



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

French

46552F/H

(Specification 4655)

Unit 2: Reading

Report on the Examination

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Foundation Tier

General comments

The mean mark was slightly higher than that for the January series and significantly higher than the parallel paper in June 2011. In this paper there were no questions requiring answers in English, meaning that students did not lose marks through poor expression in English. Additionally there were no questions having a focus on grammatical knowledge. Finally, students seemed familiar with the range of topics tested, with few individual words of vocabulary causing significant difficulties. It is disappointing to find that where the rubric directs students to a range of letters to answer a question, they continue to write other letters. Schools/colleges are advised to stress to students the importance of reading instructions carefully. In addition, students should be told to cross out a first answer if they wish to reconsider, and instructed not to overwrite a letter, but to write the answer they wish to be considered outside but alongside the box, not above or below it.

Question 1

Aimed at grade G and targeting single words, this proved an accessible introduction to the paper, with all four parts answered correctly by at least 90% of students. Part (c) (*pharmacien*) was answered correctly by 99% of students. Clearly the visual icons were well understood.

Question 2

Targeted at a mixture of F and G grades, responses here were more varied than expected. Only part (c) attracted more than 80% correct answers. In part (a), answer B was fairly popular, suggesting that students had not included Clémence in their calculations, despite the instruction to do so in the question. In part (b) *campagne* often attracted students to incorrect answer A. In parts (d) and (e), the problem was clearly lack of knowledge of basic vocabulary, *drôle* and *chips*. Indeed, only 28% of students gained the mark for part (e), suggesting that students did not think carefully here.

Question 3

Students tend to know shopping vocabulary well so almost 80% of students gained all four marks, and hardly any failed to score at all. 96% scored 3 marks, with no answer more challenging than the others.

Question 4

Aimed largely at grade E, with short texts, this question was well done, with only part (d) scoring lower than expected (59%). Incorrect answers were split fairly evenly, so that there was no obvious reason for not selecting answer A, other than not knowing either *argent* or *bouteilles vides*, or both. Students at this tier appear to be well acquainted with the basic language used to describe environmental issues.

Question 5

Also targeting grade E, this question proved more challenging, possibly because the stimulus was a single, if simple text, but more likely because some students did not know *patinoire*. Only about 40% gained all three marks, but almost all scored at least one mark.

Question 6

This was the first overlap question, with longer texts and more attention to detail required. Only 13% gained all three marks, the main reason being that so many thought *boulangerie* meant the

butcher's. Almost 98% gained at least one mark, so that they showed good skills in drawing information from across all three texts.

Question 7

This question proved accessible in parts (a), (e) and (f). Parts (b) and (c) were the most poorly answered on the paper. This might be because students did not read all the texts before starting to answer. Some were drawn to text D to answer the prompt about an unhealthy addiction, and were left inevitably to choose answer G (which is about a friend's addiction) for Question 7(c). Consequently fewer than 20% gained the mark in each case. Students must take the time to read the stimuli more carefully before answering. Part 7(d) was answered successfully by only 39% of students, possibly because of the presence of a negative, and also the word *interdit*.

Question 8

This final overlap question, targeted at grade C, performed as expected, with the percentage of correct answers ranging from 48% to 70% over the five parts. As is often the case, a P/N response in Question 8(d) proved the most challenging. Although there were some challenging words in Djamel's speech (it was also the longest), students should look out for clear markers to P/N answers, in this case *mais*, which indicate a change of direction. Students responded much better to the similar use of *mais* in part (b) with 60% gaining the mark, possibly because the text was shorter and less complex.

Higher tier

General comments

This year there were more questions than in previous papers requiring answers in English. Since some students seem to find it difficult to express themselves clearly and succinctly in English, this increased the difficulty of the paper for them. Consequently, and despite there being no gap fill question this time, the mean mark was slightly lower than in recent papers. In questions requiring a letter as the answer, students should be reminded that it is impossible to justify a mark where it is not clear which letter has been written. Additionally the submission of unclear responses to questions requiring answers in English rarely attracts the mark. As in previous years the answers for the most demanding questions (in this case Questions 7 and 8), with crossings out, arrows and phrases squeezed into small spaces, made marking difficult. Some answers continued to be in blue ink or pencil, despite clear instructions on the front of the question paper and were therefore difficult to read after scanning. On the positive side, only a very small number of students wrote answers in French.

