

French (continuers)

2011 Assessment Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

FRENCH (CONTINUERS)

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment 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

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Many interesting and creative tasks were set, which allowed students to demonstrate evidence of performance at high levels and whose task design clearly reflected the criteria described in the performance standards.

Text analysis tasks, such as listening and responding or reading and responding tasks, were those that least often conformed to the new requirements. Few such tasks allowed students the opportunity to reflect or analyse the language used in the texts presented. Tasks that clearly identified the performance standards that were being addressed in the task, or even in each question, assisted the moderation process. Text analysis tasks that allowed students to demonstrate learning at the highest level included, as an example, two or more linked texts that students were able to compare, analyse, and interpret. Past examination papers are suitable tasks if adapted to reflect the current assessment design criteria and performance standards.

In text production, tasks that were more appropriate to the students' age and experience offered students more opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic strengths. Letters of application for advertised positions were rarely handled well as some of these tasks lacked authenticity for this age group. Students found it difficult to maintain an appropriate tone and include only relevant material. Tasks that students handled well were often based on films or literary extracts.

The accuracy of the language in stimulus texts should be checked carefully to ensure that students are not exposed to incorrect structures/spelling.

In oral tasks, it is important to adhere to time limits as students may be penalised if they breach the requirements given in the subject outline.

In an interaction, it is useful to consider who will be the interlocutor. For example, another student may not provide sufficient familiarity with the language to guide the student and to react appropriately to the information offered. It was clear that most students knew beforehand what questions to expect in the interaction assessment. The most successful interactions were those where the questions were open-ended so that conversation did not always move from one prepared answer to the next;

rather, they allowed for spontaneity in responses. Students should be encouraged not to rely on notes when participating in an interaction.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Moderators commented on the range and diversity of the topics presented, and were particularly impressed by topics that allowed for interpretation, reflection, and the development of considered opinions.

There are three compulsory components of the in-depth study: the oral presentation, a written response to the topic in French, and a reflective response in English. Evidence for all of these components must be supplied in the moderation sample. Each of these three compulsory components must adhere to the word count and time limit prescribed. It is not necessary, however, for students to answer questions at the end of their oral presentation as they engage in a discussion of their chosen topic in the external oral examination.

Video recordings of oral presentations were a welcome addition to the samples and made it clear how much effort many students had gone to in preparing their presentations.

The best examples of the reflective response in English were those that contained interpretation, analysis, and reference to the students' own values, ideas, practices, and beliefs. In this task, students need to be discouraged from simply recounting their research process if they wish to achieve at the higher levels. Topics that allowed for profound reflection included: *Le velodrome d'hiver* (with a connection to the Australian denial of the Stolen Generation), *La nouvelle vague* (linked to post-war values and the importance of being true to a personal vision), and Charles Perrault and the continuing social and moral significance of fairy tales.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

The vast majority of students scored a B– or better for the conversation and the discussion, with 10% of students achieving full marks for the conversation and 13% of students achieving perfect scores for the discussion. There was a very high proportion of As for the discussion, indicating that most students had prepared very well for this section. Conversely, there were also more C+ and lower for the discussion than for the conversation.

Section 1: Conversation

In general, students handled the straightforward questions quite well. They did have some difficulty if a question was asked for which they had done no preparation. Some students were able to maintain a very natural conversation while others were stilted and gave very short answers.

Although there was a wide range of ability, overall performance in this section of the examination was higher than in past years. Many students were able to correct themselves and were able to use alternative words and/or expressions. The most

impressive responses were those with an extensive range of tenses, vocabulary, idioms, colloquial expressions, and self-corrections, which made the students appear confident and created a genuine, authentic conversation.

There was evidence of rote learning with some students; also evident with some students, was unease once they were led into unfamiliar, extended conversation. In general, all students were able to converse comfortably about their personal world. Better responses went beyond merely listing events, ideas, or situations, and explored some aspects in more depth. Comments on feelings about situations added greater depth to some responses. This distinguished the relative abilities of the students.

Many students were not able to talk at sufficient depth or support their opinions. For example, a student having said that the study of French appealed because of the culture was able to mention only '*pains au chocolat*' to explain which aspects of the culture were of interest.

Few students brought photographs or other support objects, and their preparedness to discuss them often did not extend beyond easily anticipated questions.

