

Summary of SQA Course Reports for National 5 Modern Languages

Reading

Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional)

The reading paper was of an appropriate level and was accessible to all candidates. It was appropriately demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates had been well prepared and there were many excellent performances in this paper. The supported questions were particularly well done. However, some candidates failed to write sufficient detail in their answers or misunderstood certain lexical items.

French

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading paper with very few candidates failing to write answers to the questions. Most candidates coped well with the majority of questions and gave enough detail to get the marks available in all three reading items, although there were a few examples of poor expression and mistranslation.

German

Overall, candidates performed well in this paper with some candidates attaining the full range of marks. Candidates found the second text to be the most difficult. Some candidates lost marks because they did not write sufficient detail in their answers; others lost marks because of inaccurate answers; and some mistranslated certain items of vocabulary.

Italian

The paper performed as expected with no unforeseen difficulties. Candidates performed very well in reading with very few 'no responses'. There were a number of examples of poor expression and mistranslation, but on the whole candidates gave enough detail to access the marks available, although in some questions candidates did not give precise detail.

Spanish

The content of the paper was accessible and candidates performed well, although some candidates found the overall purpose question quite challenging. Some candidates quoted their justification in Spanish and therefore lost marks. Some candidates also wrote considerably more than necessary.

Urdu

The paper was accessible and the topic relevant. Candidates showed a good understanding of topic, although some found some aspects challenging. Most candidates gained at least 1 mark in the overall purpose question.

Writing

Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional)

This paper produced a wide range of performances from very good to unsatisfactory, but there were very few poor performances.

There were many excellent performances in the four predictable bullet points. However, some candidates found the two unpredictable bullet points difficult to address and some candidates were unable to address them effectively, or at all. Some were unable to give reasons for their application; request information about the job; or ask questions. In some cases, candidates did not incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy.

However, some candidates were able to address the advertisement completely and competently, including information in response to the unpredictable bullet points.

French

Candidates performed well in this component and it was encouraging to see them referring directly to the job being advertised.

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures. Most candidates were better prepared than previously to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. However, some candidates misunderstood the meaning of *enquiry* in bullet point 6 and therefore addressed this incorrectly or inaccurately.

Many candidates were unable to form questions accurately or ask appropriate questions.

German

The vast majority of candidates were more than able to cope with the predictable bullet points and there were some examples of excellent language in these bullet points. Candidates had been well prepared and were able to write at some length. Although the majority of candidates attempted all the bullet points, many encountered difficulty with the last two unpredictable bullet points, and in some cases candidates were not prepared to go further than the bullet points they has memorised.

Italian

Candidates had been well prepared to address the first four bullet points, and many dealt well with the unpredictable bullet points. However, some candidates were unable to create sufficient written Italian to address the unpredictable bullet points in any detail

Spanish

Candidates performed very well in Writing and the element of choice had a positive impact on candidate performance.

However, many candidates used the preterite and imperfect tenses inconsistently, and lack of adjectival agreement still continues to pose problem for some candidates.

Urdu

Most candidates addressed all bullet points and used learned material appropriately. However, some candidates found the unpredictable bullet points challenging and there was a marked difference in quality between the predictable and unpredictable bullet points.

Listening

Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional)

Listening continues to prove the most difficult component for many candidates. Most candidates scored 50% in Item 1, notably in the supported questions. However, some candidates found it difficult to retain specific details, particularly in Item 2. Candidates performed better in Item 1 than in Item 2 and did better in the supported questions than in the more open-ended questions.

French

Most candidates coped well with the monologue with most answering the overall purpose question correctly. Candidates found the dialogue to be more demanding than the monologue with many not giving sufficient detail in their answers. Many candidates misunderstood or mistranslated words they had heard in some of their answers

German

Candidates performed very well in listening which was less demanding than what might have been expected. The full range of marks was accessible to a good number of candidates. The vast majority were able to make an attempt at all the questions. However, there were many examples of poor expression; the wrong use of word order in English; dictionary misuse; and some answers lacked detail...

Italian

This paper was more demanding than expected and some candidates found the context of a local festival difficult. Many did not give sufficient detail to access the marks available in the monologue, but candidates found the dialogue less demanding and most answered the overall purpose question correctly

Spanish

Candidates coped very well in the listening paper, but lack of attention to detail and insufficient information let some candidates down.

Urdu

The monologue was very well done and the overall purpose question was very well answered by majority of candidates. In the supported questions, some candidates ticked more than one box and therefore lost marks unnecessarily.

Talking

Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional)

Most candidates demonstrated a high level of performance in this component and some exceeded requirements. Most candidates chose topics which gave them a good opportunity to adapt language covered in class. However, those candidates who do not get school support in preparing assessments struggle to meet the requirements of the presentation

French

Candidates coped relatively well with the presentation with the large majority achieving between 6 and 10/10. Poor pronunciation was an issue in some performances and some lacked the detailed language, structure and variety expected at this level.

Candidates coped less well with the conversation with some only able to cope with rehearsed conversations. Candidates who listed items did not perform as well and candidates who were able to respond to less rehearsed questions performed well in the natural element.

Candidates who selected topics that allowed them to use detailed language performed well.

