Course report 2025

Higher French

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the subject page of our website.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 2,298

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 2,342

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,204	51.4	51.4	85
B	451	19.3	70.7	72
C	351	15.0	85.7	60
D	229	9.8	95.4	47
No award	107	4.6	100	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ‘most’ means greater than or equal to 70%
- ‘many’ means 50% to 69%
- ‘some’ means 25% to 49%
- ‘a few’ means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The course assessments covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability, culture. All question papers offered an appropriate level of challenge.

The reading and directed writing question papers performed as intended. Candidates performed well in these papers, and very well in the assignment–writing. Candidate performance in the listening paper was better than in 2024.

Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper performed as expected. The text was about the popularity of summer jobs with young people in France. Candidates engaged well with the topic. A few candidates left some questions unanswered, mainly in the overall purpose question.

All questions performed as expected. There was a balance of accessible and challenging questions, with some questions offering options for acceptable answers.

Candidates translate a section of the reading text into English, a skill requiring a high degree of grammatical accuracy and higher order skills that help in differentiating candidate performance. Most candidates attempted this part of the question paper (question 7).

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The question paper performed as expected. Scenario 1 (on the context of culture) and scenario 2 (on the context of learning) were fair, accessible and of equal demand.

Candidates must write mostly using the past tense, with the conditional and/or future tense needed to answer the last bullet point.

Many candidates chose to write about staying with a French family as part of a school exchange (scenario 2), with some candidates choosing to write about visiting a traditional market (scenario 1). Candidates were able to answer the bullet points in both scenarios.

Question paper 2: Listening

The question paper sampled the context of society. Item 1 was a monologue about aspects relating to health and the environment, and Item 2 was a conversation about a community project.

The question paper was fair, and on a topic that candidates could engage with. This produced a range of performances. Some candidates coped well, while others continue to find listening a challenging skill.

The listening paper contained a mixture of more accessible and more demanding questions, with several questions in both Item 1 and Item 2 offering optionality. Some candidates found aspects of the question paper to be very accessible whereas others found some aspects to be challenging, but most attempted all questions. Performance in listening was better than in 2024.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as intended. Candidates choose a stimulus on a topic of their choice and write discursively using detailed and complex language in response to the stimulus.

Candidates used a variety of contexts and topics from the contexts of society, learning or culture, with fewer essays on the context of employability.

The assignment–writing is designed to offer an element of personalisation and choice and give candidates opportunities to write on topics that interests them.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates performed in a similar way in the reading paper than in 2024. Candidates responded confidently to the comprehension questions (questions 1 to 5), with many answers having the level of detail required at this level. The overall purpose question (question 6) was done well by most candidates.

- question 1(a): many candidates achieved 1 mark. Some candidates did not gain marks as they mistranslated *mille* for ‘hundred’ or ‘million’
- question 1(b): most candidates achieved 1 or 2 marks. Few candidates did not gain marks in this question
- question 2: some candidates achieved 3 marks. Some candidates did not gain the first mark for missing the verb ‘to save’
- question 3(a): many candidates performed well and gained 2 marks. They included the details required for the second mark ‘to **always** arrive on time’
- question 3(b): several options were available, and most candidates included the first two. Most candidates achieved 2 marks
- question 4(a): three options were available. Many candidates performed well and achieved 2 marks
- question 5(b): three options were available, and many candidates achieved 2 marks. Candidates coped well with giving the required detail
- question 6 (the overall purpose question): many candidates gained 1 or 2 marks. They gave the correct assertion that the text covered many positive points about young people having a summer job. Candidates had many choices of positive examples to use in their justification
- question 7: while the translation was challenging in parts, many candidates performed well particularly in sense units 1,2 and 4

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Many candidates performed well in directed writing, achieving pegged marks of 12, 16 or 20 in both scenarios.

Candidates performed in a similar way in the directed writing paper than in 2024. More confident performances were characterised by candidates addressing the bullet points in a balanced way, demonstrating good content, grammatical accuracy, and language resource appropriate to the level. Candidates adapted learned material effectively to address their chosen scenario.

Features of stronger responses included:

- full coverage of the bullet points and additional information relevant to the scenario
- a good or very good level of grammatical accuracy with good control of past tenses and the conditional tense for bullet points 6 in each of the scenarios
- good or very good language resource, for example: *on s'est promené, je ne m'entendais pas bien, tous les matins j'allais, ce que j'ai aimé, j'avais l'occasion de connaître, si j'avais su que, quand j'en avais besoin*
- good use of discourse markers, for example: *pour commencer, il y a quelques mois, parfois, tous les jours, quelquefois, chaque soir, pendant la journée, de temps en temps, dans l'ensemble, pendant mon séjour, en général, personnellement, en conclusion*

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(a): two options were available. Many candidates gained 1 mark
- question 1(b)(iii): three options were available. Most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks and recognised relatively straightforward vocabulary 'selfish' and 'lazy'
- question 1 (c)(i): most candidates recognised relatively straightforward vocabulary and structures
- question 2(a): three options were available. Most candidates performed well and gained 1 or 2 marks

- question 2(c): most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks. Some candidates missed the mark for missing the required detail of ‘planted trees and flowers’
- question 2(d)(i): many candidates performed well and understood the number *neuf cents*
- question 2(d)(ii): many candidates performed well and recognised ‘for free’
- question 2(e)(i): many candidates performed well
- question 2(e)(ii): most candidates performed well. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the idea of the gardening ‘motivating them to be more active’

Assignment–writing

There were some excellent pieces of writing at this level and many candidates gained the upper pegged marks of 16 and 20, with most candidates gaining 12 pegged marks or higher.

