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French (continuers)

2015 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

The moderation process is designed to support the grades allocated by teachers to students’ work over the course of the year. A moderator’s role is to confirm the teachers’ marking and allocation of grades by finding evidence in the sample to support the teachers’ judgment. The moderator’s role is not to re-mark the work in the sample, and so the evidence presented in the sample bag should provide details about each of the tasks and how the teacher decided on the grades.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

This year the folios covered a variety of topics and were generally well organised. Teachers submitted a range of tasks, with many schools opting for three summative tasks; this is entirely appropriate in that the subject outline asks for between three and five tasks for this assessment type. All schools met the requirement of at least one interaction, one text analysis, and one written production. Teachers are reminded that folio tasks do not have to be completed under direct supervision. The assessment design criteria must be used to design assessment tasks so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards, including those at the highest grade level.

Any task design forms that have SSABSA written on them are out of date and may not allow for assessment against the current performance standards. Teachers are reminded that the SACE website has a range of support materials and student work samples that exemplify the standards.

Student work must be assessed using the performance standards. Other methods of grade determination, such as aggregating numerical scores without direct reference to the performance standards, can impact negatively on the students overall achievement grade. Teachers are reminded to judge student evidence of learning using the performance standards for all assessment tasks.

Teachers can leave their comments on student work, in addition to attaching the performance standards to show how they came to their decisions.

If past examination papers are used for text analysis tasks in listening and responding and/or reading and responding, they should be supplemented with questions that are designed to assess specific feature IR2 (analysis).Text comprehension questions only meet IR1 requirements (interpretation of meaning in texts) and do not constitute text analysis.

Please note that a listening text analysis is *not* compulsory in the folio.

If the learning and assessment plan (LAP) indicates that there is analysis of language and reflection in the text analysis (IR2, IR3), teachers are reminded to ensure that these criteria are included in the task design. Grammar questions such as ‘find a word that means’ or ‘find a direct pronoun or adverb’ are identification only and not an analysis of language. Task design should not limit students from demonstrating evidence of learning at the higher levels of achievement.

It is always a good idea to indicate which specific features of the assessment design criteria are being addressed in text analysis questions; this acts as an indicator for both students and teachers. For example: ‘What strategies does Madame Picard use to encourage Alex to pursue his dream career?’ (IR2), or ‘How would you react if a teacher had this conversation with you?’ (IR3).

When designing the LAP, teachers must ensure that all specific features of the various assessment design criteria are covered at least once in the folio and in-depth study. In order to confirm assessment decisions made by the teacher, evidence against all the criteria must be demonstrated across both assessment types.

It is recommended that teachers refer to the performance standards when designing tasks to ensure that students have the ability to achieve at the highest level. Some tasks do not allow students to perform at the highest level. Asking the student to write a poem as a response to another poem is not text analysis, and is unlikely to address any of the interpretation and reflection performance standards. Rather, this kind of task is a text production, assessing different criteria.

Teachers are reminded that text production tasks should have a different context and text type within the same folio; this shows a range of language and knowledge of text type requirements.

An interaction is a conversation between two or more people and requires spontaneous discussion on a range of topics. Teachers are reminded that an oral presentation without the opportunity for an adequate number of spontaneous questions is not an interaction, because it lacks reciprocity.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

It was pleasing to see the range of interesting topics chosen in 2015 for the in-depth study. Many students achieved A+ and reflected the student’s passion for, and engagement with, the chosen topic. It was also good to see many new topics that allowed students to share their opinions and reactions around the chosen topic. A topic that is not too broad and has a definite French-speaking focus will allow the students to communicate opinions and impressions gained during the course of their study.

Word count is important and should be indicated on the students’ responses. Teachers are reminded that the French response is 500 words, the reflective response in English is 600 words (or 5─7 minutes if presented orally), and the oral presentation is 3─5 minutes. Any part of a student response that exceeds the limits specified in the subject outline will not be reviewed at final moderation.

There is no need to submit research associated with the in-depth study.

Teachers are reminded that the reflective response in English requires students to demonstrate their learning and understanding of their topic, rather than provide a recount of information. Students can sometimes underestimate the complexity of the reflection required in this task and teachers are encouraged to refer them to exemplars on the SACE website to gain a clearer understanding of what is required.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to verify the authenticity of the students’ work by ongoing close monitoring and checking drafts. All work submitted is expected to be original and the student’s own work.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

*Conversation*

All students were well-prepared for the conversation, with 65% scoring in the A grade band. Many provided interesting and engaging responses that provided both depth and breadth, thus allowing the conversation to flow smoothly. Students were able to give their opinions and then justify them.

A minority of students answered questions with short responses (*Oui, peut-être! Non, Je ne sais pas*), that did not help to sustain the conversation. A small percentage of students had memorised passages to repeat, and had difficulty in understanding some familiar language in questions if they deviated from what had been memorised. Teachers and students are reminded that this procedure is designed to be an interaction between students and examiners, not an interrogation where students expect set questions and provide rehearsed responses. Teachers are encouraged to give students opportunities to engage naturally in conversation in French throughout the year, to best prepare them for this aspect of the external assessment.

There was a wide range in the level of language complexity. A small number of students used only simple structures, while more confident students used a wide range of tenses, vocabulary, and sophisticated structures in their interactions.

It should be noted that many students used examples of French language that are not always taught in the classroom, providing evidence that a growing number of students have wide experience of the French language outside their normal studies. It is pleasing that this may occur through visits to French-speaking countries or the use of technology to supplement their learning.

*Discussion*

Generally, students chose topics of genuine personal interest to them and their connection and passion was often evident in the depth and quality of their responses. Students should be encouraged to choose topics that they can relate to and in which they have an interest. This should allow them to be personally invested in their research and to engage in discussion more effectively. Teachers and students are reminded to choose topics that reflect the two themes of the subject outline — ‘The French-speaking Communities’ and ‘The Changing World’. Topics that focus on social issues often have limited connection with the French world and should be avoided or re-focused to have a distinct French flavour.

The majority of students were able to answer questions about their topic in an engaging manner, although some answers were clearly rehearsed or memorised. There were a few students who had a limited grasp of the specialised vocabulary of their chosen topic or did not demonstrate depth of knowledge.

Many students were able to reflect on why they had chosen their topic and what they had learned from their research. Often, however, the depth of the reflective response was limited. Teachers are encouraged to support students in thinking reflectively in French as this is the only section in the external assessment where specific feature IR3 can be assessed.

Only a small number of students brought objects to support the discussion, but those who did used them well.

Teachers and students are reminded that in cases where there is a French word or expression for a term it should be used; for example, Year 11 is *Année 11* or *la Première*; Year 12 is *Année 12* or *la Terminale*; in-depth study is *l’enquête approfondie* or *les recherches.*

Written Examination

*Listening and Responding*

In this section, students need to be sure that their English clearly expresses the meaning they are trying to convey. Merely translating the relevant aspects of the text will not necessarily answer the question when there is some analysis or the drawing of a conclusion required. Providing a segment of text in French without correlating English support does not provide a full response to a question.

Question 1 (a)

Students were asked to identify the purpose of this text, but many were not able to fully identify this aspect. Responses receiving a mark successfully indicated that the purpose of the text was to advertise the Paris Book Festival. Students and teachers are reminded that partial answers will not be awarded half marks.

Question 1 (b)

In order to receive full marks for this question, students had to provide an answer that fully identified the stylistic devices used, as well as the appropriate evidence from the text as support. Very few responses were awarded full marks for this question as many were unable to identify the stylistic devices used.

Question 1 (c)

Most students were able to state the two ways in which tickets could be obtained, but very few included precise details such as the website, phone number, and/or use of the app.

Question 2

It was pleasing to note that most students scored full marks for this question. A common error was stating that the French ‘no longer’ undertook certain activities identified, rather than indicating that some activities or practices had simply reduced in their frequency since the invention of the television.

Question 3 (a)

Many students were able to identify who Catherine Bouchon was, but some did not explain that she was there to discuss the problems of young people who contribute to her blog.

