Course Report 2017

Subject	Chinese Languages
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

It was pleasing to note that the National 5 papers performed in line with expectations. Candidates performed well across all question papers.

The majority of candidates were able to engage with the papers in a meaningful and constructive manner. There were few poor performances. The question papers covered a range of topics and were of an appropriate level of demand for National 5.

As indicated in the Course Assessment Specification for National 5 Modern Languages, the content of the course assessment covered all four contexts: society, learning, employability and culture. Markers noted that the papers and marking instructions were fair and easy to apply.

Component 1: question paper — Reading

In the **Reading** paper, candidates were presented with three texts of approximately 150–200 characters in Chinese, and then answered in English the questions that followed. In this year's paper, the three texts covered the following contexts: Text 1: Learning (learning activities and studies); Text 2: Society (eating habits and society); Text 3: Culture (being environmentally friendly through recycling).

Component 2: question paper — Writing

In the **Writing** paper, candidates read a job advert in Chinese and responded to a task with six bullet points. The first four bullet points were predictable:

♦ Name, age and where they live.
♦ School/college/education experience until now.
♦ Skills/interests which make you right for the job.
♦ Related work experience.

The last two unpredictable bullet points were:

♦ Ask about what there is to do on your days off.
♦ When you are available to start work.

Candidates wrote an e-mail applying for the job in Chinese by addressing these six bullet points.

Component 3: question paper — Listening

The Listening question paper covered the context of society. Item 1 was a short monologue of approximately one minute, in which Xiao Zhang spoke about his grandmother's lifestyle

and routine. In Item 2, candidates listened to Xiao Zhang talking to his grandmother about young people as well as fast food and travelling. After each item, candidates answered questions in English.

Component 4: performance — talking

Sampling of Chinese Languages performance — talking did not include National 5 for this session.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Overall, the performance of candidates in this year's question papers has been very good, with some candidates accessing full marks for many of the individual questions in each section of the assessment.

Component 1: question paper — Reading

In Reading, the majority of 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. There were very few instances of a candidate not attempting to answer a question. Mistranslation, poor dictionary use and poor expression were factors that contributed to candidates losing marks.

Item 1: Learning
♦ Overall, candidates coped well with the majority of the questions in this first text and were able to give enough detail to get the marks available.
♦ The supported questions served to make the passages accessible at this level.

Item 2: Lifestyles
♦ Candidates performed well and handled this text in a competent manner.
♦ The supported questions served to make the passages accessible at this level.

Item 3: Citizenship
♦ Candidates coped reasonably well with this text.
♦ Many were able to identify the correct information and responded appropriately.
♦ Candidates made good use of word list provided to enhance their comprehension.

Component 2: question paper — Writing

Markers commented that many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at National 5 level. There was a good range of expressions, structures and accuracy throughout the majority of responses. The overall standard this year was very good, and markers commented favourably on the standard of responses. In terms of content and language resource, many candidates are comfortable with what is required of the writing task. Markers noted that there were fewer 'one size fits all' types of written responses this year.

The majority of candidates addressed the unpredictable bullet points. Candidates were well prepared for these. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised, rather than just writing a generic job application. There were examples where candidates had gone beyond the requirement of the task, ie formatting the writing in a way that is relevant and consistent with a job application e-mail. On the whole, it is encouraging that candidates are using a good level of accurate language throughout their writing.

Component 3: question paper — Listening

In the Listening paper, there was a wide range of marks awarded. Candidates seemed to recognise a broad range of vocabulary from the context of society. Candidates were able to access full marks where there was more than one possible answer.

Item 1
♦ Question (a) was well handled, and many candidates were able to pick out both pieces of information required to get the 2 marks.
♦ The supported questions served to make the text accessible at this level.

Item 2
♦ In question (f) there were three ways of getting the marks and many candidates were able to provide sufficient details for this question to get the marks available

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper — Reading

In Reading, the majority of candidates answered well, but there were questions that some candidates found more challenging.

Text 1: Learning in context
♦ Question 1(c) on the whole, was well handled. There were some candidates who lost marks because they did not tick the three required answers.

- Question 1(d) proved challenging for some candidates who failed to identify 精彩 as 'exciting' and therefore lost the mark.
- Question 1(e) insufficient detail and inaccurate translation were factors that led to some candidates not receiving marks. 一双足球鞋. Some candidates merely answered 'shoes'. At this stage, National 5 level candidates should be looking to give greater detail in their answers, even when answering one-mark questions.

Text 2: Lifestyles

- Question 2(a) Some candidates lost marks due to insufficient detail, for example, answering 'her parents' rather than 'her parents think eating meat is not good for health'.
- Question 2(e) 'How did her parents react to this? Complete the sentence.' Some candidates lost marks because their answers were about the relationship between Ai Le and her parents and not on how her parents reacted.

Text 3: Citizenship

- Question 3(a): Candidates who checked the context of the word 讨厌 were successful in choosing the correct meaning. However, in a number of responses, candidates did not receive marks because they did not check **all** of the definitions provided. The most common definition is usually listed first but this may not always be the definition required.
- Question 3(b): 'Why does the writer think that where he lives is very special? Give any two details.' Some candidates were confused with the word 'special' in the question with 特别 in the text.
- Question 3(d)(i): Mistranslation was a factor that led to some candidates not receiving marks, 从小学 (from primary school) was misinterpreted as 从小 (from young).

Component 2: question paper — Writing

Accuracy (rather than content) was the main challenge for some candidates. Indeed, there were very few responses that fell short on content. Dictionary misuse, mother tongue/other language interference, and literal translations of idiomatic phrases were the three main factors affecting accuracy. This was particularly evident when addressing the last two unpredictable bullet points.

Some common examples of inaccuracies found were

- 'days off' were referred to as 日取消', 天离', 日离', 在天不工作', 天关着的'
- 'to start work' = 出发工作
- Lack of verb control: 手表电视 for 'to watch TV'; 戏网球 for 'to play tennis'
- Mistranslation of 'can'
- Overuse of 和 and 是 in Chinese sentence construction
- 'Spelling' of characters such as 吗 not 马 or 与 ； 年 not 牛

Component 3: question paper — Listening

For some candidates, the particular challenges of this question paper were when there was no rephrasing in the utterances, leading to missing a key word and/or lack of knowledge of vocabulary contributed to candidates losing marks.

Item 1

♦ Question 1 (c) 'What payment does she receive for this work?' Several candidates did not recognise the word 免费.

♦ Question 1(e) 'Xiao Zhang's grandmother has a very traditional habit. Complete the sentence.' In many of the incorrect answers, there was a distinct lack of clarity of responses and answers were too general, losing the candidate marks.

Item 2

Some candidates found the dialogue to be slightly more demanding. In particular, the reference to a third person in the conversation caused some candidates difficulty.

♦ Question 2(b) 'What does his grandmother say about fast food? State any two things.' As evidenced by some poor expressions, candidates found rendering the phrase 离不开 into English challenging. The workings of the negative markers 离不开, 不反对 and 不要 also proved challenging for candidates, with many not picking out either piece of information to get the marks available.

♦ Question 2(c) 'When did his grandmother go to the United States?' A number of candidates thought the answer was 'when Dad was young' rather than 'when grandmother was young'.

♦ Question 2(e) this was a supported question. The majority of candidates were able to pick out only one piece of information correctly.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper — Reading

In **Reading**, candidates should be familiar with and recognise the structures, grammar and detailed language appropriate for this level. A better knowledge of grammar would help with candidates' understanding of the texts.

For example:

♦ Verb and adjective: 讨厌 (Text 3, 3a) Some candidates had looked this up in the dictionary and wrote 'rubbish is *disgusting*' when it should be 'we *dislike* rubbish'

♦ Adjectives and adverbs: 特别 (Text 3, 3b) requires candidates to differentiate the role of 特别, eg 我的城市很特别 (adjective: special) with …垃圾桶特别少(adverb: especially).

When using a dictionary for comprehension, candidates should be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first meaning given. Centres should also ensure that candidates are aware of common 'false friends', and should encourage candidates to check these carefully in the dictionary. Use the example sentences in the dictionary to check the context of the word and to help choose the correct meaning.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and underline the key word or words in the question, which will lead them to the answer in the text. Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English.

Centres should ensure that candidates cover vocabulary from the four broad contexts of society, learning, employability and culture, to include digital technology and global environmental issues, for instance.

Component 2: question paper — Writing

In Writing, candidates were well prepared by centres this year, given the overall performance in this part of the course assessment. In stronger responses, candidates demonstrated that they had read the information carefully by making explicit reference to the job advert.

Centres should ensure that candidates:

♦ Develop ways of addressing the first four bullet points which allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs and tenses.
♦ Are able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points — so practice at dealing with unpredictable elements should be encouraged.
♦ Are aware of the criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they know what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories.

Component 3: question paper — Listening

For **Listening**, centres and candidates should be encouraged by this year's performances — many candidates find this to be the more demanding paper.

Candidates should be familiar with a range of basic vocabulary from the four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. They should also have a confident knowledge of numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions carefully and underline key words to listen out for them so they can pick out the information required more easily. More practice on notetaking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.

Candidates hear both the monologue and dialogue three times, and should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers. Re-visiting their answers and looking at the questions to check that the responses answer the question is also to be encouraged.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	98

Number of resulted entries in 2017	144

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	69.4%	69.4%	100	70
B	18.1%	87.5%	26	60
C	4.2%	91.7%	6	50
D	4.9%	96.5%	7	45
No award	3.5%	-	5	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

♦ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow 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.

♦ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.

♦ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.

♦ 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.