



National Qualifications

Course Report 2008: French

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

Contents

Introduction	1
Summary of Findings	2
Entries and Awards	3
Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses	9
Course Assessment: Standard Grade	11
Course Assessment: Intermediate 1	14
Course Assessment: Intermediate 2	17
Course Assessment: Higher	20
Course Assessment: Advanced Higher	23

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 – jim.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk

Summary of Findings

General

Candidates engaged well with external assessments across all levels in French in 2008, and there was positive feedback from candidates and centres; performance indicated that papers were again accessible, robust and of an appropriate standard.

Fewer candidates were presented for Standard Grade than in the previous year, however there was a steady increase in presentation at Access 3, Intermediate 1 & 2. There was a modest increase in the number of candidates presented at Higher. It was also heartening to see an increase of 15% in entries at Advanced Higher.

At all levels, the Report will offer information and advice which will be useful in informing departmental discussion and future progress. In particular, it is important for centres to refer closely to information and advice relating to the Standard Grade Folio, where the selection and approaches to Writing tasks can restrict candidate performance. Also Advanced Higher Folio, where the selection of some tasks and approaches - for both essays and Reports - are unsuitable.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade French

Year	Entries
2008	30,774
2007	32,315
2006	33,838

Grade boundaries for each assessable element

Grade Boundaries 2008

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 1 Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	26	18	13	32	20	14	33	20	13
Listening	25	15	10	26	16	11	27	16	12

Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 1 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 1 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

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2008	30,774	16.4%	21.9%	25.8%	21.1%	9.6%	1.9%	0.0%	3.2%
2007	32,315	16.7%	21.0%	24.4%	23.8%	9.1%	1.8%	0.0%	3.2%
2006	33,838	18.1%	21.0%	24.5%	22.6%	9.0%	1.3%	0.0%	3.5%

Entries and Awards — National Qualification Courses

Access 2

	Entries	Awards
2008	133	86
2007	93	81
2006	101	81

Access 3

	Entries	Awards
2008	2,412	2,121
2007	1,668	1,468
2006	1,998	1,532

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 French

Year	Entries
2008	1,691
2007	1,578
2006	1,465

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	1,691	39.0%	22.4%	18.8%	80.2%	6.4%	13.3%
2007	1,578	37.9%	20.5%	18.0%	76.4%	5.8%	17.8%
2006	1,465	47.8%	20.3%	14.5%	82.6%	4.3%	13.1%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 French

Year	Entries
2008	3,512
2007	3,275
2006	2,668

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	3,512	66.1%	19.4%	9.3%	94.8%	1.7%	3.6%
2007	3,275	60.4%	21.2%	11.1%	92.6%	2.8%	4.6%
2006	2,668	59.3%	20.4%	11.7%	91.5%	2.7%	5.8%

Entries and Awards — Higher French

Year	Entries
2008	4,602
2007	4,573
2006	4,287

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	69	59	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	4,602	46.2%	21.4%	18.0%	85.5%	5.3%	9.1%
2007	4,573	39.9%	25.3%	19.1%	84.3%	6.5%	9.2%
2006	4,287	43.1%	19.6%	19.2%	82.0%	6.5%	11.5%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher French

Year	Entries
2008	719
2007	624
2006	642

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	200	140	119	99	89
2007	200	139	119	99	89
2006	200	140	119	98	87

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	719	24.6%	24.9%	25.9%	75.4%	10.2%	14.5%
2007	624	23.6%	25.0%	23.9%	72.4%	10.9%	16.7%
2006	642	23.5%	22.6%	27.1%	73.2%	10.4%	16.4%

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified

French (Intermediate 1 + 2, Higher): Speaking: Presentation and Discussion

Feedback to Centres

General comments

Centres' assessments were again this year largely concordant with verifier judgments and there were a number of Very Good performances at all three levels.

Verifiers noted that there was a real and extremely pleasing improvement in the manner in which the test was conducted in the majority of centres. Whereas in previous years there has been a worrying number of instances of candidate performances in the **Discussion** element of the test being over-prepared and /or over-rehearsed, with a corresponding lack of spontaneity, this year, while there were still some examples of this, most of the verifiers made a point of reporting that there were many more instances of real discussions between interlocutor and candidate, with the result that the conduct of the test was much more natural and less contrived. A number of verifiers went out of their way to praise the interlocutor(s) for the manner in which they engaged their candidates, reacting to their statements and giving encouragement as appropriate, all of which helps to put the candidates at their ease.

