

Examiners' Report November 2008

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365)

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Contents

1.	IGCSE French Listening Paper 01	1
2.	IGCSE French Reading & Writing Paper 02	3
3.	IGCSE French Speaking Paper 03	6
4.	Statistics	8

4365 paper 1 Listening

Candidates' Responses to Specific Questions.

Overall, candidates did not seem well prepared for the examination and Centres would do well to spend more time on listening practice. There are many websites that teachers can use in class, from very basic sound discrimination exercises, to full blown listening exercises. As many students seem to be more *au fait* with technology than their teachers, it is not impossible to expect students to do "listening homework" from a website or from work downloaded onto a memory stick (or the Centre's own Intranet or similar). Some suggestions are made on Page 23 of the IGCSE Specification.

Questions 1 - 4

Question 4 was the most challenging to about half the candidates who could not identify "oreilles énormes" as *ears*. Generally, at this level, *oreilles* are confused with *yeux / œil*. The most common incorrect answer was A. This was surprising as all three pictures show faces with eyes of the same size and there is no particularly enormous feature about the face pictured in A.

Questions 5 - 9

This question was quite accessible to all but the very weakest candidates. However, some more able candidates did not do themselves justice by failing to recognise Questions 5 and 6 correctly: the monosyllables and silent final letters in the phrases *au pied de son lit* caused difficulty in Question 5. In Question 6, *fauteuil* frequently evaded the recollection of average candidates.

Questions 10 - 12

Many candidates did themselves a serious disservice as they tried to second guess the answers and to be "logical". In Question 10, the candidate may well have hesitated between the correct *14* and the incorrect *41* - this is understandable given the similarity of sound between *quatorze* and *quarante*. However, far too many candidates seem to have assumed that because he is a *grand-père* any reference to him aged *14* would be incorrect. Such candidates did not have the courage to believe their ears.

In Question 12, far too many candidates opted for *7* as the answer instead of *7*. This seemed to be simple carelessness. There were examples of quite weak candidates who had been carefully trained in using numbers and who managed to boost their marks by careful attention to this aspect of Questions 10 - 12.

Questions 13 - 15

Section B is of a higher level of difficulty for the candidates. The questions require the candidates not only to listen carefully to the text, but to read the questions very carefully and to focus their answers on the text they have heard. The answer *ennuyeuse* is incorrect for Question 13(a) as the connection in the text is clearly with the length of time: *environ 5 minutes et ça, c'est beaucoup trop long.*

Question 13(b) average candidates should have been able to pick up the word *si* in the question and relate it to the text: *si j'ai faim.*

Question 14(a) did demand a transfer of language on the part of the candidate from *très amusants* to expressions such as *l'humour / rire / s'amuser*. This, of course, is a higher level skill - although much leeway is allowed for spelling and grammar. However, only a tiny minority of candidates were able to distinguish between *j'aime ... l'humour britannique* and *Mon frère ... préfère les pubs françaises*. In this case, a great deal of latitude was allowed for the spelling of anything that implied "to do with England / Britain", but the answer nearly always given was the incorrect *français / de France* etc.

Question 15 demanded very close attention to the text. The more able candidates must be aware that in Section B they must pay very close attention to the text. The answer to Question 15 (a) *pendant un film* would seem to be accurate, but only so far as it went. Dominique may well watch advertisements during a run-of-the-mill film, but she clearly states that it is during *un bon film* that she does not want to be distracted. This then leads to the answer to Question 15(b) which targets the idea of concentration.

Question 16(a) gave candidates the chance to select the right information from a relatively lengthy paragraph. Very many candidates were comfortable with this as the information came at the beginning of the paragraph, however, many failed to spot that the *l'absence de pistes cyclables* could be gleaned from the text in the same way. The fact that the information was at the end of a long passage and was more complex in structure and lexis made the Question 16(b) a good discriminator.

Question 18(b) was generally correctly answered by more able candidates, but the word *collines* seems to have been unknown.

Many candidates were tempted to write what they knew about cycling rather than what they were told in the text. The answers given to Question 20 were, almost without exception, incorrect. Those candidates who had seen the significance of the words *on doit* very often referred to *casques / être conscient* and various other excellent ways for a cyclist to protect him or herself but which, alas, did not figure in the text in relationship to cyclists.

Question 21

Gave many candidates the opportunity to pick up a mark, but the Examiner did have the impression that some candidates did not even understand the three words given. At this level, candidates are expected to have a good range of abstract vocabulary that expresses emotions, desires etc.

