# Course report 2026

## Higher Chinese Languages, SCQF level 6

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.

We carried out limited verification for performance–talking this year, so we won't publish a verification summary. You can find summaries from previous years on our website.

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# Statistical and grade boundary information

## Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 364

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 412

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

| Course award | Number of candidates | Percentage | Cumulative percentage | Minimum mark required |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 371 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 84 |
| B | 18 | 4.4 | 94.4 | 72 |
| C | 11 | 2.7 | 97.1 | 60 |
| D | 6 | 1.5 | 98.5 | 48 |
| No award | 6 | 1.5 | 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 question papers covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. Markers noted that the papers were fair, accessible, and appropriately challenging as for the level, and performed as intended.

There was an increase in the number of entries for Higher Chinese Languages this session.

## Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper was on the context of employability. The balance of accessible and more challenging questions, particularly the overall purpose question and translation, helped differentiate candidate performance.

## Question paper 1: Directed writing

In this question paper, candidates had to choose one of two scenarios on the contexts of society and culture.

Some candidates chose scenario 1 (society); however, many candidates opted for scenario 2 (culture). Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible for candidates.

## Question paper 2: Listening

The question paper has two parts — a monologue and a conversation. The paper was based on the context of culture with a focus on university life.

The paper, in its structure and content, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and topics. This resulted in good responses from many candidates.

## Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected, allowing candidates opportunities to use detailed and complex language in response to the stimulus.

The assignment–writing offers an element of personalisation and choice and gives candidates opportunities to write on topics that interest them.

# How candidates performed

## Areas where candidates performed well

### Question paper 1: Reading

- most candidates had a clear understanding of the text, and many identified the key points
- most candidates did well in questions that required less detailed answers
- questions 1(a): most candidates identified ‘learning’ and ‘working’ and gained the marks
- question 1(b): offered optionality, and most candidates identified either ‘learning can help you find a job you like’, or ‘many people need to work over 30 years’ or ‘a satisfying job makes life happier’
- question 2(b) offered optionality, and most candidates identified either ‘she thought that good grades can get her a good job’, or ‘a university degree would guarantee a good job’ or ‘there are many job opportunities in every big city’
- question 3(a): most candidates wrote ‘her parents have a high income’ or ‘her family’s financial situation is good’ and gained the mark
- question 3(b): offered optionality, and most candidates identified one from ‘high study pressure’, ‘have no time’ or ‘they want to enjoy university life’
- question 4(a): most candidates identified ‘she did not know what work she could do’
- question 4(b): offered optionality, and most candidates identified three out of the four options: ‘she had no interview experience’, ‘she had no work experience’, ‘there were more university graduates’, ‘it was more competitive’
- question 6 (the overall purpose question): most candidates gained at least 1 out of 2 marks. Most correctly made the assertion that ‘the writer does not think that education prepares young people sufficiently for entering the job market’, and some provided a clear answer, with justifications from the text that showed an accurate understanding of the arguments

- question 7 (translation): there were some very good translations. Few candidates did not gain any marks in this question
    - sense unit 1: many candidates translated 很多大学生喜欢在暑假玩游 戏 as ‘many university students like gaming during summer holidays’
    - sense unit 2: most candidates wrote ‘they don’t want to work’ or ‘take on a part-time job’ for 他们不想去打工
    - sense unit 5: many candidates translated 因为爸爸妈妈可以照顾他 们 as ‘because their parents can look after them’

## Question paper 1: Directed writing

- most candidates responded well to the element of personalisation and choice
- many candidates addressed the unpredictable bullet points well
- many candidates adapted prepared material effectively to address less predictable bullet points
- some candidates’ writing was accurate, demonstrating a variety of language structures and tenses

## Question paper 2: Listening

- most candidates engaged well with the topic of university life
- many candidates addressed the conversation questions and the monologue questions equally well
- most candidates gained at least half of the available marks
- most candidates answering questions requiring less detail, or where there was optionality, did particularly well:
    - question 1(a): offered optionality, and most candidates identified either ‘fewer subjects’ or ‘more difficult’ and gained the mark
    - question 1(b): offered optionality, and most candidates wrote either ‘they need to organise their time’ or ‘they need to spend a lot of time studying by themselves’ and gained the mark
    - question 1(c): had three options for 2 marks, and most candidates wrote either ‘can rest’, ‘play games’ or ‘watch movies’
    - questions 1(d) and 1(e): both had three options for 1 mark each, and most candidates identified one from ‘do exercise every day’, ‘go to bed, sleep

earlier' or 'get up earlier' for question1(d), and 'develop interests', 'learn (new) skills' or 'make more friends' for question 1(e)

- question 2(d): most candidates identified three out of the four options from 'learnt independence', 'did things on his own', 'learnt cooking skills', or 'learnt room-cleaning skills'

