



Common questions about National 4 Modern Languages

Section A

General questions: unit assessments

Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the reading and listening unit assessments?

Yes, but for evidence purposes the teacher or lecturer must keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has met the relevant assessment standards.

If a candidate fails to meet the standard required to pass a unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?

Yes, SQA's advice on re-assessment is that normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. However, depending on the circumstances it is not always necessary to use a different instrument of assessment. For example failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed in that element only.

Can centres assess all four skills within one context, for example culture?

Yes, in theory, but this may not offer candidates opportunities to demonstrate a wide enough range of vocabulary and language structures.

How long should teachers and lecturers give candidates to complete unit assessments?

Time restrictions are not normally a feature of unit assessment, and centres need to determine this with reference to the specific situation of their candidates. Candidates can access audio recordings of assessment tasks and listen to these as often as they need to. However, teachers and lecturers should exercise judgement as it is unlikely that candidates would benefit from more than two or three playings.

How much support can teachers and lecturers give candidates to complete unit assessments?

Candidates must produce their work independently when undertaking assessment, however reasonable assistance may be provided. The requirements of the assessment should be made clear to candidates at the outset. Teachers and lecturers can clarify with candidates how to approach the assessment and guide them in producing their response. They may also prompt candidates where appropriate to clarify that they have met the requirements of the assessment but should not direct them to any specific response. For example teachers and lecturers should not provide specific advice on how to improve responses or provide model answers.

Do candidates have to pass all assessment standards for each outcome in the unit assessments to achieve a unit?

Yes, candidates need to pass all the assessment standards to achieve each outcome. Passing all outcomes for a unit means that the candidate has been successful in achieving the unit. This is the same for units at all SCQF levels.

If the candidate's evidence does not satisfy all of the outcomes and assessment standards, or is incomplete for an individual outcome, the candidate only needs to be re-assessed on the specific outcomes or assessment standards that have not been met. However, that would normally mean that the same text should not be used for re-assessment.

Do assessments need to be linked thematically?

No, they can all be completed independently. However, teachers and lecturers may find it helpful to combine assessments.

How are unit assessments marked?

Unit assessments should be marked according to the judging evidence tables, available within unit assessment support packs on SQA's secure site. Candidates should, for example identify the overall purpose of the reading or listening text and be able to extract the main points of the passage. Teachers and lecturers are to use their professional judgement in determining whether a candidate has written enough detail to meet the requirements of each assessment standard.

How should evidence be recorded?

Teachers and lecturers must keep detailed notes for the talking unit assessment. Audio and/or video recording of each candidate's performance is not mandatory for the unit assessments, but it is good practice to keep the evidence from each class for verification purposes. Audio and/or video recordings assist centres with internal verification.

Teachers and lecturers must keep reading, listening and writing scripts for verification purposes. SQA provides templates for this.

Can we adapt the approaches to assessment in the unit assessment support packs?

Yes, centres can adapt existing SQA unit assessment support packs. They should keep a record of any alterations made in case of external verification.

If using a centre-devised approach to assessment the centre must make sure the assessment is valid and reliable and that the approach to assessment provides candidates with the opportunity to meet the assessment standards. Any level of text used in centre-devised reading or listening must be appropriate to the level assessed.

Prior verification is a free service offered to centres which [devise their own summative unit assessments](#), or which significantly change SQA's assessments to suit their particular local needs. The service gives centres additional confidence that their proposed assessment is fit

for purpose and meets national standards. Further information is available at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74666.6219.html>

Do centres have to use a judging evidence table as presented in the unit assessment support packs?

Centres may adapt a judging evidence table or create a similar document with a range of possible responses which must clearly refer to the assessment standards and outcomes. For the Using Language unit, the expected candidate responses should be in the modern language.

Section B

National 4 added value unit

How is reading assessed for the added value unit?

Candidates should use a minimum of two texts. The teacher or lecturer provides a range of texts from which they can select. Candidates are required to show their understanding of the content of the texts by demonstrating comprehension through, for example gap fill tasks, questions in English or a written or oral summary of the main points of a text in English.

Candidates are assessed on their ability to extract the main points of the passages. There may be evidence of some misunderstanding but it will not be serious.

Candidates may use a dictionary.

How is talking assessed for the added value unit?

The candidate makes a short presentation, lasting 1–2 minutes. The presentation may be supported by brief headings in English or in the modern language, or by visual aids.

Candidates may deliver the presentation to the whole class, to groups of candidates within the class or to the teacher or lecturer.

Should candidates base the oral presentation on the reading texts?

The presentation does not need to make direct reference to the reading texts, but it should be on a related theme. Candidates could be encouraged to incorporate words and phrases from the reading texts into their oral presentation.

How is listening assessed for the added value unit?

There is no formal assessment of listening. However, after completing the presentation candidates take part in a conversation, with responses that show evidence of listening for communication. This part of the assessment should last 1 minute. The candidate should be able to ask for help in the modern language, where appropriate.

Should the questions for the conversation in the added value unit be prepared in advance?

No. Questions should not be prepared in advance, but the candidate should be asked questions covered previously in class. For example a candidate may be asked questions previously practised in class but will be unaware of exactly which questions he or she will have to answer, or in which order they will be asked.

How long do candidates have to complete the added value unit?

There is no time limit for completing the added value unit. This is at the discretion of the centre. The added value unit should be part of a series of lessons to be completed at an

appropriate point in the course. It should be part of the ongoing classroom work, and not be seen as a stand-alone test.

How much assistance should candidates receive when preparing for the added value unit?

Candidates should complete assessments in class time under some supervision and control.

Candidates should have reasonable assistance and support from the teacher or lecturer to complete the added value unit but should be encouraged to work independently.

The amount of support a candidate needs, particularly in the listening and responding section, is reflected in the teacher or lecturer's overall assessment of the candidate.

What evidence are teachers and lecturers required to retain?

Teachers and lecturers must keep copies of candidates' written responses to the reading texts. If the candidate gives oral feedback on the texts, the teacher or lecturer must keep detailed notes.

For the talking assessment, teachers and lecturers must retain a written summary, or detailed checklist of responses, or an audio and/or video recording if desired. It is not mandatory to audio or video record the oral presentation. If a centre does not record it, they must take detailed notes or checklist. Teachers and lecturers must ensure that each piece of evidence is named and dated.

What happens if a candidate does not pass the added value unit?

There should be only one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Re-assessment must always take place under the same conditions as the original assessment.

What if a candidate passes the reading and talking presentation sections of the added value unit, but not the conversation?

Candidates who did not secure a pass in the conversation only need do that part again, with a different set of questions from the first attempt. They do not need to redo the entire added value unit.

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq