



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional), Cantonese</b>
Level	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

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

2010 represented the first year of presentation at Advanced Higher level, and there were two candidates presented for Mandarin (Simplified) and one for Cantonese.

Candidates performed well generally. Centres had clearly prepared candidates well for the demands of the examination, and are to be congratulated.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates engaged very well with all aspects of the examination, in question papers which effectively covered the range of prescribed themes and topics across the skills of Reading, Listening and Writing. Examiners were very impressed with many aspects of performance.

Visiting Assessors also commented positively on engaging with candidates in Speaking tests, in which candidates also performed extremely well.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Paper 1: Reading and Translation

The inferential question can be a challenging aspect of Paper 1.

### Paper 2: Listening and Discursive Essay

Listening can prove challenging at this level.

### Folio

There can be insufficient critical analysis or evaluation in approaches to background topics.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The following advice is generic and does not necessarily relate to the performance of candidates in 2010.

### Reading and Translation

In preparing candidates for Reading, centres should introduce and develop the necessary dictionary skills, provide candidates with sufficient practice in terms of the dictionary, and enable them to become familiar with the various features of the dictionary and to find information quickly and efficiently.

Answers to the Comprehension questions should contain as much relevant detail as possible. More practice is needed for the inferential question.

### **Listening and Discursive Writing**

More practice is needed for Listening.

Pre-learned Discursive Essays may not fit what is asked and therefore can be largely irrelevant and penalised as such.

### **Folio**

Read the Folio guidelines carefully.

### **Extended Reading and Viewing**

Choose essay titles with great care and thought. A film on its own is not acceptable. The reviews of a film are not enough. The basis of preparation is a literary text.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Mandarin (Simplified)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	–
Number of resulted entries in 2010	2

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 200				
A	***	***	***	140
B	***	***	***	120
C	***	***	***	100
D	***	***	***	90
No award	***	***	***	–

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Cantonese

Number of resulted entries in 2009	–
Number of resulted entries in 2010	1

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 200				
A	***	***	***	140
B	***	***	***	120
C	***	***	***	100
D	***	***	***	90
No award	***	***	***	–

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.