



Common questions about National 3 Modern Languages

Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the reading and listening unit assessments?

Yes, but for evidence purposes the teacher or lecturer must keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has met the relevant assessment standards.

If a candidate fails to meet the standard required to pass a unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?

Yes, SQA's advice on re-assessment is that normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. However, depending on the circumstances it is not always necessary to use a different instrument of assessment. For example failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed in that element only.

How do we know what is meant by 'simple' language at National 3?

Centres should refer to the productive grammar grid for National 3 to Advanced Higher. This is available in the National 3 course support notes.

Centres can also access Understanding Standards materials for the National 3 Using and Understanding Language units on SQA's secure site via the 'Understanding Standards' tab.

Can centres assess all four skills within one context, for example culture?

Yes, in theory, but this may not offer candidates opportunities to demonstrate a wide enough range of vocabulary and language structures.

How long should teachers and lecturers give candidates to complete unit assessments?

Time restrictions are not normally a feature of unit assessment, and centres need to determine this with reference to the specific situation of their candidates. Candidates can access audio recordings of assessment tasks and listen to these as often as they need to. However, teachers and lecturers should exercise judgement as it is unlikely that candidates would benefit from more than two or three playings.

How much support can teachers and lecturers give candidates to complete unit assessments?

Candidates must produce their work independently when undertaking assessment, however reasonable assistance may be provided. The requirements of the assessment should be made clear to candidates at the outset. Teachers and lecturers can clarify with candidates how to approach the assessment and guide them in producing their response. They may also prompt candidates where appropriate to clarify that they have met the requirements of the assessment but should not direct them to any specific response. For example teachers and lecturers should not provide specific advice on how to improve responses or provide model answers.

Do candidates have to pass all assessment standards for each outcome in the unit assessments to achieve a unit?

Yes, candidates need to pass all the assessment standards to achieve each outcome. Passing all outcomes for a unit means that the candidate has been successful in achieving the unit. This is the same for units at all SCQF levels.

If the candidate's evidence does not satisfy all of the outcomes and assessment standards, or is incomplete for an individual outcome, the candidate only needs to be re-assessed on the specific outcomes or assessment standards that have not been met. However, that would normally mean that the same text should not be used for re-assessment.

Do candidates have to answer most questions correctly to pass the unit assessments?

Candidates are not expected to answer everything correctly, but they must provide sufficient acceptable responses to meet national standards.

Do assessments need to be linked thematically?

No, they can all be completed independently. However, teachers and lecturers may find it helpful to combine assessments.

How are unit assessments marked?

Unit assessments should be marked according to the judging evidence tables available within unit assessment support packs on SQA's secure site. Candidates should, for example identify the overall purpose of the reading or listening text and be able to extract the main points of the passage. Teachers and lecturers are to use their professional judgement in determining whether a candidate has written enough detail to meet the requirements of each assessment standard.

How should evidence be recorded?

Teachers and lecturers must keep detailed notes for the talking unit assessment. Audio and/or video recording of each candidate's performance is not mandatory for the unit assessments, but it is good practice to keep the evidence from each class for verification purposes. Audio and/or video recordings assist centres with internal verification.

Teachers and lecturers must keep reading, listening and writing scripts for verification purposes. SQA provides templates for this.

Can we adapt the approaches to assessment in the unit assessment support packs?

Yes, centres can adapt existing SQA unit assessment support packs. They should keep a record of any alterations made in case of external verification.

If using a centre-devised approach to assessment the centre must make sure the assessment is valid and reliable, and that the approach to assessment provides candidates

with the opportunity to meet the assessment standards. Any level of text used in centre-devised reading or listening must be appropriate to the level assessed.

Prior verification is a free service offered to centres which devise their own summative unit assessments, or which significantly change SQA's assessments to suit their particular local needs. The service gives centres additional confidence that their proposed assessment is fit for purpose and meets national standards. Further information is available at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74666.6219.html>

Do centres have to use a judging evidence table as presented in the unit assessment support packs?

Centres may adapt a judging evidence table or create a similar document with a range of possible responses, which must clearly refer to the assessment standards and outcomes. For the Using Language unit, the expected candidate responses should be in the modern language.

How long does the conversation have to be at National 3 (Using Language)?

There is no recommended length for conversations at National 3 (Using Language). During the conversation, teachers and lecturers must provide candidates with the opportunity to use simple spoken language in order to meet the assessment standards. It is worth noting that candidates rarely benefit from unnecessarily prolonged conversations and can frequently show that they have met the assessment standards in more concise conversations.

Do you have to record the conversation at National 3 (Using Language)?

No, a checklist of a candidate's spoken responses or written observations made by the teacher or lecturer are also acceptable as evidence. In the case of external verification, if centres would like more extensive feedback, audio recordings ensure a more detailed comment from SQA verification teams.

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq