



National Qualifications Course Report 2007: French

**Standard Grade, Access 2, Access 3,
Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher,
Advanced Higher**

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Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Jim McDonald, Qualifications Manager for NQ French, with your comments – 0845 213 5515 jim.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk

Summary of Findings

General

Candidate performance was broadly similar to that of previous years and examinations received mostly positive feedback from candidates and centres. Candidates were well prepared, and Principal Assessors, in the main, felt that performance indicated that the papers were accessible, robust and of an appropriate standard.

Although there was a continuing decline in entries at Standard Grade, there continues to be a rise in presentation at Intermediate 1 and 2. There was also a welcome rise in presentation levels at Higher.

Principal Assessor Reports underline the commitment shown by centres and candidates in development of successful language skills and preparation strategies. However, the Reports and Senior Verifier comments highlight some approaches in Writing and Speaking tasks which tend to restrict candidate performance and these should be noted.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade French

Year	Entries
2007	32,315
2006	33,840
2005	34,275

Grade boundaries for each assessable element

Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	22	14	33	20	13
Listening	25	15	11	26	15	10	27	14	10

Grade Boundaries 2006

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	20	14	33	19	12
Listening	25	13	9	26	12	8	27	16	9

Grade Boundaries 2005

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	16	11	32	20	13	33	20	14
Listening	25	15	11	26	14	9	27	16	12

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2007	32,315	16.7%	21.0%	24.4%	23.8%	9.1%	1.8%	0.0%	3.2%
2006	33,840	18.5%	21.5%	24.9%	22.0%	8.5%	1.2%	0.0%	3.4%
2005	34,275	17.3%	20.8%	24.0%	23.6%	8.9%	1.5%	0.0%	3.9%

Entries and Awards — National Qualification Clusters

Access 2

	Entries	Awards
2007	93	81
2006	114	92
2005	92	62

Access 3

	Entries	Awards
2007	1,668	1,468
2006	1,996	1,613
2005	1,761	1,443

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 French

Year	Entries
2007	1,578
2006	1,470
2005	1,136

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45
2005	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	1,578	37.9%	20.5%	18.0%	76.4%	5.8%	17.8%
2006	1,470	47.7%	20.2%	14.5%	82.4%	4.3%	13.3%
2005	1,136	28.5%	20.6%	22.0%	71.1%	6.8%	22.1%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 French

Year	Entries
2007	3,275
2006	2,672
2005	2,245

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45
2005	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	3,275	60.4%	21.2%	11.1%	92.6%	2.8%	4.6%
2006	2,672	59.5%	20.7%	11.7%	91.8%	2.7%	5.4%
2005	2,245	55.0%	24.0%	13.5%	92.5%	3.0%	4.5%

Entries and Awards — Higher French

Year	Entries
2007	4,573
2006	4,292
2005	4,515

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	69	59	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45
2005	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	4,573	40.0%	25.3%	19.1%	84.3%	6.5%	9.2%
2006	4,292	43.6%	19.8%	19.5%	82.9%	6.3%	10.8%
2005	4,515	45.0%	19.8%	17.5%	82.3%	6.5%	11.2%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher French

Year	Entries
2007	624
2006	642
2005	599

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	200	139	119	99	89
2006	200	140	119	98	87
2005	200	138	118	98	88

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	624	23.6%	25.0%	23.9%	72.4%	10.9%	16.7%
2006	642	24.6%	24.3%	27.3%	76.2%	9.3%	14.5%
2005	599	24.2%	26.5%	24.9%	75.6%	7.3%	16.0%

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified:

Speaking: Presentation and Discussion

Feedback to Centres

General comments

Centres' assessments were very largely concordant with Verifier judgments. Verifiers identified a number of Very Good performances at all three levels, but on the other hand there were still some centres where it was felt that the level of language being asked of the candidate at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels showed insufficient progress from Standard Grade.

The role of the teacher/ interlocutor was again identified as being a crucial factor in the successful conduct of the test, and in ensuring that a **real** discussion between teacher and candidate took place. There are still a significant number of instances, however, of candidates presenting a rehearsed or over-prepared performance which the interlocutor fails to develop with any degree of spontaneity. There continue to be too many candidate "mini-monologues" which the interlocutor allows to be presented without intervention. This is clearly not in the spirit of the task. Centres need to be reminded that the **Discussion** element of the task should be a real discussion. This issue was commented upon by all members of the Verification team, and was indeed a contributory factor in the non-acceptance of three centres.

A number of centres, despite feedback and frequent references in the relevant documentation, continue to conduct overlengthy tests which more often than not are to the detriment of the candidate performance.

There were many fewer administrative problems this year, but some centres continue to submit materials (NABs, Prelim papers, etc.) which are not required for the verification exercise.

Centres' attention should be again drawn to the guidelines on the conditions for the conduct and recording of the tests in quiet surroundings. There remain too many examples of candidates whose performance was difficult to assess as a result of poor audibility and /or background noise.

Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade French, the Course assessment consists of 4 components

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General comments

There was a slight decrease in the number of candidates this year but the spread of candidature remained largely unchanged. Overall performance in the examination was good, with a slightly higher percentage of Grade 1 than in the previous three years. Cumulative Grades 1-3 and 1-4 were also higher and there were slightly fewer Grade 6 awards.

On the whole, the papers were well received and the content, particularly in the Reading papers, appealed to candidates.

In **Reading** and **Listening**, there was an improvement at Credit level. There was a slight improvement in **Speaking** across the grades, whereas a slight decrease in performance in **Writing** at Grades 1-3.

In **Speaking**, candidates performed very well at all levels and in the centres moderated, there was virtually total agreement with the grades awarded. Developing the role play from the basic scenario remains an area for development.

In **Writing**, a good number of candidates produced work of an outstanding standard and, in general, pupils were well prepared for the tasks. Able candidates performed very well in topics which lent themselves to expressing opinions. Many pupils are clearly comfortable using the language and using complex structures with confidence. Where candidates had clearly engaged in the development of the Writing process, the end result was very pleasing. At G/F levels, pupils performed well with straightforward but accurate pieces and there were fewer inappropriate tasks set this year.

Listening once again proved to be the most difficult element. Although the Foundation paper was well done, some basic vocabulary was, surprisingly, not known by many. The General paper was challenging for the F/G cohort and the Credit paper was done well, with those just missing out on Credit scoring very well in the General paper.

The **Reading** papers were particularly well received. There was a good performance in the Foundation paper. In the General paper, the F/G cohort kept going all the way through, whereas in previous years many gave up before completion. The G/C candidates performed exceptionally well in the General

paper and the Credit paper was generally well done. Lack of detail in answers, though, is still an issue and the quality of answers was sometimes affected by a poor standard of English.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In **Speaking**, performance was good at all levels.

Writing at Credit level produced fewer top grades, despite many excellent performances where candidates were set topics which allowed them to expand on ideas and make their responses “their own” without being over-prepared. There were many impressive pieces of Writing which were well beyond Credit level. At General level, there was evidence of solid, accurate Writing in shorter pieces and a number of candidates scored well with pieces which had been written in S3.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, candidates performed well throughout with the exception of Q8. In the General paper supported questions were, as expected, answered well, although Q10 did pose some unexpected difficulties. Also, help provided in the rubrics was not always picked up by F/G candidates due to lesser developed Reading skills. At Credit level, Questions 1-3 provided better responses than Q4, 5.

Listening at Foundation level showed a good performance overall. In both the General and Credit papers, candidates picked up most marks in the earlier sections of the papers. At General, Questions 1, 3(b), 6 and 7 were particularly well done and at Credit, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (a), 10n and 13 met with greatest success.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Writing**, able Credit candidates continue to be disadvantaged where centres focus on fairly mundane topics – *Ma journée...*, *Chez moi...*, *La nourriture...*, *Ce que j’aime et ce que je n’aime pas...*, *Ma famille...*

