



NQ verification 2022–23 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	French
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	June 2023

National Course components verified

Course code	Course level	Course title
C830 75	National 5	French: performance–talking
C830 76	Higher	French: performance–talking

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Most centres selected for verification in round 2 used SQA’s coursework assessment task for the performance–talking, as set out in the [National 5](#) and [Higher](#) course specifications.

Most centres followed the approach to assessment at both levels as set out in the National 5 and Higher Modern Languages course specifications.

All centres provided a breakdown of marks at National 5 (presentation, conversation, and sustaining the conversation) as is required.

At National 5, centres are reminded that the presentation and follow-up conversation must be carried out as a one-off, single assessment event: the presentation must be followed by the conversation during the single recording of the performance. There should be no interruption in recordings or, if unavoidable (for example fire alarm goes off), centres should provide the reason with the documents they submit for verification.

Centres are reminded:

- ◆ at National 5, during the conversation, candidates must go into at least one different context to the one used in the presentation. Following one or two questions associated with the context in the presentation, the conversation must cover a different context (society, learning, employability, culture), not a different topic from within the same context
- ◆ at Higher, the performance–talking is a discussion, beginning with a few generic questions to settle the candidate followed by questions covering at least two contexts. The French verification team noted some candidates moved on to a different context only very briefly
- ◆ candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance in order to be considered for the top range of pegged marks
- ◆ at National 5 and Higher, long lists of more than two or three items (for example places in town, school subjects) or repetition of straightforward descriptions (for example family members) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary
- ◆ at National 5, to adhere to the resources candidates can refer to in the presentation section, as outlined in the [course specification](#). Note: reference to notes does not apply in the conversation section

Centres are advised to refer to the information on the recommended duration of the performance–talking (as set out in the course specification), so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 and Higher performance–talking.

At both levels, a few performances were significantly short, which affected the candidates' ability to achieve the top pegged marks, even with more able candidates. Some shorter performances were awarded full marks as the candidates spoke at a faster pace, including a lot of detailed or detailed and complex language, while maintaining a clear delivery.

Many conversations (National 5) and discussions (Higher) were unnecessarily prolonged (for example over 12 minutes for Higher) or significantly short (under 4 minutes for the presentation and the conversation at National 5) and this affected the candidates' performances.

National 5 presentation

Only a few candidates struggled with the complexity of the language they chose to use. Centres should advise candidates on the level of language they should be able to cope with and ensure they understand their presentation before delivering it.

National 5 conversation

Assessors should avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates. Questions such as 'Tu fais du foot?' are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be followed by 'Pourquoi?' to elicit fuller answers.

Most assessors were supportive, especially with nervous candidates. Where they were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural and spontaneous conversations. However, a few assessors did not consider the responses from the candidates before asking their next question. This often led to unnatural conversations and did not allow candidates to demonstrate a range of language.

Centres should:

- ◆ choose questions to ensure that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice. Some centres were overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. A number of conversations appeared to be overly rehearsed
- ◆ encourage candidates to personalise content to express their ideas and opinions so that candidates do not supply very similar information in their responses
- ◆ ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than putting the same questions in the same order to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can help candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected

Assessors asked questions in the first part of the conversation, which followed on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates before moving on to the second context(s) in the conversation.

It is not compulsory for candidates to ask the assessor a question during the conversation, although this may help sustain the conversation and allows for a more natural conversation.

Higher discussion

Where candidates ask assessors questions during the discussion, assessors must avoid monopolising the discussion with their responses.

The nature of some of the topics selected or some of the questions asked by assessors did not allow candidates to respond using detailed and complex language (for example favourite subjects).

Although it is a discussion, the focus should be on the candidates' responses, not on prolonged responses from assessors, which can be an unnecessary barrier for candidates. Assessors should respond to the candidate's questions succinctly, before swiftly moving on to their next question to return the focus to the candidate.

