



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Cantonese/Mandarin
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Question papers at this year's examination contained a healthy variety of well-chosen texts, all of which were clearly linked to the prescribed Themes and Topics at Intermediate 1. The level of demand of the examination was appropriate.

Overall, centres appear to have prepared their candidates well for the examination tasks. This resulted in some improved performances, notably in the number of candidates who achieved an A Grade. In 2014, this was up by 12%. For A–C Grades, there was an 8.7% increase. Centres should take pride in their contribution to this set of results.

## 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.

### Reading

Overall, candidates achieved an admirable standard in the Reading component. They seemed to identify with the selection of topics and themes set out in the texts. The high standard of responses to text 3 was particularly striking.

### Listening

The paper was handled with confidence, and candidates are to be commended for their pleasing performance. They were particularly assured in tackling the topics 'food and drink', 'school life' and 'numbers'. Most candidates also answered questions relating to school subjects successfully.

### Writing

In the Writing task, there were many superb responses which were well-thought through, and clearly exceeded the requirements of the task.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Reading

Most candidates dealt with Reading texts 1, 2 & 3 to a high standard. However, there are a number of areas that candidates could improve upon in the future.

Text 1: Some candidates had difficulty with the verb 'to listen to'.

Text 4: This was deliberately designed without any supported questions in order to stretch candidates' ability, and, as a result, the performance was much more varied.

For 4(c)(ii): Some candidates answered 'trousers' instead of 'sports trousers/tracksuit bottom'. Similarly, examiners were looking for 'dentist' rather than 'doctor' for 4(e)(ii), which in Chinese translates as 'tooth doctor'. These errors are attributed to lack of precision, with some candidates not picking up the compounds involved.

## **Listening**

Examiners noted mostly pleasing performances from this year's intake. The majority of questions were tackled competently, but it seems that some found the topics of 'weather' and 'location/places' challenging. Few candidates identified 'countryside' for question 10(a).

## **Writing**

Once again, examiners witnessed a number of candidates who failed to attempt all four headings, which led to a deduction of marks. This included some who covered, for example, one heading fully and accurately but left the remainder blank. The advice, as always, is to at least attempt all sections.

Another observation concerns character grids on exam papers. Centres are advised to guide candidates on the structure of characters and, more pertinently, how to fit these characters accurately into the character grids. Candidates frequently err by separating radicals in a character and hence misplace them in the grid.

A final area of consideration regards the use of a dictionary. While this is permissible for this paper, over-reliance appears to have generated a variety of errors.

# **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

## **General**

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

- ◆ It would be advisable for centres and candidates to make greater use of SQA past papers and marking instructions as part of their exam preparation. This will help ensure that candidates are familiar with task requirements and respond according.
- ◆ Candidates should develop the necessary dictionary skills, so that they can make effective use of this resource under exam conditions.

## **Reading**

- ◆ Centres should maintain good practice in preparing candidates for Texts 1, 2 & 3, and continue providing candidates with more opportunities to familiarise themselves with the handling of longer texts.

## **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 maximise this and do not presume the content of what they hear, or resort to guesswork.

### **Writing**

- ◆ As advised in previous years, centres must reinforce the need for candidates to attempt **all** sections rather than focusing on perfecting one or two sections. Examiners cannot stress enough the importance of impressing upon candidates the need to make a response in each of the sections.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	68
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	31
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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	58%	58%	18	70
B	19%	77%	6	60
C	16%	93%	5	50
D	3%	96%	1	45
No award	4%		1	-

## 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.