4365 paper 2 Reading and writing

In terms of accessibility, it is again pleasing to report that every candidate attempted virtually every section of the examination, seeking to secure marks across the whole range of questions types.

Section A Part 1

Question 1

Question 1 gave rise to very few difficulties to candidates. There were merely a few instances in question 1(iii) where candidates dropped an occasional mark. As per previous series, the same candidates then proceeded to secure full marks in a more demanding section. It is therefore appropriate to remind candidates that they should be as systematic as possible in their approach to these less demanding tasks, as multiple choice scenarios require careful scrutiny.

Question 3

In question 3, most candidates carefully circumvented incorrect responses, by seeking evidence from the text before proceeding, rather than merely choosing a grammatically plausible response. Even more so than in previous series, the evidence suggests effective preparation of candidates by their teachers, as they had been trained to discriminate between the options available within the gap filling activity.

Section A Part 2

Question 4

A significant number of candidates achieved maximum marks for both components of the question. There were equally several instances wherein candidates misinterpreted the question, by describing three or even four hobbies, as opposed to just one. It is encouraging to note that most candidates focus their attention on the specific question. The strategy of writing approximately 50 words continued to serve the candidates' best interests, as per last series. Candidates seem to have been successfully guided away from the temptation of offering excessively prolonged responses. Many scripts contained very original responses, drawn from personal experience. An excellent breadth of expression was deployed by stronger candidates, whereas others were over-ambitious in the structures attempted, leading to some rather incoherent attempts.

Section B

Question 5

It is clear that centres have conducted some excellent work in training candidates how to exclude incorrect answers from their deliberations, thus allowing them to at least reduce the chances of submitting an incorrect response. Candidates often annotated the text, using a range of tried and tested techniques, before arriving at what was usually the correct response. Where candidates found this section rather

challenging, it was encouraging to note that they were basing their responses on evidence rather than guesswork. It was equally a pleasure to note that a significant number of maximum scores were secured. Item 5(f) seemed to cause more difficulties than the other correct responses.

Question 6

The majority of candidates had clearly worked through the past papers and other resources and were clearly aware of how to gain both types of mark for the question, whereas only a few seemed unfamiliar with the format and marking structure.

In the case of more confident candidates, responses tended to take 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, but caution must be exercised when adopting such a method. Whereas complete sentences are not essential, the language used must be applicable to the given context. In order to maximise performance, close awareness of the Assessment Criteria facilitates the process of maximizing the language mark

In item (a), it was necessary to avoid reference to "notre" within the response. Item (b) was correctly addressed by the vast majority of candidates, with only a small minority offering "train" as their response. Item (c) was dealt with successfully when candidates distinguished between Paris and Saint-Tropez. This was equally the case in respect of item (d) for which the essential response tended to be systematically extracted from the text. Thankfully, reference to "banlieue parisienne" tended to be avoided. In the case of item (e), some ambiguity arose from certain candidates' deployment of "Il a surpris" which did not convey the desired response. In (f), most candidates were able to discriminate between "petites routes" and "autoroutes". It was then necessary to address the issue of "Pourquoi?", rather than to just repeat the question. Item (g) gave rise to some outstanding yet unexpected responses, indicating a wealth of breadth of expression. There were nevertheless only a relatively small number of instances wherein two marks were scored for this question. Partial responses often attracted a single mark. In the case of item (h), candidates needed to convey the lady's dislike of driving at night, rather than the fact that they arrived before nightfall. Item (i) attracted some unexpected but correct responses. Items (g) and (i) proved to be the most challenging.

As per previous series, responses sometimes required the transfer of verb endings to the third person singular, proving too difficult for a number of candidates. This was equally the case with regard to possessives such as "notre/leur" which tended to be overlooked by even some otherwise very able candidates. 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.

Section C

Question 7

Candidates should be advised to allocate sufficient time to the completion and checking of this valuable essay question, as even the weakest candidates tended to earn 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 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) It was clear from the popularity of this question that candidates tended to be aware of the relevant subject matter and were able to draw from a range of personal experiences. Whereas the first bullet point was very targeted, some candidates were less than clear in their response. The second bullet point was intended as an opportunity to refer to a past time frame. This was attempted successfully by most candidates, but a few were unable to operate outside the present tense. In bullet point three, only a few candidates were unfamiliar with the term "gens". It was pleasing to note that in the fourth bullet point, even slightly weaker candidates attempted to justify their opinions, showing a pleasing degree of initiative. It was very unusual for candidates to overlook the reference to "intention" in the final bullet point. Time frames were attempted by most candidates, albeit with some ambiguity in a significant number of instances.

