

Examiners' Report November 2007

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365)

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IGCSE French Listening

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Questions 1 - 5 Les Loisirs

This section of the examination is designed to be accessible to all candidates as they settle into the examination. It was answered almost universally correctly with a handful of candidates confusing *chien* and *chat* in Question 1.

Question 6 Au Camping

There were two main errors in the way the candidates answered this question.

The first problem was that *à droite* and *à gauche* were transposed. Surprisingly, a number of candidates who correctly identified *les douches* as being on the right then incorrectly placed the *terrain de volley-ball* on the left of the swimming pool.

The second problem was that several candidates completed all six blank boxes with a letter. This generally involved incorrectly placing the letter A where letter D should have been. However, if a candidate had put letter A in the left-hand circle and had placed all the other letters correctly, full marks were awarded. Candidates should be given more practice in class in doing similar types of question.

Questions 7 - 10 Les jeunes et les cigarettes.

It was evident that candidates had read the questions carefully and also listened carefully. Answers were generally completely correct with the one exception: a small handful of candidates confused responses A and F, thus incorrectly giving answer F for Question 10.

Question 12 Internet Première partie

The vast majority of candidates knew that an adverb was required for Question (a). Unfortunately there were, inevitably, candidates who gave *moins* rather than *plus*. For Question (b) candidates were not expected to know that *(faire) le surf* does not refer to Internet surfing. However, at this level, the candidates were expected to pick up the expression *écouter attentivement* which should have lead them to give the correct response: *(faire) attention*.

For Question (c) *courriel* was occasionally given. This probably reveals the weakest candidates who had not followed the spoken text at all and could not correlate *n'aura plus d'autorité* with *(perdre le) contrôle*.

Question 13 Internet Deuxième partie

Answers were less accurate in this part of the test which targets top C Grade and B Grade candidates.

For **Question (a)** both incorrect answers (*tombent sur le dos* and *tourment le dos*) were given in almost equal proportion, although more than half of the candidates did find the correct answer.

On the other hand, although virtually no candidates opted for the incorrect *une porte noire* for **Question (b)**, far too many opted for the incorrect *une affiche*.

It was the answer to **Question (c)** which proved the most disappointing. The examiners had hoped that text *ils doivent être surveillés par un professeur* would be relatively easy. Perhaps some candidates thought the question was too easy. They could not accept that *professeurs = adultes*. Many candidates therefore chose incorrectly: they chose either *caméras*, believing that this would be a sophisticated answer or believing the *CDI* had something to do with cameras; or *étudiants*, which did not seem to make much sense.

Question (c) was grammatically challenging. It was correctly answered by less than half the candidates.

Questions 14 - 16 Thomas Voeckler

Candidates should be reminded that this question is not a test of manipulation of language. Answers may often require no more than transcribing word for word from the spoken passage. See comments on **Questions 16(a)** and **16(b)** below.

Generally these questions were not answered well. Although they are designed for A and A* Grade candidates, weaker candidates must be reminded that they should not let their attention wander by this stage of the examination: there will most probably be one or two questions that they can attempt to answer. This was the case of **Questions 14(a)** and **15(c)**. Whilst very many candidates did successfully answer **14(a)** a sort of fatigue seemed to have set in by **15(b)** which was not as frequently correctly answered as might have been expected.

Candidates should also be reminded that it is quite acceptable to "quote" directly from the text which they hear. More able candidates managed to identify that the words required to answer **Question 16(a)** came before the words *ça choquait*. Unfortunately, these candidates attempted to alter the phrase *ce qu'il disait*. Sometimes the paraphrase was correct, thus earning the candidate a mark. However, some paraphrases were so unintelligible, that the mark could not be awarded. The answer *ce qu'il disait* - exactly as heard on the tape - was perfectly acceptable.

Similarly, **Question 16(b)** could be answered by the three words *il se sacrifie*.

