

Research and Information Services

MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT



Comparison of French Higher 2005 and 2002

1 Syllabus

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

Compared to previous years, the *general approach within the subject* **has not** changed.

1.2 Changes to syllabus

Arrangements for 2001 still had in place the requirement that candidates complete a total of 6 internal assessments as preparation for the external assessment. The current Arrangements reduced the number of internal assessments to 4 but left the requirements for the external examination unchanged. The reduction in internal assessments was achieved by removing the assessment of Writing from the 80 hour Language Unit and by removing the assessment of Speaking from the Optional Unit (whether Language in Work or Extended Reading/Viewing).

This reduction in internal assessment was part of an overall move to reduce internal assessment across all subjects

1.2.1 Were any parts *added* to the more recent syllabus which were *not* included before?

No. There were no additions.

1.2.2 Are there any parts *missing* from the more recent syllabus which were included before?

No. There were no reductions in the content of the teaching syllabus or in the external assessment. Reductions in internal assessment are described above.

1.2.3 Have any parts in the syllabus been changed?

No. The team noted a very high degree of consistency.

1.2.5 Have changes made the syllabus *as a whole* more / no more / less demanding?

No more demanding. Less time taken in administering formal internal assessments may result in more time being available for preparatory activities leading up to external assessment. There may be less formal practice of Writing but overall there is no impact, with greater flexibility for the teacher to make the decisions appropriate to his/her candidates.

1.3.1 Depth of the more recent syllabus

Comparable. Reworked syllabus is exactly the same with reference to External Assessment.

1.3.2 Breadth of the more recent syllabus

Comparable. Reworked syllabus is exactly the same with reference to External Assessment.

2 Assessment instrument

2.1 Are there any trends or gradual changes in the structure of Question Papers, questions or marking instructions?

No. External syllabus has not changed and the assessments have not changed.

It was noted that the questions in the 2005 Reading asked for more discrete items of information from larger sections of text than the 2002 Reading where there were fewer questions individually worth more points.

The structure remains the same, directly linked to the prescribed themes and topics.

The tasks are also directly linked to the prescribed themes and topics.

The Guidelines given to Setters remain unchanged, that the topics should be accessible to school students and to adults and that the restriction of themes and topics is intended to give the candidates the opportunity to study them in greater depth.

2.2 Can any papers, sections or type of tasks from the more recent Question Papers be found in almost the same form in the older Paper years?

The format remains constant; the content varies but links directly to the prescribed themes and topics.

Directed writing – the scenario varies but the format of 6 bullet points does not change, moving from the highly predictable, where candidates must give information about content and purpose of the visit abroad, to the less predictable where candidates must offer some opinions.

Listening and Writing are linked by theme.

2.2.1 Do candidates across years perform in the same way on these questions?

Yes. See comments made above. There are no changes in the Assessment and Markers are given clear instructions how to mark scripts.

The statistics show that the *a priori* scores were held, suggesting the same levels of performance across the 2 diets examined.

2.3.1 Is the coverage of the more recent syllabus in the more recent Question Papers more extensive / comparable / less extensive than in previous years?

Comparable. Same prescribed themes and topics.

Has the focus / distribution over the syllabus changed?

No. Same guidance to Setters and Vectors.

2.4.1 Are the questions and the marking scheme of the more recent Question Paper more demanding / comparable / less demanding than in previous years?

Comparable. There is a standard format for the Marking Schemes.

There is a standard format for the Preamble to the standardisation procedure.

The team noted that there is an element of professional judgement which has to be exercised by the Markers, for example, in the Translation. There is therefore every effort made to anticipate any uneven distribution of good practice by the provision of detailed Marking Schemes. These schemes are finalised only after they have been trialled by

members of the marking team and then discussed at markers' meetings. A second level of scrutiny takes place with checks on individual markers.

The team also noted that for the Listening 2005 that, in addition to the transcript, an audio recording was also provided to enable vetters and markers to hear the text and not simply to read it. This was felt to be a positive step for maintaining consistency across examination diets as vetters and markers would be alert to any potential difficulties for candidates posed by marked regional accents or a high rate of delivery.

3 Scripts

3.1 Are the A / B graded scripts from the older year(s) better / comparable / not as good as the A / B graded scripts from the more recent year?

Comparable. The team noted some variations in levels of performance by individual candidates across the modes/skills (Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing) but this was in no way any reflection on the setters, vetters or markers.

3.2 Are the C / D graded scripts from the older year(s) better / comparable / not as good as the A / B graded scripts from the more recent year?

Comparable. The team noted that the levels of performance of candidates in both diets were comparable. Where some discussion arose over the award of a particular mark, for example, 6 rather than 9 in Writing, this would not have altered the overall award. In other words the marking teams were operating within acceptable levels of tolerance. As indicated above, the team noted a very high degree of consistency across the diets examined and in all areas subject to scrutiny.