



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS ON THE
DRAFT DOCUMENT *FRENCH IN THE NEW
ZEALAND CURRICULUM*: A RESEARCH
REPORT

Final Report

Ministry of Education Research Division Wellington

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Jacquie Kerlake

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INTRODUCTION

All students benefit from learning another language from the earliest practicable age. Such learning broadens students’ general language abilities and brings their own language into sharper focus. It enriches them intellectually, socially, and culturally, offers an understanding of the ways in which other people think and behave, and furthers international relations and trade. Students will be able to choose from a range of Pacific, Asian, and European languages, all of which are important to New Zealand’s regional and international interests.

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993), page 10.

Language and Languages is one of the seven essential learning areas of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*. French is included in this essential learning area.

New Zealand benefits by having young New Zealanders learn European languages. People within the country who are fluent in these languages are necessary in order for New Zealand to participate successfully in cultural exchanges, diplomacy, education, trade, and tourism. Learning a foreign language such as French can also make a valuable contribution to the education of young New Zealanders. The draft guidelines, *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*, reinforce the commitment to quality French-language teaching and learning in New Zealand schools.

The draft guidelines for French have been designed to assist and support teachers in the planning and delivery of effective French-language programmes. They outline a clear progression of achievement objectives, and include suggested topics, structures, vocabulary, and learning and assessment activities appropriate to each of eight levels. They are intended to replace the existing French syllabus, first published in 1987.

In 1999, the Ministry of Education started work on developing guidelines for both *French in the New Zealand Curriculum* and *German in the New Zealand Curriculum*. The development of the guidelines involved consultation with many interested parties, including language educators in schools and tertiary institutions, both in New Zealand and overseas. In February 2001, draft national curriculum guidelines for French and German were released for discussion and comment. Copies of *French in the New Zealand Curriculum* were sent to all schools known to have been offering French-language programmes the previous year. Similarly, copies of *German in the New Zealand Curriculum* were sent to all schools that had offered German-language programmes in 2000. Copies of each document were also distributed to other interested parties and key organisations.

To assist in finding out how well the draft guidelines assist and support teachers in the planning and delivery of effective French-language and German-language programmes, people had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft curricula in a number of ways. In particular, schools could provide feedback by means of the response forms included in each of the draft curriculum guidelines documents.

Open invitations to provide feedback are likely to attract responses only from those who have particularly strong positive or negative views about the issue at hand. For this reason, to supplement the above feedback, the Ministry’s Curriculum Division engaged the Research Division to survey schools that had had French and/or German programmes in 2000. Two separate surveys took place in Term 3, 2001. This report summarises the findings only from the survey of schools that taught French¹.

¹ Results from the survey of schools where German was taught are provided in a separate report entitled ‘Feedback from Schools on the Draft Document *German in the New Zealand Curriculum: A Research Report*’.

THE SURVEY

The Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research was to obtain and analyse feedback from schools on *French in the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft*, so that the information provided could be taken into account in the writing of the final curriculum document.

The objectives were:

1. to establish the extent of support for the draft curriculum guidelines as a whole and for various aspects of the draft guidelines;
2. to obtain feedback on various qualities of the achievement objectives, learning and assessment activities, and the glossary;
3. to establish whether teachers felt the draft guidelines provided a suitable basis on which to structure effective French-language teaching and learning programmes; and
4. to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the draft curriculum guidelines and identify issues for schools in implementing programmes in French based on the draft curriculum guidelines.

Methodology

The study consisted of surveying all composite and secondary schools known to have offered French-language programmes in 2000 (N=246). A letter inviting the schools to participate in a survey to take place in July 2001 was sent out to schools in April the same year, soon after the draft guidelines were distributed to schools.

A covering letter and questionnaire were then sent to the principal of each selected school in early May, with a request that they pass them on to the teacher nominated to coordinate their school's response to the questionnaire. Although questionnaires were sent out in May, schools were asked not to complete them until July, to allow a period of time for teachers to familiarise themselves with the curriculum document. The delay was also to allow the school coordinator to fulfil the suggestion at the beginning of the questionnaire which stated: '*Before completing this questionnaire, please arrange for group discussions with appropriate staff and submit a response that takes account of these views.*'

Because of the long lead-in time, a reminder letter was sent in July, and, in August, a follow-up letter was mailed to schools where a completed questionnaire had not yet been received.

Response Rate

The response rate for the survey was good². One hundred and eighty-two schools (74%) returned fully- or partially-completed questionnaires.

Note about the response rate

Of the 182 schools that responded, 20 schools indicated that they were no longer offering French in 2001 and did not provide feedback on the curriculum document itself. These schools are therefore not included in the analysis of the data presented in the remainder of this report.

In addition, although the background data presented in the next section of this report are based on questionnaires from the 162 schools offering French in 2001, subsequent sections, which present analyses of information relating to various aspects of the draft curriculum guidelines themselves, are based on information provided by 148 schools (60%) only. Respondents from the remaining 14 schools did not feel that they or their schools were sufficiently familiar with the draft guidelines to be able to provide valid comment on them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SCHOOLS AND THOSE WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

This section presents information on the positions held by those who completed the questionnaires and the year level(s) of students being offered French-language programmes. Information on the extent to which participating schools were familiar with the draft curriculum guidelines for French and whether teachers had received outside support in relation to them are also presented.

