

French (continuers)

2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

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Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

# School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

The folios presented for moderation were generally well organised and adhered to SACE requirements. Moderators commented that students had completed an excellent range of tasks, with many achieving in the A range. It is important that students are given the opportunity to perform at the highest levels. Teachers are reminded that they may submit 3–5 tasks. Students are not disadvantaged if their folio consists of only three tasks and it should be noted that a listening text analysis is not a required component.

Teachers should ensure that the performance standards included with the task and used to assess student work are current SACE Board standards for Stage 2. For example, marking pro formas under the heading of SSABSA are five years out of date and must not be used. Teachers are encouraged to access the SACE website and to use the support documents provided.

When teachers attach performance standards to student work, it is useful for the moderation process if they highlight the relevant grade descriptors for each task. This demonstrates how the holistic grade was determined. It is not recommended that percentage conversions are used to assign a grade.

### Task Design

Teachers should consider the assessment design criteria when preparing the
Stage 2 learning and assessment plan (LAP), because moderators have to verify that all criteria have been met in the assessment tasks. For example, if the learning and assessment plan indicates that all assessment design criteria (1, 2, and 3) are met in a particular task (e.g. text production), that task should show evidence of all criteria. If the task does not provide evidence of these criteria, it may affect students’ ability to achieve at the highest level.

All teachers have the opportunity to submit an addendum if assessment tasks are not exactly as described in the learning and assessment plan.

When using listening or reading texts from past examination papers, teachers should ensure that additional questions have been asked in order to address each of the performance standards for text analysis, especially analysis of linguistic and stylistic features. When assessing student responses, it is important to assess the quality of the text analysis against the performance standards rather than adding up marks and converting them to a grade.

To assist moderators in supporting the teachers’ judgments, it is necessary that teachers supply the following information on the task sheet:

name of film, text used

text type, context, audience, and purpose of response.

Oral interaction tasks require interaction between the student and the teacher. An oral presentation — for example, the student talking from a prepared script in answer to a question — does not count as an interaction. This is clearly stated in the subject outline.

### Interaction

Students interact with others to exchangeinformation, ideas, opinions, and experiences in spoken French.

Students may participate in, for example, conversations, interviews, discussions, forums, or debates, or give multimodal presentations or talks to specific audiences and respond to questions in French (5–7 minutes).

The design of the assessments should specify a context, purpose, and audience.

An interaction is a two-way conversation that is preferably natural and unrehearsed.

An oral presentation can only be assessed and used as one of the folio tasks if the duration is 5–7 minutes, including the questions at the end of the presentation. Without the questions — which should take more time than the presentation — this cannot be classed as an interaction, because it is during question time that the student demonstrates interactive skills.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Teachers and students are to be congratulated on the vast range of interesting topics chosen for the in-depth study. The students’ passion for their chosen topic was evident across all assessment tasks and, consequently, many students achieved an A+ for this assessment type.

As well as indicating the overall topic, each of the responses needs to have a title and clearly articulated context, audience, and purpose to assist moderators in understanding the student’s focus.

The oral presentation component is simply a presentation of 3–5 minutes’ duration. No questions are to be asked at the end of the presentation, because questioning occurs in the discussion section of the oral examination.

In some cases, students were clearly reading from cue cards. Teachers should ensure that students are aware that intonation, fluency, pronunciation, and engagement of audience are among the assessment criteria of the performance standards and are better served by a more natural delivery.

The word limit for the written response in French is 500 words. The best responses were at the upper end of this word limit with a response of appropriate depth unlikely to be achieved in fewer than this number of words.

The oral presentation and the written response in French are assessed for ideas and expression equally. Teachers are reminded that students are not expected to perform at native speaker level, nor should they be allowed multiple drafts of their tasks.

The reflection task is the students’ opportunity to demonstrate their learning and deep understanding of their topic and should not be a simple recount. Teachers and students are encouraged to refer to the sample reflections for all languages on the SACE website to gain a clearer understanding of what is required.

Assessment Type 4: Examination

83 students completed the examination and the majority performed very well, with 34% achieving in the A range, 30% in the B range, and 34% in the C range. Students achieved particularly well in the oral examination and Listening and Responding, but found the Writing in French section most challenging. Throughout the examination, students’ use of tenses was far from accurate and often limited to the most basic tenses.

### Oral Examination

This section of the examination tended to extremes; just over half of the students scored in the A range for the conversation and just under half scored in the A range for the discussion. The rest of the students’ marks spread from B+ to D for the conversation and B+ to D- for the discussion.