Features of stronger performances included:

- relevant content, with some essays fully addressing the title in a discursive way
- many essays had a good structure, with different viewpoints on the topic and a clear conclusion
- a very good or good degree of grammatical accuracy, where errors did not always detract from the overall impression
- good language resource with sustained use of detailed and complex language; language structures, verbs and vocabulary were topic dependant, for example: *certaines personnes pensent que, c’est indéniable que, élargir ses horizons, cela permet de, il faut constater que, améliorer vos connaissances, on peut découvrir une autre culture*
- use of discourse markers, for example: *premièrement, en conclusion, cependant, d’abord, pour conclure, de nos jours, par conséquent, aussi, donc, néanmoins, de plus, en revanche, tout d’abord, on peut dire*
- discursive language, for example: *les avantages/inconvénients de…sont que…, on ne peut pas nier que, il va sans dire que, il y a des gens/ceux qui disent que, d’un côté, de l’autre côté, en revanche, par contre, examinons, d’autre part, tout*

compte fait, ayant dit cela, il y a des arguments pour et contre, il est évident que, à vrai dire, en ce qui concerne, cela dit

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

- question 4(a): the second mark required the detail 'to have friends in the right places', which was challenging for some candidates to translate from *avoir du piston*
- question 4(b): some candidates achieved 1 mark. Many candidates did not gain marks as they mistranslated *passer* as 'to pass' and *la veille* as 'evening'
- question 5(a): was a challenging question with only some candidates achieving 3 marks. Candidates missed out on marks for mistranslating *une année sur l'autre* as 'every other year', or missed the detail 'within the team' for the second mark
- question 6 (the overall purpose question): many candidates gained 1 or 2 marks. However, there were still many candidates quoting the text or a few writing all their justification in French
- sense units 3 and 5 in the translation (question 7) were the most challenging aspect of this paper:

    - sense unit 3: *il faut juste être motivé mais aussi et surtout*, candidates did not gain marks as they were omitting *juste* or translating it as 'justified' or 'fair'
    - sense unit 5: *du fait qu'on sera debout toute la journée,* candidates were missing out on marks for the mistranslation of *du fait que*. Very few candidates recognised the future tense of *être.* Candidates did not gain marks for mistranslating *toute la journée* as 'every day' instead of 'all day'

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Weaker performance highlighted problems with coverage of the bullet points, more limited content and language resource along with problems sustaining grammatical accuracy.

Where candidates only partially addressed the bullet points, they missed out on the upper pegged marks. For example, in scenario 1, a few responses did not address 'who you went with **and** how you travelled', and in scenario 2 a few responses missed 'where you stayed'.

Some candidates produced pre-learned language and phrases that did not address the bullet points in the chosen scenario. For example, in scenario 1, bullet point 2 'what you thought of the region where you stayed', and bullet point 3 'what you did at the market'. In scenario 2, some responses struggled to address bullet point 2 'why you decided to take part'.

A very small number of performances had serious inaccuracies where very little of the essay made sense and gained no marks.

Features of weaker performance included:

- problems with grammatical accuracy in spelling, gender, plurals, accents and adjectival agreement, for example:
    - *année dernier, un famille francais, en le centre, amusement chose, beaucoup des jardins, ma préfére chose, un trois étoiles hôtel, acceuilants, elle lycée nous parlons communique, faire* (missing past tense)*, je aimé, je decidé, un visiter d'échange, la pointure du lycée, recommenderais, etait, voyage* (instead of past participle *voyagé*)*, amèliorer, tres, elle a resté, j'ai arrivé, la impoli étudiants*
- a lack of knowledge of tenses, with little control of language or an inability to sustain the correct use of past tenses, and essays reverting to the present tense, particularly after the first bullet point
- use of the infinitive instead of a past tense and auxiliary verbs being omitted or incorrectly selected in the perfect tense, for example:
    - *je prendre, elle a resté, j'aimé* (missing auxiliary), *j'ai apprendu/apprendé, j'ai/nous avons allé, nous avons resté, j'ai passer, je recommenderais, tu découvre*
- use of incorrect words and/or phrases, for example:

- *l'année dernier, developé habilité de toute un vie, j'ai devenir sur trop bien, amusement* (for *amusant*)*, le future, avec une famille* (instead of *chez une famille*)*, le échange allé*

