

External Assessment Report 2013 – Intermediate 2 French (summary)

Overall Performance

Overall, the performance of candidates was very encouraging and of a high level, with some excellent performances (particularly in Reading and Writing) and with relatively few poor performances (mainly in Listening and Writing).

Reading

- As in previous years, most candidates coped well with the three short Reading texts, but there was also a marked improvement in performance in the longer fourth passage.
- Candidates lost marks for not providing sufficient detail in their answers specifically to questions in texts 1 and 4 (*un premier emploi / l'université de son choix*).
- Many candidates had difficulty demonstrating their comprehension of less frequent vocabulary (*nettoyer le champ / les feux d'artifice/ des villageois/tous les goûts / une soirée amusante*)
- A surprising number of candidates failed to translate correctly “le vingt et un juin”.

Listening

- There was an encouraging improvement in the mean mark for listening (up 1.3 marks).
- However, many candidates still found it difficult to retain the specific details while listening to the three relatively long texts. Sadly, many were unable to gain “easier” points because of a failure to recognise numbers (*au 30 juillet*), time phrases (*tous les mercredis matins*) and familiar vocabulary (*l'équipe nationale / promener mon chien / je me suis cassé le bras*).
- Passage 3 proved the most difficult, with many candidates understanding part of the answer but unable to give sufficient details (*eg assis devant l'ordinateur*) and some mistranslating the ‘false friend’ *la journée* in the phrases *ils grignotent toute la journée / une journée active*.

Writing

- This paper provided the greatest range of performances despite its predictable nature.
- Less able candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with enough accuracy to achieve a satisfactory performance.
- The vast majority of candidates were able to address the compulsory bullet points, but the less able candidates were not well prepared to give reasons for their application or to form comprehensible questions when dealing with requesting information about the job.
- A few candidates seemed unaware of the formal tone required when writing a job application.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading/Listening

- Candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question which is now usually indicated in bold eg **'Mention 2 things'**.
- Candidates need guidance on how to select as much relevant information as possible for their answers and should be discouraged from giving extraneous information.
- Centres need to ensure that candidates have had sufficient practice at reading longer texts similar in length and complexity to that set in Question 4.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are confident in their knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, prepositions and question words.
- In the listening paper, candidates should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Writing

- Centres should encourage candidates to take the time to carefully read the information regarding the job for which they are applying. Candidates should be trained on how to successfully indicate the nature of the job in the opening sentence.
- Candidates should always be discouraged from writing long lists of school subjects (and then repeating the list with a past or future verb tense).
- Candidates should be encouraged to move towards asking specific questions regarding the job rather than providing general statements such as *'Envoyez-moi des renseignements ...'*
- Candidates should be trained to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written rather than to create new sentences.
- Centres should share with candidates the extended criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories.

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.
- The high level of performance overall at Intermediate 2 level indicates that most centres are making effective use of guidance issued by SQA.
- Further exemplification of the standards to be expected in Writing at Intermediate 2 level has also been issued to accompany the extended pegged mark descriptors.