The students who achieved at the highest level used a variety of communication strategies; for example, using new vocabulary encountered during the interaction, seeking clarification, and using appropriate pause fillers. Many students employed a number of communication strategies to maintain the interaction; for example,
self-correcting, responding to correction by the interlocutor, and seeking support and clarification with occasional pauses to process questions and search for linguistic resources. Students who were confident displayed interest in the topics and gave detailed responses, performing at the highest levels. Examiners expressed some concerns about the accuracy of the students’ pronunciation; in the most extreme cases, students who spoke confidently and fluently were often unintelligible due to major errors in pronunciation.

Conversation

Responses mostly conveyed the appropriate detail, ideas, and information, but were generally lacking in depth. Most students addressed the questions directly and adequately, although some struggled to understand the questions and were unable to give detailed responses to basic topics such as family and school. Very few students were able to talk about what they had studied in French and a surprising number did not remember viewing any films.

There was a wide range of achievement in relation to the depth of ideas, information, and opinions. The more able students elaborated their ideas through additional details and opinions, but some students did not take the opportunity to extend their answers, despite being given the opportunity by examiners. Examiners observed that some students were not able to discuss what they enjoyed or what was important to them and that the range of vocabulary used to give an opinion was limited.

Examiners encourage students to prepare and master a wider range of vocabulary and frequently used verbs (e.g. *faire*, *aller*) to limit problems with tenses, gender, and content. Cohesive devices were simple and repetitive at times. Although the majority of students had prepared well for the expected topics, they were sometimes unable to respond to questions asked in an unexpected way. Students need to be exposed to a variety of questions and different ways of asking for the same information.

Discussion

A wide variety of topics was chosen for the in-depth study and the students’ ability to cope with the discussion was very mixed, demonstrating a wide range of capacity.

It is very important for students to choose topics that suit their level of competence, but still allow for reflection and the formulating of opinions that can be justified. Simple topics such as a food, a place, or a person need to be dealt with in depth and so require a certain sophistication and maturity of approach to enable the student to achieve at the highest levels. Equally, topics that are too broad (The French Revolution, Impressionism) or doubled-up (Marie-Antoinette and the French Revolution, the Catacombs and the French Revolution) limit the students’ ability to delve profoundly into the topic. It is necessary to remind students that the in-depth study is worth 20% of the overall grade and therefore should not be a huge undertaking.

That said, students are expected to know their topic well, to have mastered the necessary vocabulary and its pronunciation, and show evidence of research. Those students who relied entirely on personal experience to discuss their topic did not do as well as those who combined personal experience with research. The students who did best of all were those who were actually interested in their topic and were able to convey this interest.

Overall, students were not particularly confident with, or actually prepared for, questions that required reflection. The stronger students were able to discuss how they had changed their thinking or understanding and make recommendations about whether future students should undertake the topic they had chosen. If a student cannot answer a question such as *Qu’est-ce que ce sujet vous a appris personnellement?*, it is likely that their chosen topic is too shallow or they have not considered the requirements of the reflection section of the performance standards carefully enough.

Another thing to be considered carefully is the content of the dot-point discussion sheet that the students bring into the examination. These discussion points were often problematic for students: some really struggled to say more than what they had written down, and others had dot points that were so broad they constituted an
in-depth study topic in themselves. Teachers are encouraged to check what their students intend to write on this sheet and also to rehearse with them questions relating to the dot points finally selected. Students need to be well aware that they are required to talk about their topic for at least five minutes, so they may be asked questions that do not relate to the dot points.

### Written Examination

Listening and Responding

The overall performance in this section was very good, with most students scoring in the A and B grade bands. Students are encouraged to check their spelling and English expression; sometimes the responses were not easy to understand and spelling mistakes such as ‘it was weather’ in response to Question 1b lost marks unnecessarily.

Text 1

Most students scored 5 or 6 for this section, but there were a number who misunderstood Question 1c or were not specific enough in Question 1b. For Question 1b, the response ‘it is winter’ does not completely answer the question, and students need to make the connection that the activities mentioned cannot be done in the snow. In Question 1c, many students thought that it was David who does not like football and did not realise that he had made two jokes. Question 1d required students to comment on the transition of emotions from excited, to angry, to disappointed, then suspicious, and possibly happy. At least three of these emotions had to be identified for full marks.

Text 2

Students found this text the most challenging and more than a quarter scored only one or no marks for this section. Many thought that an opportunity of meeting the President of France was being offered or a guided tour of the Louvre. The fact that a competition was being advertised had to be mentioned, but many did not pick this point up. Most students were able to articulate that the deal on offer was too good to be true, but their reasons varied and the number of questions that had to be answered (*dix*) to win the prize was frequently misunderstood.

Text 3

All but 7 students scored 3 or 4 marks for this section. The topic of social media is clearly well understood; however, it was important that students referred specifically to the content of the text rather than answering from general knowledge. Students had to state clearly that the first speaker was in favour of social media and the second speaker against it. After this, three specific points that each speaker made had to be mentioned.

Text 4

On average, questions from this text were the best answered, with two-thirds of the students scoring 6 or 7 marks. In Question 4b, a number of students did not identify four characteristics and others gave imprecise answers instead of using clear descriptive adjectives such as ‘idealistic’, ‘passionate’, or ‘loves nature’. Most students (95%) answered Question 4c by saying that Mr Martin had helped Claire. The 5% of students who said that he had not helped her were able to give sufficient reasons to support this view; for example, Claire already knew what pathway she wanted to follow, Mr Martin told her to look up information instead of giving it to her, and he simply confirmed that she should study science.

Reading and Responding A

Students found this section very challenging, with only 12 achieving full marks for Question 5, and 9 students achieving full marks for Question 6. A majority of students demonstrated a solid understanding of both texts, but guesses at meanings of unfamiliar words and over-wordy responses impacted on their ability to clearly respond to the questions. For a significant number of students, there was confusion between ‘stylistic devices’ and ‘language used’ and it is clear that more explicit teaching of these aspects of text analysis is required. It is of concern that so many students thought that *Jean* and *Michel* were females. There was also some confusion as to who wrote and who received the letters and the difference between an employer and an employee was not always understood.

Question 5a

63% of students scored full marks for this question, succinctly stating the three different responses given by employers to Jean Eymard’s application for work. Vocabulary that was misunderstood included *revenez* (translated as ‘recognise’ or ‘review’), and *maigre* (‘the opportunity in his profession is getter thinner’, ‘his degrees gave him a migraine’).

Question 5b

Only 37% of students scored full marks for this question, because the majority did not appear to have the knowledge or vocabulary to appropriately identify linguistic features. More than one student referred to ‘explanation marks’, others to ‘confronting punctuation’, ‘casual statements’, and ‘the device of mockery’. Even when the terminology was correct and the devices correctly identified, students lost marks because they did not provide an example for each stylistic device or provided incorrect supporting statements. Some devices to which students could have referred were: emotive words, use of metaphor, repetition, rhetorical questions, use of exclamation marks, sarcasm, generalisation, and use of negatives.

Question 5c

38% of students scored full marks for this question; many students contradicted themselves by saying at first that Jean Eymard is not hopeful and then deciding after all that he is hopeful. Misunderstanding the vocabulary again contributed to answers that were difficult to assess; for example, ‘He’s hopeful the letter will be put across the page’, ‘cross the pages of his diary’, *atteindra* diversely translated as ‘teaches’, and ‘attends to’, or ‘attract’. The word *espoir* used toward the end of the letter misled some students into believing that Eymard was hopeful. The best students correctly identified that he was not hopeful and referred to the opening statement *la moindre possibilité qu’on la résolve.* Students must realise that it is often necessary to look throughout the text for examples to support their point of view.

Text 6 was better understood, with the average score of 73% being 6 percentage points higher than the average for Text 5. Again, it is important to note that English expression can make a difference to scores. It is not always possible to give students credit for understanding an answer if they do not express themselves clearly. Also, spelling and poor handwriting at times impede the marking process and can affect the ability of the marker to assess the responses.

Question 6a

94% of students scored full marks for this question, but too many had some difficulty in constructing a simple response to what is a straightforward question. The purpose of the text was to respond to Eymard’s letter and give advice.

Question 6b

Most students were able to say that Veinard succeeded in finally getting a job by directly approaching the employers in person.

Question 6c

37% of students scored full marks for this question. Although students were able to identify that both texts are about unemployment or job-seeking, most did not mention long-term unemployment and many missed the point that both texts referred to the unemployment of people who are well qualified. Again, these answers were often vague because they used unnecessary verbiage.

Question 6d

Only 23% of students achieved full marks for this question. Too many students focused on the sign-off as evidence of attitude, rather than referring to the many examples in the two texts that indicated the differences. A simple statement that Text 5 is negative whereas Text 6 is positive was necessary, illustrated by some of the following examples:

*Text 5: Est-ce un vain espoir, quel gaspillage! C’est toujours la même rengaine, mais à quoi bon? Tant de désespoir, toutes les portes sont fermées, le chômage règne!, personne ne nous écoute.*

*Text 6: Le travail qui vous attend, je ne me suis pas permis de tomber dans le désespoir. Il faut rester optimiste, il ne faut donc pas désespérer, je n’ai jamais renoncé, j’ai persisté.*

The best responses to this question avoided repeating the same things that had been mentioned in the answer to Question 5b.

*Reading and Responding B*

Students generally coped quite well with the task. The lowest mark awarded was 5/15 (two students only), but no students scored 15/15. Four students scored 14/15 and 12 students scored 13/15.

Everyone wrote the two separate responses required, although a number fell short of the word count and most did not continue the blog style that the stimulus text should have inspired. There were a few responses where the tone and language used were not suitable. It is important for students to understand that the way they write must be appropriate for the context, audience, and purpose of the text, as well as engaging the audience.

Most responses were relevant, but a surprising number made no attempt to comment on the cost of the meal. Many were fairly banal in their nature and approach and did not show much detail or development of ideas. The performance standards require relevance and depth, with detailed and varied content, and a coherently argued point of view for students to achieve at the highest level.

The linguistic standard achieved by many students was disappointing and few could distinguish between *mal* and *mauvais*. There was variable control of grammatical structures and the language used was often inaccurate. Given the very accessible nature of the task, a higher standard of linguistic competence was expected. Many students could not write a single sentence without making some kind of error.

Most students showed a fair sense of organisation and coherence in their work, although the convention of using paragraphs was often ignored. In another text type, this lack would have been more serious.

Writing in French

The selection of topics was fairly evenly divided, with 30% of students choosing Question 8, 40% of students choosing Question 9, and 30% of students choosing Question 10. The average scores of students were consistent at around 66.6%, irrespective of the topic chosen. Question 9 was the best handled, followed by Questions 8 and 10.

Generally, students were able to write to word length requirements, but expression was variable, with some students lacking control over the basic grammar of noun–adjective and verb–subject agreement. Most students tried to include the subjunctive, yet some shifted the form of address from *tu* to *vous*. There was some very good use of cohesive devices and a good range of expression overall, despite inaccuracies. Very few students did not complete the task.

Most students conformed to the text type conventions and their responses were
well structured and organised. Relevance to context, purpose, audience, and topic was generally satisfactory for all three questions, as was the conveying of appropriate detail, ideas, information, or opinions. There were a few very creative and engaging stories, but overall the ability to engage the audience was average.

Question 8

Although the tone of some invitations was not appropriate, most students managed to elaborate their ideas and support their opinions. The reason for the invitation was handled well, but the specific details about time, place, etc. were not well expressed and, in some cases, almost entirely omitted. The best answers were set out like a formal letter and sustained the appropriate register throughout.

Question 9

Students expanded on the outline provided, but rarely provided details not suggested by the topic. Most referred quite superficially to food, tourist sites, meeting people, and staying in a family. A few students wrote a speech that was very casual in tone and largely ignored speech conventions. It was difficult to give full marks for depth and breadth of ideas, especially as many students did not address the issue of communicating with, and informing, future students for the scholarship. It is important to answer every aspect of the outline given.

Question 10

It was obvious that a few students used what they had learned from their in-depth study as inspiration for their story and, on the whole, this was a successful strategy. Too often the text type was not a story, but a form of personal recount which did not demonstrate the creativity and originality that is expected in a story. This is probably the most difficult of the text types, because the best stories require flair and imagination that are difficult to achieve during an examination.

It is highly recommended that students be given multiple opportunities to write in French on a range of topics conforming to a variety of text types. One very useful strategy that helps students to understand text types and register is to ask them to write about the same topic in a number of different formats.

Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers, and teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student assessment work.

Teachers are reminded that when packaging materials, they should keep the folio and in-depth study separate. That is, they should package the materials according to assessment type rather than by student. It is also not necessary to sticky-tape the clear plastic bags.

Drafts of in-depth study and folio pieces are not required.

Teachers should verify the quality of recordings to ensure that voices can be clearly heard and understood. They should record interactions and oral presentations on a CD or USB, clearly labelling each track with the student’s number.

In addition, transcripts of listening exercises should be provided along with the learning and assessment plan in the teacher pack.

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