NQ Verification 2013–14

Key Message Reports

Verification group name:	French
Levels	N3 to N5
Date published:	July 2014

This Report combines all Verification Key Messages for the academic session 2013-14.

NQ Verification 2013–14 Key Messages Round 1

01 ▶ Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	**Modern Languages — French**
Verification event/visiting information	**Event**
Date published:	**January 2014**

National Courses/Units/Awards 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

02 ▶ Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

It is encouraging to observe that the majority of the centres verified have had their approaches to assessment accepted.

Most centres have used the Unit assessment support packs provided, but in several cases these have been slightly amended or adapted (wording of questions/texts/layout) to suit the centre's needs. This was done successfully and is to be commended. 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 be reflected in the exemplification column (fourth column) of the judging evidence table where necessary.

Centres are encouraged to adapt support packs and judging evidence tables where appropriate. Where this happens, it is important for centres to indicate clearly how the judging evidence table and Unit assessment support pack have been adapted.

Where centres have devised their own instrument of assessment for the *Understanding Language* Unit (reading and/or listening), it is important to include a revised judging evidence table. Revised judging evidence tables must demonstrate — in the fourth column — how a candidate can overtake each Assessment Standard by exemplifying accepted answers.

It is essential to indicate overall purpose in *Understanding Language* Units. Where this is omitted, candidates cannot overtake Outcome 1.1. If an assessment contains more than one overall purpose question then the candidate only needs to be successful in one of them to overtake this aspect of the Assessment Standard.

Where centres have used Unit assessment support packs they must specify the pack(s) used.

Centres are encouraged to submit the appropriate judging evidence table with the assessment instrument. One or two centres submitted the judging evidence table for a listening assessment but the evidence submitted for verification was a reading assessment.

Assessment judgements

It was reassuring to observe that the large majority of centres verified made assessment judgements in line with the national standard.

It was very useful when centres included a brief individual commentary to explain how it made the assessment judgement. This can take the form of a detailed checklist or a brief assessor commentary against each Outcome.

It is important for centres to note that assessment judgements should be made for each candidate individually against the advice in the judging evidence table — centres should not base judgements on the comparison of candidate performances against each other.

For talking assessments, assessor commentaries or detailed checklists are required — with or without an audio file — to demonstrate how assessment judgements have been reached.

A holistic approach should be taken when judging whether candidates have met Assessment Standards. The approach should not be to focus on how many marks a candidate scores, but instead the assessment judgement must be made by deciding whether the candidate's answers/performance demonstrate that the Assessment Standards have been overtaken. If scoring is used, then the result

and approach need to be valid in terms of the Outcomes and the associated Assessment Standards.

It is essential that any marking information is clearly linked to the Assessment Standards in order to facilitate the pass/fail decision.

It is good practice to share Assessment Standards with candidates prior to an assessment.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

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

There was some very good practice identified with regard to internal verification in centres.

Centres are reminded that no more than 12 candidates are to be included in a verification sample. They should refer to SQA guidance on sampling of evidence for verification purposes.

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.

Centres should ensure that the information provided on the Verification Sample Form matches the evidence submitted, ie the correct level and Unit codes, and the final assessment judgement for each candidate's evidence, which should match what has been written on candidate scripts.

Evidence of internal verification must be submitted with the sample. This can take the form of a description of quality assurance processes put in place to ensure consistency across assessors in reaching individual candidate assessment decisions.

Each candidate's evidence must be enclosed in individual flyleaves.

NQ Verification 2013–14 Key Messages Round 2

01 Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	**Modern Languages — French**
Verification event/visiting information	**Events (Round 2, Events 1&2)**
Date published:	**March 2014**

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

02 Section 2: Comments on assessment

The comments gathered for Round 2 should be read in conjunction with the Key Messages Report from Round 1.

Assessment approaches

It is reassuring to observe that the approaches selected by the large majority of centres have been 'Accepted' or 'Accepted with Recommendations'. This is to the credit of the Modern Languages staff in those centres, who have followed the guidelines and taken on the support offered by SQA. This support has also been disseminated in local authorities by the 32 different nominees and team leaders, who have participated in Round 1 and Round 2 of the 2013–14 verification events for French.

