



Course report 2022

Subject	French
Level	Higher

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	2500
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	53.2	Cumulative percentage	53.2	Number of candidates	1330	Minimum mark required	72
B	Percentage	17.2	Cumulative percentage	70.4	Number of candidates	430	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	14.2	Cumulative percentage	84.6	Number of candidates	355	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	10.0	Cumulative percentage	94.6	Number of candidates	250	Minimum mark required	36
No award	Percentage	5.4	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	135	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper sampled the context of employability. It was accessible to all candidates and the level was appropriate to Higher. The balance of accessible and more challenging questions, particularly the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance in line with expectations.

Overall, candidates performed less well in the reading question paper than in previous years. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundary.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper performed in line with expectations. The majority of candidates chose scenario 1, which sampled the context of learning. Fewer candidates chose scenario 2 on culture. Both scenarios were of a similar level of difficulty, and most candidates were able to attempt all six bullet points. As expected, the paper generated a range of performances.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper sampled the context of society. The balance of straightforward and more difficult questions in the listening question paper resulted in a wide range of marks and differentiated candidate performance, as intended.

Many candidates found the question paper to be challenging this year, and it was evident that preparation and practice had been affected by the disruption of the pandemic. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundary.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking provided sufficient opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their skill in this area.

Some discussions were significantly short for this level, and this affected candidates' pegged marks, regardless of how well they performed. Some discussions were unnecessarily prolonged beyond the recommended discussion time, which affected the candidates' overall performances.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates appeared to have been well-prepared for the question paper by centres and generally performed well across comprehension questions, overall purpose question and translation. However, some candidates failed to gain marks in some of the comprehension questions as they did not write sufficient detail in their answers, and a number of candidates failed to provide a response to questions, losing any associated marks.

Question 2(a): a number of candidates failed to recognise that it was Céline's husband who was away on business trips and not Céline herself. Many candidates misunderstood *c'est moi qui dois m'occuper de tout à la maison*, which they expressed as 'She had to occupy/look after the whole house'.

Question 4(a): many candidates did not gain marks as they did not write sufficient detail in their answer or misunderstood the detail. A number of candidates understood that it is easy to be distracted but omitted or failed to understand *par ce qui se passe autour de soi. ...ou faire des heures supplémentaires sans s'en rendre compte* was often given as 'without counting or without getting paid'.

Question 4(b): a number of candidates didn't gain marks for choosing to write 'separate' for *s'éloigner du travail et de se détendre*.

Question 5(a): many candidates did not gain the second mark available, with some giving this answer in question 5(b) instead. Some candidates mistook *je n'ai plus de frais de voyage* as 'she no longer went on cool journeys' and therefore did not gain the mark.

Question 5(b): some candidates omitted to write that she offered herself little treats or rendered *visiter les pays* in the singular and did not gain the mark.

Question 6: the overall purpose question was not particularly well done. Many candidates gained 1 mark for this question, but some did not achieve any marks. Many candidates answered this question by merely reiterating details from the comprehension questions, without making an assertion and justifying why they made that assertion. Other candidates simply quoted parts of the text in French, resulting in them not gaining any marks.

Most candidates attempted to make an assertion but gave no justification as to why they thought this was the case. However, some candidates were able to make an assertion and justify it by going on to give relevant details about these aspects from the text.

Question 7: most candidates found the translation challenging and overall performance in this question was weak.

- ◆ Sense unit 1: most candidates failed to recognise the imperfect tense *rentrait*, often translating it using the present tense.
- ◆ Sense unit 2: many candidates failed to note details. Several candidates did not translate *elle devait*, or mistranslated *tout de suite*. Many translating *le repas du soir* as 'dinner'.
- ◆ Sense unit 4: some candidates mistranslated *un fauteuil*.

- ◆ Sense unit 5: this presented significant issues for the vast majority of candidates, who failed to recognise the expression *je n'en pouvais plus*. Some candidates did not translate *soupire-t-elle* and therefore did not gain any marks.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Many candidates were well-prepared to answer the predictable bullet points in this question paper. Many performed well in the paper overall, demonstrating accuracy, appropriate content and skilful demonstration of language resource.

The following issues affected candidate performance:

In scenario 1 bullet point 3, where candidates were asked to describe which sports they had learned, the language was often very basic and not of the level expected at Higher. This was also the case in scenario 2 bullet point 3, which asked candidates to say how they found out about the festival.

Lack of accuracy continues to be a problem for candidates, with spelling, genders, plurals, accents and adjectival agreement all posing problems. Some candidates did not appear to have a sound knowledge of tenses. The formation of the past tense is often inconsistent with the infinitive being used, or the auxiliary verb being omitted in the perfect tense. Some candidates also had difficulty distinguishing the difference between the imperfect and conditional tenses.

Many candidates failed to maintain accuracy in the less predictable bullet points. This was often characterised by dictionary misuse and other language interference.

