

Summary of SQA Course Reports for National 5 Modern Languages 2018

Reading

Chinese Languages

Most candidates performed competently in the reading paper. However, mistranslation, not reading questions carefully enough and putting answers in the wrong place were factors that contributed to candidates losing marks.

French

Candidates performed well in the reading paper, with very few candidates giving no response to a question. Text 3 proved to be more challenging. There were a few examples of poor expression and mistranslation, but candidates generally gave enough detail to attain the marks available. However, some candidates lost marks by not writing enough details in their answers.

Gaelic (Learners)

Candidate generally performed well in this paper, although some candidates found several of the questions demanding.

German

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading paper, although some candidates did not provide enough detail to access some of the marks. Candidates found question 3 the most challenging, and questions 1 and 2 more straightforward. Some encountered difficulty with the recognition of comparative adjectives; plural forms of the noun and, in some cases, composite nouns. Some did not choose the correct meaning from the dictionary, which distorted their answer. A few candidates did not answer some of the questions.

Italian

Overall this paper was well done, but some candidates had difficulty in identifying the precise details in some of the questions.

Spanish

In reading, most candidates coped well with the three texts. There was little evidence of candidates running out of time or being unable to complete the paper on time. There were few questions with no response. However, a few questions challenged some candidates in terms of the amount of detail required in answers.

Urdu

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. There was a range of performances and some candidates were able to attain very good marks in the paper. There were some 'no responses', but most candidates tried to answer all questions. Some candidates found a few of the questions demanding and failed to provide enough detail in their answers.

Writing

Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional)

Most candidates demonstrated a sufficient command of the language to be able to communicate clearly and quite effectively. Although candidates are able to handle the mandatory bullet points well, in many cases the handling of the unpredictable points, though acceptable, were somewhat less effective.

French

Candidates performed very well in the writing component. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised. Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures. Most candidates had been well prepared for tackling the unpredictable bullets, although in some instances, there were examples of dictionary misuse and learned material used incorrectly.

Gaelic (Learners)

Overall, candidates performed to a good standard in this question paper with some candidates achieving very high marks. The vast majority of candidates dealt well with the four predictable bullet points and some coped very well with the two unpredictable bullet points. A few responses went beyond the level expected at National 5. However, some candidates lost marks for not including detailed and accurate language in the first four bullet points. When addressing the two unpredictable bullet points, some candidates were unable to match the standard achieved when addressing the predictable bullet points. There were some instances of dictionary misuse and mother tongue interference.

German

Overall, candidates performed slightly less well than anticipated in this paper. There was a full range of performances and a good number of candidates were able to achieve a 16 or 20, but fewer candidates than last year achieved top marks.

Most candidates coped relatively well with the first four bullet points and most attempted all six bullet points, but many encountered difficulties in the final two unpredictable bullet points, particularly the last bullet point.

A number of candidates did not always understand what they were writing and made many errors when writing from memory. Some had excellent responses in the first four bullet points and performance then deteriorated significantly in bullet points five and six.

Italian

All candidates attempted this paper and most achieved 12 or more. Many candidates were able to show that they had prepared appropriately for this task by writing sentences with good content, accuracy and language resource — in particular in the first four bullets. In addition, most candidates attempted both unpredictable bullet points.

However, some candidates had difficulty in addressing the two unpredictable bullet points as a result of being unable to manipulate verbs and of inappropriate dictionary use.

Spanish

A large number of candidates addressed all the bullet points fully. Those candidates who used a wide range of vocabulary and structures were awarded 16 or 20. There were many examples of responses demonstrating a good range of accurate, detailed language, which were relevant to the job advertised. Many candidates this year showed a high level of accuracy, in particular in addressing the last two unpredictable bullet points, using a range of language structures and resource to address these points. There were fewer examples than in previous years of candidates including

irrelevant content in their responses, and almost all candidates attempted the last two unpredictable bullet points.

Accuracy is still the main challenge for some candidates, including misuse of the dictionary, other language interference and literal translations of idiomatic phrases.

Urdu

Overall, candidates performed as expected in the writing paper. Many candidates attempted all six bullet points and a large number of candidates achieved 12 or 16 marks. Most candidates coped well with the first four bullet points, demonstrating a good range of vocabulary and structures and some very complex language. Candidates also showed competence in the use of different tenses - present, past and future.

However, some coped less well with the unpredictable bullet points, particularly bullet point six, where performance deteriorated significantly.

Listening

Chinese Languages

Most candidates handled the listening paper well, although some questions proved demanding.

French

The listening paper was relatively accessible to all candidates. There was a good range of marks with some candidates achieving full marks. It was encouraging to see that candidates were generally giving more detail in their answers. However, some candidates are still relying heavily on guess work in answering some of the questions.

Gaelic (Learners)

Candidates performed well in this paper, although some candidates found several of the questions demanding.

German

Most candidates seemed to cope well with the listening overall and both items were generally well attempted. However, some candidates struggled with composite nouns and a number were unable to recognise cognates and near-cognates. Others almost got the correct answer but failed to provide sufficient detail required for the point. A number of candidates had isolated pieces of vocabulary and had then guessed the answer for some questions.

