

French (continuers)

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

FRENCH CONTINUERS

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' 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

The school assessment for French comprises a folio of 3–5 tasks and an in-depth study as outlined in the learning and assessment plan. When designing the course, teachers are reminded that it must meet all assessment design criteria and that the criteria must be evident in the tasks submitted in the folio. The learning and assessment plan is referenced during the moderation process and directs what evidence is looked for because it contains the assessment design criteria nominated by the teacher. During the year, changes may be made and these must be specified on the addendum to the plan and included in the moderation package.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

The majority of students submitted folios that met all curriculum requirements and demonstrated achievement across all assessment task types.

Most teachers included annotated performance standards in the folios and these were very useful to moderators in supporting the marks given to each task. It was clear that the performance standards were closely considered in the design of most assessment tasks and this enabled students to provide evidence of achievement at the highest level. It is recommended that the current performance standards, in an easy-to-follow format, be attached to each task.

It is not good practice for teachers to convert numerical scores into a grade because this does not reflect a judgment made against the performance standards. All assessment must be made in direct reference to the performance standards.

A range of excellent tasks was evident in many folios across all three compulsory assessment types (interaction, text analysis, and text production). When creating a text analysis task, teachers need to ensure that the text encourages students to analyse the language, style, tone, and cultural features. Questions should be open-ended and allow for analysis and reflection, as well as encouraging students to draw links between the texts and the student's own values and beliefs. Answering questions in French is permitted, but this limits the student's ability to demonstrate analysis and reflection.

If local examination papers prior to 2011 or interstate/international past examinations are used as tasks, it is essential to ensure that the texts and questions allow students to meet all aspects of the interpretation and reflection performance standards.

The precise topic, context, purpose, audience, and text type must be indicated clearly on each task for each student, particularly for the written response in French. If the task is a response to a stimulus text, teachers are asked to provide the stimulus text in the package (for example, the listening analysis script or response to a letter or article).

In interaction tasks, students are allowed to refer to cue cards or know the questions in advance. However, this can sometimes prevent students from performing at the highest level, because they are expected to be spontaneous and react naturally to the interlocutor's questions and comments. Similarly, oral presentations followed by questions should allow the student to demonstrate the capacity to interact and develop responses within the time limit.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

The majority of students submitted in-depth studies that met all curriculum requirements and were able to demonstrate achievement across all assessment task types. Many topics were interesting and considered from a variety of perspectives. However, there were a small number of in-depth studies that focused on topics that were very broad and/or not specific to French or Francophone culture. Topics relating to youth issues (anorexia, teenage suicide, drug addiction) are discouraged as they are very broad and do not allow the students to study an aspect in depth or discuss the topic in depth.

If such topics are chosen they must relate to the issue in France or a French-speaking country and could perhaps focus on support mechanisms in place. Discussion of such issues from a personal perspective can be very confronting for all involved. At the other extreme, some superficial topics such as cheese, a region, or a famous historical figure give students very little scope for formulating opinions and engaging in critical reflection. The in-depth study provides the most significant opportunity for students to address the 'reflection' performance standards, both in their discussion and their written reflection; consequently, the topic chosen is crucial if students are to perform at the highest level.

Oral presentations give students the opportunity to engage their audience and many students support their presentation with sound or video clips. It is recommended that these support materials be presented either at the beginning or end of the presentation so that the timing of the student's speech can be clearly defined and identified. The timing of the student's words alone should be 3–5 minutes. If clips or music are included in the body of the presentation, this may cause the student to exceed the allocated time limit. Teachers are reminded that students are not required to answer questions at the end of their oral presentation; they answer questions in relation to their in-depth study during the discussion section of the oral examination.

It was noted that this year some students presented exactly the same content for both the written and the oral task of their in-depth study. Each task must differ in context, purpose, audience, and text type. There can be some overlap in content but each task should be approached from a different perspective. It is recommended that

students indicate the nature and details of each task, either as a cover sheet or on a summary sheet that outlines all tasks covered.

Teachers are encouraged to guide students in mapping out their responses for the in-depth study; this ensures that each of the components is considered. Teachers can also refer to the SACE website which offers support materials to aid in the planning and assessment of all tasks.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

Conversation

Most students were well-prepared for the conversation and were able to respond appropriately. A minority of students needed to have the questions repeated or did not understand basic vocabulary (*habiter, école*). All students are encouraged to elaborate their answers and to demonstrate some interest in the topics; the best students were spontaneous and gave details to expand on the topic without being prompted.

All students were able to give relevant answers, but there was a great range in the amount of depth and elaboration provided. It is important for the content of responses to be detailed and varied, with opinions being supported or justified.

Stronger responses used a range of linguistic structures and vocabulary appropriately and had accurate pronunciation with a good degree of fluency. Other students made basic grammatical errors and struggled with the correct use of tenses. Pronunciation for many students was an issue and the influence of English was evident. Many students self-corrected and used appropriate communication strategies to ask for repetition and clarification.

Students should be encouraged to maintain a conversation rather than simply respond briefly to a question and wait for the next one. This section of the examination is about their life and interests which should allow them to speak knowledgeably and at length.

Discussion

Some students chose topics that could not be discussed in much depth or detail and the dot points they provided on the summary sheet did not allow for extended discussion. Teachers are encouraged to look at their students' summary sheets and ensure that students are able to speak for at least one minute about each dot point. They should not simply memorise the material, but be able to explain what they know and show that they have thought about the topic.

Those students who had brought support materials (photographs, pictures, poster) were able to talk more naturally and easily when able to refer to them. Having an illustration or object to focus on may be helpful for some students but this should only be to support the discussion and not used as the main focus.

A number of students performed better in the discussion section of this examination than in the conversation as they were truly inspired by the topic they had chosen. These students also showed an ability to reflect on their topic.

Using a number of texts, and not just internet sites, enabled students to obtain a wider perspective of their topic and, therefore, to reach a better understanding of it. Students should be able to state clearly what they have learned as a result of undertaking their in-depth study.

There was some reliance on rehearsed language and memorised information which prevented students from being able to respond effectively to unexpected questions.

On the whole, students performed well in the oral examination, but some could work on pronunciation and make the effort to speak and listen to French more often so that they do not rely on pre-rehearsed answers to the questions they are anticipating.

Written Examination

Listening and Responding

In this section, students need to be sure that their English clearly expresses the meaning they are trying to convey. Merely translating the relevant aspects of the text will not necessarily answer the question when there is some analysis or the drawing of a conclusion required.

Question 1a: All students answered this correctly.

Question 1b: Very few students scored full marks for this question as they did not focus on the *values* being promoted; 'delicious food', and 'not too much fat, salt or sugar', are not values. One of the best answers specified: 'They are promoting good, healthy food as they value good health. They also promote classic, authentic food which shows they value their culture. They also promote impeccable service which shows that they value their customers'.

The average score for Question 1 was 76%.

Question 2: Some students totally misunderstood this text or only partially understood it. Most students scored two points as they were able to give an opinion and provide some facts from the text. The best answers made *specific* reference to the text, quoting those points which supported their point of view.

The average score for Question 2 was 69%.

Question 3a: This was the text that the students found most challenging. Many, misinterpreting the significance of the sound effect, thought that the conversation was taking place in an elevator.

Question 3b: A number of students were unfamiliar with the term 'vicious circle' and so struggled to answer this question, although the situation was clearly described. Some students confused the words '*magasin*' and '*magazine*' and so completely misunderstood the text.

Question 3c: Many students struggled to answer this question correctly. It was important to both compare (state what is the same) and contrast (state what is

different) the situations of the two speakers. The best responses were organised into two columns under the headings 'same' and 'different'. The majority of the information was in the 'different' column.

The average score for Question 3 was 66%.

Question 4a: This was the question that students answered most successfully, with 81 students losing only one mark or less.

Question 4b was also handled well by the majority of students.

Question 4c: The answers to this question were generally very good, but the points that should have been made were 'positive adjectives' (many examples of these), 'phenomenal success *as usual*', urges listeners to 'buy or reserve tickets *at once*'. Very few students mentioned the fact that the whole interview in itself was an indication of the interviewer valuing the festival.

The average score for Question 4 was 81%.

Reading and Responding A

It is as important that students express themselves clearly in this section of the examination as in the Listening and Responding section. Poor English expression, spelling errors, and badly structured answers make it difficult for markers to gauge the student's level of understanding.

Students should also be discouraged from referring to information that is not within the text box. Some students were misled by the titles of the source material cited underneath the box.

Question 5 was much better handled by most students than Question 6. Most students coped reasonably well with the content but too many students gave insufficient detail in their answers. The *vous* was misinterpreted as formal *vous* rather than the plural. The general purpose of the text was identified.

Both Questions 5a and 5b were answered reasonably competently.

For Question 5b, students were able to identify rhetorical questions, imperatives, and statistical evidence. There were not many comments made on specific vocabulary however and only the best students recognised the significance of the *nous* form of the imperative as a means of including the audience in the author's argument and therefore being an effective persuasive technique.

This question refers to the 'listeners'; as a consequence, referring to punctuation as a technique is not relevant other than stating that the exclamation marks indicate that the speaker is speaking passionately or urgently. Many students referred to 'emotive language' without providing specific examples. The language features must be identified; translation of the content does not answer the question. Not all students gave four specific examples as required by the question.

The average score for Question 5 was 85%.

Question 6a: Students had to focus on the *evidence* given in the text and to distinguish this from the opinions given; both 'extreme' and 'unseasonal' needed to

be addressed. Those students who thought that *printemps* was autumn were disadvantaged here.

