



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

French

46554

(Specification 4655)

Unit 4: Writing

Report on the Examination

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Administration

Centres' administration was on the whole excellent. Tasks were despatched on time with the relevant forms included and correctly completed. However, centres are to be reminded of the following: tasks should be sent to the correct AQA examiner. Some centres sent their Writing tasks to the Speaking moderator. Centres should ensure that the task titles have been written in all the appropriate places and that the work itself has been labelled 'Task 1' and 'Task 2'. Centres do not need to attach a task sheet to each piece of work. Where a number of students have done the same task, one copy of each task submitted is enough. Centres are reminded to indicate on the reverse of the Candidate Record Form if a Task Planning Form has been used or not.

Centres are encouraged:

- to collate each student'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 student or group. Marking cannot begin until the examiner knows what the students are writing about
- to remind students to write neatly as poor handwriting can affect marks
- to send the work in the same student order as on the Attendance List, as would be done for a terminal examination paper
- to check that the students have correctly filled in and signed the Candidate Record Form and the Task Planning Form (if used). There were errors with candidate numbers this year
- to ensure students have written the following information on each piece of work
 - centre number
 - student number
 - student name
 - component code (eg 46554)
 - task title
- to remind teachers that they should not write on the students' work (ie marks they may have awarded)
- to adhere to the deadline of 7 May by which all materials should be sent to the AQA examiner. The following items must be sent to the AQA examiner:
 - students' work (2 tasks per student) clearly labelled as Task 1 and Task 2
 - the task sheets
 - Task Planning Forms (if used)
 - Candidate Record Forms (signed)

Task Titles

Examiners saw a wide range of titles. Centres are devising imaginative and interesting tasks for students. Task titles and bullet points should always be in English.

Centres are reminded that for Writing, the **title is the task** and that the bullet points are there as a guide and are not compulsory. Titles chosen often had a profound effect upon the outcome. A general title (My holidays, My home and Local Area, My Lifestyle, My Free Time) is likely to be most successful since the piece of writing will be assessed according to its relevance to that title. Students need to be reminded that everything they write must be relevant to the title. Where titles were broad, students were able to write relevant and detailed responses.

It is important to choose a task which suits the ability of the students. Tasks which involve students writing about environmental issues, for example, often suit more able students but cause difficulties for less able students. On the other hand, a title like 'Me and my family' does not always give the most able students scope to demonstrate the quality of their written language.

The most popular titles were relating to Holidays, School, Home and Environment, Healthy Lifestyles, Free Time, Life of a Celebrity and Work Experience. Students' responses were not as successful when the bullet points given did not always address the title. Centres are advised to differentiate tasks for students. Some students who thought they were expected to address all the bullet points could not always address them effectively. Centres are encouraged to contact their Controlled Assessment Adviser if any support is needed or if they would like tasks checking. Details of Controlled Assessment Advisers can be obtained from the MFL subject team using the MFL mailbox: mfl@aqa.org.uk.

Task Planning Forms

These are optional. Many students did not use Task Planning Forms and were able to produce good pieces of work, but students who did produce Task Planning Forms found them helpful and used them effectively. Centres are reminded that task titles need to be on the Task Planning Forms. Very few students exceeded the maximum of 40 words which was pleasing.

There were fewer instances of conjugated verbs used on Task Planning Forms than last year. There were some centres, however, which sent Task Planning Forms with conjugated verbs included. These must always be obliterated. Some students had simply put a line through them and they could still be easily seen which is not acceptable. Other students had not obliterated them at all. Centres should remind students that work containing conjugated verbs visible on the Task Planning Form will not be credited and that therefore they could be disadvantaged, particularly if the conjugated verb is used often in the task. It is essential that these are checked by the teacher prior to the task being produced.

Centres are reminded that for the June 2012 examination and beyond, visuals are no longer permitted on Task Planning Forms.

Drafts

A number of things need to be emphasised:

- Students are not *required* to write a draft at Stage 2
- If a draft is produced, it must be done under direct teacher supervision, must **not** be commented upon and must be kept in school. This also applies to partially-completed drafts
- At Stage 2, students have access to all resources (**except the teacher/FLA**) to inform their planning and preparation. This may include, from Stage 1, their own (corrected) written work, worksheets, text books, on-line resources (other than

translation software) etc. All of this is potentially accessible, within the 6 hours, in school and at home.

