

External Assessment Report 2013 – Intermediate 1 French (summary)

Overall Performance

There was an overall improvement in all four language skills in comparison with the previous year indicating that this year's cohort was well prepared for the exam. However, there were also a significant number of candidates who failed to complete the writing task and to answer several of the questions in listening and reading.

Reading

- There was a particularly encouraging improvement in reading with more candidates proceeding to cope well with the longer third text. However, a significant number of candidates remained unable to attempt or complete the two longer texts.
- Disappointingly, many candidates failed to comprehend basic language like numbers (**la vingtaine / deux mois / cent cinquante**), days (**samedi**) and months (**mars / janvier**).
- Marks were also lost due to insufficient answers, as in text 3 (**parle de sa vie et des paysages**) and in text 4 (**une piscine en plein air**).
- Less frequent vocabulary proved difficult for some candidates (**une affiche / fabriquez / ont vendu / en faisant des courses / est tombée en panne**), and many had problems with false friends (**la journée, travailler/travail, magasin/magazine, gare/garage**)

Listening

- Performance in listening was variable but, in general, it was felt that the majority of candidates had been well prepared to cope with the more predictable items.
- Less incidence of the need to apply the extraneous rule suggests that candidates were better primed for selecting relevant information.
- Many candidates failed to give sufficient details in their answers, often managing to recognise part of the answer (**midi**) but not the precise details (**et quart**).
- More surprising was the failure to recognise common vocabulary (**des céréales / au troisième étage / bibliothèque**) including numbers (**salle 35 / une demi-heure**) and colours (**jaune / rouge**).

Writing

- This task produced the greatest range of performances, from very good to very poor.
- There were some excellent performances where candidates had been prepared well and were able to write at some length and with a high level of accuracy.
- A few candidates failed to provide the required number of pieces of information for each of the areas and the task was clearly beyond their ability.
- It was evident that such candidates required further guidance on;
 - what constitutes three sentences
 - the accuracy required in terms of spelling, genders and use of accents, and

- how to go beyond a minimal response

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/Listening

- Candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question and **should be discouraged from giving extraneous information** as this is likely to be penalised.
- Centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary indicated in the prescribed themes and topics.
- Centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at reading texts similar in length those set in Questions 3 and 4. Many candidates would benefit from more focused practice of dictionary skills.
- Particularly in the Listening Paper, centres should ensure that candidates are able to give accurate answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, prepositions and question words.
- Candidates should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Writing

- Candidates need further guidance on what constitutes an adequate amount of information (three sentences) in each section of the Writing task.
- Centres need to encourage candidates to take greater care in how they present this information, particularly in the formation of verb tenses and in the spelling and genders of high frequency vocabulary, eg family, school subjects and leisure activities.
- In indicating what is required in this task, centres should share with candidates the expanded version of the pegged mark descriptors.
- Centres should use the exemplification of candidates' performances, which accompanied the new descriptors, to prepare candidates to go beyond a 'minimalist' response under each of the sections.

General

- Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible (particularly when writing in French) and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.
- Some centres may still be having difficulty in presenting candidates at the correct level for their ability and are encouraged to make effective use of the guidance issued by SQA.
- Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 1 level has been issued to accompany the extended pegged mark descriptors, and this will also prove useful to centres in improving the performance of their candidates in Writing.