The Positions held by Respondents

The ‘person nominated to coordinate their school’s response’ was asked to indicate, from a list provided in the questionnaire, the position(s) they held within the school. The results presented in Table 1 show that the position ‘typically’ held by respondents was ‘person responsible for French’ (84%) or ‘teacher of French’ (77%), clearly often one and the same person.

² Schools had the opportunity to provide feedback on the document in a number of ways. It is possible that some of the schools surveyed had already provided feedback on the draft guidelines at some other stage of the consultation process and did not wish to provide further feedback via the present study. In other words, the overall response rate achieved for the present survey may have been lower than would otherwise have been achieved.

TABLE 1: *The position(s) that respondents held within the school*

Position held by respondent	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Person responsible for overall curriculum planning	13	8.0
Person responsible for languages	88	54.3
Person responsible for French	136	84.0
Principal	1	0.6
Teacher of French	125	77.2
Other ^b	15	9.3
Total	N = 162	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could indicate more than one position.

b The ‘other’ category included Deputy Principal, teacher of foreign languages, Head of Department.

Year Levels of Students Receiving French-language Programmes

When asked to indicate the year level(s) of students to whom French was being taught, the majority of respondents said that their schools were teaching French to Year 9 (96%), Year 10 (92%) and Year 11 (84%) students (Table 2).

TABLE 2: *The year levels of students receiving French-language programmes*

Year level	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Below Year 7	5	3.1
Year 7	26	16.0
Year 8	34	21.0
Year 9	156	96.3
Year 10	149	92.0
Year 11	136	84.0
Year 12	102	63.0
Year 13+	84	51.9
Total	N = 162	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could indicate more than one year level where French was being taught.

Whether Schools in the Study had Received any Outside Support in Relation to the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French

When respondents were asked ‘Has your school received outside support (eg, visits from advisers) or consulted with others with respect to the draft French Curriculum guidelines?’ over half (57%) answered ‘Yes’. They went on to explain that the support or input received had mainly involved consulting colleagues from other schools where students were being offered French-language programmes and/or talking with other teachers at cluster group meetings. Others had consulted or received support from the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT), or from language advisers.

The Basis on which Respondents Answered the Questionnaire about the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French

Respondents were asked to indicate, by means of one or more of the three options listed in Table 3 below, the basis on which they had formed their response to the draft curriculum guidelines — that is, the extent to which they were familiar with the draft document.³ A large majority of respondents indicated that they had both read the draft document and formed an overall impression, and ‘related and compared material contained in the draft document with existing programmes’.

Only few respondents (4%), however, said they had used the draft document ‘to plan (and trial) lessons in the classroom’ at the time of the survey.

TABLE 3: *The basis of respondents’ feedback on the draft document French in the New Zealand Curriculum*

The basis on which respondents had formed their opinion of the draft curriculum guidelines	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Read through the draft document and formed an overall impression	139	85.8
Related and compared material contained in the draft document with existing programmes	130	80.2
Used the draft document to plan (and trial) lessons in the classroom	7	4.3
Total	N = 162	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could select more than one option.

³ As indicated earlier, 14 of the schools offering French in 2001 indicated that they were not yet sufficiently familiar with the curriculum document to be able to comment on it and have not been included in subsequent sections of this report.

The remainder of this report is based on data from the 148 schools where respondents felt they — and, where relevant, others in the school — had looked at the document sufficiently to be able to comment on it.

VIEWS ON THE DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR *FRENCH IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM*: RESPONDENTS’ FEEDBACK

This broad section discusses respondents’ views on various parts of the draft curriculum guidelines and on aspects associated with implementing a curriculum for French-language learning. It also presents more in-depth opinion on the *achievement objectives*, *suggested learning and assessment activities*, and the *Glossary of Terms*.

Extent of Support for Specified Aspects of the Overall Structure or Framework Proposed for *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*

Data on the extent to which respondents supported various concepts and philosophical stances described in the draft curriculum guidelines are presented in Table 4. Although, overall, a good level of support was given for most of the broad aspects of the curriculum guidelines on which feedback was sought, one aspect received a notably lower level of support, namely, the suggested approach to vocabulary lists.

A discussion of the main findings indicated by the data in Table 4, along with a brief description of each aspect of the curriculum guidelines referred to in the table, follows. The discussion includes a summary of the sorts of comments made by those who supported ‘about half’ or less of each aspect.

- A large majority (89%) of respondents supported ‘all or most’ of the section on **language-specific aims** (p.18⁴ in the draft curriculum guidelines document for French). The *language-specific aims* were explained in the curriculum document as follows. ‘*Students should be encouraged to: listen for understanding, interest, and enjoyment; speak to be understood; read for meaning and for appreciation of the language and culture; and write for a purpose and to be understood.*’
- Students progress through eight curriculum *levels* (pp.18–19). The range and complexity of the achievement objectives increases from level to level. As they progress through the levels, students become familiar with a broadening range of vocabulary, increasingly complex language structures, and more challenging contexts for language use. When asked to indicate their support for the section on *levels*, approximately two in five respondents (43%) indicated that they supported ‘all or most’ of this section, and a further quarter (27%) indicated that they supported ‘about half’ of it.

⁴ This and further page references given in this section of the present report refer to the page numbers in the draft document *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*.

