Course report 2023

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 in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

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Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 510

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 449

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	165	Percentage	36.7	Cumulative percentage	36.7	Minimum mark required	138
B	Number of candidates	105	Percentage	23.4	Cumulative percentage	60.1	Minimum mark required	118
C	Number of candidates	95	Percentage	21.2	Cumulative percentage	81.3	Minimum mark required	98
D	Number of candidates	52	Percentage	11.6	Cumulative percentage	92.9	Minimum mark required	78
No award	Number of candidates	32	Percentage	7.1	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied 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 more statistical reports on the statistics and information page of SQA's website.

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Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation question paper attracted the full range of marks available in all elements of reading comprehension, overall purpose and translation.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing question paper was challenging for candidates, particularly in item 1 (listening). However in terms of discursive writing, candidates were able to access the full range of marks. Most candidates were able to express their ideas successfully.

Portfolio

Questions that candidates chose for the task encouraged effective analysis. Some responses evidenced deep insight into the area selected for study.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking gave candidates the opportunity to showcase their learning and put learned material to good use. Many candidates used complex and sophisticated language effectively, ensuring that they could express their ideas clearly.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates coped well with the reading comprehension element, often achieving high marks.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Candidates performed better in item 2 of the listening paper than they did with item 1, often finding it easier to identify relevant language in the dialogue than in the monologue. When selecting their discursive writing topic, candidates could confidently adapt learned material to address the essay title and express their opinions successfully.

Portfolio

Where candidates selected an appropriate essay question, there was evidence of some good analysis of literary or media texts. Most candidates wrote clearly and concisely, making effective use of appropriate terminology, and engaging well with the focus of study.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well-prepared for the performance–talking assessment and able to express their ideas well. They were able to use complex and sophisticated language throughout the conversation with the visiting assessor. Where STL forms had been completed with a good range of topics for discussion, candidates performed well and could use and adapt learned material to express their ideas and opinions.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

In the reading comprehension, some candidates struggled with elements of vocabulary, for example *durable* (question 5(a)) *employé de la société* (question 3(c)) or omitting to translate *Si* (sense unit 4) of the translation.

The overall purpose question continues to be a challenging aspect for many candidates. Many have taken on board advice and guidance on how to tackle this question effectively, for example citing statistics, rhetorical questions, tone, use of personal anecdote, expert opinions; however, references did not always reference the literary or media text(s) in a convincing, reflective way.

The translation proved challenging for some candidates. They had difficulty recognising tenses correctly or displayed evidence of dictionary misuse.

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Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

This year, discursive writing proved to be a significant challenge for many candidates, whose control of language and structures was weak. These candidates struggled to conjugate verbs and use tenses accurately and had difficulty manipulating adjectival agreements and verbs with set prepositions. This made it a significant challenge to express ideas using sophisticated and complex language expected at Advanced Higher level.

Portfolio

Where candidates selected essay questions that were too general or insufficiently demanding in scope, they had difficulty addressing the task effectively. There was a lack of attention to detail in some candidates' submissions in areas such as spelling, accuracy and language register. Some candidates incurred penalties for the absence of a bibliography, or for excessive word count.

Performance–talking

Where STL forms contained insufficient detail, for example only listing two topics, candidates tended to disadvantage themselves as their ideas were often quickly exhausted, leaving little scope for further discussion. Equally, candidates were not at an advantage when STL forms had been completed to resemble a pre-prepared script, making it difficult for the visiting assessor to conduct the assessment effectively.

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Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Candidates should check their work carefully to ensure the accuracy of their writing is clear and comprehensible to the marker.

Portfolio

Candidates should place importance on the selection of an appropriate question that encourages effective analysis of the chosen area of study. They should supply a bibliography and adhere to and not exceed the word count.

Performance–talking

Candidates should ensure that their completed STL form enables the assessor to conduct the assessment in a way that allows the candidate to express ideas and opinions using complex and sophisticated language. They should ensure it contains sufficient detail for a good discussion without the contents of the STL form being so exhaustive that it is counterproductive to an effective discussion.

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.

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 was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

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standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

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 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. 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 the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 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 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report.