



Course report 2022

Subject	French
Level	Advanced Higher

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. 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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	510
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	44.3	Cumulative percentage	44.3	Number of candidates	225	Minimum mark required	136
B	Percentage	19.6	Cumulative percentage	63.9	Number of candidates	100	Minimum mark required	116
C	Percentage	19.4	Cumulative percentage	83.3	Number of candidates	100	Minimum mark required	96
D	Percentage	11.0	Cumulative percentage	94.3	Number of candidates	55	Minimum mark required	76
No award	Percentage	5.7	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	30	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

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 more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA’s website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

On the whole, candidate responses to the question paper were successful, particularly when answering the comprehension questions. Candidates generally performed more successfully than in previous years in the overall purpose question. While the translation question proved accessible for most, some sense units caused significant difficulty for many candidates.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening section, dealing with the pros and cons of city life versus country life, proved to be appropriately challenging, and performed as expected, with many candidates performing better in Item 2.

In discursive writing, all four questions were attempted, with most candidates choosing to write on society or employability.

Portfolio

Candidates performed better in the portfolio than in previous years.

Many performed significantly better in the portfolio where they were attempting to address a title that allowed them to demonstrate a critical and analytical approach.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed well in the performance–talking. The format of this assessment allows candidates a good degree of autonomy, with many candidates producing impressive performances, where they are able to demonstrate their talking skills on a range of topics, using complex and sophisticated language.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Many Candidates were able to extract relevant information, allowing them to successfully answer the majority of the comprehension questions. Those candidates who tackled the overall purpose successfully, scoring 5 or 7 marks, showed a strong grasp in identifying the writer's overall purpose.

Candidates who relied on paraphrasing the text, or repetition of material used, to answer the comprehension questions gained fewer marks.

Successful translations showed attention to accuracy of verbs in particular and were able to cope well when translating idiomatic language. Some candidates had difficulty translating *d'après elle* (sense unit 1), *ce qui* (sense unit 4) *constatent* (sense unit 5) and struggled to translate the verb *estimer* (sense unit 9).

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Candidates performed well when giving full and detailed answers to the listening questions, and generally performed more successfully in Item 2, being guided through the questions due to the format of the item (a conversation).

For discursive writing, many candidates produced very good essays, showing appropriate grammatical accuracy, appropriate use of idiom and good use of language resource.

Successful essays were well-structured and written in paragraphs that developed candidates' ideas. Many candidates fully addressed the titles with accurate complex and sophisticated language, and interesting ideas. This led to higher marks, as did the use of suitable expressions to express ideas and give opinions. Less successful essays were characterised by weakness in language control, unidiomatic translation from English or an inability to cope adequately with verse and tenses. These essays often relied on pre-used material that did not always address the question.

Portfolio

Overall, candidates were successful where they based their portfolio on a question that allowed them to demonstrate a genuinely critical and analytical approach. Where the question provided opportunities to compare and contrast, for example comparing the treatment of a theme in two separate texts, or a comparison of characters in a novel or film, candidates often gained higher marks.

Candidates performed well when backing up assertions with appropriate evidence from the text(s) being studied or from relevant sources, and when using appropriately analytical language. Most submissions were based on literary texts, often allowing for effective analysis. Media-based submissions allowed for interesting references to cinematographic techniques, for instance, giving candidates an opportunity to produce interesting and thought-provoking essays.

Candidates focused on a wide range of texts and films, including: *No et moi, Au revoir, les enfants, Un sac de billes, L'étranger, La haine, Intouchable, Thérèse Raquin, Le petit*

garçon, Welcome, La petite fille de M Linh, and Huis Clos. There were also interesting submissions based on poetry by Prévert and Verlaine.

Candidates' portfolios were less successful where they lacked an appropriate title, or the title provided insufficient focus. There was some evidence of candidates' portfolios being expressed in poor English or in inappropriate register, which had a significant impact on the quality of their writing.

Performance-talking

The performance-talking provided an opportunity for candidates to show their ability to interact appropriately with the visiting assessor and demonstrate their ability to express ideas and opinions effectively in French, in many cases with considerable success.

Candidate performance was at its best where candidates could readily adapt learned material to cope with questions asked, and used clear, relevant and well-organised content. Candidates were successful when pronunciation and intonation were accurate, when they could seek clarification if necessary, in French, and when they went beyond minimal responses, readily taking the initiative.