Question 6b: This was the most challenging question and received quite polarised answers. Students were able to argue either that the article was balanced and impartial, or that it was biased and pro the climate change believers. Both answers were acceptable: the important thing was to support their point of view with evidence drawn from the text. A number of students tackled the question of structure very well and justified their opinion effectively. Some students were clearly unsure of the meaning of 'impartial'. It was in this question that students needed to refer to the opinions stated and to refer *specifically* to both the language and the structure of the text.

The average score for Question 6 was 65%.

Reading and Responding B

The average score for Reading and Responding B was 68%.

Ideas – Relevance:

Most students scored well under this criterion; they understood the thrust of the original text and were able to find much of relevance to say in response. Three main issues needed to be addressed: disappearing traditions, the importance of family, and the impact of technology. The matter of disappearing traditions was least well-handled because many students saw this as a question of traditions of family practice, whereas local cultural traditions and events could have been mentioned.

Ideas – Depth:

There was a wide variation in the quality of answers as the number of students who really engaged with the topic and task was quite small. A surprisingly large number of students did not write enough and failed — at times by a large margin — to reach 200 words. In those circumstances, it is almost impossible to write with the depth of ideas required at Stage 2 level.

It was possible either to agree or disagree with the article, but there were not many students who elaborated opinions at a sophisticated level or supported their arguments in an original and creative way. Overall, responses were generally convincing and provided evidence of the students' ability to understand the source text and respond to it in a meaningful and, usually, coherent way.

Expression – Accuracy and Appropriateness:

The standard of written French was disappointing. At times, the level of French within one response could vary quite markedly: impressive phrases would be followed by basic verbs not conjugated correctly in the present tense or by a whole series of errors in basic agreement. Often the errors in French made it difficult to appreciate precisely what the student was trying to say.

The matter of appropriateness was perhaps not appreciated by many students, who were content just to make their points without caring about the language used to do it. The response needed to be in the form of a letter to the editor; therefore, the tone had to be more formal than informal.

Expression – Coherence in Structure/Sequence and Use of Text Type Conventions:

In general, most of the responses were coherent and made sense. Almost all began with a sentence in which reference was made to the stimulus article, followed by some indication of the viewpoint of the correspondent. This made the marker's task in following the subsequent argument much easier, as well as helping students to frame their response in a relevant way.

The structure of the original article helped students to shape their response. Most students were aware of the need to organise their ideas into paragraphs, but there were still some who failed to do this.

There was great variation in students' ability to observe the conventions of the text type. Very few answers had the tone and style of a genuine letter to the editor. While non-compliance with text type requirements is not the most important part of a response, it is taken into account by the markers, so teachers and students need to be aware of this when preparing for the examination.

Writing in French

16 students chose Question 8, 59 chose Question 9, and 27 chose Question 10.

Most students wrote the required number of words; only 4 failed to meet this requirement.

Students who achieved at the higher grade levels produced very relevant, interesting texts and displayed much creativity and depth, engaging the audience, elaborating their arguments, and supporting them with authentic examples. The students who scored a lower grade had difficulty with the application of grammatical rules.

Ideas – Relevance:

In Question 10, many students' responses displayed a very good use of details and opinions. This was less effective in Question 9 and even less so in Question 8.

Ideas – Depth:

While the most successful students showed much depth in their writing, others lacked details and variation. While creating some interest, they failed to deliver the necessary impact. Some responses were only partially relevant to the topic, especially in Question 8.

The best responses came from Question 10.

Expression – Accuracy and Appropriateness:

In Question 10, especially, students used a vast range of complex linguistic items, along with high accuracy and strong cohesion. This was less noticeable in the responses to Question 9 and hardly displayed at all in Question 8.

Some students relied on limited cohesive devices in their sentences and expression was appropriate for two-thirds of the students; however, many used rehearsed patterns, which did not really convey adequate meaning.

Expression – Coherence in Structure and Sequence and Use of Text Type Conventions:

As in the Reading and Responding B section of the examination, some students inserted some learned sentences (on a few occasions, even paragraphs) which may or may not have helped to elaborate their ideas. Often, this technique distracts the reader as the tone and style change and the learned text is not necessarily relevant to the topic of the examination question. Only one student failed to use the correct text type.

Too many students relied very heavily on the dictionary, resulting in the misuse of pronouns and verbs with a number of Anglicisms, particularly in word order (for example, *pour une épaule pleurer sur, jouer — jouereuse, je le veux être une surprise*).

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers are asked to ensure that recordings of student work are submitted in a compatible format and that they are recorded clearly. It is also recommended that teachers identify each students on the disc and on the file, either by name or SACE number. Material on mini-discs cannot be accessed and CDs or USBs are the preferred recording medium.

On the whole, this year the packaging and identification of materials was the best it has been so far.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Although this year's cohort was small the standard was exceptionally high. Clearly teachers are using good practice to prepare their students for the examination and we hope that this continues.

French (continuers)
Chief Assessor