



Course report 2024

National 5 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.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 6,819

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 6,611

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	3,595	Percentage	54.4	Cumulative percentage	54.4	Minimum mark required	83
B	Number of candidates	1,160	Percentage	17.5	Cumulative percentage	71.9	Minimum mark required	70
C	Number of candidates	867	Percentage	13.1	Cumulative percentage	85.0	Minimum mark required	58
D	Number of candidates	613	Percentage	9.3	Cumulative percentage	94.3	Minimum mark required	45
No award	Number of candidates	376	Percentage	5.7	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.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper was comprised of three texts of equal weight. There were three supported questions. The question paper covered the contexts of society, employability and culture (the three contexts not covered in the listening question paper), and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics that engaged candidates.

Each text was accessible to all candidates and performed as expected.

Question paper 1: Writing

In the writing question paper, candidates had to reply by email to a job advert. The question paper has four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The two unpredictable bullet points were accessible to all candidates and the paper performed as expected.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper was comprised of two parts: a monologue and a conversation, both included a supported question. The paper was based on the context of learning.

One of the supported questions did not perform as expected, and one question was more demanding than expected. This was considered when setting the grade boundary.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was reinstated this session.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates performed equally well in all three texts, particularly in the following questions.

Text 1 (society)

- ◆ question 1(a): most candidates answered well and gained the mark
- ◆ question 1(c)(ii), supported question: most candidates answered well and gained 2 marks
- ◆ question 1(c)(iii): this question offered optionality, and many candidates gained 2 marks
- ◆ question 1(d): most candidates answered well and gained 2 marks

Text 2 (employability)

- ◆ question 2(a): the answer required a number and time period. Most candidates answered well and gained the mark
- ◆ question 2(d): many candidates gave the detail required and gained 2 marks

Text 3 (culture)

- ◆ question 3(a): the answer required a number. Most candidates answered well and gained the mark
- ◆ question 3(e)(ii): many candidates gave the detail required and gained 2 marks
- ◆ question 3(f): this question offered optionality, and many candidates gained the mark

Question paper 1: Writing

Candidates performed well in this question paper, with most being well-prepared to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. Many candidates answered the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and used detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at this level.

Most candidates were prepared for the two unpredictable bullet points and answered these.

Question paper 2: Listening

As is often the case, candidates found this paper challenging but performed in line with 2023 and did particularly well in the monologue.

Monologue

- ◆ question 1(a), supported question: most candidates gained the mark
- ◆ question 1(b): the answer required a number and time period. Most candidates answered well, and many gained the mark
- ◆ question 1(c): this question offered optionality, and most candidates gained the mark

Conversation

- ◆ question 2(a): many candidates gained the mark
- ◆ question 2(f): this question offered optionality, and many candidates gained 2 marks

Assignment–writing

Most candidates covered the topics of health, school or holidays. Many candidates produced an accurate piece of writing including detailed language and structures expected at this level. Most candidates performed well with many achieving full marks.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed well or very well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates found the following questions more demanding.

Text 1 (society)

- ◆ question 1(b): some candidates misunderstood *des baskets* and thought it meant 'basketball'; however, most candidates gained the marks
- ◆ question 1(c)(i): many candidates did not give sufficient or correct detail to gain the mark

Text 2 (employability)

- ◆ question 2(b), supported question: many candidates mistranslated *en droit* or did not give the required detail to gain the mark
- ◆ question 2(c)(ii): many candidates misunderstood *il n' y avait plus de* and did not gain the mark

Text 3 (culture)

- ◆ question 3(c): many candidates translated *supporter* as 'to support' rather than 'to put up with' and did not gain the mark

Question paper 1: Writing

Some candidates used the past tense to write about related work experience (bullet point 4) but did not use the tense correctly and made errors that detracted from the overall impression.

Although most candidates answered bullet points 5 and 6, some candidates penalised themselves through dictionary misuse. There were more instances of illegible handwriting than in previous years.

Question paper 2: Listening

- ◆ question 1(f): many candidates did not understand *cours de cuisine* and did not gain this mark. Many candidates did not give enough detail to gain the second mark
- ◆ question 1(g): this question offered optionality, but many candidates did not give enough detail and did not understand *se détendre* and did not gain the marks
- ◆ question 2(b), supported question: candidates had to complete the sentence. Many candidates misunderstood *au mois de*, although not required as part of their answer
- ◆ question 2(c): this question offered optionality, but many candidates did not give enough detail and did not understand *la première fois* and did not gain the marks
- ◆ question 2(e): this question offered optionality: many candidates gained the marks for *j'ai préparé un petit déjeuner* but many misunderstood *on écoutait des chansons* and *je leur parlais de la France* and did not gain both marks
- ◆ question 2(g): many candidates did not give the detail needed to gain the marks

Assignment–writing

Some candidates wrote about the topic of holidays in the past, present, future and conditional tenses. This sometimes led to serious grammatical errors and repetitive language, detracting from the overall impression and impacted on the mark awarded.

