



## Course Report 2017

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

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

## **Section 1: Comments on the assessment**

### **Summary of the course assessment**

The number of the entries increased in 2017.

On the whole, candidates' performance was very good, and they were well prepared for each question paper component. It was encouraging to see a wider range of performances.

In 2017, the Verification Team verified selected centres' evidence for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA) performance — talking. Overall, the approaches to assessment were valid and acceptable. Centres used a range of assessment tasks to assess candidates appropriately.

Marking Instructions clearly explained where marks are available to differentiate responses. Assessors made effective use of the Marking Instructions to award marks and judgements were made in line with national standards.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

The papers were fair, accessible and challenging in areas where appropriate for Higher. It was pleasing to note that candidates performed very well across all sections of the question papers and there were several instances of outstanding performances. Most candidates were clearly well prepared for the examination.

### **Component 1: question paper — Reading**

Candidates performed very well in the overall purpose question.

### **Component 2: question paper — Directed Writing**

Candidates are continuing to embrace the elements of personalisation and choice in the Directed Writing paper. The Directed Writing scenarios asked candidates to choose between the contexts of learning and employability. This allowed candidates to choose the context that best suited their abilities.

### **Component 3: question paper — Listening and Writing**

There were many outstanding responses in both the Listening and Writing sections. Learned language was successfully adapted to suit the Writing stimulus. Some very able candidates

produced a well-structured and accurate piece of writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures.

#### **Component 4: performance — talking**

The overall standard of candidate performance was very high. All the candidates who were sampled demonstrated the ability to make presentations that were strong in terms of content, accuracy, and language resource.

During the presentations, candidates demonstrated a good grasp of Chinese grammar.

During the conversation, candidates were capable of understanding questions and responding accordingly. Candidates could use appropriate pronunciation and intonation to communicate effectively with interlocutors and sustain the conversation naturally.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

#### **Component 1: question paper — Reading**

In the **Reading** text, the questions were balanced in terms of high, low and average demand. Candidate performance was highly satisfactory although there are some points to address:

- ◆ Some candidates didn't pay full attention to detail. For example, in Q1(a) a number of candidates missed 'new' in learning new skills (学习新技能)? Q3(a) A number of candidates answered 'have a half day break' and missed the important detail 'every month' (工作了一个月, 才有半天的休息时间)
- ◆ A few candidates found difficulty with the overall purpose question. Some candidates only translated the text without making comments. Some candidates simply gave statements on the text but did not provide any references from the passage or expand to back up their answer.
- ◆ Some answers were not specific enough — such as Q5(a) 'city on the **coast** in the **south**'. Candidates who missed details wouldn't achieve the mark.
- ◆ In the translation some marks were lost by a lack of precision. For example 这些经历..., which should be translated as 'These experiences...' some candidates translated 'This experience...' Many candidates continue to lose marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles and conjunction words, and misusing tenses.

#### **Component 2: question paper — Directed Writing**

In Directed Writing, candidates had the choice of two scenarios, one on learning and one on employability. This year there appeared to be an equal balance in candidates' choices of scenario. A number of candidates failed to address all bullet points as required (including the double questions in the first bullet point), and were penalised for this.

### **Component 3: question paper — Listening and Writing**

In **Listening**, the question paper was linked to the context of learning and featured a topic about a mobile phone. Although this is a familiar topic to most candidates, it proved a challenge when candidates tried to predict answers or relied on guesswork.

Some candidates were also unable to retain sufficient detail to answer the questions accurately. Some candidates understood part of the information but didn't give sufficient details, such as Item 2(b)(iii) 一个星期差不多花 12 个小时 'approximately 12 hours per week', some candidates missed 'per week'.

In both **Writing** pieces, at times candidates did not use correct sentence structures, and there were also occasions where candidates appeared to be translating directly from English. Some candidates exhibited an over-reliance on their dictionary to help them to create new sentences, which often had a poor outcome.

### **Component 4: performance — talking**

During the conversation, some candidates found it challenging to use colloquial spoken Chinese.

## **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **General**

- ◆ It is recommended that centres share this report with future candidates, along with the Marking Instructions for the 2017 papers, to reiterate to them the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Higher level in both Reading and Listening, as well as the precision required for translation.
- ◆ Likewise, the Marking Instructions for both Directed Writing and Writing should be shared and discussed with candidates.
- ◆ Some centres who have heritage background candidates should ensure that candidates are aware of the structure of the paper and understand the approaches of the exam.
- ◆ Apart from writing tasks, answers should be written in English, not Chinese.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to make sure their handwriting is legible, as this can adversely affect marks awarded.

### **Component 1: question paper — Reading**

- ◆ Continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing an accurate and precise translation. Detailed Marking Instructions for

Reading and Listening are available on the SQA website and show the level of detail required for answers.

- ◆ Centres should encourage candidates to read the passage as a whole, rather than sentence by sentence, so they gain a full understanding of the entire passage.
- ◆ The penultimate question will require candidates to identify the overall purpose of the text. For this question candidates must draw meaning from their understanding of the text rather than translating the text.
- ◆ In the translation passage, encourage candidates to pay particular attention to the articles and tense used. Candidates should also be told not to include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers. Candidates should allow enough time to complete the translation, where accuracy plays a very important role.

### **Component 3: question paper — Listening and Writing**

- ◆ Before candidates listen to the recording, they should study the heading and questions, and the marks allocated to them. This will help them anticipate the type of information that will be required.
- ◆ It is important that candidates do not presume the context of what they hear, and that they avoid guesswork.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and not to lose marks by lack of accuracy and inaccurate information.

### **Writing and Directed Writing**

- ◆ In Directed Writing, writing a good response but missing the bullet points won't get the highest mark. Advise candidates to carefully read each bullet point to ensure that they do not miss any details; candidates should use material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that writing tasks require the candidates to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks, and not rely on the dictionary to help them to invent new sentences.

### **Component 4: performance — talking**

The Verification Team for Chinese was pleased to see centres submit assessment evidence including assessment records, cross-marking, a breakdown of marks for the talking Performance (presentation, conversation and ability to sustain the conversation), and internal verification.

For preparing and assessing future candidates, centres should attach more importance to asking questions that are more open-ended and questions that encourage more natural transition between the topics.

Centres should involve only one assessor during the conversation to support and help candidates in demonstrating their language skills.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	111
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	129
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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 —				
A	79.8%	79.8%	103	72
B	10.9%	90.7%	14	61
C	7.8%	98.4%	10	50
D	1.6%	100.0%	2	44
No award	0.0%	-	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, 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.