



NQ Verification 2017–18

Key Messages Round 2

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	French
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	May 2018

National Courses/Units verified:

C830 75 National 5 Performance–talking (IACCA*)
C730 76 Higher Performance–talking (IACCA)

*Internally-assessed component of course assessment

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

National 5 and Higher Performance–talking (IACCA)

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA’s task for the internally-assessed component of course assessment — National 5/Higher Modern Languages performance–talking.

In line with the National 5/Higher 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 (eg ‘fire alarm goes off’) should be submitted.

The updated version of 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.

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 Higher, a very small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to the 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 long or short and affected the candidates' performances. 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 demands of National 5/Higher 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 aimes le foot?*' 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.

Some interlocutors did not consider the responses from the candidates before asking their next question, however, at times asking questions which had already been answered through earlier questions. This usually resulted in 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 to the whole cohort. 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).

Several interlocutors monopolised the conversation when candidates asked them questions. Although it is a conversation, 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 to the candidates.

Many conversations were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short and affected candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the latest information on the SQA's website regarding the recommended length of time the conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5/Higher as indicated 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. Although 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 – interlocutors should adhere to these whenever possible.

The majority of centres asked questions in the very 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.

A couple of centres 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. It would be more judicious for candidates to ask questions at relevant times in the course of the conversation.

At National 5 and Higher, centres are reminded that the conversation must lead into at least one other context, and that this/these other context(s) should form the essence of the conversation.

Assessment judgements

National 5 and Higher Performance-talking (IACCA)

It is pleasing to report that a large majority of centres have applied the marking instructions for the performance accurately and in line with national standards. It is important that assessors only use the most up-to-date online Marking Information Grid at National 5/Higher, in conjunction with the National 5/Higher Productive Grammar Grid in order to make their assessment judgements. For example, two centres did not consider the addition of 'pegged mark 1' (May 2016) in the sustaining the conversation element.

Overall candidate performance was high. Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. External verifiers must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their presentation or conversation is. It was felt that, on occasions, assessors had been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an intuition as to what candidates were going to say.

Other candidates did not perform well because the choice of topic or the questions did not allow candidates to respond using language at the appropriate 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 in the sample. For instance, 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) agreed between the assessor and the internal verifier.

Specifics in relation to the sustaining the conversation element:

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 it was 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 at 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 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 by non-verbal means how they had understood the question/response from the interlocutor
- ◆ 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 gain full marks.

03 ➤ Section 3: General comments

Centres submitted candidates' performances on tapes, CDs and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the tapes, CDs, and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification, and that these are correctly labelled. Some candidates' performances 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 memory sticks and similar storage devices are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and clearly labelled.

Centres must include a breakdown of the marks (presentation + conversation + sustaining the conversation) for each candidate, and the total mark must be entered on the Verification Sample Form for verification to proceed. One centre had to be contacted to confirm the marks awarded.