

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE French (4FR0)
Paper 2 Reading and Writing

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Publications Code UG035935

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**International GCSE French
Paper 2 Reading and Writing
Examiner report**

The Examiners were delighted to see that the vast majority of students had been well prepared by their teachers for the examination. Students had approached their tasks carefully and thoughtfully.

Q1

These questions posed no problems to students who had been correctly entered for the examination. The vocabulary in the stimulus was known and the icons were easily recognisable.

Q2

This is the second time a single picture has been used as a stimulus to test reading comprehension. In a small number of cases, students transposed V and F, thus invalidating all their answers. The letter T was accepted in place of the letter V. The most challenging part of the question was Q2(ii) as the word *tasse* was not known. The items in front of the girl being *a bowl; salt and pepper* and, further away, *a jug*. The vocabulary (including prepositions) was accessible to the vast majority of students.

Q3

The move from discrete statements to continuous text marks a transition to the Grade C/D level. Students aiming at this grade did well in this question and were comfortable with continuous text. Students were able to extract the information required in order to tick the correct boxes for the answers. A few students had not read the rubric correctly and had failed to see that only those activities which Azzouz enjoys should have been ticked. These students incorrectly ticked answer D.

Q4

There were many excellent answers which respected the rubric requiring students to write "about 50 words". The language does not need to be complex, as is indicated in the marking grid supplied in the Specification for the 2013 session. The following piece gained full marks.

'J'adore mon école, car à mon avis, c'est très belle. Il y a beaucoup de facilités, c'est très utile. Le sport à mon école est super, c'est parfait pour moi parce que je suis très sportif. La cantine est super et les repas sont bons. Je suis une interne, j'adore ça parce que je suis avec mes amis. Mais je n'aime pas mon école aussi, car je crois que c'est très stricte.'

5+5

The student has completely fulfilled four of the five criteria for a mark of 5 for Communication and Content. It is extremely rare to find the fifth criterion, "originality", within 50 words. The language used by the student is generally quite simple, but there are "more complex structures" (*à mon avis*; three different subordination conjunctions; appropriate vocabulary) used very "accurately". These elements place this script in the top band for Knowledge and Application of Language.

Students must take care to read the rubric carefully. Students were asked to write about what they liked and/or disliked at school. The script below has 46 words about school.

'J'adore le sport parce que tres s'amusant et bon pour la sante. Je prefer le rugby parce que c'est [...] Je le joue avec mes bon amis mais en été Je joue le cricket parce qu'il ya [...] tres chaud. Pour rugby je joue dans l'equipe de mon encole. A ma maison je joue dans la jardin et regarde la télévision.'

3+3

The last sentence is about home. This automatically puts the script in a band higher than Band 4 for Communication. The final Communication mark for this script was Band 3 as not only was "Some of of the information ... not fully relevant", there was also ambiguity in the unfinished sentence in the third line.

The language of the piece was quite adventurous for this type of question. The student has used a subordinating conjunction, an object pronoun and two adjectives. Although the structures are more than "quite simple", the script was placed in Band 3 as the vocabulary and structures were "adequate to the task" but communication was impeded by:

- the incomplete sentence
- weakness in using simple idioms: *en été* well used but *il y a très chaud* and *je joue le cricket* are errors which should not be made at this level.

"Genders, spellings, verb forms (were) inconsistent":

- the omission of essential verbs (*parce que tres s'amusant*)
- poor construction of *je prefer*
- incorrect spelling / gender of nouns *encole*; *la jardin*.

Whilst the vast majority of students had been extremely well trained to write "about 50 words", there were still far too many examples of longer essays, a few of which stretched to over 150 words. Such over-long essays, almost without exception, failed to reach full marks as students digressed and/or wrote carelessly in their rush to complete such a long piece of writing.

The number of words is not counted. Everything a student writes is marked. It is very noticeable that in over-long essays, the quality of writing tends to diminish rapidly in proportion to the number of words written.

Centres are reminded that, although this type of question will remain for the 2014 Certificate examination, it has been re-numbered at Question 3b and the mark grid has been modified. The new mark grid can be found in the Specification on the Edexcel website.