Question 1

These questions were targeted at grades C/D. Parts (b) and (c) were correctly answered by more than 90% of students. In part (a), about a third of students chose answer B, indicating a lack of knowledge of *sors*, but possibly *cuisinière* and *poubelle* as well. The 22% who failed to gain the mark for part (d) appeared not to know *paresseux*.

Question 2

The pattern here reflected Foundation Tier, with part (d) being the most challenging, but percentage success in all five parts was much higher, as should be the case at this tier.

Question 3

This was also an overlap question, with similar performance to Question 2. Almost half of the students gained all three marks, with answer C (misunderstanding of *boulangerie*) again the most common cause of error.

Question 4

Aimed at grade B, with six marks for answers in English, this question proved appropriate at this level, but marks were not scored as easily in parts (a) and (b). As in the past some students superimposed their own experience of air travel, rather than seeking answers in the text.

Question 4(a) The required answer was ‘to make the journey less stressful for children’. There were many vague and wrong answers, such as ‘leave the children at home to reduce stress’. References to ‘voyages’ did not score. Despite the instruction in the question (‘according to the first paragraph’), students sought answers elsewhere. Only 35% gained the mark for this question.

Question 4(b) Only 15% gained this mark. The mark scheme rewarded either toys or holiday work books. The latter concept is difficult to express in English but answers such as guide books, holiday books, exercise books or just books could not be credited (holiday exercise books, holiday notebooks/diaries/records were, however, accepted). Many who attempted the alternative answer (toys), wrote ‘games’, with or without a range of qualifying answers, which was not the same thing. A significant number thought that MP3s could be bought at the equivalent of our pound shops.

Question 4(c) This was well answered by 67% of students, many of whom were prompted to give a simple short answer, such as ‘exercise’, or ‘get fresh air’, or both. The MP3 player prompted answers referring to listening to (loud) music on the plane. Answers such as ‘You can exercise’ indicated that students had not read the question with sufficient care. Other responses, such as ‘you can enjoy the scenery’, also ignored the negative in the question. The presence of *valables*, albeit in the next paragraph, led to answers about not being able to take valuables with you.

Question 4(d) This was successfully answered by 70% of students, many of whom produced the desired short answer about comics or cartoon books, or the alternative references to colouring in. *Bandes dessinées* was not well known and led to answers about drawing (presumably from *dessin*) or bands/groups (from *bandes*) with the addition of MP3 players. The idea of watching cartoons was also wrong.

Question 4(e) Only about 20% of students gained both marks, but about three quarters scored one of the two. This was usually through identifying the long time needed to pass through the airport/wait for the flight. By extension, the mark scheme also accepted the notion of having to leave home well before the flight (but not the imprecise ‘leave home early’ as this could be early morning). The second mark depended on equating delays with (bad) weather. Many students misconstrued *mauvais temps*, leading to answers about bad times or tempers. As so often in this situation, students drew on their own travel experiences to make generalisations about long flights, travel sickness, and so on.

Question 5

This third overlap question posed few problems for students at this tier. Parts (b) and (c) were again the least successfully answered, but more than 65% gained the mark in each case.

Question 6

The point about not overwriting a letter answer is particularly important in this sort of question where it is almost impossible to decipher a T overwritten with F, or vice versa. This question

targeted B, A and A* grades and, with one exception, performed largely as anticipated. Where this was not the case, it is easy to identify individual lexical items which caused an unexpected fall in the percentage of correct answers. In part (a), the problem, clearly, was with *printemps*. In part (c) it was with *après sa mort*. However, the fact that less than 20% gained the mark for part (g) is unclear, since *les enfants offrent un petit cadeau à leur mère qu'ils ont fait eux-mêmes* does not contain especially testing vocabulary and does not support the idea of buying presents. It does perhaps suggest that students identified the sentence in the text containing the answer, but then failed to read it carefully enough. However, the two answers requiring the question mark (for not in the text) were amongst those done best, a change from previous years. Teachers should note that the answer V (for *vrai* in the legacy specification) was not one of the three possible answers, and was not credited.

Question 7

This was a challenging question, aimed at A*, so that many students found it demanding. However, some answers proved to be reasonably accessible for those who located the correct information.