TABLE 4: *The extent to which respondents supported specific aspects of the draft curriculum guidelines for French*

Aspect of the draft curriculum guidelines	Support all or most of this section	Support about half of this section	Support none or less than half of this section	Have no opinion on this section	Cannot make a single rating because opinions are too diverse ^a	Not answered
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Language-specific Aims (p.18)	89.2	4.7	–	0.7	–	5.4
Levels (pp.18–19)	42.6	27.0	20.9	0.7	–	8.8
Proficiency Target Statements (pp.19–20)	41.9	20.9	27.0	1.4	–	8.8
Grouping the Language Skills (p.20)	77.0	10.8	3.4	0.7	–	8.1
Achievement Objectives (p.21)	39.9	29.7	22.3	0.7	–	7.4
Suggested Sociocultural Aspects (p.22)	59.5	15.5	14.9	0.7	–	9.5
Suggested Topics (p.22)	52.7	19.6	16.9	1.4	–	9.5
Suggested Text Types (p.22)	63.5	14.9	9.5	2.0	–	10.1
Suggested Structures and Examples (p.23)	43.9	23.0	22.3	1.4	–	9.5
Suggested Vocabulary (p.24)	26.4	21.6	41.2	0.7	–	10.1
Communicative Grammar Activities (pp.24–25)	54.1	25.7	8.8	1.4	–	10.1
Assessment and Assessment Activities (pp.25–26)	53.4	20.9	14.9	1.4	–	9.5

a This response category was included because of the suggestion at the beginning of the questionnaire that the person in each school nominated to complete the questionnaire should arrange for group discussions with appropriate staff and submit a response that took account of the views expressed.

Just under half of the 44 teachers who commented on why they supported half or less of the section on levels within the draft curriculum guidelines for French, felt that the content that students had to achieve to enable them to work successfully at level 6 (NCEA5 level 1) was “too much” or “too difficult”. A small number of these respondents added that being able to meet the requirements of level 6 of the curriculum guidelines depended on the starting year of students⁶. One of these teachers commented:

“Essentially the levels are good: well sequenced; well defined. Complications arise, however, because of the variation in age at which students begin French. The expectation that students work at levels 5 and 6 in their third year (Year 11) at

⁵ NCEA = National Certificate in Educational Achievement.

⁶ The draft document *French in the New Zealand Curriculum* states (p.19) that: ‘The levels described in these draft curriculum guidelines do not coincide with traditional form levels or with students’ years of schooling. The age at which students begin learning a language will be one factor in determining what level or levels a class might work within in the course of one year. For example, many students in a Year 7 class might work towards level 1 objectives only, but many students beginning to learn French in Year 9 might be able to meet the achievement objectives for levels 1 and 2 within one year.’

*secondary school does seem to **depend** on **all** students starting their learning of French in Year 7.”*

Some added that the levels in general needed refining or that there was too much to cover at each level (especially given the time allocated to teaching French) or that content overall was too difficult.

Eleven teachers further indicated that there needed to be clarification of how the levels within the curriculum related to NCEA levels and student year/class levels.

- The **proficiency target statements** (pp.19–20), presented at the beginning of each curriculum level, describe the general level of French-language proficiency that students will need in order to meet the achievement objectives at that curriculum level. Asked for their views on the section outlining the nature and purpose of the *proficiency target statements*, 42 percent of respondents gave a rating of ‘support all or most of this section’ and another 21 percent indicated that they supported ‘about half’.

The level of difficulty was the main issue raised by respondents who supported ‘about half’ or less of the *proficiency target statements*, some suggesting that students would not be able to reach the ‘*personal independence target*’ (ie, successfully achieve at levels 7 and 8 of the curriculum), and that more time was needed for the development of social competence. This group of teachers also referred to the language of the proficiency target statements, half of those who commented noting that they felt the statements should be defined more clearly and simply.

- The section on **grouping the language skills** (p.20) refers to how the language skills can be grouped as oral language skills (listening and speaking) and written language skills (reading and writing). The data revealed a high degree of support, with 77 percent of respondents supporting ‘all or most’ of this section and a further 11 percent supporting ‘about half’ of it.
- The **achievement objectives**⁷ describe what learners are expected to achieve at each level of the curriculum. Support for the section explaining the *achievement objectives* (p.21) was not as strong as it was for several other sections of the curriculum guidelines document, with 40 percent of respondents indicating that they supported ‘all or most’ of this section and a further 30 percent that they supported ‘about half’ of it.

Nearly half of the (53) comments made by those who supported half or less of the section on *achievement objectives* referred to the objectives as being wordy or couched in unnecessarily complex language. A few respondents reported that they did not like the term ‘achievement objectives’, and suggested ‘communication functions’ or ‘learning objectives’ as alternatives. The notion of ‘recycled’ was considered to be confusing by 11 respondents; four of these 11 respondents thought either ‘extension’ or ‘expansion’ would be preferable alternative terms.

- The **suggested sociocultural aspects** (p.22) propose that learning about historical and social aspects of French-speaking societies will enable students to make comparisons with the cultures of New Zealand. Three out of five respondents (59%) supported ‘all or most’ of the section on the suggested sociocultural framework, while a further 16 percent agreed with ‘about half’ of it.
- The section on **suggested topics** (p.22) outlines topics for students to study in order to meet the achievement objectives within the curriculum. *Suggested topics* are listed for each curriculum level.

⁷ Achievement objectives are developed at eight levels. Within any one unit of work or activity, students will generally work towards objectives from more than one strand. Descriptors accompany every achievement objective, providing examples of learning experiences in which students must demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding that are in keeping with meeting a particular achievement objective.

