



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Mandarin / Cantonese
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 level of the examination was of an appropriate level of difficulty, and adhered to the teaching syllabus as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2. Each component of the examination was accessible to all candidates, and performances were highly satisfactory.

With the introduction of the new National 5 examination, the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 2 this year dropped.

The three **Listening** items covered travelling experience in Hami, use of the internet, and celebrating birthday with a friend. The **Writing** advertised a job as a secretary in a primary school.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates coped well with all the components of the examination.

Reading

The **Reading** passages dealt with an online advertisement for a Chinese course in Beijing, some information about accommodation in Beijing, website information about a play, and an article about young people and internet. All candidates coped comfortably with the paper. Questions 1 and 2 and most of Question 3 were done particularly well.

Listening

Candidate performance was very good. Candidates were particularly assured in tackling:

- ◆ Question 1 (b), Question 1 (d), and Question 1 (e).
- ◆ Question 2 (a), Question 2 (b), Question 2 (c), and Question 2 (d).
- ◆ Question 3 (a), and Question 3 (b).

Writing

In **Writing**, there were many excellent performances, with candidates demonstrating the content, accuracy and variety of language required of a Very Good performance. Overall the standard achieved in this year's examination was highly satisfactory.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Overall, markers noted pleasing performances from this strong cohort. Nevertheless, there were a few areas which proved challenging for some candidates.

Reading

All candidates seemed to cope well with the Reading texts in general, although some candidates found passage 4 challenging due to the level of detail required. For example, candidates lost points by not providing sufficiently detailed answers, in Question 4 (f), and in Question 4 (h), 'friends and relatives' were also often missed out.

Listening

Candidate performance was very good, although some candidates struggled in the following areas:

- ◆ Question 2 (c) (post card): This was an 'open' question, and appeared to be quite challenging for many candidates.
- ◆ Question 2 (e) (poor quality): Despite being a supported question, many candidates were not able to choose the correct answer.
- ◆ Question 3 (b) — *a department store*. Many candidates wrote 'shopping mall' instead.
- ◆ Question 3 (d) — *next Tuesday*. Some candidates were not able to provide sufficient detail.

Writing

In Writing, the only area which some candidates did not deal with well was the fifth bullet point, 'request for information about the job', where some found it hard to structure the sentences with suitable tone, or link the questions logically.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

It is hoped that the following suggestions will be helpful for future the National 5 presentations

Centres are strongly encouraged to make full use of resources currently available, such as Hanban's and SQA's support materials, as well as resources from SQA's Understanding Standards Events. The availability of marking instructions is also useful, and can assist with future preparation of candidates.

Reading and Listening

- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged, as in previous years, to learn vocabulary in key prescribed areas such as numbers and time, daily routine, prices, weather, colours, sports and pastimes, food and drink, jobs and careers, places and directions. A sound knowledge of these is particularly important for Listening, where candidates are not allowed the use of a dictionary.
- ◆ In preparation for the Reading paper, centres must ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice in tackling the four questions in the time allocated.
- ◆ Candidates should read over all their answers to ensure that they make sense and that their English expression is clear.

- ◆ In Listening, candidates should be ready to use the built-in minute before each of the three Listening texts to study the questions for that item. This can help them to anticipate possible answers.

Writing

- ◆ Centres should ensure that candidates read carefully the information regarding the job for which they are applying. In addition, it should be noted that writing long lists of school subjects does not necessarily address the topic.
- ◆ Candidates should be aware of the need to address all compulsory bullet points in a more balanced way. A personalised application may result in a more interesting and meaningful essay.
- ◆ Teachers are encouraged to provide samples to candidates of good essays.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	52
Number of resulted entries in 2015	11

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%	11	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%	-	0	

For this Course, grade boundaries have been stable for a number of years and the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to previous years. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.