Course Report 2026

Advanced Higher Chinese Languages, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question papers and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

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Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 19

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 120

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	103	85.8	85.8	140
B	7	5.8	91.7	120
C	7	5.8	97.5	100
D	2	1.7	99.2	80
No award	1	0.8	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find statistical reports on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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.

How the course assessment performed

The Advanced Higher question papers in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional), and Cantonese performed as intended.

The question papers covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture, which were relevant and accessible to candidates.

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading texts were accessible and engaging.

The range of question types provided effective differentiation and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and language skills.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening paper had accessible topics and clearly structured questions, supporting progression from Higher level and allowing candidates to demonstrate comprehension effectively.

In the discursive writing paper, all six essay titles were attempted, with question 6 (culture) the most popular choice.

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as expected and provided candidates with opportunities to demonstrate a range of critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature and media.

There was a variety in the choice of texts, with poetry continuing to be popular, and a range of literary works and contemporary films.

Performance–talking

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

How candidates performed

Most candidates performed well, and many demonstrated secure reading comprehension, improved translation skills, confident listening comprehension and well-structured discursive writing. Candidates showed a good understanding of the assessment requirements.

Where candidates performed well, they demonstrated accuracy, used the dictionary effectively, identified key information and expressed ideas clearly in English and Chinese. Many candidates confidently handled complex language and produced analytical and well-supported responses.

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates performed well in the reading paper, successfully identifying key information and responding accurately to straightforward comprehension questions. Many demonstrated careful reading, selecting only the relevant information rather than giving unnecessary detail.

- question 1: offered optionality, and most candidates identified two from the three options, ‘the number of self-employed people in China has reached 200 million’, ‘18% are university graduates’ and ‘more than half of them were born after 1990’
- questions 2(a)(ii) and (a)(iii): offered optionality. Most candidates identified two from the three options for 2(a)(ii), ‘online writing’, ‘owning or running an online shop’ or ‘making videos’, and three from the four options for 2(a)(iii), ‘flexible hours’, ‘convenient locations’, ‘improve creativity’ or ‘improve problem-solving skills’
- question 3(a)(ii): most candidates identified ‘it allows young people to develop their interests’ or ‘realise their dreams’ and gained the mark
- questions 5(a) and (b): offered optionality, and most candidates gained the marks for ‘increases employment opportunities’, ‘has more career choices’ or ‘enriches people’s lives’ for 5(a), and ‘improve support for self-employment’ or ‘encourage people to try various forms of employment’ for 5(b)

- question 6 (the overall purpose question), many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the writer's overall message which was to convey why self-employed jobs are attractive to young people and provided a clear, concise, and reflective answer, drawing inferences which were entirely appropriate, analytical and which demonstrated a sophisticated and accurate reading of the text
- question 7 (translation): many candidates handled complex sentence structures well, adapting Chinese syntax into natural English, and selecting appropriate vocabulary

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening paper:

- most candidates performed well, and achieved more marks in item 2 (the conversation) than item 1 (the monologue)
- most candidates gained marks in questions 1(b) and 2(a), demonstrating a good understanding of factual information and identified key details from the recordings
- question 1(b): offered optionality, and most candidates identified three from the four options of ‘get to know’ or ‘experience Africa’, ‘make African friends’, ‘visit different cities’ or ‘try local food’
- question 2(a): offered optionality, and most candidates identified two from the three options of ‘doctors’, ‘computer engineers’ or ‘business people’

In the discursive writing paper:

- many candidates produced very good essays
- where candidates performed well, their essays had a clear structure, well-developed and balanced arguments, and a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures
- many candidates expressed their ideas logically and coherently in Chinese
- candidates whose essays were closely focused on the precise wording of the title and demonstrated linguistic accuracy produced coherent, convincing arguments and achieved marks in the upper bands

Portfolio

- most candidates performed particularly well in the selection and formulation of portfolio titles
- many chose focused and clearly defined titles, allowing them to sustain a line of enquiry and demonstrate analytical engagement throughout their portfolio
- where candidates performed well, their portfolios:
    - had a clear focus, coherent arguments, and supported discussion with relevant textual evidence
    - showed precision in language, clear structure, sustained critical analysis, and produced convincing and coherent evaluations

Performance–talking

- most candidates demonstrated a high level of language proficiency, speaking fluently and with minimal hesitation
- most used a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, expressing their ideas and opinions clearly and effectively. While a small number of candidates appeared nervous and required occasional encouragement, they responded promptly and engaged positively in the discussion
- many candidates demonstrated a range of levels of linguistic competence, with some responding naturally and confidently to a wide range of questions and making effective use of varied vocabulary and complex language, while others demonstrated secure understanding and the ability to communicate confidently in extended discussion
- there was evidence of good preparation, supported by well-completed Subject Topic List (STL) forms, outlining detailed and appropriate discussion topics
- many candidates demonstrated confidence in sustaining the conversation and engaging in spontaneous interaction, moving beyond rehearsed responses and showing increasing independence in managing the discussion
- some candidates used appropriate strategies to seek clarification when encountering unfamiliar language, enabling them to respond more fully
- where candidates performed well, they:
    - had depth of discussion
    - coherent development of ideas

- adapted language naturally to follow-up questions
- demonstrated both linguistic accuracy and the confidence to express and justify opinions while maintaining the flow of conversation

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Some candidates missed out details or did not identify the information required and missed out on marks, for example:

