



Common questions about Advanced Higher Modern Languages

Portfolio

Can candidates use a translated text as an additional source?

The conditions for the portfolio are that the two main sources must have been written for speakers of the target language, but additional sources may be in any language.

Can candidates use a source that has been translated into the target language from another language?

No. If a text was originally written in, for example, Swedish and then translated into German (the target language) it does not qualify as a main source. However, a candidate could use it as an additional source, depending on the focus adopted for the analysis.

Do all sources mentioned in the bibliography have to be referred to in the portfolio?

Not all sources listed in the bibliography need to be referred to in the portfolio. Additional sources may have been consulted to help understanding or to provide confirmation for information already sourced from elsewhere. Any sources that are quoted in the portfolio must be referenced in the bibliography.

What advice is there on portfolio essay titles?

Teachers and lecturers can refer to the Modern Languages course reports, course support notes (appendix of the course specification) and the exemplars on the Understanding Standards website.

The title chosen for the portfolio essay should clearly outline the approach the candidate intends to take. Teachers and lecturers may support candidates to choose a suitable focus for the portfolio essay. This may need to be fairly narrow to allow for deeper analysis.

What is meant by ‘critical terminology’?

With reference to the critical terminology, there is no specific list of terms that SQA would be looking for and these terms will vary depending on whether candidates are analysing, for example, a novel, a poem or a film. For literary analysis, these could include references to tone, register, narrative point of view, structure, rhyme patterns, use of imagery, metaphor and other figures of speech as well as to the style of the writing (diary, stream of consciousness, for example) and the type of language used (highly descriptive, colloquial, etc). In terms of a film this could include references to, for example imagery, effects, cinematography or use of flashback.

As there is a penalty for being 10% over the word count is there a penalty for being under?

No, there is no penalty for portfolio essays below the word count but pieces that are significantly shorter than the minimum required are likely to be self-penalising.

How many sources would constitute a reasonable bibliography?

There is no fixed number for a reasonable bibliography. A minimum of two sources in the target language must be quoted, and this would be the minimum expected. Ideally, a bibliography should include the following:

- ◆ book: last and first name of author, title of book, publisher, year of publication
- ◆ film: name of film, name of director, year of release
- ◆ article or report: name of author (if known), title, name of publication, country of origin, date of publication, page number(s) (if suitable)
- ◆ internet sources: name of author (if known), title of article (if applicable), full URL and date accessed

Does the second text need to be referenced in the title or must it be in the body of the portfolio?

It is not necessary to reference the title of any source directly in the title of the portfolio essay, but any sources quoted directly must be referenced in the essay.

Performance–talking

When are centres notified of the visiting assessor’s visit?

Visiting assessors receive notification of their itineraries at the end of January and contact centres as soon as possible after that. The period for visiting assessment usually lasts from mid-February to mid-March.

How many topics should the candidates choose per context for the performance–talking?

There is no set number of topics to be listed. The Subject Topic of Language (STL) form is intended to provide the visiting assessor with a framework for the discussion. Candidates should remember that the section related to the language topics studied is likely to last at least 10 minutes and they should be able to sustain the discussion during this period.

Is it acceptable for candidates to use different regional and country-specific accents and pronunciation during the performance–talking?

Candidates should be familiar with and exposed to a range of language learning opportunities from different geographic linguistic settings, as part of learning and teaching. They may develop a variety of accents, pronunciations and usages as a result of these approaches, all of which are valid for assessment purposes.

Similarly, candidates may be L1 users of a modern language. Their pronunciation and usage are equally valid for assessment purposes.

The detailed marking instructions for the performance–talking outline that candidates can use pronunciation (and intonation) which can be understood by a speaker of the language.

Overall purpose question

Where is there guidance on the Advanced Higher Modern Languages overall purpose question?

Teachers and lecturers can refer to the Modern Languages course reports, course support notes (appendix of the course specification) and the exemplars on the Understanding Standards website.

How should candidates approach the overall purpose question?

The response to the overall purpose question needs an analytical and critical approach, which refers to stylistic aspects. It should be reflective and evaluative.

Candidates should use inferential-type language and examine the writer's technique. For example, they could examine the structure of the text and the tone used in different paragraphs. They could consider the use of emotive language and the impact of any direct speech and real-life examples and if they lend weight to any argument, for or against.

The response should not be personal in nature, so candidates should use a formal register and not give personal opinions. The response should be well structured with a conclusion.

General questions

Are there exemplars relating to aspects of the Advanced Higher examination?

Exemplars of standards relating to aspects of the Advanced Higher examination are available on the [Understanding Standards website](#).

This website includes exemplars of discursive writing, portfolio and overall purpose question for each modern language. Exemplars relating to the performance–talking can be found on SQA’s secure site. Please contact your SQA co-ordinator.

What advice is there on the use of gender-neutral language?

A candidate can choose to use masculine, feminine or gender-neutral adjective agreements throughout their Modern Languages writing and performance–talking assessments, where appropriate to the language. Candidates must use their pronouns and adjectives consistently and adhere to associated conventions of adjectival agreement, where appropriate.

What support is available to teachers and lecturers?

Please refer to the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page](#).

Teachers and lecturers can refer to the ‘Assessment resource summary’ document, which summarises many of the available resources. This can be located under the ‘Course support’ tab on the Advanced Higher Modern Language web page.

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