



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 2

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	French
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H276 74	National 4	Added value unit
H7Y2 77	Advanced Higher	Specialist study unit
C730 75	National 5	Performance: talking (IACCA)
C730 76	Higher	Performance: talking (IACCA)

*Internally assessed component of course assessment

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Added value unit

It was pleasing to note that the approaches to assessment used by centres that were 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 and at events (for nominees and practitioners) during 2014–16. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended.

Some centres have used centre-devised assessments to assess their candidates reflecting the approach set out in the published added value unit assessment support pack. This has allowed for personalisation and choice. The tasks were on the whole appropriate, varied and on interesting topics.

Centres must include the texts and a judging evidence table if they have used a centre-devised assessment to assess candidates. It is also recommended that they include an adapted judging evidence table when using a translation and an adaptation of the SQA-produced unit assessment support pack: *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit*.

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.

It is recommended that centres refer to the SQA unit assessment support pack: *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit* for guidance regarding length of texts, level of challenge and difficulty to ensure that the language is straightforward and that the questions are supportive and appropriate at National 4. Some centre-devised texts were slightly beyond National 4 level so more supportive questions would have better supported candidates.

Specialist study unit

The logbook produced by SQA and located in the unit assessment support pack of the specialist study unit was used by most centres.

It was encouraging to see that candidates worked through the process to meet assessment standards 1.1 and 1.2 in preparation for their portfolio.

There was clear indication of independent research by candidates for the specialist study unit.

Some candidates used a focus that could have been reworded to allow for a better analysis (eg 'loss of innocence in two texts' could have been changed to 'to what extent is there a loss of innocence...').

Some candidates changed their focus half way through, therefore centres should advise candidates to adjust their focus for assessment standard 1.1 in their log accordingly.

National 5 and Higher performance: talking (IACCA)

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA guidelines for the internally assessed component of course assessment — *National 5/Higher Modern Languages Performance: talking assessment task*.

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.

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in the performance. 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.

Specifics in relation to the presentation

In the presentation, a 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 what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it.

A few 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 and the conversation 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 '*qu'est-ce que tu préfères, la physique ou la biologie?*' 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/spontaneous conversations.

A few conversations were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short and affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation 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*.

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 asked questions about the same topic/context as in their presentation, candidates were often limited to repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation. At Higher, centres are reminded that the conversation must lead into at least one other context.

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 small 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).

Assessment judgements

Added value unit

Again, it is pleasing to report that all the assessment judgements made by assessors in centres have been 'accepted' as they were in line with national standards.

Many centres have clearly justified how they made their assessment judgements. This should be commended. This is good practice as it is very useful and appropriate for internal and external verification purposes.

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 merge in-house information on judging evidence with judging evidence tables to create one document to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made. The verified centres had successfully combined their centre-devised judging evidence tables with the SQA judging evidence table.

Specialist study unit

The centres in the sample verified in this round of verification were all accepted as their judgements were in line with national standards.

One centre provided very detailed feedback to candidates using their centre-devised logbook. However, it was somewhat disjointed and therefore unnecessarily complex to use for internal verification and for central verification purposes as it was not clear where each assessment standard had been met.

Where the candidates had a detailed discussion with the assessor about aspects of analysis, it would have been useful to the candidates and the assessor for the content of this discussion to have been recorded, albeit briefly or in bullet point form, in the logbook. This would have added weight to the analysis of evidence section against assessment standard 1.2.

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 in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

It is important that assessors only use the most up-to-date 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. Referring to previous examination procedures (eg 'good, satisfactory, etc') is not necessarily beneficial since the format of the assessment has changed.

Overall candidate performance was high. Pronunciation was 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 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.

In general, centres provided clear commentaries to demonstrate how they made the assessment judgement, which was very useful for the nominee verifiers. This is also useful for internal verifiers and promotes constructive professional dialogue. Centres are 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 a final mark.

Specifics in relation to the sustaining the conversation element

There was some inconsistency in approach and in marking. Some centres were too severe in awarding 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 it was not scripted. Using scripted conversations may not allow candidates to meet the criteria for the top pegged marks in the performance. 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 ('*euuh/ 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 through non-verbal means the question/response from the interlocutor
- ◆ asking questions that are relevant to the conversation and at relevant times
- ◆ sustaining the conversation, asking for repetition or clarification (eg '*pardon?*')

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

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Section 3: General comments

Added value unit

Overall candidate performance was appropriate for this level and in some cases candidates went beyond what is expected at National 4.

For the assessment of talking and listening in the added value unit assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3, there is no requirement to submit an audio recording of candidate work. However, audio-recordings allow verifiers to provide more detailed and useful feedback to centres.

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. In this round, centres that did not include audio recordings for the added value unit included detailed commentaries to demonstrate how candidates met the assessment standards, which was good practice.

It is recommended that centres use a range of open-ended questions to allow candidates to meet assessment standard 1.3. This will allow candidates to demonstrate that they can handle straightforward language and use a reasonable range of vocabulary appropriate to National 4. Candidates should also be encouraged to answer unexpected questions. Performances should not be scripted in advance and should allow for personalisation and choice, although candidates should be made aware of the type of questions they could be asked on the selected topic.

Some centres prepared and supported candidates by asking the same questions, but also included some unexpected questions to facilitate a more natural conversation.

Unnecessarily prolonged presentations and conversations can affect a candidate's performance in a detrimental way. Centres are advised to follow SQA guidelines more closely.

Centres should avoid asking questions in the follow-up conversation where the information has already been addressed in the presentation.

Some centres have detailed their quality assurance procedures, which is to be commended.

Specialist study unit

Centres can adapt the SQA logbook or create their own as long as it is supportive for the candidate and illustrates how the assessment standard has been met, particularly the analysis for assessment standard 1.2.

Candidates need to demonstrate clearly that analysis has taken place by providing enough evidence of analysis to meet assessment standard 1.2. This may include a series of ideas for analysis, relevant quotes which relate clearly to the focus. Centres should refer to the two exemplars of the completed specialist study unit available on the SQA website.

National 5 and Higher performance: talking (IACCA)

Centres submitted candidates' performances on CDs and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification. In the case of CDs, it is essential that they can be played on a range of devices and not solely on the device used for recordings. We recommend that USB keys are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and labelled.

Most centres clearly labelled candidate evidence, which is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process.

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.