GCSE

FRENCH

Unit 2 Reading
Report on the Examination

4655
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Foundation Tier

General Comments

A small number of students sat this examination as an on-screen test. This report covers the on-screen test as well as the written paper.

There was a significant increase in the number of students taking this paper compared to 2012. More questions required answers in English this year, potentially making the paper more challenging, but the mean mark was similar to last year's, suggesting an improvement in students' ability to express themselves appropriately when answering such questions.

Question 1

This question tested students' knowledge of vocabulary of food items. Almost every student gained at least one of the four marks available, and the vast majority gained three or four, indicating sound knowledge. The only slight problem was confusion of 'ham' and 'lamb'.

Question 2

Four marks were available for recognising single items of vocabulary on the topic of places in town. Students knew this vocabulary well and the majority gained all four marks. Item 2(b) was the only one to cause problems. Students may well have chosen the car park for *la gare* on the basis of the verb *garer,* though it is more likely that, as in the past, they simply did not know *la gare.*

Question 3

Testing short texts on hotel facilities, this question was well answered by the majority of students. It was good to see that potentially challenging items of vocabulary, such as *demi-pension, repas* and *les champs*, did not pose serious problems as students drew on the context in which they appeared.

Question 4

With the exception of part 4(a), this question on social issues was extremely well answered. Most students seem to be familiar with the topic, as certain aspects are covered in controlled assessment tasks. Item 4(a) clearly referred to 'inconsiderate behaviour' because of the impact on neighbours. Possibly some students did not fully understand the actual English used here, for there was some support, not based on anything in the texts, for the answer 'shoplifting'.

Question 5

This overlap question required answers in English on aspects of a typical school day. Parts 5(b) and 5(c) were well answered by the majority of students, but the other three items caused problems, especially where students were imprecise in their choice of words.

In Question 5(a), many students understood that Marine was not woken up by her mother, but did not gain the mark through adding erroneous and contradictory information such as 'late' or 'in time'. The word *Maman* was a surprising extra difficulty, as a significant number of students did not translate it into English, or misconstrued it completely. Some wrote that her alarm clock did not go off, probably a guess, but possibly confusing *réveil (-matin)* with *réveiller*. Others thought her problem arose from her late night doing her history project or a night out with her friends, which were not related to the text.

In Question 5(d), many students grasped the idea that Marine wanted to improve in order to play in a concert, but failed to add 'at the end of the year/end of term', which was required. Many wrote 'next year' instead or referred vaguely to an annual event.

In Question 5(e), too many students referred to her having to spend three hours on homework (which does not answer the question) rather than indicating that she cannot continue to practise her guitar. Many answers generalised her homework chores, ignoring the reference to *ce soir*. The amount of homework, though not needed for the mark, was often wrong, as students misunderstood *au moins trois heures*.

Question 6
This question, based on the front page of a teenage magazine, tested a range of topics. Part 6(a) proved very accessible, while a substantial majority gained the mark on the other three. Where the mark was not gained it was because students did not recognise individual items of lexis, such as *météo, jeux* and *mode*.

Question 7
Almost all students gained at least two of the three marks awarded for this question on the consequences of flooding, making it the most accessible of the overlap questions.

Question 8
This was a new question type for reading, though regularly used in listening papers. Students had to provide short answers in English to identify advantages and disadvantages of different part-time jobs.

Question 8(a) proved very challenging with very few students gaining both marks. As usual the mention of *temps* was translated as 'time', leading to responses about long hours, shifts and so on, as well as 'temper', leading to responses about moods or angry drivers. Very few students grasped the notion that Stefan received tips/extra money from drivers. Many wrote imprecise answers such as 'they give him money' where the word 'they' could refer to anybody, including his employers. Others simply referred to 'good money'.

Question 8(b) was answered more successfully. The majority identified that Lilka is gaining experience and the fact that some customers are impolite. A few wrongly mentioned her past experience as the advantage, or used the imprecise 'people/they' instead of 'customers'. Teachers should advise students of the danger of using the word 'they' in their answers in English, as it is rarely precise enough.

In Question 8(c), many students identified the correct pieces of French but placed them in the wrong box, so that 'poor pay' became an advantage and 'not boring' became a disadvantage. Some did not gain the mark for the advantage because they construed the word *choses* as 'choices'.

Higher Tier

General comments
A small number of students sat this examination as an on-screen test. This report covers the on-screen test as well as the written paper.

There was again an increase in the number of students taking this paper. Although there were far more marks than usual awarded for answers in English, creating a potentially more challenging paper, this was offset by the fact that many students found questions targeted at A and B grades more accessible than in previous years. It was pleasing to see a reduction in awkwardly expressed responses and the almost total elimination of answers in French. The fact that there were few spaces for answers left blank indicates that students were at ease with the length of the paper.

Questions 1, 3 and 5
As expected, these overlap questions were answered much better here than by students attempting the same questions at Foundation Tier, though the pattern of mark distribution was similar. Students tended to be more precise in their use of English in Questions 1 and 5.

