

NQ Verification 2014–15

Key Messages Round 2

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Modern Languages — French
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2015

National Course verified:

C730 75 National 5 French performance: talking (Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment)

C730 76 Higher French performance: talking (Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment)

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA guidelines for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5/Higher performance: talking.

In line with the National 5/Higher Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task, centres are reminded that the presentation and follow-up conversation must be carried out in a single assessment event, ie the presentation must be followed by the conversation during the single recording of the performance.

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

Specifics in relation to the presentation

In the presentation, some candidates seem to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it.

Specifics in relation to the conversation

Interlocutors should try to avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates. Questions such as '*qu'est-ce que tu préfères, la physique ou la biologie?*' are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be immediately followed by '*Pourquoi?*' to elicit fuller answers.

For the most part, interlocutors were supportive, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural/spontaneous conversations.

Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5/Higher as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

The majority of centres asked questions in the conversation, which followed on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the *National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task* document. Many assessors went on to refer to other contexts, which allowed for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. On occasions, where candidates were asked questions about the same topic/context as in their presentation, candidates were often limited to repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation. At Higher, centres are reminded that the conversation must lead into at least one other context.

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Some centres were overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. Some conversations appeared to be excessively rehearsed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from SQA's website).

Assessment judgements

It is pleasing to report that a large majority of centres have applied the marking instructions for the performance in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

It is important that assessors only use the Marking Information Grid for the talking performance at National 5/Higher, in conjunction with the National 5/Higher Grammar Grid to make their assessment judgements. Referring to previous examination procedures is not necessarily beneficial since the format of the assessment has changed. An updated version of the National 5 Marking Information Grid will be published in September 2015. The standards will remain the same, but each pegged mark descriptor will provide additional detail for assessors.

Overall candidate performance was high. Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers — sympathetic (native or non-native) speakers of French — must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their presentation/conversation is. It was felt that, on occasions, assessors had been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what candidates were going to say.

In general, centres provided clear commentaries to demonstrate how they made the assessment judgement, which was very useful for the nominee verifiers. This is also useful for internal verifiers and promotes constructive professional dialogue. Centres are encouraged to provide brief information about how they made the assessment judgement for all candidates submitted in the sample.

Specifics in relation to the Natural element (National 5) / Sustaining the Performance (Higher):

- ◆ There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the natural element. Many centres were too severe in awarding marks.
- ◆ Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain marks for the natural element.
- ◆ In some cases, candidates paused — briefly — during the conversation to think about their answers; this is a natural part of a conversation. Assessors should give candidates appropriate time to think and respond. However, if candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic.
- ◆ Some conversations were very natural as candidates answered with a mixture of longer and shorter answers.
- ◆ Examples of how candidates could demonstrate their ability to sustain a natural conversation include the following:
 - a mixture of extended and shorter answers (ie not a suite of short presentations/monologues)
 - appropriate thinking time
 - natural interjections ('*euuh/ bah/ ben/ alors*')

- acknowledgement that they have understood the question (*'oui, je suis d'accord/non, pas du tout'*). Some centres included a brief commentary to describe how the candidate showed how they had understood through non-verbal means the question/ response from the interlocutor
- asking questions that are **relevant** to the conversation
- sustaining the conversation, asking for repetition or clarification (eg *'pardon?'*)

This is not an exhaustive list and one example from the above list on its own may not be sufficient to be awarded full marks.

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Section 3: General comments

Centres submitted candidates' performances on CDs, tapes and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, tapes and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification. We recommend that USB keys are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and labelled.

Most centres clearly labelled candidate evidence, which is necessary for the Verification team to proceed with the verification process.

Centres should leave blank the 'Nominee Review Result' section on the Verification Sample Form as this will only be completed by the nominee verifiers if marks for the Course assessment are changed.