SQA Higher French External Assessment Report 2014

General comments

- The content of the exam was deemed to be an appropriate level of difficulty.
- On the whole, candidates were well prepared for each component with very few really poor performances.
- Many candidates again found the Listening text the most challenging paper.
- The Mean Marks indicate an improved performance on 2013:

  - Reading/Directed Writing   = 28.3 (45) – up 0.4
  - Listening/Writing   = 16.7 (30) – up 0.6
  - Speaking   = 21.9% (25) – up 0.6

Reading and Directed Writing

- Most candidates succeeded in responding accurately to the reading comprehension questions, in particular questions 1(a) and (b) and 2(a) and (b).
- There was less evidence of marks lost due to 'word for word translation'.
- In some instances poor use of dictionary was evident.
- In Question 2(c) some candidates mistranslated "*il s'est jeté sur un des voleurs, en hurlant…*"
- In Question 3(c) some candidates missed the detail in "on court le risque d'être poursuivi .... on se rend compte"
- In the translation:

  - Sections 1 and 3 proved most challenging.
  - Many candidates continue to lose marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles (*sur le quai* as 'a platform'), verb tenses (including the present tense *on voit/on le sait*).
  - Many candidates translated *arriver* as to arrive, and struggled with *dont la plus âgée*

- The vast majority of candidates managed to address all 6 bullet points of the DW.
- Only the most able were able to really develop the final bullet point '**whether or not you would recommend the area to tourists'**.
- When arriving at the final impression mark, how well or poorly candidates addressed the bullet points was taken into account under the '**content**' comments. Therefore, relatively few candidates were penalised for avoiding a bullet point.
- Some candidates were penalised for failing to address fully both parts of bullet points 1 and 2.

Listening and personal response essay

- Most candidates were able to gain marks in questions 1–4.
- Many candidates struggled with questions 5–7, which required more detailed responses.
- Some candidates failed to recognise

  - Factual information including numbers and time phrases in Question 2(b): *le matin à sept heures /onze heures du soir,* and in Question 6(a): *une demi-heure tous les jours*
  - The verbs exagérer, grignoter, se détendre

Leading on Languages

o   Vocabulary items including la maladie /l'heure du déjeuner / l'ascenseur.

- Many candidates often understood part of the information required by a question but did not retain sufficient details to gain marks e.g. stop smoking/ not drink so much / walk at lunchtime.
- The topic of the personal response essay was accessible to all candidates.
- Candidates seemed well prepared to deal with the first part of the stimulus (Et vous, vous pensez qu'il est important de manger sain et de faire de l'exercice?)
- Many candidates failed to sustain the level of performance when developing the second part of the stimulus (*Vous faites du sport ou vous préférez vous détendre devant la télé ou l'ordinateur*?).
- Many candidates did less well than might have been expected through poor grammatical knowledge of genders and verb tenses, and through poor spelling and lack of accents.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

- Continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and translation of a particular section of text.
- Encourage candidates to attempt the translation after the reading comprehension questions, so that the context in which the translation section is situated is clear.
- Encourage candidates to answer the specific wording of the question, and discourage them from giving a word-for-word translation of the text as a response to the reading comprehension questions.
- Encourage candidates to look closely at each word in each section of the translation passage and to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing

- Encourage candidates to write to the context provided, and to be prepared in some part of their writing to explain the reason for the visit to or from France.
- Advise candidates to consider carefully the wording of each bullet point and to ensure that they incorporate learned material that is relevant and appropriate.
- Advise candidates to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, genders etc.) not to create new sentences.
- Share with candidates the expanded assessment criteria for Writing so that they know what is expected in terms of Content, Accuracy, Range and Variety.

Listening/Writing

- In the Listening Comprehension task encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract from the text.
- Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers.
- Encourage candidates to take great care in rendering numbers, prepositions and question words accurately.
- In the Writing task, ensure candidates read the stimulus carefully and incorporate and adapt learned material that is relevant to aspects contained in the stimulus.