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1b(i): some candidates missed the mark for giving *jeunes* as 'people' instead of 'young people'
- question 1b(ii): many candidates misunderstood *un kilomètre et demi* as '1km'. Candidates missed out on marks for not including the detail of *les mêmes personnes* 'the **same** people', which was required for the second mark
- question 1c(ii): many candidates missed the mark for not recognising the past tense of the verb *pleuvoir*
- question 2b: many candidates missed out on marks for not including the required detail of *seulement:* 'only'
- question 2(e)(iii): many candidates missed out on marks for this question as they did not recognise the word *bénévolat* 'volunteering'
- question 2(f): some candidates missed out on marks in this question as they did not understand the idea of 'everyone talking in the area'. *Les gens* was often mistranslated as 'young people' and some candidates did not understand the idea of *ça change l'esprit de communauté:* 'it changes the community spirit'

Assignment–writing

In this component, writing should be largely discursive. Some candidates' essays had titles and stimuli that should have elicited a discursive response; however, their responses were from a personal point of view with mostly personal ideas and opinions, and little discussion of different viewpoints. Some submissions lacked an appropriate conclusion. There were some titles or stimuli that required candidates to recount their experience, and this did not provide them with the necessary scope to consider different viewpoints.

If essays read as a personal response to a topic and had either few or no discursive elements, the candidates could not gain the upper pegged marks.

Features of weaker performances included:

- content with limited coverage of different arguments and/or viewpoints
- an insufficient level of accuracy for the level. Some essays had errors that detracted from the overall quality of some performances, for example:
    - verb and tense errors: *il faut bien dis, nous avons trouvés, tu peut, tu doit, c'est causé, les téléphones pouvait, ils no savoirs, tout le monde ne sont pas avoir, nos sont pas peut, ils faire, les parents peux, il peuvent*
    - gender and agreement errors: *vie sain, ses famille, sont pratique essentiel, nouveau culture, la famille est très important, de bon conseils, un responsabilité, le relation*
    - spelling errors: *en revenche, souvinirs, innconvenients, la manque d'opportunite, le travaill, l'exercise, que ils, semane, que apprendre, cela permit*
    - incorrect or incomplete structures: *en mode de vie, touts les gens, examinons, les inconvénients sur exercice, parce qu'ils sont assis passent, avec les beau temps dehors souvent, une boire une verre, a rester en contact*
    - inconsistent use of accents*: bénefique, inconvenients, a (preposition à), agrèables, ameliorer, reduire, regulieres*

In terms of language resource, most candidates' essays showed that they attempted to use detailed and complex language, but weaker performances showed unsuccessful use of language and structures, mostly due to issues with accuracy.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

For the comprehension questions, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- pay close attention to the number of marks for each question and provide as much detail as they can
- know that if a question says, ‘state any one thing’, there is more than one possible correct answer
- know that the comprehension questions have key words to help them find the correct answer in the text
- leave time to check their answers
- are aware that marks are not transferrable across questions

For the overall purpose question, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- know they should answer the question (assertion), going beyond the simple statement of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. They should follow this with a justification that shows an accurate reading of the text, using examples or reasons with reference to the text
- are aware that quotes in French without an explanation of their relevance, will not gain any marks

For the translation, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have opportunities to practise the skill of translation as often as possible
- complete the translation question after the comprehension questions
- pay attention to verb tenses and detail to ensure that the translation is an accurate reflection of the French
- re-read their translation in English to check it makes sense

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- check they have answered all the bullet points, or parts of bullet points
- try to give detail for each bullet point in a balanced way
- write in paragraphs
- use detailed and complex language, avoiding repeating the same structures and ideas
- include additional information, where appropriate
- develop a robust knowledge of aspects of grammar appropriate to the level
- know how to conjugate perfect and imperfect tenses
- have a secure understanding of when to use the perfect or imperfect tense
- use a variety of tenses and structures, using different verb forms, for example first- or third-person plural
- set aside time to read over their writing to check, for example, gender, spelling, adjectival agreements using the dictionary

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- practise listening skills, including note-taking in class
- use the time before the recording starts to read the questions
- try to identify or highlight key words in each question
- include as much detail as possible in their answers
- practise basic vocabulary on a regular basis. This includes vocabulary covered before starting the Higher course, for example days of the week, time, numbers, months of the year, food, shopping, travel, holidays, weather and family

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates:

- read the general marking principles and detailed marking instructions to understand that, at this level, they should present different arguments or viewpoints and draw a conclusion
- view examples of discursive writing on our Understanding Standards web page to better understand the style of writing required in the assignment–writing
- have a choice of stimuli at the start of the drafting process, to help them write discursively about a topic
- use the time spent between the first draft and final version to improve accuracy in all aspects of grammar and spelling
- write the stimulus and any associated questions in English in the answer booklet
- avoid including any draft work in the answer booklet
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- ensure typed responses are double spaced between lines

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy.