



Course Report 2009

Subject	French
Levels	Standard Grade Access 2 and Access 3 Intermediate 1 Intermediate 2 Higher Advanced Higher

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Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Jim McDonald Qualifications Manager for NQ Modern Languages, with your comments – jim.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk

Summary of Findings

General

Once again, candidates engaged well with external assessments across all levels of French in 2009. Performances indicated that papers were accessible and of an appropriate standard. Candidates responded positively to stimulating and robust instruments.

Presentations at Standard Grade have continued to decline, and this has been a trend evident over several years. Candidate numbers at Intermediate 1 and 2 continue to rise, and presentations at Higher and Advanced Higher have remained largely stable.

At all levels, the information contained in this Report will be useful in informing departmental discussion, and planning. Previous Reports have highlighted issues relating to approaches in the production of the Standard Grade Folio, and this continues to be a theme in 2009. Similarly, the production of the Advanced Higher Folio can present issues for centres, particularly when some approaches are unsuitable. On the whole, however, the Report, can point to good practice, and offers useful advice and opportunities for reflection and development.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade French

Year	Entries
2009	27,986
2008	30,774
2007	32,315

Grade boundaries for each externally assessed element

Grade Boundaries 2009

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	20	14	33	20	13
Listening	25	15	10	26	16	11	27	16	12

Grade Boundaries 2008

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	20	14	33	20	13
Listening	25	15	10	26	16	11	27	16	12

Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	22	14	33	20	13
Listening	25	15	11	26	15	10	27	14	10

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2009	27,986	16.4%	21.2%	23.0%	24.8%	11.2%	1.5%	0.0%	1.8%
2008	30,774	16.4%	21.9%	25.8%	21.1%	9.6%	1.9%	0.0%	3.2%
2007	32,315	16.7%	21.0%	24.4%	23.8%	9.1%	1.8%	0.0%	3.2%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 French

Year	Entries
2009	1,966
2008	1,691
2007	1,578

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	70	60	50	45
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	1,966	33.4%	24.5%	18.2%	76.0%	6.5%	17.5%
2008	1,691	39.0%	22.4%	18.8%	80.2%	6.4%	13.3%
2007	1,578	37.9%	20.5%	18.0%	76.4%	5.8%	17.8%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 French

Year	Entries
2009	4,000
2008	3,512
2007	3,275

Tut tut

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	69	59	49	44
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	4,000	59.2%	20.0%	12.4%	91.6%	3.4%	5.1%
2008	3,512	66.1%	19.4%	9.3%	94.8%	1.7%	3.6%
2007	3,275	60.4%	21.2%	11.1%	92.6%	2.8%	4.6%

Entries and Awards — Higher French

Year	Entries
2009	4,577
2008	4,602
2007	4,573

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	68	58	48	43
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	69	59	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	4,577	42.6%	20.8%	19.0%	82.4%	6.8%	10.9%
2008	4,602	46.2%	21.4%	18.0%	85.5%	5.3%	9.1%
2007	4,573	39.9%	25.3%	19.1%	84.3%	6.5%	9.2%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher French

Year	Entries
2009	710
2008	719
2007	624

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	200	140	119	99	89
2008	200	140	119	99	89
2007	200	139	119	99	89

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	710	24.1%	29.0%	25.2%	78.3%	9.0%	12.7%
2008	719	24.6%	24.9%	25.9%	75.4%	10.2%	14.5%
2007	624	23.6%	25.0%	23.9%	72.4%	10.9%	16.7%

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified

French (Intermediate 1 + 2, Higher): Speaking: Presentation and Discussion
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General comments:

Centres' assessments were again this year largely concordant with verifier judgments and there were a number of Good and Very Good performances at all three levels. Some of the team commented on the outstanding control of language by some of the Higher students.

As last year, verifiers were happy to note a continuing improvement in the manner in which the test was conducted in the vast majority of centres. While there remain instances of candidate performances in the Discussion element of the test being over-prepared and /or over-rehearsed, there were many more instances of real interaction between interlocutor and candidate, with the result that the conduct of the test was much more spontaneous and natural. Indeed, a number of verifiers went out of their way to praise the interlocutors for the supportive manner in which they conducted the test.

