



# **Course report 2025**

## **Advanced Higher Chinese Languages**

This report provides information on 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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 105

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 119

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	97	81.5	81.5	140
B	10	8.4	89.9	120
C	8	6.7	96.6	100
D	1	0.8	97.5	80
No award	3	2.5	100	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

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

The 2025 Advanced Higher question papers in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional), and Cantonese performed as expected. The question papers were fair and accessible, with question types and topics proving relevant and accessible.

The number of entries increased across all three Chinese Languages courses this year.

The grade boundary has returned to the notional level, indicating a stable standard of performance overall.

### **Question paper: Reading and Translation**

The question paper performed as expected. The reading text was engaging and accessible, with improvements noted in candidates' handling of complex sentence structures.

The reading paper was well-structured with a good range of clear and fair questions.

Translation questions saw an increased improvement in accuracy and word order compared to 2024.

### **Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

The question paper performed as expected. The listening paper had accessible topics and clearly structured questions.

Responses to the discursive writing paper was overall, of a high standard. All four questions were attempted, with many candidates opting for question 4.

## **Portfolio**

The portfolio performed as intended and provided candidates opportunities to show their critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature or media.

## **Performance–talking**

The assessment offered candidates an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their ability to interact meaningfully, express ideas and opinions, and handle extended discourse in Mandarin and Cantonese with fluency and accuracy.

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

Many candidates demonstrated a greater familiarity with the assessment format, alongside improvements in dictionary use, writing skills, and the ability to adopt a more analytical approach.

The performance gap between stronger and weaker candidates has narrowed, reflecting enhanced preparation and understanding of assessment demands.

### **Question paper: Reading and Translation**

#### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

Most candidates successfully extracted key details in comprehension questions. Translation performance improved in accuracy and fluency. Stronger responses showed effective dictionary use and a very good understanding of terms, for example 终生学习 and 影响.

The questions where candidate performance was strongest were question 2, question 3(a) and question 4(b).

Many candidates gave multiple correct details where only one was required, reflecting thorough understanding.

Candidates who tackled the overall purpose question successfully showed a strong grasp in identifying the writer's overall purpose with a clear, concise and reflective manner.

The translation question is a challenging part of this question paper. However, markers noted that many candidates performed better than in 2024. There were noticeable improvements in handling complex sentence structures, adapting Chinese word-order into fluent English, and demonstrating greater attention to word-level accuracy.

## Areas that candidates found demanding

Many candidates found specific vocabulary, for example 动画设计课程 and nuanced phrases challenging. 拥有更多享受生活的技能 confused many, with incorrect renderings such as 'have more life skills'.

Some candidates provided a very long answer but did not identify some key details. Some didn't provide accurate details, and they missed out on marks. For example in question 1(a) and 5(a), some candidates left out 'more than 300 people' or the word 'technology'.

The overall purpose question is one of the most challenging parts in the question paper. Some candidates wrote lengthy but unfocused responses. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long answers. They repeated most of the information they had given in answer to the comprehension questions, rather than addressing the actual question and highlighting the key aspects of the text and any stylistic techniques used by the writer. Some included quotes from the text in their answer but just repeated these in English instead of using them to develop their argument.

In the translation question, some candidates did not adjust English sentence structures appropriately. Successful translations reflected accuracy and sensitivity to idiomatic meaning, weaker responses tended to rely on word-for-word or overly literal translations. Misuse of dictionaries was evident, and repeated grammar errors with article usage, for example inappropriate placement of 'the', inconsistent verb tenses, and awkward conjunctions.

Specific vocabulary items, such as 乐趣 and 丰富生活 frequently caused issues, often leading to imprecise or incorrect translations. Successful responses showed attention to accuracy of words and demonstrated an awareness of context-dependent meaning, for example 影响 can be viewed as 'influence', 'impact', 'effect and affect'; however, in English these words have different meanings.

## **Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding and contextual awareness.

Most candidates responded well to the format of items 1 and 2. Questions 1(b) and 2(e) were the most successfully answered.

Performance in discursive writing was very good, with many candidates demonstrating a high standard of language and content in their essays. Candidates achieving higher marks incorporated appropriate learned material effectively and remained clearly focused on the question. High-quality responses were characterised by sophisticated sentence structures, well-balanced arguments, and coherent integration of supporting evidence.