Approximately half (53%) of the respondents supported ‘all or most’ of the section on *suggested topics* and a further 20 percent supported ‘about half’.

Lack of correlation with achievement objectives, suggested vocabulary, and curriculum levels was the most common concern expressed by respondents who commented on why they supported half or less of the section which explained *suggested topics*. Several teachers said that topics should be prescribed and a small number stated that they preferred a thematic rather than a grammar-based approach.

- The draft curriculum guidelines for French state that ‘*Different cultures recognise distinct text types. Examples of written text types are personal and business letters, forms, manuals, and reviews. Spoken text types include weather forecasts, lectures, sports commentaries, and news bulletins. At each level, these curriculum guidelines suggest a range of text types to which students may be introduced in the course of their learning. ... Teachers may [also] decide to focus on other text types.*’ When asked for their views on **suggested text types** (p.22), approximately three in five respondents (64%) indicated that they supported ‘all or most’ of this section. Another 15 percent said they supported ‘about half’ of it.
- The **suggested structures and examples** (p.23) section outlines the philosophy behind the curriculum guidelines document. For example, the draft curriculum guidelines state that ‘*Learners can assimilate language structures more readily when the structures are introduced and used in the context of meaningful communication. As they communicate, they will discover that some structures have different meanings when they are used in different contexts.*’ The guidelines also suggest that certain language structures can be learned at more than one level, and acknowledge that it is generally best to introduce simple structures first, building gradually towards more complex ones. Under half (44%) of the respondents chose the rating ‘support all or most of this section’ and a further 23 percent chose the rating ‘support about half of this section’.

Thirty-eight respondents who supported half or less of this section of the curriculum guidelines document gave reasons for their answer. The main issue for almost a third of this group concerned the level of difficulty or appropriateness of the *suggested structures and examples*. Other views were that there should be a prescribed or minimum set of structures to be learned and that the suggested structures and examples were too wordy or used language that was not always relevant to students or appropriate to the specific curriculum level.

- Of all aspects of the curriculum guidelines document listed in Table 4, support was lowest for the section entitled **suggested vocabulary** (p.24), with only 26 percent of respondents supporting ‘all or most’ of this section, and 22 percent supporting ‘about half’ of it. A large proportion (41%) of respondents supported ‘none or less than half’ of the section on suggested vocabulary.

The draft curriculum guidelines state that ‘*The vocabulary lists at each level are not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive. They indicate the types of vocabulary that students are likely to need to meet their achievement objectives. Teachers should add vocabulary that relates to the interests and capabilities of their students and to the specific requirements of their programmes.*’ Most of the concerns raised related to a need for prescribed or specific vocabulary lists, some adding that specific lists were necessary for NCEA or external examination requirements. Others stated that they would like a minimum list provided, although some teachers suggested that any such list would need to be updated and revised as necessary. Standardised vocabulary lists were viewed as providing equity for students studying French nationwide and as providing consistency for students transferring between schools.

As one teacher put it:

“It is absolutely essential that there be a finite vocabulary list set for the levels which sit external examinations. This is to ensure a common goal among students nationwide, making the qualification transportable, but also being fair to all students by making the requirements clear and transparent.”

A few respondents reported that some of the suggested vocabulary did not correlate with the curriculum guidelines’ *suggested structures* or *achievement objectives*, while other teachers said that the vocabulary was too formal and that some commonly used words were not included in the list. For example:

“I don’t agree that the vocab lists cover what students need to meet the objectives — some examples are too formal or unlikely to be of use and many other simpler or more current vocab is not included in the examples.”

- The purpose of the **communicative grammar activities** (pp.24–25) in the curriculum guidelines is to allow students to practise grammar in realistic contexts. There was general support for this section, with over half (54%) of respondents supporting ‘all or most’ of this section and a further 26 percent supporting ‘about half’ of it.

Although a range of issues was raised by those supporting only half or less of this section, the most commonly mentioned concern was that some grammar was introduced too early.

- Data showed that 53 percent of respondents supported ‘all or most’ of the section on **assessment and assessment activities** (pp.25–26 in the draft curriculum guidelines document for French), and that a further 21 percent supported ‘about half’ of it.

Twenty of the teachers who supported half or less of this aspect of the draft curriculum guidelines described the assessment as time-consuming, unrealistic or inappropriate to the target group, or stated that it did not correspond with NCEA assessment requirements.

Support for Specific Aspects of the Eight Learning Levels within the Draft Document *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*

As mentioned earlier in this report, there are eight progressive levels of learning specified in the draft curriculum guidelines. Respondents were asked to indicate whether their school either supported or had concerns about specific aspects within each level. Table 5 summarises responses to this question. It should be noted that respondents were asked to refrain from giving an estimate of support if they, and those with whom they had consulted, had not yet considered a particular aspect or level, had no particular opinion about them or were not sure, or the level in question was not being taught in their school.

It can be seen in Table 5 that at least 20 percent of respondents did not offer an opinion about the various aspects at each level, with the rates of non-response increasing for the higher levels⁸. In general, however, the degree of support decreased for each successive level.

Respondents who indicated that they had concerns were asked to outline what these concerns were, linking their comments to specific level(s) and aspects. Their observations were quite detailed and specific and have been passed on to the Curriculum Division within the Ministry of Education so that they can be taken into account when the curriculum guidelines for French are being finalised.

⁸ Refer to footnote 6 on page 7 for an explanation of ‘levels’ within the curriculum guidelines for French and how they relate to the year/class levels of students.

TABLE 5: The extent to which respondents expressed support for or concern about aspects of the eight levels of learning within the draft curriculum guidelines for French

Aspect of each level	Support or concern for objectives?	Levels 1 – 8 of the curriculum guidelines							
		1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %
Proficiency Target Statements	Support	68.2	54.7	48.6	38.5	31.8	29.1	27.0	26.4
	Concern	9.5	13.5	17.6	26.4	30.4	31.8	26.4	25.7
	No response	22.3	31.8	33.8	35.1	37.8	39.2	46.6	48.0
Achievement Objectives	Support	62.8	45.3	48.0	29.7	28.4	29.1	31.1	29.7
	Concern	13.5	23.6	20.9	37.2	35.1	32.4	24.3	24.3
	No response	23.6	31.1	31.1	33.1	36.5	38.5	44.6	45.9
Suggested Sociocultural Aspects, Topics, and Text Types	Support	66.9	58.1	50.0	48.6	46.6	43.9	35.1	37.8
	Concern	7.4	10.1	15.5	16.2	14.9	15.5	17.6	15.5
	No response	25.7	31.8	34.5	35.1	38.5	40.5	47.3	46.6
Suggested Structures and Examples	Support	56.8	38.5	37.2	24.3	18.9	22.3	27.7	26.4
	Concern	19.6	30.4	31.1	41.9	45.3	40.5	26.4	26.4
	No response	23.6	31.1	31.8	33.8	35.8	37.2	45.9	47.3
Recycled Achievement Objectives	Support		45.3	44.6	33.8	27.0	29.7	33.8	33.1
	Concern	N/a	18.2	19.6	31.8	33.8	29.1	19.6	17.6
	No response		36.5	35.8	34.5	39.2	41.2	46.6	49.3
Suggested Vocabulary	Support	41.9	26.4	29.7	27.0	22.3	17.6	22.3	18.2
	Concern	33.1	42.3	37.2	40.5	43.2	42.6	33.1	35.1
	No response	25.0	31.1	33.1	32.4	34.5	39.9	44.6	46.6
Suggested Learning and Assessment Activities	Support	62.8	50.0	43.9	39.2	35.1	33.1	31.8	29.1
	Concern	11.5	15.5	20.3	23.6	23.6	22.3	18.2	17.6
	No response	25.7	34.5	35.8	37.2	41.2	44.6	50.0	53.4

Further Views on the Achievement Objectives

Additional information about the achievement objectives was sought. The question put to respondents asked them to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ according to whether or not they thought the achievement objectives in the draft curriculum guidelines were (a) expressed in a way that enable them to be easily assessed, (b) clearly specified, (c) clearly differentiated from one level to another and (d) appropriate for their level.

Table 6 shows that just one-fifth (20%) of respondents felt that the achievement objectives were at the appropriate level for which they were specified. Furthermore, considerably fewer than half felt that the objectives were either able to be assessed easily (36%) or were clearly specified (40%), and only slightly more (45%) felt that the objectives were clearly differentiated from one level to another.

TABLE 6: Views on the achievement objectives within the draft curriculum guidelines for French

Are the achievement objectives ...	Yes		No		Not answered	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
...expressed in ways that can easily be assessed?	54	36.5	75	50.7	19	12.8
...clearly specified?	59	39.9	68	46.0	21	14.2
...clearly differentiated from one level to another?	66	44.6	57	38.5	25	16.9
...appropriate at the level for which they are specified?	30	20.3	92	62.2	26	17.6

Respondents who answered ‘No’ in relation to any of the four statements listed in Table 6 were asked to give reasons for their answer, linking their comments to the specific achievement objectives/levels about which they had concerns. However, 22 teachers provided a general response, most referring to the degree of difficulty, or wordiness of the achievement objectives overall.

Teachers commenting specifically in relation to whether the achievement objectives were ‘clearly specified’ said the objectives were wordy or not user-friendly, whereas others commenting on how readily the achievement objectives could be assessed emphasised a need for the objectives to be defined more clearly and simply.

The teachers who commented on whether the achievement objectives were appropriate at the levels for which they are specified most often said that some aspect of level 4 was too advanced. Smaller numbers noted that some of the objectives given for levels 3, 5, and 6 were too difficult.

Further Views on the Suggested Learning and Assessment Activities

In addition to the information summarised in Table 5 above on the *suggested learning and assessment activities*, respondents were also asked whether they (and, where relevant, others in the school with whom they had consulted) felt that the activities provided were (a) helpful in achieving the learning outcomes, (b) sufficiently varied and (c) at the appropriate level.

Table 7 shows that high proportions of respondents considered that the suggested learning and assessment activities were helpful (64%) and that the examples given were sufficiently varied (69%). However opinion on whether the activities were appropriate at the levels for which they were specified was more evenly divided.

TABLE 7: Views on the suggested learning and assessment activities within the draft curriculum guidelines for French

With regard to the learning and assessment activities ...	Yes		No		Not answered	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
...are they helpful in achieving the learning outcome?	95	64.2	27	18.2	26	17.6
...are there sufficiently varied examples?	102	68.9	21	14.2	25	16.9
...are they appropriate at the levels for which they are specified?	62	41.9	59	39.9	27	18.2

Those who did not feel that the learning and assessment activities contained in the draft curriculum guidelines were helpful, sufficiently varied, or appropriate for the level at which they appear were invited to elaborate on their answers.

