

External Assessment Report 2013

Advanced Higher Mandarin (Simplified)

General comments

- There was an increase in entries this year and also in the number of centres.
- The examination was of an appropriate level of difficulty and in line with Modern Languages Arrangements.
- Candidates had been well prepared by centres for each component. The overall level of performance was very strong, with some excellent performances.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- In Discursive Writing, candidates generally achieved good results when they incorporated appropriate learned material into their answer and when their essays were fully relevant to the topics.
- In the Speaking test, centres are to be commended as the performance of candidates in this component was highly pleasing.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper I:

- The inferential question continues to be the most challenging task. Rather than attempting to draw inferences or develop their own arguments, some candidates wrote unnecessarily long answers in which they simply repeated most of the information given in response to the comprehension questions.
- Grammar mistakes often appeared in candidates' translations. They lacked the precision and detail required for a fully accurate translation, and many candidates lost marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles.

Folio:

- Examiners identified the following as contributing to underperformance in this area:
 - The range of literary texts and background topics was not wide enough.
 - Candidates employed a **descriptive** or '**story-telling**' approach, rather than **critical and analytical** one.
 - **Poor choice** of essay title or question.
 - **A misunderstanding of the arrangements/guidelines** for the Folio. Some candidates presented a Language in Work Report that was actually a Background topic. The piece was marked along the lines of a Background topic, i.e. marked out of 15 rather than 30.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

- Encourage candidates to make full use of the SQA Modern Languages website. Refer them to the External Assessment reports for AH Chinese from previous years as well as Marking Instructions.
- Centres should encourage Chinese teachers/practitioners to work with the Modern Languages department to learn from the expertise of colleagues in preparing candidates for exams.

Reading

- Encourage candidates to read the passage globally to gain overall understanding, so that they will be able to answer the questions accurately.
- Answers to the comprehension questions should contain as much relevant detail as possible.
- In preparing candidates for the inferential question, discuss with them how they can draw inferences from the passage by examining the key aspects of the text and any stylistic techniques used by the writer. Advise them to avoid reproducing factual information and/or repeating their answers to the comprehension questions.
- Candidates should understand that in translation they are required to demonstrate both a good understanding of Chinese and reasonable expression in English. More attention should be given to the development of translation skills and, in particular, care should be taken with recognising and accurately translating tenses.

Listening and discursive writing

- Candidates should be encouraged to provide full and detailed answers as far as possible.
- Candidates should try to avoid prejudging the content.
- Encourage candidates to read the essay title carefully and to construct a relevant and personal response in which they may draw upon **relevant** learned material.

Folio

- Ensure that Folio guidelines are examined carefully.
- The selection of texts could be wider and centres should encourage candidates to choose more varied topics.
- A title or essay question that generates debate or critical analysis is crucial. Try to make the title as specific as possible, and encourage candidates to research the area thoroughly.
- Share the assessment criteria for Folio Writing with candidates so that they know what is expected in terms of content, analytical approach and structure.