General comments

Now that past papers for three series of the IGCSE French examination are available, it is strongly recommended that teachers use them for practice in class as the types of tests used in the examination are not always those used in class or in class text-books.

IGCSE French Reading and Writing

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It is pleasing to report that all candidates attempted to secure marks across the whole range of questions, seeming to find the format of the questions accessible.

Section A Part One

Question 1 caused absolutely no difficulties to candidates, whereas a small number dropped a single mark in question 2. It should be noted that such errors were occasionally made by candidates who achieved a very high overall mark for Paper 2. Candidates are therefore advised to be as secure as possible in their judgements, considering all the multiple choice responses. In question 3, maximum marks were only achieved by those candidates who were able to select very specific information from the reading text. This indicated effective preparation of many candidates, as they had been trained to discriminate between the options available within the gap filling activity.

Section A Part Two

Most candidates were able to achieve maximum marks for both elements of the question, whilst writing approximately 50 words. This strategy seems to have been emphasized by teachers at certain centres, where all candidates avoided unnecessarily long answers. Such good practice is in the best interests of candidates. The vast majority of candidates adhered to the question, whereas a few seemed to lose sight of the actual task, incorporating some irrelevant material. Originality of response was a pleasing feature of many scripts. Stronger candidates seemed willing to employ an excellent range of structures.

Section B

Question 5

Candidates employed a range of strategies aimed at "ruling out" incorrect responses. Many chose to underline or highlight certain elements of the reading text, as part of the process. These candidates tended to score high marks for the question. Once again, it seemed that candidates were looking for extra evidence to confirm as many answers as possible, before cautiously proceeding to the items they perceived as more difficult. Most candidates appreciated that items could be attempted in any order. Not surprisingly, maximum scores were achieved in a significant number of cases. Item (iv) was only successful where candidates had closely scrutinized the text.

Question 6

It was clear that candidates from most centres had gained previous experience of the range of question styles to expect, by reference to past papers and other resources, whereas a few seemed unsure of what to expect.

Many responses took account of the fact that marks are awarded in two categories. The first relates to those allocated to comprehension of a passage containing some complex language. The five remaining marks award candidates' ability to express the answers in accurate French. In certain instances, the French can be virtually lifted from the stimulus. Complete sentences are not essential, although the language used must be applicable to the given context. The Assessment Criteria indicate how best to maximize the language mark

In item (a), most candidates carefully avoided reference to current employment in "tourisme". Item (b) caused very few difficulties. The main issue in item (c) was whether or not candidates dealt effectively with the use of "moi" in the original. Candidates who merely lifted all information from the text did not gain credit in this case. In response to item (d), there were numerous references to "se manquer", as even some stronger candidates were unfamiliar with the construction. Whereas there were numerous successful attempts at item (e), most difficulties arose from misinterpretation of the question. In (f), most candidates secured at least one mark, but many then lifted "notre vie" from the text. Item (g) attracted some excellent responses, in cases where candidates specifically addressed the issue of "Pourquoi?". There was often a partial response, achieving a single mark. In the case of item (h), candidates tended to enjoy the breadth of vocabulary needed to understand "fier" and were even able to manipulate the verb employed in their response. Items (d), (g) and (h) were the most challenging.

Encouragingly, transfer of verbs to the third person singular proved difficult for only a small minority of candidates, but possessives such as "ma/sa" tended to be less successful. It must be borne in mind that this examination is graded in difficulty. Certain comprehension items in Question 6 are designed to test the knowledge and skill of candidates who are aspiring to Grades A /A*. Whereas candidates are encouraged to attempt all questions, those who find elements of question 6 rather demanding are advised to proceed with reasonable pace to the more universally accessible question 7.

Question 7

Candidates should be advised to devote sufficient time to the completion and checking of this valuable essay question, as even the weakest candidates earned valuable marks. Some essays were too short for the purpose of addressing all the bullet points. However, candidates can achieve maximum marks by producing about 150 words of French. Excessively long answers tend to be self-penalising, as candidates then often struggle to maintain a consistent level of accuracy. It also leaves little time for the careful checking of one's responses.

