

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE Applied French (2707/3701/3702)

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Summer 2008

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CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

This third year of the pilot saw an increase in entries across all units. This improved the accuracy of the statistical information produced this year.

The following codes apply to papers in the third year of the pilot:

- 5751 Applied Oral Communication in a specialist context
- 5752 Applied Written Communication in a specialist context
- 5753 Understanding Applied Oral Communication
- 5754 Understanding Applied Written Communication

Based on performance at Key Stage 3 in core subjects, evidence suggested that this year's cohort was more capable than that of 2007. This trend suggests a move towards greater parity with the entry pattern of the 'traditional' GCSE French. Candidates performed better in the Listening and Reading tests than in the Oral and Writing. Whether this is because these test receptive skills rather than productive skills, are on-screen rather than on paper, and generic rather than specialist, is hard to say.

5751 - APPLIED ORAL COMMUNICATION

Centres provided candidates with a variety of tasks across the three specialist contexts and these were used by candidates to show capability within the spoken language in both the interactions and presentations.

5751/01

Centres should ensure that they act upon information provided by Edexcel throughout the year. Since the qualification is still a pilot, there were some changes to the procedures, including the assessment criteria which were changed due to the new specification. Centres should be aware that all candidates should have at least three recorded interactions and the best three recordings, one of which should be from March to May in the final year of the course, are submitted to Edexcel for moderation by B centres. From next year all centres are required to record at least three interactions and these will be sent to Edexcel for moderation (including centres presently accredited as A centres).

The best tasks were as authentic as possible and allowed candidates to show spontaneity within the interaction. This required skilful questioning by teacher-examiners as part of the interaction but also allowed the candidates to take the initiative and manipulate the language to make it their own. Candidates should be encouraged to master the framing of questions as a natural part of the interaction. It is important for centres to realise that too similar interactions, questioning and a lack of unpredictable elements prevents candidates from reaching their potential and the higher mark bands.

Candidates, in less successful tasks often had little or no opportunity to use a variety of tenses or structures. Weaker candidates were often very reliant on the vocabulary and structures of the teacher-examiner and produced little of their own language.

Centres should beware of a long list of points that must be covered as failure to do so will affect the successful completion of the task and therefore the marks of the candidate will be affected. Wording such as *you may wish to include* is recommended.

Successful stimulus material was fairly brief or a series of pictures. All three interactions should be of roughly equal length and relate to the same specialist context.

Too often very similar work was seen across a whole centre including the questioning of the teacher-examiner and responses of the candidates. Centres are reminded that candidates are expected to be able to respond to unpredictable elements in order to reach the higher mark bands. These should follow the responses of individual candidates rather than be the same for all.

ASSESSMENT

Centres were generally generous in their marking but consistently so in overvaluing the performance of candidates in both communication and application of language. Too much credit was given to work that was over reliant on the stimulus and to work that was pedestrian or formulaic. Centres must take into account how a candidate takes the initiative within the task rather than just respond to a series of questions or go through a list of tasks from the stimulus. Work that shows a real flair and a sophistication of ideas, opinions, structure and vocabulary may reach the highest mark band for communication.

In terms of application of language, centres must take into consideration the amount of ambiguity produced by poorly formed verbs, inaccurate tenses and repetition of structures and vocabulary.

Centres are reminded that tenses should be integral to the task rather than an afterthought. Candidates score more highly where a variety of tenses and structures are used throughout the interaction rather than bunched at the end.

It was noted that there were a greater number of lower attaining candidates who completed all three interactions compared with previous series.

5751/02 - PRESENTATION & FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Most centres chose an appropriate topic related to the specialist context. However, centres are reminded of the applied nature of the specification and simply choosing my holiday for example is not appropriate and simply changing the subject slightly to a report on a visit to a country/place for a local magazine. Centres are also reminded that the topic chosen should not overlap with topics chosen for the written communication element. The new individual learner record sheets for both the oral and written communication require all titles to be written down and this should prevent any overlap.

There as much evidence of rote learning of the presentation. This is against the spirit of the examination and was often self penalising and incomprehensible. It resulted in a poorly pronounced piece of work with poor intonation and some candidates did not seem to understand what they were saying.

At times very similar work was seen across a whole centre, often when the presentation had been prepared about work experience, a local leisure topic or something similar. The delivery where this was the case was often less confident as the candidate did not have ownership of the work. Moderators are looking at how candidates are able to manipulate language to make it their own.

Centres should be aware that candidates are only allowed to take into the examination room notes which consist of no more than 30 words and which fit on to an A5 piece of paper. They may be in the form of bullet points or spider diagrams or illustrative material providing the word count is adhered to.

The follow-up questions and answers should be relevant to the specialist context rather than a general question and answer exercise. It should be as natural dialogue as possible building on the responses of the candidate rather than just a list of questions that all candidates are required to answer. The most successful questioning picked up on points made during the presentation before becoming more general within the specialist context.

All too often the questions were similar for all candidates. These questions should be appropriate to the ability of the candidate and more able candidates should be given the opportunity to offer a variety of tenses and a range of structures and vocabulary using more complex language in response to a variety of question forms.

Centres are reminded that they should adhere to the requirements of the specification in terms of timing. Candidates are able to score highly within the 1-2 minutes for each part of the presentation and follow-up questions, 2-4 minutes in total.

ASSESSMENT

Although the presentations were once again marked out of 30 in total there was a change in the assessment criteria and the marks awarded for each section, it is important that all centres are aware of the latest changes to procedures and these criteria. A significant number of centres overvalued the performance of candidates but consistently so and there was evidence of internal standardisation at the majority of centres.

Centres are reminded that in order to access the higher mark bands for communication in the follow-up questions candidates are expected to show real flair and a sophistication of ideas, opinions, structure and vocabulary, responding to a variety of question types.

For Application of Language, centres must take into consideration the amount of ambiguity produced by poorly formed verbs, inaccurate tenses and repetition of structures and vocabulary. Tenses used as an afterthought at the end rather than integral to the piece are unlikely to gain the candidate high marks. It is also essential that the candidate is able to offer a variety of forms of subordination appropriate to the task.

For accuracy, in order to reach the higher mark bands more complex language needs to be used rather than just the absence of error. It should be noted that most verbs will need to be correct in order to reach the top two mark bands. Centres should also be aware that poor pronunciation will also be a bar to higher marks as it contributes to errors.

The marks for Application of Language and Accuracy are marked globally across the presentation and follow-up questions and answers. If a candidate is unable to respond to the same level across both these marks will be affected.

ADMINISTRATION

Centres are reminded that the interactions and presentations may have different candidates requested for moderation and are asked to take note of this. Similarly, the work of the highest and lowest candidates must be included in the sample sent to the moderator even if not selected by Edexcel.

All stimulus materials must be sent with the recordings. Failure to do so will result in delays to the moderation.

All materials must be packed carefully to ensure that they are not damaged in the post.

It is most helpful if performances are recorded on CD but if not that each candidate is recorded on separate cassettes with the interactions on one side and presentations on the other.

All cassette inserts and boxes should have the candidate names and numbers in order to help the moderation process.

Moderators wish to thank centres who carried out the requirements of the specification successfully.

5752 - APPLIED WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

There was a pleasing cross-section of coursework tasks across the three specialist contexts and candidates were provided with imaginative stimuli in most centres enabling them to show capability within the written language.

Some centres used stimuli provided in the coursework guide and adapted them to suit their own candidates; others used their own stimuli. In either case centres are to be congratulated on the quality of the stimuli given.

TASKS

Tasks which were more successful allowed candidates to demonstrate linking, opinion and logical argument. These included an opportunity to use a variety of tenses, structures and vocabulary in each unit of work. Weaker candidates were able to write simple sentences and paragraphs without too much adherence to stimulus material.

There should be a wide variety of tasks available and candidates encouraged to produce different styles of writing.

Tasks should not be too prescriptive and a large list of bullet points to be covered is not helpful to candidates. Wording such as *You may wish to include some of the following points* is more appropriate.

Successful tasks included:

- Use of minimal stimulus, such as bullet points and the opportunity to include some unpredictable elements of the candidate's choosing
- A town / city - description, history, opinions
- A film, book or restaurant review
- Creative and imaginative pieces of work
- Work experience accounts

Tasks which were less successful did not encourage candidates to use more than one tense. Language was repetitive, with excessive reliance on the stimulus, and there was little standardisation of task choice within the centre.

Less successful tasks included:

- Fully prescriptive English stimulus which candidates attempted to translate
- Lists; labelling of pictures - for candidates who could do more than this
- Model letters - particularly letters of complaint or booking accommodation especially if just copied from a stimulus and only producing a few words of individual language
- PowerPoint presentations- where there is repetition of structure and verbs
- CV's and letters of application - where little original language was used
- Small postcards where there was no opportunity for linking

Successful stimulus material was brief, often in the form of title plus a few bullet points. Some centres used past exam papers (Specification 1226 Paper 4) to good effect where appropriate to the specialist context. Most stimulus material was in French, although moderators noted some in English.

Some centres appeared unsure of the difference between stimulus and reference materials. The latter might include textbook pages or grammar worksheets, which help candidates with a particular piece of vocabulary or with a more complex structure. They become a problem when candidates copy whole chunks of language from them - and sometimes very similar work was seen across a whole centre. Moderators are looking to see how individual candidates manipulate the language to make it their own.

It is quite possible to obtain good marks for work, which meets the specification demands: 350 - 700 words across the three pieces. The three should be of roughly equal length, including the piece written under controlled conditions, and they should all relate to the same specialist context. Some centres sent in 3 pieces of over 700 words for each task and these were often counterproductive.

Where candidates make drafts of their work, the teacher must not correct these. Feedback should only be given in the form of general comments; the use of form CFS1 is designed for this purpose. Drafts should be clearly identified and should be included with the sample. Moderators are instructed to ignore final drafts in those cases where first drafts have been marked with specific corrections. There should be no ticks or annotation on work submitted, first or final draft and centres should not put marks on anything other than the CF1 front sheet.

Candidates are encouraged to use ICT when composing their coursework. They are however urged to check spellings carefully, especially accents, as accents missing do affect the accuracy of the final piece. There were a significant number of occasions when there was inconsistency in the production of ICT assisted work. Centres are however reminded that text and backgrounds, particularly in PowerPoint presentations, should contrast so that the text can be read.

The use of Internet translation devices is not permitted, and centres must not authenticate work produced in this way. In general, moderators were impressed this year in standards of word-processed work.

ASSESSMENT

Centres are reminded that the assessment criteria changed in 2008 and although this was highlighted to centres, a number still marked to the old criteria which held up the moderation process.

On the whole, assessment was completed well by centres although a significant number were generous but consistently so. Internal standardisation was usually successful however centres are reminded that if internal standardisation is not rigorous this may have the consequence of affecting the marks of all candidates within the centre.

The three marking grids provided in the specification were well used, although on many occasions too much credit was given to work copied from a stimulus, to pedestrian or formulaic work, and to work that was too short to meet the criteria. Centres must take into account both the length and type of task when awarding a mark for Communication and Content. Here too, the use of linking needs to be considered, and the extent to which the candidate expresses a logical argument. There was a tendency to award 9/10 when some logical argument was produced,

however centres should be aware that only work that shows real flair and sophistication of ideas, opinions, structures and vocabulary can gain the highest communication marks.

Under the heading of Knowledge and Application of Language, Centres must give consideration to the amount of ambiguity produced by poorly formed verbs and repetition of structure, verbs and vocabulary. Tenses used as an afterthought, rather than being integral to the piece, are unlikely to help the candidate gain high marks here.

In the Accuracy grid, centres are reminded that the majority of verb forms have to be correct in order to achieve three or more marks. The correct use of accents, for example on past participles, is crucial. Similarly there is an expectation of the use of more complex language, not simply the absence of error to gain four marks or more for Accuracy.

Centres who also offer the traditional 1226 syllabus to their candidates are reminded that there are differences between the assessment grids for the two specifications, particularly for Knowledge and Application of Language and for Accuracy.

ADMINISTRATION

Although most centres were extremely helpful in following the requirements for the coursework that were in the Coursework Guide and in the Specification, where this did not happen it held up the moderation process and in some cases, penalised candidates. There were various specific problems, and centres are asked to ensure that the following takes place:

- Deadlines for the submission of coursework to Moderators and marks entered on the Edexcel Online website should be adhered to. Failure to do so may result to a delay in the issue of results to centres
- The latest version of form CF1 (coursework front sheet) should be used.
- Only the work requested for the sample needs to be sent to the moderator.
- This should include the highest and lowest marks within the centre even if not in the original sample
- The record sheet should include the centre number, candidate number and be signed by the teacher and the candidate. Unauthenticated work cannot be moderated.
- It should contain an accurate word count and titles of the pieces of work undertaken.
- It should include the title of the oral presentation
- Addition of marks should be carefully checked.
- Candidates' work should not be annotated in any way
- The sample should be arranged in candidate number order.
- Work in the folder should be in the same order as on the front sheet.
- There should be no loose pages - especially ones without a name.
- Work is ideally presented in a plastic wallet or similar. Paper clips should not be used..
- Stimulus and reference material should be submitted - not references to pages in a textbook or electronic stimuli.
- When moderators request additional information or folders, these should be provided promptly.