Only small numbers of teachers explained why they did not feel the suggested activities were helpful for achieving learning outcomes (12) or explained why they did not feel the activities were sufficiently varied (8), and their comments were of a diverse nature. A further 14 teachers chose to write a general comment, most saying that the suggested learning and assessment activities were inappropriate for their target group. This point was also raised by some of the 43 teachers who explained why they did not think the activities were appropriate at the levels for which they were specified. A quarter of this group specifically noted that the activities for level 3, in particular, aspects of activity 3.5, were too advanced for students at that level.

Views on including additional learning and assessment activities in the curriculum guidelines

To a question which asked if there were additional learning and assessment activities they would find useful in helping students meet the objectives in the curriculum, 45 percent of respondents felt there were not. However, a sizeable minority (30%) of respondents felt that there were⁹.

Views on the Glossary of Terms

Respondents were asked ‘Do you think the definitions in the **Glossary of Terms** are appropriate ones?’ Nearly three out of five respondents (59%) thought that all of the definitions were appropriate, only a small proportion (18%) expressing the view that some definitions were not¹⁰. Remaining respondents omitted to answer the question.

Views on extending the glossary

When asked if they felt there were other terms that should be included in the *Glossary of Terms*, just under a quarter (22%) of respondents felt that there were¹¹, while half of the respondents said ‘No’.

⁹ Respondents who stated that there were additional learning and assessment activities that they would find useful were asked to outline them and specify at what level they would be appropriate. A list of the specific activities suggested has been passed on to the Curriculum Division within the Ministry for consideration when finalising the curriculum document.

¹⁰ Some respondents who felt that a number of the definitions were not appropriate provided what they considered to be more appropriate terms and definitions. These have also been passed on to the Curriculum Division for consideration when the curriculum guidelines for French are being finalised.

¹¹ The additional terms suggested covered a wide range and have also been passed on to the Curriculum Division for consideration.

Views on the Usefulness of the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French as a Guide to Planning, Classroom Practice, Assessment, and Reporting

The first of a series of more general questions about the draft curriculum guidelines asked teachers if they had found the document easy to come to grips with as a guide to planning, classroom practice, assessment, and reporting. The data from this question are presented in Table 8.

Approximately a quarter of respondents had not used the curriculum guidelines document for each of the purposes stated. In addition, only small proportions of respondents indicated that the draft curriculum guidelines had been easy to come to grips with as a guide to planning (21%), as a guide to classroom practice (22%), as a guide to assessment (17%) or as a guide to reporting (14%).

Thirty-seven teachers explained why they had not found the guidelines easy to come to grips with. The most common reason was that the language of the curriculum guidelines was too verbose and/or complex — in other words, they had not found the document user-friendly.

Other teachers commented on the level of difficulty, or said that the suggested structures were either not suitable, were misplaced, or too numerous. One teacher said:

“Makes it difficult to do any of the above until simplified and clarified and made more appropriate.”

Several of the 37 respondents also stated that they did not find the guidelines easy to come to grips with as a ‘guide to reporting’, and could not see any specific reference to reporting in the draft document.

TABLE 8: *Views on the draft curriculum guidelines for French as a guide for planning, classroom practice, assessment, and reporting*

Is the draft easy to come to grips with...	Yes		No		Cannot comment, opinions are too diverse ^a		Not applicable, not used		Not answered	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	%	%	N	%
...as a guide to planning?	31	20.9	58	39.2	2	1.4	38	25.7	19	12.8
...as a guide to classroom practice?	32	21.6	54	36.5	4	2.7	39	26.4	19	12.8
...as a guide to assessment?	25	16.9	59	39.9	2	1.4	43	29.1	19	12.8
...as a guide to reporting?	21	14.2	63	42.6	1	0.7	43	29.1	20	13.5

a This response category was included because of the suggestion at the beginning of the questionnaire that the person in each school nominated to complete the questionnaire should arrange for group discussions with appropriate staff and submit a response that took account of the views expressed.

Views on Whether the Draft Curriculum Document was a Suitable Basis for Effective Teaching and Learning Programmes in French

To the question ‘Do you feel that the draft document provides a suitable base on which to structure effective teaching and learning programmes?’, less than a third (30%) of respondents answered ‘Yes’. Of the remaining respondents, over half (56%) felt that the document did not provide a suitable base (Table 9).

TABLE 9: Views on whether the draft curriculum document provided a suitable basis for effective teaching and learning programmes in French

Whether the draft provided a suitable basis for effective teaching and learning programmes	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	%
Yes	44	29.7
No	83	56.1
Cannot comment, opinions are too diverse ^a	–	–
Not applicable, not familiar enough with this to be able to judge	6	4.1
No reply	15	10.1
Total	N = 148	100.0

^a This response category was included because of the suggestion at the beginning of the questionnaire that the person in each school nominated to complete the questionnaire should arrange for group discussions with appropriate staff and submit a response that took account of the views expressed.

Of the 60 teachers who commented on their response, a third (19) said that the draft document needed to be made more user-friendly and 11 said that it needed to be “reworked”. The curriculum content was considered to be “too much” by nearly a quarter of the 60 respondents and a fifth of these teachers added that the levels within the draft curriculum were “too difficult” compared to NCEA levels.