Candidates were well-prepared and could express ideas and opinions confidently, using a complex and sophisticated range of language and structures.

The shorter duration of the performance-talking this year allowed candidates to focus on their language topics, which for the most part had been thoroughly prepared. Common topics for discussion were immigration, racism, marriage and civil partnership, changing patterns of family life, the role of women in society, and technology and the environment. All these topics allowed candidates to express their own ideas and opinions.

A small number of candidates were disadvantaged where their STL forms did not contain enough detail or resembled a series of prescribed questions. Neither of these help the visiting assessor to easily lead the candidate towards a topic area where they might have had more ideas and opinions.

Some candidates relied heavily on learned material or written notes, which detracted from the impression of a genuine conversation.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ share and discuss marking information, including pegged mark descriptors (portfolio, performance, and discursive writing) with candidates
- ◆ make use of support materials published on SQA's Understanding Standards website to help prepare candidates for the course assessment
- ◆ encourage candidates to access past papers available on SQA's website

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ give themselves enough time to tackle the comprehension questions as well as the overall purpose and translation questions. This will help ensure they have the opportunity to access all the marks available in the paper
- ◆ check how many marks each question is worth. This will help ensure their response has sufficient detail to attract the full range of marks
- ◆ know if they do the translation first they are less likely to translate as well as doing it after the comprehension questions, as these will give a 'feel' for the nature of the text
- ◆ have sufficient experience of using a French-English dictionary and know how to use this as an appropriate resource. Reminding them to explore all the meanings of the dictionary entry to find the most appropriate one
- ◆ for the overall purpose question, know their answer will require an appropriate level of inferencing, rather than simply repeating information used to answer the comprehension questions, and that they should consider the following to support their response:
 - the article's title
 - the beginning and ending of the text
 - how the text is structured, use of relevant statistics
 - quotes from experts
 - use of questions or humour
 - personal experiences referred to
 - use of lists
 - use of emotive language
- ◆ for the translation:
 - give close attention to translation skills, particularly with reference to idiomatic language
 - take care over the correct translation of tenses
 - be encouraged to read over their translation to ensure that it reads well in English

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Listening

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ advise candidates to ensure their answers have sufficient detail relating to the number of marks available
- ◆ ensure candidates make the best use of their time in the exam by reading the questions to gain insight into what they might expect to hear
- ◆ encourage candidates to listen to French materials online – especially short news items, as these provide a relevant, accessible source of language at the level
- ◆ build in note-taking strategies during lessons as they serve as a useful skill in the exam

Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ continue improving their grammatical accuracy as appropriate to Advanced Higher level
- ◆ when writing their essay, address the question fully and remain relevant throughout
- ◆ avoid basic, high-frequency expressions in their written work
- ◆ use appropriately complex and sophisticated language to express opinions
- ◆ use banks of useful phrases for essay writing practice
- ◆ proofread their work using a dictionary to eliminate errors, particularly those which are basic in nature but seriously detract from a good overall impression

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ help candidates in developing an appropriate title that is not over-ambitious or too general, to give them an opportunity to show their ability to adopt a critical and analytical approach
- ◆ encourage the use of critical terminology with candidates to further allow an appropriate approach
- ◆ encourage candidates to choose appropriate and compatible sources, which are relevant and likely to support candidates' assertions
- ◆ encourage candidates to check the factual accuracy of their work, and to ensure that they are quoting accurately in French
- ◆ remind candidates to proofread their work carefully to eradicate errors in spelling, punctuation and typing
- ◆ remind candidates to avoid inappropriate register or reference to the first person in their writing
- ◆ ensure candidates think carefully about their introduction and conclusion as these are crucial in framing the essay and informing the reader of the candidate's intentions
- ◆ ensure candidates are not tempted to adopt the style of a background topic, but rather provide a critical evaluation of the primary source(s).

Performance-talking

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ continue to provide candidates with opportunities to develop their conversational ability
- ◆ ensure that the STL forms contain sufficient detail to allow the visiting assessor an insight into the areas candidates wish to discuss
- ◆ remind candidates of the importance of grammatical accuracy, in particular appropriate use of verbs and tenses, gender, and adjectival position and agreement
- ◆ develop with candidates an appropriate range of phrases to allow them to demonstrate appropriate discussion techniques, or to help them to cope with questions requiring them to think ‘on their feet’ rather than relying on learned material

Appendix 1: 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.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).