Candidates must ensure that they adhere strictly to the bullet points of the essay. Any omission or misinterpretation will affect the Communication mark. However, it is not necessary to write an equal number of words on each bullet point.

Specific Observations:

7(a) This topic seemed familiar to most candidates who attempted this option, apparent from the pleasing level of specific vocabulary at their disposal. The second bullet point, eliciting opinions, drew some excellent and original responses, allowing candidates to embark upon a more discursive dimension. Even slightly weaker candidates attempted to justify their opinions, showing a pleasing degree of development and initiative. Only a few candidates misinterpreted a key component, such as "prochaine visite". Overall, time frames were used with at least sufficient accuracy to avoid ambiguity.

7(b) This proved to be the most popular option. Whereas the entire range of candidates found the bullet points generally accessible, even the more able succeeded in producing a range of extended structures. There were some instances of tense ambiguity in response to the fourth bullet point, "Vos projets de famille pour les grandes vacances".

7(c) "Argent de Poche" was the least popular option, typically avoided by candidates who felt less confident in terms of breadth of expression. This essay tended to be attempted by candidates who had a clear set of views on the issue and seemed to base their responses upon individual experience.

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Examiner's Report

Section A In all instances, candidates were able to address the picture stimulus, providing the interviewer with several points for discussion. This allowed the conversation to develop in a range of directions. Careful selection of visual stimulus can enhance the ensuing discussion. There is evidence that candidates who supply a photograph relating to their own experiences tend to feel comfortable at this stage and are indeed enthusiastic to share their personal experiences. Where candidates are invited to narrate from a visual stimulus unrelated to their own experiences, their utterances are sometimes less spontaneous. An authentic conversation can therefore be more difficult to initiate. Less confident candidates can find themselves out of their depth. Pre-learned presentations do tend to sound rather mechanical. During this series, the discussions did tend to follow on naturally from candidates' presentations of the visual stimulus. This constitutes excellent practice. It is pleasing to report that there were no instances in which interviewers elicited information the candidate had already offered.

Section B It was pleasing to note that the specimen questions only tended to be used as a guide by interviewers and that they were not considered as a prescribed list. This approach elicited a range of very original and spontaneous responses in most instances. The standard of the questioning tended to be such that it allowed candidates access to responses which incorporated their optimum breadth of expression. Most candidates avoided the use of lists when responding and dealt effectively with more open-ended questions. In a few instances however, even stronger candidates seemed reticent in taking the initiative.

Interviewers did well in attempting to steer clear of closed questions. It was pleasing to note that interviewers knew how to couch questions in a way best suited to their students. The range of question employed was broadly in line with the ability of individual candidates.

Conduct of Examination Most recordings respected the timings allocated for each part of the test. This is clearly in the best interests of candidates, as responses offered beyond the time limits are not assessed. Naturally, conversations should not be too short. It is most important that candidates are allowed the stipulated time for the presentation. Most centres divided up the various component times as specified. For the purposes of assessment, it is necessary to indicate the point at which each new conversation is beginning.

Interviewers displayed a pleasing degree of empathy, thus allowing candidates to perform to the best of their ability.

Administrative Matters

Centres are thanked for their overall excellent standard of administration during this series.

Materials were presented and labelled according to the guidelines. The appropriate Attendance Registers and other documents were always completed.

Most recordings were of a high quality, centres having clearly verified their clarity. On occasions, obtrusive background noise made it difficult to hear certain utterances. When recording, the microphone should always favour the candidate rather than the interviewer.

Statistics

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Subject Grade (all candidates) (max 100)	91	80	69	58	49	40	32	24
Lowest mark for award of Grade for Spoken French (optional) (max 60)	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7

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