## Assignment–writing

- there were many outstanding assignment–writing submissions, where candidates successfully adapted pre-learned language to suit the context
- most candidates produced well-organised and accurate writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures
- most candidates were well prepared and wrote a discursive essay within the word limit

# Areas where candidates did not perform well

## Question paper 1: Reading

- question 1(b): some candidates did not give enough detail and missed out on marks, for example some missed out ‘over’ from ‘need to work over 30 years’, and a few missed key words such as ‘you like’ from ‘learning can help you to find a job you like’
- some candidates did not read the details and misunderstood the text and missed out on marks, for example:
    - question 2(a): they did not understand 了解, (did not know about job hunting, interviewing) and responded ‘don’t have work experience’
    - question 5(b): they confused ‘teamwork skills’ with ‘social skills’
- question 6 (overall purpose question):
    - some candidates retold or translated sections of text rather than providing assertion, justification and supporting evidence
    - many candidates did not give references from the text or justification to show an accurate reading of the text
- question 7 (the translation): with complex and detailed language and a focus on grammar as well as the accurate use of English expression, some candidates found this challenging, particularly translating past habits and ‘future-in-the-past’ constructions into English. A few candidates missed out on marks due to a lack of precision, for example:
    - sense unit 1: some confused 游戏 (gaming) with 游泳 (swimming) and 旅游 (travel)
    - sense unit 3: a few did not understand 零花钱 (pocket money) and 雨 (radical), and gave unrelated answers, such as ‘it is rainy outside’
    - sense unit 4: a number of candidates used incorrect tenses, where instead of the conditional in English (would return or go home during holidays)
- many candidates missed out on marks through a lack of accuracy, omitting words, tense inconsistency and incorrect dictionary use

## Question paper 1: Directed writing

- some candidates did not address all bullet points, including the first bullet point, which always requires two pieces of information
- some candidates missed required points despite writing excellent language and structure
- a few candidates completed their writing in a single paragraph

## Question paper 2: Listening

- some candidates missed out on marks as they did not answer the questions accurately, often understanding part of the information but not giving enough detail, for example:
    - question 1(a): 更难了, some responded ‘difficult’ without ‘more’
    - question 1(c)(ii): some did not specify ‘the city’
    - question 1(d): some did not write ‘every day’
    - question 2(a): some wrote ‘meet people’ but missed ‘from other countries’
    - item 2(d): 打扫房间, some missed the detail of ‘room’
    - question 2(f): some missed ‘fees’ from ‘tuition fees’, and ‘before graduation’ from ‘gain work experience before graduation’

## Assignment–writing

- some candidates did not show progression from National 5 when writing about their daily routine, family, or future plans, and did not demonstrate content, language resource or accuracy expected at this level
- a few candidates did not produce a piece of writing in a discursive nature or in a focused and structured way
- a few candidates had difficulty expressing or discussing different viewpoints or drawing valid conclusions
- some candidates had difficulty focusing on their chosen title, and missed out on marks
- some candidates did not apply the correct sentence structure, for example translating directly from English, or were too reliant on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences

# Preparing candidates for assessment

You should ensure candidates:

- read this report and the marking instructions for the 2026 question papers, so that they're fully aware of the level of detail required for a mark at Higher level
- understand the task structures and assessment expectations
- are aware that, apart from writing pieces, answers should be written in English not in Chinese or pinyin
- make their handwriting legible, as this can affect their mark

## Question paper 1: Reading

You should ensure candidates:

- know the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation
- read the whole passage first, before looking at answering the questions
- pay particular attention to articles and tenses when translating passages
- do not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers
- allow enough time to complete the translation as accuracy is important
- for the overall purpose question, know they must draw meaning from their overall understanding of the text rather than translating the part of the text. Assertion, justification and supporting examples are all required to gain full marks

## Question paper 1: Directed writing

You should ensure candidates:

- refer to the marking instructions for the directed writing question paper and discuss it
- check that they have addressed all bullet points or parts of bullet points
- practise unpredictable bullet points and learn techniques to deal with these
- address all bullet points in a balanced way, using a variety of language structures and resources to achieve the higher marks

- do not cover two or three bullet points in one sentence or write excessively as this can result in grammatical or character errors and they may not access the higher marks as a result
- understand the writing structure and requirements of this task to access the higher marks

## Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- read the heading, questions and marks allocated to them before listening to the recording. This helps to anticipate the type of information required
- do not presume the context of what they hear and avoid guesswork
- give as much detail and accurate information as they can in their answers to avoid missing out on marks

## Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- know they are to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the tasks and not rely on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences
- are aware their piece of writing should be mainly of a discursive nature
- write in a focused and structured way, and in paragraphs
- practise how to structure a piece of writing, while developing techniques on how to check the accuracy of their written work
- express or discuss different viewpoints, while demonstrating relevant content, ideas and opinions and, where applicable, give reasons for their opinions
- draw conclusions and demonstrate language resource (variety and range of structures) and accuracy