

Course report 2026

National 5 French, SCQF level 5

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: 6,483

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 6,043

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	3,220	53.3	53.3	81
B	945	15.6	68.9	69
C	875	14.5	83.4	57
D	556	9.2	92.6	45
No award	447	7.4	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper included three texts of equal weight. There were four supported questions. The question paper covered the contexts of learning, employability and culture (the three contexts not covered in the listening question paper), and the texts were on interesting and relevant topics that engaged candidates.

This paper was more demanding than intended and we considered this when setting grade boundaries.

Question paper 1: Writing

In this question paper, candidates reply by email to a job advert. There are four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. Although the two unpredictable bullet points were accessible to all candidates (why you would like to work in a hotel, and ask any relevant questions about the job), they did not perform as well as in previous years.

Question paper 2: Listening

This question paper has two parts: a monologue and a dialogue, each including a supported question. The paper was on the context of society and performed as intended.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected.

How candidates performed

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Text 1 (employability)

- question 1(a): most candidates understood the question *vous aimez travailler dehors?* (do you like/love to work outside?) and gained the mark
- question 1(b), supported question: most candidates completed the sentence and included both pieces of information (students and clean the beaches) and gained 2 marks
- question 1(c): most candidates identified the verbs *ranger* as 'tidy' or 'clear up', *ramasser* as 'pick' or 'clean up' and/or *trier* as 'sort' or 'separate' and gained 2 marks
- question 1(d)(i): this question offered optionality, and most candidates stated that the 'days and/or hours are long' or 'the days and/or the work is, are, or can be tiring' and gained the mark

Text 2 (culture)

- question 2(a), supported question: most candidates identified the superlative (oldest or most old) and gained the mark
- question 2(d)(ii): many candidates identified this as 'the first year the UK took part or sang in the Eurovision song contest' and gained the mark

Text 3 (learning)

- question 3(b): this question offered optionality, and most candidates gained the mark for either 'her mother is Spanish' or 'her mother thinks it is important to speak another/at least two languages'
- question 3(d)(ii): many candidates gained 2 marks with 'study abroad' and 'work in an international company'
- question 3(e), supported question: most candidates gained the mark for 'international/foreign trips'

Question paper 1: Writing

- many candidates prepared well for the job application
- many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and used detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at this level
- many candidates prepared for the two unpredictable bullet points and addressed these well

Question paper 2: Listening

Monologue

- question 1(b), supported question: most candidates identified *mon cousin* and gained the mark
- question 1(d): this question offered optionality, and most candidates identified either 'watching documentaries on tv' (*on adore regarder les documentaires à la télé*) or 'cooking/preparing new dishes or food' (*cuisiner de nouveaux plats*) and gained the mark
- question 1(e)(i): most candidates identified *ouvrir un restaurant ensemble* and gained the mark

Dialogue

- question 2(b)(i): most candidates identified *quatre fois par semaine* as 'four times a week' and gained the mark
- question 2(b)(ii), supported question: most candidates selected box 1: 'she plays for her school team' (*l'équipe de foot du collège*) and gained the mark
- question 2(e)(i): this question offered optionality, and many candidates gained 2 marks from the three options (*je prends rarement un petit déjeuner*, *je ne mange pas de légumes* and *j'achète trop de bonbons*)

Assignment–writing

- most candidates covered the topics of health, family, school or holidays
- many candidates produced an accurate piece of writing including detailed language and structures expected at this level, and gained full marks

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper 1: Reading

Text 1 (employability)

- question 1(e): few candidates understood *l'hôtel de ville* and most thought it meant 'the city or town hotel' and did not gain the mark
- question 1(f): many candidates did not give enough detail and/or understand *les postes* as 'by mail, post or post office' and did not gain the mark

Text 2 (culture)

- question 2(b): many candidates did not give enough detail to gain the marks, for example missing out 'on stage' from *les animaux vivants sont interdits sur scène* or 'singers' or 'in the song' from *les chanteurs ne doivent pas utiliser de mots grossiers*
- question 2(d)(i): most candidates only answered with a number and did not include *environ*, approximately or about, and did not gain the mark
- question 2(e): this question offered optionality, but many candidates did not give enough detail to gain the marks, for example:
 - the 'longest' song - *la chanson la plus longue a duré plus de cinq minutes*
 - several 'winners' - *plusieurs gagnants ont chanté pieds nus*
 - 'without winning' - *Chypre est le pays qui a participé le plus souvent sans gagner*
 - 'in 1981' - *en 1981, l'Italie n'a pas participé car le public italien trouvait le concours trop démodé !*

Text 3 (learning)

- question 3(c)(i): this question offered optionality, but many candidates did not give enough detail from *tous les cours sont enseignés en anglais et maintenant je me débrouille bien dans cette langue* to gain the mark
- question 3(c)(ii): many candidates did not understand *rapports* thinking it meant 'reports' and did not gain the marks

