



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Cantonese/Mandarin (Simplified and Traditional)
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

This set of question papers contained a range of well-selected texts, and related clearly to the teaching syllabus for Intermediate 2. 2011 was the third year of presentation of candidates at this level.

The content of the examination was an appropriate level and clearly related to the Modern Languages Arrangements. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for each component. Overall, the level of performance was very strong.

Centres are to be commended, as the performance of candidates on the whole was highly pleasing.

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 general, candidates performed very well in the Reading component. They seemed to identify with the variety of Topics and Themes presented in the texts. There was good progression in the level demand through the shorter to the longer Reading text.

Reading texts 1, 2 & 3 were handled very well, with most candidates scoring highly in these shorter texts. Many candidates were able to sustain this level of performance through to the longer and more demanding text 4. There were several vocabulary areas such as places in town where candidates performed extremely well.

Listening

Listening is often perceived as the most challenging component of the examination. Once again, candidates are to be congratulated for their impressive performance in this paper overall. It was handled well and with confidence. The opportunity to hear each item three times may well have had a positive impact on candidates' performance.

Writing

In the Writing tasks, there were many well-prepared and excellent responses. Many wrote with flair, displaying a good range of vocabulary and expressions and addressing all the compulsory bullet points convincingly. On the whole, performance was very good.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Most candidates handled all four Reading texts well, so there is no major concern.

Listening

Overall, Examiners noted pleasing performances from this cohort. However, candidates are reminded to listen carefully and not to prejudge the content. (In Question 1 — many failed to make a distinction between village 村, town 镇 & city 城, for instance).

Writing

There were some outstanding pieces of in Writing. However, when addressing bullet point 5 'request for further information', some candidates are encouraged to broaden the range of question posed. They should avoid restricting themselves to sentences such as '您可不可以给我发更多关于这个职位的信息?'.

It is noted that there were some rather creative performances. At the same time, there were occasions where over-reliance on a dictionary, and inappropriate character selection, led to mistakes — for example, choosing 硬(hard) in place of 难 to express 'difficult'; or when some candidates used 传达 instead of 交流 for 'communicate'. Another area of difficulty identified is with the use of '的·地& 得'.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading

Centres should maintain good practice when preparing candidates for Texts 1, 2 & 3. In future, centres are encouraged to provide candidates with more opportunities to familiarise themselves with handling longer text and strategies to handle short answer questions. In addition, centres are urged to work with candidates to increase their level of accuracy in character recognition.

Listening

Candidates are advised to listen closely and avoid prejudging the content, using the time allocated to familiarise themselves with the questions. Additionally, candidates should take advantage of hearing each item three times (as opposed to twice, as was the case before 2011).

Writing

Once again, it is very important that candidates and centres have a clear understanding of SQA Pegged Mark Descriptors and how these criteria are applied. Centres are encouraged to share these with candidates and to make them the basis of further discussion on performance.

General

Centres are strongly encouraged to make full use of current resources available such as Hanban and SQA's support materials, as well as resources from SQA's Support Event in January 2011. The availability of marking instructions is also useful, and can assist with future preparation of candidates.

The following advice should help candidates cope with the demands of the external assessment:

- ◆ Ensure that written responses are constructed in a way that display a good range of vocabulary and is in line with demands of the Course.
- ◆ Make sure candidates have the necessary dictionary skills, so that they can make effective use of this resource under exam conditions.
- ◆ Remind candidates to maintain a balance between content and accuracy in the written responses.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Simplified) Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	19
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	37
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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	83.8%	83.8%	31	70
B	10.8%	94.6%	4	60
C	0.0%	94.6%	0	50
D	5.4%	100.0%	2	45
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

Mandarin (Traditional) Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1
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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	***	***	***	70
B	***	***	***	60
C	***	***	***	50
D	***	***	***	45
No award	***	***	***	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.