Course report 2025

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 2025 appeals process.

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Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   379

Number of resulted entries in 2025:   366

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	165	45.1	45.1	144
B	92	25.1	70.2	122
C	51	13.9	84.2	100
D	33	9.0	93.2	78
No award	25	6.8	100	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

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

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In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 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.

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Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

This question paper covered the context of learning and provided appropriate challenge for candidates. There were a range of A and C-type questions, requiring candidates to use higher-order skills of inferencing and translating.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening paper covered the context of culture, exploring the topic of lesser-used languages. It discussed issues such as personal identity, culture and the benefits of bilingualism.

The discursive writing section covered all four contexts: society, learning, employability, culture. The choice of essay titles gave candidates opportunities to express their ideas in French.

Portfolio

The portfolio provided candidates opportunities to show their critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature or media. No candidates chose language in work this year.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain a conversation with a visiting assessor. 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

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Reading and Translation

In the reading section, most candidates completed the comprehension questions successfully and were able to identify information accurately.

The overall purpose question (question 7) was more successfully attempted than in recent years, with many candidates, using effective inferencing skills and correctly identifying the overall purpose, backed up by appropriate evidence from the text.

In the translation section, many candidates performed well in question 8.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Many candidates found the listening section accessible and could correctly identify relevant information.

In the discursive writing section, markers noted a range of responses across the four options available. Many candidates made good use of learned material, which many adapted successfully to express their ideas in French. Many candidates showed good control of language structures, allowing them to express their ideas clearly and concisely.

Portfolio

Where candidates used clear and focused titles, allowing for a critical and analytical response, they could successfully demonstrate critical and analytical skills. Good use was made by many candidates of appropriate quotations from both primary and

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secondary sources, strengthening the points being made. Most candidates gained good marks.

Many candidates used a critical and analytical approach, without retelling the story of the novel(s), play(s), poem(s) or film(s), or lapsing into first-person analysis, and produced appropriate analysis of the subject matter.

Performance–talking

Many candidates who completed their Subject Topic List (STL) form in line with SQA's guidance, indicating an adequate range of topics for discussion with the visiting assessor, were able to address the topics successfully and adapt language to respond to questions.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

In the reading and translation question paper, a few candidates missed out questions 5 and 6 in instances where they completed the translation section before attempting these questions. They may have forgotten, or ran out of time, to return to them.

In the translation section, some candidates had difficulty identifying the present, perfect and imperfect tenses accurately. Some candidates had difficulty expressing their ideas due to poor English expression.

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.

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Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the discursive writing section, some candidates lacked the ability to demonstrate control of verbs and tenses, and other grammatical conventions, and their ideas could not be expressed clearly, and they missed out on marks.

Portfolio

If candidates did not use clear or focused titles, they were often unable to produce critical and analytical essays and could not gain high marks. They tended to make only very general points on the sources or adopted a narrative approach and were lacking in critical analysis.

A few candidates' poor expression in English, or first-person response to the question, detracted from the overall impression of the portfolio.

Performance–talking

Some candidate STL forms did not contain enough detail and had very few topics (sometimes only two) or in a very few cases it resembled a scripted dialogue. This did not allow for much discussion at the level required, and candidates struggled to perform well.

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 provide alternatives in their answers to comprehension questions or the translation
- are aware of tenses and moods and their importance in the translation
- do not attempt the translation first, as this is rarely a successful approach
- attempt all questions
- 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

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- identify numbers accurately
- 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
- check the accuracy of their written French, particularly verbs and tenses

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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
- are aware that poor English expression does not gain high marks
- 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

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are aware an appropriately completed STL form is crucial in allowing candidates to perform to potential
- know that a form with only two topics is limiting and does not allow for much discussion at the level required
- do not give a list of questions on the STL form, reading like a script

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Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

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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.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).