



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional), Cantonese
Level	Higher

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

2010 was the first year of presentation at Higher level in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese. On the whole, candidates performed well, and several candidates had undertaken the National Course at Intermediate 2 in 2009, which was also the first year of presentation at that level. The majority of candidates were undertaking National Qualifications for the first time in Chinese languages.

Areas in which candidates performed well

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, and familiar with the format. Centres are to be congratulated for ensuring this level of performance in a relatively short period of time.

In Writing, examiners noted some outstanding Short Essays, in which candidates often produced coherent and sophisticated pieces, in which language and learned language were successfully adapted to suit the context. This was similarly the case with many Directed Writing pieces, in which candidates fully engaged with the topic.

In Reading, many candidates gave extensive responses, and subsequently performed well. Similarly, there were several extremely good examples of Translation, which displayed accurate and sophisticated understanding.

In Listening, many candidates displayed good global understanding of the passage, and were able to identify detail with sufficient accuracy.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Some candidates, however, struggled with the Translation section of the Reading and Directed Writing paper. Responses sometimes lacked a sufficient amount of detail to accurately convey meaning, often with key aspects such as articles omitted and a lack of accuracy when determining correct tenses. In the Directed Writing section, a number of candidates were over-prepared, and produced responses which lacked a sufficient degree of flexibility in order to address the task and the bullet points as indicated.

This over-preparedness sometimes led to candidates failing to address bullet points, for which they were penalised. This approach was also evident in some performances in the Short Essay. Very rarely candidates reverted to the use of Pinyin instead of writing characters. Candidates can receive no credit for this.

In Listening, a number of candidates had difficulty, and sometimes provided answers that lacked enough detail and accuracy to gain points.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

In the Translation passage, encourage candidates to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses to be used when rendering in English.

Directed Writing

Advise candidates to read carefully each bullet point and to ensure that they do not miss any bullet point, and also to ensure that they use learned material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.

In writing tasks generally, some candidates relied too heavily on dictionary use, and invented language which was inaccurate and unidiomatic. This approach is to be discouraged. Very rarely candidates reverted to the use of Pinyin instead of writing characters.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Simplified)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	–
Number of resulted entries in 2010	28

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	96.4%	96.4%	27	70
B	0.0%	96.4%	0	60
C	3.6%	100.0%	1	50
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	45
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	–

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Traditional)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	–
Number of resulted entries in 2010	5

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%	5	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	–

Statistical information: update on Courses

Cantonese

Number of resulted entries in 2009	–
Number of resulted entries in 2010	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	***	***	***	70
B	***	***	***	60
C	***	***	***	50
D	***	***	***	45
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.