Performance–talking

Pronunciation remains one of the main issues for many candidates. Some candidates did not perform well because of the choice of topic.

A few performances were too short, which affected candidates' ability to gain the highest pegged marks, even for stronger candidates. Some were significantly short (under 4 minutes for the presentation and conversation) and this was reflected in the mark candidates achieved.

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 higher pegged marks.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read each question carefully and underline the key word or words in the question that leads them to the answer in the text
- ◆ check their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English
- ◆ are being guided by the number of marks available for each question and give as much detail in their answer as they have understood
- ◆ do not give extra information as this could negate any correct information and result in not gaining marks
- ◆ have a good knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings, and the comparative. This minimises mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension
- ◆ use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first definition listed
- ◆ are aware of common 'false friends' and encourage them to check these carefully in the dictionary
- ◆ have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Question paper 1: Writing

As the writing is in the form of an email, there is no requirement for candidates to use the formal beginning and endings. Many candidates who include these formal beginnings and endings often make errors in these parts.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the job advert carefully
- ◆ answer all six bullet points
- ◆ are aware bullet point 4 (related work experience) does not need to be in the past tense as candidates who write in the past tend to make grammatical errors
- ◆ only write about a past professional experience if they can use the past tenses in French accurately
- ◆ write enough detailed language accurately for the unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders) and not to create new sentences
- ◆ ask questions regarding the job, as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure they have covered all bullet points and not made any basic mistakes, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents and words missed out
- ◆ are familiar with the assessment criteria in the marking instructions for the writing paper, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve high marks

Question paper 2: Listening

Listening is a skill that candidates find challenging, and it is clear candidates made progress in this skill this session.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ regularly practise listening and use French as often as possible in the classroom to reinforce listening strategies
- ◆ do more practice involving note-taking to improve their listening skills
- ◆ read all the questions carefully and underline the key words so they can find the correct answer in the text
- ◆ know that they hear both the monologue and conversation three times and should make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers
- ◆ are being guided by the number of marks available for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood
- ◆ answer every question; however, candidates should not give extra information or long lists of possible answers. This could negate any correct information, and they could miss out on marks
- ◆ give accurate answers through confident knowledge of numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the more accessible points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ cover the language for the chosen scenario as part of learning and teaching, and ensure the scenario gives them opportunities to use detailed language
- ◆ write in a structured way, including paragraphs and punctuation
- ◆ use a range of tenses, where appropriate, and only if the candidate can use these accurately
- ◆ use the dictionary to check the accuracy of their writing (spelling, accents, genders), and not to create new sentences
- ◆ are discouraged from writing lists, for example school subjects, places in the town
- ◆ do not use repetitive language, for example the same activities on past, present and future holidays, what they eat or drink for every meal
- ◆ read through their piece of writing to ensure basic mistakes have not been made, for example spelling, adjective endings, accents and words omitted
- ◆ are familiar with the assessment criteria in the marking instructions
- ◆ have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements

Performance–talking

Conversation

During the conversation, candidates must go into at least one different context to the one used in the presentation. Following questions with the context in the presentation, the conversation must cover a different context (society, learning, employability, culture), not simply a different topic from the same context.

Candidates should prepare for the conversation by thinking about the type of questions they are likely to be asked on their chosen topic, including key words that could be used in the questions.

Sustaining the conversation

Candidates can demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation using some of the following techniques:

- ◆ including a mix of extended and shorter answers (not short presentations or monologues)
- ◆ incorporating appropriate thinking time
- ◆ using natural interjections, for example *euh, bah, ben, alors*
- ◆ acknowledging that they have understood the question: *oui, je suis d'accord, non, pas du tout*
- ◆ asking questions that are relevant to the conversation and at relevant times
- ◆ asking for repetition or clarification, for example *pouvez-vous/peux-tu répéter?*

Teachers and lecturers should make use of the Understanding Standards materials for National 5 French: performance–talking (IACCA) published on SQA's secure website. This is available through your SQA co-ordinator.

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

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](#).