In a lot of such cases, the language is basic or repetitive, but it is clear from other pieces of good, discursive Writing that the candidates are capable of much better.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, Q8 proved to be most difficult. Candidates tended to pick out individual words without seeing the complete answer. Also, poor dictionary skills let a number of candidates down. At General level, there was again a tendency for a significant number of the F/G cohort to focus on individual nouns rather than looking at groupings of words, thus ignoring essential verbs. Questions 2, 5, 6 and 9 were found to be most difficult, with Q6 being answered frequently using general knowledge (about the tsunami). Lack of detail also lost marks e.g. in Q9 where *dessert* and *petit déjeuner* were not referred to. At Credit level, there were often problems with lack of detail, particularly where

expressions of quantity were mentioned – *plus...*, *assez...*, *moins...*, *trop...*. Other expressions caused specific difficulty – *rien ne peut changer...*, *ne laissez pas trainer tes affaires par terre...*, *en train de...*

In **Listening** at Foundation level, it was surprising that candidates had problems with basic vocabulary for food and drink – *pain...*, *confiture...*, school subjects – *chimie...*, weather – *il fait beau...*, *il neige...* and places – *l'église...*, *la gare...*. At General and Credit levels, there were a number of wild guesses at words which candidates thought sounded like words in English, resulting in answers which were well wide of the mark – *concours* (conkers), *entier* (auntie), *discuter* (disco), *quelque chose* (shoes), *avec qui* (with your key), *beaucoup de monde* (a lot of demand), *mon portable* (comfortable), *gratuit* (graffiti). A number of these renditions were replicated by a fair number of candidates. Lack of detail lost marks, particularly at Credit level.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

SPEAKING

For Credit candidates, centres should develop the role play beyond the basic scenario.

READING AND LISTENING

Candidates should re-read their answers to make sure they make sense and be aware that the quality of English can affect the points awarded. Also, be aware of common *faux amis*.

Sufficient detail should be given in answers, particularly at Credit level. Partial answers frequently fall short of what is required to gain the full point.

At all levels, look at entire phrases and sentences, rather than individual words.

WRITING

Mundane topics disadvantage the abler candidates. Also, where the candidate actively engages in the Writing process, excellent pieces of Writing can ensue. There is still evidence of over-preparation of candidates, with many pieces of Writing being similar rather than “individualised”.

Course Assessment: Intermediate 1

In Intermediate 1 French, the Course assessment consists of 3 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The level of demand of the examination has been held constant over the years, while the composition of the cohort attempting the examination continues to develop and settle down. At this level, the guidance given to setters concerning the length and type of text is very prescriptive and consequently, the examination was again appropriate in terms of content, which related clearly to the prescribed themes and topics for this level, and in terms of the level of difficulty which was appropriate and in line with previous years. The overall level of performance by candidates was very good, although slightly down in relation to the large increase in performance of the previous year.

The Mean Marks for each element were as follows:

Reading = 20.9 (35) – down 2.4

Listening = 11.1 (20) – down 1.4

Writing = 7.7 (15) – down 0.1

Speaking = 23.8 (30) – up 0.1

The mean marks show an encouraging performance in all four language skills with a strong performance in both Reading and Speaking, where the mean mark continues to be well above half of the available marks. Performance in Listening and Writing is still slightly disappointing as it is only just above half of the available marks. The mean marks and the distribution of grades would suggest that this year's cohort was able and well prepared for the examination and centres are to be congratulated on this, however, there were fewer outstanding performances than in the previous year. Nonetheless, the performance of candidates in all components was encouraging and there were still some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Writing) and relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

The performance of candidates in the Reading Paper was very encouraging. The four texts provided good progression in terms of the level of difficulty and demand and the vast majority of candidates related well to the content of the reading texts. Most candidates scored well in the shorter texts but it was in the more demanding, longer texts that improvement was most noticeable and relatively few candidates compared to previous years were unable to attempt with

some success the final questions. There was less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule in the marking of both the Reading and Listening answers, which suggests that candidates are being trained well not to exceed the required amount of information indicated in the question. Although the mean mark for the Writing task is still low, there were still some excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well and were able to write at some length and with a high level of accuracy to show what can be produced by good candidates within the confines of the task. Although overall the performance in Listening is variable, most candidates have been well prepared to cope with predictable items including numbers, times, dates and high frequency vocabulary.