There were still some examples of over-lengthy tests, which again usually proved to be to the detriment of the candidate.

Poor pronunciation remains an issue, especially at Higher level. Mispronunciation (sometimes of basic everyday words) and poor intonation detracted in many cases from what might otherwise have been Good or Very Good performances. Centres need to remember that this is one of the key criteria in the assessment of the student performance, given that it is a vital factor in ensuring that successful communication takes place.

Verifiers again commented that candidate performance was sometimes difficult to assess either as a result of background noise, or as a result of centres re-recording on previously-used cassettes on which earlier student recordings had not been completely erased. Some centres had clearly not checked the quality of the recordings.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

As already stated, more centres would appear to be taking notice of the requirement for the Discussion element of the test to be a real and spontaneous conversation. These centres who still show an unfortunate tendency to allow the student to indulge in a series of “mini-monologues” during the Discussion element of the test should be encouraged to listen again to the range of available exemplar materials, more of which were made available at the professional Development Workshop (PDW) in Nov. 2008.

Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade French, the Course assessment consists of 4 components.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was, again, a slight decrease in the number of candidates presented but the spread of candidature was similar to that of recent years. Performance overall in the examination was very satisfactory. However, whilst the percentage of those achieving Grade 1 was virtually the same as the previous three years, there was a 4% decrease in awards at Grades 2-3 compared to 2008.

Overall, it was felt that the papers were well received by candidates. Feedback from centres and markers suggests that the papers were set at appropriate levels.

In **Reading**, the percentage achieving Grade 1 was higher than the previous three years. There were fewer Grades 2-3 and performance at Grades 4-6 was good. In **Listening**, performance at Grade 1 was not as good as 2008, Grade 2 was on a par with recent years, Grade 3 slightly down and Grades 4-6 up in terms of percentage distribution. Performance in **Writing** was on a par with recent years at Credit level. There were fewer awards at Grade 3 and other levels remained largely unchanged. In **Speaking**, candidates performed exceptionally well at Grades 1-3 and the percentage of awards at these levels was up on previous years.

In **Writing**, there were many exceptional performances where candidates expressed themselves with clarity and accuracy and where they truly engaged with the piece of Writing, giving interesting personal opinions and using colloquial expressions. There were fewer inappropriate tasks this year and most candidates at all levels were well prepared, even when completing straightforward tasks. There was, in some centres, evidence of over-preparation which led to candidates clearly not engaging with the Writing process and producing pieces very similar in content which showed little sign of personal input or personal opinion. This practice is to be discouraged.

Listening was, once again, the most difficult element for candidates, although the performance at Foundation level was exceptionally good.

Although the Reading papers were well received, and performance was exceptionally good at Grade 1, the slippage at Grades 2-3 resulted in a higher number of awards at Grades 4-6. A significant number of markers commented upon the use of poor English and pupils not reading over answers to ensure that they make sense.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Speaking performance was good at all levels, with an enhanced performance at Grades 1-3 in particular. Many centres are now much more at ease with the Extended Role Play – others still need to focus more on the demands of this task.

In **Writing**, candidates performed well where the language was personalised, interesting and portrayed their own ideas. At other levels, most candidates did not try to write too much and were well prepared within their own ability level.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, candidates coped very well with most questions and this resulted in high scoring, with few candidates scoring below 20 points. Questions 1-4, 7-9 and Q11 were particularly well done. In the General paper, there was, as expected, a significant disparity in performance between the G/F and G/C cohorts. The former group found the paper challenging. Questions 1(b), 3, 4, 9 met with most success. At Credit level, Question 1 got most candidates off to a good start. Otherwise, different groups of candidates performed well in different parts of this paper.

Listening at Foundation level was mostly good throughout. At General level, performance was mixed but Questions 1, 4(b), 5, 9, 10 were well answered on the whole. In the Credit paper, Questions 1, 4, 9, 10, 12 and 14 were well answered by most candidates.

Areas which candidates found demanding

For **Writing**, comment is similar to that of last year. Able candidates are disadvantaged when they are set mundane topics such as *Moi...Ma Famille...Ma Routine...* In such instances, the level of language often dips to a very basic level.

