



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	French
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2 and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. Each component of the examination was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole had been well prepared by centres for each component and there were few really poor performances.

With the introduction of the new National 5 exam and with this being the final year of the Intermediate 2 exam, there was a further large drop in the number of presentations from 2443 in 2014 to 176 in the current year. The Mean Marks for each component were:

Reading = 23.6 (30) – up 2.6

Listening = 11.3 (20) – down 1.2

Writing = 12.8 (20) – down 1.2

Speaking = 26.1 (30) – up 1.3

While the mean marks suggest an uneven performance across the much smaller cohort, they still indicate a good level of performance in all four language skills, with the average performance in each skill well in excess of half of the available marks. The uneven nature of the performance is partly explained by the very strong performance of candidates from S4 and the relatively weaker performance of candidates from S5. However, overall, the performance of candidates was very encouraging and of a high level, with some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Writing) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

With the exception of a few candidates in the Writing and Listening, there were few really poor performances.

As in previous years, most candidates coped well with the three short Reading texts which were linked to the theme of holidays in a French *gîte*. However there was also a very strong performance in the longer fourth passage, where candidates clearly related well to the article about summer jobs.

The Writing task, because of its predictable nature, again produced a large number of excellent performances, which demonstrated the range, variety and grammatical accuracy required for the top mark of 20. It was encouraging to note that, instead of giving long lists of school subjects which they are studying/have studied, many candidates gave the reasons for / benefits of their subject choice and how this equipped them for the job advertised.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Most candidates coped well with the three shorter Reading texts on holidays in a French *gîte*, although some candidates had difficulty with the following: *héberger / chauffage / à l'ombre dehors* (in text 1), *des ceintures en cuir* (in text 2) and *le panier d'accueil / besoin d'une lave-vaisselle* (in text 3). In the final longer text, many candidates lost marks through not providing sufficiently detailed answers particularly in Question 4(e): *j'avais du mal à me lever très tôt le matin, à être debout toute la journée*.

As was indicated by the mean marks, the most difficult component for many candidates remains Listening. This was the fourth year that candidates were allowed to hear each text three times and it was disappointing that last year's increase in the mean mark has not been sustained albeit with a much smaller cohort.

Many candidates still find it difficult to retain the specific details while listening to the three relatively long texts. To compensate for this there is a mix of straightforward as well as more demanding questions and it is disappointing that many candidates failed to gain these 'easier' points owing to the inability to recognise numbers / time phrases (*pendant 12 ans / donne 25% de réduction / je n'y suis resté que 5 jours*) and the following vocabulary, (in text 1) *faire des recherches/ faire du lèche-vitrine*; (in text 2) *l'hébergement / une carte d'étudiant*; (in text 3) *prêts à écouter / brûler quelques calories / le bal de fin d'année*.

The Writing task, in spite of its predictable nature, was again the element that produced the greatest range of performances from very good to unsatisfactory, with only a very few poor performances. Less able candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy to achieve a satisfactory performance. Very few candidates failed to address the compulsory bullet points but less able candidates were not well prepared to give reasons for their application nor to deal with requesting information about the job and were unable to form comprehensible questions. A few candidates seemed unaware of the formal tone required when writing a job application and poor handwriting, poor layout, poor spelling and the lack of the appropriate use of accents created a negative impression.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Although this was the final year of the Intermediate 2 examination, the following advice may still prove relevant and useful for teachers and for candidates being presented for or working towards National 5.

Reading/Listening

In preparing candidates for the Reading, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at reading longer texts similar in length and complexity to that set in Question 4.

Particularly in the Listening Paper, centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, prepositions and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Now that candidates hear each of the Listening texts 3 times, candidates should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Writing

Centres should ensure that candidates read the information regarding the job for which they are applying carefully, **are discouraged from writing long lists of school subjects** (and then repeating the list with a past or future verb tense), and are trained to:

- ◆ Complete successfully the opening sentence with which they are provided so that they are able to indicate the nature of the correct job for which they are applying.
- ◆ Ask **specific questions** regarding the job, rather than provide a general statement such as 'Envoyez-moi des renseignements ...'
- ◆ Use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders etc) **not** to create new sentences.
- ◆ Be aware of the extended criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories.

General

- ◆ Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible (particularly when writing in French) and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

The high level of performance overall at Intermediate 2 level indicates that most centres are making effective use of guidance issued by SQA in the form of the materials (marking schemes and Photostat essays) used at the Professional Development Workshop on Intermediate 1 and 2 (December 2005) and the Professional Development Workshop on Writing at NQF levels 4 and 5 (December 2007). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 2 level has also been issued to accompany the extended pegged mark descriptors and it is intended that this will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2441
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	177
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	62.7%	62.7%	111	69
B	18.1%	80.8%	32	59
C	9.0%	89.8%	16	49
D	1.7%	91.5%	3	44
No award	8.5%	-	15	-

For this Course the grade boundaries have been stable, and the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to previous years.

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.