

NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Modern Languages — French
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H274 73	National 3	French: Understanding Language
H275 73	National 3	French: Using Language
H274 74	National 4	French: Understanding Language
H275 74	National 4	French: Using Language
H276 74	National 4	French: Added Value Unit
H274 75	National 5	French: Understanding Language
H275 75	National 5	French: Using Language
H274 76	Higher	French: Understanding Language
H275 76	Higher	French: Using Language
H274 76	Advanced Higher	French: Understanding Language
H275 76	Advanced Higher	French: Using Language

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The approaches to assessment used by centres selected for verification were all 'Accepted'. This demonstrates that centres have followed guidelines and made use of the feedback and support provided by SQA in publication updates, the Verification Key Messages reports, and at events (for nominees and practitioners) during 2014–15. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended.

A large majority of centres have used the Unit assessment support packs to assess their candidates.

If a centre has used a centre-devised assessment or amended a task and/or a judging evidence table, the created/revised task and judging evidence table must be included within the submission for verification.

If centres are not confident about the validity of their centre-devised assessment, they should request for their assessment to be prior verified through SQA's prior verification service. This should be requested before instruments are used to assess candidates.

Centres should ensure that they clearly indicate which Unit assessment support pack or prior verified assessment they have used, eg Package 1, N5, Reading. It is recommended that one copy of the judging evidence table, the task, the texts and transcripts — for listening tasks — are also included for the whole sample. There is, however, no need to include one copy inside each candidate's clear envelope.

When using Unit assessment support packs, it is important that centres use the most up to date online version. Centres have not been penalised for using previous versions of the Unit assessment support packs, but centres will be expected in future to use the most up to date version. Should a previous version be used, it would be helpful to the nominee verifier if centres included the corresponding version of the judging evidence table, text(s) and questions.

Many centres successfully adapted these assessments to suit the needs of their candidates or to allow for personalisation and choice without affecting the Assessment Standards and Outcomes. This is to be praised.

It is important to note, however, that amendments should not alter the mandatory Assessment Standards included in the judging evidence table and any amendments must only be reflected in the exemplification column (column 4) of the table, where necessary.

A few centres in the sample devised their own assessments and most did so effectively using judicious and imaginative approaches. Some of these centre-devised assessments had been prior verified and accepted as a valid approach.

If a centre has used a centre-devised assessment, which has been prior verified, the verification certificate should be included with material submitted for external verification. If a centre has translated a reading or listening task from a Unit assessment support pack from one language into another, the centre must ensure that the standards and level of difficulty of the original text are adhered to. The centre may need to adapt the translation to that effect. When centres sent their assessments of the Added Value Unit for National 4, the centre-devised tasks were on the whole appropriate, varied and on interesting topics.

For some tasks, centres may want to consider more structured questions to support candidates and should ensure they are in line with the assessment guidelines, eg in listening assessments, some centres have asked candidates to give detailed notes rather than answering specific questions. This can be an

accepted approach as long as the judging evidence table makes clear what responses are expected from candidates to address each Assessment Standard.

Centres should feel free to reformat the assessments provided in the Unit assessment support packs by slightly amending the questions, the texts or the layout to suit their candidates' needs while maintaining the standards. Should the amendments to the texts or questions be minor, these would not require to be prior verified.

It is acceptable to add a glossary for vocabulary that might not be available in some editions of a dictionary. However, centres must ensure this does not provide an answer to any of the questions in the task.

Even where no justification is required in a Unit assessment support pack at National 3 to National 5, it may be useful to ask candidates to justify their choice when attempting the overall purpose question in the reading or listening tasks. This might avoid any misunderstanding/misreading of the statements/question by the candidates.

Assessment judgements

The assessment judgements made by assessors in centres have all been 'Accepted' as they were overall in line with national standards. Some recommendations were made when specific minor issues arose. This demonstrates that centres have successfully implemented guidelines and made use of the feedback and support provided by SQA in publication updates, the Verification Key Messages reports, and at events (for nominees and practitioners) during 2014–15. Overall, staff have made best use of the expertise already in place in centres or in clusters of centres. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended.

Centres are reminded that, for verification purposes, and where possible, they should submit a range of evidence, ie some passes and some fails, including judgements for borderline evidence. This should ensure more effective and relevant feedback.