In **Reading**, at Foundation level, the content was largely accessible. At General level, a lot of candidates focussed on individual words rather than entire phrases or sentences, thus losing marks. Poor expression in English was another factor which affected performance, as was providing insufficiently detailed answers – where answers were not wrong but not sufficiently detailed to gain the point. Under-developed dictionary skills also let a number of candidates down. Questions 5-8 in particular were less well done, with a large number of candidates trying to use prior knowledge rather than examining the texts closely. Some words and expressions which caused difficulty – *informations...rencontre sportive...rapports (Q2), faire ses devoirs...navigateur...temps (Q4), pendant les vacances (Q7)*. Many also ignored negatives. At Credit level, Question 4 was not well done and there was some confusion in Q6(c). Expressions found to be difficult – *le bon déroulement...se débrouiller...rend services...j'ai du mal à faire...il n'est pas facile de s'isoler*.

In **Listening**, at Foundation level, words which were less known were *droite...pêche...jolie...mer* caused difficulty. At General level, the first four questions frequently caused candidates to get off to a slow start with *boîte de chocolates...près de la gare...trois voitures sont entrées en collision* posing problems – also *salle de jeux* in Q7 and *le prof est jeune* in Q11. At Credit level, Questions 2, 3 and 11 proved to be most challenging. Individual words and phrases were also found to be challenging – *écrans plasma (Q5), sainement (Q11), maquillage (Q13) and comprehensive (Q14)* – but largely it was lack of attention to detail and incomplete answers which cost marks, and also poor English expression.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates should re-read their answers to make sure that they make sense and make their English expression as clear as possible.

Answers need to be as detailed as possible.

Candidates should focus on entire phrases/sentences rather than individual words.

Pay attention to negatives like *ne...pas*, *ne...rien*, *ne...plus* and watch out for “wee words” like *sans...avec...peu...meme...plus...moins*

Course Assessment: Intermediate 1

In Intermediate 1 French, the Course assessment consists of 3 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The level of demand of the examination has been held constant over the years, while the composition of the cohort attempting the examination continues to develop and settle down. At this level, the guidance given to setters concerning the length and type of text for each component is very prescriptive and consequently, the examination was again appropriate in terms of content, which related clearly to the prescribed themes and topics for this level, and in terms of the level of difficulty which was appropriate and in line with previous years. The overall level of performance by candidates, although slightly down, was in line with the performance of the previous year.

The Mean Marks for each element were as follows:

Reading = 20.2 (35) – down 0.2

Listening = 10.4 (20) – down 1.8

Writing = 8.0 (15) – down 0.2

Speaking = 24.3 (30) – down 0.3

The mean marks indicate an encouraging performance in all four language skills with Listening and Writing still remaining the most difficult components with mean marks that are still only just above half of the available marks. The mean marks and the distribution of grades would suggest, however, that the majority of this year's cohort were presented at the correct level in the National Qualifications Framework and had been well prepared for the examination. There were some excellent performances (particularly in Writing) and relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

Although there was a decrease in the mean mark, the performance of candidates in the Reading Paper was still encouraging, as relatively few candidates compared to previous years were unable to attempt with some success the longer third and fourth texts. The four texts provided good progression in terms of the level of difficulty and demand and the vast majority of candidates related well to the content of the reading texts. Although overall the performance in Listening is variable, most candidates had been well prepared to cope with predictable items including numbers, times, colours and high frequency vocabulary (e.g. household tasks / countries / places in town). There was less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule in the marking of both the Reading and Listening answers, which suggests that candidates are being trained well not to exceed the required amount of information indicated in the question.

Although the mean mark for the Writing task is still low, there were still some excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well and were able to write at some length and with a high level of accuracy to show what can be produced by good candidates within the confines of the task.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading Paper many candidates lost points through failing to provide sufficiently detailed answers (e.g. rendering plural nouns as singular: **les musées et les marchés**) and many lost points in the first two shorter texts and in the supported questions (**un livre pour mon frère** was often given as a book for my father). Question 3 h: **What two problems can the teachers help with?** caused problems for many (**les petites maladies** - minor illnesses and **les difficultés de langue** - language difficulties), while the accuracy of comprehension required to answer the final question 4i: **Why does she want to come back?** was beyond the ability of all but the very good candidates, who realised she wishes to see the Western Isles (**les îles de l'ouest**). Throughout the Reading paper many candidates continued to have problems with 'false friends' and translated **travailler** as travel and **journée** as journey.

As was indicated by the mean marks, the most difficult components for candidates remain Listening and Writing. Some candidates continue to find the Listening element difficult owing in part to the inability to give sufficient details in their answers, often managing to recognise part of the answer (**l'aéroport**) but not the precise details (**à l'entrée**). More surprising was the inability of candidates to perform well in the supported questions (3 a and b) and to recognise common vocabulary (**la natation / allemand / sud-est**) including numbers (**13 ans / 15 jours**), time phrases and dates (**vers 7 heures et demie / Samedi 4 juillet**), weather phrases (**il fait du soleil**), colours (**grise/noire**) and prepositions and places (**au bord de la mer**). Many candidates also had difficulty with the phrase **je me suis fait beaucoup d'amis** and in demonstrating comprehension of the following two questions in French: **Est-ce que vous habitez près de l'aéroport** and **Quel temps fait-il en ce moment?**

Many candidates again had considerable difficulty with the Writing element, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. There were still a few candidates for whom the task was clearly beyond their ability and who failed to provide the required number of pieces of information for each of the areas. In preparing candidates for this component, many centres need to give further guidance on what constitutes 3 sentences, the accuracy required in terms of spelling, genders and use of accents and how candidates can go beyond a minimal response.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/Listening:

In responding to the questions in the reading and listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question and **should be discouraged from giving extraneous information** as this is likely to be penalised. Indeed to avoid candidates falling foul of the extraneous rule, the question itself now usually indicates the amount of information the candidate is required to give by stating in bold e.g. **'Mention 2 of them'**.

In preparation for the Reading Paper, centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1 Level and should continue to give candidates sufficient practice with longer texts in preparation for texts 3 and 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.

In preparing candidates for the Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at noting information from texts after only **two hearings**. It is important to stress to centres and to candidates that they will hear the text only **two times** as opposed to three times for the internal unit assessment and for Standard Grade.

Writing:

Centres need to give further guidance to candidates on what constitutes an adequate amount of information (3 sentences) in each section of the Writing task and need to encourage candidates to take greater care in how they present this information particularly in the formation of verb tenses. The expanded version of the pegged mark descriptors gives a good indication of what is required of candidates in this task **and these criteria should be shared with candidates**. The exemplification of candidates' performances, which accompanied the new descriptors, also provides centres with examples of good and very good performances in this writing

task in order to show how it is possible to prepare candidates to produce more than a 'minimalist' response under each of the sections.

General:

Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

The overall performance at Intermediate 1 level indicates that most centres, which are moving from Standard Grade to the National Qualifications Framework, are now aware that Intermediate 1 represents **progression from** Foundation level and is benchmarked against General level. However, the number of poor performances in Writing suggests that some centres may still be having difficulty in presenting candidates at the correct level relative to their ability. Centres are encouraged to make effective use of the 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 SCQF Levels 4 and 5 (December 2007). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 1 level has also been issued to accompany the new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that this will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Course Assessment: Intermediate 2

In Intermediate 2 French, the Course assessment consists of 3 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment.

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 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. The Mean Marks for each component were as follows:

Reading = 23.5 (30) –down 0.5

Listening = 11.2 (20) – down 3.0

Writing = 13.5 (20) – no change

Speaking = 23.3 (30) – no change

The mean marks indicate a good level of performance in all four language skills with the average performance in each skill in excess of half of the available marks. There was, however, a significant drop in the performance in Listening in comparison with the improvement of the previous year, and the mean mark indicates that this is still the skill most candidates find most difficult. 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

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and had been presented at the level in the National Qualifications Framework appropriate to their level of ability. In the Reading Paper candidates seemed to identify with the topics of the texts (school competition / stay in Strasbourg / living away from home). There was good progression in the level of demand through the shorter to the longer fourth reading text with most candidates scoring well in the shorter texts and with an increasing number managing to sustain this level of performance throughout the longer and more demanding final text. In Listening, candidates performed well in Question 1 where the content focused on the details of studying in an international school and in general most candidates were well prepared to identify correctly the more predictable items such as numbers, times, weather phrases and common areas of vocabulary (e.g. clothes and leisure activities). There was less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule in the marking of reading and listening answers, which suggests that candidates have been trained well to heed the required amount of information indicated in the questions. In the Writing task there were many excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well by their centre and were able to write at considerable length and with a high level of accuracy, range and variety of structures. Such candidates are well placed to do well at Higher level should they decide to proceed with their study of French.

Areas which candidates found demanding

With the exception of a few candidates in the Writing and Listening, there were few really poor performances, which indicates that there is a satisfactory progression from the level of performance demanded in the internal unit assessments for each skill to the level demanded in the external assessment.

Most candidates coped well with the Reading texts but some lost points through not providing sufficiently detailed answers: **on a plus de liberté** (more freedom) / **il m'appelle une fois par semaine** (once a week) / **des drapeaux** (flags) / **on a chanté dans toutes les langues** (in all languages).

The performance in Listening was disappointing in comparison to performance in the other skills and 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 (**15 jours** and the phone numbers **54 – 16**), time phrases (**3 heures du matin**), weather expressions (**du brouillard**) and to link the correct colour to the correct article of clothing (**un pull noir /des baskets blanches**). Passage 2 in the Listening was least well done with many candidates understanding part of the answer but unable to give sufficient details: **un de mes amis avait oublié son passeport** (friend forgot passport), **à cause du brouillard** (because of fog not bad weather), **je me suis cassé la jambe** (broke leg not was injured).

The Writing task, in spite of its predictable nature, was again the element, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. Weaker 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 the weaker 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

Reading/Listening:

In responding to the questions in the reading and listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question, should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood but **should be discouraged from giving extraneous information** as this is likely to be penalised. Indeed to avoid candidates falling foul of the extraneous rule, the question itself now usually indicates the amount of information the candidate is required to give by stating in bold e.g. '**Mention 2 of them**'.

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.

In preparing candidates for the Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at noting information from texts after only **two hearings**. It is important to stress to centres and to candidates that they will hear the text only **two times** as opposed to three times for the internal unit assessment and for Standard Grade.

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

Writing:

Centres should ensure that candidates read carefully the information regarding the job for which they are applying, **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 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 SCQF 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 new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that this will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher French, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment.

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 Higher level and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. Each element of the examination was accessible to candidates but proved demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole were well prepared for each component with very few really poor performances, although a number of candidates struggled to deal with the translation passage. The Mean Marks for each component were as follows:

Reading/Directed Writing = 26.2 (45) – down 2.9

Listening/Writing = 17.1 (30) – down 0.7

Speaking = 20.7% (25) – up 0.2

The mean marks show an encouraging performance in all components of the examination, although the mean marks for both of the written papers were down from the high performance in the previous year. Candidates seem to have performed less well in the translation and to have found the first two bullet points in Directed Writing more demanding than in previous years. The slight drop in the mean mark for Paper 2: Listening and Writing indicates that Listening is still the skill most candidates find most difficult, as there was overall an improved performance in the Writing element in Paper 2. However, the performance overall in each component was very encouraging with some excellent performances (particularly in Reading) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in the two Writing tasks, owing to the misuse of dictionary by some candidates).

Areas in which candidates performed well

Performance in Reading was again very encouraging with many excellent performances. Candidates clearly found the content and vocabulary of the reading passage ' **Ils vivent dans les bois, été comme hiver!**' accessible and on a topic (homeless people) to which they could relate, although less easily than in the previous year (creating a blog). On the whole, candidates succeeded in responding accurately to the reading comprehension questions and there was less evidence of 'word for word translation' of the text (with the exception of volunteers for **volontiers**) resulting in the loss of marks through awkward use of English. Again this year there were also some excellent performances in both of the writing tasks but particularly in Paper 2, where very able candidates demonstrated all the elements required of a very good performance and produced a well-structured and accurate piece of writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Performance in the Translation section of Paper 1 was disappointing with many candidates losing points for a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles (leur as the/a) and singular/plural nouns (la niche as the kennels). As was expected, many candidates found the fourth and fifth sense units demanding (**Pas facile à faire pousser des légumes en pleine forêt..... Mais, ils y arrivent**) with many candidates giving a literal translation of **ils y arrivent** (they arrive there).