- A large majority of centres have used the Unit assessment support packs (available on the SQA secure site) to assess their candidates.

- Many centres successfully adapted these assessments to suit the needs of their candidates without affecting the Assessment Standards and Outcomes.

- A few centres in the sample devised their own assessments and most did so effectively using judicious and imaginative approaches.

- If centres are unsure about the validity of centre-devised assessments, they could compare them with the prior-verified assessments available on the SQA secure site. If still not confident, they should make use of SQA's prior verification service. This should be done before instruments are used as assessments for candidates.

- Centres should make sure they clearly indicate which Unit assessment support pack they have used, eg Package 1, N5, Reading. It is recommended that the judging evidence table, the texts and transcripts — for listening — are also included for the whole cohort — there is no need to include one copy inside each candidate's flyleaf.

- If a centre has used a centre-devised assessment, which has been prior verified, the verification certificate should be included in the envelope.

- When using Unit assessment support packs, it is important that schools use the most up to date version as several have been amended and/or changed since August 2013 (including the texts and the judging evidence tables). Centres have not been penalised for using older 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 the centres included the corresponding version of the judging evidence table, text(s) and questions.

- When centres sent their assessments of the Added Value Unit for National 4, the centre-devised assessments were on the whole appropriate, varied and on interesting topics.

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

- Centres should feel free to reformat the instrument of assessments provided in the Unit assessment support packs by slightly amending the questions, the texts or the layout to suit their pupils or their centre's requirements while maintaining the Assessment Standards. Should the amendments to the texts or questions be minor, these would not require to be prior verified.

- Even where no justification is required in a Unit assessment support pack, it may be useful to ask candidates to justify their choice when attempting the overall purpose question in the reading. This might be a way of avoiding any misunderstandings of the statements/question.

Assessment judgements

It is equally reassuring that a large majority of the assessment judgements made by centres have been 'Accepted' or 'Accepted with Recommendations'. Overall, centres have made best use of the expertise already in place in centres or in clusters of centres.

- 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, eg an assessment outcome record/commentary/checklist for each candidate.

- Detailed commentaries about each candidate's performance are very useful to the nominee verifier. 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, and more practical. This could be used as effective feedback to the candidates.

- Centres should amend judging evidence tables found in the Unit assessment support packs with a range of possible answers to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made, particularly for Assessment Standard 1.1 (overall purpose question).

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

- Centre-devised marking instructions must be clearly referenced to the Outcomes and Assessment Standards, not simply indicate marks awarded.

- It is important that centres have a consistent approach to assessing candidate evidence. For instance, if a reason is expected to support the answer to the overall purpose question, this should be clear in the question(s) or it should be noted that this has been verbally explained to pupils and it should be noted in the judging evidence table. The same standard of answers should be expected from all pupils in the cohort.

- Some centres have noted the Assessment Standards next to each of the candidates' answers or on their scripts as 1.2 / 2.3 etc… to evidence where the candidates had overtaken these Assessment Standards. This is more useful and appropriate than adding marks. One centre used a colour-coded approach, highlighting each Assessment Standard in a different colour and then highlighting the candidates' scripts using this system. It was very clear

where the Assessment Standards had been overtaken.

♦ Centres are reminded that if a candidate fails the overall purpose question, the assessor could ask the candidate to explain their answer orally. This could allow the candidate to justify their choice or change their choice with justification, and therefore possibly overtake this Assessment Standard. This conversation should be summed up on the candidate's script or individual record form. Following marking on a script by the assessor, a mere change of choice in the multiple-choice box without justification would not demonstrate that the candidate has understood the overall purpose of the text.

♦ 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 the Outcomes overall, regardless of whether they are necessarily in the correct place. For instance, if a pupil does not have the correct information in one question, but has it in another, they may be able to demonstrate evidence of overtaking an Outcome by showing understanding of main details etc.

♦ The Unit assessment support pack judging evidence table should be used as a guide: the answers listed in column 4 are only exemplifications of how a candidate may overtake 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.

Specificities of the talking assessments

♦ For talking Unit assessments, 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 (eg more complex phrases like Je pense que / ce qui est génial…) referenced against the Assessment Standards and Outcomes.