Again, this year there were fewer examples of overlengthy tests, but where they did occur, they again proved to be to the detriment of the candidate.

All of the verifiers still find that poor pronunciation is an issue, especially at Higher level. Centres need to remember that this is a vital factor in ensuring that successful communication takes place.

Very few centres had difficulties with the completion of the relevant documentation this year, and for the first time, no centre submitted materials that were not required.

Verifiers again commented that in a number of centres, candidate performance was difficult to assess as a result of background noise, usually external but occasionally internal (and avoidable if a suitably quiet environment is provided for the conduct of the test).

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

I would simply reiterate that more centres would appear to be taking notice of the requirement for the Discussion element of the test to be a real and spontaneous conversation. This is a vital aspect of the successful conduct of the test, and it is one of the main issues that will be highlighted at a

Professional

Development Workshop on the Assessment of Speaking in November of this year.

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, once again, a slight decrease in the number of candidates presented this year, but the spread of candidature was similar to that of 2007. Performance overall in the examination was good. Whilst those achieving a Grade 1 was on a par with last year, the cumulative Grades 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 and 1-6 were higher than in the previous three years.

The papers were well received and the content appealed to candidates. Feedback also indicated that the papers were set at appropriate levels,

In **Reading**, there was a significant improvement in performance from those candidates achieving the upper of the General awards whilst at Credit level the performance was largely unchanged. In **Listening**, the performance at Credit level was slightly down but the percentage of candidates achieving Grades 3 and 4 increased significantly. In **Speaking**, candidates performed marginally better than in 2007 and performance was good at all levels. In centres externally verified, there was again virtually total agreement with the Grades awarded. Performance in **Writing** was similar to the previous year.

In **Writing**, many candidates produced work of outstanding quality and were well prepared for the tasks. Topics which lent themselves to expressing opinions suited very able candidates. Many candidates are comfortable and confident when expressing complex structures. Where pupils engaged in the Writing process, rather than attempting to learn a chunk of language, the results were particularly pleasing. At G/F levels, there were many straightforward and accurate pieces, producing good results. Very few centres set tasks which were inappropriate.

Listening was again found to be the most difficult element. Although the Foundation paper was well done on the whole, there were some surprising gaps in basic vocabulary. The General paper in particular was well answered and those candidates just missing out on a Credit award scored very highly in the General paper.

The **Reading** papers were well received and performance was good, particularly the significant improvement at Grade 3. At Credit level, quality of answers was often affected by poor expression in English and lack of care in reading over answers to make sure that they made sense.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Speaking performance was good at all levels. Performance in the Extended Role Play was particularly improved.

In **Writing** at Credit level, candidates performed well where the pieces were clearly an expansion of their own ideas and were not over-prepared.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, candidates coped well with nearly all questions and in particular Q3. In the General paper, the supported questions were, as expected, well done. Questions 1, 5, 6 and 7 were particularly well answered. At Credit level, Questions 4 and 5 provided many excellent responses and improved many performances, possibly because these two texts caught the candidates' interest.

Listening at Foundation level showed good performances overall, particularly in Questions 1, 2, 3 and 10. At General level, most performed well in the supported questions but lack of attention to detail in written answers often lost marks. In the Credit paper, questions 1-7 were generally answered correctly by many candidates and Questions 11 and 12 did not pose too many problems.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Writing**, candidates continue to be disadvantaged at Credit level when set mundane topics such as *Ma journée...*, *Chez moi...*, *Ma Routine...* In such instances, the language tended to be repetitive and basic.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, Q5 posed some difficulties with candidates failing to express themselves clearly and give complete answers and also use the dictionary effectively. At General level in Q3, very few pupils grasped the notion that the outside label had been torn off (G/F and G/C cohorts). In Q4, lack of detail penalised a number of candidates. Poor dictionary skills also let a number of candidates down, especially where they focussed on individual nouns rather than entire phrases. Surprisingly, the Daily Routine vocabulary in Q7 proved demanding for the G/F cohort. Lack of detail e.g. in Q2 - *less than*, Q7 - *par jour*, Q8 - *plus de* caused marks to be lost. Other vocabulary proving to be testing - *municipale...*, *un voyage d'affaires ou de loisirs*. In the Credit paper, Q3 was least well done and in Q5(a), lack of detail in answers and confusion with years and relevance of numbers lost marks. "Wee words" like *ne...plus, n'importe..., car..., entre* were, surprisingly, often not known and there were mistranslations of *sortir* (to sort), *location* (location), *a été* (summer), *affaires* (affairs), *occupé* (occupies), *horaire* (hourly) at G/C levels. Also at Credit level - difficulties with *les problèmes graves...*, *les gouvernements ne font pas assez...*, *des sommes importantes...*

