

External Assessment Report 2013

Higher Mandarin (simplified)

General comments

- The number of centres presenting candidates has increased significantly.
- The content of the exam related clearly to the prescribed Themes and Topics for Higher level, and was of an appropriate level of difficulty.
- On the whole, candidates' performance was good, and they were well prepared for each component.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- Reading and translation were done particularly well, with many excellent performances.
- The content and vocabulary of the reading passage '流浪动物 (abandoned animals)' was accessible to candidates and the topic one to which they could easily relate.
- There was a notable improvement in translation.
- There were some outstanding short essays in which learned language was successfully adapted to suit the context.
- Many candidates fully engaged with the topic of the directed writing.

Areas that candidates found difficult

- Candidates found the content and vocabulary of the listening passage '实习, 工作经验 (work placement and work experience)' less familiar than that of previous years.
- Some candidates failed to demonstrate comprehension of the 'easier' points by failing to recognise the more factual information required — for example, in Questions 1 and 2.
- A number of candidates failed to address all bullet points in the directed writing and were consequently penalized. Many missed the bullet point 'What you did to help the group'. This issue has been mentioned in previous PA reports, yet the issue remains unchanged.
- In the short essay, there was some evidence of misuse of the dictionary leading to literal and inaccurate translation from English to Chinese.
- In translation, some candidates continue to lose marks through a basic lack of accuracy in the appropriate inclusion of articles ('a' and 'the') and in the use of tenses.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

- Centres should continue with established good practice in preparing candidates for reading questions.
- Ensure that candidates understand the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate translation. Discuss translation skills.
- Centres should encourage candidates to read the passage globally rather than sentence-by-sentence, to gain full understanding of the whole passage.

- In the translation section, encourage candidates to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing

- Centres should continue with established good practice in preparing candidates for writing.
- Bullet points:
 - Writing a long passage but not addressing all bullet points will not result in a high mark.
 - Advise candidates to read each bullet point carefully and to ensure that they do not overlook any of these in their response.
 - They must ensure that learned material is both relevant and appropriate to bullet points set.
- Dictionary skills:
 - At this level, candidates should understand that they cannot use the dictionary to create new sentences.
 - Use of the dictionary should be reserved for checking the accuracy of what they have written.

Listening and Short Essay

- Encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract from the text.
- It is important that candidates do not presume the context of what they hear, and that they avoid guesswork.
- In the essay, ensure candidates read the stimulus and incorporate and skilfully adapt learned material that is relevant to the aspects contained in the stimulus.