

*Research and Information Services*

**MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT**



# **Comparison of French CSYS 1992, 1998 and Advanced Higher 2004**

# Summary of Findings

## **1 What were there main differences between the arrangements?**

There is less emphasis on writing in French, possibly due to the greater emphasis on oral proficiency in earlier years. The demands of internal assessment have restrained the breath of the study.

‘Language in Work’ is a new optional unit, and Prescribed Topics have been added. ‘Language Study’ has disappeared.

In other respects there has been a change from an open-ended to a more prescriptive and from a language skills based to a more directed approach.

### **1.1 Have these differences together made the subject more demanding, less demanding or did the overall level of demand remain unchanged?**

Altogether, the changes have made the syllabus **less** demanding.

## **2 Were there differences between the Question Papers and Marking?**

There are changes in the balance of external and internal assessment connected with the introduction of Higher Still. The language used is less literary, and no essays need to be written in French anymore. Speaking has been allocated 5 minutes extra.

The coverage was less extensive in 2004.

### **2.1 Have these differences together made the exam more demanding, less demanding or did the overall difficulty remain unchanged?**

The question papers and marking schemes were comparable or less demanding.

### **3.1 Would scripts graded at borderline A/B in the most recent year, have been awarded the same grade in the previous years?**

No, the 1992 and 1998 scripts were better. The quality of the written French was found to be poorer in 2004, and the English answers were judged to be ‘lightweight’.

**3.2 Would scripts graded at borderline C (Pass / Fail) in the most recent year, have been awarded the same grade in the previous years?**

Yes, the older scripts were largely comparable.

# **1 Syllabus**

## **1.1 General approach**

Compared to previous years, the general approach within the subject has changed.

Overall the approach remains largely the same; there is continuity from S Grade and Higher.

- ◆ The teaching approach may have changed to reflect the greater emphasis in the earlier years on oral proficiency.
- ◆ There is however less emphasis on writing in the foreign language in AH than in CSYS.
- ◆ In addition there is less emphasis on the production of written work in the foreign language under examination conditions.
- ◆ The demands of internal assessment have put constraints on the breadth of study.

### **1.2.1 Elements added to the syllabus**

- ◆ The introduction of Prescribed Topics has led to a reduction of in-depth study, a feature of CSYS.
- ◆ Language in Work is an addition to the previous syllabus.

### **1.2.2 Elements from the syllabus**

- ◆ Language study is not in more recent syllabus.
- ◆ Critical reading paper has gone. It has been replaced by one two-part evaluative question worth ten marks.
- ◆ Summary from Listening Paper has also gone.

### **1.2.3 Have any parts in the syllabus changed?**

Yes:

- ◆ Change from a more open-ended to a more prescriptive approach.
- ◆ Change from a language skills based to a more directed approach.

#### **1.2.4 Has this made the syllabus less demanding?**

Yes. It is noted that AH subsumes the content of Higher so the following remarks must be taken in context:

- ◆ Topics prescribed.
- ◆ Much less emphasis on the manipulation and production of written foreign language.
- ◆ Three essays in the foreign language for the Folio are no longer required.
- ◆ ‘Current Affairs’ not necessarily covered in AH because the topic can be ‘Scottish’ based.
- ◆ ‘Current Affairs’ essay at CSYS done in examination conditions.

#### **1.3.1 Depth of the recent syllabus**

The introduction of Prescribed Topics is felt to have led to a reduction of depth of study.

#### **1.3.2 Breadth of the recent syllabus**

The combination of the Prescribed Topics and the use of internal assessment are felt to have imposed restrictions on the breadth of study.

## **2 Assessment instrument**

### **2.1 Changes to structure**

- ◆ Changes in the type of language the candidates meet over time. A trend away from more literary style language towards more journalistic and / or colloquial styles.
- ◆ Number of Papers reduced from 4 to 2 with a reduction of external assessment from 270 minutes to 160 minutes.
- ◆ Folio retains the essays in English but not those in foreign language.
- ◆ Speaking has been allocated an extra 5 minutes.

### **2.2 Similarity of tasks in recent and older Papers**

While the papers test the basic competences of reception and production, there are quantitative and qualitative differences between the papers and their assessment instruments.

#### **2.2.1 Do candidates perform in the same way on these questions?**

- ◆ The performance of candidates from the 92 and 98 cohorts was felt to be largely similar.

- ◆ The quality of written foreign language of the 04 cohort was felt to be of poorer quality than that of the previous cohorts sampled.
- ◆ The responses in English of the 04 cohort were felt to be ‘lightweight’.

### **2.2.2 Discernible trends**

The system of ‘pegged marks’ might be seen as working to the candidates’ advantage in as much as the level of demand may be similar but higher marks may be awarded for responses which are not as fully developed as those in previous years.

It may be that the scripts sampled do not reflect the overall levels of performance of the cohort.

### **2.3.1 Coverage of the syllabus**

Coverage of the more recent syllabus is less extensive than in the previous years.

- ◆ The syllabus was felt to be less extensive with the introduction of the Prescribed Topics.
- ◆ The removal of the Critical reading was felt to be a reduction.
- ◆ The removal of the evaluative study of language features was felt to be a reduction.
- ◆ The removal of the Summary from the Listening was felt to be a reduction.
- ◆ The removal of the essays in the foreign language from the Folio was felt to be a reduction.

### **2.4.1 Level of demand of Questions and Marking Instructions**

Questions and marking schemes of the more recent Question Paper were comparable / less demanding.