Question 2
This gap-fill question, targeting grades C and D, was answered well, considering the level of difficulty that such grammar-based questions often pose. Only part 2(c) caused significant problems. Almost as many students chose answer G *(piscine)* as the correct answer D *(boîte),* probably because it is a word they are more familiar with, but answer G clearly did not make sense.

Question 4
A true/false/not in text question on a long passage about sibling rivalry, this was an example of questions targeting grades A and B which students found very accessible, with none of the parts proving as challenging as anticipated. Many gained all six marks and it is good to see that students are now more inclined to use the question mark option. However, given that only three alternative answers are possible, it was worrying that students choose so many other letters. Teachers should remind students to pay sufficient attention to the rubric.

Question 6
This question on the Olympic Games carried seven marks for identifying the person making the comment, and targeted a range of grades from B to A*. Overall the responses reflected the intended difficulty of the items. Items 6(b), 6(c), 6(d), and 6(f) were well answered, indeed better than expected.

In Question 6(a), more students chose answer R than the actual answer M. This was surprising, as only Mehmet made reference to prices, and although *acheter* was used by Roselyne there was no justification in her comments. It would appear that *prix* is not well known in this context.
In Question 6(e), which was aimed at A*, students were required, in line with the grade descriptions, to compare texts and draw a conclusion. More than half chose answer M rather than S. However both Mehmet and Roselyne make direct reference to the atmosphere in London, whereas Serge does not, with his arrangements resulting in his spending no time in the city apart from watching the games.

In Question 6(g), the vast majority chose answer R instead of M. Mehmet refers to making purchases (perhaps *achats* is not well known), whereas there is nothing in Roselyne's comments to justify this choice. Students may have chosen R because it had been used only once. The principle in this question type is that each alternative must be used at least once. Students should not assume a level of equality in the use of each letter.

Question 7
This was another example of a question where students answered so well that marks proved more accessible than anticipated, probably because more able students benefit from the amount of context present in longer texts. Answers B, E and H were consistently selected, with only F being preferred to G in a small number of cases, probably because *épuisé* was not recognised.

Question 8
Most students dealt with the comparisons made in the first paragraph to deduce that towns in the USA have more fashion boutiques than Montreal or towns in France, and correctly chose answer

C. Part 8(b) required answers in English and proved very challenging, although a majority of students gained at least one of the two marks. This was usually for identifying the fact that shops do not change their opening times, but the failure to spot the negative often led to the opposite conclusion. The other mark was for stating that people can access the shops through the underground/metro system, an idea which was too often so poorly expressed that the mark could not be awarded. For example, some students wrote about 'trains' or other means of transport, or stated simply that the shops are indoors. If the concept of not having to go outside was linked to the idea of getting to the shops, this was also credited, but too many misunderstood the reference to the temperature, especially the word *moins*, so that some responses about high winter temperatures were seen.

Question 9
Parts (a) and (b) were well answered but all others performed as expected for A/A* items.

In Question 9(a), most students stated that national parks protect endangered species or that you can see rare animals there. The answer 'To protect animals' is a good example of a response which is not precise enough at this level. A few students became entangled in attempts to include the statistics mentioned in the first paragraph, to no avail. The concept of *extinction* was not understood by those students who propounded the protection of extinct species!

In Question 9(b), most correct answers stated that animals are finding it harder to find food. However the answer 'They are finding it hard to find food' could not be credited as it was unclear who 'they' are. It might well include the human inhabitants of the area, for example. Some students, seeing the reference to polar regions in the question, wrote about polar bears or, even more often, to the impact of global warming, ice melting and so on, drawing on their own knowledge rather than the text, a common issue in this sort of question.

In Question 9(c), the answer required some detail, either body parts of animals or rare animals being used for medicine and/or cooking/eating. Where marks were not awarded, it was usually because of an omission of a detail. There was also incorrect reference to animals being tested for medical purposes. The word *culinaires* was sometimes translated as 'cultural'.

In Question 9(d), most students grasped the idea that you need a guide to find and/or approach gorillas, but this was sometimes expressed in a manner that meant the mark could not be awarded, usually because some additional information negated the correct concept. Too many students wrote about gorillas being dangerous or that they approach you.

Question 9(e) proved to be the least accessible mark on the paper. Students had to understand *n'est pas aussi bien protégé,* and therefore refer back to the previous sentence to express the comparison, so that only 'not as well protected as elephants' was accepted. The vast majority wrote simply that the rhinoceros is not protected, that they are hunted for their horns/ivory or they have no chance (of survival), based on *n'a pas eu cette chance*. However the answer 'they're still being/continue to be hunted' was also credited.

In Question 9(f), there were two marks available, and most students gained at least one. The first was for stating that only insects and mankind will live on the planet. Some students included 'scientists' in the list, not understanding *selon*. A surprising number invoked science fiction and wrote about, for example, insects being banned to another planet. *Notre* was sometimes translated as 'north', as in previous papers. The second mark was for stating that disease-carrying insects could threaten the existence of mankind in future. The mark scheme generously allowed a wide

range of possible wording for this notion, but some weaker wording, such as 'might affect humans' did not adequately convey the sense of threat.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks
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