



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	French
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments 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 vary from year to year. 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.

With the introduction of the National 4 qualification, and with this being the final year of this examination, only 11 candidates were presented for Intermediate 1 French in 2015.

The Mean Marks for each element were:

Reading = 21.9 (35) – up 0.1

Listening = 16.5 (20) – up 6.0

Writing = 8.5 (15) – up 0.8

Speaking = 28.0 (30) – up 2.0

Although it was an extremely small cohort, the mean marks indicate a significant improvement in comparison with the previous year, with a particularly marked improvement in Listening. The mean marks and the distribution of grades do suggest that this year's small cohort were presented at the correct level and had been well prepared for the examination. There were some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Listening) with eight of the 11 candidates achieving A grades.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The relatively high mean mark for Reading was maintained and the performance of candidates in the two shorter Reading passages (an advert for a holiday camp) was generally good, and almost all candidates proceeded to cope well with the longer third text which continued the same topic, and with the longer fourth text (Hamissa who makes his living catching squid). The four texts provided good progression in terms of the level of difficulty and demand and the majority of candidates related well to the content of these reading texts.

There was a very strong performance in Listening where the majority of candidates had been well prepared to cope with predictable items including numbers, times, weather phrases, days, seasons and high frequency vocabulary (eg food and drink / leisure activities).

There was an improvement in the mean mark for the Writing task, and there were 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 a few candidates found the fourth text more demanding and struggled with the phrases: *construite de boue, de paille et de bambou* and *jusqu'à cinq mètres de profondeur*. In general, candidates continue to lose points mainly through failing to provide sufficiently detailed answers: as in text 2 (*au moins deux mois à l'avance*) and in text 3 (*des concours de chant et des jeux autour d'un feu*).

Although there was a large improvement in the mean mark, 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 but not the precise details (eg Question 3: *on n'a pas le droit de jouer de la musique après minuit*). Some candidates also failed to achieve the two marks in the supported Question 7 by failing to recognise the 'false friends' *leur propre hôtel et doivent travailler*.

A few candidates had considerable difficulty with the Writing element and failed to provide the required number of pieces of information for each of the areas. In preparing candidates for this component or for any writing task at this level, centres need to give further guidance on what constitutes three 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

Although this was the final year of the Intermediate 1 examination, the following advice may still prove relevant and useful for teachers and candidates being presented for National 4 or working towards National 5.

Reading/Listening

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 in working with longer texts in preparation for texts 3 and 4. Many candidates would benefit from more focused practice of dictionary skills.

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.

Now that candidates hear each of the Listening texts three times, they should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Writing

Centres need to give further guidance to candidates on what constitutes an adequate amount of information (three 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 and in the spelling and genders of high frequency vocabulary, eg family, school subjects and leisure activities.

The 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 expanded 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 (particularly when writing in French), and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

To improve performance in Writing, 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 extended pegged mark descriptors, and it is intended that this will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	385
------------------------------------	-----

Number of resulted entries in 2015	12
------------------------------------	----

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	66.7%	66.7%	8	70
B	8.3%	75.0%	1	60
C	8.3%	83.3%	1	50
D	8.3%	91.7%	1	45
No award	8.3%	-	1	-

For this Course the intention was to set an assessment with the Grade Boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. the adjustment made in 2014 no longer applied, and the grade Boundaries returned to notional values.

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.