



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Cantonese/Mandarin
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

This was the sixth year of examination presentation at this level, with the question papers offering a considered range of texts, all of which were clearly linked to the Themes and Topics for Intermediate 2. There was a smaller cohort than in 2013, with a slight decrease in the number of participating centres. This year's cohort, however, was more representative of the population in general.

The difficulty of the examination was to standard and clearly correlated to the Modern Language Arrangements. Centres had prepared the candidates for each component of the examination, and should be commended for this. Candidates' performances were, overall, highly satisfactory, and centres are to be congratulated for their contribution to this result.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The vast majority of candidates appeared to be well-prepared for the examination and had been presented at the level appropriate to their ability.

### Reading

The four texts all produced impressive performances, with candidates especially strong on the shorter texts. The topics of 'media' and 'lifestyles' were dealt with very competently, while the longer text was more challenging for candidates but still of an appropriate demand. The centres clearly prepared their candidates well and deserve positive feedback for their efforts.

### Listening

Once again, candidates are to be congratulated for their impressive performance in this paper. The Listening component can be one of the more challenging aspects of the exam, so it was especially pleasing to note the overall level of attainment. Candidates seemed particularly strong in the topics of 'travel' and 'hobbies'.

### Writing

There is clear evidence that, year on year, candidates are increasingly well-prepared by centres. Many centres had taken on board recommendations on best practice, and this was clearly reflected in candidates' performance. Many wrote with flair, and used a wide range of vocabulary and expressions. They produced some very convincing job applications.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Reading

Although this paper was tackled with confidence, some candidates lost marks needlessly by failing to provide sufficient information. As mentioned in previous reports, at Intermediate 2 level candidates are expected to provide fuller responses and a lack of detail will not attract

marks. For example, for question 4(f), a suitable answer would have been 'they lived in a small house', but some candidates answered 'they lived in a house'.

## **Listening**

Overall, Examiners noted pleasing performances from this cohort. However, candidates are reminded to listen carefully and not to prejudge the content. For example, for question 2(a), despite the accessible content, some candidates answered 'they have too much school work' instead of 'they live far from each other'.

## **Writing**

The writing component produced another impressive batch of performances this year. However, there were some disappointing aspects, most notably the recurring basic errors which continue to lower the overall average, and failure to address compulsory bullet point questions. This type of issue has already been addressed in advice to centres in previous reports, and practitioners should continually remind candidates of the requirements of the paper.

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

Centres are strongly encouraged to make full use of current resources available such as Hanban and SQA's support materials, as well as resources from SQA's Support Events. The availability of marking instructions is also useful, and can assist with future preparation of candidates.

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

- ◆ Candidates should always be encouraged to provide comprehensive responses to questions in Reading and Listening.
- ◆ Candidates should be confident with dictionary use and aware of its purpose and limitations during exams.
- ◆ Prepare and practise exam technique, which includes attempting all questions in the allotted timescale.
- ◆ At this level, candidates need to understand the structure of characters and hence be aware each grid should be used to house an individual character.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	84
Number of resulted entries in 2014	52

## 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	73.1%	73.1%	38	70
B	13.0%	86.5%	7	60
C	12.0%	98.1%	6	50
D	0.0%	98.1%	0	45
No award	2.0%		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.