Course report 2019

Subject	French
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper was comprised of three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). There were three supported questions (worth 4 marks in total). The question paper covered the contexts of learning, society and employability (the three contexts not covered in the listening question paper) and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics that engaged candidates well. Each text was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of responses.

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper required candidates to reply by email to a job advert. The question paper is worth 20 marks, with four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The candidates performed as expected, with many receiving full marks.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper was comprised of two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks and a conversation worth 12 marks, both included a supported question worth 1 mark each. The question paper was based on the context of culture. The context of culture, and the topic chosen, was slightly more demanding for candidates, and the grade boundary was adjusted to take account of this.

Assignment–writing

As expected, candidates performed very well in the assignment–writing. Topics were varied and, overall, candidates were able to use detailed language expected at this level.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected.

In the performance–talking, candidates are required to carry out a spoken presentation and then take part in a conversation directly afterwards.

Centres are familiar with how this coursework task works, and it is the same format year on year. Revised performance–talking marking instructions were published for session 2017–18; however, the aim and format of the task remain unchanged.

The revision from session 2017–18 requires candidates to cover an additional context in the conversation to that used in the presentation. In addition, the recommended duration of the conversation was extended from 4–5 minutes to 5–6 minutes from session 2017–18.

Many recordings verified fell significantly short of the recommended timings and this affected the outcome for the candidate. Only a few were unnecessarily long and affected the candidates' performances.

A small number of centres in the submission used an older version of the marking instructions for the sustaining the conversation section (not including pegged mark 1), although in these instances none of the judgements were affected (candidates were accurately awarded pegged mark 3 or 5).

In both the presentation and conversation sections, candidates are required to demonstrate detailed language at National 5. The four aspects of the performance (content, accuracy, language resource and interaction) remain unchanged compared to previous sessions.

Teachers and lecturers play an important role in guiding candidates prior to the assessment in their choice of contexts and topics. This is outlined in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*.

The majority of centres sampled this session had encouraged candidates to identify topics (from two of the contexts) which gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability against the four aspects. However, the choice of topics for some candidates did not allow them to demonstrate their ability to use detailed language at this level, for example family description.

The majority of centres sampled this session marked candidates' performances in line with national standards using the detailed marking instructions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper, with very few candidates giving no response to a question. Text 3 proved to be more challenging. There were a few examples of poor expression and mistranslation; however candidates often gave enough detail to gain the available marks.

Text 1 — context: learning

Overall, the candidates coped well with all questions in this first text with more than half of the candidates giving enough detail to gain the full available marks.

Text 2 — context: society

Candidates performed well with most of the questions in this second text.

Questions 2(a), 2(b), 2(c)(ii) and 2(e): many candidates answered these four questions particularly well, providing enough detail to gain the available marks.

Text 3 — context: employability

Question 3(a): this question was a supported question, and most candidates were able to pick out the correct information to complete the sentence correctly.

Questions 3(c) and 3(e): most candidates were able to give the detail required to gain the available marks for these questions.

Question paper 1: Writing

Candidates performed well in this question paper, with most being well prepared to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. There were some examples of dictionary misuse and mislearned material in response to the unpredictable bullet points.

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at National 5. Candidates were prepared for the two unpredictable bullet points and most candidates did address these, albeit to a greater or lesser extent. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised, rather than just a generic job application.

Question paper 2: Listening

There was a good range of marks in the listening question paper with a few candidates achieving full marks. It was encouraging to see that candidates were giving more detail in their responses to gain the available marks.

Monologue

Question 1(a): this was a supported question and most candidates gained the mark.

Conversation

Questions 2(a) and 2(c): most candidates gained the available marks for both questions.

Question 2(b): this was a supported question (tick box) and the vast majority of candidates were able to gain the available mark.

Assignment–writing

As expected, given the format of the assignment, candidates performed very well in this element of the course. There was a good range of topics and candidates were able to use detailed language appropriate to National 5.

Performance–talking

In the sample submitted, candidates generally performed well or very well. Overall, there were very few poor performances.

The presentation section attracted the upper two pegged marks for most candidates in the sample. Most conversations were awarded pegged marks 9 or above, however very few received 15 pegged marks. The sustaining the conversation section mostly attracted pegged mark 3.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

Question 2(c)(ii): many candidates misunderstood the word *numérique* within the context of technology and translated this as 'numerous' rather than 'digital', which prevented them from gaining the full 2 marks available.

Question 2(d)(i): many candidates did not give enough specific detail required to gain the mark for this question.

Question 3(b): candidates found this question to be more demanding. There were many examples of misuse of dictionary, lack of detail and poor expression, preventing candidates obtaining the full 2 marks available.

Question 3(d)(i): Only around half of candidates gained the full 3 marks available. Candidates lost marks mainly because of lack of detail and the understanding of *leur*.

Question paper 1: Writing

Although the majority of candidates did address bullet points 5 and 6 (the unpredictable ones), at times these lacked detail and contained many inaccuracies. Some candidates had already addressed bullet point 5 in the unpredictable bullet points but decided to address it as a separate bullet point. This resulted in repetitive language or led to inaccuracies because of misuse of dictionary.

Question paper 2: Listening

Monologue

Question 1(b): many candidates had difficulty with this question and were unable to give the detail required to gain the full marks, especially understanding *plus de cent plages*.

Question 1(c): many candidates guessed the answer or did not give enough detail to gain the 2 marks for this question.

Question 1(e): many candidates misunderstood *pour tout le monde* and translated this as 'in/for all the world'.

Conversation

Question 2d(i): many candidates were unable to pick out the words *porc* and *riz* and therefore many were only awarded 1 mark for 'it's a speciality of Martinique'.

Question 2(e)(i): many candidates listed a range of sports, guessed, or confused *équitation* with *natation* and therefore were not able to gain the full 2 marks available.

Question 2(e)(ii): this question proved the most challenging for candidates. Candidates either guessed or did not know the meaning of *soirée* preventing them gaining the mark available.

Assignment–writing

As previously stated, candidates performed very well in this part of the course. There were instances of misuse of dictionary and inaccuracies with spelling, accents and grammatical structures.

Performance–talking

In the presentation section, a very small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of their chosen topic. Many presentations were too long or too short in relation to the guidelines, and this affected the candidates' performances.

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Several centres did not consider pronunciation when judging the evidence, as they may have had an inclination as to what their own candidates were trying to express during the recording. However, verifiers were unable to decipher some of the points made by some candidates.

Other candidates did not perform well because the choice of topic, or questions asked, did not allow candidates to respond using language at the corresponding level.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and underline the key word or words in the question that will lead them to the answer in the text. Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English.

Candidates should be guided by the number of marks available for each question and give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. Candidates should be discouraged from giving extra information as this could negate any correct information and therefore result in losing mark(s).

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings and the comparative as this will minimise mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension. Candidates should also be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first word given. Centres should also ensure candidates are aware of common 'false friends' and encourage candidates to check these carefully in the dictionary.

Question paper 1: Writing

Centres and candidates should be encouraged again by the candidates' standard of writing in the question paper this year.

As the writing is in the form of an email, there is now no requirement for candidates to use the formal beginning and endings as was required in the past. Many candidates who continue to include these formal beginnings and endings often make many errors in these parts.

Centres should ensure that candidates read the information carefully regarding the job for which they are applying. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates:

♦ check they have addressed all six bullet points (if either one of these has been covered in the predictable bullet points, they do not need to be readdressed, as this can lead to repetition and/or many inaccuracies)
♦ write enough accurate and detailed language for the unpredictable bullet points
♦ use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders) — not to create new sentences
♦ ask questions regarding the job, as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points
♦ leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure all bullets have been covered and basic mistakes have not been made, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents and words missed out
♦ are aware of the criteria to be used in assessing candidates 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
♦ handwriting is legible

Question paper 2: Listening

Centres and candidates should once again be encouraged by the performance of candidates in the listening question paper.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to read all the questions carefully and underline the key words to listen out for, so they can pick out the information required more easily.

Candidates hear both the monologue and conversation three times and should make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

In responding to the questions in the listening question paper, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. More practice on notetaking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.

Candidates should be discouraged from giving extra information and giving long lists of possible answers (guesses) as this could negate any correct information and therefore result in losing mark(s).

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are able to give accurate answers through confident knowledge of numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Assignment–writing

Centres and candidates should be very encouraged by the performance of candidates in this element of course assessment.

The assignment–writing should be on the contexts of either society, learning or culture and teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates tick the correct box on the answer booklet.

Candidates must not write on the context employability as this is covered in the writing question paper.

Although the stimulus given to the candidates is not required for SQA purposes, centres should be encouraged to provide a more detailed title The title should be in English.

The choice of topics should be appropriate to the age and level of candidates, allowing them to be able to produce accurate and detailed language based on what they have been studying during the course.

As this piece is based around a topic that the candidates have been studying, centres should encourage candidates to include more detailed language and grammatical structures appropriate to National 5. A range of tenses is not required to gain full marks and should only be used when and where appropriate.

Performance–talking

In some of the performances sampled, grammatical errors included gender errors and problems with agreement of adjectives and verbs, including omissions of the latter in some instances.

Centres are encouraged to continue to include grammar practice and coverage of the rules of the language as an integral part of learning and teaching. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate. The assignment–writing could contribute towards developing candidates' understanding of how language works.

Centres are encouraged to ensure speakers of the language, who are not familiar with what the candidates have studied, can understand candidates. Having performances and allocated marks verified by another assessor, or another centre, should ensure accuracy in judgements.

Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource. In some instances, candidates did not use enough detailed language and this prevented them accessing the upper pegged marks.

In the conversation section, teachers and lecturers are encouraged to ensure candidates have strategies for asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to utter when they have not understood an aspect of the conversation.

Candidates who were able to use relevant interjections, ask relevant questions and use idiomatic phrases were able to sustain the conversation well. Centres are encouraged to continue to prepare candidates in this way.

Where candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should continue to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic. Assessors should give candidates appropriate thinking time before doing this.

The length of the performances sampled varied, and centres are advised to refer to the advice on the recommended duration of the presentation and the conversation. This is to make sure candidates are able to demonstrate their full ability to meet the demands of the task at National 5 as provided in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*. A few of the performances went beyond the recommended duration and others were significantly shorter than the recommended duration. On occasion, this prevented candidates from accessing the upper pegged marks.

As noted in previous years' National 5 French course reports, some candidates gave what appeared to be short, 'mini-presentation' answers in the conversation. While candidates may wish to prepare language and phrases for topic-related questions, centres are encouraged to continue to put open-ended questions to candidates, which can elicit detailed language in the answers.

Centres are also encouraged to put a variety of questions to their candidates, even where candidates from within the same centre have selected the same or similar topics. For example the same question can be asked in different ways keeping the same key words for

candidates to identify. In turn, this provides for personalisation and choice and provides scope for candidates to produce a more varied conversation and therefore to access the upper pegged marks for sustaining the conversation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	8145

Number of resulted entries in 2019	7872

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	54.3%	54.3%	4272	85
B	16.6%	70.9%	1306	73
C	14.0%	84.9%	1102	61
D	8.9%	93.8%	703	49
No award	6.2%	-	489	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.