



Course Report 2016

Subject	Chinese Languages
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

The number of the entries at Higher level in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese showed a significant increase this year.

On the whole, candidate performance was very good, and candidates were well prepared for each component. It was encouraging to see a wider range of performances.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

The papers were judged to be fair, accessible and challenging as appropriate for Higher level. Many candidates performed well in all aspects of the examination, and there were several instances of outstanding performances. Most candidates were clearly well prepared for the examination. Centres who presented candidates from a non-native speaker background are particularly to be congratulated for ensuring this level of performance.

In particular, the performance in component 2 question paper 2: Listening was well done with many excellent performances. Candidates clearly found the content and vocabulary of the listening passage relevant, interesting and accessible.

Most candidates performed excellently in the other two components. There were many outstanding short essays, in which learned language was successfully adapted to suit the context. Some very able candidates produced a well-structured and accurate piece of writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In question paper 1 the **Reading and Directed Writing**, performance was highly satisfactory, though there are some points to address:

- ◆ In **Reading** some candidates failed to identify the accurate key information — such as question 2(b), where some candidates answered ‘Are students actually studying?’ rather than ‘Are students actually **learning** (学到了)?’; question 4c(i) a number of candidates provided ‘the teacher was very angry’ rather than ‘the teacher was very **impatient** (不耐烦)’.
- ◆ It is still proving challenging for candidates to answer the overall purpose question, but more able candidates did very well. Some candidates only translated or retold the text without detailed comments. Equally, some candidates simply give the statement but do not provide any references from the text.
- ◆ Some answers are not specific enough, such as question 1 ‘students’ rather than **university** students.
- ◆ The translation represents a challenging aspect of this paper. Some marks were lost needlessly by lack of precision and accuracy, such as 没有学生敢 ... This should be translated as ‘no student would dare to ..’, but a number of candidates translated ‘no

student want to...' Many candidates continue to lose marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles, conjunction words and by misusing tenses.

- ◆ In **Directed Writing**, the candidate has the choice between two scenarios, with the majority of candidates selecting culture this year. A number of candidates failed to address all bullet points as required, including the two-part questions in the first bullet point, for which they were penalized. A number of candidates failed to address both questions for the first bullet point.

It was encouraging to see many excellent performances in question paper 2: **Listening and Writing**, although adding a monologue has been challenging for some candidates.

Some candidates in **Listening** were unable to retain sufficient detail to answer the questions accurately, often understanding part of the information but not giving sufficient detail, such as Item 2b(ii) 中国跟很多不同的国家做生意, 'China does business/trade with many different countries', but a number of candidates provided only 'China works with other countries' rather than providing specific detail 'doing business/trade'.

In both **Writing** and **Directed Writing**, candidates were sometimes unable to form the correct sentence structure, and there were also occasions where candidates translated directly from English. Some candidates tended to misuse the dictionary which often had a poor outcome.

Section3: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

- ◆ It is recommended that centres share this report with candidates, along with the Marking Instructions for the 2016 paper, to reiterate the level of detail required for a mark at Higher level in both Reading and Listening, as well as the precision required for Translation.
- ◆ Some centres who have heritage background candidates should be reminded that candidates should be aware of the structure of the paper and understand the approaches of the exam.
- ◆ Apart from Writing tasks, answers should be written in English, not in Chinese.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to make sure handwriting is legible as this can adversely affect marks awarded.

Reading

- ◆ Centres should continue with their good practice in preparing candidates for reading questions, and continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation.
- ◆ Centres also should encourage candidates to read the passage globally rather than sentence by sentence, in order to gain the full understanding of the whole passage.

- ◆ In the Translation, encourage candidates pay particular attention to the articles and tense used and to not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers.
- ◆ The penultimate question will require candidates to identify the overall purpose of the text. For this question candidates must draw meaning from their overall understanding of the text rather than translating part of the text.

Listening

- ◆ Before candidates listen to the recording, they should study the heading and questions and the marks allocated to them. This will help them anticipate the type of information that will be required of them.
- ◆ It is important that candidates do not presume the context of what they hear and avoid guesswork.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and not to lose marks by lack of accuracy and inaccurate information.

Writing

- ◆ In Directed Writing, advise candidates to read carefully each bullet point and ensure that they do not miss any bullet point, and also to use learned material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
- ◆ Centres should be reminded that writing tasks require the candidate to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks, and not to rely overly on the dictionary
- ◆ Likewise, the writing criteria for both Directed Writing and Writing should be shared and discussed with candidates.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	20
Number of resulted entries in 2016	111

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	81.1%	81.1%	90	72
B	13.5%	94.6%	15	61
C	2.7%	97.3%	3	50
D	0.0%	97.3%	0	44
No award	2.7%		3	-

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.