



French: Course Report 2016

Subject	French
Level	National 5

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

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

The Reading paper comprised three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). Over the whole paper, there were three supported questions (worth 4 marks) and one overall purpose question.

The paper covered the contexts of Culture, Society and Employability (the three contexts not covered in the Listening paper) and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics which engaged the candidates. Each text was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of performances.

The Writing paper required the candidates to reply by e-mail to a job application. The paper was worth 20 marks with four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

The Listening paper had two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks, including an overall purpose question; and a dialogue worth 12 marks, including a supported question worth two marks. The paper was based on the context of Learning and related clearly to the teaching syllabus for National 5.

Component 3: performance: Talking

This component performed as expected since the task remains the same year on year.

Assessors seem to have benefitted from the more detailed pegged mark descriptors in the detailed marking instructions at National 5. The dialogue between the Assessor and the Internal Verifier was more developed and useful than in previous years.

Overall candidate performance was high.

A large majority of centres applied the marking instructions for the performance in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Overall, candidates performed well in the Reading paper, with very few candidates giving no response to a question. There were a few examples of poor expression and mis-translation, but on the whole candidates gave enough detail to get the marks available.

Candidates performed very well in this component, with most being better prepared to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. There were some examples of dictionary misuse and mis-learned material in response to the unpredictable bullet points, and some candidates struggled to form questions in accurate French.

Reading

Item 1 — Context Culture:

- ◆ Overall the candidates coped well with the majority of the questions in this first text and were able to give enough detail to get the marks.
- ◆ Question 1(b) was answered particularly well, with most candidates picking out the information required to get full marks for both b (i) and b (ii).
- ◆ Question 1(e) was also answered particularly well, with most candidates getting full marks.

Item 2 — Context Society:

- ◆ Candidates performed very well with the questions in this second text.
- ◆ Question 2(a) and (f) – the majority of candidates answered these two questions particularly well providing enough detail to get the marks available.

Item 3 — Context Employability:

- ◆ Candidates coped reasonably well with most of the questions in this third text.
- ◆ Question 3 (a) was a supported question and most candidates were able to pick out the correct information to complete the sentence correctly
- ◆ Question 3(e) was the overall purpose question and 99% of candidates answered this correctly.

Writing

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures, which one would expect at National 5 level. 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 2: question paper 2: Listening

There was a good range of marks in the Listening paper, with some candidates achieving full marks. Some candidates did find this paper to be rather challenging but the majority got the mark for the overall purpose question. Candidates still found the dialogue to be slightly more demanding than the monologue with many not giving enough detail to get all the marks available.

Listening – Context: Learning

Monologue:

- ◆ Question 1(c): Many candidates were able to pick out at the two pieces of information required to get the 2 marks.
- ◆ Question 1(e): the majority of the candidates answered the overall purpose question correctly.

Dialogue:

- ◆ Question 2(cii): Many candidates were able to pick out the two pieces of information required to get full marks for this question.
- ◆ Question 2(e): this question was a supported question and most candidates ticked the two correct boxes to get the full marks available.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Candidates performed better in the presentation section of the Performance. In the sample verified, most candidates were awarded one of the two top pegged marks (8 or 10). This is as expected as this section can be thoroughly prepared and rehearsed ahead of the assessment.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Reading

- ◆ Question 1(f)(i): Many candidates had difficulty with this question. There were many examples of poor expression and mis-translation of 'on n'a même pas le droit de ...'
- ◆ Question 2(e): This question required the candidates to state two points. As only two pieces of information were given in the text, some candidates struggled to pick out all the detail required to get the full 2 marks.
- ◆ Question 3(b): Many candidates struggled with this question and misunderstood 'une perte de temps' and the use of 'café' in this context.
- ◆ Question 3 (d) (i) and (ii): Some candidates misunderstood 'mauvaise humeur', translating it as 'a bad sense of humour' in question 1(d)(i). Similarly, many candidates translated 'assisté' as 'helped or assisted' in question 1(d)(ii).

Writing

The majority of candidates did address bullet points 5 and 6 (unpredictable). Most candidates did seem to cope well with bullet point 5. However, many candidates struggled to form accurate questions in French and this prevented some candidates achieving full marks.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

Monologue:

- ◆ Question 1(a): Many candidates had difficulty with this question. Many did not know or remember that 'printemps' means 'spring', and many misread the question and thought the answer was the length of time, rather than 'when' and answered 'for one week'.

- ◆ Question (1b): Many candidates guessed the answer or did not give enough detail to get the 2 marks for this question.