Areas which candidates found demanding

As was indicated by the mean marks, the most difficult components for candidates remain Listening and Writing. Some candidates continue to find the Listening element difficult owing in part to the inability to give sufficient details in their answers, often managing to recognise part of the answer (**ennuyeux**) but not the precise details (**pas**). More surprising was the inability of candidates to perform well in the supported questions (1 and 6) and to recognise common vocabulary (**fraises/ fromage/ montre/ sac à main**) including numbers (**500 grammes**), times (**quatre heures/ minuit**), and places (**devant l'église**). Many candidates again had considerable difficulty with the Writing element, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. There were still a few candidates for whom the task was clearly beyond their ability and who failed to provide the required number of pieces of information for each of the areas. In preparing candidates for these elements, many centres need to give further guidance on what constitutes 3 sentences, the accuracy required in terms of spelling, genders and use of accents and how candidates can go beyond a minimal response.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/Listening:

In responding to the questions in the reading and listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question and should be discouraged from giving extraneous information as this is likely to be penalised. Indeed to avoid candidates falling foul of the extraneous rule, the question itself now usually indicates the amount of information the candidate is required to give by stating in bold e.g. '**Mention 2 of them**'.

In preparation for the Reading Paper, centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 1 Level and should continue to give candidates sufficient practice with longer texts in preparation for texts 3 and 4.

Particularly in the Listening Paper, centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, prepositions and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

In preparing candidates for the Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at recording information from texts after only **two hearings**. It is important to stress to centres and to candidates that they will hear the text only **two times** as opposed to three times for the internal unit assessment and at Standard Grade.

Writing:

Centres need to give further guidance to candidates on what constitutes an adequate amount of information (3 sentences) in each section of the Writing task and need to encourage candidates to take greater care in how they present this information particularly in the formation of verb tenses. The new expanded version of the pegged mark descriptors gives a good indication of what is required of candidates in this task **and these criteria should be shared with candidates**. The exemplification of candidates' performances, which accompanied the new descriptors, also provides centres with examples of good and very good performances in this writing task in order to show how it is possible to prepare candidates to produce more than a 'minimalist' response under each of the sections.

General:

Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

The overall performance at Intermediate 1 level indicates that most centres, which are moving from Standard Grade to the National Qualifications Framework, are aware that Intermediate 1 represents **progression from** Foundation level and is benchmarked against General level. However, the increase in the number of poor performances in Writing suggests that some centres may still be having difficulty in presenting candidates at the correct level relative to their ability. Most centres also appear to be making effective use of the guidance issued by SQA in the form of the materials (marking schemes and Photostat essays) used at the Professional Development Workshop on Intermediate 1 and 2 (December 2005). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 1 level have also been issued to accompany the new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that these will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Course Assessment: Intermediate 2

In Intermediate 2 French, the Course assessment consists of 3 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Intermediate 2 and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. Each element of the examination was accessible to all candidates but proved demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole were well prepared for each element with very few really poor performances. The Mean Marks for each element were almost identical to those of the previous year and were as follows:

Reading = 23.3 (30) – identical

Listening = 12.6 (20) – up 0.1

Writing = 13.4 (20) – up 0.1

Speaking = 23.4 (30) – up 0.3

The mean marks show a good level of performance in all four language skills with the average performance in each skill well in excess of half of the available marks. There was again a small but continuing improvement in Listening, although the mean mark indicates that this is still the skill most candidates find most difficult. Overall, the performance of candidates was very encouraging with some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Writing) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and had been presented at the level in the National Qualification Framework appropriate to their level of ability. In the Reading Paper there was good progression in the level of demand through the shorter to the longer fourth text with most candidates scoring highly in the shorter texts and managing to sustain this level of performance throughout the longer and more demanding final text. In Listening, candidates performed well in Question 1 where the content was drawn mainly from personal and social language and in general were better prepared to identify correctly the more predictable items such as numbers, times, weather phrases and common areas of vocabulary. There was less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule in the marking of reading and listening answers, which suggests that candidates have been trained well to heed the required amount of information indicated in the questions. In the Writing task there were many excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well by their centre and were

able to write at considerable length and with a high level of accuracy, range and variety of structures. Such candidates are well placed to do well at Higher level should they decide to proceed with their study of French.