Question 3 (b)

More than half of all responses indicated at least one reason why communication was an issue for Antoine. Responses that were awarded full marks successfully identified two reasons as to why communication is an issue and supported this with evidence from the text.

Question 3 (c)

This question proved tricky for some, in that students misunderstood Sarah’s main concern. While unemployment in general was an issue, her major worry was about not getting a good job for herself later in life.

Question 3 (d)

This question was generally well answered. Successful responses to this question provided complete explanations about how the young people coped with their issues, providing details for both Antoine and Sarah.

Question 3 (e)

In order to receive a mark for this question, responses needed to indicate the common ground shared by both teenagers to cope with their issues. Almost all students answered that music was the common ground; however, only a few identifying that both were doing very little to solve the problem, but were rather running away or ignoring it.

Question 4 (a)

There were many different responses given for this question. All students explained that Christophe was either annoyed, angry, frustrated, or depressed. To justify their decision about his mood, students either listed the things that went wrong (e.g. he was late because of the motorbike and taxi, wearing the wrong clothes, being unprepared for the questions) or listed more descriptive quotes (e.g. ‘total disaster’, ‘horrible’, ‘don’t talk to me about it’, ‘missed my chance’).

Question 4 (b)

This was generally answered very well, with many students able to provide a comprehensive understanding of Martine’s advice to Christophe.

*Reading and Responding A*

Overall, this section of the examination was very well done. Responses in this section are expected to be clear and detailed. Students are encouraged to respond in full sentences, edit their work for spelling errors, and ensure that their responses are structured well so that markers are able to accurately gauge the level of understanding of the text and question. Almost half of all students received full marks for both questions in this section of the examination.

Question 5 (a)

Generally, students were able to provide some correct details about what Paul’s life was like prior to the global financial crisis. Within the details, there was some confusion about the status of his relationship. Examples are that *fiancée* was often translated as ‘wife’; the purchase of an apartment — *venait d’acheter* — was translated as ‘was going to buy’ rather than ‘had just bought’; and *meubles* (furniture) was mistaken for *immeuble* (building). Responses could also have included details about Paul’s personal life, including being madly in love, living well, and being happy.

Question 5 (b)

Most responses to this question successfully recognised the ways in which Paul’s life had changed after he lost his job. The most successful answers outlined the three main points, including the car accident, his broken relationship, and the sale of his apartment to pay his hospital bills.

Question 5 (c)

There were many different responses to this question, as students provided their own interpretation of the situation in the text. Paul himself recognised that he was partially to blame for his own situation because he was arrogant, thought he was invincible, and continued to spend money and have fun without thinking about the future. Many students believed that Paul’s misfortune was not his fault despite admitting his misgivings, perhaps because the car accident and/or the global financial crisis were out of his control. Had the accident not happened, things may have been different, but nearly all responses acknowledged Paul’s mistakes.

Question 5 (d)

Most responses identified that Paul was seemingly positive about life and identified that he acknowledged life was going to improve. A range of justifications were used, including identifying the use of the future tense indicating a positive attitude towards the future, having a large group of friends, and dreaming of rebuilding his life.

Question 6 (a)

Nearly all responses received full marks for this question. Responses included a range of reasons why people are homeless, including sickness, unemployment, business failure, lack of familial or friendship support, and economic situations.

Question 6 (b)

Successful responses to this question identified the person who was least sympathetic and justified this with specific, relevant evidence from the text. Nearly all students suggested that Eric was the least sympathetic person and justified this accordingly, although some students argued that Belle was worse and found the evidence to substantiate this.

Question 6 (c)

Students generally answered this question well. The most successful responses linked the key aspects of both texts, identified the issues, and used specific references from each text to support the claim. Some of the most common needs included support from charity organisations, not being judged, being reintegrated into society, support from family and friends, and help to escape the cycle.

*Reading and Responding B*

Responses to this section were satisfactory. The mean score for Reading and Responding B was 60%.

Students generally understood the task, which was very open ended. The question *Et vous, qu’en pensez-vous? Pour ou contre la technologie à l’école?* allowed students to choose a point of view for or against, or to take the middle-ground. All students wrote a letter.

