



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education
Advanced Level Higher 1 (2025)**

French (Syllabus 8831)

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides details of Higher 1 French for candidates in **Singapore**.

This syllabus is available in October/November only.

Note on the use of dictionaries: Centres and candidates should note that dictionaries may be used in *preparation* for the Speaking test. Dictionaries may not be used in any of the other components nor *during* the Speaking test.

2 AIMS

The aims of the syllabus are set out below and describe the educational purposes of following a course in French at Higher 1. These aims are the same for all students:

- to develop the ability to understand French from a variety of registers
- to enable the student to communicate confidently and clearly in French
- to form a sound base of skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure
- to develop insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where French is spoken, including the study of literary texts where appropriate
- to encourage positive attitudes to language learning and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations
- to further intellectual and personal development by promoting learning and social skills.

3 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The examination will assess candidates' linguistic competence and their knowledge of contemporary society by requiring them to:

- understand and respond to texts written in French, drawn from a variety of sources such as magazines, newspapers, reports, books and other forms of extended writing
- manipulate French accurately to demonstrate a capacity to choose appropriate examples of lexis and structures
- select information and present it in French, to organise arguments and ideas logically
- understand and respond to authentic contemporary spoken language drawn from a variety of sources such as recorded news items, telephone messages, announcements, talks and discussions.

4 TOPIC AREAS

All textual material used in the examination will be drawn from the topic areas below, with reference to the country/ies where French is spoken. Further guidance on the Topic Areas is given in section 7 of this syllabus.

- Human relationships
- Family
- Generation gap
- Young people
- Patterns of daily life
- Urban and rural life
- The media
- Food and drink
- Law and order
- Religion and belief
- Health and fitness
- Work and leisure
- Equality of opportunity
- Employment and unemployment
- Sport
- Free time activities
- Travel and tourism
- Education
- Cultural life/heritage
- War and peace
- The developing world
- Scientific and medical advances
- Technological innovation
- Environment
- Conservation
- Pollution
- Contemporary aspects of the country/ies where French is spoken

5 ASSESSMENT

AVAILABILITY OF COMPONENTS

Component 1 Speaking	Component 2 Reading and Writing	Component 3 Listening
October/November	October/November	October/November

RULES OF COMBINATION

Candidates will take Components 1, 2 and 3.

SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Component 1		Component 2		Component 3	
duration	weighting	duration	weighting	duration	weighting
approx. 15 minutes	20%	2 hours 45 minutes	60%	approx. 45 minutes	20%

6 DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

COMPONENT 1: Speaking (approx. 15 minutes) (raw marks 90 weighted to 25 marks)

This component description should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme in section 8 of this syllabus.

The Speaking Test will be recorded for external moderation by Cambridge.

It is important that the timings listed for the individual parts of the test be adhered to, within the tolerances given.

Section 1: Presentation (no more than 2½ minutes) (20 marks)

The candidate is expected to give a presentation of about 2 minutes on a specific topic.

The subject matter of the presentation should be drawn from one of the topic areas listed in section 4. Centres wishing to seek advice on the acceptability of subject matter are welcome to contact the Cambridge Languages group through the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB).

The candidate will be expected to show evidence of the ability to present relevant facts, to express opinions and hypotheses and to put forward points for discussion.

The intention is that the candidate should have thoroughly prepared a topic in which they have a personal interest and that they give a lively and interesting presentation. Candidates may prepare a 'cue card' in French to bring into the examination room. The 'cue card' should be no larger than a postcard, and may contain a maximum of 5 headings in succinct point-form to remind candidates of the points they wish to make. Candidates may also bring in a limited quantity of illustrative material, which may include maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures and short articles. **A script of their presentation is not allowed.**

Examiners will only interrupt candidates to ask questions where the speech shows no sign of finishing after about 2½ minutes, or to prompt candidates having obvious difficulty in continuing with their speech.

Section 2: Topic conversation (approx. 6 minutes) (35 marks)

The presentation will lead into a conversation about the chosen topic. During the delivery of the presentation, examiners are likely to make notes in order to help them ask appropriate questions. Candidates must be prepared to supply additional factual material where appropriate and to express and defend a point of view. In order to give the candidate every opportunity to do this, questions will be of the 'tell me more about...', 'why?', 'how?' variety, rather than closed questions which may be answered by 'yes/no'. When choosing a topic, candidates should be advised to consider in what ways a conversation about it might develop: if they cannot think of half a dozen questions they could be asked, it is unlikely to present a fruitful source of discussion. The examiner's objective will be to encourage the candidate to contribute as much as possible to the conversation.

Section 3: General conversation (approx. 6 minutes) (35 marks)

This section will begin with fairly straightforward questions about the candidate's background and interests and will move quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas.

