



## Course Report 2019

Subject	Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the candidates' performance. 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**

The course assessment performed as expected. Feedback received by centres and examiners was positive. Overall, it was felt to be fair and accessible to candidates. The majority of candidates coped well with the level and were able to complete the question papers within the allocated time.

There is an increase on A grade (both upper A and lower A) on last year, reflecting the trend in the overall ability of the candidates this year. The increase in number of centres presenting candidates for National 5 is another pleasing trend.

Overall, performance of candidates was very good this session, and in line with expectation. The question papers performed well. Examiners considered the papers to be accessible and marking instructions were fair.

However, it was noticeable that a number of candidates were possibly not fully prepared for the National 5 assignment–writing, as reflected in the highly conservative topic choice and recycling of topics. Some candidates wrote with a high level of accuracy but with mundane language resource at this level.

### **Question paper 1: Reading**

The reading question paper comprised of three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). Each text has approximately 150–200 Chinese characters, and candidates answer in English the questions that follow.

This year, the three texts provided appropriate challenge in terms of content and language. The texts dealt with travel, environment, as well as ambitions and future plans. The questions provided opportunities for candidates to show a range of skills, for example mastery of vocabulary and understanding of grammar and sentence structures.

### **Question paper 1: Writing**

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

Overall, this question paper performed as expected. There were no specific questions which did not perform as expected.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

The listening question paper had two parts: A monologue worth 8 marks and a dialogue worth 12 marks, including a supported question worth 2 marks. The paper was based on the context of society, and the topic of media.

This question paper performed as expected. There were no specific questions which did not perform as expected.

## **Assignment–writing**

The assignment–writing is one piece of writing in the modern language based on one of the following contexts: society, learning or culture.

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

## **Performance–talking**

The approach to assessment used by most centres selected for verification were valid and accepted. Centres used a range of SQA course assessment tasks for the performance–talking to assess candidates at National 5 appropriately. The interlocutors were supportive and encouraging.

Overall, assessment judgements by most centres were made in line with national standards. Assessors made effective use of the SQA marking instruction to support the marks awarded to each candidate.

In most cases at National 5, candidates covered at least two contexts as instructed in the performance–talking assessment task. Assessors used the candidate assessment record effectively to record the marks awarded.

Marking instructions clearly explain where marks are available to differentiate corresponding responses.

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

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

#### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Overall, candidates' performance in this question paper was very much in line with expectation. The majority of candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of a reasonably useful range of vocabulary and grammar. Most candidates managed to communicate effectively.

Most candidates handled the reading question paper competently. Examiners noted that the question paper functioned well and did not present major problems for majority of candidates. The average candidate was successful in selecting and handling the information required from the three texts. Additionally, candidates were also adept at handling supported questions. There was a balance of demand in the range of questions.

Candidates answered questions 1(e), 1(g)(i), 2(a) and 3(b)(ii) well,. Candidates made use of lexical knowledge, for example stored meaning of individual words to access the more straightforward questions.

#### **Question paper 1: Writing**

In general, examiners commented favourably on the responses and how centres had prepared the majority of candidates well this year. In terms of content and language resource, many candidates were comfortable with what was required of the writing question paper.

Most candidates demonstrated 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 capacity to organise lucid sentence structures based on a range of connecting devices.

Examiners noted candidates in the middle of the range did a competent job of handling the task. It was pleasing to see that candidates were able to make use of the job advert and link the person specification to their written responses, producing a relevant job application by email.

The majority of candidates addressed the unpredictable bullet points with a good level of accuracy. Many candidates kept the final two bullet points simple which worked well overall.

Notably, the stronger candidates demonstrated their language competence required by their ability to combine command of the language with an understanding of forms and conventions, in order to express effectively developed and organised ideas.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

Overall, the handling of language was effective. The average candidate was mostly successful in locating, selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of questions types.

On the whole, candidates seemed to be able to recognise a good range of vocabulary from the context of society in which the listening items were set.

## **Assignment–writing**

In general, the quality of the candidates' assignments this session was considered appropriate and most candidates demonstrated awareness of the requirements.

There were some excellent pieces of writing that were well considered, thoughtfully crafted and well presented. However, examiners noted that majority of assignments were about holidays and personal profile.

In many of the best essays the writing was focused, with many stronger candidates looking to go beyond a biographical topic. Most candidates had well-structured written responses, making good use of paragraphing, and with a clear start and a conclusion.

The assignment–writing allows candidates to write about a topic in depth, and at this level candidates should provide opinions and give reasons. Those who presented writing based on personal profile often did not show sufficient progress at the level required for National 5.

Mundane language resources were a consistent feature of weaker writing. Examiners recommend that candidates and centres pay attention to the choice of topic. This is an aspect of the course that allows for personalisation and choice.