- When sending coursework through the post, centres should ensure that the full amount of postage is paid.
- Work should be securely packaged using polybags supplied by Edexcel to ensure safety of materials in the post.
- When moderators point out anomalies and inaccuracies on CF1 forms, it is the responsibility of centres to inform Edexcel about any changed marks.

5753 - LISTENING

Candidates generally performed well across the paper and there were some very good performances. Candidates were well prepared for the various test types, however, difficulty increases for weaker candidates when they have to listen to the whole extract and where they have a greater number of choices.

The questions which required the recognition of single lexical items or short phrases (Q1 *À la réception d'un hôtel* and Q2 *Au Restaurant*) were well done. The relevant vocabulary in both these questions was very accessible and well known and the majority of candidates scored 3 or full marks on these questions. In Q1(c) *clefs* was possibly the hardest item of vocabulary. In Q2(a) and 2 (b) distinguishing between numbers is still difficult for weaker candidates..

Q3 *A Visit to the Castle*, was in English. Candidates were required to distinguish four correct statements from eight and this question was generally well done. Answers (b) *The castle is open from Tuesday to Saturday* and (h) *You can have a meal there* were the mostly easily identified. In answer (e) many candidates confused *à gauche* with *à droite* and *The ticket office is to the right of the castle* was a very common incorrect answer.

Q4 *Les messages sur répondeur* proved difficult for many candidates. The task required them to match statements to places, parts (iii) and (iv) were the most accessible. In part (b) weaker candidates were led to an incorrect answer because they did not listen to the whole (*Vos billets d'avion sont arrivés, on va les mettre à la poste*) but chose their answer incorrectly based on hearing the word *poste*. Possibly candidates did not spend enough time on this question, the bleeps between sections made it seem quite long and candidates may have listened to it only once.

The questions which were intended to discriminate did so and weaker candidates found the questions targeted at grades C and above demanding (Q5-8).

Q5, *Au travail*, had multiple choice questions and required candidates to listen to the whole. In this type of questions many candidates have a tendency to tick the answer containing the first word/s they hear in the relevant part of the extract. For example in Q5 (ii), upon hearing the first part of the sentence, *Vous avez demandé de travailler au rayon de sport*, instead of listening to the whole, they immediately ticked answer (a) *rayon de sport*, even though the sentence finishes with *mais ce n'est pas possible et on va vous mettre au rayon enfants*.

Q6 *Un nouveau portable*, again required candidates to listen to the whole, they had to listen to two people discussing three mobile phones and in part (a) identify the mobile chosen and in part (b) select three correct reasons for the choice from six. The choices in part (b) did require candidates to listen quite carefully and to discriminate between the three 'phones and was difficult for weaker candidates. Again the recognition of single lexical items led to incorrect choices i.e. on hearing *en bleu,vert,blanc et rouge* many candidates ticked *Il y a un choix de couleurs* regardless of the context of the statement Better candidates scored well on this question.

Q7 *The French on holiday* required candidates to match figures with statements. This question was well done by the better candidates. Weaker candidates were unable to distinguish between the various choices and again chose their answers based on the recognition of single lexical items rather than on listening to the whole.

This is also true of Q8 (*Un nouveau parc de loisirs*) which required the recognition of opinions and attitudes. Better candidates performed well but answers by candidates suggested guesswork. However, this type of question with limited choices, was generally accessible to candidates, all of whom felt confident to attempt the question.

It is important that candidates know that they should listen to each question at least twice, and from question 3 onwards listen to the whole extract. There is some evidence that some candidates do not do this but choose their incorrectly answers based on an initial hearing.

The performance of better candidates as always was characterised by:

- careful reading of the questions
- sound knowledge of core vocabulary
- listening to the whole rather than homing in on individual words
- attention to detail
- applying logic
- checking their answers

5754 - READING

Candidates were well prepared for the various test types and generally performed well across the paper as a whole.

The vocabulary for Q1 (places in the town) , was accessible and many candidates scored full marks. Part 1(d) le syndicat d'initiative was possibly the most difficult item. Q2, *Le Shopping sur Internet*, was also well done with candidates able to successfully match key vocabulary in the stimulus with the choices. Part d proved the most difficult with weaker candidates unable to match *pantalon* with *vêtements*.

Q3 *What's on TV tonight?*, required candidates to match times to TV programmes and was generally well done, although weaker candidates found this question harder and possibly did not know some of the key vocabulary.

The questions that were intended to discriminate did so and weaker candidates found Q4-8, targeted at grades D to A* difficult. All these questions required candidates to read the whole and the performance of weaker candidates was characterised by matching individual words in the text (often the first words in the sentence), with words in the choices for the answers.

In Question 4 *La Météo* the weather vocabulary proved difficult for a number of candidates.

Q5 was generally well done but again recognition of single lexical items e.g. *ce sera une expérience inoubliable* led weaker candidates to tick incorrectly *Il faut avoir de l'expérience*. Candidates need to read the text as a whole before starting to answer questions and to not just tick the first answer containing a word they recognise from the text. They also need to be aware of the use of negation.

Q6-8 proved challenging for weaker candidates and only the better candidates were able to demonstrate the understanding required at this level.

Q6, *Rachid se présente* required candidates to tick choose four correct words to complete a summary and required careful reading of the text. For this type of question candidates need to be able to match the information in the text with paraphrased statements eg to match *Je ne suis jamais aller à l'étranger donc je voudrais visiter d'autres pays* with *voyager* for part (b). Again the performance of weaker candidates was characterised by ticking choices based on the recognition of single lexical items rather than from reading the text as a whole.

Q7, *Learning a Language Abroad* , was accessible for better candidates who coped well with this question.

Q8 *Le Piratage Musical* proved challenging The number of choices increased the difficulty of the task and only the better candidates understood enough of the detail to answer this question well. Candidates did have to discriminate carefully between the choices and again the recognition of single lexical items led many candidates to incorrect choices.

The performance of better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the questions and texts

- sound knowledge of core vocabulary
- reading the whole sentence/text rather than homing in on individual words
- attention to detail
- applying logic
- checking their answers

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE FOR CENTRES

This is the third year of awarding for this qualification. The Principal Examiner, Principal Moderator and Chair of Examiners compared papers and candidates' work from last year with the equivalent from the current year. Evidence indicates that the level of demand was comparable in the two years. Close comparison was also made between Applied French GCSE and qualifications 1226/3226 ('traditional' GCSE French). The Principal Examiner, the Principal Moderator and Chair of Examiners are the same for both sets of examinations. Again, very high levels of comparability were in evidence.

- Centres should use the Sample Assessment Materials available, together with the on-screen tests that were used in June 2006, 2007 and 2008, as mock tests to familiarise candidates with the format of the test questions that will be used in future years.
- Centres should please note that the on-screen tests scheduled for June 2009 will follow the same format as those used in June 2008. Questions will be graded in order of difficulty as this year, with a similar spread of question types. There was some evidence that candidates might overlook certain questions and accidentally neglect to answer them when working on-screen rather than from a question booklet.
- As this is a Pilot qualification changes are and improvements are being made as lessons are learnt. Centres should ensure that they use the most up-to-date information from Edexcel and that administration procedures follow the latest - rather than earlier - guidelines. Since the launch of the qualification, for example, there have been changes to the assessment criteria for oral components(as well as to the arrangements for sampling) and the written coursework component. Some forms have also been updated. Some centres seemed not to be aware of the changes, using forms from previous years and last year's assessment criteria.
- Centres are advised to arrange for at least one member of the programme team to attend an Edexcel examination feedback meeting or INSET event, and to note the standardisation procedures for the marking of the oral components. Centres should also note that in 2009 they are required to record three interactions for the oral 5751/01 component to send to Edexcel for moderation (including centres currently accredited as A centres)
- Centres should note the comments of the Principal moderator for the Oral and written coursework components re: over reliance on stimulus material, pedestrian and formulaic approaches when devising assessment materials.

CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE

The figures show the cumulative percentage achieving each grade on the four individual papers.

Paper	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
5751	6.2	16.8	33.3	56.7	74.6	85.2	91.1	95.7	100
5752	5.2	17.1	41.4	62.9	84.1	94.1	97.6	99.0	100
5753	5.5	14.0	34.8	70.4	89.9	98.3	99.3	99.5	100
5754	3.6	12.4	38.1	66.9	91.1	98.8	99.7	99.8	100

The overall results for the full course (2701) and the short course (3702) are given below. Again, the percentages are cumulative.

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
2701	3.0	11.2	31.5	60.4	83.1	94.6	98.1	99.4	100
3702	2.7	21.6	32.4	54.1	83.8	100	100	100	100

In the judgement of the senior examiners the third year of the pilot has gone well from the candidates' point of view. However, confusion and not being aware of current criteria for the sampling of internally assessed oral components and the current revised assessment criteria for the oral and writing components gave rise to difficulties which it is hoped will not reoccur in future sessions.

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