The strongest responses in this section observed all conventions of the text type, used an extensive range of complex linguistic structures and features with a high degree of accuracy, and included depth and breadth in the treatment of the topic.

A large number of responses fell short of the required word length. While some of the ideas presented were interesting, they were not elaborated well. Some responses presented one idea in depth (often repetitiously) that did not respond fully to the numerous examples in the original text. Some responses did not connect their ideas about technology use to the school setting with enough clarity, while others presented lots of ideas but lacked solid structure. Teachers are encouraged to work with students through the process of creating a plan for a response before they start writing.

The accuracy of expression was variable, with many mistakes in the use of verb endings, tenses, adjective agreements, and prepositions — for example, *à le, beaucoup des*, etc. The expression demonstrated in stronger responses included a high degree of accuracy, complex language, and the use of a range of sophisticated cohesive devices to connect ideas and achieve interest, flow, and cohesion.

Teachers are encouraged to give students opportunities to practise responding texts in French, in order to be better prepared for this section of the examination.

Writing in French

Question 9 was the most popular choice this year, with 55% of students choosing to write a journal entry about the first day of their adventure. Question 10 was attempted by 25% of students and the remaining 20% chose Question 8.

As with Reading and Responding Part B, students should be encouraged to plan their response before starting to write. This gives students time to consider the structure of their response, as well as opportunities to broaden and deepen its content.

Students are also reminded that questions in this section have a specified context, purpose, and audience with a defined text type. Students are encouraged to respond appropriately to the text type, paying careful attention to the specific conventions such as dates, titles, personal comments and the like as appropriate. Students are also discouraged from re-writing their in-depth study written response in French as a response to this section as often the text type and topic don’t match and have little relevance to the question(s) posed.

Weaker responses in this section lacked depth and clarity of expression. Many were superficial with no real elaboration of the ideas presented.

The accuracy of expression was variable but there were some excellent responses. However, students continue to make similar mistakes each year:

* using the wrong verb/preposition — *être* for the weather, *attendre/chercher pour*
* poor use of possessive adjectives, including *m’aventure* instead of *mon aventure*
* poor use of agreement of the passé compose, as well as the wrong choice of auxiliary verb, coupled with a lack of elision — *de le, à les.*

Teachers are encouraged to provide students with the necessary language and skills to edit their own work to improve the quality of their responses in written French.

A range of spelling errors also caused concern and affected the markers’ reading of the response; for example: *recontre* instead of *rencontre*; *est/et* used interchangeably; *la joue* instead of *le jour; trés* instead of *très;* and *mére* instead of *mère.* There were also cases of adjectives not agreeing with their article and/or noun.

Students also need to make better use of their access to dictionaries as often specific vocabulary was not checked — *le stage* was used instead of *la scène; le singer* instead of *le chanteur; le audience* instead of *le public; le trafic* instead of *la circulation; le summit* instead of *le somme; sur l’avion* instead of *en avion;* and *j’amour* instead of *j’aime.*

## Operational Advice

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

For samples sent to moderation, teachers are asked to:

* refrain from including hyperlinks in the assessment sample, because hyperlinks are often blocked and cannot be accessed at moderation
* include transcripts and possible answers for listening text analysis tasks, where possible
* verify the quality of the recorded material and ensure that all material has been recorded and submitted, with each recording labelled with the student’s number
* ensure that each piece of written production is accompanied by details of the task, including purpose, audience, context, and text type to help identify the student’s focus and assist in confirmation of the teacher’s grades
* pack folio and in-depth study responses separately, and in the clear plastic bags provided, which allows for quick identification of the sample; work does not have to be submitted in folders
* refer to the moderation bag checklist on the SACE website to ensure that all required components are included in the moderation bag.

## General Comments

Generally, students were well-prepared for all sections of the examination. Teachers and students are encouraged to look closely at the performance standards and the subject outline to further their understanding of the assessment procedures and assessment design criteria. Clearly, the standard of the cohort is very high and we look forward to this continuing into the future.

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