- question 1(a): some did not identify or accurately translate 两亿 (200 million)
- question 3(a)(i): some missed ‘more’ from ‘to have more opportunities’
- question 4(a): some responses lacked sufficient accuracy, for example some missed the key word ‘monthly’
- some wrote lengthy responses but did not give the detail required
- question 6 (the overall purpose question): some repeated information already provided in the comprehension questions or summarised the text without evaluating the writer's overall purpose
- some included translated quotations from the text but did not use them to support or develop their explanation
- question 7 (translation): many candidates inaccurately used grammar, particularly verb tenses, and incorrect verb choices
  - sense unit 3: 所以会用很多的时间 some translated this as ‘you can spend a lot of time’ instead of ‘you will spend a lot of time’
  - sense unit 5: 你会学到各种技能 some translated this as ‘you can learn various skills’ instead of ‘you will’
  - sense unit 8: 你就会对将来有信心 some translated this as ‘you can learn have confidence in the future’, instead of ‘you will’
  - sense unit 9: 你会找到工作和生活的平衡 some translated this as ‘you can find a balance between work and life’ instead of ‘you will’

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening paper:

Some candidates did not identify precise wording and specific details and missed out on marks, for example:

- question 1(a): some wrote ‘travel to different countries’ instead of ‘travel to different places’
- question 2(d)(i): some left out the phrase ‘every day’ from ‘he can read every day’

In the discursive writing paper:

- some candidates did not fully address the focus of the title, and their essays lacked depth, relevance or enough supporting detail as a result
- in some cases, the content was too limited to allow candidates to access the higher mark bands, despite demonstrating good language knowledge
- some candidates had difficulty with language control and had inconsistent grammatical accuracy, unidiomatic translation from English into Chinese, incorrect word order, and dictionary misuse
- some essays lacked a clear structure or sustained focus, and had ideas that were insufficiently developed or not fully connected to the question

Portfolio

- there was often not enough depth or critical evaluation to access the higher mark bands
- many candidates used description rather than analysis, or retold the plot of a novel or film instead of evaluating themes, techniques or the writer's intentions
- in poetry-based portfolios, some candidates translated quotations rather than analysing their significance or linking them to the overall argument
- some candidates did not provide enough sources and supporting evidence
- some portfolios relied on limited evidence, restricting the depth of discussion

Performance–talking

- some candidates found it difficult to respond spontaneously to unfamiliar questions
- some candidates relied heavily on prepared material or vocabulary and had difficulty adapting when the discussion moved beyond familiar topics
- some responses were overly rehearsed, resulting in reduced spontaneity in parts of the assessment
- a small number of candidates asked an excessive number of clarification questions, which interrupted the natural balance of the interaction and limited opportunities to demonstrate the depth of their own ideas

Preparing candidates for assessment

You should ensure candidates:

- read this report and refer to the marking instructions in our Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification so they are fully prepared for what is required at Advanced Higher level

Question paper: Reading and Translation

You should ensure candidates:

- focus on providing accurate responses to comprehension questions
- develop strategies for identifying key information, particularly where questions require accurate interpretation of numbers, time references and qualifying words
- practise dictionary skills, selecting the most appropriate meaning according to context rather than relying on the first definition
- regularly practise translation that focuses on producing natural, idiomatic English, with particular attention to word order, grammatical accuracy and context-dependent vocabulary
- pay close attention to grammatical accuracy and precise language choices in the translation
- understand that the overall purpose question requires analysis of the writer's overall message and techniques rather than repetition of information from the comprehension questions
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

You should ensure candidates:

- develop strategies for listening accurately and retaining precise detail, rather than relying on prediction or partial understanding
- listen for all elements of an answer, ensuring that required information is not missed
- develop strategies to listen for precise detail, retain key information, and ensure that they have all relevant details before responding
- in discursive writing, address the specific focus of the essay title throughout their response and ensure that ideas are fully developed and supported
- develop accuracy in written Chinese, particularly in relation to grammar, word order and dictionary use
- adapt learned material to the focus of the essay title rather than relying on memorised responses
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Portfolio

You should ensure candidates:

- select focused, analytical titles that allow for sustained evaluation: broad or descriptive titles often restrict the depth of analysis
- demonstrate critical analysis rather than narrative description. They must explain the significance of textual evidence instead of retelling the content of literary works or films
- select quotations purposefully and integrate these into the discussion to support analysis, rather than translated without commentary
- use of a range of appropriate Chinese language sources, ensuring that bibliographies contain complete and accurate publication details
- develop their use of critical terminology, specialist vocabulary and an appropriate academic register
- know their portfolios must have a clear line of argument, coherent organisation and well-selected supporting evidence throughout
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Performance–talking

You should ensure candidates:

- have opportunities to develop spontaneous interaction, enabling them to respond confidently and naturally to follow-up and unfamiliar questions rather than relying heavily on rehearsed material
- practise active listening and develop strategies for responding accurately to unpredictable questions, helping to strengthen comprehension and sustain extended discussion
- know they should demonstrate the depth and range of their knowledge and opinions, using varied vocabulary and structures while maintaining a natural balance between answering questions and taking appropriate initiative in the conversation
- provide detailed and developed responses that demonstrate the level of linguistic sophistication expected at Advanced Higher
- complete their STL forms appropriately, and ensure they are clear, detailed, focused and not too long. Well-prepared STL forms support a more natural and effective discussion: brief or overly scripted forms can restrict the conversation

You should:

- make full use of our Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page, including course reports, marking instructions for Advanced Higher Chinese Languages and past papers
- continue sharing good practice across Modern Languages departments, particularly in the teaching of analytical and discursive writing