7(b) This proved to be as popular as 7(c). Naturally, candidates who had a clear grasp of the future tense were more likely to be successful here. Nevertheless, the question was adopted by many less able candidates who struggled to manoeuvre between time frames. "Espérez" and "récentes" served as useful triggers to more confident candidates, whereas others tended to become a little confused over which time frame to deploy.

7(c) Able candidates often entered into a more discursive response when dealing with the issue of pocket money, although even some linguistically strong candidates overlooked either bullet point two or three. As per the other two essay titles, most candidates seemed alert to the invitation to deploy time frames other than the present.

4365 paper 3 Speaking

Section A

In the vast majority of cases, the picture stimulus was deployed in a very effective manner, facilitating a comprehensive discussion. Most centres continue to support the needs of candidates by favouring the use of a picture or photograph targeted in respect of the individual candidate. This means that the stimulus can be used to excellent effect, optimizing the performance of the individual. Engaging photographs and even contemporary cartoon images are regularly favoured in this section, allowing able candidates to convey a significant range of views whilst employing a significant breadth of expression. Where such images are used with less able candidates, it often places such candidates in contexts they find it difficult to contend with. Images proving more successful across the ability range include those which depict moments spent with family members or friends. This may be because they are directly related to the candidates' personal experiences. For the less confident candidate, such images often provide a sense of security and familiarity, but their use is equally effective in respect of more able candidates who tend to produce their very best language when in a familiar context. It is pleasing to report that all interviewers refrained from eliciting information which had already been conveyed by candidates during the presentation. Thankfully there were very few instances wherein very confident candidates were asked very basic questions during the discussion. Only rarely were candidates asked questions requiring a level of linguistic competence beyond their grasp. Interviewers are becoming more and more skilled in the ways they succeed in eliciting each candidate's full range of linguistic structures. It is encouraging to note that only a tiny minority of interviewers regularly interrupt candidates in mid sentence.

Section B

It is pleasing to relate to centres that specimen questions tended to be used in the manner for which they had been intended, circumventing too much direct reference to questions extracted directly from the guidelines. This technique served candidates' needs, allowing genuine discussion to take place. Candidates equally seized the opportunity of calling upon a wide range of spontaneous and original responses. In merely a few instances, questions asked of confident candidates provided an insufficient level of demand. By their very nature, certain questions tend to elicit a response composed primarily of lists, whereas others provide greater linguistic opportunity.

Eg *"Pourquoi voudrais-tu visiter le nord de l'Espagne?"* In this instance, candidates tended to be more successful, as it required the language skills needed to clarify a previous response. Candidates performed better in that majority of instances where interviewers allowed them sufficient time to complete responses. On an equally positive note, closed questions are very rarely asked of candidates. Most interviewers successfully rephrased questions in situations where candidates were a little unsure. This allowed candidates to proceed with a greater degree of confidence. It was to the advantage of candidates where they experienced a range of question types.

Conduct of Examination

It is appropriate to thank the vast majority of interviewers, as they adhered to the stipulated timings. This is extremely important, as marks are not allocated to responses offered beyond the specified time limits. If conversations are too brief, the candidate is not in a position to achieve an optimum mark. If the interviewer realises that the initial conversation is too long, then the second and third conversation should not be abridged in order to compensate for this. Candidates equally need to be allowed the stipulated time for the purpose of the presentation. Loud bleeps to indicate the end of a conversation should be avoided, as they can unsettle the candidate. All interviewers made the transition between the different conversations very clear. The high degree of empathy shown by interviewers towards their students seemed to place them at their ease.

Administrative Matters

Centres are to be commended for the overall excellent standard of administration during this series.

Virtually all tapes and other important materials were correctly presented and clearly labelled. All pictures relating to the presentation were included. To assist interviewers new to this component, guidelines are provided on pages 39-42 of the IGCSE French Specification.

Recordings were very clear in nearly all cases, but some were not clearly audible, due to very "quiet" recordings. There were however no cases of obtrusive background noise. Centres are politely requested to test the effectiveness of recording equipment before conducting the first examination, whether on CD or cassette. Recordings must never be stopped or even paused once the candidate has started his / her examination.

The microphone should always favour the candidate rather than the interviewer.

2008 Statistics

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Subject Grade (all candidates) (max 100)	88	78	68	59	49	40	31	22

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Grade for Spoken French (optional) (max 60)	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7

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