Fewer than half of the 44 teachers who considered that the draft document did provide a suitable basis for effective teaching and learning gave reasons for their answer. Some of those who did comment simply expressed their support unequivocally. For example, one teacher said the draft guidelines were ...

“... a big improvement on the syllabus. Now we have a document which says what we have largely been doing for the last five to 10 years anyway.”

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, CRITICAL ISSUES, AND OVERALL RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT CURRICULUM GUIDELINES FOR FRENCH

This section presents information from four ‘summing up’ questions which asked respondents for their (and their school’s) overall response to the draft guidelines, and for their views of the strengths, weaknesses and critical issues of the draft curriculum guidelines.

Respondents’ Ratings of their School’s Overall Response to the Draft Guidelines for French in the New Zealand Curriculum

When asked to rate how favourable the overall response within their school was to the draft curriculum guidelines for French, over half (55%) of the respondents indicated that the response was ‘not favourable’; only just over a fifth (22%) of respondents indicated that it was ‘favourable’. Table 10 provides further details.

TABLE 10: Respondents’ views on how favourable they thought their school’s overall response was to the draft curriculum guidelines for French

Rating of school’s overall response to the draft guidelines	Number of responses N	Proportion of responses %
Favourable	33	22.3
Neither favourable nor unfavourable	19	12.8
Not favourable	82	55.4
Cannot comment, opinions are too diverse ^a	1	0.7
No reply	13	8.8
Total	N = 148	100.0

a This response category was included because of the suggestion at the beginning of the questionnaire that the person in each school nominated to complete the questionnaire should arrange for group discussions with appropriate staff and submit a response that took account of the views expressed.

Views on the Strengths of the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French

The second of four ‘summing up’ questions asked respondents (and those with whom they had consulted) to nominate what they considered were the three significant strengths of the draft curriculum guidelines. Although most respondents identified specific aspects of the curriculum guidelines or document itself, others made more general comments, for example, about the overall clarity of the document.

As Table 11 illustrates, the *Introduction* to the draft curriculum guidelines received the highest level of support (46 respondents). The *Why Learn French* section within the *Introduction* was reported to be particularly useful by 19 of the 46 respondents and other sections of the introduction were noted as useful. One teacher said:

“The material to page seventeen [of the curriculum guidelines document] I found very thought-provoking; I have already used the ‘Why Learn French’ pages as a handout to send home to parents.”

The *suggested learning and assessment activities* also received considerable support. Teachers who nominated these as a strength of the curriculum guidelines commented positively on the amount, range and usefulness of the suggested activities.

A quarter of those who identified *suggested structures and examples* as a significant strength of the draft curriculum guidelines considered that, on the whole, they were clearly stated. The extent, variety, and usefulness of the structures and examples were also commented on positively.

A further 12 respondents in each case commented that they felt the *achievement objectives* were clearly stated and that the format of the draft guidelines was clear and sufficiently detailed. A similar number of respondents described the tables within the document as being well laid out and organised.

Some of the respondents who identified the *levels* as a significant strength of the draft curriculum guidelines explained that they felt the progression of the levels had been well thought out, a few adding that the increasing levels of difficulty would prepare students well for post-secondary education.

Other significant strengths were nominated by fewer than 10 respondents in each case.

TABLE 11: Significant **strengths** of the draft curriculum guidelines for French according to respondents

Strengths	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Introduction to the document	46	31.1
Suggested Learning and Assessment Activities	34	23.0
Suggested Structures and Examples	23	15.6
Levels	17	11.5
Achievement Objectives	12	8.1
Suggested Sociocultural Aspects	9	6.1
Suggested Topics	5	3.4
Vocabulary relating to information technology	5	3.4
Suggested Vocabulary	4	2.7
Proficiency Target Statements	3	2.0
Suggested Text Types	3	2.0
The document itself: detail /clarity	13	8.8
Format: clarity	12	8.1
Tables	10	6.8
Index within the document	3	2.0
Flexibility	9	6.1
General positive comments	8	5.4
Updates French syllabus	6	4.1
Total	N = 148	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could select more than one option.

Views on the *Weaknesses* of the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French

The third of the ‘summing up’ questions asked respondents to list what they felt to be three significant weaknesses of the draft curriculum guidelines.

As shown in Table 12, the most common weakness identified by respondents concerned the *levels* within the draft guidelines. Most often, respondents expressed concern about the degree of difficulty of the levels either generally and/or in relation to specific levels. Several teachers added that the lack of correspondence between year/class levels of students and curriculum levels was also a weakness.

TABLE 12: *Significant weaknesses of the draft curriculum guidelines for French according to respondents*

Weaknesses	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Levels	56	37.8
Suggested Vocabulary	52	35.1
Suggested Topics	25	16.9
Suggested Structures and Examples	23	15.6
Achievement Objectives	14	9.5
Suggested Learning and Assessment Activities	11	7.4
Proficiency Target Statements	4	2.7
Language of document	51	34.5
Too much content to cover	24	16.2
The document itself: lack of detail / clarity	20	13.6
Some aspects not relevant to students	4	2.7
Lack of suitable resources to support the curriculum	5	3.4
Teacher workload involved in its implementation	3	2.0
No weaknesses in the draft document	6	4.1
Total	N = 148	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could select more than one option.

