



General Certificate of Secondary Education

French 4655 *Specification*

46554 Writing (Controlled Assessment)

Report on the Examination *2010 examination - June series*

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General Comments

From a relatively limited entry, there were examples of work of excellent quality showing evidence of thorough preparation for the component. Candidates were able to produce original and detailed responses to some interesting tasks, offering points of view together with justification and using a range of complex structures with a high degree of accuracy. Many centres are used to preparing candidates for the Legacy Coursework component and this was a good basis for encouraging candidates to produce extended pieces of writing. It was encouraging to see more imaginative and ambitious tasks although some centres chose to use Legacy titles with which they are familiar and confident. Titles seen were varied: Holidays, School, Home and Environment, Leisure, Relationships with others and Lifestyles and Teenage Issues. These were handled well. The title 'A Day In The Life of a Celebrity' taken from the specification tended to focus more on the idea of 'being a celebrity' and 'Being Fit and Healthy' tended to have too much emphasis on eating habits.

The following suggestions are offered to encourage centres to maximise attainment:

- Centres are reminded that task titles need to be carefully thought out so that candidates are writing fully relevant responses. The title and not the bullet points are what the candidates should be writing about. The bullet points are there as a guide to ensure that appropriate language is elicited.
- Some candidates were awarded lower marks because their tasks did not offer the opportunity to display the features required for the various assessment categories. Centres should make students aware of the assessment criteria and in all writing assignments should encourage pupils to ensure their piece is fully relevant and contains opinions and, according to their ability, justification. Where possible, students should be encouraged to write longer sentences and to use a range of tenses. Most centres are familiar with the Legacy controlled conditions coursework so that controlled assessment is not entirely new to them. As teachers become more familiar with the criteria for assessment and the new specification, it is likely that performance will improve.
- Centres are encouraged to study the exemplar materials in terms of content and assessment (there will be additional exemplars in autumn 2010) and to make use of the Controlled Assessment Advisers allocated to them. Details of Controlled Assessment Advisers can be obtained from the subject team using the MFL mailbox mfl@aqa.org.uk.

Task Planning

Where Task Planning Forms were used, the quality was generally good. Teachers are reminded that conjugated verbs must not be used and if they are they should be obliterated from the Task Planning Form. Good examples of Task Planning Forms were seen where candidates had numbered each word. Teachers are advised to spend time with their students modelling what is and what is not permissible on a Task Planning Form. Centres are also reminded that the task title must be written on the Task Planning Form.

Drafts

Centres are reminded that it is not a requirement that a draft be produced. However, if candidates choose to write drafts, they must be completed in front of the teacher and retained in school. The draft and final piece will normally reflect the teaching and learning that has taken place at Stage 1 and candidates will have been given source material to use in order to prepare them for Stages 2 and 3.

Use of Dictionaries

As might be expected, effective use of bilingual dictionaries was variable. It is advised that candidates are trained in the use of bilingual dictionaries in order to avoid misuse and potential loss of marks.

Assessment

Content

Centres are advised to study the criteria for assessment and ensure that preparation for tasks matches what is required for each band of marks. Where able candidates were not scoring 13–15 marks, it was because the responses were not always **fully** relevant and they were not always conveying information clearly (and this is where Accuracy can impact on Content). The key phrase in the 10–12 band is ‘convey **a lot** of information clearly’ and in the 7–9 band ‘**quite a lot** of information clearly communicated’. Candidates who scored at the 4–6 band and the 1–3 band generally produced short pieces of work containing errors that impeded communication.

Range of Language

Where candidates scored well, there was evidence of good preparation and familiarity with the production of complex sentences and a variety of verb tenses. However, inappropriate use of the infinitive, errors in tense formation and inaccuracies in spelling were common with some candidates clearly having little understanding of linguistic structure. It is in these areas that a lack of precision and inappropriate vocabulary prevents candidates from scoring marks in the top bands. Candidates who appropriately scored 5–6 used simple connectives effectively and this should be encouraged.

Accuracy

The mark of 3 was the most common mark awarded. Candidates had the ability to produce language that communicated a message so that ‘the intended meaning was clear’ but in many cases errors were not generally occurring in complex sentences. Lack of auxiliary verbs in perfect tense formation was often seen and errors in the spelling of simple words often impeded communication.

Administration

Centres are encouraged:

- to collate each candidate’s work – ie the two tasks - together with the Candidate Record Form and the Task Planning Form. The use of treasury tags to keep portfolios together is preferred as paper clips and plastic wallets cause significant handling problems.
- to make sure the examiner receives the full Controlled Assessment Task sheet relevant to the candidate or group. Marking cannot begin until the examiner knows what the candidates are writing about.
- to remind candidates to write neatly as poor handwriting can affect marks.
- to send the work in the same candidate order as on the Attendance List, as would be done for a terminal examination paper.

