



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject	Cantonese/Mandarin
Level	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

2012 was the fourth year of presentation of candidates at this level. This set of question papers contained a range of well-selected texts, with which candidates engaged very well, on the whole.

The content of the examination was at an appropriate level. The content related clearly to the Prescribed Themes and Topics, and, in terms of difficulty, was in line with Modern Languages Arrangements. Overall performance was very good.

Centres are to be commended on a pleasing set of performances from a larger cohort of Intermediate 1 candidates. Generally, the grades awarded greatly exceeded centres' estimates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates seemed suitably prepared for the examination and had been presented at the level appropriate to their ability. Candidates performed well in all areas.

Reading

Overall, candidates performed strongly in the Reading component. They seemed to identify with the variety of topics and themes presented in the texts.

Listening

Candidates are to be congratulated for their pleasing performance in this paper. It was handled well and with confidence. Candidates were particularly assured in dealing with areas relating to food and drink this year.

Writing

In the Writing tasks, there were many outstanding responses which were well thought through. Many candidates wrote with flair with a good range of vocabulary and expressions, sometimes exceeding the requirements of the task.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Most candidates handled Reading texts 1, 2 & 3 to a high standard. However, the performance for text 4 was varied. Some candidates lost marks due to a lack of precision. For example: Q4 (c) the correct answer is a **large** hospital, but some candidates omitted 'large'.

Listening

Examiners noted pleasing performances from this year's intake. Most questions were tackled well by the majority of candidates. However, it seems that some found the topics of transport and directions challenging this year.

Writing

Performances in this component were polarised. There were some excellent responses, where all four sections were addressed fully and in a balanced way. On the other hand, there were a small number of disappointing responses where candidates simply did not respond to the demand of the task. One or two candidates wrote very little. Centres should impress upon candidates the need to make a response in each of the sections. Additionally, sometimes candidates spent too much time completing the opening section and failed to write anything in the remaining sections.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading

Centres should maintain good practice in preparing candidates for Texts 1, 2 & 3. In future, centres are also encouraged to provide candidates with more opportunities to familiarise themselves with the handling of longer texts, as well as strategies for handling short answer questions. In addition, candidates must be encouraged to pay closer attention to grammar points, such as the use of particle '了,' and more precise expression when answering questions.

Listening

Performances in this component were also polarised. There were some excellent responses. On the other hand, there were a small number of rather disappointing responses. Candidates have the opportunity to listen to the recording three times and it is important that they do not presume the context of what they hear and avoid guesswork. Candidates should take the opportunity to use the third playing to check over their answers and confirm detail.

Candidates should be reminded to read the rubric carefully. It was a pity that a number of candidates chose one correct answer when they were asked to tick the two correct boxes.

Writing

It is very important that candidates have a clear understanding of SQA pegged mark descriptors and how these criteria are applied. Centres must reinforce the need for candidates to attempt ALL sections rather than focusing on perfecting one or two sections. Candidates should be aware of the pitfalls of overusing 'to have' and literal translation from English to Chinese, thus relying overly on dictionaries to create wholly new sentences. In addition, candidates should consider varying verbs to add variety to their sentence structures.

General

The following advice should help candidates cope with the demands of the external assessment:

- ◆ Centres should ensure that written responses are constructed in a way that displays a good range of vocabulary and is in line with the demands of the Course. Centres should refer to the *Modern Languages Productive Grammar Grid*, which has been specifically adapted for Chinese. This is available in Appendix A of the Modern Languages Arrangements Document.
- ◆ Candidates should develop the necessary dictionary skills, so that they can make effective use of this resource under exam conditions.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	30
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	56
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	60.7%	60.7%	34	70
B	17.9%	78.6%	10	60
C	14.3%	92.9%	8	50
D	3.6%	96.4%	2	45
No award	3.6%	100.0%	2	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.