Areas which candidates found demanding

With the exception of a few candidates in the Writing and Listening, there were few really poor performances, which indicates that there is a satisfactory progression from the level of performance demanded in the internal unit assessments for each skill to the level demanded in the external assessment. Although there was a continuing improvement in the candidates' performance in Listening, many candidates still find it difficult to retain the specific details while listening to the three relatively long texts. To compensate for this there is a mix of straightforward as well as more demanding questions and it is disappointing that many candidates failed to gain these 'easier' points owing to the inability to recognise numbers (between the ages of **11** and **17**), directions (**dans l'Est de la France**) and basic food vocabulary (**de bons jambons et toutes sortes de fromage**). Passage 3 in the Listening, concerning the time spent in Scotland as an assistant, was least well done with few candidates recognising where he stayed during his trip (**une auberge de jeunesse**) or that the reason for the lack of trees was '**il y a trop de vent**'. The Writing task, in spite of its predictable nature, was again the element, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. Less able candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy to achieve a satisfactory performance. Very few candidates failed to address the compulsory bullet points but the less able candidates were not well prepared to give reasons for their application nor to deal with requesting information about the job and were unable to form comprehensible questions. A few candidates seemed unaware of the formal tone required when writing a job application and poor handwriting, poor layout, poor spelling and the lack of the appropriate use of accents created a negative impression.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/Listening:

In responding to the questions in the reading and listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question, should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood but should be discouraged from giving extraneous information as this is likely to be penalised. Indeed to avoid candidates falling foul of the extraneous rule, the question itself now usually indicates the amount of information the candidate is required to give by stating in bold e.g. '**Mention 2 things**'.

Particularly in the Listening Paper, centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, prepositions and question words, so that some of

the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

In preparing candidates for the Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at recording information from texts after only **two hearings**. It is important to stress to centres and to candidates that they will hear the text only **two times** as opposed to three times for the internal unit assessment and at Standard Grade.

Writing:

Centres should ensure that candidates read carefully the information regarding the job for which they are applying and are trained to:

- complete successfully the opening sentence with which they are provided so that they are able to indicate the nature of the correct job for which they are applying.
- ask specific questions regarding the job rather than provide a general statement such as "Envoyez-moi des renseignements"
- use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders etc.) **not** to create new sentences
- be aware of the new extended criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories.

General:

Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

The high level of performance overall at Intermediate 2 level indicates that most centres are making effective use of guidance issued by SQA in the form of the materials (marking schemes and Photostat essays) used at the Professional Development Workshop on Intermediate 1 and 2 (December 2005). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 2 level have also been issued to accompany the new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that these will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher French, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers and a Speaking Assessment

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The content of the examination related clearly to the teaching syllabus as indicated by the prescribed themes and topics for Higher level and was of an appropriate level of difficulty. Each element of the examination was accessible to all candidates but proved demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole were well prepared for each element with very few really poor performances. The Mean Marks for each element were as follows:

Reading/Directed Writing = 27.6 (45) – down 1.1

Listening/Writing = 16.5 (30) – same

Speaking = 20.5% (25) – up 0.2

The mean marks show an encouraging performance (very similar to that of the previous year) in all elements of the examination with the drop in performance in Paper 1: Reading/Directed Writing attributable to a more demanding translation task. The encouraging improvement of the previous year in Paper 2: Listening and Writing has been maintained. Nevertheless, the mean mark for Paper 2: is still only just above half of the available marks, which indicates that Listening is still the skill most candidates find most difficult. However, the performance overall in each component was very encouraging with some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Translation) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in the two Writing tasks).

Areas in which candidates performed well

Performance in Reading was again very encouraging with many excellent performances. Candidates clearly found the content and vocabulary of the reading passage '**Dialoguer en famille Quelle corvée!!**' accessible and on a topic to which they could relate. On the whole, candidates succeeded in responding accurately to the reading comprehension questions and there was less evidence of 'word for word translation' of the text (with the exception of some attempts to render '**les mœurs de la société et le rythme familiale**') resulting in the loss of marks through awkward use of English. Performance in the Translation section was also very encouraging in spite of the demanding nature of the first and third sense units (**Il y a des soirs où l'on se retrouve Et la petite déjà couchée**). On the other hand, it was surprising the number of candidates who mistranslated **files** and **mon mari**. Again this year there were also some excellent

performances in both of the writing tasks, where very able candidates demonstrated all the elements required of a very good performance and produced a well-structured and accurate piece of writing containing an excellent range and variety of language structures.

