



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
January 2012**

**French**

**46552F/H**

**(Specification 4655)**

**Unit 2: Reading**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General comments

The mean mark for Foundation Tier was slightly lower this year, largely because some items of vocabulary were not well known and caused some difficulties for students. At Higher Tier it was gratifying to note the rarity of answers not attempted. More challenging questions requiring answers in English were better answered, although expression was often poor and spelling remains a cause for concern. Questions testing students' knowledge of grammar continue to cause difficulties. The specification includes a section on grammar and it is appropriate for this to be tested.

## Foundation Tier

### Question 1

This proved to be a suitable opening question in that the vast majority of students could identify the two correct days of the week.

### Questions 2 and 3

Most students identified the rooms in Question 2 but many failed to gain the marks because they were unable to distinguish between *à gauche* and *à droite*. Question 3 proved too demanding for its target grade, as so few knew *alimentation*, *rez-de-chaussée* and especially *jouets*. In fact Question 3(b) was the least accessible question on the paper.

### Question 4

Students know the topic of free time well. Only *planche à voile* caused any difficulties.

### Question 5

Most students could identify *cravate*, but fewer gained the mark for *chaussures* and particularly for *jupe*. There was a lot of guesswork, presumably based on students' own school uniform, with blazers, trousers and jumpers frequently offered as answers.

### Question 6

In Question 6(a), fewer than half of students identified *chanteuse*, with a huge range of jobs being offered. Question 6(b) was worth three marks from the four activities listed in the text. Many correctly construed the idea of listening to music and playing together, though a significant number thought that *ensemble* was a game, like Scrabble for example, whereas others deduced that the family played in a band. The least accessible mark was for the concept of staying at home/staying in, with the translation of *rester* by 'resting'.

### Question 7

This tested the topic of recycling, which students know well. Almost two-thirds of students correctly identified all four items.

### Question 8

This first overlap question required students to read longer passages and to link them to statements in English. It discriminated well, as expected, but the percentage of students gaining the mark was pleasingly high in all four cases. It is encouraging to see that students are not as intimidated by the length of texts as they once were.

### Question 9

With one major exception, this overlap question on relieving stress was well answered. The majority of students gave answer G for Question 9(b), where the answer was A. Clearly the word *tôt* was not well known, in addition to which students were mistakenly attracted to G by the presence of *chambre* and, perhaps, *lis* (which might have been confused with *lit*).

### Question 10

As in Question 8, students found enough clues in these longer passages to access the correct answers in this final overlap question. Consequently students did better on overlap questions than on some questions targeted at much lower grades.

## Higher Tier

### Question 1

This question required knowledge of basic grammar to correctly join parts of sentences. Although parts (a) and (b) were well answered, parts (c) and (d) were more demanding, possibly due to a time reference, but more likely due to shortcomings in vocabulary knowledge, with *démodé*, *monde* and *sans* causing difficulties. Teachers are reminded that the word *sans* appears regularly in these tests and should ensure it is known by students.

### Questions 2, 4 and 6

All three overlap questions produced better responses at this level, as anticipated. Even here less than half of students scored the mark for Question 4(b), (Question 9(b) at Foundation Tier), for the same reasons as those mentioned at Foundation Tier. However, marks accumulated on these questions gave most students a firm basis for scoring a high mark overall.

### Question 3

Students had to read all five quite lengthy texts in order to decide which of the eight statements were true, false or not in the text. They showed commendable perseverance to gain good marks in all except parts (e) and (h). In neither case was the language more difficult to understand. Rather, it was a matter of missing clues. For example the key information for (h), the last question, was on the first line of the first text. It was gratifying to see that students were more inclined to use the question mark than in the past.

### Question 5

These longer texts provided a good test of comprehension. Students seem to realise that the longer the text the more clues there will be, because of context. Consequently they were quite successful in producing correct responses. Only parts (b) and (d) caused general difficulty, for no apparent reason.

### Question 7

The gap fill question, here targeted at the higher grades, caused the same difficulties as in the past. This particular version combined the need to know how words fit together in sentences with some more challenging vocabulary (*deçus*, *mentir*, *doué*), although the language used in the actual texts was largely straightforward. Schools and colleges are most strongly advised to create similar tasks to enable students to advance their knowledge of grammar and structure, as well as to provide practice for this sort of question. With the exception of Question 7(a), these questions were poorly answered, with guesswork prevalent.

### Question 8

Worth five marks at A\* grade, these questions requiring answers in English were answered better than usual, despite poor handwriting and awkwardness of expression which caused some difficulties for examiners. Parts (a) and (c) were well answered by over half of students. At this grade, answers have to be precise. For example, a mark was awarded for stating that ‘Chinese people had lost the habit of cycling’ (direct translation) or that ‘Chinese people no longer cycle’ (indicating a change of habit), but not for the frequently found statements that ‘the Chinese do not cycle/use bikes’ (no reference to past habits). Students too often make such imprecise statements, and therefore fail to gain the marks. To summarise, answers must be precise and make sense.

### Question 9

Question 9(a) proved challenging because so few students recognised *laid*, although this was not the only possible answer. Many who attempted to describe the height of the blocks of flats could not be credited because they translated *vingt* by five, eight or fifteen. Question 9(b) was well answered. The mark scheme had to address the fact that students might phrase their response from the point of view of either the centre or the suburbs, so that simple answers such as ‘It’s safer and more interesting’ was given both marks as these answers could be justified from the text. As in recent years, there was increasing evidence that students were prepared to attempt these more challenging questions and were rewarded for their perseverance. There were very few blank responses, and only a small number of answers in French, in response to this and the previous Question 8.

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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