### **Areas that candidates found demanding**

A few candidates had issues relating to vocabulary interpretation, for example:

- question 1(c): 'build school' was misinterpreted as 'help in school'
- question 2(d): 'primary school' was often shortened to 'school', leaving out essential detail
- question 2(e): 工作的种类也更多了 'more types of work' was inaccurately rendered as 'more work'
- question 2(g)(i): 'know what you can do' was interpreted as 'know'

Some candidates relied too heavily on predicted answers or partial comprehension, leading to incomplete or inaccurate responses.

Some candidates struggled to maintain balance or focus throughout their essays. Some relied too much on memorised material and their responses lacked depth or relevance to the specific task. Essays with lower marks often displayed awkward English to Chinese phrasing, inaccurate translations of ideas, and evidence of



dictionary misuse. These issues, along with inconsistent grammatical control, limited access to the higher mark ranges for some candidates.

## **Portfolio**

The portfolio is always a challenging part of the assessment for candidates. The overall standard of portfolio submissions in 2025 showed clear improvement compared to 2024, with a noticeable increase in high-quality work.

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

Many candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of the task, adhered to the word count, and made effective use of relevant literary and analytical terminology. Many candidates chose a variety of literary texts, and markers noted an increase in poetry-based submissions.

Candidates who selected literature-based topics generally performed better than those who focused on media-based texts. Literature portfolios more often demonstrated a clear analytical focus, deeper engagement with source material, and more effective use of critical vocabulary. In contrast, media-based submissions occasionally defaulted to descriptive reviews of films rather than offering focused, research-driven analysis. No portfolios were submitted on the Language in Work option this year.

There were more candidates, particularly those working with poetry-based literature, who demonstrated advanced analytical techniques and a confident use of critical terminology. These submissions were often well-structured and supported by a clear line of argument.

## **Areas that candidates found demanding**

The overall quality of titles remains an area for development. Many titles were too broad or vague, limiting the scope for evaluative depth. A few candidates continue to struggle with framing their research as a specific question or argument, which affects the analytical quality of their work.

Most candidates wrote using an appropriate formal register, although a tendency toward informality was still noted in some Cantonese portfolios, with repeated use of personal expressions, such as 'I feel...' and 'I believe...'. This was less common in Mandarin (Simplified) submissions.

## **Performance—talking**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

Many candidates' performances were of a high standard this year.

The 20-minute assessment format was handled well by most candidates. Candidates often performed strongly where an informative STL form had been received.

Most candidates were well-prepared and handled their chosen topics with confidence and clarity. They frequently displayed strong command of vocabulary and grammar, using a wide range of structures and sophisticated expressions. Fluency was generally very good, with minimal hesitation. Pronunciation and tone were mostly accurate, with only occasional minor errors.

A particularly strong aspect of this year's cohort was their willingness to go beyond minimal responses. Many candidates used effective and sometimes enterprising discussion techniques to engage with the visiting assessor, showing adaptability and responsiveness, even when faced with unexpected questions. Their ability to incorporate learned material into spontaneous conversation was evident in many high-performing discussions.

## **Areas that candidates found demanding**

A few candidates were nervous and needed encouragement to speak more fully or take initiative in the discussion. Some responses lacked spontaneity, perhaps due to over-rehearsal of learned material, which limited their ability to engage naturally or extend their answers. A small number of native speakers missed out on marks by relying on brief responses and not demonstrating the level of sophistication expected at Advanced Higher.

Some candidates struggled to adapt learned material to meet the demands of spontaneous interaction. Some candidates struggled when questions diverged from their rehearsed topics, highlighting the need for further practice in unpredictable conversational contexts.

A few candidates STL forms did not contain enough detail or resembled a series of prescribed questions. Neither of these help the visiting assessor to lead the candidate towards a topic area where they might have had more knowledge or opinions.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- read this report and the marking instructions for the 2025 question papers, to help demonstrate the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Advanced Higher level
- have the writing criteria for the discursive writing question paper and discuss it
- make their handwriting legible, as this can affect their mark

It would be beneficial for teachers and lecturers of Chinese languages to work with Modern Languages departments to share best practice with other colleagues, for example:

- making use of support materials published on our [Understanding Standards website](#) to help prepare candidates for the course assessment
- encourage candidates to access past papers available on our [website](#)

### Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- answers to comprehension questions contain as much relevant and accurate detail as possible. A long answer that lacks accurate details does not gain marks. They should have a comprehensive understanding as well as the attention to detail, and practise identifying key points and supporting detail
- develop their dictionary skills and pay attention to the grammar. Candidates should be able to use dictionaries effectively, especially to identify the correct meaning of polysemous words in context
- focus on contextual understanding, word order, and grammatical accuracy when translating. They should practise restructuring Chinese sentences into natural English, especially for inverted or idiomatic expressions. To receive high marks in

translation, it requires both a good understanding of Chinese and reasonable and accurate expression of English.

- answers to the overall purpose question are clearly structured, analytical, have a rounded conclusion, and are supported with relevant examples
- avoid repetition and instead demonstrate an understanding of the writer's techniques and intended impact
- further develop inferencing skills to distinguish between surface-level meaning and the author's broader purpose
- are aware any quotation from the text should be appropriate and relevant, not just a repetition of what has been argued in English. It is essential to provide the summary of the text to gain a minimum of 3 marks or more
- provide relevant examples that support their justifications

## **Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

### **Listening paper**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- provide full and detailed answers
- avoid prejudging the content and guessing answers
- develop note-taking and detailed listening skills
- use time in the exam to read questions carefully before listening to identify key vocabulary they are likely to hear

### **Discursive writing paper**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- construct a relevant and personal responses in which they may use learned material relevant to the essay title
- address both bullet points fully
- can develop balanced arguments, integrate learned material effectively, and use complex, idiomatic language, where appropriate
- avoid repetition and ensure that learned material is relevant to the task
- pay close attention to word order, grammar control, and avoid dictionary misuse

# Portfolio

## Bibliography and source use

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- refer to our guidelines in the [Modern Languages portfolio coursework assessment task](#), in the 'Instructions for candidates' section when preparing bibliographies, to ensure quality and breadth
- refer to a range of appropriate sources in the target language: three or more, including full bibliographic detail, is good practice
- are aware that *Wikipedia* (without mention of a website or specific page references) or a reference to a Chinese sources article (on its own without any author or publisher) are not appropriate for a bibliography
- are aware it is not acceptable to reference films with only English subtitles as their sole source
- avoid lengthy description of a film's plot, or the storyline in literature
- can link the sources they select to their portfolio's analytical focus
- refer to the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) for the criteria and conditions relating to sources of the research and evidence

## Title selection

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- decide on a title that is precise, evaluative, and aligned with their line of argument and generates debate or critical analysis. Vague or overly broad titles limit critical engagement and depth
- avoid using informal titles, for example 'How we feel or see...'
- frame their title as a research question or analytical statement

## **Analytical writing versus description**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- avoid retelling the plot or translating long passages from Chinese. Portfolios should focus on developing interpretation and analysis
- use quotations purposefully and supported by commentary that links to the candidate's argument. Candidates should not use direct translation of quotations unless analytically justified

## **Argument development**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have a coherent line of argument, clearly structured paragraphs, and effective use of textual evidence
- can build sustained, well-supported reasoning

## **Comparative analysis**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- can organise comparisons clearly and logically when comparing multiple texts, especially poetry

## **Language, register and presentation**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- use formal, academic register, which is expected throughout
- use critical terminology and specialist vocabulary and appropriate register
- carefully proofread for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and quotation accuracy
- use quotations in Chinese to support the arguments being developed, and avoid translating these quotes into English
- practise how to structure an essay

## **Performance–talking**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- practice discussion techniques, including how to respond naturally to questions outside of rehearsed material
- have many opportunities of spontaneous speaking practice, to help them manage unexpected topics and reduce over-reliance on memorised responses
- have regular speaking opportunities to help build fluency
- demonstrate range and depth in their responses
- complete their STL forms contain enough detail to allow the visiting assessor an insight into the areas they wish to discuss



# **Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries**

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).