Areas which candidates found demanding

There was a satisfactory performance in the Listening Comprehension, which was on a topic (**Life in the capital city, Paris**) with which candidates were familiar and the quality and speed of recording were good. However, many candidates were unable to retain sufficient details to answer accurately the more difficult Questions 1-3 often understanding part of the information e.g. **animé** but without the detail **de jour comme de nuit**. However, most candidates were able to compensate to some extent by showing understanding of the more factual information required for questions 4-6. It was disappointing, however, that many candidates failed to demonstrate comprehension of the 'easier' points by failing to recognise the comparison (**en hiver en été**) and common vocabulary including **faire les courses en banlieue/ me paient le logement/ m'offrir des vêtements**.

The Writing tasks were again the element of the exam, which produced the greatest range of performances from very good to very poor. Many candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy and relevance to achieve a satisfactory performance, while a relatively small number of candidates produced poor and very poor performances with little or no control of basic grammar and verb formation.

Both of the Writing tasks proved challenging but accessible for most candidates and required the candidates to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks. It was worrying that a number of candidates did not approach the tasks in this way, relying instead on the dictionary to help them to create new sentences with predictably dire consequences. This was particularly noticeable in the Directed Writing task, where many candidates reproduced accurately relevant learned material for the predictable bullet points but struggled to find any relevant learned material for the less predictable bullet points (particularly number 4: **how the town celebrated the (twinning) anniversary** and often resorted to misuse of dictionary and 'unidiomatic translation from English'. However, in general in the Directed Writing, relatively few candidates were penalised for avoiding and failing to address fully a bullet point.

The topic of the personal response essay (Paper 2) was one with which all candidates should have been familiar and there were fewer instances of candidates struggling for ideas and therefore misusing the dictionary to produce what they considered to be the French equivalent of suitable English expressions. The candidates seemed better prepared to deal with the first part of the stimulus (**Quels sont les avantages et les inconvénients d'habiter dans une grande ville?**) than the second part (**Avez-vous l'intention de quitter votre ville pour suivre votre carrière?**). Although the essay was on a topic accessible to all candidates, many did less well than might have been expected through the use of repetitive language (**il y a plus** lists of places in the town) and did not use the range and variety of vocabulary and structures required to achieve the top categories. In both Writing

tasks the legibility of handwriting caused some problems, while poor spelling and the lack of accents sometimes created an unfavourable impression.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation:

- 1 Continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation of a particular section of the text
- 2 Encourage candidates to attempt the translation **after** the reading comprehension questions as that should make clear the context in which the translation section is situated
- 3 Encourage candidates to answer the specific wording of the question and discourage candidates from giving a word for word translation of the text as a response to the reading comprehension questions, as this often results in incomprehensible use of English.
- 4 Encourage candidates to look closely at each word in each section of the translation passage and to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing:

- 1 Encourage candidates to write to the context set and to be prepared in some part of their writing **to explain the reason** for the visit to or from France
- 2 Advise candidates to consider carefully the wording of each bullet point and to ensure that they incorporate learned material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
- 3 Advise candidates to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, genders etc.) **not** to create and invent new sentences.
- 4 Share with candidates the new expanded assessment criteria for Writing so that they know what is expected in terms of Content, Accuracy, Range and Variety.

Listening/Writing:

- 1 In the Listening task encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract from the text
- 2 Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and not to lose marks by inaccurate rendering of numbers, prepositions and question words
- 3 In the Writing task, ensure candidates read the stimulus and incorporate and adapt learned material, which **is relevant to the aspects contained in the stimulus**.

