



NQ verification 2023–24 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	French
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	June 2024

National Course components verified

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

Note: the performance–talking is an internally assessed component of course assessment (IACCA).

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres selected for verification in round 2 used the performance–talking coursework assessment task, as set out in the National 5 and Higher course specifications. Most centres closely followed the approach to assessment at both levels.

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 slightly 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.

Several conversations (National 5) and discussions (Higher) were significantly shorter than the recommended duration (under 4 minutes for the presentation and the conversation at National 5) and this affected candidates' performances.

National 5 presentation

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 es sportif?*' are likely to invite very short answers and may mean candidates are unable to demonstrate their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be followed by '*Pourquoi?*' or '*Pour quelle raison?*' to produce more detailed answers.

Most assessors were supportive, especially with less-able candidates. Where the assessors paid close attention to the candidates' answers, the conversations sounded more natural and spontaneous. 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. Some assessors asked the same questions and in the same order of all their candidates, which made for overly rehearsed performances.

National 5: sustaining the conversation

Most 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. Assessors in a few centres selected for verification moved from one topic to another without any transition.

Note:

- ◆ at National 5, we remind centres 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 this is unavoidable, centres should provide some explanation in the documents they submit for external verification
- ◆ 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
- ◆ candidates must use detailed language at National 5 in most parts of the performance in order to be considered for the top range of pegged marks
- ◆ at National 5, long lists of more than two or three items (for example 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 (assessment conditions). Reference to notes does not apply in the conversation section
- ◆ at National 5, 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

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 family description).

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

Although it is a discussion, the focus should be on the candidates' responses, not on prolonged responses from the assessor, 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.

Note:

- ◆ 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
- ◆ candidates must use 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 Higher, long lists of more than two or three items (for example 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

National 5 and Higher performance–talking: important aspects for consideration

- ◆ 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 or Higher performance–talking
- ◆ 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
- ◆ encourage candidates to personalise content to express their ideas and opinions
- ◆ 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
- ◆ give candidates appropriate time to think and respond. In some performances, candidates paused briefly during the conversation to think about their answers: this is a natural part of a conversation. However, if candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic
- ◆ avoid over rehearsed conversations. Some conversations sounded more natural as candidates answered with a combination of longer and shorter answers. However, it was clear that some conversations were 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 by 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

- ◆ how to help candidates sustain the conversation. Examples of how candidates could demonstrate this can include:
 - a mix of extended and shorter answers (not short presentations or monologues)
 - appropriate thinking time
 - natural interjections, for example *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 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 '*Pouvez-vous répéter?*' or '*Peux-tu répéter?*'

Note: this is not an exhaustive list.

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 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 performed less well due to 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 were marked too severely. Assessors must avoid comparing their marks across their cohort but should refer closely to the marking instructions as set out in the [National 5](#) and [Higher](#) Modern Languages course specifications.

Some centres included very detailed commentaries to justify the marks awarded to each candidate. Some included detailed commentaries from both the assessor and the internal verifier, evidencing constructive professional dialogue. This is excellent practice and is very useful for event verifiers.

We remind centres to highlight which mark was finally agreed between the assessor and internal verifier and to note the reason. This mark should also be 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.

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

Sustaining the conversation 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 instructions. Some centres incorrectly justified not awarding pegged mark 5 because candidates did not ask any questions.

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

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.

We remind centres to:

- ◆ provide a breakdown of marks for the presentation, conversation, and sustaining the conversation at National 5
- ◆ clearly label candidate evidence as it is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process
- ◆ check the sound quality of all files that are submitted for verification and that these are correctly labelled
- ◆ 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
- ◆ ensure that files are playable on a variety of devices
- ◆ if not using the digital upload service on SQA Connect, 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
- ◆ ensure the verification team has access to the password if the USB memory stick is password protected (not compulsory)
- ◆ enter candidates in alphabetical order on the verification sample form, starting with all National 5 candidates, then all Higher candidates