



Qualification Verification Summary Report

NQ Verification 2018–19

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	French
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2019

National Courses verified:

C830 75 National 5 French: Performance–talking (IACCA)*
C830 76 Higher French: Performance–talking (IACCA)

* Internally-assessed component of course assessment

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

It is pleasing to report that all the centres verified in this round used SQA's course assessment task (CAT) for performance–talking at National 5 and Higher.

In line with the National 5 Modern Languages performance–talking assessment task, centres are reminded that the presentation and follow-up conversation must be carried out in a single assessment event, ie the presentation must be followed by the conversation during the single recording of the performance. There should also be no interruption in recordings or, if unavoidable, a reason should be submitted (eg fire alarm went off).

The National 5 performance–talking task (version 2.0) specifies that, in the conversation, candidates must go into at least one different context to the one used in the presentation. Following a couple of questions associated with the context in the presentation, the substance of the conversation must be on a different context. Some candidates were only very briefly allowed to move on to a different context and therefore only pegged mark 9 could be awarded as a maximum mark in this instance.

The performance at Higher is a discussion, beginning with a few generic questions to settle the candidate followed by questions covering at least two contexts. Some candidates were only too briefly allowed to move on to a different context.

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance in order to be considered for the top range of pegged marks. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

At Higher, the nature of some of the topics selected, or of some of the questions asked by the interlocutor, did not allow candidates to respond using detailed and complex language.

Specifics in relation to the presentation

In the presentation at National 5, a very small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the level of the language required. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it.

Many presentations were significantly short which affected the candidates' ability to achieve the top pegged marks, even with more able candidates. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements of National 5 as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Specifics in relation to the conversation

Interlocutors should try to avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates. Questions such as '*Tu joues au foot, hein?*' are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be immediately followed by '*Pourquoi?*' to elicit fuller answers.

For the most part, interlocutors were supportive, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural and spontaneous conversations.

However, a few interlocutors did not consider the responses from candidates before asking their next question, at times asking questions which had already been answered through earlier questions. This usually equated to unnatural conversations.

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Some centres were overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. A number of conversations appeared to be excessively rehearsed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than asking the same questions in the same order to the whole cohort. More concerning, the responses from several candidates in one centre were all the same or very similar. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from SQA's website).

Some interlocutors monopolised the conversation/discussion when candidates asked them questions. Although it is a conversation/discussion, the focus should be on the candidates' responses, not on prolonged responses from interlocutors. These can be an unnecessary barrier for candidates. Interlocutors should respond to candidates' questions succinctly, before swiftly moving on to their next question to return the focus on the candidates.

Many conversations (National 5) and discussions (Higher) were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short and affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the latest information on SQA's website regarding the recommended length of time the conversation/discussion should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5/Higher as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*. At National 5, some centres did not consider the revised expected length for the conversation (from 2017–18). Timings are notional — a candidate may be able to demonstrate his/her ability to meet the demands of a level in a shorter response while another may need slightly longer — but should overall be adhered to by interlocutors.

At National 5, the majority of centres asked questions in the first part of the conversation which followed on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates, before moving on to the context(s) of the conversation as required in the *National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task* document.

Naturally moving on to other contexts allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language.

One centre expected their candidates to ask a series of questions at the end of the conversation. This is unlikely to result in a natural and spontaneous conversation/discussion. It would be more judicious for candidates to ask questions in the course of the conversation/discussion, at relevant times.

Assessment judgements

National 5 and Higher performance—talking (IACCA)

It is pleasing to note that a large majority of centres have applied the marking instructions for the performance in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

It is important that assessors only use the most up-to-date online Marking Information Grid for the talking performance at National 5/Higher, in conjunction with the National 5/Higher Grammar Grid to make their assessment judgements. For example, two centres did not consider the addition of pegged mark 1 (introduced in May 2016) in the sustaining the conversation element. However, in those instances, it did not affect the marking of the candidates.

Overall candidate performance was good. Pronunciation remains the main issue 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 presentation/conversation/discussion is. It was felt that, on occasions, assessors had 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 the choice of topic (eg family relationships/sports) or the questions did not allow candidates to respond using language at the corresponding level.

Some performances had been marked too severely, especially when the rest of the centre's sample included performances which went beyond expectations for the level.

In general, centres provided brief, but clear commentaries to demonstrate how they made the assessment judgement, which was very useful for the event verifiers. This is also useful for internal verifiers and promotes constructive professional dialogue. Centres are therefore encouraged to provide brief information about how they made the assessment judgement for all candidates submitted in the sample. Evidence of 'dialogue' between the assessor and the internal verifier in the form of checklists, respective notes in two different colours of pen, or fuller commentaries, were very useful. It is, however, essential for the centre to provide the final mark(s) (and a breakdown for National 5 performances) agreed between the assessor and the internal verifier. The final mark must then be entered on the Verification Sample Form.

Specifics in relation to the sustaining the conversation element at National 5

There was some inconsistency in approach and in marking. Some centres were too severe and others too lenient in awarding some of their marks.

Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain marks for this element. Some centres incorrectly justified not awarding pegged mark 5 when candidates did not ask any questions.

In some cases, candidates paused — briefly — during the conversation to think about their answers: this is a natural part of a conversation. Assessors should give candidates appropriate time to think and respond. However, if candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic.

Some conversations sounded more natural as candidates answered with a mixture of longer and shorter answers and it was clear that the conversations were not scripted. Using fully scripted conversations may not allow candidates to meet the criteria for the top pegged marks in the performance, but, above all, it does not prepare candidates for the demands of Higher/Advanced Higher or of real-life situations. Instead, candidates could prepare for their conversation thinking about the type of questions the assessor is likely to ask on their chosen topic, and thinking about what key words the interlocutor is likely to use in his/her questions.

Examples of how candidates could demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation include the following:

- ◆ a mixture of extended and shorter answers (ie not a suite of short presentations/monologues)
- ◆ appropriate thinking time
- ◆ natural interjections (*'euh/ bah/ ben/ alors'*)
- ◆ acknowledgement that they have understood the question (*'oui, je suis d'accord/non, pas du tout'*) — some centres included a brief commentary to describe how the candidate showed how they had understood the question/response from the interlocutor through non-verbal means
- ◆ asking questions that are **relevant** to the conversation and at **relevant** times
- ◆ asking for repetition or clarification (eg *'pardon?'*)

This is not an exhaustive list and one example from the above list on its own is unlikely to be sufficient to be awarded full marks.

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Section 3: General comments

Centres submitted candidates' performances on CDs and memory sticks (no tapes this year). It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification and that these are correctly labelled. One candidate's performance could not be verified as the names of the candidates on the Verification Sample Form did not match the names of the candidates on the recording. Clearly labelled candidate evidence is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process.

We recommend that USB keys are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and clearly labelled.

If the USB key is password protected (not compulsory), centres must ensure that SQA has access to the password.

Centres must include a breakdown of the marks (presentation + conversation + sustaining the conversation) for each candidate at National 5 and the total mark must be entered on the Verification Sample Form for verification to proceed.

Candidates should be entered in alphabetical order on the Verification Sample Form, starting with all the candidates at National 5, then all the candidates at Higher.