



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Mandarin Simplified/Traditional & Cantonese
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

This set of question papers contain a wide range of well-selected texts. Candidates performed well in general.

At this level, the guidance given to setters concerning the length and type of text for each component is very prescriptive and consequently, the examination was appropriate in terms of content. The content related clearly to the prescribed themes and topics for this level, and in terms of the level of difficulty which was appropriate and in line with the Modern Language Arrangements. The overall level of performance by candidates was very good.

Centres are to be congratulated, as the performance of candidates in all components was encouraging in this the first year of certification and there were some excellent performances (particularly in Writing and Speaking) and relatively few poor performances (mainly in Reading).

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The four Reading texts provided good progression in terms of the level of difficulty and demand and the vast majority of candidates related well to the content of the texts.

Candidates were well prepared to cope with predictable structure and items in Writing. There were several outstanding performances in writing.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading Paper, question 3a was badly done by some candidates who failed to provide sufficiently detailed answers. Surprising was the inability of candidates to recognise common vocabulary (museum, hospital). Additionally, some candidates failed to make good use of the word list provided.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

### Reading:

In preparation for the Reading Paper, centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1 Level and should continue to give candidates sufficient practice with longer texts in preparation for texts 3 and 4.

### Listening:

In preparing candidates for the Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at noting information from texts after only **two hearings**. It is important to stress to centres and to candidates that they will hear the text only **two times** as opposed to three times for the internal assessment.

### Writing:

The new version of the pegged mark descriptors for Chinese Languages gives a good indication of what is required of candidates in this task **and these criteria should be shared with candidates** in preparation for external presentation.

## General:

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

- Make full use of the word list.
- Candidates should not to be put off by the longer text(s).
- Capture the key idea/vocabulary in the sentences
- Ensure writing is clear also

Centres are encouraged to make effective use of the guidance issued by SQA in the form of the support materials.

## Mandarin (Simplified)

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	6
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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	83.3%	83.3%	5	70
B	16.7%	100.0%	1	60
C	0.0%	100.0%	0	50
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	45
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

## Mandarin (Traditional)

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	-
Number of resulted entries in 2009	3

### 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	66.7%	66.7%	2	70
B	0.0%	66.7%	0	60
C	33.3%	100.0%	1	50
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	45
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

### 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.

