Course report 2024

Advanced Higher French

This report provides information on candidates' performance. 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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

1

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   449

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   379

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	148	Percentage	39.1	Cumulative percentage	39.1	Minimum mark required	148
B	Number of candidates	97	Percentage	25.6	Cumulative percentage	64.6	Minimum mark required	127
C	Number of candidates	69	Percentage	18.2	Cumulative percentage	82.8	Minimum mark required	106
D	Number of candidates	40	Percentage	10.6	Cumulative percentage	93.4	Minimum mark required	85
No award	Number of candidates	25	Percentage	6.6	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

2

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

This paper was accessible to all candidates. Most candidates did the comprehension questions well. Responses to the overall purpose question and translation varied, allowing for differentiation between candidates.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Most candidates coped well with the listening paper, accessing the full range of marks. Questions 1(b)(i) and 2(a)(c) performed better than expected, largely due to the identification of cognates and near cognates.

The discursive writing paper was attempted successfully by most candidates. Many candidates responded to the statement on the context of learning and used the topic from the listening paper as a resource, adapting it successfully to express their ideas.

Portfolio

Successful candidates chose a concise title that made the focus of their essay clear, and produced critical and analytical submissions, resulting in some interesting and accomplished work.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well prepared for the performance–talking, and many benefitted from the reintroduction of the requirement to discuss their portfolio.

When candidates completed their Subject Topic List (STL) form in line with SQA's guidance, visiting assessors could use this to help draw out effective and sustained discussion from candidates.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates completed the comprehension questions successfully, although many misidentified *librairie* as 'library' in question 6(a).

The overall purpose question was more challenging for candidates. Some candidates provided concise responses, correctly identifying the overall purpose and making appropriate and relevant inferences; however, many candidate responses provided insufficient inference and repeated detail from the text. A few candidates appeared to use a list of sources, for example making inferences, quoting title, word choice, expert opinion and personal experience, even if these did not help to provide any meaningful identification of the overall purpose of the text.

Many candidates performed well in the translation section, which required a good knowledge of tenses. Some candidates had difficulty identifying the range of tenses accurately. A few candidates chose to do the translation before the comprehension questions. This strategy is often disadvantageous to candidates as they do not yet have the full context of the text. Candidates should always complete the comprehension questions before attempting the translation.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening paper, many candidates were able to successfully demonstrate understanding of sophisticated vocabulary and identify qualifiers, which are often key details required to gain marks.

Candidates performed better in the discursive writing paper than in previous years. Many candidates were able to communicate their ideas successfully, using complex and sophisticated language with a high degree of accuracy and demonstrating language resource appropriate to the level. Many essays were well structured, including an effective introduction, sequenced paragraphs and a conclusion.

Some candidates performed less well as they did not use learned material successfully or construct accurate sentences containing correct genders, adjectival agreement, basic verb forms and tenses.

Portfolio

If candidates used clear and focused titles, they were able to produce critical and analytical essays, showing insight and a sound knowledge of their chosen source, as well as referencing secondary sources to support their arguments effectively.

Titles such as 'The theme of ....' or 'A study of...' rarely allowed for a critical and analytical approach, and generally resulted in a narrative approach or an essay that was similar to a background study.

Unlikely comparisons, for example a 19th century poem and a modern novel did not allow for the required amount of critical analysis. Poor English expression had a negative impact on some candidate performance. If the meaning was unclear through overly colloquial language or overuse of a thesaurus, it caused confusion of the meaning.

Performance–talking

Candidates who prepared well for the assessment could talk on a range of topics, using complex and sophisticated language, often successfully incorporating learned material, adapting this to help them maintain meaningful conversations. The language demonstrated a comprehensive range of structures and verb forms with a high level of accuracy. Many candidates were able to answer unpredictable questions well, using appropriate language structures and idiomatic language, and attempting to discuss more complex issues.

Many candidates showed initiative in expanding their answers, evidencing genuine, interesting and sometimes lively discussions.

Some candidates delivered weaker performances when they selected topics that did allow for much discussion at the level required. Some candidate STL forms did not contain enough detail and had either very few topics (sometimes only one) or had excessive detail.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ read the entire text before answering the questions, so that they have an appreciation of what the article is about
♦ do not attempt the translation first, as this is rarely a successful approach
♦ are aware of tenses and moods and their importance in the translation
♦ make appropriate and effective inferences to identify the overall purpose of the text
♦ refer to past papers and associated marking instructions where more extensive detail is listed about the reading texts

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

For discursive writing, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ have a thorough knowledge of language structures, verb forms and tenses, which are important help write effectively at this level
♦ express their own opinions and those of others
♦ check over their essay to ensure accuracy of language
♦ read and discuss the marking instructions, focusing particularly on elements of language resource

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ select a concise and focused title that allows them to demonstrate a critical and analytical approach to their study of literature or media or language in work. A vague or unfocused title rarely produces the critical analysis required
♦ know that, while quoting a second source in French is mandatory, this does not mean that two separate literary works need to be compared or analysed, particularly where such comparisons do not allow appropriate analysis
♦ sources can be articles or critical analyses to support and enhance their argument, which in turn supports their conclusions

Performance–talking

The Subject Topic List (STL) form is crucial to setting the scene for a performance and candidates should take time completing this form. If it doesn't contain enough detail, it does not allow for a sustained discussion and may limit candidates' performances and the range of the discussion. Forms with excessive detail can be unhelpful as they may limit the amount of preparation candidates can do for less predictable questions.

6

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)

♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.

♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in March 2024 and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

7

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report.