## **Performance–talking**

The overall standard of candidate performance sampled was very high.

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

All conversations selected for verification covered at least two contexts. Candidates were able to understand questions and respond accordingly.

It is pleasing to note that non-heritage candidates selected for the verification were capable of using pronunciation and intonation sufficient to be readily understood by a Chinese speaker. They readily took the initiative to ask questions to assessors at the right time.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Question paper 1: Reading

Generally, candidates handled this question paper well.

#### Text 1

Question 1(f): there were several cases where candidates did not choose the correct meaning from the dictionary, which distorted their answers and did not answer the question correctly. For example some candidates translated 书法 'calligraphy', into 'book in French' and others into 'law book'. A number of candidates did not convey the idea of 在公园 and在地上 which was essential to gain the mark.

Question 1(g)(ii): a number of candidates were not able to convey the idea of 好好地努力学习中文 missing out on the 'work/try harder'.

#### Text 2 (society)

Most candidates coped relatively well with the majority of questions in text 2, providing sufficient detail to attain most of the marks.

Question 2(b): a number of candidates provided one answer when the question was explicitly looking for two.

Question 2(d)(i): in the vocabulary question, More able candidates seemed to have a little difficulty in identifying 春天 at the start of paragraph two. Instead they confused it with, or were distracted by 三月 and 秋天 which appeared later in the paragraph.

#### Text 3 (achievements and ambitions)

There were more no responses to some of the questions compared to texts 1 and 2. This could be due to time pressure or candidate fatigue.

Question 3(a): almost half of candidates were not able to identify 重要.

Question 3(c)(ii): 36% of candidates did not recognise 浪费时间, and simply guessed answers.

Question 3(d): Many failed to recognize vocabulary that is expected at National 5, for example 上网听. A few candidates made no attempt to answer this question. Others guessed answers or did not provide enough detail.

### Question paper 1: Writing

Spelling, for example 错别字, was another area affecting accuracy. There were common errors, for example:

- ◆ inversion of 和
- ◆ confusion of 住 and 在 and 左
- ◆ 没 with 沿
- ◆ turning 爱 into 受

In bullet point three, a small number of candidates were still writing about hobbies and free-time activities with no reference to skills and qualities, and without any relevance to the job, for example going to cinema, listening to music and swimming. It is important to remember that the bullet point is looking for information on skills and/or interests which make them right for the job.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

In the listening question paper, it was the level of accuracy in translation required to gain marks that led to some candidates not accessing the marks. There also seemed to be some unfamiliarity with certain words or phrases that is expected at National 5. In questions 1(d), 2(c), (e) and (h) many candidates did not gain marks because they did not respond with sufficient precision.

### **Item 1**

Question 1(d): Over half of the candidates did not gain any marks.

### **Item 2**

Question 2(c): many candidates did not fully recognise the phrase 去日本餐厅吃饭 and opted for 'to eat'.

Question 2(e): many candidates did not provide enough detail in their answers, for example 'watching TV' or 'watch TV' is insufficient information for 在家看电视.

Question 2(f): many candidates provided answers which did not accurately capture 太无聊

Question 2(h): with 上网找工作 most candidates did not provide all the detail necessary to gain the mark, mostly by omitting 上网 or 上网找 in their answers.

Candidates need to understand that there is a level of accuracy and familiarity with the vocabulary required in their answers. They must ensure there is sufficient revision of vocabulary.

## **Assignment-writing**

Some essays treaded over the familiar biographical 'name, age, where I live' paths. These pieces of writing proved insufficiently challenging because such topics tended to lend themselves to basic language, which did not reflect the level of detailed language required for National 5.

In some of the assignments submitted, there was basic reliance on verbs such as 是 and 喜欢 which were repeated throughout. Where the vocabulary was repetitive, it did detract from the overall quality of the writing. Candidates addressing the personal profile assignments were close to veering off topic and stray into detailing family members, friends, free-time and many other areas.

In the topic of personal profile, it is advised that candidates focus on self and move away from providing the names, ages and physical descriptions of family members or friend(s) as the language used is often too basic for National 5 and is often very repetitive.

In the topic of holidays, candidates should steer away from being overly dependent on listing, for example what we ate, what we saw, what we bought, and pieces of furniture in the room.

A number of candidates could have improved their writing pieces by carefully proofreading before submission. A number of essays lost marks unnecessarily through failure to use paragraphs and being over reliant on listing. Some candidates did not score well in the assignment–writing due to poor structure and lack of organisation in their writing.

In some assignments, candidates had not given a title, or had a title in English, or had not ticked the context box. Centres should re-read the assessment conditions guidance in order to ensure candidates' work is presented as per SQA guidelines.

### **Performance–talking**

All candidates selected for the verification demonstrated well-organised content and good grammatical accuracy corresponding to the level. However, candidates could still find it challenging to manipulate the language flexibly and respond naturally. They showed more hesitation and pause when responding to unpredictable elements in the conversation.



## Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

### Question paper 1: Reading

Centres should continue to:

- ◆ encourage candidates to read questions carefully and be guided by the marks available for each question
- ◆ remind candidates that the information comes in a chronological order and the questions include hooks to support the candidates throughout

Candidates should be advised to:

- ◆ look for the direct reference in the text. They should not provide an 'inferred' example if a direct reference is given in the text
- ◆ practice how to frame words or phrases to ensure accuracy of their language
- ◆ look at what comes before and what comes after, to ensure that all the necessary detail is included
- ◆ practice dictionary skills, especially to learn how to select the most appropriate translations in the context of the text
- ◆ read the questions and their answers at the end of the paper to ensure that all questions have been answered, and that what they have written in English makes sense

### Question paper 1: Writing

Candidates are advised to:

- ◆ maintain legible handwriting
- ◆ use effective paragraphing and cohesive devices to structure ideas
- ◆ remember the context of the question paper, for example a job application, and provide information that is relevant to the job application
- ◆ ensure they cover all bullet points
- ◆ use their dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written

Centres are advised to:

- ◆ frequently address significant errors, for example 错别字
- ◆ strengthen candidates' ability to distinguish 近形字
- ◆ practice a range of unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ work with candidates on the control of sentence structure
- ◆ make candidates aware of the marking criteria so candidates know what is expected of them in this question paper

## Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates are advised to:

- ◆ read the introductions and be aware of the context
- ◆ 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
- ◆ avoid providing a range of alternative answers using /. Some candidates lost marks because their answers contradicted each another
- ◆ be guided by the number of marks available for each question to ensure sufficient detail is provided
- ◆ use the third playing to check the accuracy of what they have written

Centres are advised to:

- ◆ guide candidates to answer questions using the wording of the utterance as much as possible. All questions can be answered using the exact words in the recording, with very little or, more often, no change to the utterance.
- ◆ encourage candidates to take notes
- ◆ emphasise the importance of judicious consideration of the requirement of each question, where 'one' detail is required, one answer (one word or phrase) should be provided

## Assignment–writing

Helping to define an engaging and manageable assignment–writing topic is the main challenge for centres. Teachers are advised to encourage candidates to be more ambitious with their topic selection. It is advisable to help a candidate find a topic that will prevent them from going over too much well-trodden ground, and also avoid having the whole class writing on the same topic. 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.

Candidates are strongly advised to avoid listing or repetitive language. As previously mentioned, candidates should move beyond stating names, ages and physical descriptions when talking about family and friends, or listing what they like or eat every day.

While it is not against SQA guidelines for candidates to present their assignment based on their talking presentations, teachers and candidates are reminded to make necessary and appropriate changes to ensure that candidates' texts are task appropriate. For example, using verbs such as 说一说 for a written piece of work is not appropriate, instead use 写一写 or 讨论. When dealing with the essay topic, sentences such as 你好, 你好吗? 我叫 are not sufficient, unless it an assignment based on a personal profile.

At National 5, candidates are expected to use detailed language and give opinions and reasons. Candidates should be made aware of the marking criteria to ensure they are confident in what is expected of them.

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

Looking across the board, examiners also noted from some centres the recurrence of one topic, similarity of structures and patterns in language resources emerging from candidate's written responses. Centres should re-read the assessment conditions guidance in order to ensure candidates' present work in accordance with SQA guidelines.

Centres should ensure candidates are aware of the features of planning, paragraph development, and sequencing, and give more attention to coherence and cohesion. Candidates should be encouraged to look at the productive grammar grid and ensure that they cover a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Centres should ensure they are not overly prescriptive when preparing candidates for the assignment–writing.

### **Performance–talking**

During the performance, the assessor should ask more open-ended questions which enable candidates to demonstrate their full ability to use Chinese language at National 5.

For the performance–talking, centres should consider a wider scope of different contexts to generate a variety of performances.

All centres are encouraged to provide good evidences of effective internal verification.

Centres should ensure the candidate assessment record (or equivalent) is accurately completed, including the signature and date.

To help the SQA verification team, centres should submit the completed checklist with any verification samples.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	186
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	185
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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	75.3%	75.3%	143	86
B	7.9%	83.2%	15	74
C	13.2%	96.3%	25	62
D	2.1%	98.4%	4	50
No award	1.6%	-	3	-

## **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 allows 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.