



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Mandarin Simplified / Traditional & Cantonese
Level	Intermediate 2

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

The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2 and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. Each component of the examination was accessible to all candidates. On the whole candidates had been well prepared by centres for each component.

The mean marks indicate a good level of performance in all four language skills with the average performance in each skill well in excess of 58% of the available marks. Overall, the performance of candidates was very encouraging with some excellent performances (particularly in Speaking and Writing) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening).

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the examination. In the Reading Paper candidates seemed to identify with the topics of the texts (holiday/ work / school). There was good progression in the level of demand through the shorter to the longer fourth reading text with most candidates scoring highly in the shorter texts and with a large number managing to sustain this level of performance throughout the longer and more demanding final text. In the Writing task there were many excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well by their centre and were able to write at considerable length and with a high level of accuracy, range and variety of structures.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Most candidates coped well with the Reading texts but some lost points through not providing sufficiently detailed answers, particularly in Question 4 b.

Although there was some excellent performance in Listening, it is notable as the most challenging component across the entire Examination. Many candidates find it difficult to retain the specific details while listening to the three relatively long texts. To compensate for this there is a mix of straightforward as well as more demanding questions and it is disappointing that many candidates failed to gain these 'easier' points owing to the inability to recognise some very common vocabulary. (cheap/ international/ better).

The writing task was done well by many candidates. Centres should take care, however, to ensure that candidates are able to provide pieces of writing which can show a sufficient degree of flexibility in order to address all aspects of the task as set. This was not always evident in this element. Quite a few numbers of candidates failed to address the compulsory bullet points; A few candidates were not well prepared to give reasons for their application nor to deal with requesting information about the job and were unable to form comprehensible questions.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/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.

In preparing candidates for the Reading, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at reading longer texts similar in length and complexity, providing sufficient detail in their answers.

Writing:

Centres should prepare the candidates with a range of expression

Centres should ensure that candidates read carefully the information regarding the job for which they are applying and **are discouraged from writing long lists of school subjects**. They should be trained to:

- complete successfully the opening sentence with which they are provided so that they are able to indicate the nature of the correct job for which they are applying.
- **ask specific questions** in a range of expressions (further training opportunities; starting date; full information pack etc) rather than mechanically memorised phrases/ sentences.
- use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written.

General:

Centres should make full use of current resources made available. i.e Hanban and SQA's support materials, to familiarise candidates with the layout and the structure of the assessment. SQA's Specimen Question Paper will be very helpful in this respect.

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

- Make full use of the word list, rather than relying overly on dictionaries all the time.
- Capture the key ideas/vocabulary in the sentences
- To ensure the handwriting is neat and clear

Mandarin (Simplified)
Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	25
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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	64.0%	64.0%	16	70
B	20.0%	84.0%	5	60
C	16.0%	100.0%	4	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	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	2
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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	100.0%	100.0%	2	70
B	0.0%	100.0%	0	60
C	0.0%	100.0%	0	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.