Assessment judgements

Most centres applied the marking instructions for the performance–talking accurately and in line with national standards. They did this using the detailed marking instructions for the National 5 and Higher performance–talking and productive grammar grid.

Overall, candidate performance was good. Pronunciation remains one of the main issues for many of the candidates who did not perform as well. Verifiers — sympathetic (native or non-native) speakers of French — must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their presentation, conversation or discussion is. On occasion, the French

verification team felt that assessors may have been lenient regarding pronunciation, possibly because they already had an inclination as to what candidates were going to say.

Other candidates did not perform well because of the choice of topic (for example school subjects or sports at Higher level) or the questions did not allow candidates to respond using language at the corresponding level.

Some performances had been marked too severely. Assessors must not compare their marks across their cohort but should refer to the marking instructions as set out in the [National 5](#) and [Higher](#) Modern Languages course specifications.

The French verification team observed some excellent practice from centres where detailed commentaries were included to justify the marks awarded to each candidate. Some centres included detailed commentaries from both the assessor and the internal verifier, evidencing constructive professional dialogue. This was very useful for event verifiers.

Centres are reminded to highlight which mark was finally agreed between the assessor and internal verifier, and this should be reflected in the mark noted on the verification sample form. Centres should ensure that the marks on the verification sample form match the marks included in the candidate assessment record (or similar document) submitted with the candidate evidence.

Some centres referred closely to or highlighted the sections of the pegged marks in the detailed marking instructions that reflected each candidate's performance. This is equally effective in terms of allocating a pegged mark and is less time-consuming. Some centres highlighted the detailed marking instructions in two different colours: one for the assessor and one for the internal verifier.

Sustaining the conversation element at National 5

There was some inconsistency in marking, with some centres being too severe and others too lenient in the application of the marking information.

Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain marks for this element. Some centres incorrectly justified not awarding pegged mark 5 because candidates did not ask any questions.

In some cases, candidates paused 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 sounded more natural as candidates answered with a combination of longer and shorter answers and it was clear that it was excessively rehearsed. Overly rehearsed conversations may not allow candidates to meet the criteria for the top pegged marks in the performance, and it does not prepare candidates for the demands of Higher or Advanced Higher or real-life situations.

Instead, candidates could prepare for their conversation thinking about the type of questions the assessor is likely to ask on their chosen topic and thinking about what key words the assessor is likely to use in their questions.

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

- ◆ a mix of extended and shorter answers (not short presentations or monologues)
- ◆ appropriate thinking time
- ◆ natural interjections, for example *euh, 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 a candidate showed they had understood, through non-verbal means, the question or response from the assessor as it would happen in a natural conversation. This is useful for event verifiers who cannot see a recording of the performance
- ◆ asking questions that are relevant to the conversation and at relevant times
- ◆ asking for repetition or clarification, for example *pardon?*

Note: this is not an exhaustive list.

Candidates can be awarded 5 marks for sustaining the conversation, even if they briefly hesitate and recover successfully.

Centres should make use of the Understanding Standards materials for National 5 and Higher French: performance–talking (IACCA) published on the SQA's secure website.

Section 3: general comments

Centres submitted candidates' performance—talking evidence on USB memory sticks or by using the NQ Verification Evidence Submission service on SQA Connect.

Clearly labelled candidate evidence is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process.

Centres are advised to check the sound quality of all files that are submitted for verification and that these are correctly labelled.

Centres should refer to the *Verification Submission Guidance, Internally-Assessed Components of Course Assessment* document on the [National Qualifications external verification](#) web page to check the acceptable electronic evidence formats, and should ensure that files are playable on a variety of devices.

If not using the digital upload service on SQA connect, centres should ensure that the USB memory stick is put into the separate plastic bag, provided by SQA, within the large brown envelope, and that this is sealed and clearly labelled.

If the USB memory stick is password protected (not compulsory), centres must ensure the verification team has access to the password.

Centres should enter candidates in alphabetical order on the verification sample form, starting with all National 5 candidates, then all Higher candidates.