



## Course Report 2018

Subject	French
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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**

## **Summary of the course assessment**

The course assessment performed largely as expected, with candidates achieving the full range of marks available.

### **Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation**

This question paper was seen to be accessible, as was reflected in the overall performance of candidates. The comprehension questions performed largely as expected and enabled candidates to evidence good subject knowledge, with the majority of candidates tackling this aspect well. The overall purpose question and translation proved discriminatory, as would be expected.

### **Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

This question paper proved to be accessible for candidates, who generally showed good comprehension skills across both listening items. In terms of discursive writing, candidates attempted all four essays, and the marks achieved covered the full range available.

### **Component 3 — portfolio**

Candidate response in this element showed increasing confidence in terms of the sophistication of the questions/titles chosen, and the effectiveness of candidate responses to the stimulus.

### **Component 4 — performance**

The performance provided candidates with the opportunity to successfully showcase their skills and to perform to their potential. Where the candidate had provided an informative STL form, this facilitated a wide-ranging discussion on a variety of topics.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation**

Candidates showed good overall understanding in the comprehension questions, and there was an improvement in candidate approaches in answering the overall purpose question. This resulted in some insightful reading of the text and the identification of appropriate inferences.

#### **Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

Candidates performed well in both item 1 and 2 of the listening, with sound comprehension of vocabulary and language structures.

In the discursive writing, candidates accessed all four essays and achieved the full range of marks available. Candidates were able to adapt their knowledge of language to the topics addressed.

#### **Component 3 — portfolio**

Candidates performed best when tackling an essay title, which encouraged a critical and analytical approach. Instances of a merely narrative approach were rare, which is encouraging. Candidates mostly adhered to the word count, there were few issues regarding inappropriate, or lack of, bibliographies.

#### **Component 4 — performance**

Candidates should take the time to complete the STL form carefully, which enables sufficient scope for the development of a spontaneous conversation with the visiting assessor. A number of performances were outstanding, and achieved full marks.

Candidates were generally well prepared for the performance and, overall, took advantage of the opportunity to showcase their skill.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

#### **Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation**

Where candidates attempted the translation first, this often proved to be an inappropriate approach as evidenced by poor performances overall, and characterised by a lack of understanding of the text as a whole. Centres should discuss with candidates the importance of using the comprehension questions to gain an overall 'feel' for the text, which in turn, assists in the more demanding aspects of translation.

#### **Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

Candidates encountered difficulty in discursive writing where they misread the question or chose to shoehorn learned material into their writing, regardless of the stimulus.

### **Component 3 — portfolio**

Where candidates attempted essays which were too wide in scope, or where questions/titles were unsuitable or too limiting, their portfolio was limited in terms of its success. Some of the essay questions/titles selected by candidates caused problems on those occasions where these did not encourage a critical or analytical approach.

Only a limited number of candidates attempted a language in work portfolio. Where the approach was more similar to the study of a background topic candidates tended to fare poorly.

Some candidates displayed a poor quality of written English. Others adopted an inappropriately informal and colloquial tone, which had a negative impact on candidate responses.

### **Component 4 — performance**

The majority of candidates performed well in this aspect of the assessment. However, some performances were adversely affected where STL forms had been either very sparsely completed, or where, conversely, STL forms were populated with specific questions designed to script the conversation rather than allowing a spontaneous conversation to arise, based on the contexts and topics studied.

## **Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation**

Most candidates are coping well with the reading comprehension and can extract sufficient, appropriate detail from the text. Candidates should attempt all questions, including the overall purpose question, in order to access the full range of available marks.

Attempting the translation first, without appropriate understanding of the text as a whole is not a recommended strategy. A small number of candidates adopted this approach, with limited effect.

### **Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

Candidates should read the discursive writing essay stimulus carefully, in order that their writing is relevant and appropriate to the topic set.

### **Component 3 — portfolio**

Candidates should be encouraged to attempt realistic essays within the scope of the word count. Inappropriate comparisons between works, which do not share common themes, are unlikely to produce good responses. As are attempts at a language in work portfolio, which become little more than a limited background study.

While many candidates chose to study familiar works, for example *L'étranger*, *Au revoir, les enfants*, *No et moi*, it is pleasing to see the emergence of new and/or previously unused works, for example *Suite française*, *Lacombe, Lucien*, *Elle s'appelait Sarah*, *Trois petites histoires de jouets*, *Je voudrais rentrer à la maison*, *La petite fille de M Linh*, which enable candidates to access a wider range of texts and/or films.

### **Component 4 — performance**

Where candidates are able to discuss an appropriate range of topics, performances tend to be better, as is also the case where candidates are able to respond appropriately to the spontaneous nature of the conversation with the visiting assessor.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	774
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	638
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### 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	43.3%	43.3%	276	144
B	26.2%	69.4%	167	124
C	17.7%	87.1%	113	104
D	5.6%	92.8%	36	94
No award	7.2%	-	46	-

## **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 which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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 Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.