



Course Report 2014

Subject	French
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

The Reading paper comprised three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). Over the whole paper, there were three supported questions and one overall purpose question. The paper covered the contexts of Society, Learning and Culture and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics which engaged the candidates. Each text was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of performances.

Writing

The Writing paper required the candidates to reply by e-mail to a job application. The paper was worth 20 marks. This paper differed from the Intermediate 2 Directed Writing as there were four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable ones.

The mean mark for Reading and Writing was 34.39 out of 50, Reading being 21.09 out of 30, and Writing being 13.30 out of 20.

Listening

The Listening paper had two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks, including an overall purpose question, and a dialogue worth 12 marks, including a supported question worth one mark. The paper was based on the context of employability, and related clearly to the teaching syllabus for National 5.

The mean mark for Listening was 10.32, mainly because of the poorer performance of candidates in the dialogue. This was taken into consideration when deciding on grade boundaries.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

In the sample verified, overall candidate performance was high and, in some cases, candidates performed at a standard that would be closer to a Higher performance.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

Overall candidates performed very well in the Reading, with very few candidates giving no response to a question. There were a few examples of poor expression and mis-translation, but on the whole candidates gave enough detail to access the marks available.

Writing

Candidates performed very well on the predictable bullet points but found the unpredictable bullets to be more challenging. Having said this, on the whole, most candidates coped with the piece.

Listening

As is often the case, the candidates did find the Listening paper slightly more challenging. However, most candidates coped relatively well with the monologue, with most getting the overall purpose question.

Candidates found the dialogue slightly more demanding. Many did not give enough detail to access all the marks available.

General

Centres should be very encouraged by the overall performance of candidates in this first year of National 5. Although some candidates were clearly not presented at the appropriate level, 86 % of candidates achieved a grade A–C, which is very promising at this early stage.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

In the sample verified, overall candidate performance was high and, in some cases, candidates performed at a standard that would be closer to a Higher performance.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question papers

Reading Item 1

Overall the candidates coped very well with the majority of the questions in this first text, and were able to give enough detail to get the marks.

- ◆ Question 1(c)(ii) was answered particularly well, with most candidates getting full marks
- ◆ Question 1(d) was also answered particularly well, with most candidates picking out the three pieces of information required to get full marks

Reading Item 2

Again, candidates coped well with most of the questions in this second text.

- ◆ Question 2(b) was a supported question, and most candidates answered it correctly.
- ◆ Question 2(f) was the overall purpose question, nearly all candidates were able to get the correct answer.

Reading Item 3

Again candidates coped well with most of the questions in this third text.

- ◆ Question 3(a) was a supported question, and most candidates were able to pick out the correct information to complete the sentence correctly
- ◆ In question 3(e) most candidates were able to write enough detail and pick out two of the three pieces of information required to get the 2 marks.

Writing

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures, which one would expect at National 5 level. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised rather than just a generic job application.

Listening: Monologue

- ◆ Question 1(a): Most candidates were able to pick out at least one of the three pieces of information required to get the 2 marks. 'There is a good atmosphere' and 'the job/it is never boring' were the two most popular answers given.
- ◆ Question 1(b): Most candidates were able to pick out one of the two pieces of information required for the mark.
- ◆ Question 1(e): Nearly all the candidates answered the overall purpose question correctly.

Listening: Dialogue

- ◆ Question 2(a): Basic numeracy was required to get the mark in this question. Nearly all candidates heard 'deux' and were therefore able to complete the sentence correctly with the required information.
- ◆ Question 2(b): Most candidates were able to pick out two of the three pieces of information required for the 2 marks.
- ◆ Question 2(d): Most candidates were able to pick out two of the three pieces of information required for the 2 marks. 'She is organised' and 'does it/homework on a Sunday' were the most popular answers given.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

Candidates were better prepared and performed better in section 1 - Presentation, worth 10 marks. The majority of the sampled candidates achieved between 8 and 10 for this section, some following verification.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

- ◆ Question 1 (a): Most candidates had difficulty with this first question and many translated *moins* as 'more' and *il y a 5 ans* as 'when they were 5 years old'.
- ◆ Question 2 (c): Some candidates were unable to understand the phrase *j'avais du mal à* and this resulted in a lot of poor expression from candidates

- ◆ Question 2 (f): Many candidates had difficulty with *au moins* and translated this as ‘by a month’.
- ◆ Question 3 (c): Some poor expression from candidates for *les jardins de fleurs illuminés*. Only the most able candidates understood *feux d’artifices*.

Writing

Most candidates did address bullet points 5 and 6 (the unpredictable ones). Most candidates did seem to cope with bullet point 5, although many errors occurred when using the past tenses. Most candidates had a lot of difficulty with bullet point 6, in which they were asked to write a question about working hours. Many candidates were unable to form an accurate question, or asked a question that had been learned but had no reference to working hours.

Listening Monologue

Question 1(d): Some candidates had difficulty in picking out two of the three pieces of information required to get the 2 marks. Some candidates were unable to pick out the word *généreux* referring to the clients, and were therefore unable to give the detail required. Very few candidates understood the word *pourboires* and this was often mistranslated as ‘she can have drinks there’

Listening Dialogue

- ◆ Question 2(c)(i): Some candidates had difficulty picking out the detail required for this question and failed to mention ‘with (her) friends’
- ◆ Question 2(c)(ii) Some candidates had difficulty in picking out the correct pieces of information which answered this second part of question 2. Some candidates either did not hear *vendredi* or translated this with an incorrect day of the week. Very few candidates understood *faire la fête* and were therefore unable to get the second mark.
- ◆ Question 2(e): Very few candidates understood *gérer mon temps*, and some candidates did not give enough detail for the second piece of information given. Some candidates were unable to pick out the comparative *plus responsable* for the third piece of information given.
- ◆ Question 2(f): Some candidates had difficulty picking out enough detail to get the full 2 marks. Very few candidates understood *je n’en suis pas encore sûre* for the first piece of information given, and many failed to mention ‘Europe’ from the third piece of information given.

Component 2: Performance: Talking

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers — sympathetic speakers of French — must be able to understand the candidate, no matter how good the content of the presentation/conversation is.

On occasions, where candidates were only asked questions about the same topic/context as their presentation, the candidates merely repeated their presentation in their answers.

Some presentations and some conversations were too short for candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the *Modern Languages Performance: Talking, General assessment information* document.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

As with the listening 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. Although the extraneous rule no longer applies at National 5 candidates **should be discouraged from giving extra information** as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised.

Centres 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.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and perhaps to underline the key word or words in the question, which will lead them to the answer in the text. Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure it makes sense in English.

Writing

As the Writing is in the form of an e-mail, there is now no requirement for candidates to use the formal beginning and endings as was required at Intermediate 2.

Centres should ensure that candidates read the information carefully regarding the job for which they are applying, Candidates should be trained to:

- ◆ Check they have addressed all six bullet points.
- ◆ Use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders etc) 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 errors have not been made eg spelling, adjective endings, accents, words missed out.
- ◆ Be aware of the criteria to be used in assessing performances in 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.

Listening

In responding to the questions in the Listening 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. Although the extraneous rule no longer applies at National 5, candidates **should be discouraged from giving extra information** as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised.

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, 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.

Where possible, centres should try to do more practice of 'dialogue' type listening exercises as this is where many candidates lost marks. Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions carefully and underline key words to listen out for so they can pick out the information required more easily. More practice on note-taking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.

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

Component 2: Performance: Talking

Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the length of time the performance and conversation should last in the *Modern Languages Performance: Talking, General assessment information* document.

The majority of centres asked questions in the conversation, which followed on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: Talking Assessment Task* document. Many assessors went on to refer to other contexts, which allowed for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. On occasions, where candidates were only asked questions about the same topic/context as their presentation, the candidates merely repeated their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions for each candidate rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort, to ensure that candidates are able to meet the demands of National 5 and to produce more natural responses to the questions.

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. 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 SQA 'General Assessment Information' document).

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers — sympathetic speakers of French — must be able to understand the candidate, no matter how good the content of the presentation/conversation is. It was felt that, on occasion, assessors had been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what the candidate was going to say.

Natural Element

- ◆ There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the Natural Element. Some centres were too severe, and others gave full marks to all candidates.
- ◆ Candidates do not have to ask a question in the conversation to be awarded marks for the Natural Element.
- ◆ In some cases, candidates paused during the conversation to think about their answers; this is a natural part of the conversation. 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 were very natural as candidates answered with a mixture of longer and shorter answers.
- ◆ Examples of how candidates could demonstrate their ability to sustain a *natural conversation* could be: a mixture of extended and shorter answers (ie not a suite of short presentations); appropriate thinking time, natural interjections (*euh/ bah/ ben/ alors*), acknowledgement that they have understood the question and respond to it (*oui, je suis d'accord/non, pas du tout*); asking questions that are relevant to the conversation and perhaps during the conversation, sustaining the conversation, asking for repetition or clarification (*'pardon?*).

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	9444
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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	51.1%	51.1%	4823	69
B	20.1%	71.1%	1895	59
C	15.5%	86.7%	1466	49
D	5.7%	92.4%	538	44
No award	7.6%	-	722	-