



Course report 2025

National 5 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.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the [subject page](#) of our website.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 408

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 426

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	341	80.0	80.0	84
B	39	9.2	89.2	72
C	15	3.5	92.7	60
D	20	4.7	97.4	48
No award	11	2.6	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

There were some strong performances across the assessment.

The question papers covered a range of topics across all contexts and were of an appropriate level of demand and challenge for the level.

Question paper 1: Reading

In this year's reading question paper, the three texts covered the contexts of society (text 1, friendship), culture (text 2, travel) and society and learning (text 3, students and stress levels).

The question paper provided an appropriate level of demand, which most candidates coped well with. The questions following each of the three texts were accessible to candidates, making it straightforward for most candidates to locate the answers in the text.

Overall, the assessment was positively received by candidates, teachers and lecturers.

Question paper 1: Writing

This question paper performed as expected.

Markers noted that both unpredictable bullet points were relevant to the job advert and straightforward for candidates to address.

Question paper 2: Listening

This question paper performed as intended. The listening question paper was comprised of two parts: a monologue and a dialogue, and both parts included a supported question. The paper covered the context of employability.

The topic and range of vocabulary used across the two items were suitable for National 5. There was a sufficient level of challenge and demand in terms of the content and the questioning.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Most candidates engaged with the papers in a meaningful and constructive manner.

Candidates time management and exam techniques had improved this year. This is evidenced in both the reading and writing question papers.

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates performed well in the reading question paper, with few no responses. Many candidates demonstrated good reading skills and achieved good marks. There was a range of marks in the reading paper, with a few candidates gaining full marks.

Candidates' comprehension and handling of the texts has improved. Many were able to identify the correct information and respond appropriately.

Most candidates were able to engage well with the texts, which covered relevant topics. Many were able to access the full range of marks by reading the questions carefully and understanding the key sections of each text.

Text 1 (society)

Overall, candidates performed well in this text about friendship. The supported question worked well, enabling many candidates to gain full marks.

Text 2 (culture)

Most candidates showed good text handling skills and coped well with the questions on this text. Most candidates did well in questions 2(a)(i) and 2(a)(ii), and many candidates did well in the supported questions, 2(d) and (e).

Text 3 (society and learning)

- question 3(b): this was a supported question, and most candidates were able to identify the correct information and complete the sentence accurately

Question paper 1: Writing

The overall standard was very good.

Most candidates tried to include a range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to the level. In terms of content and language resources, many candidates were comfortable with what is required of the writing task.

Most candidates were able to address the four predictable bullet points in a balanced way using detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures. The written responses displayed a good range of expressions, structures, and accuracy.

Most candidates addressed the two unpredictable bullet points. Many candidates did well in the bullet point on 'what food do you like most'. Most candidates who had prepared well, could respond with more detailed language and use a range of grammar structures for bullet points 1 to 4.

Markers noted fewer 'one size fits all' written responses this year. Candidates demonstrated higher level of accuracy in terms of their 'spelling' of high frequency words, such as 是, 在, 住, 喜 and use of measure words.

Stronger responses referred directly to the job advertised. Many candidates were able to incorporate the prompts in the advert and adapt learned phrases to suit the job application. Most candidates who incorporated information in the job advert in their written responses were able to write beyond learned phrases. The use of clear paragraphs in the written responses helped candidates ensure all bullet points were addressed, resulting in fewer responses with missed bullet points. There were fewer responses with formal beginnings and endings in the written responses, allowing candidates more time to focus on the main body of their texts.

Question paper 2: Listening

There was a range of marks in the listening paper, with a few candidates gaining full marks. Markers noted very few no responses in both items. Questions 1(a) and (d) were accessible to most candidates. Many candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of vocabulary on the context and topics of employability.

Assignment–writing

Many candidates performed well in the assignment–writing. Many were able to use detailed language with the required level of accuracy.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates showed good text handling skills, although some found certain questions to be more challenging.

Text 1

- question 1(e): most candidates could identify ‘music’ but not ‘summer camp’
- question 2(f): some candidates attempted to predict their responses through logical reasoning, for example in ‘What is in the roof of the hotel that the writer stayed in?’, candidates incorrectly gave ‘roof’ as the answer

Question paper 1: Writing

Most candidates addressed bullet points 1 to 4 in a balanced way; however, the unpredictable bullet points 5 and 6, at times lacked detail. Most candidates could answer ‘what type of food they like’ more successfully than ‘when their availability for work is’. Some candidates made fewer attempts to use advanced language resources (8–12 pegged marks) indicating a compromise between accuracy and risk-taking.

Question paper 2: Listening

Most candidates coped very well, but there were questions that some candidates found more challenging, for example:

Item 2

- question 2(b)(i): some candidates provided a location of her work instead of giving information about her job and missed out on the mark
- question 2 (d)(i): some candidates provided insufficient or incomplete answers, for example 'teacher primary' instead of 'a primary school teacher'

Assignment–writing

Most candidates performed well in the assignment–writing. There were fewer instances of dictionary misuse and inaccuracies with spelling and grammatical structures.

Markers commented that there is scope for candidates, and teachers and lecturers, to be more ambitious with the topic selection to better demonstrate candidates' abilities and potential.

Topics such as 'my school' and 'personal profile' don't allow candidates to demonstrate a range of tenses. Some candidates use of connectors was limited to 'because...therefore...', 'although...but...' indicating a compromise between accuracy and risk-taking. Many candidates re-used learned phrases from the writing question paper (job application) in the assignment–writing, which impacted on the quality of their responses.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- read questions carefully and then respond by giving the correct amount of information, ensuring that they give enough detail
- follow instructions carefully, for example when asked to 'tick' a correct box, put a 'tick' not a 'cross' or any other symbol
- make their handwriting legible, as this can affect their mark
- strikethrough any errors or mistakes with a single line
- continue to develop dictionary skills as part of the course and think about the context of a word to decide which meaning is most appropriate
- read through answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English, especially when answering 'complete the sentence' type question

Question paper 1: Writing

Teachers should ensure candidates:

- read the job advert carefully and learn to use the prompt appropriately in their responses
- take time to check 'spelling', especially with common sight characters, such as 是, 和, 住, 在, 今, 年
- practise manipulating the language in a range of unfamiliar bullet points
- know that they should not provide a formal introduction and/or end to the job application as this can prevent candidates from having enough time to perform well in the required areas of the job application
- provide detailed language, for example taking it beyond a simple subject-verb-object structure, when responding to the unpredictable bullet points

- write enough accurate and detailed language for the unpredictable bullet points
- leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure all bullets have been covered and basic mistakes have not been made, for example spelling, and words missed out

Question paper 2: Listening

It is important to remind candidates that the listening exam is not a memory test. Encourage them to take notes while they listen, preferably on a separate piece of paper.

Teacher should ensure that candidates:

- read questions carefully, then respond by giving the correct amount of information, ensuring they give enough detail
- avoid making a long list of answers or including guesses as this could negate the correct information and result in not gaining marks
- make their handwriting legible, as this can affect their mark
- present their answers clearly, for example there should be a clear distinction between answers and notes
- practise note-taking, as this helps improve their performance in listening
- make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing should be on the contexts of either society, learning or culture, and teachers and lecturers must ensure that candidates tick the correct box on the answer booklet.

Candidates must not write on the context of employability as this is covered in the writing question paper. Although the stimulus given to candidates is not required for SQA purposes, we encourage teachers and lecturers to provide a more detailed title. The title should be in English.

The choice of topics should be appropriate to the age and level of candidates, allowing them to be able to produce accurate and detailed language based on what they have been studying during the course. As this piece is based around a topic that candidates have been studying, teachers and lecturers should encourage them to include more detailed language and grammatical structures appropriate to National 5.

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](#).