Candidates often had good ideas, but did not have the language resource necessary to express them. This resulted in over-reliance on dictionary usage, which led to serious mistranslations.

A few candidates failed to address three of the six bullet points, or did not attempt the paper and therefore did not achieve any marks in this paper.

Question paper 2: Listening

Item 1 was not particularly well done. Many candidates did not achieve as many marks as they did not write enough detail in their answers.

Question 1(a): many candidates missed out the detail of *On habitait dans le même quartier du centre-ville*.

Question 1(b): many candidates missed out the detail in the first point *on allait chaque matin à l'école ensemble* by omitting to include 'every morning' in their response. In the second point *Tous les mercredis après-midi on passait le temps à faire du lèche-vitrine en ville*, candidates did not include 'every Wednesday' or 'on Wednesdays' in their answer.

Question 1(c)(ii): most candidates didn't gain the mark by failing to understand that it took three buses to get there – *il faut prendre trois bus différents pour y aller* – with many candidates assuming the answer by writing, for example 'She lived far away'.

Question 1(d): this question was worth 2 marks; however, there were three possible answers. Many candidates missed out the detail in the first point *on se parle au téléphone pendant au moins une demi-heure par jour* by omitting to include 'half an hour' in their response. In the second point *Une fois par mois, je passe la nuit chez elle* by not including 'once a month' in their answer. In the third point *De plus, au mois de juillet on passe nos vacances à se détendre sur la plage*, many omitted to write 'July' and 'at the beach' in their answer.

Question 1(e): this question was worth 1 mark, but many candidates did not include the detail of *on va étudier les langues étrangères et le droit dans la même fac à Paris* by writing 'they will study law', 'they will study languages' or 'they are going to university' and they did not gain the mark.

Question 2(a)(i): most candidates did not understand the detail of *comparé à la plupart de mes amis, je m'entends mieux avec mes parents*. They also failed to recognise *il y a plus de disputes à la maison depuis que je suis adolescent* writing 'there are lots of arguments' instead of 'more arguments since he became a teenager'.

Question 2(a)(ii): many candidates failed to recognise that his parents thought he spent too much time in his room – *mes parents pensent que je passe trop de temps dans ma chambre à réviser* – and wrote that his parents thought he should be revising more.

Question 2(c)(iv): many candidates misunderstood *lire les informations en ligne* and gave it as 'he used the internet to find out information', and therefore did not gain the mark.

Performance–talking

Overall candidate performance was good. Most candidates achieved at least pegged mark 21. A few candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language they chose to use.

Pronunciation remains one of the main issues for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers, sympathetic (native or non-native) speakers of French, must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their discussion is. It was felt that, on occasions, assessors may have been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what candidates were going to say.

Other candidates did not perform well because of their choice of topic (for example family or hobbies) or the questions did not allow candidates to respond using language at Higher level.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ include as much detail as possible in their answers
- ◆ pay careful attention to the numbering of the questions to ensure that they gain marks for their answers. This is particularly important if a question has several parts to it
- ◆ are aware that marks are not transferrable across questions
- ◆ check what they have written makes sense and answers the question
- ◆ leave sufficient time to check their answers
- ◆ make an assertion, give a reason for that assertion, and justify their answer by choosing relevant detail from the text to gain both marks in the overall purpose question. They should be reminded that they will not achieve any marks for quoting chunks of text in French to justify their answer
- ◆ write succinctly in their answer to the overall purpose question, and avoid writing lengthy responses that merely reuse answers from the comprehension questions
- ◆ focus on tense recognition and attention to detail to ensure that the final translation is an accurate reflection of the French sentence
- ◆ have opportunities to practise translation as much as possible in class

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ check they have addressed all the bullet points, or parts of bullet points
- ◆ address all bullet points in a balanced way, using detailed and complex language appropriate to Higher
- ◆ know to use a variety of tenses and structures to achieve higher pegged marks
- ◆ have a sound knowledge of past tense verbs, in particular how to conjugate the perfect and imperfect tenses, and when to use these tenses
- ◆ have opportunities to practise more unpredictable bullet points in class, and use techniques on how to deal with these bullet points
- ◆ are encouraged to be more accurate in verb tenses, verb endings, number, gender, spelling, adjectival agreement and the use of a dictionary

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ use the time before the recording starts to read the questions carefully and include as much detail as possible in their answers
- ◆ focus on the actual text and not their own knowledge of a particular topic or theme

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ know they must cover at least two different contexts
- ◆ following a few warm-up questions, know that the substance of the conversation must be on two different contexts (culture, society, learning, employability), not simply different topics. Some candidates did not move on to a different context and therefore only pegged mark 18 could be awarded as a maximum mark in this instance
- ◆ use detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance to achieve the top range of pegged marks. At this level, long lists of more than two or three items (places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (places in town) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).