Question 7(a) This proved fairly accessible, with almost half of students gaining both marks and over 80% gaining one. Most recognised that Safi's father had a job (*boulot*), though some negated the mark by adding incorrect extra information. For example, *boulot* was mistaken for *boulangier*, *manger* led to *manager*, and some thought he was a fisherman because of the presence of *pêche* later in the text, though a long way from the reference to her father. Many also expressed accurately that the family has enough to eat, but the use of more positive modifiers, such as 'lots to eat', negated the mark.

Question 7(b) This proved to be one of the most challenging question on the paper, as students had to read quite an extended section of the passage in order to identify that few Moroccans managed to get to/escape to Spain (or abroad). Some came close, but the idea of 'go to/travel to Spain' was ambiguous, as this could have been a holiday. At this tier, precision is required. A surprising number of students seemed to think that six million (*mille*) Moroccans drowned at sea.

Question 7(c) 60% of students gained the mark by recognising *agences caritatives* as charities. Those who chose to use the word 'agencies' needed to add the idea that these were from Europe, or foreign.

Question 7(d) Although the text was again challenging, half of the students gained this mark, usually for stating that Safi's family could go to live in France (by virtue of Mamadou's football success). The idea of simply going to France was ambiguous, and could not be credited. Many misunderstood what was said about Mamadou's status as a footballer, for instance stating what might happen if he was selected to play for his country, when he is already an international. Equally, some wrote about him playing for France or even Europe, rather than in Europe. At this level, credit is given for correct deductions supported by the text. In this case, those who inferred that his success might lead to a better life for the family gained the mark. However, generalisations about him earning lots of money, based on widely held views on footballers' incomes, were not credited.

Question 7(e) More than 50% gained this mark. There were indicators in two parts of the text to the idea of large scale unemployment in Senegal. Too many answers were not rooted in the text, so were merely guesswork, for instance reference to Safi's lack of experience.

Question 8

These four questions, each worth two marks, were also challenging, as they were targeted at grade A, with part (a) aimed at A*. As in Question 7, students needed to be precise in their expression, but too many students produced long answers, often with minimal reference to the

text. Students must be encouraged to read the whole text before starting to answer and to realise that questions and answers follow the order of the text. Too many students select a word they know, no matter where it occurs, and produce an answer to fit in with this word.

Question 8(a) Very few, less than 3% gained both marks here. The key marker was *j'aimerais*, found in both paragraphs. Many students wrongly tried to find all the information in the first paragraph. Imprecision caused huge loss of marks. For example, those who wrote that Marie-Ange would like the responsibility of assessing their competence were indicating that, in view of the wording of the question, this was about the horses' competence rather than the riders'. The translation of *promenades* as walks was judged to be inappropriate. It also led to answers about the seaside. 40% of students gained one mark, usually for identifying that working on a ranch would appeal to Marie-Ange. The use of the word security, rather than safety, was considered ambiguous.

Question 8(b) More than half of the students gained one mark, but only 12% gained both. Most gained a mark for stating that Marie-Ange would not like to prepare the horses, but some lost the mark for adding incorrect extra material, such as 'for a show/competition' (presumably from *compétence*). Some confused *chevaux* with *cheveux*, leading to incorrect answers. There were also a lot of vague attempts at the notion of her having nothing to do when few visitors came. Whereas the mark scheme accepted such interpretations as during the winter months/out of season, credit could not be given for the vague 'some' months, as it was unclear to which months the answer referred. The wrong understanding of *grand monde* led to answers about disruption to her travel opportunities.

Question 8(c) 70% gained one mark and almost a quarter of students gained two. Worthy answers were fairly equally divided between the notion that Romain believed in his ability to satisfy customers, expressed in many different ways, and the reference to the usefulness of his experience when travelling with his family. Few identified the third possibility, that he had learned a lot from his work experience in a travel agent's.

Question 8(d) (i) and (ii) These two questions were marked globally, to be fair to students who thought that his main worry was the closure of travel agents. Over half of the students recognised that his concern was that the cost of holidays might result in less use of travel agents. 55% of students also recognised that the consequent risk of travel agents closing would affect him, or that he might not get the job he wants (a correct deduction). Marks were not scored in the many cases where answers suggested that he already had the job, and for inaccurate translations of *agences de voyages*, for example simply as agencies, which was lacking in precision, or as holiday companies, which is a different proposition. Vague answers such as 'it might close' could not be credited because examiners did not know to what 'it' referred, without clear context. The presence of the word *fermer* led to answers about farming and even smoking.

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.