

## Principal Assessor Report 2005

**Assessment Panel:**

**Modern Languages**

**Qualification area**

**Subject(s) and Level(s)  
Included in this report**

**French AH**

## **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2004</b>	712
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2005</b>	599
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### **General comments re resulted entry numbers**

The drop in numbers this year is disappointing but more in line with the uptake over previous years.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- <b>200</b>	-	-	-	-
A	22.5	22.5	135	138
B	26.0	48.6	156	118
C	25.0	73.6	150	98
D	9.8	83.5	59	88
No award	16.5	100.0	99	-

### General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

### Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

There are no significant changes in distribution of awards this year. The slightly lower grade boundaries reflect a slightly poorer performance in Paper 1 where a pegged mark system was introduced for question 5, resulting in less marks available to the marker and lower marks for certain candidates.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Overall, candidates responded well to what was considered by markers to be a very fair and appropriate paper. It was, however, felt that there were not so many “very good” candidates this year across all papers. Centres with fewer candidates seemed to do less well than those with large entries. Less teaching time given in these centres?

#### **Speaking.**

Candidates generally performed well in this exercise and the VE reports all praise the way they are willing to talk. Over-preparation is still a problem for some who flounder when led off the beaten track, but all in all a very heartening exercise for all concerned.

#### **Folio**

The folios were felt to be better this year with some good, even outstanding, performances. There were, of course, some weak essays, especially if they were background essays. Language in Work essays left a lot to be desired and it was a very fine line drawn as to whether an essay might be deemed a background essay rather than a LiW essay. Again, candidates were let down by over-long essays, (some twice the length they should have been!), imprecise titles or titles that were impossible to do justice to in 500 words. The standard of English left much to be desired in a large number of cases.

A worrying departure this year is the feeling that some candidates have either only read the book in English or only watched a video or film of a book. This is a difficult problem to deal with for markers.

#### **Paper 1. Reading and translation.**

Overall performance was a little disappointing this year. The comprehension questions were done quite well though lack of detail or precision marred many answers, along with a failure to develop answers in a manner appropriate to Advanced Higher. The inferencing questions were not well done. Imprecise answers with an “I think” but no back-up from the text were commonplace and poor time management was obvious.

The translation showed understanding of the passage and there were some quite good attempts. Two or three sections did cause problems, partly due to lack of knowledge of basic constructions such as ne...que, non plus, plusde/moins de.

#### **Paper 2 Listening and Writing**

Again a better overall performance than previous years though again it was felt that there were far fewer “very good” efforts.

In the Listening, Passage A was not as well done as Passage B. Lack of detail in answers was a feature in both sections. However, there was a heartening improvement noticed by markers.

In the Writing there was a good spread in the take-up of titles, with essays 2-4 attracting most candidates. However, it was these titles that produced many “Higher” type answers of the “lifestyle” or “what I do in my spare time” variety, rather than an Advanced Higher essay. Again, the problem of regurgitated essays was obvious but not on the scale of previous years. This made them slightly off the point vis-à-vis the title and therefore just satisfactory at best.

The quality of the French was often disappointing, especially the verbs: tenses/infinitives/endings...and what has happened to accents? Also, there was a lot more anglicised French for some reason.

There were fewer very weak essays.

**Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

The Speaking Test always brings out the best in candidates as seen in the reports of the VEs.

**Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

None.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

As always, the content of the folios leaves much to be desired. Excessive length, no word count, no bibliography. Centres should be reminded to read and adhere to the requirements for the Folio before submitting their candidates' work. Too often they are ill-served by teachers not looking over the candidate's final entry to see if it fulfils the requirements.