

External Assessment Report 2013

Mandarin Intermediate 1

General Comments

- It is encouraging to note the increasing number of participating centres.
- The content of the examination clearly related to prescribed themes and topics and the level of challenge was in line with arrangements.
- Candidates engaged well with the texts and performance overall was very good.

Reading

- Most candidates dealt with texts 1, 2 & 3 to a high standard. However, the following difficulties were noted:
 - Text 2: Some candidates are uncertain of vocabulary relating to directions.
 - Text 3h): Some candidates did not differentiate between 'market' and 'supermarket'.
 - Due to the unsupported nature of questions in text 4, performance was more varied. Some candidates failed to identify family members '奶奶' in 4e).

Listening

- Candidates are to be commended for their pleasing performance in this paper; they were particularly assured in tackling the topics of 'school subjects' and 'weather' this year.
- However, it seems that some found the topics of transport and directions challenging this year.

Writing

- There were many well-thought through responses which clearly exceeded the requirements of the task.
- There was an increase in the number of candidates who failed to attempt more than three topics.
- Candidates overuse 'and (和)' when considering literal translation from English to Chinese. In Chinese, 'and' has a much narrower application than in English.
- Candidates frequently err by separating radicals in a character, and hence misplace them in the grid.
- Over-reliance on the dictionary appears to have generated a number of errors. Some examples include: 'live in' 活着 (住在) ; and 'photography' 照片 (摄影) . In both instances, candidates relied on a partial literal dictionary translation rather than core grammatical knowledge.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

- Centres should direct candidates to make greater use of SQA past papers and marking instructions as part of their exam preparation. This will help ensure that candidates are familiar with task requirements and respond accordingly.
- Ensure candidates have the opportunity to develop the dictionary skills necessary to make effective use of this tool under exam conditions.
- Centres should maintain good practice in preparing candidates for Texts 1, 2 & 3 of the reading as well as continuing to provide candidates with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the handling of longer texts.
- Candidates have the opportunity to listen to the recording three times. It is important that they use this to listen carefully to what is said. They must not presume the context of what they hear and should avoid guesswork.
- Centres must reinforce the need for candidates to attempt ALL sections on balance rather than focusing on perfecting one or two sections.
- Centres are advised to guide candidates on the structure of characters and, more pertinently, how to fit them accurately into the character grids.