Centres should ensure that they submit documentation for each piece of evidence, clearly demonstrating how assessment judgements are made and clearly indicating the overall outcome of pass or fail and for each Assessment Standard of the Outcome, eg an assessment outcome record or commentary or checklist for each candidate.

Detailed commentaries about each candidate's performance are very useful for internal and external verification purposes. However, it is acknowledged that this approach can be time-consuming. Therefore, a detailed checklist for each candidate's performance can be just as useful for the verifier, and more practical for the centre. This could also be used as effective feedback to candidates.

Centres should amend judging evidence tables in Unit assessment support packs with a range of possible answers to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made for each Assessment Standard (column 4).

Centres should merge in-house information on judging evidence with judging evidence tables to create one document to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made.

Centre-devised information on judging evidence must be clearly referenced against each Assessment Standard. The award of marks is not a feature of Unit assessments. The inclusion of 'marks out of' is not noted for verification purposes.

Many centres have clearly justified how they made their assessment judgements. This is to be commended. Some centres noted each Assessment Standard next to each of the candidates' responses or on their written scripts as 1.2/2.3 etc to evidence where the candidates had addressed these Assessment Standards. This is good practice as it is very useful and appropriate for internal and external verification purposes. A couple of centres used a colour-coded approach, highlighting each response addressing an Assessment Standard in a different colour in the judging evidence table and then highlighting the candidates' scripts using this system. It was very clear where each Assessment Standard had been met.

Centres should take a holistic and positive approach to marking candidate work. A candidate should be given credit for answers as long as the candidate meets each Assessment Standard overall, regardless of whether they are necessarily in the correct place. For instance, if a candidate does not have the correct information in one question, but has it in another, they may still be able to demonstrate evidence of addressing an Assessment Standard by demonstrating understanding of main details etc. Equally, one answer from a candidate might address more than one Assessment Standard. This depends on the difficulty of the text the response relates to: is this section of the text simple, straightforward, detailed, detailed and complex, complex and sophisticated?

Centres are reminded that assessors should ignore extraneous material that does not contradict the response.

The judging evidence table in the Unit assessment support pack should be used as a guide: the answers listed in column 4 are only exemplifications of how a candidate may address each Assessment Standard. It is recommended that centres populate the judging evidence table (column 4) with a range of other possible answers that have been accepted by the centre.

It is important that centres have a consistent approach to assessing candidate evidence. For instance, if an explanation is expected to support the answer to the overall purpose question, this should be clear in the question or it should be noted that this has been verbally explained to candidates and it should be noted in the judging evidence table. The same standard of answers should be expected from all candidates in the sample and therefore in the cohort. Centres are

reminded that if a candidate does not respond correctly to the overall purpose question (Assessment Standard 1.1/2.1), the assessor can ask the candidate to explain their response orally. This could allow the candidate to justify their choice or change their choice with justification, and therefore possibly address this Assessment Standard. This conversation should be briefly summed up on the candidate's script or individual record form. Following judgement of a script by the assessor, a change of choice in the multiple-choice box without justification would not demonstrate that the candidate has understood the overall purpose of the text.

Specificities of the assessment of talking

For the assessment of talking in the Using Language Unit, there is no requirement to submit an audio recording of candidate work. If no audio recording is submitted, centres must submit a detailed checklist or commentary with some examples of what each candidate says referenced against each Assessment Standard for the Outcome.

If a centre would like SQA to give more extensive feedback on the verification of a talking assessment, audio recordings would ensure a more detailed and accurate comment. Centres could decide to only audio-record candidate evidence submitted for verification.

For the assessment of talking in the Using Language Unit, it is recommended that centres use a variety of questions, including unexpected and more open questions to assess candidates. This would allow for a more natural conversation and for candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation.

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Section 3: General comments

What evidence should a centre send in for a verification round?

Most centres submitted very clear and well-organised packages for verification, which is to be commended. This has facilitated the verification process and assisted in providing useful feedback to centres.

Centres should only send evidence at one level per candidate and should think carefully about how much evidence to submit. For instance, if a candidate has completed a reading assessment and failed it, been re-assessed and passed the re-assessment, it is only necessary to send in the re-assessment.