- to check that the candidates have correctly filled in the Candidate Record Form and the Task Planning Form. There were errors with candidate numbers this year.
- to remind teachers that they should not write on the candidates' work (ie marks they may have awarded).
- to adhere to the deadlines given by AQA.

Two further points to provide help to centres:

- The guidance provided to examiners is published at the end of this report.
- From this year's examination, further examples of completed writing tasks with marks and commentaries will be available on the AQA MFL website in the autumn term.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Exactly what do examiners mark?

- They mark the candidate's response to the title.
- They do **not** mark a response to the bullet points which have the status of guidance. The candidate may choose to ignore the bullet points completely.
- The response must be relevant to the title.

2. Must the title relate directly to the Contexts defined in the specification?

No. The title can be anything.

3. How is the title identified?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.

4. What is a relevant response?

- Of course, the response must be relevant to the task.
- Candidates are not penalised for not responding to the scene setting details.

5. And what if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

- It would affect the mark for CONTENT.
- The relevant material should still be assessed for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY.

6. What if there is a significant duplication of material across the two pieces of work submitted?

- The same material cannot be credited twice.
- Incidental and occasional overlap do not count as duplication.

7. What if it is clear the wording is identical to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of the tasks from other candidates at the same centre?

The work is referred to AQA Irregularities and Malpractice Department.

8. Does the number of words affect assessment?

- The quality not the quantity of work affects the assessment outcome.
- 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades D-G, 400-600 if aiming at grades A*-C, is for **guidance** only.
- Obviously, the shorter the assignment, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of assessment criteria for CONTENT (and therefore other categories.)
- There is no *upper* limit on the number of words. The whole piece is read and marked.

9. How does the CONTENT mark affect the marks for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY?

Content Mark	Maximum Mark for Range of Language	Maximum Mark for Accuracy
0	0	0
1 – 3	1 – 4	1-2
4 – 6	1 – 6	1-3
7 – 9	1 – 8	1-4
10 – 12	1 – 10	1-5
13 – 15	1 – 10	1-5

10. In the upper band for CONTENT, what evidence is required for “Well organised structure” in the 13-15 band?

- A sound ordering of ideas, a coherent structure – these are sufficient.
- There does **not** need to be a formal essay structure.

11. The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment are they separated out in order to quantify them?

- No. They are all viewed as one notion. Ideas, points of view and opinions are the same for assessment purposes.
- In terms of evidence, there must be more than one instance of the above.

12. The 4 - 6 band for CONTENT indicates: “Simple opinions are expressed.” Must there be more than one opinion expressed?

- Yes – there should be a minimum of two.
- This could be very simple. Eg: ‘I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.’ = 3 simple opinions.

13. The criteria for CONTENT in the two top bands refer to “explain ideas and points of view.” How many that be demonstrated?

- Opinions should be explained or justified with reasons.
- In terms of evidence, at least two opinions or points of view must be explained or justified.

14. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE what evidence is required for “verb tenses used successfully” in the 9-10 band?

- This does **not** mean reference to different time frames.
- There must be a combination of a minimum of two different tense constructions.

- The use of the present tense plus timer marker to refer to the future does not count as a future tense. However in French the immediate future tense (ie *je vais* + infinitive) is acceptable as a separate tense.
- All other present tense constructions which refer to different time frames are not acceptable as anything other than the present tense.
- The present subjunctive does not constitute a different tense when the rest of the task is written in the present indicative.
- In a given piece of work, there should be a minimum of one instance of a tense used which is other than the default tense used.
- To fulfil the descriptor: “verb tenses are used successfully,” there needs to be evidence that the candidate can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors but provided they do not prevent communication they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses does not guarantee a mark in the 9-10 band.
- In the 7-8 band, it could be that the use of different tenses constitutes evidence of ‘more complex sentences.’
- There is no requirement for evidence of 3 tenses used across BOTH pieces of work.

15. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, in the two top bands what would provide evidence of ‘more complex sentences?’

- A range of different structures leading to more varied, longer sentences.
- Subordinating conjunctions could be one way of producing more complex sentences but are not an absolute requirement. Adverbial conjunctions, for example, could also provide sound evidence.

16. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, in the 5-6 band, what would constitute evidence for “attempts at longer sentences using appropriate linking words?”

Repeated dependence on simple connectives (‘and.....and.....and.....’) would be an example of this.

17. For ACCURACY, is there an implicit requirement for different tenses to be in evidence?

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. Examiners do not consider range of tenses when assessing Accuracy.