The most common pronunciation errors with even the stronger responses were -tion (e.g. *attention*, *éducation*), and the 'p' in words such as *beaucoup* and *sept*. Weaker responses included recurrent incorrect pronunciation and there were some students whose pronunciation was very Anglicised. Tenses were not always used correctly, especially *passé composé* and *imparfait* and some irregular present-tense verbs were incorrect.

Common errors were *j'étude*, *beaucoup des*, *j'étude français*, *sur le weekend*. The most common Anglicisms were *especielllement*, *assister*, *les sujets* (for school subjects), *la voiture à moi*, *il est neuf ans*, and misuse of *depuis*, *pour*, and *pendant*. Prepositions were added when not necessary; for example, *j'espère de*.

Vocabulary: *la loi* was misused for *le droit*; and a number of students used *comment dit-on* too frequently and often for vocabulary that was quite basic.

Section 2: Discussion

Some excellent research was done where students really considered the influence of the topic of their in-depth study on French culture and/or the development of French values.

However, for many students, this could not be termed an 'in-depth' discussion. Often it appeared to be a regurgitation of learned facts taken from their oral presentation in the school assessment. It was difficult to get students to reflect or have clear opinions about their topic; sometimes this was because of the rather limiting topic, for example, a famous person or a sport.

There were few topics that involved exploring an issue or event; this resulted in many answers being simply factual rather than considered responses demonstrating depth of thought or reflection.

Most students understood the need to develop their responses as fully as possible, but some topics chosen for the in-depth study made it difficult for students to go beyond the questions that they had prepared. Consequently, they misunderstood what was asked of them when they were asked questions requiring reflection. The

most able students could express their personal opinions or observations in reference to their in-depth study.

Some students used support materials (photos, visual evidence, etc.), but not all used these to full advantage. Some students were able to explore certain aspects of their topic using supporting photographs, which gave them an advantage as they were able to lead the discussion.

Many students had found information only on the Internet and were not able to recall using books or articles, etc. There did not seem to be a great variety of sources consulted. Students who had interviewed people, or had access to authentic texts or video footage, were often able to bring a more immediate, relevant perspective to their discussion.

Some students did not know vocabulary like *recherche*, *enquête approfondie* or terms that were central to their study.

Students from some schools did not seem to have been given any guidance regarding appropriate use of the 'In-depth Study Outline for Oral Examination' form, and were thus disadvantaged because they did not know what to write, or presented the wrong form to the examiners. Information about this was in the learning area manual and is now available on the subject pages of the SACE website.

Written Examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Q. 1: Students found this the most difficult of the four texts as they were unable to distinguish who the speakers were. Thinking that the discussion was between Lea, her mother, and her grandfather led to some confusion in answering question 1 (b). Too few students realised that *devait* is in the imperfect tense and therefore refers to what used to happen when grandmother and grandfather were younger. Therefore many students thought that Lea was being told to walk to school in the rain and snow.

Q. 2 (a): This question was very well answered, but most students did not fill in the CV as a CV, writing full-sentence answers instead of summarising relevant facts. A number of students misinterpreted Chloe's availability and previous work experience.

Q. 2 (b): Opinions as to whether Chloe would get the job varied, but the range of opinions were well-supported with specific reference to the text.

Q. 3: Students found this text very accessible.

Q. 3 (a): Quite well-answered, but many students gave only half of the advice, which was to go out a lot and not be shy. There were those who heard *sautez beaucoup* instead of *sortez beaucoup* and came up with some quite interesting advice!

Q. 3 (b): The stronger responses were those where students chose one star sign and provided detailed evidence from the text. Those who discussed more than one star sign rarely provided enough evidence as a result of misunderstanding the question rather than the text. A number of students interpreted *un ami d'enfance* as 'a friend from France'.

Q. 3 (c): Too many students responded to the question, 'Are planets significant?' rather than 'How significant are planets?'. This led to responses that were not sufficiently analytical in the choice of supporting evidence and therefore did not achieve the highest possible score.

Q. 4 (a): Generally students provided insufficient evidence; nearly all of the responses included *music* and *dancing*, but few mentioned *parades*. Some responses suggested that all of the festivals were religious.

Q. 4 (b): Some students were very thorough, but most generalised their answer dealing with the festivals as a group rather than providing specific evidence as to how *each* festival had changed since its origin. To answer this question fully both the origin of the festival and its present day practices needed to be mentioned. Again, understanding precisely what the question required was more of an issue than understanding the text.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Part A

This section of the examination was the best-handled by the students, with half of the students achieving very highly.

