



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (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 contains a range of well selected texts, with which candidates engaged very well, on the whole. 2010 represented the second year of presentation of candidates at this level.

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, was appropriate and in line with Modern Languages 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 and there were some excellent performances and relatively few poor performances (mainly in Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

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

Reading

In the Reading paper, candidates seemed to identify with the variety of topics and themes presented in the texts. 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 greater number managing to sustain this level of performance throughout the longer and more demanding final text.

Listening

Listening is always considered the most challenging component of the examination. Nonetheless, performances were impressive, especially for those tasks with multiple-choice options. However, the gap-fill types of tasks were less convincing.

Writing

In the Writing task there were many excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well by their centre and were able to write with flair and a high level of accuracy, with a good range of characters, which were often accurate.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

On the whole, there were some issues with candidates' manipulation of Chinese numbers, especially with large numbers. Most candidates handled Reading texts 1 and 2 very well.

The handling of texts 3 and 4 was less consistent. There were evidences to suggest that candidates were not entirely familiar with the 'measure word' pattern: number + MW + noun.

Listening

In general, candidates found the gap-fill and short answer questions challenging. For instance, Questions 3, 4 (b) and 8 (b) were not completed fully, in some instances.

Writing

Performances in this component were polarised. There were some outstanding pieces of written responses, where all four sections were address fully and in a balanced way. On the other hand, some were extremely disappointing because some sections were incomplete.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading

The supported tasks were well handled; centres should continue with the good practice. In future, centres are encouraged to provide candidates with sufficient practice with longer texts in preparation for texts 3 and 4.

Listening

Candidates should be encouraged to listen closely and fully; they must avoid prejudging the content. However, candidates should use the rubrics given to familiarise themselves with the content.

Writing

Centres should highlight and stress the importance of attempting ALL sections rather than focusing on perfecting one or two sections. It is essential that candidates have a clear understanding of SQA pegged mark descriptors and how these criteria are applied. These can be shared with candidates.

Candidates should avoid the overuse of 'to be' and 'and'. Candidates should be aware of the pitfalls of literal translation (from English to Chinese, word for word). '我是四十岁。'
'中文是好玩。'

General

The following advice should help candidates 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).
- ◆ Ensure the writing is neat and clear.
- ◆ Ensure **all** tasks are completed.

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

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Simplified)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	6
Number of resulted entries in 2010	30

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	60.0%	60.0%	18	69
B	16.7%	76.7%	5	59
C	6.7%	83.3%	2	49
D	0.0%	83.3%	0	44
No award	16.7%	100.0%	5	—

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Traditional)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	3
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 — 100				
A	***	***	***	69
B	***	***	***	59
C	***	***	***	49
D	***	***	***	44
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.