



Internal Assessment Report 2010: Mandarin and Cantonese

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified

Mandarin (Simplified): Speaking, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher
Mandarin (Traditional): Speaking, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher
Cantonese: Speaking, Higher

General comments

2010 represented the second year of National Course delivery at Intermediate 1 and 2 levels. Significantly, this was also the first year of presentation at Higher level. Candidates were presented for Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional) at Intermediate 1 and 2 and Higher levels. Candidates were also presented at Higher level in Cantonese. The verification of Speaking sampled across the three levels.

At Intermediate 1 and 2 levels, Verifiers were pleased to note that centres have consolidated performance, and had clearly made good use of advice and guidance issued in 2009. At Higher, centres had generally prepared candidates very well for the activity, and are to be commended for the manner in which tests were conducted.

Areas of good practice

At all levels there were performances in which candidates had engaged very well with the task. Skilled interlocutors facilitated authentic exchanges which allowed candidates to develop ideas and express themselves clearly and skilfully. At Intermediate 2 and Higher, for instance, many candidates coped well with the transition from presentation to the less predictable demands of the discussion. Notably, several candidates were able to speak at some length on topics which interested them.

Areas for improvement

At Intermediate 1, there were a few instances of performances which would have benefited from a greater degree of reaction and intervention on the part of the interlocutor. The role of the interlocutor in encouraging and drawing out can be crucial, particularly when candidates are reticent and lack confidence. It is entirely appropriate in such instances for interlocutors to repeat, rephrase and allow time for response. At this level some performances were short, which did not allow candidates to express themselves adequately.

At Intermediate 2 and Higher, only a few performances were over-prepared and rigidly structured. Such performances can be restrictive for candidates, and rarely allow for a degree of spontaneity which more able candidates, for instance, find both rewarding and challenging.

Centres are encouraged to share pegged mark descriptors with candidates. This will allow preparation to focus on successful aspects of performance. SQA will host a support event for practitioners in early 2010, and activities will focus on several areas of performance, including Speaking.

Again, centres should note that judging candidate performance should be done by means of the pegged mark descriptors, and that candidates from native speaker and non-native speaker backgrounds should be assessed identically against these criteria.

On the whole, performances were very good, and centres are to be congratulated on their preparation for the activities.