



Course report 2025

Higher 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: 312

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 364

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	326	89.6	89.6	84
B	18	4.9	94.5	72
C	8	2.2	96.7	60
D	7	1.9	98.6	48
No award	5	1.4	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

The question papers covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture. Markers noted that the papers were fair, accessible, and challenging as appropriate for the level, and performed as expected.

The number of the entries increased again in 2025. There were more candidates from non-heritage backgrounds compared with 2024.

Question paper 1: Reading

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

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

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The question paper performed as expected. The paper covered the contexts of society and employability.

Some candidates chose scenario 1 (society); however, many candidates opted for scenario 2 (employability). Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible and accommodated a range of candidates.

Question paper 2: Listening

This question paper performed as intended and covered the context of culture.

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

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Many candidates performed well in the question papers and had prepared well. There was a range of performances.

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates gave a very competent response to the comprehension questions, and many understood almost all of the main points.

Most candidates had a clear understanding of the text and did well in the questions that required less detailed answers. Questions 1, 2, and 4(b) were particularly well answered.

Most candidates gained at least 1 out of the 2 marks available in the overall purpose question. There were some highly competent translations. Extremely few candidates did not 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 society and employability allowed candidates to perform well.

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

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates related well to the familiar topic area of a gap year and future plans. Many candidates did well in the dialogue questions and the monologue questions. Most candidates were able to gain at least half of the available marks. Questions that required less detail, or where there was optionality, were particularly well done.

Assignment-writing

There were many outstanding assignment-writing performances, in which learned language was successfully adapted to suit the context. Most candidates produced well-structured and accurate writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures.

Most candidates performed in line with expectations, were well prepared and able to write a suitable discursive essay within the word limit. Most candidates gained 16 out of the 20 marks available. There were some excellent pieces of writing.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

The translation, with complex and detailed language and a focus on grammar as well as the accurate use of English, proved to be more challenging for some candidates, particularly the translation of the past tense into English.

- question 3(b): some candidates did not have a good understanding on ‘verb 不 verb’ structure, which showed in their partial or inaccurate understanding of 愿意 不愿意 不断地学习
- a few candidates translated or retold the text without assertion, justification and/or relevant samples from the text. Many candidates did not provide references from the text or justification that showed an accurate reading of the text

- some candidates did not read the details and misunderstood the text: for example:
 - question 3(a): some candidates responded, 'companies shouldn't look at the exam results' and missed 只 and did not gain the mark. The answer had to include 'companies shouldn't 'only' look at the exam results'
 - question 4(d): some candidates responded, 'new learning opportunities' and missed the verb 寻找, and did not gain the mark
- the translation has always been a challenging part in the reading question paper. A few candidates missed out on marks due to a lack of precision, for example:
 - sense unit 3: because of 如果 and 上了, candidates should translate the sentence in past tense: 'They thought if they got into a good university' (他们认为如果上了好大学), 认为 here means 'thought'. Using 'think' is not precise
 - sense unit 5: 'and they wouldn't need to learn anymore' (而且他们也不需要再学习了), 而且 means 'and'; 'so, therefore' are not correct
- many candidates continue to miss out on marks through a basic lack of accuracy, omitting words, tense inconsistency and using the dictionary incorrectly

Question paper 1: Directed writing

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

Some candidates did not address all bullet points, including the double questions in the first bullet point. Candidates from native speakers' background often missed the bullet points despite writing excellent language and structure.

Candidates should avoid covering two or three bullet points in one sentence and writing too many words on irrelevant information. Candidates who had too many

sentences with minor grammatical or character errors often gained 12 rather than 16 marks. A few candidates completed their writing in one single paragraph. Understanding the writing structure and requirements of this task is beneficial for candidates to help gain higher marks.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper was linked to the context of culture. The two items talked about if Chinese students can take a gap year and their future plans. Although it is a familiar context to candidates, it proved challenging if candidates tried to predict answers or rely on guesswork.

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

- item 1(a): 在大学的时候, (during university), some candidates responded, 'before university', and did not gain the mark
- item 1(b): 边旅游 (travel), some candidates responded, 'go on holiday' and did not gain the mark. 边做义工(volunteer), some candidates responded 'do part time job', and did not gain the mark

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 the 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. For example, 'Celebrate Chinese New Year' or 'Introduction of Chinese New Year Tradition' are not suitable stimulus. At times, candidates struggled to express or discuss different viewpoints or draw valid conclusions.

Some candidates did not look for the correct sentence structure, for example translating directly from English, or too reliant on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences, which often didn't go well.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- read this report and the marking instructions for the 2025 question papers, to demonstrate the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Higher level
- are given the writing criteria for the directed writing question paper 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 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
- read the whole passage first, rather than sentence by sentence, 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 the part of the text. Assertion, justification and supporting examples are all required to achieve full marks

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- check that they have addressed all bullet points or parts of bullet points
- practise and learn techniques for responding to the unpredictable bullet points
- address all bullet points in a balanced way, using a variety of language structures and resources

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- study the heading, questions and marks allocated to them before listening 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 by lack of accuracy and inaccurate information

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- know they are to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks and not rely on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences
- are aware the information relayed in the 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 any 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

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](#).