There was a wide range of performance in the Listening Comprehension, which was on a topic (**experience as a foreign language assistant**) with which candidates were familiar and the clarity and speed of recording were commented on favourably by many centres. There was a good variety of straightforward and more demanding questions, which allowed most candidates to gain points in the early questions 1-4, while only the more able candidates coped well with questions 5-8, which required more detailed responses. It was disappointing, however, that some candidates failed to demonstrate comprehension of the 'easier' points by failing to recognise the more factual information including the time phrases: **plus tard, chaque semaine** and **jusqu'à 20 heures**, the verbs **éviter** and **partager** and vocabulary including **enrhumée** and **déprimée**. Many candidates were also unable to retain sufficient details required to answer accurately question 6 b, often understanding part of the information e.g. that Scottish food is unhealthy (**la nourriture écossaise est mauvaise pour la santé**) but without the detail that she liked it anyway (**mais je l'aime quand même**). The Writing tasks were again the element of the exam, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. Many candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy and relevance to achieve a satisfactory performance, while a small but significant number of candidates produced poor and very poor performances with little or no control of basic grammar and verb formation.

Both of the Writing tasks proved challenging but accessible for most candidates and required the candidates to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks. It was worrying that a number of candidates did not approach the tasks in this way, relying instead on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences with predictably dire consequences. This was particularly noticeable in the Directed Writing task, where many candidates struggled to find any relevant learned material for the less predictable bullet points (particularly number 3: **what you did during the working day** and number 6: **what you plan to do with the money you earned**) and often resorted to misuse of dictionary and 'unidiomatic translation from English'. However, in general in the Directed Writing relatively few candidates were penalised for avoiding a bullet point, although some candidates were penalised for failing to address fully bullet points 1(a) **why you applied for the job** and 2(b) **how you travelled to work**.

The topic of the personal response essay (Paper 2) was one with which all candidates should have been familiar, however there were still a few instances of candidates struggling for ideas and therefore misusing the dictionary to produce what they considered to be the French equivalent of suitable English expressions. The candidates seemed better prepared to deal with the first part of the stimulus (**Quels sont les avantages /desavantages de vivre en Ecosse?**) than the second part (**Vous pensez aussi qu'il est important de visiter d'autres pays?**). Although the essay was on a topic accessible to all candidates, many did less well than might have been expected through the inability to distinguish between **Ecosse** and **Ecossais**, poor grammatical knowledge of genders and verb tenses and through poor spelling and the lack of accents which could have been checked through appropriate use of the dictionary.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation:

1. Continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation of a particular section of the text
2. Encourage candidates to attempt the translation **after** the reading comprehension questions as that should make clear the context in which the translation section is situated
3. Encourage candidates to answer the specific wording of the question and discourage candidates from giving a word for word translation of the text as a response to the reading comprehension questions, as this often results in incomprehensible use of English.
4. Encourage candidates to look closely at each word in each section of the translation passage and to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing:

1. Encourage candidates to write to the context set and to be prepared in some part of their writing to explain the reason for the visit to or from France
2. Advise candidates to consider carefully the wording of each bullet point and to ensure that they incorporate learned material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
3. Advise candidates to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, genders etc.) not to create and invent new sentences.
4. Share with candidates the expanded assessment criteria for Writing so that they know what is expected in terms of Content, Accuracy, Range and Variety.

Listening/Writing:

1. In the Listening Comprehension task 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
2. Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and not to lose marks by inaccurate rendering of numbers, prepositions and question words
3. In the Writing task, ensure candidates read the stimulus and incorporate and adapt learned material, which **is relevant to the aspects contained in the stimulus.**

General:

1. Encourage candidates to make sure handwriting is legible.
2. Although the internal Writing Task (Personal Record of Achievement) is no longer mandatory as part of the 80 hour unit assessment, centres should consider continuing to use the task **as part of their teaching syllabus.** The task of writing a Personal Record of Achievement was designed to help candidates develop grammatical accuracy in handling present, past and future tenses and to focus on the accuracy that is required in terms of spelling, genders, accents and agreements, when you move from the spoken to the written mode. The task was intended to help candidates develop their writing skills in a supported manner so that they would be better prepared for the external Writing tasks and as such it still has a valuable role to play in this.

Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher French, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers, a Folio and a Speaking Assessment.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Again this year the general consensus of the markers was that the examination as a whole was quite accessible. Candidate performance was similar to 2008. Markers again felt that there were many Good and Satisfactory candidates but fewer Very Good. There were also fewer Very Poor performances, but still quite a few candidates who struggle with the level of achievement needed.

Some instances of poor English continue to be commented on by the markers. Candidates' answers were often spoiled and occasionally incomprehensible because of poor English.

In both parts of the question papers, Reading and Translation and Listening and Discursive Writing candidates performed well in the comprehension questions. This was perhaps mainly due to the extra time allotted to Paper I which allowed candidates to complete the inferencing question more fully. However, the translation passage was once again not well done, on the whole.

The Folios were, on the whole, very ordinary. The discussion of a film without explicit reference to a literary text is still a worrying trend and candidates are penalised.

Speaking. As always, the Visiting Examiners praised the efforts of candidates in this most rewarding of exercises. Candidates are, for the most part, well-prepared and willing to speak and it is always a pleasure to hear what they have to say. Occasionally, rooms allocated for the speaking are not the most suited for the purposes of this exercise.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading and Translation

As mentioned, the passage seemed to be very accessible. Candidates managed to answer the comprehension questions better this year, with some quite detailed answers and not just wholesale translation of the text. Good questions led to good answers.

Listening and Discursive Writing

The Listening questions this year were answered very well. It seems that with more availability of practice material candidates are more confident with the examination.

Folio

There were some very good folio essays showing good preparation. Again, however, the choice of topics continues to raise concern and this unnecessarily penalises the candidate. Some titles are extremely vague and others needlessly too ambitious.

There is still too much evidence of only a film being studied without an appropriate text.

There continues to be a problem with quotations. Very poor spelling and quotations in English mar some essays.

This year there were many examples of inaccurate word counts. This should be avoided.

Speaking

Generally, candidates were very willing to speak and engaged very well with the exercise.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading and Translation

The Translation again caused difficulties. Careless translation and poorly expressed English spoiled many performances and it is obvious that candidates do not re-read what they have written.

Listening and Discursive Essay

The Essays were probably the part of the examination that was least well done. Once again some candidates did not read the essay titles carefully enough and wrote essays that were largely irrelevant. Over-prepared and memorised essays are still evident in many instances.

All essay titles were attempted in good numbers with “La vraie communication” and “L`égalité des sexes” being the most popular. These, however, tended to deal with (A) the virtues of the internet and not la vraie communication and (B) equality in the workplace and not in marriage

Once again some essays were marred by some very poor French. Wrong genders, wrong tenses, no accents, non-existent agreements of both verb and adjectives, poor use of dictionary were evident in these instances.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

Answers to the comprehension questions should contain as much relevant detail as possible.

More practice is needed for the inferential question. Personal comment is appropriate as long as reference to the text is made.

More practice is needed in translation. Candidates should be aware that if the translation does not read or sound like English then it is quite likely that the translation is wrong.

Listening and Discursive Writing

Read the essay titles carefully. Pre-learned essays may not fit what is asked and therefore can be largely irrelevant and penalised as such.

Use of dictionary should be practised.

Folio

Read the folio guidelines very carefully.

Extended Reading and Viewing

Choose essay titles with great care and thought and ensure that they are within the capability of the candidates. There is also a word limit of 750 words.

A film on its own is not acceptable. The basis of preparation is a literary text. The viewing of a film may enhance the experience but on its own does not constitute a valid approach.

Ensure there is a bibliography and that it conforms with the guidelines sent to centres.

Ensure that candidates take time to reflect on what they have written and that appropriate guidance/support/redrafting takes place.

Ensure that the content is appropriate to Advanced Higher.

Language in Work

Some Language in Work Reports did not display appropriate levels of critical evaluation and analysis of the vocational areas studied. A number of candidates compiled Reports which offered little or no analysis or critical reflection.

Speaking

It is externally important to have the right equipment ready for the VE's visit and also a suitable room.