



**National Qualifications 2012
Internal Assessment Report**

FRENCH

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles / levels of National Courses verified:

French Intermediate 1
French Intermediate 2
French Higher

General comments

In general, centres have a good understanding of the requirements of both the content and the conduct of the speaking test at all three levels.

However, there was a worrying increase in the number of centres whose grades were discordant this year, with eight centres out of a total of 30 (24 per cent) verified as being Not Accepted.

Of the eight centres whose grades were not concordant with national standards, three were Not Accepted as a result of over-generous marking and four as a result of over-severe marking. The other Not Accepted centre was over-generous at one level and over-severe at another.

The main area of discordance was at Higher level (five centres), but there were also some instances of inaccurate grading at Intermediate 2 (three centres) and Intermediate 1 (one centre).

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It was clear from the conduct of the tests that the vast majority of the in-school assessors are very familiar with all of the above.

Evidence Requirements

Centres are clearly aware of the requirement to submit CDs or cassette recordings of candidate performance.

However, there remain a number of centres who submit incorrectly completed forms. Others continue to send in extraneous material (NABS, prelims etc) which does not form part of the verification exercise.

There is still evidence that some centres fail to check recordings. Most take steps to ensure that the tests are conducted in appropriate surroundings, eliminating the possibility of disruptions and background noise in the course of the test.

Administration of assessments

Almost all of the centres verified administered the tests in accordance with the available guidelines and documentation, using appropriate assessments at all three levels.

In centres where more than one interlocutor was involved in conducting the tests (often the case where the centre presented candidates at more than one level), it was pleasing to note that it was usually clear that cross-marking and internal verification had taken place.

At Intermediate 1 level, some centres showed a tendency to ask too much of the candidates in the course of the test, going well beyond the recommended minimum requirements laid out in the guidelines. This was not always to the candidate's advantage.

The duration of candidate performances remains an issue for some centres, especially in the discussion element, where there was frequent evidence of unnecessarily prolonged exchanges, often to the detriment of the candidate.

Areas of good practice

Several members of the verification team commented on the fact that there was real and positive interaction between candidate and interlocutor, leading to excellent performances that were commended in the feedback to the centres.

It is clear that a supportive and involved approach by the interlocutor puts the candidates at their ease and leads to their performing at a high level and demonstrating their ability to communicate in a natural manner on a range of topics.

Specific areas for improvement

There remain too many instances of candidates being over-prepared and the so-called 'discussion' element of the test being nothing other than a list of prepared questions and answers with minimum intervention or comment from the interlocutor.

There were also some instances where the 'discussion' was effectively no more than a repetition of the presentation, with little attempt being made by the interlocutor to stretch the candidate's ability, thus limiting the possibility of their attaining a grade any higher than Satisfactory in this element of the assessment.

As stated above, the best performances at both Intermediate 2 and Higher levels tended to be those which involved the candidate in real and spontaneous conversations where the interlocutor reacted to the candidate's responses and

encouraged meaningful and positive dialogue.

A major issue this year was the extent to which poor pronunciation impacted on candidate performance. While basic pronunciation errors might be expected and tolerated at Intermediate 1 and 2 levels, this is inappropriate at Higher level. Many centres seem to disregard this essential criterion when awarding marks to their candidates' performance, and it is a source of some concern.