

External Assessment Report 2013

Mandarin Intermediate 2

General Comments

- There was a huge increase of 153% in the number of candidates presented.
- The range of texts related clearly to the Themes and Topics for Intermediate 2, the content was clearly related to the Modern Languages Arrangements and the level of difficulty was to standard.
- Candidates had been again well prepared by centres for each component. It was pleasing to see some solid and very confident responses from centres that entered candidates for the first time this year.

Reading

- Strong performances across all four texts.
- The topics of 'jobs' and 'lifestyles' were very well received and candidates seemed to engage fully with the content of the longer texts.
- Centres are to be congratulated for preparing their candidates well. It was particularly encouraging to see the emphasis that had been placed on preparing candidates to tackle the longer texts.
- Some candidates lost marks by failing in multiple choice questions to select the correct number of answers, a basic error which detracted from the clear knowledge the candidate had demonstrated elsewhere in the paper.
- In other cases insufficient information was provided. For example, in question 4k), the answer required was 'their entire savings/all their savings' rather than simple 'saving'.

Listening

- Candidates are to be congratulated for their impressive performance in this paper overall. It was handled well and with confidence.
- Candidates seemed particularly strong in the topics of 'hobbies' and 'weather'.

Writing

- There is clear evidence that candidates are increasingly well prepared by centres.
- Many candidates wrote with flair, using a wider range of vocabulary and expressions.
- However, there was an increase in the number of writings containing persistent errors, e.g. missing strokes/radicals, which had a significant impact on the overall performance.
- Some candidates squashed entire items of vocabulary into one grid box rather than a single character, for example 喜欢 (to like) should be fitted into two separate grids. Similarly, some candidates split radicals, or confused their order: the character most noted by examiners was 和; there were quite a few candidates who wrote 口禾.
- There were a few instances in which candidates failed to address compulsory bullet point questions. This was noted even among high-performing candidates.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

- Centres are strongly encouraged to make full use of resources available such as Hanban and SQA support materials, as well as resources from SQA's Support Event. The availability of marking instructions is also useful and can assist with future preparation of candidates.
- Guide candidates in developing written responses which are constructed in a way that displays a good range of vocabulary in line with demands of the course.
- Ensure candidates have the opportunity to develop the dictionary skills necessary to make effective use of this tool in exam conditions.
- Remind candidates to maintain a balance between content and accuracy in the writing paper. Most importantly, they should attempt all sections of the paper.
- Guide candidates in exam technique — for example, to address multiple choice questions properly by ensuring they select the correct number of responses.
- In the writing paper, candidates must realise that each character should be written in a separate grid.
- In listening and reading papers, centres should remind candidates that responses should always be sufficiently detailed.