There was evidence that some students had tried to learn a draft word for word. That evidence took the form of work which deteriorated towards the end of the piece and frequent omissions, such that sentences ceased to communicate effectively.

Assessment

Students generally produced good quality work that was interesting and varied. Centres are skilled in encouraging students to prepare and produce a high standard of written language. The word counts in the specification are there as a guide only but some centres encouraged students to write excessively long pieces of work. A few students were able to do this and score highly but on the whole, the longer the piece of work, the more scope there was for error given that students only have a single session of one hour in which to produce a response. Centres are advised to focus on quality rather than quantity.

Some students 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 tasks should encourage students to ensure their piece is fully relevant and contains opinions and, according to their ability, justification of these. Where possible, students should be encouraged to write longer sentences and to use a range of tenses.

Content

Students were able to produce relevant, detailed pieces of work. Where they were less successful was when the tasks included bullet points not totally relevant to the title and, more importantly, when there were not at least two examples of opinions being justified. The criteria for marks of 10–15 expect students to **express and explain ideas and points of view**. Centres are reminded to encourage students aiming at these marks to include at least two opinions and justifications. In some instances, inaccuracy impacted on Content marks given that for marks of 7–15 information has to be conveyed **clearly**. Sometimes inaccuracy can lead to breakdown of communication.

Range of Language

Students were well-prepared and there was effective use of a variety of tenses, including the present subjunctive, complex structures and sentences and a range of connectives. Students are allowed access to dictionaries for this component and centres should be mindful of the fact that many students are not skilled in using dictionaries effectively. Examiners found that in many cases marks for Range of Language were adversely affected by dictionary misuse.

Accuracy

On the whole students produced work that was more accurate than inaccurate. The main errors were in relation to verb formation, minor misspellings and omissions of verbs including auxiliary verbs for the perfect tense. An issue for many students was the transposition of infinitives from the Task Planning Forms. Centres are advised to train students to form verbs from the infinitives they may use on the Task Planning Forms. Students could also be reminded of the usefulness of verb tables found in most dictionaries.

Further support

Three further points to provide help to centres:

- the guidance provided to examiners is published at the end of this report for your information
- at the time of publication of results, centres will receive the total mark out of 60 for Unit 4 as well as the UMS score for the unit. In order to access the breakdown of the mark out of 60 (ie the mark out of 30 per task and the mark awarded for each assessment criterion), centres must register with e-AQA and use the Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA). It is only through ERA that a breakdown of marks will be made available
- further examples of completed writing tasks with marks and commentaries from the 2011 examination will be available in the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA MFL website in the autumn term.

Advice to Students

Below is some advice you may wish to provide to your students:

- Once you know the title of your task and your teacher has given you the bullet points to use in your task, think carefully about how you intend to write about each one and prepare to write as much as you can and as clearly and accurately as you can
- It will improve your mark if you can use a variety of vocabulary and structures, if you can express opinions clearly and, when you can, justify these opinions by giving a reason. It also helps if you can use different tenses by saying what you did in the past, and/or what you are going to do or will do in the future, for example
- You are allowed to use a Task Planning Form on which you may write up to 40 words (in the target language and/or English) and you may use this form at Stage 3 (once it has been checked by your teacher). Be sure to spell words accurately on this sheet so that they will be accurate when you write up your piece of work. It might be wise to include the same order of bullet points on your Task Planning Form as the teacher gave you on the Task Sheet and then jot down a few words next to each one. If you are worried you may forget what a target language word means, you could write the English translation next to it, as long as the English word is included in your final count. Remember not to use conjugated verbs (parts of verbs in whichever tense); if you want to jot down verbs, you can only include infinitives
- You are allowed to use a dictionary when you write up your piece of work. You should use this to look up occasional words, but do not waste too much time looking up lots of words; you only have 60 minutes and you need to write as full a response as you can. Remember that your dictionary is likely to contain verb tables and you could always use it to check that you have written the part of the verb/the tense of the verb accurately
- Be sure that everything you write is relevant to the title
- Try to write as much as you can about each bullet point but keep an eye on the clock. Remember you only have 60 minutes. If you follow the order of the bullet points provided, this should bring a well-organised structure to your piece, but if time is running out you might choose to round off the piece neatly even if you have to cut short what you were intending to write.