Q5

Q5(iii) and Q5(iv) of this question proved the most challenging. For Q5(iii), students had to equate *des musées* with the fact that parents were organising *des sorties culturels*. Another technique for arriving at the same answer would have been to note that none of the suggested items referred to *le shopping; un centre commercial* or anything relevant to the distracter *les magasins*. Similarly, none of the suggested *visites* explicitly related to *des parcs d'attraction*.

Overall, fewer than 50% of all students correctly answered Q5(iv). The errors were often attributable to over-hasty reading of the text by the students. Students at a level of Grade C and below might well have been unable to distinguish between *au moins* and *moins de*, thus arriving at the incorrect answer B. At this level, approximating to Grade B/C, students would be expected to know *écran*. They would certainly be aware, from their own experience, that *la télé, Internet ou (...) jeux vidéo* are all accessed via a screen. Simple addition of *2h30* and *(au moins) un heure* should have led students to answer C: *plus de trois heures*.

Q6

It is very pleasing to see how few blank scripts were submitted this year. Students are attempting to answer more of the questions on the paper.

The vast majority of students were able to answer both parts of Q6(i) as a straight lift from the text. This was quite acceptable (and will be acceptable from 2014 onwards). Weaker students, provided they could identify the relevant part of the text, could answer the following questions with equally straight lifts:

Q6(a) *2007*

Q6 (b) *tout le monde*

Q6 (e) *des centaines*

Q6 (h) *deux heures*.

Other questions demanded some manipulation of language.

Q6 (c) required a change from *le numéro de ma carte bancaire* to *le numéro de sa (or une) carte bancaire*

Q6 (f) also required a change from first person to third person ideally

Q6(g) required the change from *tapé* to *taper* to correspond to the format of the question *quelle est la première chose à faire* (although *tapé* was accepted for comprehension).

There will be similar demands for manipulation of language if future examination papers.

Q7

Teachers had prepared their students well for the demands of this question. There were very few over-long essays and equally, few very short pieces. Q7(a) was by far the most popular, being attempted by more than 60% of all students, Q7(b) came next in popularity and was answered by just over 20% of students. Q7(c) was not popular and indeed was often a poorly written answer.

Q7(a)

Students were free to choose which bullet point or points they wished to emphasise. It was quite adequate for a student to write: *Nous sommes allés au cinéma parce que c'était mon anniversaire* to cover the first bullet point. Most students were happy to adopt this approach for and then expand at length about what s/he did with the friend. For the third bullet point, many students gave the simple reason of liking their friend as an explanation of why they like going out with the friend. A rather circular argument, but acceptable if stated in clear French.

It was the last bullet point which was the most testing for many students. The move from *vous changeriez* to *je changerais* proved beyond them. However, those students who could manage to write *je ne changerais jamais mon ami parce que ...* are to be congratulated – both on their loyalty and their grammar.

Q7(b)

This question proved to be surprisingly difficult for many able students. The time frame proved challenging: often reasons for liking the new house were discussed rather than those for liking the old home. The examiners accepted a wide range of types of *journée spéciale* ranging from birthday parties to hunting for a lost dog. The third bullet point, designed to encourage the use of the future tense, was occasionally omitted and nearly always sketchily dealt with. It was quite acceptable to describe *vos sentiments sur ce changement* in passing as long as other bullet points had been expanded to give “evidence of description, opinion and expansion”.

Q7(c)

Many students took the rubric of this question as an invitation to “write all you can about the environment”. Many essays were diffuse and bordering on the irrelevant (protection of wild animals; climate change etc). There was a large cohort of students who did not take the opportunity to use the range of tenses indicated in the e-mail from Dominique. However, the language marks for this question were often better than the communication mark.

Centres are reminded that from 2014, there will be a new mark grid for this type of question, which will become Question 6. The Communication mark will be increased from 5 to 10. It will therefore be imperative that students read the rubrics extremely carefully in order to give themselves the best chance of gaining all-important communication marks.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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