

Course report 2026

Advanced Higher French, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question papers and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 366

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 368

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	155	42.1	42.1	140
B	96	26.1	68.2	120
C	63	17.1	85.3	100
D	35	9.5	94.8	80
No award	19	5.2	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The question paper performed as intended. The paper covered the context of employability. The text was on the impact of working from home, allowing candidates to engage with a familiar topic. There was a range of A and C-type questions, and candidates had to use higher-order skills to answer the overall purpose question and the translation.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The question paper performed as intended. The listening paper covered the context of society, with a focus on health and well-being. There was a range of question types, allowing candidates to access the full range of marks.

The discursive writing section covered all four contexts: society, learning, employability, culture. The choice of essay titles gave candidates opportunities to express their ideas in French. Candidates addressed all four titles, with no one title being more or less popular. The questions were accessible to all candidates.

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as expected. It provides candidates opportunities to show their critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature or media. No candidates chose language in work.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. The performance allows candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain a conversation with a visiting assessor. When candidates completed their Subject Topic List (STL) form in line with our guidance, visiting assessors could use this to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their conversational skills and ability to manipulate the language to express ideas on their topics.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

In the reading section, most candidates coped well with the comprehension questions and gathered general information and more specific detail accurately. Candidates performed well in questions with optionality.

- question 2: many candidates identified three from four options:
 - *réduisant le temps de trajet quotidien* (reduces daily travel times)
 - *améliorant l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie personnelle* (improves work-life balance)
 - *permettant aux travailleurs de mieux se concentrer sur leurs tâches sans interruption* (allows workers to better focus on their tasks without interruptions)
 - *gérer leur emploi du temps à leur guise* (manage their work schedule freely)
- question 3: many candidates identified three from four options:
 - *il pourrait s'avérer dangereux pour la santé et le moral de ceux et celles qui le pratiquent exclusivement* (can prove dangerous for health and morale)
 - *les télétravailleurs peuvent être sous pression et ont souvent l'impression de devoir être plus productifs que leurs collaborateurs en entreprise et ce pour prouver qu'ils ne se contentent pas de ne rien faire chez eux, assis dans un fauteuil* ((they) often feel like they must be more productive than their colleagues who work on site, prove that they are not content to do nothing at home (in an armchair))
 - *cette pression, conjuguée à une perte d'horaires fixes, les mène parfois à faire plus d'heures de travail que nécessaire* ((sometimes leads them to) work more hours than necessary)
 - *[cela] peut brouiller la démarcation entre le domaine du travail et la vie personnelle* (can blur the line between their professional time and their personal time)
- question 5(c)(i): many candidates identified *nous passons à côté des signaux sociaux d'un bureau plein de vie* (when working remotely we miss social cues of

- a busy office) or *nous perdons des interactions sociales indispensables* (when working remotely we lose essential social interactions)
- question 5(c)(ii): many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *se croiser par hasard dans le couloir du bureau* (meeting by chance in the office corridors)
 - *prendre un verre après le travail* (having a drink after work)
 - *prenant des nouvelles et posant des questions sur le week-end* (asking for news, asking questions about the weekend)
 - question 6: many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *les télétravailleurs travaillent parfois sur leurs lits ou sur leurs canapés et ont commencé à souffrir de courbatures et même, dans certains cas, de scoliose* (working without a suitable workspace at home, on a couch, bed can cause pain, stiffness, scoliosis)
 - *le manque de mouvement et d'activité physique peut occasionner du surpoids* (lack of movement, physical activity can lead to being overweight) or *l'utilisation continue d'écrans mènera sans doute à une dégradation de la vue* (continuous use of screens will cause deterioration of eyesight)
 - in the overall purpose question, some candidates performed well. They identified the overall purpose of the text, which was to inform the reader about the increase in remote working since COVID, its advantages and disadvantages, and presented a picture of remote working that is more negative than positive. Many backed up their assertions with appropriate inferences drawn from the language and stylistic features
 - in the translation, many candidates displayed an excellent level of idiomatic English, along with a good understanding of the grammatical challenges in each sense unit

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, most candidates responded well to the stimulus, which was a monologue on physical activity, and a discussion on health issues. Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the language and answered well.

In the discursive writing section, all four discursive essays were attempted, and many candidates made good use of learned material, adapting it to answer the questions.

Essays that achieved the upper range of marks contained idiomatic language, a high level of accuracy in both grammar and vocabulary choice appropriate to the level, and a structure that was clear and identified the points that would be discussed. They demonstrated a strong conclusion, which summarised the arguments presented in their essay.

Portfolio

Candidates used a good selection of sources. Candidates who performed well in the portfolio chose a question that led to critical analysis, for example 'To what extent is the author and/or director successful in...' and provided several considered examples to back up their position. These candidates proofread their submissions and took an analytical and/or critical approach, with reasoned and relevant arguments.

Candidates achieving higher marks often consulted background materials on their focus of study and integrated the findings of these into their essays.

Most portfolios contained a bibliography.

Performance—talking

Many candidates prepared well and incorporated learned material skilfully. Many candidates engaged and interacted meaningfully with the interlocutor, which led to some very good performances.

Candidates who accessed the upper range of marks:

- completed the Subject Topic List (STL) form well, and included clear starting points for discussion that allowed the visiting assessors to broaden the conversation beyond the topics listed, ensuring the speaking assessment was both flexible and purposeful
- could seek help in French if they were having difficulty understanding
- used learned material but maintained a natural flow
- attempted to answer questions fully and did not give many short answers

Discussion of their portfolio allowed most candidates the opportunity to talk about a topic they studied in depth during the course.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- some candidates had difficulty with expression in English and a lack of detail in their answers
- question 1(a): some candidates misunderstood *les salariés* (workers or employees) as 'salaries'
- question 1(b)(i): some candidates answered 'had, there was a change' instead of 'it brought about, triggered, led to a change' from *ceci a déclenché un changement d'attitude et a profondément transformé la façon dont nous envisageons le travail*
- question 3: a few candidates misunderstood *le moral* (morale), as 'morality', and did not gain the mark
- question 4: a few candidates misunderstood *plusieurs fois* (several times) as 'many times'
- in the overall purpose question, most candidates did not gain the upper marks:
 - many had difficulty going beyond giving a summary of the text
 - a few did not give an introductory statement to answer the question, 'What was the author's purpose in writing this text?'
 - some presented a list of stylistic features or quotations without drawing inferences from these in relation to the text
- in the translation, some candidates had difficulty identifying verb tenses, which impacted on the quality of their translation, and they missed out on marks:
 - sense unit 3: some mistranslated the imperfect *voulait travailler* (had wanted, had been wanting) as 'has wanted to' or 'used to want to'
 - sense unit 4: some mistranslated the conditional *ne poserait pas* (wouldn't be) as 'did not pose'
 - sense unit 5: some did not recognise the imperfect tense in *je croyais* (I believed)
 - sense unit 7: some translated the present tense *part* (goes) into the wrong tense
 - sense unit 8: some translated the perfect tense *est devenu* (has become, became) into the wrong tense

- some candidates mistranslated false friends, for example:
 - sense unit 1: 'a post' for *un poste* (a job)
 - sense unit 2: 'occasion' for *l'occasion* (chance, opportunity)
 - sense unit 8: 'support' for *supporter* (to bear)
- a few candidates chose to do the overall purpose question and/or translation before the comprehension questions. This strategy is often disadvantageous to candidates as they do not yet have the full context of the text

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section, some candidates did not give enough detail:

- question 1(b)(i):
 - some candidates did not state '80%' and 'every day' from *80% des adolescents ne pratiquent pas d'activité sportive au quotidien* and did not gain the mark
 - some did not state 'enough' from *assez d'activité sportive* and did not gain the mark
- question 2(a): some candidates missed 'for two weeks' from *me réfugier dans mon lit pendant deux semaines* and did not gain the mark
- question 2(b)(i): some candidates did not identify 'contradictory' or 'worrying' from *informations contradictoires, parfois inquiétantes* and did not gain the mark
- question 2(b)(ii):
 - in the first part of the question, some candidates did not identify two out of the three parts of *leurs opinions, conseils et astuces* (opinions, advice, tips) and did not gain the mark
 - in the second part of the question, some candidates did not identify 'anything' in *ils sont souvent prêts à dire n'importe quoi pour promouvoir un produit et en tirer profit* (they are often ready to say anything to promote a product, for profit) and did not gain the mark

In the discursive writing section:

- many candidates had difficulty with basic grammatical structures and a lack of accuracy in spelling
- some candidates lacked control of the conjugation of verbs and use of tenses when writing in French, and there were errors of gender and use of prepositions, and they missed out on marks

Portfolio

- some candidates did not use a clear, focused title, or they used a conversational rather than formal register, and could not access the higher marks
- some candidates found it difficult to compare two works, which led to repetition and general statements not backed up by appropriate evidence
- some media studies were less analytical, occasionally reverting to a general, background study rather than focusing on the question
- some candidates chose essay titles that did not lend themselves to an analytical approach and instead led to a retelling of the plot, and they could only access the lower marks in the range
- some candidates selected quotations that had some relevance to the title of the essay but led to a plot description and not to analysis

Performance–talking

Some candidates' Subject Topic List (STL) forms did not contain enough detail for the chosen contexts, while others were overly prescriptive (for example a list of questions, or very narrow and specific topics).

This led to some candidates not performing well, as they either could not talk in some detail or could not express ideas and opinions on more general themes within the context. Some topics did not allow enough discussion at the level required, for example, choice of university, the benefits of listening to music.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

You should ensure candidates:

- avoid giving alternatives in their answers
- do not do the translation first, as they develop an understanding of the text from the questions, which can help improve the quality of the translation
- have a secure knowledge of verbs and tenses
- pay careful attention to all line references given as these help and guide them through the text
- are aware of question paper numbering conventions, for example 2(a), 2(b)(i), 2(b)(ii), 3(a), 3(a)(i), and ensure they put the correct answer beside the correct number and letter combination
- give precise, detailed answers, checking for qualifiers required to gain the mark
- do not attempt the overall purpose question and translation before completing the comprehension questions. Attempting the questions in order provides a deeper understanding of the text, which helps when attempting the overall purpose question and translation
- produce a response to the overall purpose question, which is analytical and inferential in nature, and are aware that the question uses the phrase: 'with close reference to the points made and the language used'
- avoid rewriting or only translating large parts of the text as a response to the overall purpose question. Instead, choose key points and explain what the impact of these points is, beyond the text
- know there is nothing to gain by rewriting numerous lines from the text as a quotation. The inclusion of a short phrase or single word to demonstrate a point they are making is acceptable and valid
- use translation practice as an exercise in accuracy and precision throughout the year, with a focus on ensuring the English translation is in good, idiomatic English
- pay close attention to the function of simple words
- refer to our [Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page](#), including course reports, marking instructions and past papers

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

You should ensure candidates:

- use the number of marks for each question as a guide to the level of detail required in their answers
- check the accuracy of their written work, particularly the conjugation of verbs
- refer to the productive grammar grid in our [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to ensure they cover all relevant areas of grammar
- pay particular attention to any numbers, dates, times and years, and listen out for any qualifiers or other adjectives as well as any comparatives or superlatives, as these are likely to be assessed
- listen to sophisticated, authentic language throughout the year, and develop note-taking skills well in advance of the exam
- are aware of the importance of relevance and accuracy in their discursive writing
- practise planning essays and, under pressure of time, concentrate on the grammatical accuracy of the language
- practise adapting essays to suit various scenarios, for example ‘How could I use an essay I’ve written on the importance of language learning to respond to the essay title, ‘Online learning is more difficult than traditional lessons?’
- practise and develop both skills throughout the year

Portfolio

You should ensure candidates:

- select a clear, focused title that allows them to demonstrate a critical and analytical approach in an appropriate register
- include a bibliography
- avoid including films and books in translation in the bibliography if these are the only sources, as this gives the impression that these have been used in translation only
- are aware of our current position statement on the use of [generative artificial intelligence \(GenAI\) in assessments](#)
- write the same essay title on the flyleaf and their essay
- keep the essay title short and to the point, and avoid long complex titles

- discuss the literature text or media selected for study to ensure that the text chosen is not an immediate barrier, for example if the film or book has little scope for analysis or is of an inappropriate level
- know not to translate any quotes they include in their essay
- fully reference quotes in their essay
- refer to the guidelines in the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to know what they need to do to access the higher marks

Performance–talking

You should ensure candidates:

- have a choice of topics they can select for discussion that allow them to expand their answers as required at Advanced Higher level
- regularly practise their conversational French to prepare for the visiting assessor
- can adapt pre-learned material to the conversation, while ensuring that it is not a scripted dialogue
- fill in the [STL form](#) in a comprehensive way, by identifying topics and sub-topics they would like to discuss. They should not include a list of questions or overly-specific sub-topics, but should give enough detail about the main themes they want to discuss
- have a bank of phrases that they can use to elevate their performance–talking to a more sophisticated level, as well as ones that they can use to seek clarification in French