Centres should only send one piece of evidence per candidate per Outcome for one Unit (ie no more than two pieces of evidence in total), eg:

- ◆ 1 reading and/or 1 listening evidence for the Understanding Language Unit
- ◆ 1 talking and/or 1 writing evidence for the Using Language Unit
- ◆ 1 reading and 1 talking evidence for a combined approach (for example on the same topic of 'taking a gap year')

The same assessment task(s) must be submitted for the candidates at any one level in the sample (eg six candidates being assessed in reading at National 4

with the same instrument of assessment rather than two or three different instruments of assessment).

The verification team is not concerned with whether a candidate has passed or failed an Outcome/Unit. Nominees only verify that the judgements made by the centre's assessors are acceptable or not. Indeed a candidate may well have been re-assessed by the centre since the evidence was submitted. Centres will enter the final Unit Outcomes for their candidates at a later stage (see centre's SQA Co-ordinator).

Centres should use a separate flyleaf and clear envelopes for each candidate.

How to complete the SQA Verification Sample Form

It is important that the SQA Verification Sample Form is completed correctly and matches the information on candidate scripts and the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf. This is very important, as the judgement (pass/fail) entered on the Verification Sample Form is what the verification exercise is based on, regardless of what is entered on the candidates' scripts or individual record forms.

Centres should arrange candidates in alphabetical order for each level and/or Unit on the Verification Sample Form: eg A–Z at National 3 reading, then A–Z at National 4 listening, then A–Z at National 5 writing. The order of the candidates' evidence must match the order on the Verification Sample Form.

The Unit code (eg H274) and level code (eg 73) need to be clearly and correctly entered. You will find the list of Unit/level codes on page 1 of this report.

The Pass/Fail column should **only** be completed with 'pass' **or** 'fail' and should not be left blank.

If a centre submits complete evidence for a Unit, eg a reading and listening assessments for the Understanding Language Unit, then the Pass/Fail column on the Verification Sample Form should be completed to show the overall outcome for the Unit, **not** for each individual assessment. For example, a candidate needs to pass both a reading and a listening assessment to pass the entire Understanding Language Unit.

Some centres submitted 'Complete' evidence (eg evidence of reading and listening), however, on the Verification Sample Form, they stated that the evidence submitted was 'Interim'.

No entry should be made in the 'Nominee Review' column.

The judgement entered on the Verification Sample Form is for verification purposes (ie have the centre's assessor(s) judged the evidence in line with national standards) and is not necessarily final as there might be an opportunity for a candidate to be re-assessed at a later stage, if not already done.

How to complete the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf

Centres should enter:

- ◆ 'Complete' when both elements for one Unit are included, eg when reading and listening for the Understanding Language Unit are submitted. Note that 'Complete' does not necessarily mean 'Final'; a candidate could be re-assessed at a later stage.
- ◆ 'Interim' when a single element from a Unit is included; eg only the reading element of the Understanding Language Unit is included.
- ◆ 'Mixed' when elements of two Units are combined (eg reading and talking).

What evidence of internal verification and quality assurance should a centre send?

This could be a covering note explaining the process used (eg cross-marking, discussion on validity of centre-devised assessments at meetings) and a clear indication on the candidate scripts or on the candidate record form that the work was internally verified and the judgements agreed.

Some centres have spent a remarkable amount of time detailing their quality assurance procedures, which is to be commended.

In order to avoid duplication of systems, the internal verification/quality assurance arrangements could be modelled on a whole centre/local authority one, rather than being developed for each subject.

Centres devising their Internal Verification procedures may find SQA's Internal Verification Toolkit helpful: www.sqa.org.uk/ivtoolkit.

How do I share my concerns/queries about any aspects of the verification process for French?

Any queries/concerns should be sent to SQA via the centre's SQA Co-ordinator. They should not be included in any envelopes destined for verification. The verification team, consisting of nominees and SQA appointees, cannot respond to these, as their role is to focus on the verification process.

Can a prelim be used to assess Units?

This is not a recommended approach as the Unit assessments have a formative goal, following the study of a specific topic/context. It is important that candidates are not disadvantaged by a 'dual purpose' approach, which does not take into account differences between reaching a competency level in a Unit assessment and undertaking a Course assessment. If this approach is selected, the centre would have to create clear links against each Assessment Standard in the judging evidence table. It is important that the overall purpose question used — either commercial or centre-devised — by its nature covers the whole text and not only a section of the text.