Italian

Overall, this paper performed as intended. The paper was deemed to be fair and appropriately challenging for the level. Some candidates found several of the questions challenging.

Spanish

In listening, most candidates coped well and there were very few no response answers. However, some candidates lost marks by not providing the necessary detail or by mistranslating some words and phrases.

Urdu

Most candidates performed well in this paper and many attempted to give the appropriate level of detail in their answers.

Assignment-Writing

Chinese Languages

There were some excellent pieces of writing, but in some instances the pieces submitted focused on topics which were insufficiently challenging in terms of range of vocabulary, sentence structure and language resource. Poor structure and failure to proofread meant some candidates scored less well.

French

Candidates performed very well in the assignment- writing. Candidates covered a good range of topics and used language appropriate to this level. However, there were instances of dictionary misuse and inaccuracies in spelling, accents and grammatical structures.

Gaelic (Learners)

Candidates generally performed well in this component. There were some excellent responses which went beyond what is required at National 5. Such pieces of writing contained a range of detailed language, expressed opinions and ideas and were very accurate. However, some candidates submitted responses that were not of an appropriate standard. Such responses contained insufficient detailed language, basic sentence structures and a high number of inaccuracies.

German

Candidates generally did well in the assignment- writing and chose a range of topics appropriate to National 5 level. Most candidates were able to write in-depth about their chosen topic, giving opinions and justifying them. However, in some cases the topic chosen (e.g. family) lent itself to basic, repetitive language, and candidates who chose a film study were often unable to cope with the language required to express complex ideas. In some cases, poor handwriting meant that marking was challenging. Some pieces of writing were characterised by poor use of capitals on nouns, verb endings and word order.

Italian

The majority of candidates performed well in this component with most gaining 12/15 and wrote on a good range of topics. Candidates who achieved less than 12 often wrote lists or used basic structures.

Spanish

Candidates generally performed well in the assignment- writing, producing very good pieces of work on a range of topics. Most candidates used detailed and complex language appropriate to National 5. The majority used a range of vocabulary and tenses and gave a wide range of reasons, ideas and opinions. However, some candidates relied on basic verbs and used repetitive language and this detracted from the overall quality of the writing. Some topics, such as family, did not lend themselves to enough variety in language resource.

Urdu

Overall, the standard of the assignment – writing was very good. The vast majority of candidates performed well in this component and wrote on a range of different topics.

Talking

Chinese Languages

The overall standard of candidates' performance was very high and performances sampled were of an appropriate level. Some candidates gave informative presentations and responded well to

questions asked. Pronunciation and intonation was generally good. However, some candidates found responding to unpredictable elements in the conversation challenging.

French

Overall, there were very few poor performances in the performance of talking. Most candidates achieved 8 or 10 in the presentation and 9 or above in the conversation. However very few achieved full marks in this section. Most candidates were awarded 3/5 in the sustaining the conversation section. A very small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen in the presentation section. Many presentations were significantly too long or too short and this affected candidates' performances. Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Other candidates did not perform well because of the choice of topic did not allow them to use language of a level appropriate to National 5.

Gaelic (Learners)

Overall, candidates performed well in the performance of talking. They tended to perform better in the presentation than in the conversation. They were well prepared, displaying a range of vocabulary and tenses, as well as a range of language structures suitable to National 5 level. Those candidates who were the highest achieving tended to cope with the conversation better.

German

Generally speaking, candidates did well in the talking performance. In most cases, candidates performed more confidently in the presentation, with many well-structured and fluent performances. However, some candidates struggled with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen.

In general, candidates performed well in the conversation section and were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic in relation to the presentation context, then moved on to another context in the course of the conversation. Where assessors used a wide variety of questions in the conversation section, this often helped candidates to avoid recycling the same language and structures from their presentations into their conversations. A few performances were too long or too short and this affected candidates' performance.

Italian

Most candidates were able to demonstrate the use of detailed language and a wide range of verb forms and language structures. They responded effectively to a supportive interlocutor.

Spanish

The overall quality of candidate performance was high. Candidates performed very well in the presentation section and the majority of candidates were awarded 8 or 10. In the conversation section, most achieved 12 or 15 marks. Most candidates sustained the conversation well and were awarded 3 or 5 marks. Some candidates found the conversation section more demanding as it is less predictable.

Urdu

Overall, candidates performed very well and secured high marks for the performance of talking. Candidates performed very well in the presentation, often better or much better than in the conversation. Some candidates used language and structures going beyond the demand at the level. Pronunciation was overall better in the presentation than in the conversation. However, some assessors asked questions on more than two topics that resulted in the candidates not being able to use the detailed and complex language required at this level. Some performances were either too short or too long.

Advice to Centres

General

- Candidates should ensure that their handwriting is legible.