Answers dealing with Text 5 were, on the whole, very good indeed. The students who scored poorly usually gave generalised answers without providing specific evidence from the text. In question 5 (a) comments like 'She writes in it as she would speak to a dear friend' could refer to any diary written by anyone. For responses to this question to attract high marks, the answer needed to be expanded with references to the relevant words and phrases actually used in the text.

Often the same examples were used to support responses to question 5 (b) as were used to respond to question 5 (a). It is rare that the answers to two different examination questions would require the same information or evidence. The majority of students identified the exclamation marks and questions as specific stylistic features and were able to support their opinion as to Marie's state of mind. However, the words 'specific vocabulary' in the question meant that responses should refer to more than one word for sufficient evidence.

Most students gave very good answers to question 5 (c), providing detailed explanations of Marie's attitude and appropriate evidence from the text to support their answers. Those who misunderstood *je crois* to mean 'I grow' and *cours* as 'courtyard' were less able to provide relevant evidence.

Students found Text 6 more challenging as it required more analysis and interpretation and students tended to translate, without pointing out the significance of what they had clearly understood. Some students thought that the text referred to young people doing work experience, which limited their ability to supply information that was relevant.

Question 6 (b) was the most challenging; the best responses included reference to the title of the article as well as the final paragraph.

Question 6 (c) was often answered by simple translation without any reference to the linguistic features used (negative expressions, emotive language) and only the best

responses referred both to tone and linguistic features. As in section 1, students must answer all aspects of the question, in good, clear English.

Part B

This was the section of the examination in which students recorded the lowest average mark, with only 15% achieving an A grade and 30% scoring D+ or lower.

As well as demonstrating good control of the language using a wide range of vocabulary and structures, it is necessary in this section to ensure that responses are relevant (clearly responding to the majority of cues in the stimulus text), coherent (well-organised and appropriate for the text type), and make sense in the context.

The response letter needed to take into account the following aspects of the original letter: date, place from which it was written, the fact that the writer was lamenting the loss of her/his Paris lifestyle to a friend who was close enough to have been spoken to about the proposed move.

A number of students wrote their reply from Australia or Saint-Jean-aux-Bois and took advantage of one of the cues in the letter to write out memorised, largely irrelevant, passages. The main issue of S's unhappiness with the move was ignored in order to include a lengthy recount of what was happening in the life of the recipient or a beautiful description of a country landscape or life in rural Australia.

Relevance and depth of ideas are considered along with linguistic competence so even excellent French will not receive a high score if the connections to the stimulus text are tenuous.

Too much reliance on rehearsed patterns or memorised expressions needs to be discouraged. Students should be encouraged to develop a fluent style that incorporates sophisticated structures naturally, rather than memorising particular sentences that they are then determined to include, whether appropriate to the context or not. Some use of vocabulary and expressions from the stimulus text is acceptable; however, these should then be spelt correctly.

Most students used the correct form of address (*tu*) but many were unable to spell the corresponding verb form correctly. Areas of grammar that need attention include: object and reflexive pronouns, negative expressions, how to use *tout* and its variants, and the different functions of the imperfect, conditional, and future tenses. Common errors were confusing *mieux* with *meilleur* and *mois* with *moins*; using *place* to mean *endroit* and not using the correct prepositions after *jouer*, *pas*, and *beaucoup*.

The best responses referred to the majority of the cues in the stimulus text providing encouragement or advice relevant to the context and making only a brief reference to whether or not the writer's life had changed. These responses were well-organised, not necessarily responding to the stimulus cues in the order they appeared in the original letter, and flowed naturally in a tone appropriate for a friendly exchange of ideas, even sometimes being critical of S's complaints. A good range of structures was used with some excellent control of sophisticated grammar (subjunctives, *si* clauses, relative pronouns) demonstrated.

Section 3: Writing in French

Slightly more than half the students chose question 9, a large number answered question 10, and very few selected question 8.

An improvement on previous years was that the vast majority of students met the required word count with most students producing comprehensible responses with a pleasing level of accuracy. Despite some use of *franglais* in the weaker responses, students seemed well-prepared with a good range of vocabulary, a variety of sophisticated sentence openings, and usually successful incorporation of the subjunctive.

A concern is in the use of verbs and tenses. There were widespread difficulties with time frames and the sequencing of events as the tenses used were often not appropriate, resulting in a lack of logic. Conjugation of verbs was erratic and use of following prepositions and infinitives was not well-handled.

Syntax was a problem for many students who were unsure of the position of adjectives, adverbs, negatives, and pronouns. Confusions between *ont* and *sont*, *et* and *est*, *c'est* and *cet*, *fois* and *temps*, *mal* and *mauvais*, *bon* and *bien*, *dire* and *parler* need to be resolved. Practice of the correct usage of the basic relative pronouns *qui*, *que*, *dont*, and *où* would assist students to link their ideas effectively.

As in section 2, part B, students need to be discouraged from inserting rehearsed sentences whether relevant or not. On a larger scale, some of the responses to question 9 seemed to have been written before for another purpose and then simply had the required ending tacked on.

Q. 8: Many students ignored the conventions of writing an article (such as title, by-line, introduction, paragraphs or sub-headings, conclusion) and register and tone were sometimes too informal. Responses often did not go beyond the issue of physical appearance.

Q. 9: Students often had difficulty in creating a convincing link between their 'story' and the final line *mais je suis sûr(e) que cette expérience m'aidera à mieux réussir dans mes études*. Many failed to note the implication of a negative experience in the word *mais*. Too many of these responses were not in fact a story, but a personal recount of an exchange in France or other personal experience. A story is enhanced by a title and a touch of imagination.

Q. 10: All students managed to include relevant arguments with supporting examples and details. Few students went beyond citing the ease and low cost of contact with friends as the advantages, and dangers and distraction as disadvantages. The better answers dealt with social costs and benefits, use in emergencies, use in developing countries etc., and broadened the scope of the debate. There were some students who did not use the conventions appropriate to a speech (salutations at beginning and end, direct appeals to the audience, clear indication of the content of the speech, and a summary of the argument).

It is important that the criteria of depth and relevance be addressed in this section (and others) of the examination and adherence to the requirements of the text type indicated is critical.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

A copy of the approved learning and assessment plan is an important tool for the moderators in matching the tasks presented to the subject outline requirements and determining which performance standards were being assessed in which task. It is

especially useful to have the addendum attached so that any changes to tasks are clear to the moderators.

Teachers are reminded to rank the students in their class carefully, ensuring, for example, that all students given an A– demonstrate achievement at this level according to the performance standards. This is especially important for moderation groups that contain work from two or more schools, as an underlying assumption for moderation is that there has been a consistent interpretation and application for all responses with the same grade level.

Further to the details for preparing moderation packages that can be found on the subject pages of the SACE website, the following proved useful to the moderation panel:

- A school assessment cover sheet per student summarising the tasks set, grades allocated, and any special provisions or departures from the learning and assessment plan for that student; or confirming that a student had not submitted a task.
- Although electronic files can be submitted as either one per student or one for multiple students, a single CD per student containing all folio and in-depth study interactions, clearly labelled with the student number and the title of each task was most accessible for the moderation panel. Please note: The sound or video recording must be in a format that can be read on a computer and the quality of the recording should be checked before it is included in the sample.
- CDs/DVDs with separate, clearly labelled tracks for each task. A single track, recording all students in the one track, hampers the moderators' ability to locate and moderate individual student work.
- In addition to the task sheet for every folio and in-depth study task, and the students' responses, the marking scheme or rubric was useful in the moderation process; for example, the performance standards with the student's performance against each relevant descriptor clearly highlighted, circled or underlined, and the grade allocated.
- Clear identification of the task requirements — the title, text type, context, purpose, and audience — for each of the folio and in-depth study responses (usually indicated on the task sheet).
- A copy of the text(s), questions, and answer key(s) for the text analysis task(s).
- Transcripts for any listening and responding tasks.

It is up to each teacher to decide how much support is allowed for each student in all tasks. However, in a true interaction one does not read from a script or frequently refer to lengthy notes. It is important to ensure that all recordings are done in an environment free from distraction and extraneous noise.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the performance of this cohort in both the school assessment and external assessment components was very pleasing, with a large percentage achieving at a high level after the two components were combined. The fact that school assessment is now worth 70% of the final grade needs to be kept firmly in mind, especially in designing the tasks for the folio and guiding the students towards wise choices for their in-depth study. Students still need to be given enough practice without supports to cope confidently with the external examination, especially the oral examination.

Students are more likely to achieve at the highest level of which they are capable if they:

- understand and can apply the different text type requirements
 - are able to interpret precisely what a question is asking them to do
 - remember that the relevance and depth of a response are just as important as the quality of the French.
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French (continuers)