Question paper 1: Writing

- some candidates used the past tense to write about related work experience (bullet point 4) but did not use this tense correctly and made errors that detracted from the overall impression as a result
- most candidates answered unpredictable bullet points 5 and 6 (why you would like to work in a hotel and ask any relevant questions about the job); however, some did not ask questions correctly for bullet point 6, and missed out on marks through dictionary misuse
- there were many instances of illegible handwriting

Question paper 2: Listening

Monologue

- question 1(a): this question offered optionality, but many candidates misinterpreted *compréhensif* in *un bon ami doit être compréhensif* or did not understand *quelqu'un avec qui je me sens à l'aise et qui ne me juge pas. Un bon ami peut aussi être quelqu'un de sa famille ce qui est le cas pour moi*, and did not gain the marks
- question 1(c): most candidates did not understand the two household tasks *il ne passe pas l'aspirateur* and *il ne sort jamais la poubelle* and did not gain the marks
- question 1(e)(ii): many candidates misinterpreted *économise* as 'to economise' from *il faut qu'on économise beaucoup d'argent* ('we must' or 'it is necessary' to save a lot of money) and did not gain the mark

Dialogue

- question 2(a): many candidates did not pick out the time phrase *une heure et demie* and did not gain the mark
- question 2(d): this question offered optionality, but many candidates did not give enough detail to gain the mark, for example take the bike 'to school' (*aller à l'école à vélo*) or do the gardening 'for your parents' (*faire du jardinage pour tes parents*)
- question 2(f): many candidates did not understand *trois repas par jour* and did not gain the mark

Assignment–writing

Some candidates wrote about the topic of holidays in the past, present, future and conditional tenses. This sometimes led to serious grammatical errors and repetitive language, detracting from the overall impression.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

You should ensure candidates:

- read each question carefully and underline or highlight the key word or words in the question that should lead them to the answer in the text
- underline or highlight the matching key word or words in French in the text so they can identify where the answer is
- check their answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English
- are guided by the number of marks for each question and give as much detail in their answer as they have understood
- do not give extra information as this could negate any correct information and result in not gaining marks
- have a good knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings, and the comparative. This minimises mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension
- use the dictionary carefully and do not always choose the first definition listed
- immediately write down the word and/or phrase they look up in the dictionary on their paper
- are aware of common 'false friends' and encourage them to check these carefully in the dictionary
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper 1: Writing

As the writing is in the form of an email, there is no requirement for candidates to use formal beginning and endings. Many candidates who include formal beginnings and endings often make errors in these.

You should ensure candidates:

- read the job advert carefully
- attempt all six bullet points and include all required information, for example name, age 'and' where you live for bullet point 1
- know they do not have to write about 'skills and interests' in bullet point 3: it is written as 'skills/interests' to allow for choice
- are aware that for bullet point 4 (related work experience) they do not need to write in the past tense. Many candidates who write in the past often make grammatical errors
- only write about a past professional experience if they can use past tense in French accurately
- write enough detailed language accurately for the unpredictable bullet points
- write in a structured way, including paragraphs and punctuation
- use the dictionary to check the accuracy of their writing (spelling, accents, genders)
- know how to ask questions about the job, as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points
- leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure they have covered all bullet points and not made mistakes in, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents
- are familiar with the marking instructions for this paper, so they know what is required in terms of content, accuracy and language resource: variety, range and structures to gain high marks
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper 2: Listening

Listening is a skill that candidates find challenging, and they showed progress in this skill.

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise listening and use French as often as possible in class to reinforce listening strategies
- regularly practise note-taking to improve their listening skills
- read all the questions carefully and underline key words so they can listen for the correct answer
- know that they hear the monologue and conversation three times and should make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers
- are guided by the number of marks for each question and give as much detail in their answer as they have understood
- answer every question; however, candidates should not give extra information or long lists of possible answers. This could negate any correct information, and they could miss out on marks
- are confident in the use of numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, household tasks, time phrases, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that they do not miss out on marks for some of the more accessible points of information

Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- cover the language for the chosen scenario as part of learning and teaching and ensure the scenario provides opportunities to use detailed language
- write in a structured way, including paragraphs and punctuation
- use a range of tenses, where appropriate and relevant, and only if they can use these accurately
- use the dictionary to check the accuracy of their writing (spelling, accents, genders)
- are discouraged from writing lists, for example school subjects, places in the town, physical descriptions of family members
- do not use repetitive language, for example the same activities on past, present and future holidays, what they eat and drink for every meal
- read through their piece of writing to ensure they have not made mistakes, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents and words missed out
- are familiar with the assignment–writing marking instructions so that they're fully aware of what is required
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

You should use our writing improvement code, or equivalent, when reviewing candidates initial draft, and have follow-up conversations with candidates.