Course Report 2018

Subject	French
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

The reading paper was comprised of three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). There were three supported questions (worth 3 marks in total). The paper covered the contexts of society, learning and culture (the three contexts not covered in the listening paper) and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics that engaged candidates. Each text was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of responses.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

The writing paper required candidates to reply by e-mail to a job advert. The paper is worth 20 marks, with four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The candidates performed well with many achieving the full 20 marks.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

The listening paper was comprised of two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks and a dialogue worth 12 marks, including a supported question worth 2 marks. The paper was based on the context of employability. The paper was judged to be relatively accessible and this was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Component 4: assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was a new element to the National 5 course this year and candidates performed very well. Overall, the topics selected varied and candidates were able to use detailed language expected at National 5. The grade boundaries for C and A were raised by 2 marks as a result of increased accessibility evidenced in relation to the new assignment – writing in its introductory year. Such adjustment enables the national standard to be maintained from year to year.

Component 5: performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected.

In the performance–talking, candidates are required to carry out a spoken presentation and then take part in a conversation directly afterwards.

Centres are familiar with how this coursework task works, and it is the same format year on year. Revised performance–talking marking instructions were published for session 2017/2018; however, the aim and format of the task remained unchanged.

The revision from session 2017/18 requires candidates to cover an additional context in the conversation to that used in the presentation. In addition, the recommended duration of the conversation was extended from 4–5 minutes to 5–6 minutes from session 2017/18.

In both the presentation and conversation sections candidates are required to employ detailed language at National 5. The four aspects of the performance (see below) remain unchanged compared to previous sessions.

As in previous years, very detailed descriptions for each pegged mark (detailed marking instructions) are available. The marking instructions allow centres to mark candidates' performances with confidence. The majority of centres sampled this session marked candidates' performances in line with national standards.

In the performance–talking, candidates are required to demonstrate their abilities against the four aspects of the performance: content, accuracy, language resource and interaction.

Centre staff play an important role in guiding candidates prior to the assessment in their choice of contexts and topics. This is outlined in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*.

The majority of centres sampled this session had encouraged candidates to identify topics (from two of the contexts) which gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their ability against the four aspects.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

It was clear that the majority of candidates had been presented at the correct level and that candidates had coped very well with the new assignment–writing.

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper with very few candidates giving no response to a question. Text 3 proved to be more challenging. There were a few examples of poor expression and mistranslation but, overall, candidates gave enough detail to attain the marks available.

Text 1 — context: culture

Overall, the candidates coped well with most of the questions in this first text and were able to give enough detail to achieve the marks.

Question 1(b): this question was answered particularly well with most candidates locating the information required to access full marks.

Question 1(e): was answered particularly well with most candidates obtaining full marks for both 1(e)(i) and 1(e)(ii).

Text 2 — context: learning

Candidates performed very well with the questions in this second text.

Questions 2(c), 2(d) and 2(f): the majority of candidates answered these three questions particularly well, providing enough detail to obtain the marks available.

Text 3 — context: society

Question 3(b): this question was a supported question and most candidates were able to pick out the correct information to complete the sentence correctly.

Question 3(d)(ii): most candidates were able to give the detail required to obtain the full 2 marks.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

Candidates performed very well in this question paper, with most being very well prepared to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. There were some examples of dictionary misuse and learned material used incorrectly in response to the unpredictable bullet points.

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures, which is expected at National 5. Candidates were more prepared for the two unpredictable bullet points and the majority of candidates did address these. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised, rather than just a generic job application.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

There was a good range of marks in the listening paper with some candidates achieving full marks. It was encouraging to see that candidates were generally giving more detail in their answers.

Candidates performed very well in questions 1(d), 1(e), 2(b) (supported question), 2(e) and 2(f).

Monologue

Question 1(d): many candidates were able to pick out the two pieces of information required to achieve the 2 marks.

Question 1(e): the vast majority were able to obtain the mark available for this question.

Dialogue

Question 2(b): this was a supported question (tick box) and nearly all candidates were able to access the 2 marks.

Questions 2(e) and 2(f): most candidates were able to give the detail required for the full marks.

Component 4: assignment–writing

Candidates performed very well in this new element of the course. Candidates covered a good range of topics and they were able to use detailed language appropriate to National 5.

Component 5: performance–talking

From the sample submitted, candidates generally performed well or very well. Overall, there were very few poor performances. The presentation section attracted the upper two pegged marks for most candidates in the sample. Most conversations were awarded pegged marks 9 or above, however very few received 15 pegged marks. The sustaining the conversation section mostly attracted 3 marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Question 1(a): many candidates only gave a percentage and did not give the detail required to achieve the full mark. Some candidates also struggled with *trente* (a basic number).

Question 1(d): many candidates did not give enough detail to obtain the full 2 marks.

Question 2(a): many candidates did not give the specific detail required.

Question 3(a): many candidates did not give the specific detail required.

Question 3(d)(i): candidates found this question to be more demanding. There were many examples of misuse of the dictionary and poor expression, preventing candidates obtaining the full 3 marks.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

The majority of candidates did address bullet points 5 and 6 (the unpredictable ones) and coped well with these. Some candidates had already addressed bullet point 5 in the predictable bullet points but decided to address it as a separate bullet point. This sometimes led to inaccuracies because of misuse of dictionary.

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

Monologue

Question 1(a): many candidates had difficulty with this question, especially understanding the basic number *vingt-et-un*.

Question (1)(f): many candidates guessed the answer or did not give enough detail to access the 2 marks for this question.

Dialogue

Question 2(a): many candidates either guessed this answer or gave a choice of places where one could be interviewed. This then negated their answer and they could not be awarded the mark.

Question 2(c) and 2(d): these questions proved challenging for many candidates with many guessing or not giving enough detail to obtain the full 2 marks.

Component 4: assignment–writing

As previously stated, candidates performed very well in the new assignment–writing . There were however, instances of misuse of dictionary and inaccuracies with spelling, accents and grammatical structures.

Component 5: performance–talking

In the presentation section, a very small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Many presentations were

significantly too long or too short in relation to the guidelines and affected the candidates' performances.

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Other candidates did not perform well because of the choice of topic or the questions did not allow candidates to respond using language at the corresponding level.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading

Candidates should be guided by the number of marks available for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. Although the extraneous rule no longer applies at National 5, candidates should be discouraged from giving extra information as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised.

Centres should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings and the comparative, as this will minimise mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension. Candidates should also be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first word given. Centres should also ensure candidates are aware of common 'false friends' and encourage candidates to check these carefully in the dictionary.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and to underline the key word or words in the question that will lead them to the answer in the text. Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English.

Component 2: question paper 1 Writing

Centres and candidates should be encouraged again by the candidates' standard of writing in the question paper this year.

As the writing is in the form of an e-mail, there is now no requirement for candidates to use the formal beginning and endings as was required in the past.

Centres should ensure that candidates read the information carefully regarding the job for which they are applying. Teachers and lecturers should make sure candidates are able to:

♦ check they have addressed all six bullet points (if either one of these has been covered in the predictable bullet points they do not need to be re-addressed, as this can lead to repetition and/or many inaccuracies)

♦ use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (for example spelling, accents, genders) — it is not to be used to create new sentences

♦ ask questions regarding the job as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points

♦ leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure all bullets have been covered and careless mistakes have not been made, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents, or words missed out

♦ be aware of the criteria used in assessing their writing,centres can share the marking instructions with candidates so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and variety and range of language to achieve the range of marks on offer

Component 3: question paper 2 Listening

Centres and candidates should be encouraged by the performance of candidates in the listening paper as many candidates tend to find this question paper to be the most demanding.

In responding to the questions in the listening paper, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood.

National 5, candidates should be discouraged from giving extra information as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised, as was the case for many candidates in question 2(a).

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to give accurate answers through confident knowledge of numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions carefully and underline the key words to listen out for, so they can pick out the information required more easily. More practice on note-taking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.

Candidates hear both the monologue and dialogue three times and should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Component 4: assignment–writing

Centres and candidates should be very encouraged by the performance of candidates in this new element of National 5. This reflects good support and preparation from centres, enabling candidates to achieve high marks in this part of the course.

The assignment–writing should be based on the contexts of either society, learning or culture, and centres should ensure that the correct box is ticked on the writing answer booklet.

Although the stimulus is not required for SQA purposes, centres should be encouraged to provide a more detailed title rather than just mon *école, ma famille* etc.

The choice of topics should be appropriate to the age and level of candidates, allowing them to produce accurate and detailed language based on what they have been learning during the course.

As this piece is based on a topic that candidates have been studying, centres should encourage candidates to include more detailed language and grammatical structures appropriate to National 5. A range of tenses is not a prerequisite to be awarded full marks but should be used when and where appropriate.

Centres should be encouraged to use, for example a writing improvement code when providing feedback of the first draft to allow candidates to identify their errors and to use the code to correct their own work. Centres can have learning conversations with the candidates following the first draft, but centres should not correct the draft.

Component 5: performance–talking

In some of the performances sampled, grammatical errors included gender errors and problems with agreement of adjectives and verbs, including omissions of the latter in some instances.

Centres are encouraged to continue to include grammar practice and coverage of the rules of the language as an integral part of learning and teaching. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate. The assignment–writing coursework task could contribute towards aiding candidates' understanding of how language works.

Centres are encouraged to ensure candidates can be understood by speakers of the language, who are not familiar with what the candidates have studied. Having performances verified by another assessor or another centre is regarded as good practice.

Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource. In some instances, candidates did not use enough detailed language and this prevented candidates from accessing the upper pegged marks.

In the conversation section, centres are encouraged to ensure candidates have a variety of strategies for example, asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say Text 1 when they have not understood any aspect of the conversation.

Candidates who were able to use relevant interjections, ask relevant questions and use idiomatic phrases were able to sustain the conversation well. Centres are encouraged to continue to prepare candidates in this way.

Where candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should continue to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic. Assessors should give candidates the appropriate response or thinking time before doing this.

The length of the performances sampled varied, and centres are advised to refer to the advice on the recommended duration of the presentation and the conversation. This is to make sure candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of the task at National 5 as provided in the *National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification*. A few of the performances went beyond the recommended duration and others were significantly shorter than the recommended duration. On occasion, this prevented candidates from accessing the upper pegged marks.

As noted in previous years' National 5 French course reports, some candidates gave what appeared to be short, 'mini-presentation' answers in the conversation. While candidates may wish to prepare language and phrases for topic-related questions, centres are encouraged to continue to put open-ended questions to candidates, which can elicit detailed language in the answers.

Centres are also encouraged to put a variety of questions to their candidates, even where the same or similar topics have been selected by candidates from within the same centre. The same question can be asked in different ways, keeping the same key words for

candidates to identify, for example *«Quelle est ta matière préférée/Quelle matière aimes-tu le plus/Tu as une matière préférée?».* In turn, this provides for personalisation and choice and provides scope for candidates to produce a more varied conversation and therefore to access the upper pegged marks for sustaining the conversation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	9078

Number of resulted entries in 2018	8145

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	56.9%	56.9%	4632	87
B	17.1%	73.9%	1391	75
C	13.4%	87.4%	1092	63
D	7.8%	95.1%	633	51
No award	4.9%	-	397	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary).

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.