A large majority of the 52 respondents who nominated the *suggested vocabulary* as a significant weakness said that they would like to see prescribed or specific vocabulary lists. Some of these teachers said that such lists were necessary in order to meet external assessment requirements. A small number of teachers described the suggested vocabulary as random, poorly related to other aspects of the curriculum guidelines, or not user-friendly.

The majority of the 51 respondents who felt that the language used in the document itself was a weakness referred to the document as being too wordy, or as containing too much jargon. Several respondents added that the language was too complex, a small number specifically referring to the inclusion of meta-language in the document.

Although 24 respondents nominated “too much content” as being a significant weakness of the curriculum guidelines, most qualified this by saying that this was because insufficient time was allocated for the teaching French to allow them to cover all or most of what was set out in the guidelines.

Most who nominated *suggested topics* within the curriculum guidelines as a significant weakness explained that they had done so because they did not agree with the shift from the topic/theme-based approach advocated by the French syllabus. A few respondents in this group also stated that they would prefer a prescribed or core set of topics.

Those who felt that the *suggested structures and examples* were a significant weakness stated that this was mainly because the suggestions were either too numerous or too difficult.

Other weaknesses listed in Table 12 were each nominated by fewer than 10 percent of respondents.

Views on *Critical Issues* Facing Schools in Implementing Programmes Based on the Draft Curriculum Guidelines for French

The fourth of the ‘summing up’ questions asked *‘What are the three most critical issues for you and your school in implementing programmes based on the draft curriculum guidelines?’* Respondents’ answers fell into three main groupings. Most often the issues identified related to the need for more time, resources and professional development in order to implement the curriculum. The second main grouping concerned particular aspects of the curriculum guidelines document itself — its content and implementation. The third group of issues involved ‘context’ of the proposed curriculum guidelines, both at a national level and at the school level — for example, how the proposed curriculum guidelines relate to the NCEA or the National Language Policy, and how student retention and multi-level classes impact on implementation of the curriculum guidelines for French. Table 13 provides further details.

Having sufficient time to teach the content of the curriculum was the most common concern for the teachers who reported time as a critical issue. Some teachers also said that it was important to have time to prepare to implement the new curriculum. A related issue identified by 16 percent of teachers was the need for (more) professional development for teachers in order to successfully implement the proposed curriculum.

Almost a quarter of respondents identified that a critical issue concerned the availability of updated resources to support implementation of the guidelines, many of this group saying that existing texts were no longer suitable.

Around a quarter of respondents also felt that assessment was a critical issue, mostly because of concerns about different assessment requirements for each of the curriculum guidelines and the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA). Some respondents, for example, stated that the assessment requirements within the draft curriculum should correspond with NCEA requirements, while others said that it was difficult to implement a new curriculum at the same time as adapting to the demands of the NCEA.

While there were teachers who took issue with particular aspects of the guidelines, such as vocabulary, one in five teachers who identified critical issues or concerns made the broad observation that the draft document as a whole needed to be rewritten or reworked. Some reiterated the need for a clear document, written in user-friendly language.

The data in Table 13 show that other critical issues for the teacher or the school in implementing French-language programmes based on the draft curriculum guidelines were each raised by less than 10 percent of respondents.

TABLE 13: Critical issues for schools in implementing programmes based on the draft curriculum guidelines for French

Critical issues in implementing the draft curriculum guidelines	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
	N	% ^a
Time	48	32.4
Resources	36	24.3
Professional development	24	16.2
Nature of text books available	22	14.9
Teacher exhaustion/workload	12	8.1
Issues concerning implementation of the draft guidelines	8	5.4
Assessment	35	23.6
The nature of the document itself (eg, not user friendly)	33	22.3
Vocabulary	17	11.5
Too much content to cover	12	8.1
Level of difficulty of content	10	6.8
Achievement Objectives	9	6.1
Suggested Topics	7	4.7
Suggested Structures and Examples	7	4.7
Suggested Sociocultural Aspects	3	2.0
Student retention	8	5.4
Multi-level classes	4	2.7
Relationship to National Language Policy	3	2.0
Total	N = 148	

a Percentages in this table add to more than 100 percent as respondents could select more than one option.

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The large majority of respondents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their response (and, where relevant, the response of others in the school with whom they had consulted) was based on reading the draft document, *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*, forming an overall impression, and relating and comparing the draft document with their existing programmes. Only a small number had responded on the basis of having used the draft document to plan (and trial) lessons in the classroom.

While respondents’ overall response to the draft curriculum guidelines for French was not favourable, they did identify a number of strengths. These included the *Introduction* (especially the section on *Why Learn French*), the *Suggested Learning and Assessment Activities*, and *Suggested Structures and Examples*.

Some of the particular areas of concern identified by respondents related directly to the format of the draft curriculum document, its content, and the perceived difficulty of the proposed levels within the curriculum. Other concerns, however, were to do with the wider context for the curriculum guidelines and assessment considerations. For example, some teachers identified a need for prescribed vocabulary lists within the curriculum guidelines to assist in meeting the external examination requirements of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA).

In addition to the findings presented in this report, many more specific or detailed comments and suggestions made by respondents have been passed on to the Curriculum Division within the Ministry of Education, to those responsible for reviewing the draft document. These comments, along with present data and feedback received from other forms of consultation with the sector about the draft curriculum guidelines, will be taken into account when finalising *French in the New Zealand Curriculum*.