GUIDANCE NOTES

It should be noted that the following guidance contains examples from French, German and Spanish.

1. Task Planning Forms (TPF)

If more than 40 words have been used, examiners will ignore when awarding a mark, the parts of the student's response (ie the phrases or clauses) which use words noted on the TPF beyond the first 40.

If a conjugated verb appears on the TPF, examiners will ignore the clause(s) where that verb is used when awarding a mark for Range of Language and Accuracy. If the sentence (with the conjugated verb discounted) still communicates, then it may be counted towards the mark for Content. The same applies to the use of codes (eg a picture of an eye to represent the Spanish word *hay*).

Visuals on Task Planning Forms are permitted for the last time in June 2011 and must not appear on Task Planning Forms in June 2012 and beyond.

2. Exactly what do examiners mark?

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

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

No. The title can be anything.

4. How do examiners identify the title?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.
- See examples in *Additional Exemplar Tasks: Controlled Assessment Writing and Speaking* on the AQA website within the Teacher Resource Bank for your language at <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/languages.php?id=11&prev=10>, where the task and scene setting are clearly separated

5. What is a relevant response?

- The response must be relevant to the task.
- Students are not penalised for not responding to the scene setting details.

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

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

7. What if a student has omitted an entire aspect of the title?

A student with the task ‘Home, local area and special occasions’ who writes nothing about home area, for example, could be considered to have completed two thirds of the task. The piece could therefore be eligible for the 10-12 band for Content, assuming the piece fulfils the criteria for that band in other ways. This would still allow the student access to all mark bands for language.

8. 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.

9. What if it is clear the student’s entire response is identical (ie exactly the same, word for word) to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of tasks from other students at the same centre?

The work would be referred to AQA’s Irregularities/Malpractice Department.

10. 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 will be read and marked by the examiner.

11. 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 |

12. The criteria for assessment

(a) CONTENT

The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment, how are they viewed?

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 this feature.

How do examiners decide between the 3 marks available for CONTENT in each mark band?

If the descriptor fits the piece exactly, then the examiner will award the middle mark in the band. If there is strong evidence of the descriptors and the examiner had been considering the band above, the highest of the three marks would be awarded. If there is just enough evidence and the examiner had been considering the band below, then the lowest mark in the band would be awarded.

13-15 marks

- Students provide a **fully relevant** and **detailed** response with **almost all** information conveyed **clearly** and **developed**.
- They must offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and at least two of them must be explained or justified.
- The piece should have a well organised structure, ie a sound ordering of ideas but **not** necessarily a formal essay structure or an introduction, conclusion, etc.

10-12 marks

- The response will be **mostly** relevant and **a lot** of information will still be provided and conveyed **clearly** and will **generally** be developed.
- There is a requirement to give **and explain** ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2)

7-9 marks

- The response will be **generally** relevant with **quite a lot** of information conveyed **clearly**.
- There will still be evidence of an ability to **develop** ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions / points of view (minimum 2).

4-6 marks

- The response is **limited** but **some** relevant information will be conveyed.
- There will be **some development** of basic ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2). These could be very simple, eg: 'I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.' = 3 simple opinions.

1-3 marks

- The response is **very limited** with **little** relevant information conveyed.
- There will be **no real structure**.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated in a coherent fashion. If zero is awarded for Content, zero must also be awarded for Range of Language and Accuracy.

(b) RANGE OF LANGUAGE

- The immediate future (ie *je vais* + infinitive, *voy a* + infinitive, etc) counts as a future tense. A present tense verb with a future time marker (eg *Nächste Woche fahre ich...*) does not.
The immediate future (eg *je vais aller*) is seen as a different tense from the future (eg *j'irai*).
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative. A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (eg *Je joue du piano depuis 2 ans / Llevo 5 años estudiando español / Ich spiele Klavier seit 2 Jahren*) counts as the present tense. Similarly a construction using the present tense to refer to the future (eg *J'espère aller à l'université / ich hoffe, auf die Universität zu gehen / Espero ir al cine*) counts as the present.