♦ 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.

03 Section 3: General comments

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

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

How to complete the SQA Verification Sample Form

Only 12 candidates should be entered with a maximum of two assessments per candidate if they form a Unit (eg a reading assessment and a listening

assessment completing the Understanding Language Unit) or if combined (eg a reading assessment and a writing assessment, not forming a Unit, but interim results across two Units). In the case of combined assessments not forming a Unit, INTERIM Pass/Fail should be entered for each element separately (eg READING = PASS + WRITING = PASS) so it is clear to the verifier what was judged. Note that there is only one box per candidate, but this could be doubled-up to clearly show the judgement made.

It is important that the SQA Verification Sample Form is completed correctly and matches the information on pupil scripts and the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf.

Candidates should be listed in alphabetical order and grouped together for each level (ie N3: candidates A, B, C…, N4: candidates A, B, C… The same order should be used when inserting the scripts into the envelope.

The Unit code (eg H274 73) and level code (eg 73) need to be clearly and correctly entered. Please see page 1 of this report for the list of codes.

The Pass/Fail column should **only** be completed with 'Pass' **or** 'Fail' and should not be left blank. It should not be completed with 'Re-assess/Interim'.

It is essential that the judgement matches that on the candidate script/assessment record forms. 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.

If a centre submits complete evidence for a Unit, eg a reading and listening assessment for the Understanding Language Unit, then on the Verification Sample Form, the column Pass/Fail 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.

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

The judgement entered on the form 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 reading and listening for the Understanding Language Unit are enclosed. Note that 'Complete' does not necessarily mean 'Final'; a candidate could be re-assessed at a later stage if not already done at that level.

♦ 'Interim' when a single element from a Unit is included; eg only the reading element of the Understanding Language Unit is included.

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, etc) and a clear indication on the candidate scripts or on the candidate record form that the work was internally verified and the outcome agreed.

Some centres have spent a remarkable amount of time detailing their quality assurance procedures, which is to be commended. The internal verification/quality assurance arrangements could be modelled on a whole centre one, rather than being developed for each subject to avoid duplication of systems.

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 made up of nominees and 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 summative assessment. If this approach is selected, the centre would have to link clearly to assessment standards in the judging evidence table. It is important that the overall purpose question used — either commercially or centre-devised — by its nature covers the whole text and not only a passage of the text.

NQ Verification 2013–14 Key Messages Round 3

01 ▶ Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	**Modern Languages — French**
Verification event/visiting information	**Event**
Date published:	**June 2014**

National Course verified:

National 5 French performance: talking (Internally-assessed Component of Course Assessment) (C730 75)

02 ▶ Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA guidelines for the Internally-assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5 performance: talking.

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.

Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the performance and conversation should last, in order for candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 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 allow 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 (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from the CfE section of SQA's website).

Natural element:

♦ There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the natural element. Some centres were too severe and other centres gave full marks to all candidates.
♦ Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain 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 include the following — 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 ('*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 (eg '*pardon?*').

Assessment judgements

It is satisfying 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 Marking Information Grid for the talking performance at National 5, in conjunction with the National 5 Grammar Grid to make their assessment judgements. Referring to previous examination procedures is not necessarily beneficial since the format of the assessment has changed.

Centres must use the most up-to-date version of the National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task, which is available from SQA's secure website.

Overall candidate performance was high and, in some cases, candidates performed at a standard, which would be closer to a Higher performance.

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 occasions, assessors had been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what the candidate was going to say.

There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the natural element. Some centres were too severe and other centres gave full marks to all candidates.

In general, centres provided clear commentaries to demonstrate how they made the assessment judgement, which was very useful for the nominee verifiers. Centres are encouraged to provide brief information about how they made the assessment judgement for all candidates in the sample.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

Round 3 focused on the verification of Internally-assessed Component of Course Assessment talking performance at National 5.

Centres submitted candidates' performances on CDs, tapes and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, tapes and MP3 files that are submitted for verification. 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 should leave blank the 'Nominee Review Result' section on the Verification Sample Form as this will only be completed by the nominee verifiers if marks for the Course assessment are changed.