#### **Questions**

- ◆ The questions in the Reading in AH are much more guided and are sequential, i.e. the questions are asked in the order in which the information appears in the text.
- ◆ There are more questions in AH with questions asking for specific information rather than questions within questions.
- ◆ An increase in the number of words was noted.
- ◆ Within the READING section, it was noted that candidates had to answer a ‘critical question’ worth 10 marks. This was seen as a ‘replacement’ for the Critical Reading and results in two separate skills being tested in one paper.

- ◆ The content of the first passage in the Listening paper was found to be comparable but the speed of delivery to be more difficult. The second paper was found to be comparable, with overall level of difficulty offset by questions in English. In addition candidates were asked to produce a ‘compare and contrast’ summary of the texts in the foreign language in CSYS whereas this is no longer the case in AH 04.
- ◆ Essay questions were felt to be of a comparable standard: again it was noted that more guidance was given to candidates than had previously been the case.
- ◆ Some concern over the demands on candidates to complete the Listening tasks and then move to the written production of the foreign language.
- ◆ Continuity with Higher was noted but there was some concern over an apparently generous shift in the pegged mark system.
- ◆ The Folio pieces can be done ‘at home’ and there is no requirement for the written production of the foreign language in examination conditions.
- ◆ Speaking is based on the Folio and is more prescribed than previously.

### **Marking schemes**

- ◆ Translation: the 92 and 98 marking schemes seemed to be more subjective in some measure. Attendance at the Markers’ meetings was very important and there was a clear focus on accuracy in the translation. The marking scheme for 04 was much more detailed and used a ‘unit of sense’ approach. This was seen as helpful but there was some concern that half marks could be awarded for ‘imprecise or inaccurate translation’.
- ◆ Listening: the marking scheme, including Acceptable / Unacceptable / Acceptable / Markers’ Notes was seen as helpful, as was the conversion table.
- ◆ Writing / Folio / Speaking 04: It was noted that these elements were marked using a pegged marking scheme which could work to the candidates’ advantage, leading to a possible inflation of grades. This concern arose because ‘Satisfactory’ in every case equals 60%

## **3 Scripts**

### **3.1 Quality of A/B scripts from older years**

A/B graded scripts from the older years are not so good as the A/B graded scripts from the more recent year.

From the sample of scripts seen, it was felt that the candidates’ overall levels of performance were not so high. This remark has to be taken in the context that there is much less emphasis on the study of language and the development of

manipulative language skills in AH than was the case with previous examinations.

### 3.2 Quality of C/D scripts from older years

Candidates' performance in these bands was felt to be largely comparable.

Other factors:

- ◆ Two different skills being tested in Paper 2, Listening and Writing in relatively short time.
- ◆ Reading has an extra five minutes and the questions are much more directed.
- ◆ Rubric in English for Reading and Listening. This may be of help to the weaker candidates
- ◆ Speaking has an extra five minutes and is worth more in percentage terms, reflecting the greater emphasis on oral competence.
- ◆ Essay questions comparable but with less emphasis on written French, the level of candidates' language not so high.

Table of comparison for 'cut off' percentages for the three sets of papers examined.

	1992	1998	2004
<b>A%</b>	69	67	70
<b>B%</b>	57	56	60
<b>C%</b>	45	43	50

## Comparison: French 1992, 1998 and 2004

CSYS - 1992				CSYS - 1998				Advanced Higher – 2004.			
<b>Paper 1</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Paper 1</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Paper 1</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Words</b>
Reading comprehension 2 comp questions in English. Information can occur anywhere	20	75	600 - 800	Reading comprehension 2 comp questions in English. Information can occur anywhere	20	75	600 - 800	Reading & translation Questions much more structured and follow text.	20	80	750-800
Translation	20			Translation 30	30			Translation 20	20		
Language study Answers in French	10							“Critical question”	10		
<b>Marks</b>	<b>50</b>				<b>50</b>				<b>50</b>		
<b>Paper 2</b>				<b>Paper 2</b>							
Critical reading 1 poem + 1 prose Evaluative + study of language features	50	90		Critical reading 1 poem + 1 prose Evaluative + study of language features Sequential questions	50						
<b>Marks</b>	<b>50</b>				<b>50</b>				<b>50</b>		
<b>Paper 3</b>				<b>Paper 3</b>				<b>Paper 2</b>			
Listening Compare and contrast + summary in French	20+10	45		Listening Compare and contrast + summary in French	20 +10			Listening Answers in English	40	c.30	
								Writing	30	c 50	250 - 300
<b>Marks</b>	<b>30</b>			<b>Marks</b>	<b>30</b>			<b>Marks</b>	<b>70</b>		
<b>Paper 4</b>				<b>Paper 4</b>							
Writing	50	60	250 – 300								
Folio 100 3essays in French, 2 essays in English, 20 marks each	20X5		200 – 250 X 3  400 – 500 X 2	Folio 3essays in French, 2 essays in English, 20 marks each	20X5		200 – 250 X 3  400 – 500 X 2	Folio 2 essays in English. 500 words  1 report in English,			500 X 2  1000

								1000 words.			
Marks	<b>150</b>			Marks	<b>150</b>			Marks	<b>30</b>		
Speaking	<b>70</b>	15		Speaking 70	<b>70</b>		15	Speaking	<b>50</b>	20	
<b>Totals</b>				<b>Totals</b>				<b>Totals</b>			