9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used **successfully**. This means two or more tenses and a minimum of one instance of a tense use which is other than the default tense used. The tenses could come from the same time frame (for example the preterite and the imperfect) but a greater range of tenses will add to the complexity of the language used. An overall judgement needs to be made as to whether “verb tenses are used successfully.” There needs to be evidence that the student can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors (and in German occasional word order errors) but provided they do not prevent communication they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses is not a ‘passport’ to the 9-10 band.
- There must be evidence of **successful use of complex sentences**. This could be:
 - use of subordinating conjunctions (but this is not an absolute requirement)
 - use of adverbial phrases (*al llegar...*, *après avoir fait cela...*, etc).
 - use of infinitive constructions after a preposition (e.g. *sans hésiter / ohne zu essen / despues de ir*), after an adjective (eg *C'est facile à faire / einfach zu tun / fácil hacerlo*) or after a verb (eg modal verbs; *je préfère vivre en ville / Ich mag fernsehen / prefiero ir* etc)
 - a range of different structures leading to longer, more varied sentences (eg *suelo ir* rather than *voy*, *j'ai l'intention de...* rather than *je veux..ich habe vor* rather than *ich will...*)
 - use of pronoun objects
 - use of adverbial conjunctions (eg *heureusement, cependant, leider, sin embargo*) or prepositional phrases (eg *par contre / zum Beispiel / por ejemplo*)
 - regular use of connectives to form longer sentences.However, this is GCSE so even in the highest mark band examiners are not necessarily looking for use of the subjunctive or similar grammatical structures.
- There needs to be a **wide range of vocabulary**. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use.

7-8 marks

- **Mainly successful** use of complex sentences. The note above about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will also apply here.
- No specific requirement to use more than one tense but the use of different tenses may constitute evidence of ‘more complex sentences’.
- There must be a **good range** of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.

5-6 marks

- There will be some attempts made at longer sentences using appropriate linking words. At this level this will often mean repeated dependence on simple connectives such as 'and' / 'but', though 'because' will also be found fairly frequently when students attempt to explain ideas and points of view. Use of other forms of complex sentences will often not be wholly successful.
- There should be **some variety** of vocabulary, though students will generally be using a more basic range of vocabulary than in the higher bands and there may be more repetition.

3-4 marks

- Language will be basic, with **short, simple sentences**. Attempts at longer sentences and more difficult constructions will usually not be successful.
- Vocabulary will generally be appropriate to the basic needs of the task but will be **limited**, with a lot of repetition and overuse of a few common verbs such as *to be, to have, to like, to go*.

1-2 marks

- Little understanding of language structure shown with just the occasional short phrase which is correctly used.
- Vocabulary will be very **basic**, with only isolated words correctly used. Vocabulary will often be anglicised.

(c) ACCURACY

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

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. The range of tenses is not considered when assessing Accuracy.

There are 5 marks available to cover the whole range of ability (i.e. 8 grades). This means the mark awarded could represent quite different performances. Moreover, a mark of 5 will not be used only to represent an A* performance.

5 marks

- **Largely accurate**.
- Major errors only usually appear in complex structures.
- There may be some minor errors (eg gender).
- Verbs and tenses are **secure**.

4 marks

- Errors occur but the piece is **generally accurate**. Mistakes made will not generally impede communication.
- Verbs and tenses are **usually correct**.

3 marks

- **More accurate than inaccurate**, though there will often be fairly frequent errors.
- The intended **meaning is clear**.
- Verbs and tenses are **sometimes unsuccessful**.

2 marks

- **Many errors.**
- Mistakes **often impede communication.**
- Verbs are **rarely accurate.**

1 mark

- **Frequent errors.**
- Mistakes **regularly impede communication.**
- **Limited understanding** of basic linguistic structures.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.