



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (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 but proved demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole had been well prepared by centres for each component and there were few poor performances. 2010 represented the second year of presentation of candidates at this level.

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 strong, with some excellent performances.

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. In the Reading paper, candidates seemed to identify with a 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 an increasing 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. The varied and individualised written responses were pleasing features, as was the accurate reading of characters, on the whole.

It is notable that Listening is the most challenging component across the entire examination. However, the performances in Listening were excellent, and candidates should be commended for their achievements.

There has been significant improvement in candidates' written responses this diet. The compulsory bullet points were addressed adequately and convincingly. The majority of candidates attempted bullet point 4 with a great deal of confidence, as reflected in the range of questions posed. Overall, the level of accuracy of writing was very high and there were pleasing number of candidates who produced mature and neat handwriting.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Most candidates handled Reading texts 1, 2, and 3 very well. With text 4, some lost points through not providing sufficiently detailed answers.

Overall, there were strong performances for the Reading paper. There was evidence that candidates had been misled as the direct result of their being overly dependent on dictionaries. For instance, some candidates provided very literal translation, such as ‘酒店’ as ‘wine/ alcohol shop’ instead of ‘hotel’. This is rather disappointing at Intermediate 2 level.

Listening

On the whole, the Listening component was well done; hence there is no major concern.

Writing

In general, candidates produced works that were convincing. However, some were let down by their inaccuracies in grammar, affecting the overall message.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading

In preparing candidates for Reading, centres should introduce and develop the necessary dictionary skills, provide candidates with sufficient practice in terms of dictionary, and enable them to become familiar with the various features of dictionary and to find information quickly and efficiently.

Writing

Be aware of the sentence structure and word order, eg ‘工作什么时候开始 (吗) ?’; ‘长大在 + name of a place’.

General

Centres should make full use of current resources available, ie Hanban and SQA’s support materials, to familiarise the candidates with the layout and the structure of the assessment. SQA’s specimen question paper will also be very helpful in this respect. The availability of marking instructions is also useful, and can assist with preparing candidates.

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

- ◆ Make full use of the word list, rather than relying overly on dictionaries.
- ◆ Maintain the level of concentration throughout the entire examination.
- ◆ Attempt **all** tasks.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Mandarin (Simplified)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	25
Number of resulted entries in 2010	19

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	89.5%	89.5%	17	70
B	10.5%	100.0%	2	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, 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.