In **Listening** at Foundation level, it was surprising that candidates had difficulty with basic words such as *sympa* and *jolie* and with numbers and weather expressions. At General level in Q9, there was confusion of information relating to Nicolas' mother's opinions. In Q10(b), pupils were perhaps disadvantaged by being asked for two pieces of information for one point - where and when. In Q12, a large number of candidates did not know *Allemagne*. At Credit level, many candidates did not link the girl's age to her aspirations and missed out the information *à l'âge de cinq ou six ans*. In Q14, the idea of might/would like to was largely misunderstood. Q9 - some muddled answers relating to *...ma mere m'emmenait aux cours de musique et de danse*. Other difficulties - *équilibré...*, *huit heures de sommeil...*

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

READING AND LISTENING

Candidates should focus on re-reading their answers to make sure that they make sense, especially where *faux amis* are concerned. Poor expression in English can easily lose marks.

Answers need to be detailed to gain points at Credit, and sometimes, General levels.

Candidates can lose marks by focussing on individual nouns rather than on entire phrases.

WRITING

Centres should ensure that tasks are challenging enough for Credit candidates.

There is still some evidence of over-preparation of candidates, rather than getting them to individualise and engage in the Writing process.

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 for each component 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 is now very good and was very much in line with the performance of the previous year.

The Mean Marks for each element were as follows:

Reading = 20.4 (35) – down 0.5

Listening = 12.2 (20) – up 1.1

Writing = 8.0 (15) – up 0.3

Speaking = 24.3 (30) – up 0.5

The mean marks indicate an encouraging performance in all four language skills with a continuing, gradual improvement in Listening and Writing which still remain the most difficult components with mean marks that are still only just above half of the available marks. The mean marks and the distribution of grades would suggest, however, that this year's cohort were presented at the correct level in the National Qualifications Framework and had been well prepared for the examination.

Centres are to be congratulated as the performance of candidates in all components was encouraging and there were some excellent performances (particularly in Writing) and relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Areas in which candidates performed well

Although there was a decrease in the mean mark, the performance of candidates in the Reading Paper was still encouraging, as relatively few candidates compared to previous years were unable to attempt with some success the longer third and fourth texts. 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.

Although overall the performance in Listening is variable, most candidates had been well prepared to cope with predictable items including numbers, times, colours and high frequency vocabulary (e.g. household tasks / countries / places in town). 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.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading Paper many candidates lost points through failing to provide sufficiently detailed answers and surprisingly many lost points in the first two shorter texts. The supported question 1 c was badly done by some candidates who failed to render **seize** as 16 and to understand **travailler en équipe**. Question 2 c caused problems for many with the phrase **peu de transports en commun**, while the accuracy of comprehension required to answer the final question 4h was beyond the ability of all but the very good candidates: **Je n'aime pas les gens qui parlent seulement de feuillets ou de jeux d'ordinateur**. Throughout the Reading paper many candidates continued to have problems with 'false friends' and translated **travailler** as travel, **journée** as journey and **car/autocar** as car.

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 (**c'est un cadeau**) but not the precise details (**de ma mère**). More surprising was the inability of candidates to perform well in the supported questions (4 and 7) and to recognise common vocabulary (**mariée / fais la vaisselle / lunettes de soleil / un appareil photo**) including numbers (**18 ans / 200 euros**), time phrases (**vers 9 heures ce matin / à 5 minutes**), weather phrases (**il fait souvent trop chaud**) and prepositions and places (**en face de la poste**). Many candidates also had difficulty with the phrase **je sors la poubelle** and with the final question 10 which required them to demonstrate comprehension of the following two questions in French: **Où est le restaurant de l'hôtel?** and **Est-ce qu'on peut prendre le petit déjeuner dans sa chambre?**

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 this component, 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 noting 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 for 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 now aware that Intermediate 1 represents **progression from** Foundation level and is benchmarked against General level. However, 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. Centres are encouraged to make 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) and the Professional Development Workshop on Writing at NQF Levels 4 and 5 (December 2007). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 1 level has also been issued to accompany the new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that this 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 component of the examination was accessible to all candidates but proved demanding and produced a good range of performances. Candidates on the whole had been well prepared by centres for each component and there were few really poor performances. The Mean Marks for each component were as follows:

Reading = 24.0 (30) – up 0.7

Listening = 14.2 (20) – up 1.6

Writing = 13.5 (20) – up 0.1

Speaking = 23.3 (30) – down 0.1

The mean marks indicate 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 a significant and welcome 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 Qualifications Framework appropriate to their level of ability. In the Reading Paper candidates seemed to identify with the topics of the texts (holiday work / suggestions for improvements at school / voluntary work – looking after animals and providing overseas aid). There was good progression in the level of demand through the shorter to the longer fourth reading text with most candidates scoring highly in the shorter texts and with an increasing number managing to sustain this level of performance throughout the longer and more demanding final text. In Listening, candidates performed well in Questions 1 and 2 where the content focused on the details of working over the summer in an amusement park and in general candidates were better prepared to identify correctly the more predictable items such as numbers, times, weather phrases and common areas of vocabulary (e.g. clothes and colours). 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.

Most candidates coped well with the Reading texts but some lost points through not providing sufficiently detailed answers, particularly in Question 4 c where candidates had difficulty in rendering the questions: **Qui va promener le chien quand il pleut?** and **Où va-t-on laisser le chien lorsqu'on part en vacances?** Some candidates also failed to understand the significance of **sauf** in the phrase **sauf les repas et les boissons**.

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 (**35 heures par semaine, 8 euros de l'heure, 15 nationalités différentes**), time phrases (**toutes les demi-heures**) prepositions (**près de la sortie / sous les lits**) and to link the correct colour to the correct article of clothing (**une casquette rouge / un tee-shirt jaune / un pantalon noir**). Passage 3 in the Listening was least well done by most candidates with many candidates unaware that Martinique is an island (**une île montagneuse**) and many rendered **sites historiques** as historical cities.

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 of them'**.

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 noting 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 for Standard Grade.

In preparing candidates for the Reading, centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at reading longer texts similar in length and complexity to that set in Question 4

Writing

Centres should ensure that candidates read carefully the information regarding the job for which they are applying, **are discouraged from writing long lists of school subjects** (and then repeating the list with a past or future verb tense) 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) and the Professional Development Workshop on Writing at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (December 2007). Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 2 level has also been issued to accompany the new extended pegged mark descriptors and it is hoped that this 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 component with very few really poor performances. The Mean Marks for each component were as follows:

Reading/Directed Writing = 29.1 (45) – up 1.5

Listening/Writing = 17.8 (30) – up 1.3

Speaking = 20.5% (25) – same

The mean marks show an encouraging performance in all components of the examination with a significant improvement in performance in both of the written papers. Candidates seem to have coped particularly well with the translation and the listening comprehension in comparison with previous years. The steady improvement in the mean mark for Paper 2: Listening and Writing has been maintained but still indicates that Listening is 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 ‘**Comment mon blog a changé ma vie.**’ 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 resulting in the loss of marks through awkward use of English. Performance in the Translation section was also very encouraging with many candidates achieving full marks. However, some candidates found the third and fourth sense units demanding (**Moi je suis célèbre depuis plus de quatre mois Et qu’ai-je fait pour mériter cette renommée?**) and it was surprising the number of candidates who mistranslated or confused **un quart d’heure** and **quatre mois**. 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 in general a much better performance than in the previous year in the Listening Comprehension, which was on a topic (**part-time jobs**) with which candidates were familiar and the clarity and speed of recording were commented on favourably by many centres. There was a good variety of straightforward and more demanding questions, which allowed most candidates to gain points in the early questions 1-4, while only the most able candidates gained both points in the final question; 'How has she benefited from the jobs?' It was disappointing, however, that some candidates failed to demonstrate comprehension of the 'easier' points by failing to recognise the more factual information including the time phrases: **deux fois par semaine** and **le mercredi soir** and common vocabulary including **mieux payé** and **de bons pourboires**. Many candidates were also unable to retain sufficient details required to answer accurately question 6 often understanding part of the information e.g. **études** but without the detail **supplémentaires** or **une longue journée** but without the detail **d'études**.

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 6: **how other students in your school/college will benefit from your visit**) 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 still a few 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 second part of the stimulus (**Quels sont les avantages et les inconvénients d'avoir un emploi à temps partiel?**) than the first part (**Est-ce que vous avez assez d'argent pour vos besoins?**). Although the essay was on a topic accessible to all candidates, many did less well than might have been expected through the inability to distinguish between the verb **travailler (je/j'ai travaille)** and the noun **travail (le monde de travaille)**, poor grammatical knowledge of genders and verb tenses and through poor spelling and the lack of accents which could have been checked through appropriate use of the dictionary.

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 Comprehension 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, accents 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

The general consensus of the markers this year was that the examination as a whole was quite accessible. It was felt that there were many Good and Satisfactory performances but not so many Very Good. There were also, it was felt, fewer Very Poor performances, but still some who struggle with the level of achievement required.

The poor level of English was commented on by the markers. Candidates' answers were often spoiled and occasionally incomprehensible because of poor English, more so than in previous years.

In both Papers, **Reading and Translation** and **Listening and Discursive Writing** candidates performed better than in previous years in the comprehension questions. This was perhaps mainly due to the questions leading the candidates to the answers more clearly. However, the translation passage was on the whole not well done. This was also the case with many essay selections.

There was not a significant increase in attainment for the Folio though it was heartening to see some new books being studied. Centres must note that it is not acceptable to study a film without appropriate literary source, which must be referenced and analysed in the essay.

Speaking. As always, Visiting Examiners praised the performances of candidates in this most rewarding of exercises. Candidates are, for the most part, well-prepared and willing to speak and it is always a pleasure to hear what they have to say. Occasionally, rooms allocated for the speaking are not the most suited but this never seems to throw the candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading and Translation

As already mentioned, candidates managed to answer the comprehension questions better this year. The passage as whole seemed to suit them very well. Answers were detailed and generally related to the question and there were fewer instances of wholesale translation of the text.

Listening and Discursive Writing

The Listening questions this year were answered much better than in previous years. Perhaps the topics were more accessible for candidates.

Folio

There were some very good Folio essays showing good preparation.

Speaking

Generally, candidates perform very well in this element.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading and Translation

Question 5, the *inferencing* question, proved once more to be very testing. Many candidates simply retold the content of the passage, others gave their own point of view which had nothing to do with what the author had stated.

Time is obviously still a serious factor, as many candidates only managed to write a line or two and one has the feeling that this question is left to the very end and hopefully there will be enough time to answer it.

The Translation was sometimes problematic for candidates. Careless translation and unrecognisable English spoiled some attempts.

Listening and Discursive Essay

The Essays were probably the part of the examination that were done least well. Candidates sometimes did not read the essay titles carefully enough and wrote essays that were largely irrelevant. This was especially obvious in the “Environment” essay where a prepared and memorised essay was reproduced but largely irrelevant to the question.

The essay on *censorship* was also poorly done as some candidates seemed to be unsure what censorship is and the *generation* essay dwelt mainly on relationships with parents rather than grandparents

The Europe essay on *working abroad* was reasonably well done.

Once again, essays were marred by some poor French. There were many instances of wrong genders, wrong tenses, no accents, lack of agreements of both verb and adjectives, poor use of dictionary - all led to quite a few disappointing performances.

Folio

The choice of title is crucial to the success and scope of many essays and centres must consider choices carefully. Guidance, both in terms of previously issued exemplification and materials from Professional Development Workshops are available and should be consulted.

For Extended Reading and Viewing Essays the study of films without literary source or reference to source are not acceptable

Poor bibliographies or even no bibliographies caused problems.

In addition poorly spelt quotations and quotations in English are still appearing despite recommendations having been given.

It is also important for centres to note that Language in Work Reports must provide critical evaluations and analysis of the vocational area studied. A number of candidates compiled Reports which offered little or no analysis or critical reflection.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

Answers to the comprehension questions should contain a much relevant detail as possible.

More practice is needed for the inferencing question. Personal comment is appropriate as long as reference to the text is made. Candidates need to focus their answers on evidence from the text.

More practice is needed in translation. Candidates should be aware that if the translation does not read or sound like English then it is quite likely that the translation is wrong.

Listening and Discursive Writing

Read the essay titles carefully. Pre-learned material needs to be adopted skilfully. If not it can be largely irrelevant and penalised as such.

Use of dictionary should be practised.

Folio

Read the Folio guidelines very carefully.

Choose essay titles with great care and thought and ensure that they are within the capacity of candidates. There is also a word limit of 750 words for each ERV essay. The word limit for Language in Work Reports is 1,500 words.

Make sure there is a bibliography and that it conforms with the guidelines sent to centres.

Take time to have a look at what the candidates have written and ensure that it conforms with what is required. Ensure that the content is appropriate to Advanced Higher.