Dialogue:

- ◆ Question 2 (a): Many candidates mistranslated 'car' as car instead of bus /coach, and many did not get the number 'vingt-quatre'.
- ◆ Question 2 (c): This question proved challenging for many candidates with many not picking out either piece of information to get the mark available.
- ◆ Question 2 (d): Despite there being four different ways of getting the marks, many candidates did not provide enough detail to get the 2 marks available for this question.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Some candidates found the conversation section of the performance more demanding as it is less predictable. Centres and candidates should follow the advice given in section 3 of this document to ensure the conversation and sustaining the conversation elements are approached more successfully.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Writing

For the Reading 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. 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 underline the key word or words in the question, which 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. Centres and candidates should be encouraged by the performance of candidates in the writing 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, candidates should ensure they:

- ◆ Check they have addressed all 6 bullet points
- ◆ use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders etc) **not** 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 avoidable errors have not been made, eg spelling, adjective endings, accents, words missed out
- ◆ are aware of the criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening

Centres and candidates should be encouraged by the performance of candidates in the listening paper as many candidates do find this paper to be the more demanding of all the papers.

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. 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 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 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 3: performance: Talking

It is important that assessors only use the most up-to-date Marking Information Grid for the talking performance at National 5, in conjunction with the National 5 Grammar Grid to make their assessment judgements. Referring to previous examination procedures (eg 'good, satisfactory, etc') is not necessarily beneficial since the format of the assessment has changed.

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. It was felt that, on occasions, interlocutors had been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what candidates were going to say. Verifiers —

sympathetic speakers of French — must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their presentation/conversation is.

In general, centres provided clear commentaries to demonstrate how they made the assessment judgement, which was very useful for the verifiers. This is also useful for internal verifiers and promotes constructive professional dialogue.

In line with the National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task, centres are reminded that the presentation and follow-up conversation must be carried out in a single assessment event, ie the presentation must be followed by the conversation during the single recording of the performance.

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 in most parts of the performance. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

The presentation

In the presentation, candidates should not struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it.

Significantly long or short presentations can affect the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: Talking, General Assessment Information*.

Specifics in relation to the conversation

Interlocutors should try to avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates. Questions such as 'qu'est-ce que tu préfères, la physique ou la biologie?' are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be immediately followed by 'Pourquoi?' to elicit fuller answers.

Interlocutors should be supportive, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural/spontaneous conversations.

Unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short conversations can affect the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: Talking, General Assessment Information*.

Centres should ask questions, which follow on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking

assessment task document. Interlocutors could go on to refer to other contexts, which allows for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language.

Where candidates are asked questions about the same topic/context as in their presentation, candidates are often limited to repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Centres should not be overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed, and should not sound excessively rehearsed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort.

A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages Performance: Talking, General Assessment Information*, which is available from SQA's website).

Sustaining the conversation element

Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain full marks for this element.

In some cases, candidates may pause — briefly — during the conversation to think about their answers; this is a natural part of a conversation. Assessors should give candidates appropriate time to think and respond. However, if candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic.

Some conversations sound more natural when candidates answer with a mixture of longer and shorter answers which are clearly not scripted. Using scripted conversations may not allow candidates to meet the criteria for the top pegged marks in the performance, but, above all, it does not prepare candidates for the demands at Advanced Higher or in real life situations. Instead, candidates could prepare for their conversation by thinking about the type of questions the interlocutor is likely to ask on their chosen topic and thinking about what key words the interlocutor is likely to use in his/her questions.

Examples of how candidates could demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation include the following:

- ◆ a mixture of extended and shorter answers (ie not a suite of short presentations/ monologues)
- ◆ appropriate thinking time
- ◆ natural interjections ('*eah/ bah/ ben/ alors*')

- ◆ acknowledgement that they have understood the question (*'oui, je suis d'accord/non, pas du tout'*) — some centres included a brief commentary to describe how the candidate showed how they had understood through non-verbal means the question/response from the interlocutor
- ◆ asking questions that are **relevant** to the conversation and at **relevant** times
- ◆ sustaining the conversation, asking for repetition or clarification (eg *'pardon?'*)

This is not an exhaustive list and one example from the above list on its own may not be sufficient to be awarded full marks.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	10551
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	9292
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	54.0%	54.0%	5017	69
B	17.8%	71.8%	1651	59
C	14.2%	86.0%	1323	49
D	4.8%	90.8%	448	44
No award	9.2%	-	853	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- 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.