



Course Report 2018

Subject	Chinese Languages
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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.

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

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

The reading question paper is comprised of three texts of equal difficulty and weighting (10 marks for each item). Each text is approximately 150–200 Chinese characters. Questions are answered in English.

The three texts provided appropriate challenge in terms of content and language. The texts covered the contexts of society, employability and culture (the three contexts not covered in the listening question paper). The texts were based on the topics of work experience, Chinese traditions, and travel. The questions provided opportunities for candidates to show a range of skills, such as the mastery of vocabulary and understanding grammar and sentence structures.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

The writing question paper required the candidates to reply by e-mail to a job application. The paper was worth 20 marks with four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points.

Overall, this question paper performed as expected.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

The listening question paper had two parts: A monologue worth 8 marks and a dialogue worth 12 marks, which includes a supported question worth 2 marks. The question paper was based on the context of learning.

Overall, this question paper performed as expected.

Component 4: assignment–writing

The assignment–writing is one piece of writing which is submitted for each candidate, and is externally marked by SQA.

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

The grade boundaries for C and A were raised by 2 marks as a result of increased accessibility evidenced in relation to the new assignment–writing in its introductory year. Such adjustment enables the national standard to be maintained from year to year.

Component 5: performance–talking

The centre approach to assessment was valid and accepted. Centres used the SQA course assessment task for the performance–talking to assess candidates at National 5 appropriately.

Assessment judgements of the candidates sampled were made in line with national standards. Assessors asked a good range of open-ended questions; the conversation

covered information in different contexts. Assessors made effective use of the marking instructions to award marks to each candidate.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Overall, candidates performed as expected. The majority of candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of a reasonably useful range of vocabulary and grammar. Most candidates communicated effectively.

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Most candidates performed competently in the reading question paper. Markers noted that the question paper functioned well and did not present issues for the majority of candidates. Candidates successfully selected and handled the information required from the three texts. Additionally, candidates were also adept at handling supported questions.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

Most candidates demonstrated a sufficient command of the language to be able to communicate clearly and quite effectively. The candidates producing the best writing pieces were evidently at ease, and displayed the capacity to construct lucid sentence structures based on a range of connecting devices. Markers noted candidates in the middle of the range did a competent job of handling the task.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

Overall, the handling of language was effective. Most candidates were generally successful in locating, selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types.

Component 4: assignment–writing

In general, the quality of assignment–writing submitted for assessment this session was considered appropriate, and most candidates demonstrated awareness of the requirements.

Markers were generally impressed by the range and variety of the topics attempted, from school to travel. There were some excellent pieces of writing that were well considered, thoughtfully crafted, and well presented.

Many of the best essays were focused, and many stronger candidates strived to go beyond biographical topics. Markers recommend that attention be paid to the choice of topic. In addition, markers noted that most candidates wrote to the stipulated word count.

Component 5: performance–talking

The overall standard of candidate performance was very high. All performances sampled demonstrated adequate knowledge and skills to meet the demand at National 5.

Candidates gave very informative presentations on chosen topics and, in terms of content, accuracy and the language resource, performed to a high standard.

During the conversation, the candidates sampled were able to understand questions and respond accordingly. It is pleasing to note that non-heritage candidates were capable of using pronunciation and intonation sufficiently to be understood by a native speaker. Candidates readily took the initiative to ask questions of assessors at appropriate times.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Text 1

- (d) There were several cases of misreading of 小学 (primary school) and responded with 'the school is small'.

Text 2

- (d) Vocabulary 下棋 proved challenging.

Text 3

- (b) Vocabulary question. Many candidates seemed to have little difficulty in identifying '好吃' as a compound word: good + eat = delicious/ tasty, rather than 'food is good'.
- (c) Approximating numbers with 左右. The structure 温度十度左右 proved to be of medium difficulty to a number of candidates, who literally translated 左右 to right left, this led to an incorrect answer.
- (d) This proved accessible to most candidates but some candidates did not read the question carefully and used information from (e) to answer this question. Although the information was correct, it did not answer question (d).

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

While the evidence of this session shows that many centres are teaching candidates to focus clearly and precisely on responding to the mandatory bullet points, in many cases the handling of the unpredictable points, though acceptable, were somewhat less effective.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

- Item 2** A good number of candidates gave the correct answer but some answered
- (b) with 'quiet' an incorrect answer, suggesting confusion between 安全 with 安静.
- (d) Expression such as '不怕说错' proved somewhat demanding.
- (e) Demanding. A good number of candidates were not familiar with the concept of 留学, 'to study overseas/abroad'.

Component 4: assignment-writing

There were some essays which did less well because candidates covered the familiar topics of biographical 'name, age, where I live'. Such pieces of writing proved insufficiently challenging, in terms of range of vocabulary, sentence structures and language resource for a satisfactory assignment-writing.

A number of writing pieces could have been improved by careful proofreading before submission. A number of essays lost marks quite unnecessarily through failure to use paragraphs. Poor structure and lack of organisation meant some candidates scored less well in the assignment-writing.

Component 5: performance–talking

All performances sampled demonstrated good grammatical accuracy corresponding to the level. However, candidates still found it challenging when responding to unpredictable elements in the conversation.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Centres are advised to encourage candidates to read question carefully.

Candidates are advised to:

- ◆ look for the direct reference in the text. They should not provide an 'inferred' one if a direct reference is given in the text
- ◆ practise how to frame words or phrases to ensure accuracy of their language

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

Candidates are advised to:

- ◆ maintain legible handwriting
- ◆ use effective paragraphing and cohesive devices to structure ideas

Centres should encourage candidates to:

- ◆ frequently address significant grammar errors, such as the use of 和 and interference from candidates' L1, for example I am in fifth year - 我是里五年级
- ◆ practise how to handle unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ practise the use of dictionary, especially the ability to differentiate between words with multiple meanings, for example 'am' and 'a.m': 上午 is a.m whereas am is 是, resulting in sentence such as 我上午十六岁。
- ◆ practise sentence structure

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

Candidates are advised to:

- ◆ read all questions carefully and underline key words to listen out for in order to better anticipate and identify information more quickly
- ◆ check over answers to make sure their responses make sense

Centres should encourage candidates to:

- ◆ practise answering questions using the wording of the spoken texts as much as possible. All questions can be answered using the exact words in the recording, with very little or, more often no transformation of the spoken words
- ◆ emphasise the importance of judicious consideration of the requirement of each question: where 'one' detail is required, one answer (one word/one phrase) should be provided

Component 4: assignment–writing

Helping to define an engaging and manageable assignment–writing topic is the main challenge for teachers and lecturers. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be more ambitious with their topic selection... It is important for candidates to choose a specific focus for their assignments, one that is neither too broad nor too narrow, and use this focus to demonstrate understanding and command of language resources.

Centres should also bear in mind that it is the candidate's own ideas, thinking and input into the assignment–writing that are of most importance. It is essential for centres to guide candidates towards finding a balance between writing independently to avoid relying too much on teacher or lecturers' direction.

Another area requiring focus is drawing candidates' attention to features of planning, paragraph development, and sequencing. Coherence and cohesion also needs more attention.

Component 5: performance–talking

Centres should encourage candidates to use a range of contexts or topics for more personalisation.

The conversation section should last long enough to allow candidates opportunities to demonstrate their ability to cope with the demands of the performance at National 5. Further information on timings for this assessment task can be found within the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*.

Centres should provide clear evidence to demonstrate they have an effective internal quality-assurance system in place. This is to ensure that all candidates are assessed to national standards.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	144
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	186
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	64.5%	64.5%	120	86
B	16.7%	81.2%	31	74
C	7.5%	88.7%	14	62
D	4.8%	93.5%	9	50
No award	6.5%	-	12	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.