German

Overall, the level of candidate performance was high with many achieving “good” or “very good” in at least one of the elements. However, some candidates did not use language appropriate to National 5 and some candidates struggled with the complexity of the language or topic they had chosen. Some candidates appeared to have been guided by the centre in their choice of topic for the presentation. The use of open-ended questions provided candidates with greater scope to express a wide range of ideas and opinions, but where closed questions were used, candidates’ responses were more limited in terms of the vocabulary and structures required for good/very good categories. There was inconsistency in approach and marking of the natural element part of the conversation.

Italian

The candidates reviewed at verification performed very well. There were no poor performances. Candidates performed very well in the presentation. The better performances had evidence of better structure and pronunciation and showed the ability to use different tenses.

Candidates who selected topics that allowed them to use detailed language throughout performed well. Most candidates were well-prepared and could use different tenses accurately. There were some examples of very good pronunciation and a number of candidates went beyond the basics in the conversation element. There were also some examples of very good content both in the presentation and conversation, and some candidates were able to ask for help in the target language.

However, candidates who made a list of items did not perform as well and the conversation was generally less successful than the presentation as some candidates were unable to sustain the same level. There was also a lack of spontaneity from some candidates who gave very short, unexpanded answers to questions.

Spanish

Candidates had been well prepared and performed well in the talking assessment, although candidates were more confident in the presentation than the conversation. The standard of presentations was high with many candidates achieving full marks

Urdu

Candidates coped well with this component. The majority of candidates performed satisfactorily or better in the presentation, conversation and natural element sections. Candidates performed more confidently in the presentation section where there were many well-structured and fluent performances. In the conversation section, candidates performed better when the interlocutor used a wide variety of questions which ensured that candidates avoided repeating the language and structures they had used in their presentation

Advice to Centres

General

- Centres should encourage candidates to pay attention to detail and accuracy
- Centres should encourage pupils to write clearly and leave space between answers
- Centres should ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to practice exam type questions, including overall purpose questions
- Centres are encouraged to share course reports and marking instructions with candidates to demonstrate what the expectations are at this level
- The use of Intermediate past papers could help candidates to revise and improve their language skills in reading, writing and listening
- Centres should ensure that candidates have covered all the necessary grammar required at this level by referring to the Productive Grammar Grid

Reading

- Candidates should be encouraged to read introductions and key words carefully for each question
- Candidates should be encouraged to pay attention to supported questions which are not always easier than other types of questions
- Candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and give as much detail as they have understood
- Candidates should be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first word given
- Candidates should be encouraged to read questions carefully and to write detailed answers to the comprehension questions ensuring what they have written makes sense. They should be encouraged to check their answers on completion of the exam
- Centres should ensure candidates have a sound knowledge of grammar as outlined in the Grammar Grid for National 5

Writing

- Centres should make it clear to candidates that there is no requirement for them to use the introductory and closing formulae which were given at Intermediate 2
- Centres should advise candidates to read the job advert carefully so that they know exactly which job they are applying for
- Centres should remind candidates that writing long lists of school subjects is not particularly helpful. They should also be reminded to write in sentences and avoid using bullet points
- Candidates should be reminded to address the compulsory bullet points in a balanced way

- Candidates should be encouraged to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written
- Candidates should be reminded to attempt all the bullet points in order and be careful in the use of the dictionary when tackling the unpredictable bullet points
- Centres should ensure that candidates are informed of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language
- Centres should ensure candidates get sufficient practice in asking questions
- Centres should advise candidates to read through their writing carefully to ensure they have covered all the bullet points
- Practitioners should consider looking at the unpredictable bullet points in other languages in order to prepare candidates for the writing.

Listening

- Candidates should read the listening questions carefully before the recording starts, underline key words and look at the number of marks allocated for each question
- Centres should encourage candidates to take notes and consider using dictation exercises in class to help improve listening skills.
- Candidates should be encouraged to give as much detail as they have understood in answers to the listening questions
- Candidates should be encouraged to give accurate answers through confident knowledge of numbers, adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words
- Candidates should be encouraged to make use of the third playing to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers
- Candidates should be discouraged from attempting guesswork and writing alternative answers as a contradictory answer could incur a penalty
- Centres should prepare candidates for unfamiliar topics, particularly those related to culture and remind them to listen for familiar language in unfamiliar contexts

Talking

- Candidates should be reminded to use detailed language at this level and they should avoid long lists or repetitions of straightforward descriptions.
- Centres should advise candidates on the level of language to be used to enable them to cope with, and ensure comprehension of, their presentation
- Centres should provide candidates with the opportunity for personalisation and choice in their presentation topic.
- Centres should develop strategies and a range of techniques to enable candidates to ask for help and enhance the natural element part of the conversation
- Candidates should be given the opportunity to talk regularly in the target language in class to encourage accurate pronunciation and develop the natural element of response
- Interlocutors should ensure that the questions following on from the presentation avoid the candidate repeating large amounts of material already covered in the presentation
- Interlocutors should ensure they ask open-ended questions to give candidates scope to use detailed language and should avoid asking all candidates the same questions.
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- Centres are advised to make use of the Understanding Standards materials available on the SQA website.