Reading

- Candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question, and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. They should be discouraged from giving extra information as this could negate any correct information and could be penalised. It is important to note that it is rare for a single-word answer to be sufficient detail at National 5 level.
- Centres should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of verb conjugations, adjective endings and the comparative in French and compound nouns in German.
- Candidates should also be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first word given. They should be aware of common 'false friends' and should check these carefully in the dictionary.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and underline the key word or words in the question, which will lead them to the answer in the text.
- Candidates should ensure that their response answers the question asked
- Candidates should be reminded that the information comes in chronological order and the questions include hooks to support them throughout the text.
- Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English.

Writing

- Centres should make it clear to candidates that there is now no requirement for them to use the formal beginning and endings as was required in the past.
- Centres should ensure that candidates read the information carefully regarding the job for which they are applying and address this appropriately. They should avoid giving information that is not relevant to the job application
- Candidates should leave time to read through their writing to ensure they have addressed all 6 bullet points
- Candidates should check to see if they have addressed the unpredictable bullet points in the predictable bullet points in order to avoid repetition
- Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the two unpredictable bullet points.
- Candidates should have the opportunity to practice a range of unpredictable bullet points
- Centres should develop ways of addressing the first four bullet points which allow candidates to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs and tenses.
- Candidates should be encouraged to ask questions regarding the job as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points
- Candidates should be advised to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, accents, genders etc) but **not** to create new sentences, as this often leads to many inaccuracies and sentences which are incomprehensible.
- Candidates should be made aware of the 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.

Listening

- Candidates should be encouraged to read the introduction to the listening texts so that they are aware of the content
- Candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood, but should be discouraged from giving extra information as this could negate any correct information and could be penalised.
- Candidates should be discouraged from providing a range of alternative answers
- Centres should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of basic vocabulary from the four contexts, particularly numbers, seasons, months, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions carefully and underline key words so they can pick out the information required more easily. More practice on notetaking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.
- Candidates should check over their answers to make sure what they have written makes sense
- Candidates should be encouraged to make use of the third playing to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Assignment - Writing

- Candidates should be made aware of the marking criteria so they know what is expected of them in the assignment–writing
- Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be more ambitious with their topic selection and advise candidates to choose a specific focus - one that is neither too broad nor too narrow.
- Candidates should be discouraged from writing about a range of topics or including information that is not relevant to the topic
- Candidates should be encouraged to write independently and avoid relying too much on direction from teachers
- Candidates should be advised to pay attention to planning and structuring their writing
- Centres are advised to ensure that the assignment–writing is based on the contexts of society, learning or culture and that the correct box is ticked on the writing answer booklet.
- Centres should be encouraged to provide a more detailed title rather than just a generic one.
- Centres should encourage candidates to choose an appropriate topic and include more detailed language and grammatical structures appropriate to National 5.
- Centres should be encouraged to use a writing improvement code when providing feedback of the first draft to allow candidates to identify errors and correct their own work.
- Candidates should be advised to select a topic which allows them to demonstrate a range of detailed language appropriate to National 5.
- Candidates should avoid writing responses which contain long lists as this limits opportunities to demonstrate their full range of skills.
- Candidates should not apply the same language and vocabulary in both the assignment– writing and the writing question paper. They should not be writing about the same topic in both assessments.
- Candidates should be encouraged to show an awareness of a range of verbs tenses; connectives; more complex adjectives; adjective modifiers; gender; cases, where appropriate; comparatives; plurals and past participles
- Candidates should also be encouraged to structure their texts with a clear introduction and conclusion, and use conjunctions and linking phrases to structure their writing. They should also avoid lists and repetitive language
- Candidates should also be discouraged from choosing a topic that is beyond their linguistic capabilities

Talking

- Candidates should be reminded that they need to cover two contexts in the performance of talking
- Centres should encourage candidates to use a range of contexts or topics to encourage more personalisation and choice
- Centres should ensure that the conversation section lasts long enough to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to cope with the demands of the performance at National 5 level.
- Centres are encouraged to continue to include grammar practice and coverage of the rules of the language as an integral part of learning and teaching. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use a variety of persons and tenses, where appropriate.
- Centres are encouraged to ensure candidates can be understood by speakers of the language, who are not familiar with what the candidates have studied. Having performances verified by another assessor or another centre is regarded as good practice
- Assessors should ask questions, which follow on naturally from the presentation. They should avoid asking questions which lead to candidates merely repeating parts of the conversation.
- Candidates should be reminded to use detailed language as failure to do so prevents candidates from accessing the upper pegged marks.
- Centres are encouraged to ensure candidates have a variety of strategies for asking for questions to be repeated when they have not understood any aspect of the conversation.
- Centres are encouraged to prepare candidates to use relevant interjections, ask relevant questions and use idiomatic phrases in order to sustain the conversation.
- Assessors should continue to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic when the candidate does not understand. They should give candidates the appropriate response or thinking time before doing this.
- Centres are encouraged to continue to put open-ended questions to candidates to prevent candidates making mini presentations
- Centres are also encouraged to ask a variety of questions, even where the same or similar topics have been selected by candidates from within the same centre.