General:

- 1 Encourage candidates to make sure handwriting is legible or points can be lost.
- 2 Although the internal Writing Task (Personal Record of Achievement) is

no longer mandatory as part of the 80 hour unit assessment, centres should consider continuing to use the task **as part of their teaching syllabus**. The task of writing a Personal Record of Achievement was designed to help candidates develop grammatical accuracy in handling present, past and future tenses and to focus on the accuracy that is required in terms of spelling, genders and agreements, when you move from the spoken to the written mode. The task was intended to help candidates develop their writing skills in a supported manner so that they would be better prepared for the external Writing tasks and as such it still has a valuable role to play in this.

Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher French, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers, a Folio and a Speaking Assessment

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

Overall, candidates responded quite well to what was considered by the examining team to be a fair and appropriate paper. As last year, there were not so many “very good” performances across all papers. The standard of English was weaker this year, resulting in confused answers in many candidates` papers.

Speaking.

Candidates performed well in this exercise and showed that they are willing to talk. Over-preparation is still a problem for some with candidates unable to cope when diverted from learned material. All in all, however, a very worthwhile exercise for everybody concerned.

Folio

With the extra 250 words available for the essays in the Extended Reading and Viewing option, the Folios were felt to be better this year with some very sound performances. There were still some very weak essays, especially if they were based on background topics. Some titles are not appropriate for an AH essay; some candidates were let down by imprecise titles or titles that were impossible to do justice to, even with the extra word allowance. This year saw a rise in the number of centres who are preparing an essay with candidates who then reproduce it “en masse”, and virtually the same, in their Folio. This is not quite the spirit of AH French where it is the candidates` *own* work that is required.

Again this year, Markers commented that, in some instances, candidates have either only read the book in English or only watched a video or film of a book.

The Language in Work option was attempted by very few candidates.

Paper 1. Reading and translation.

Overall performance was as last year. Some comprehension questions were done quite well but lack of detail or precision and poor English expression marred many answers, along with a failure to develop answers in a manner appropriate to Advanced Higher. With only the one inferencing question this year candidates were able to concentrate more on their answer and there was some improvement here. However, there was a tendency to come down on one side of the answer

rather than deal with the two parts. Imprecise answers with an “I think” but no back-up from the text were still commonplace.

The translation proved to be testing in parts but there were some good responses. However, the standard of English let many candidates down, not only here but also in the Comprehension questions, where answers sometimes became very confused because of poor English expression

Paper 2 Listening and Writing

Overall performance was very much as last year and again it was felt that there were far fewer “very good” performances.

In the Listening, Passage A was done better than in previous years, and the early questions were quite accessible. Passage B proved more testing and, as in the Reading paper, poor, unidiomatic English cost marks. Lack of detail in answers was also a feature in both sections.

In the Writing there was a good spread in the take-up of titles. However, the problem of rehearsed essays is still obvious despite efforts to create titles which require that little bit extra. On some occasions, candidates’ pre-learned essays were reproduced without detailed reference to the question set, and therefore were just Satisfactory at best. The “technology” essay produced many “Higher” lifestyle television essays but “La Presse” produced some very heartening personal attempts, as did “Vivre pour Manger”.

The quality of the French was sometimes disappointing, especially the verbs: tenses/infinitives/endings. Accents were frequently omitted. There was also a lot more anglicised French, for some reason.

There were fewer very weak essays.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates always manage to impress the Visiting Examiners in the speaking test.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading and Translation

Time is still a problem in this paper. Poor time management means that either the translation or the inferencing question can be rushed.

Parts of the translation were badly done.

Listening and Writing

Listening is still found demanding.

Writing needs much more accuracy.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Folio

Centres should ensure that they are fully aware of requirements.

Films, unless part of a Background essay, are not enough.

Titles should invite analysis and personal views.

Detailed bibliographies should be added, as should word-counts.

Quotations should be full and accurate, and in French.

Characters` names should be spelled correctly.

Reading and Translation

Detailed answers in good English.

Manage time better.

Practise translation. It should read as good English.

Listening and Writing

Listening

Practise as much as possible

Answer in as much detail as possible

Writing

Titles are designed so that prepared essays will not be enough.

Content and structure appropriate to AH French.

Basic grammatical accuracy is essential...tenses, accents, agreements.

Practise use of dictionary.