

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2012 Assessment Report

French Level 1

- 90878 Demonstrate understanding of a variety of spoken French texts on areas of most immediate relevance**
- 90881 Demonstrate understanding of a variety of French texts on areas of most immediate relevance**

COMMENTARY

The 2012 French external examinations provided students with a fair assessment of the French language at Levels 5 and 6 of the Curriculum. The two standards examined covered a wide range of text types and contexts, vocabulary and language structures and provided candidates with the opportunity to achieve the standard at all levels. The contexts of the texts were immediately relevant to candidates. 90878 contained a phone message, interview and conversation, 90881 was based around an online message group, blog, magazine article and Twitter feed.

Now in its second year of implementation, the new externally assessed standards for French have begun to embed. It is important that candidates note the change in question type with the new standard. Questions are now far less reliant on specific lexical item knowledge and instead expect candidates to be able to infer meaning, justify responses, and elucidate their responses with detail and explanation drawn (directly or indirectly) from the text. For this reason, a direct translation of a reading text or a transcription of a Listening text will preclude candidates from achieving the standard at Excellence or even Merit level.

The standards require that candidates at Merit and Excellence level must respectively show “clear” and/or “thorough” understanding of the text. Word for word translation does not show this.

Explanatory Note 3 of the standard defines what a “clear” and/or “thorough” look like in the standards:

Clear understanding means the relevant information, ideas and/or opinions from the texts are selected and unambiguously communicated.

Thorough understanding means the relevant information, ideas and/or opinions from the texts are expanded on with supporting detail to show understanding of the implied meanings or conclusions within the text.

Candidates across the two standards showed that they were well prepared for the examination. Responses largely showed that candidates were making a good effort at responding fully and thoughtfully to each question.

Some candidates demonstrated insufficient preparation for the examination in regard to learning of vocabulary. The Appendix for the two externally assessed standards is available from the NZQA website at the base of the subject page ([Link](#)).

It is becoming increasingly clear that with two standards to complete in a three-hour timeframe candidates are more able to use their time to produce thoughtful and well checked responses for the questions asked of them.

STANDARD REPORTS

90878 Demonstrate understanding of a variety of spoken French texts on areas of most immediate relevance

ACHIEVEMENT

Candidates who were awarded Achievement for this standard demonstrated the required skills and knowledge. They typically:

- attempted each section of the paper
- understood the gist of the passage
- showed understanding of higher frequency words
- demonstrated understanding of basic grammatical ideas in French.

NOT ACHIEVED

Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved for this standard lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement. They typically:

- misunderstood entire passages or parts of passages
- left questions or parts of questions blank
- wrote isolated words as responses
- confused ideas/tenses so responses lacked any clarity or resemblance to what was heard.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit typically:

- responded to the questions with increasing detail
- comprehended lower frequency words
- understood higher level ideas and concepts
- used language knowledge to show this higher level understanding.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement with Merit, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Excellence typically:

- responded to each question in full, and included only relevant detail
- selected appropriate details to fully explain – often being those with the most complex language inherent
- understood all language in the texts
- selected the appropriate meaning where words have more than one and used it as an appropriate response to the question
- proofread their responses to ensure that they made sense and were succinct.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates made good use of the listening notes boxes to assist them in seeking out the appropriate information to use in their final responses.

Proofreading is highly desirable. Some candidates gave conflicting or unintentionally amusing (and inaccurate) responses. For example, in Question 3 where the student is a

New Zealander on exchange in France about to return home, some candidates changed her nationality within the response – she was both a French girl learning how to speak French better, and a New Zealander with a poor French accent. Likewise in Question 1, the French teacher – Monsieur Tournier – was frequently wearing a yellow dress. Simple errors such as these can detract from the overall performance, and are easily avoided if answers are proofread. Allied to this, it is suggested that candidates check their responses for legibility, and rewrite them if they have a lot of crossings out or difficult to decode writing.

Particularly noticeable this year was the tendency of some candidate to misread questions, or not read them carefully. For Questions 1 and 3 in particular candidates tended to repeat the question in their response, or give completely irrelevant information. For example, when asked about Monsieur Tournier, candidates often responded with details about Sara rather than the teacher. In Question 3, many candidates repeated the entire wording of the question in their response instead of actually answering the question. The old advice to “Read the question, and answer what it asks” holds good.

Words with more than one meaning proved to be challenging for all but the highest achievers in the cohort (e.g. *marche* in Question 1 – walks/works)

90881 Demonstrate understanding of a variety of French texts on areas of most immediate relevance

ACHIEVEMENT

Candidates who were awarded Achievement for this standard demonstrated the required skills and knowledge. They typically:

- showed a basic general understanding of the text
- misunderstood some key information in parts
- lacked clarity/specificity in their response – e.g. with answers such as ‘They won the rugby’
- confused words that seemed similar but were spelt differently, eg peu/peur/peux,
- understood information in the text, but had difficulty honing down the details of their answers so that only relevant information was given.

NOT ACHIEVED

Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved for this standard lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement. They typically:

- did not address the question
- invented detail where they were unsure of an answer
- showed very little or no understanding of the basic information contained in the text
- did not read the glossed vocabulary, e.g. ‘*propre*’.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit typically:

- showed a detailed understanding of most of the text
- attempted inferences or to draw conclusions but did support them with evidence from the text

- clearly identified the correct information needed for the question
- differentiated between tenses eg *je lisais, c'était, JK a habité*
- understood the meaning of words in context, such as '*quand on lit*'
- understood grammatical structures such as *venir de, je n'aime pas trop penser, personne ne m'invite*.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement with Merit, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Excellence typically:

- drew inferences/made conclusions about the texts
- provided detailed evidence as justification for their conclusions.
- were able to read and understand detail across the whole text
- answered questions based on their overall understanding.

OTHER COMMENTS

The examination assessed a variety of text types which were relevant to the age of the candidates. Responses generally showed that they had made a strong effort to respond as fully as possible to each of the questions – indicating that the removal of one standard has benefitted candidates in regard to timing.

Candidates are able to write responses to questions in their choice of English, French and/ or Te Reo Maori. Excellence candidates showed that they understand the implied meanings or conclusions within the text, regardless of language in which they answered. Those who paraphrased the texts in French typically gained Achieved or Merit; those who simply copied parts of the text did not show understanding of the French, which is what the standard is assessing, and could not be awarded the standard.

Higher scoring candidates read through the whole of the passage and the questions before answering, and were therefore able to plan their response, select relevant evidence from the text, and write focused answers. It is in all candidates' interests to resist the urge to start writing as soon as they read the first sentence of a text. There is sufficient time to read through before writing, and to proofread their answers afterwards, and ensure that all responses are legible.

It is possible that responses to questions may not follow a "chronological" order to the text. A response may draw on an understanding of an entire text. It may also be that information required for a response be found throughout the text (e.g. the beginning of the text and also at the end).

The instructions to '*Use information from the texts to support your answer*' means that the candidates should refer to details/information in the text to justify their answer, and it is perfectly fine if they do this in English. Some candidates also quoted the relevant French phrase from the text in support of everything they said, this is not required.