Course report 2023

Higher Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese

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 in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

1

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 220

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 233

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	185	Percentage	79.4	Cumulative percentage	79.4	Minimum mark required	82
B	Number of candidates	19	Percentage	8.2	Cumulative percentage	87.6	Minimum mark required	70
C	Number of candidates	16	Percentage	6.9	Cumulative percentage	94.4	Minimum mark required	58
D	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	3.4	Cumulative percentage	97.9	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	5	Percentage	2.1	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

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

In this report:

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

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics and information page of SQA's website.

2

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The number of the entries increased again in 2023 and there are an increasing number of candidates from non-heritage backgrounds compared with 2022.

Overall, the candidates' performance was good, with a wide range of performance presented.

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper sampled the context of employability. The text was accessible to all candidates and was considered to be of a level appropriate to Higher, which resulted in a good range of performance.

Candidates were required to answer comprehension questions on the text in English, including an overall purpose question. The comprehension questions were worth 20 marks, which included 2 marks for the overall purpose question. Most questions were answered well by candidates. There was a good level of overall understanding in candidates' responses.

The last question required candidates to translate a section of the text, which was worth 10 marks. It required a great deal of sophistication and accuracy in the language. Full marks are only available from the translation with a very good translation of the text into English.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper required candidates to choose one of two scenarios taken from the contexts of learning and culture. Candidates had to address six bullet points. The first bullet point contains two pieces of information. The remaining five bullet points each contain one piece of information. The paper was fair and accessible to all candidates.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening paper has two parts — a monologue worth 8 marks, and a dialogue worth 12 marks. The paper was based on the context of employability. The topic was about volunteering at a summer camp and taking on summer jobs.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2022–23.

Performance–talking

Many candidates were able to interact well with interlocutors and respond accordingly. Candidates were provided with various topics from different contexts, which enabled them to display skills and knowledge of using the language.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Overall, candidates' performances were good and most appeared well-prepared for each component. There was a wide range of performances.

Areas that candidates performed well in

Candidates performed well across all sections of the question papers and there were several instances of outstanding performance.

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. Most candidates had a clear understanding of the text. Questions that required less detailed answers were tackled well by most candidates. Question 1, 3, 4 and 5(b) were particularly well answered. Most candidates gained at least 1 out of the 2 marks available for the overall purpose question.

Some highly competent translations were observed. Extremely few candidates failed to gain any marks in this question.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates are continuing to embrace the element of personalisation and choice in the directed writing question paper. The choice of tasks between the contexts of learning and culture, allowed candidates to perform well.

Candidates generally performed well with the unpredictable bullet points. There were very few poor performances. Most candidates scored within the top three band of marks. Some candidates' writings were highly comprehensive and accurate throughout where they demonstrated a wide variety of language structures and tenses accurately.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates related well to the familiar topic area of volunteering at a summer camp and taking on summer jobs.

In general, the monologue was better tackled than the dialogue. Most candidates were able to gain at least half of the available marks. Questions requiring less detail, or where there was optionality, were particularly well done.

Performance–talking

All candidates demonstrated good pronunciation and intonation sufficient to be readily understood by a native speaker of the Chinese language. They were able to use relevant content to appropriately complete their speech including different detailed language features.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

The performance was satisfactory, though there are some points to address. Some candidates didn't pay attention to details, for example:

♦ question 2(a): 'more than 100 people apply for each job' (一百多人申请). A number of candidates answered 'nearly 100 people' or 'almost 100 people' instead of 'more than 100 people'

♦ question 5(b): 'more people drive electric cars' (越来越多的人开上了电动车). Some candidates answered 'there are more electric cars' and missed the important details 'more people' and 'drive'

It is challenging to answer the overall purpose question, but this year there has been a significant improvement in this element. In general, candidates did very well. However, a few candidates only translated or retold the text without assertion and justification. A number of candidates failed to provide any references from the text or justification that shows an accurate reading of the text.

Some answers were not specific enough:

♦ question 4: some candidates who responded, 'invest in education and health' and omitted 'increase', did not gain the mark

The translation has always been a challenging part in the reading question paper. Candidates did not gain marks due to a lack of precision and accuracy:

♦ sense unit 3: 'The pressure of finding a job is also a lot less' (找工作的压力也小很多). To be precise candidates would have to state 'a lot'

♦ sense unit 5: 'can go there to work and live' (能去那里工作和生活), "生活" is a verb here, 'go there for work and life' is not correct. Many candidates continue to miss out on marks through a basic lack of accuracy, omitting words, and using a dictionary incorrectly

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates have the choice of two scenarios of learning and culture. The two scenarios were chosen in a balanced way. There are six bullet points candidates need to address.

Some candidates failed to address all bullet points required, including the double questions in the first bullet point, for which they did not gain marks. Candidates from native speakers' background often missed the bullet points despite writing excellent language and structure.

In scenario 1, bullet point 6 posed the most difficulty for some candidates. They used pre-learnt materials about 'whether they would recommend the experience' instead of addressing 'how you think you will benefit from your experience in the future' as required.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper was linked to the context of employability. The two items talked about volunteering at a summer camp and taking on summer jobs. Although it is familiar to candidates, it proved challenging if candidates tried to predict answers or relied on guessed work.

Some candidates were unable to answer the questions accurately, often understanding part of the information, but not providing sufficient detail, for example:

♦ item 1(d): 水太冷了, '<u>water</u> was too cold', some candidates responded 'the weather was too cold', and did not gain the mark

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ read the marking instructions for the 2022 question paper, to demonstrate to them the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Higher level in both reading and listening, as well as the precision required for translation
♦ are given the writing criteria for directed writing and discuss it
♦ who have heritage background, are aware of the structure and understand the approaches of the question paper
♦ are aware that, apart from writing pieces, answers should be written in English and not in Chinese or pinyin
♦ make their handwriting legible, as this can affect their mark

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ know the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation
♦ use the detailed marking instructions for reading (available on SQA's website) to show the level of detail required for answers
♦ read the whole passage first, rather than sentence by sentence, in order to gain a full understanding
♦ pay particular attention to the articles and tense used in the translation passage
♦ do not include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers
♦ allow enough time to complete the translation as accuracy plays an important role
♦ for the overall purpose question, know they must draw meaning from their overall understanding of the text rather than translating part of the text

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ check that they have addressed all the bullet points or parts of bullet points
♦ have the opportunity to practise more unpredictable bullet points and to learn techniques to deal with these bullet points
♦ address all bullet points in a balanced way

7

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ study the heading, questions and the marks allocated to them before they listen to the recording. This helps them to anticipate the type of information that is required
♦ do not presume the context of what they hear and avoid guesswork
♦ give as much detail as possible in their answers so as not to miss out on marks through lack of accuracy and inaccurate information
♦ use the detailed marking instructions for listening (available on SQA's website) to show the level of detail required for answers

Performance–talking

Centres are advised to refer to Understanding Standards materials for internally-assessed components of course assessment, available on SQA's secure website.

Teachers and lecturers should support candidates with relevant training regarding the use of pinyin and detailed sentence patterns to respond to a wide range of topics and themes within the four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture. Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to express personal ideas and opinions as widely as possible.

Centres should continue to provide a breakdown of marks for presentation and conversation.

Centres may find the NQ internal verification toolkit webpage useful to ensure national standards are maintained, assessors are supported, and paperwork is not excessive. The toolkit is a suggested approach and SQA recognises that many centres have well-developed processes in place.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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, SQA holds 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 SQA's 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. SQA 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.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

9

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report.