The subjects covered in this section will depend on the candidate's interests and the subject of the presentation: it would not be appropriate to continue talking about the environment/ green issues when the candidate has already chosen to discuss ecology for the topic. Candidates should be able to discuss some matters of current interest though it is unreasonable to assume that all candidates will be closely informed on all matters of serious contemporary concern: if the candidate seems unresponsive, the examiner will try a change of topic.

For example, examiners might begin the General Conversation section with questions such as ‘How do you spend your spare time?’, leading rapidly to matters of contemporary interest/current affairs. The type of question is important: closed questions may, of course, be used to gain some information on the candidate’s interests, but ‘why...?’, ‘how...?’, ‘what do you think about...?’ will give the candidate scope to expand his/her responses.

Each of the ‘starter’ questions mentioned above could, depending on the reactions of the candidate, lead away from factual matters towards more abstract areas, for example:

- ‘How long have you lived here?’ could lead on to ‘What do you think of the area?’ → ‘What would attract people to the area/make them leave it?’ → ‘What would be your ideal place to live and why?’
- ‘What subjects are you studying?’ → ‘What do you think of the way you’ve been taught?’ → ‘How could it be improved?’ → discussion of school/education system, comparison with other countries.

To give a possible outline of the way the General Conversation section might develop:

• ‘What do you do in your spare time?’	
<p>Answer: ‘Sport’</p> <p>Supplementary questions – taking part?/ watching?/team/individual?</p> <p>→ Why?</p> <p>This could develop along sport/health lines, necessity for sport in schools, success/failure of national teams</p> <p>→ Feelings of nationalism/nationality; drugs in sport etc, all according to the responses of the candidate. Any of these areas of discussion could lead to violence in sport → society, the need for government intervention/control → politics, etc.</p>	<p>Answer: ‘Watch TV’</p> <p>Supplementary questions – what sort of programmes/news?</p> <p>This might develop along the lines of whether the news is unbiased/censorship in general</p> <p>Films? → what makes a film successful, importance of stars and why; national or international film industries, subsidies for the Arts, etc.</p> <p>Documentaries? → are they merely entertainment, or a genuine educational experience? are they sensationalised? → power of the media, etc.</p>

The General Conversation section might only cover 2/3 topic areas, but might touch on more if the examiner has difficulty finding something the candidate is interested in, or can talk about. Candidates who cannot sustain the conversation at an appropriate level when given every opportunity to do so cannot expect a high mark.

Important Note:

It is intended that both conversation elements will be lively and spontaneous. Teachers should warn their candidates not to produce chunks of pre-learned material since Cambridge’s moderators will have been advised to penalise candidates who do so. Equally, teachers who may also be conducting the final examination should guard against over-rehearsing the tests in advance. Any suspicion of collusion in the conduct of speaking tests (e.g. pre-prepared questions, candidates or teachers using pre-determined scripts) will be dealt with in accordance with Cambridge’s Malpractice procedures.

COMPONENT 2: Reading and Writing (2 hours 45 minutes) (75 marks)

Section 1 (40 marks)

Two passages in French will be set dealing with related themes.

Candidates will be expected to answer specific and general comprehension questions; and to respond to a task requiring summary/comparison of issues raised in both passages. French will be used for all questions and answers.

Passages will be chosen which were written during the last twenty years, and will reflect the international scene:

- The two passages taken together will not exceed 550 words.
- Comprehension questions will be set on both passages (25 marks).
- The last question (15 marks) will require candidates to write about 120 words drawing information from both passages and adding their own opinions (5 marks for items drawn from the texts; 5 for personal response to the material; 5 for quality of language).

Section 2 (25 marks)

Candidates will be asked to write 200 words on one of two topics.

Section 3 (10 marks)

Candidates will be asked to complete a cloze test with 10 gaps, to test knowledge and use of structure.

COMPONENT 3: Listening (approx. 45 minutes) (25 marks)

A CD will be provided with pre-programmed gaps to which candidates, in groups of no more than 30, will listen together. All items will be heard three times. All rubrics and task descriptions will be in French. Candidates write their answers on the question paper.

Section 1 (10 marks)

Two or three short, factual items will be heard, e.g. news flashes, advertisements, dialogues, telephone messages.

Both verbal and non-verbal responses will be required. Tasks to test comprehension might include box-ticking, matching, true/false, entering information on a grid, timetable, programme or other diagrammatic aid.

Section 2 (15 marks)

Candidates will listen to an extended piece taken from a statement or talk given by a single speaker or from an interview or a discussion involving more than one speaker. Questions will test overall comprehension of the text and comprehension of specific detail.

7 FURTHER GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF THE TOPIC LIST

Teachers are free to explore the topic areas **in any way they choose**. They may find the following examples (which are not prescriptive) a useful guide to planning courses. All these **suggestions**, and other themes chosen by the teacher from within the topic areas, should be studied with reference to countries/communities where French is spoken.

Human relationships; family; generation gap; young people

- family activities; new patterns of family relationships; the status of the elderly and responsibility for their care
- conflicts in the family circle; young people and the older generation; attitudes of young people to the family environment
- young people and their peer group; young people as a target group for advertisers and politicians

Patterns of daily life; urban and rural life; the media; food and drink; law and order; religion and belief; health and fitness

- daily routine; school; the individual's way of life; living conditions
- advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural life; transport and communications; shopping; housing
- the role and influence of the media; the power of advertising
- healthy eating; fast-food; national traditions of eating and drinking
- violence and crime; drug-related crime; the role of the police; law-enforcement
- the place of religion in society; attitudes to religious belief; patterns of attendance; religious minorities
- healthy living; exercise; dieting; drugs; health care provision; stress; AIDS

Work and leisure; equality of opportunity; employment and unemployment; sport; free time activities; travel and tourism; education; cultural life/heritage

- women in society and in the workforce; equality of opportunity for minority groups
- preparation for work and job opportunities; career plans; qualifications and job routines; plight of the unemployed; areas of high unemployment; demise of traditional industries; possible solutions; immigrant workers
- individual and team sports; amateur and professional sport
- value of leisure; balance between leisure and work; planning leisure time
- tourism as a modern phenomenon; friction between tourists and local inhabitants; holidays and foreign travel
- education systems and types of school; patterns of curriculum; relationship between education and training; further and higher education provision; examinations
- the world of the arts; significant figures and trends in the arts; the place of culture and the arts in the life of the nation

War and peace; the developing world

- conflicts in the world: ethnic, religious, ideological
- problems of developing countries; future trends

Medical advances; scientific and technological innovation

- advances in the treatment of disease; ethical issues of medical and other technologies
- cloning; genetic modifications; modern communications systems

Environment, pollution, conservation

- the individual in his/her surroundings; effect of environment on individuals; protest action to protect one's locality; ways of contributing to environmental awareness
- global warming; acid rain; air pollution; water pollution; noise pollution; destruction of rain forests; damage to animal world; solutions and cost implications
- saving endangered species and landscapes

Contemporary aspects of the country/ies where French is spoken

- political, regional, social issues

8 MARK SCHEMES

COMPONENT 1: Speaking

Section 1: Presentation

The presentation will be marked out of 20 marks: Content/Presentation 10; Pronunciation/ Intonation 5; Language 5.

Content/Presentation Knowledge of facts; ability to express opinions and raise issues for discussion.	Pronunciation/Intonation	Language
9–10 Full and well organised coverage of the topic; ideas and opinions included as well as factual points; lively presentation; Examiner's interest sustained.	5 Outstanding pronunciation and intonation; an occasional slight mistake or hesitation. Not necessarily a native speaker.	5 Has a very good feeling for the language; speaks fluently and accurately; shows good use of relevant idiom and uses a wide range of structures and vocabulary.
7–8 Good exposition and sound organisation of the topic; makes relevant factual points though may be less good in ideas and opinions; presentation somewhat stilted though keeps Examiner's interest.	4 Good pronunciation, makes a fair attempt at correct intonation and expression; some mistakes and/or hesitation.	4 Speaks fairly fluently and accurately; uses idiom with a reasonable range of structures and vocabulary.
5–6 Adequate exposition of the topic; few ideas or opinions; evidence of preparation but presentation pedestrian.	3 A fair degree of accuracy in pronunciation; quite a number of errors; some attempt at intonation and expression.	3 May speak with hesitation; adequate range of structures and vocabulary; no ambiguity of meaning.
3–4 Material thin; rambling, repetitious; hardly any ideas or opinions; in danger of losing the Examiner's interest.	2 Intelligible but shows marked influence of mother tongue and very many errors of pronunciation.	2 Marked hesitation; limited range of structures and vocabulary; leading to some ambiguity of meaning.
0–2 Very little factual information; material irrelevant; vague, arguments incoherent; little effort at presentation.	0–1 Very poor; many gross errors; frequently incomprehensible.	0–1 Very marked hesitation; severe limitations of structures and vocabulary; thought processes basically influenced by mother tongue.

Section 2: Topic Conversation and Section 3: General Conversation

Examiners will mark out of 35 for each part: Comprehension and Responsiveness (10 marks), Accuracy (10 marks), Feel for the Language (10 marks), Range of Vocabulary and Structures (5 marks).

Comprehension and Responsiveness	Accuracy	Feel for the Language
9–10 Very good No problems of comprehension. Responses are natural and spontaneous even to unexpected questions. Able to present and defend a point of view in discussion.	9–10 Very good Consistently accurate. Only occasional minor slips.	9–10 Very good Has a very good feeling for the language and is able to express concepts fluently in appropriate idiom. Negligible influence from the mother tongue.
7–8 Good Few problems of comprehension. Responds thoughtfully, and copes fairly well with unexpected questions. Reasonably forthcoming but tends to follow Examiner's lead.	7–8 Good Accuracy generally good, with more frequent errors than in the very best candidates. Shows a sound basic understanding of grammatical usage.	7–8 Good Has a very good feeling for the language. Shows competent use of relevant idiom. Avoids significant influence from mother tongue.
5–6 Satisfactory Understands questions on basic situations and concepts, but has difficulty with more complicated ideas. Some delay in response. Needs encouragement to develop topics OR relies heavily on prepared responses.	5–6 Satisfactory Accuracy indicates a measure of competence but with some obvious and significant gaps in grammatical usage.	5–6 Satisfactory Feeling for the language evident with some occasional use of relevant idiom. Thought processes and expression are influenced by mother tongue.
3–4 Weak Has general difficulty in understanding. Limited response to questions on the majority of topics raised.	3–4 Weak Generally inaccurate use of the language.	3–4 Weak Has scant feeling for the foreign idiom. Generally translates literally from the mother tongue.
0–2 Poor Severe problems of comprehension. Very marked hesitation. Limited responsiveness.	0–2 Poor No grasp of grammatical accuracy. Errors constant and repeated.	0–2 Poor Has no feeling for the foreign language.

Range of Vocabulary and Structures

5 Very good Extensive range of appropriate vocabulary. Able to use a wide range of structures with confidence.
4 Good Has sufficient range of vocabulary and structures to handle reasonably mature subjects.
3 Satisfactory Limited expression of ideas (but not ambiguity) caused by limitations in range of vocabulary and some structures.
2 Weak Severe limitations of vocabulary and structures restrict discussion to a very basic level.
0–1 Poor Very restricted vocabulary. Only simple sentences and no variety of structure.

COMPONENT 2: Reading and Writing**Section 1****Quality of Language (for final question in Section 1)**

5 Very good	Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order).
4 Good	Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures.
3 Satisfactory	Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions.
2 Below average	Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions frequently incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives.
0–1 Poor	Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error.

Response to the Text (for final question in Section 1)

Mark like a mini-essay according to the variety and interest of the opinions and views expressed, the response to the original text stimulus and the ability to express a personal point of view. Further, more detailed guidance for particular questions will be given to examiners.

5 Very good	Varied and interesting ideas, showing an element of flair and imagination, a capacity to express a personal point of view.
4 Good	Not the flair and imagination of the best candidates, but work still shows an ability to express a range of ideas, maintain interest and respond to the issues raised.
3 Satisfactory	A fair level of interest and ideas. May concentrate on a single issue, but there is still a response to ideas in the text.
2 Below average	Limited range of ideas; rather humdrum. May disregard the element of response to the text, and write a largely unrelated free-composition.
0–1 Poor	Few ideas to offer on the theme. Banal and pedestrian. No element of personal response to the text. Repeated error.

Section 2: Composition

25 marks are awarded as follows:

- Relevant communication 5 marks
- Accuracy 15 marks
- Impression 5 marks

Counting words

The question is marked up to a maximum of 210 words.

Irrelevant material

No marks will be obtained for clearly irrelevant material.

Relevant communication marks

The content is open-ended provided it relates strictly to the material demanded in the question set. There are no set points to be made. To score 4 or 5 marks the candidate must show some maturity of thought, present a balanced argument when required by the demands of the essay title, and write a well-structured essay.

Accuracy marks

13–15	High degree of accuracy in the use of all structures, both basic and more advanced. There should be very few errors and only of minor significance for an award of 15.
10–12	The candidates show a sound grasp of structures, both basic and more advanced, although they may make more errors in using more advanced ones than the candidates placed in the very top band.
7–9	High degree of accuracy in basic sentence structures, and accuracy in some more complex structures.
4–6	Reasonably accurate in basic sentence patterns. Candidates who do not use any more complex structures must not be awarded a mark in a higher band than this one.
1–3	Persistent errors, even in basic grammar, e.g. subject-verb accord, word order in main clauses, but a few basic items correct.
0	No marks are awarded to compositions which are entirely inaccurate or incomprehensible.

General impression marks

5	Excellent use of idiom, vocabulary, structures and appropriate tenses.
4	Very good use of idiom, vocabulary, structures and appropriate tenses.
3	Good use of idiom, vocabulary, structures and appropriate tenses.
2	Satisfactory use of idiom, vocabulary, structures and appropriate tenses.
0–1	Poor use of idiom, vocabulary, structures; inappropriate tenses.