

Course report 2026

Higher French, SCQF level 6

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 carried out limited verification for performance–talking this year, so we won't publish a verification summary. You can find summaries from previous years on our [website](#).

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: 2,342

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 2,205

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,062	48.2	48.2	82
B	463	21.0	69.2	70
C	349	15.8	85.0	58
D	218	9.9	94.9	46
No award	113	5.1	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

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

Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper performed as intended. The text was about the growing use of artificial intelligence in all aspects of society. Candidates engaged well with the topic. A few candidates did not answer all questions, particularly 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. This skill requires a high degree of grammatical accuracy and higher order skills that help in differentiating candidate performance. Most candidates attempted this part of the paper (question 8).

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The question paper performed as intended. Scenario 1 (on the context of employability) and scenario 2 (on the context of culture) 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 doing voluntary work in a French-speaking country (scenario 1), with some candidates choosing to write about going on an activity holiday in Switzerland (scenario 2). Candidates answered the bullet points in both scenarios.

Question paper 2: Listening

The question paper performed as intended. The paper was on the context of learning. Item 1 was a monologue about going to school in two different countries,

and Item 2 was a conversation about a primary school teacher moving into secondary teaching.

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

The paper contained questions of various levels of demand, and there were some that candidates found more challenging than others.

Assignment–writing

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

Many candidates used a variety of topics from the contexts of society, learning or culture, with fewer pieces of writing on the context of employability. The most popular topics candidates wrote about were technology and social media, family versus friends, the value of language learning, healthy living, and the pros and cons of a gap year.

The assignment–writing offers an element of personalisation and choice and gives candidates opportunities to write on topics that interest them.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates responded confidently to the comprehension questions (questions 1 to 6), and many answers had the level of detail required at this level. Some candidates did the overall purpose question (question 7) well.

- question 2: many candidates gained 1 or 2 marks and identified the differing views expressed from *certaines pensent que c'est une révolution technologique* and *d'autres la considèrent comme une menace pour les emplois, l'éducation et peut-être même l'humanité*:
 - 'some (people) or certain people think it is a technological revolution, a technology revolution, a revolution in technology and (others) consider it as a threat, detrimental, danger to jobs, employment, employability, work, education and (perhaps even) humanity'
- question 3: most candidates gained 1 mark, identifying either:
 - *une opportunité de réinventer l'école* (they see it as an opportunity or chance to reinvent school(s))
 - *l'occasion d'améliorer certaines méthodes de travail* (improve or improving the methods or way(s) of working, work)
- question 4(a): most candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *les professeurs observent que l'éducation est devenue plus flexible et mieux adaptée aux préférences de leurs élèves* ((for teachers) education has become more flexible, better adapted to pupils, students' preferences/likes)
 - *L'IA est très utile aux professeurs qui ont besoin de générer rapidement des plans de cours* ((AI helps teachers) to generate lesson(s), course(s) (plans), class plans quickly, faster, rapidly)
 - *ou qui veulent créer du matériel éducatif individualisé* ((it helps teachers) to create, make individualised, individual, personalised educational, teaching material(s))

- question 5(a): many candidates mistook *certaines* as ‘certain’, but most candidates understood the first option of ‘taking part in a conversation’. Many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *elle peut prendre part à une conversation* (she can take part in, be part of a conversation)
 - *répondre à des centaines de questions* (answer, respond, reply to hundreds of questions)
 - *et même écrire des articles en temps réel* (write articles in real time)
- question 5(b): many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *on peut traiter plus de patients en utilisant l’IA au lieu d’un chirurgien pour faire certaines opérations* ((can treat more patients using AI) as it can be used to carry out, to do (some) operations instead of the surgeon, doctor)
 - *la technologie peut aider les médecins à prendre de meilleures décisions* (can help doctors to make better decisions)
 - *certains programmes sont capables d’identifier des maladies que l’on ne pouvait pas détecter avant l’arrivée de cette technologie* (can identify, spot diseases, illnesses undetectable before or without the arrival of this technology)
- question 5(c): many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options:
 - *la première fois que je suis montée dans un bus sans chauffeur j’avais vraiment peur* (she was frightened, scared (the first time) she got on a (driverless) bus)
 - *je me suis vite rendu compte que la technologie était capable de réagir plus rapidement qu’un être humain* ((the technology, it) can respond, react quicker, faster, more quickly, (the reaction time of) a human (being), person)
 - *je suis maintenant convaincue que l’IA est une bonne chose pour notre sécurité routière* ((she is convinced that) it could be a good thing for (our) road safety)
- question 6(a): many candidates identified ‘technology never makes mistakes’ and gained 1 mark
- question 7 (the overall purpose question): most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks. They gave the correct assertion that the text covered many positive points about artificial intelligence. Candidates gave many good examples from the text to justify their answers

- question 8: while the translation was challenging in parts, many candidates performed well, particularly in sense unit 3 (*car la traduction générée par l'IA fonctionne très bien*) and sense unit 5 (*maintenant nous corrigeons les erreurs dans les textes créés par l'IA*)

Question paper 1: Directed writing

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

Candidates who performed well addressed the bullet points in a balanced way, demonstrated good content, grammatical accuracy and language resource appropriate to the level. Some candidates adapted learned material effectively to address their chosen scenario.

These 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 point 6 in each of the scenarios
- good or very good language resource, for example: *je recommanderais, je m'entendais très bien, j'ai fait du bénévolat, je me suis endormie, je voulais aider les gens, j'ai décidé de, j'ai tellement apprécié*
- good use of discourse markers, for example: *pendant les grandes vacances, pendant la journée, quelquefois, je dois vraiment dire, heureusement, pendant mon séjour, en général, personnellement, en conclusion*

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1: most candidates gained 1 mark
- question 1(b): most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks and recognised relatively straightforward phrases such as *mes parents ont divorcé* (parents got a divorce) and *ma mère voulait habiter plus près de sa famille* (mum wanted to live close(r)/near(er) to her family)
- question 1(d): three options were available, and many candidates gained 2 marks. Most understood *plus de cinq nationalités différentes* (more than five

- (different) nationalities in her class) and *maximum vingt élèves par classe* (maximum of twenty pupils in a class). Some identified the third option: *tous les cours étaient en anglais* ((all) lessons, classes were in English)
- question 2(a): most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks from the three options:
 - *j'ai étudié les langues vivantes à l'université* (she studied languages at university)
 - *parler anglais me manquait* (she missed speaking English)
 - *je voulais utiliser mes compétences linguistiques* ((she wanted to, likes to, could) use her linguistic, language skills, abilities, competence(s))
 - question 2(b): most candidates gained 1 mark for the first part: *j'avais une excellente institutrice à l'école qui m'a inspiré* (she had an (excellent) primary teacher, teacher who inspired her)
 - question 2(c): most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks from the four options:
 - *je fais le travail dont j'ai toujours rêvé* (it is what she has (always) dreamed of, it is her dream job, career)
 - *mon nouveau poste n'est pas très loin de la maison de mes parents* (it is near, close to, not far from her parents' (house))
 - *on peut se voir souvent* (they can see each other often, they can see her often, she can see them often)
 - *ils pensent que j'ai trouvé un bon équilibre entre ma vie personnelle et ma vie professionnelle* ((they think that) she has a (good) balance between personal life and professional life, life and work)
 - question 2(d)(iii): some candidates understood *je m'entends avec tous mes collègues* (she gets on (well) with (all) her colleagues)
 - question 2(e)(ii): many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the idea of *un festival pour célébrer la diversité des cultures représentées au collège* (there is a festival celebrating the diverse, different cultures (of the school), there is a festival celebrating the diversity and culture (of the school))

Assignment–writing

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

These candidates included:

- relevant content, with some fully addressing the title in a discursive way
- a clear 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: *il fournit, il y a des gens qui disent que, de nos jours, autrement dit, il y a ceux qui pensent, en ce qui concerne, selon moi, il faut constater que*
- use of discourse markers, for example: *d’abord, pour conclure, en conclusion, personnellement, pour commencer, toutes choses considérées, aujourd’hui, premièrement, cependant, par conséquent, aussi, donc, néanmoins, de plus, en revanche, tout d’abord, on peut dire*
- discursive language, for example: *les inconvénients l’emportent sur les avantages, autrement, 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 est évident que, à vrai dire, en ce qui concerne, il faut peser le pour et le contre*

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper 1: Reading

- question 1: many candidates did not gain marks as they misunderstood *le contact entre les personnes qui habitent dans des pays différents ou dans des communautés isolées* (it has facilitated, facilitates, allowed, allows, helps, helped contact, communication between people who live in different, other countries or isolated communities or it has made contact, communication easier between people that live in different, other countries or isolated communities) and interpreted it as communication between different countries and isolated communities
- question 2: some candidates only gained 1 mark as they did not identify *une menace pour les emplois* as a 'threat' or a 'danger' (rather than a menace)
- question 4(b): some candidates did not gain marks as they misunderstood *un ensemble* (a set, group, collection, range, variety) as 'together'
- question 5(b): many candidates did not recognise the comparative in *meilleures décisions* and incorrectly identified it as the superlative, writing 'best decisions' instead of 'better decisions'
- question 6(a): many candidates found this question challenging and only a few gained 2 marks. Many misunderstood *engager* (taking on, hiring) as 'to engage', or *certaines* as 'certain', and did not gain the marks
- question 6(b): many candidates found this question challenging. Some candidates misunderstood the sentence *trouver de nouveaux emplois pour ceux qui sont remplacés par l'IA* (to find (a) new job(s), employment for those being replaced by AI) and wrote 'finding new employees to replace AI', and did not gain the marks
- question 7 (the overall purpose question): many candidates quoted the text or did not give precise examples. A few candidates wrote all their justification in French, instead of in English
- (question 8): candidates found sense units 1, 2 and 4 in the translation most challenging:

- sense unit 1: candidates mistranslated *on se sent un peu inutile* (we, one feel(s) a (little) bit useless) as ‘we, one, you smell(s)’, and did not gain the marks
- sense unit 2: candidates omitted *nous disent* or mistranslated *les gens nous disent* as ‘we as the people’, and did not gain the marks from *les gens nous disent* (people tell, say, are saying to us, we are told by people that)
- sense unit 4: many candidates did not translate *nous avons dû adapter* as ‘we had to adapt’, and did not gain the marks from *alors nous avons dû adapter nos méthodes de travail* (so we had to adapt our methods, ways of working, work, so we have had to adapt our working, work methods, ways)

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Where candidates did not perform well:

- they only partially addressed the bullet points, and could not access the upper pegged marks, for example:
 - in scenario 1, a few candidates did not address ‘who you went with and how you travelled’
 - in scenario 2 a few missed ‘where you stayed’
- some used pre-learned language and phrases that did not address the bullet points in the chosen scenario, for example:
 - in scenario 1, candidates found ‘volunteer work’ challenging, often translating it literally, mixing up the noun and verb forms (for example *J’étais une volontaire*), or did not give a reason for taking part in bullet point 2
 - in scenario 2, many did not recognise ‘last winter’, and could not spell *Suisse*. Candidates found the concept of an ‘activity holiday’ challenging
- a very small number had serious inaccuracies where little of the piece of writing made sense and gained no marks
- they had problems with grammatical accuracy in spelling, gender, plurals, accents and adjectival agreement
- they lacked knowledge of tenses, had little control of language or could not sustain the correct use of past tenses. Some scenarios reverted to the present tense, particularly after the first bullet point

- they used the infinitive instead of a past tense, omitted auxiliary verbs or incorrectly selected them in the perfect tense
- use of incorrect words and/or phrases

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(e)(i): many candidates mistranslated *des activités parascolaires* as 'classes' instead of 'extra-curricular activities' and did not gain the mark
- question 1(e)(ii): many candidates did not identify 'sailing' in the phrase *je ne peux plus faire de la voile sur le lac le vendredi après-midi*. Some did not include the detail of on the lake (*sur le lac*) or Friday afternoons (*le vendredi après-midi*), and did not gain the mark
- question 2(b): some candidates did not include the required detail of 'parents and grandfather were teachers' (*de plus mes deux parents et aussi mon grand-père étaient professeurs. Je voulais faire comme eux!*), and did not gain the mark
- question 2(d)(i): many candidates did not include the required detail of *en banlieue* 'in the suburbs' and did not understand the number *six cents* '600', and did not gain the marks
- question 2(d)(iii): many candidates transposed the answers for question 2(d)(i) into this question and did not gain the marks. Some did not interpret the reflexive verb *se connaître*, in the phrase *tout le monde se connaît bien* (everyone knows each other well)
- question 2(e)(i): most candidates did not understand the idea of 'pupils sharing the traditions of their country' (*traditions de leurs pays d'origine*), and often misinterpreted or omitted *leurs*, and did not gain the marks

Assignment–writing

- in the assignment, the writing must be discursive. Some candidates' pieces of writing had titles and stimuli that should have elicited a discursive response; however, their responses were written from a personal point of view with mostly personal ideas and opinions, and little discussion of different viewpoints
- some pieces of writing 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 pieces of writing read as a personal response to a topic and have either few or no discursive elements, candidates cannot access the upper pegged marks.
- where candidates did not perform well:
 - the content had limited coverage of different arguments and/or viewpoints
 - there was an insufficient level of accuracy for the level
 - some pieces of writing had errors that detracted from the overall quality
 - in terms of language resource, some pieces of writing showed unsuccessful use of language and structures, mostly due to issues with accuracy

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

For the comprehension questions, you 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, you should ensure candidates:

- know they should answer the question (assertion), going beyond a 'yes' or 'no' statement. 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, do not gain marks

For the translation, you should ensure candidates:

- 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
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Question paper 1: Directed writing

You should ensure candidates:

- check they answer all the bullet points, or parts of bullet points
- give detail for each bullet point in a balanced way
- write in a structured way, including paragraphs and punctuation
- use detailed and complex language, and do not repeat the same structures and ideas
- include additional information, where appropriate
- develop a robust knowledge of aspects of grammar appropriate to the level
- refer to the productive grammar grid in our [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) as a guide to the type of language use expected at Higher 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 in the exam to read over their writing, using the dictionary to check, for example gender, spelling, adjectival agreements
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise listening skills and note-taking
- 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
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- read the general marking principles and detailed marking instructions in our [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to understand that at this level, they should present different arguments or viewpoints and draw a conclusion
- refer to examples of discursive writing on our [Understanding Standards website](#) 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
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines