Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in French (4FR1/01) Unit 1: Listening

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Introduction

June 2022 is only the second nearly full session for 4FR1 01, Listening, set in accordance with the specification, International GCSE French 4FR, and is the first post-pandemic. This paper was of equal demand, as ever, as the time-zone equivalent paper, 4FR1 01R. This session, there were nearly 6000 candidates for this single tier qualification. The marking principles and rubrics for this specification remain consistent, in the context of the pandemic, with previous sessions; and the total time allocated to this 40 mark paper is 30 minutes plus 5 minutes' reading time. There is no optionality in this paper, and most candidates attempted all seven questions. Five questions do not require productive use of French. Only Questions 3 and 7 require the productive use of French which examiners assess for communication only. Given the background to the session, and candidates' experiences, there were some excellent performances. The questions are all taken from the five specified topic areas and their sub-topics. The six questions are of increasing demand, with early questions targeting Grades 1 and 2, and Q7 seeking to elicit performances up to Grades 8 and 9. In a number of questions, an example precedes the question, so that the candidates can see how information will be sought and needs to be conveyed. Q1 is a visual pairing question on tourism worth 4 marks, where candidates listen to quite short utterances and match them to the appropriate image. Q2, about helping at home, is worth 6 marks and requires candidates to indicate who helps how at home, from a choice of eight images, including the example. The passage does not mention all the activities shown. Q3, again valued at 6 marks, is a more extended passage about services, in this case, the post office, and candidates have to produce brief target language responses, not necessarily in sentences. In Q4, a non-verbal question which requires a measure of deduction to work out whether the opinions of the six speakers on jobs are positive, negative or both, offered up to 6 marks. Q5 is a passage comprising two speakers about festivals in France. Candidates can earn up to six marks by identifying the six correct multiple-choice responses, with three distractors offered in each part. Q6 concerns the use of media and technology. Candidates select six words from a pool of thirteen to complete the sentences in the question, paying attention to both grammatical accuracy and the sense of the speakers in the passage. There are up to six marks on offer in this non-verbal question which is aimed at more able candidates. A further six marks are available in Q7 for responses in the target language regarding school trips. As in Q3, examiners assess responses for communication only, not for quality of language, save in so far as the candidates' responses need to be unambiguous, in the context of this International GCSE specification.

Question 1

In Q1, 1 mark is available for each of four parts where, four times after the example, candidates have to look at the images about tourism, and determine which one each statement references. Candidates of all abilities tackled this question very well in both sessions to date, with a very high success rate and many perfect scores. Where there were difficulties, (c) and (d) were marginally less well addressed, but all four parts had a mean score of 95% or higher. Question 1 was thus within the scope of nearly all candidates.

Question 2

Helping at home in question 2 seemed to be a familiar sub-topic to many candidates, and as in the 2019 and 2020 sessions, they frequently accessed full credit. The mean score exceeded 5 marks. Candidates seem to be aware of the fact that not all images are targeted, and that they must offer six responses only. However, in a minority of cases, excess crosses forfeited one or more marks. Words or phrases such as mettre la table, faire le jardinage and faire mon lit seemed to be

challenging for some, and this emphasises the value of learning the Minimum Core Vocabulary carefully.

Question 3

In Q3, there were, again, many excellent scores, and candidates of all abilities gained some credit. Numerous candidates accessed at least 3 of the 6 marks available for this question, and, given that this question targets quite modest grades, relatively little French was required in this note-taking exercise. Please see below for Q7 and marking principles, which are common to Q3 and Q7, the only two questions which require the productive use of French in 4FR1 01. Sometimes, as in Q3(a), a single word suffices, and examiners took a generous understanding of unambiguously communicated information. In Q3(a), Écossais is obviously not a country, but we considered that the candidate scored, having correctly identified the necessary information. Q3(b) needed some sense of par semaine, as deux fois on its own is ambiguous. Candidates earned 1 mark in Q3(d) by writing carte on its own. Q3(e) required more careful listening, as the difference between nom and prénom was critical in this part. Tarik devrait écrire le nom was an oblique response to the question, but we deemed it successful in conveying the necessary detail. As examiners are assessing communication, rather than grammar, faulty attempts at the conjugation of recevoir scored, such as recevoit. Pas reçu le cadeau is not very accurate, but this and similar attempts conveyed enough information in Q3(f) to earn the 1 mark on offer.

Question 4

In Q4, the level of demand increases, and 6 marks were available, preceded by an example, for deciding if the speaker opined negatively, positively or equivocally. This was a question where many candidates scored well, and the mean score exceeded 70% in almost all parts. Q4(f) was the most successful part, as most candidates identified the nuanced view. However, Q4(c) had the lowest mean score, with 30% success. Although candidates may be looking for a concessive or contrastive word, such as mais or cependant, the actual content of what is being said might contain opinions on both sides, without such a contrastive word: Tanisha loves doing useful volunteering, and she would also like to earn money, so she is equivocal. Cela me plaît in Q4(a) was more familiar to candidates than it had been in 2020, and eluded only 28% of them. Three-quarters of candidates understood the idiom j'en ai marre. Some inference is necessary in this question type, and it is worth practising this type of question for future series.

Question 5

Q5 is a non-verbal question worth 6 marks. This provided good differentiation with 95% success in the first part, ranging down to 38% accessing the mark in Q5(c). In Q5(b), candidates needed to associate les coutumes anciennes with les traditions, which about half managed. In Q5(c), many candidates confused the reference to dix mètres de hauteur with à dix mètres de la plage. A minority of candidates understood that jardins publics and endroits ouverts à tous went together. Q5(d) and Q5(f) were fruitful for three-quarters of candidates, but Q5(e) was more elusive: juste pour cette fête was targeted in option B with the adverb uniquement.

Question 6

Q6 remains a demanding question type, worthy of particular practice, as candidates must comprehend the passage, the items in the pool of words, and the vocabulary and grammatical constructions of the sentences in the questions. Happily, most candidates gained credit in three of the parts, and (a), (b) and (f) proved to be the more accessible parts. Q5(e) was successful for a fifth

of candidates, but where it was not correct, at least candidates often proposed K, which is grammatically and semantically possible. It is worth practising this type of question, to narrow down through the sense of the passage, and the grammar, the possible answers from which to choose. For example, Q5(a) is D, but F, or even M and B, are potentially right answers, as they are all adjectives in the feminine singular. Any other responses can be discounted at once. Similarly, in Q5(b), some two-thirds of candidates earned the mark, and of those who did not, most offered a third person verb. Any other response would not be grammatically valid. It is perhaps useful to remind candidates that passages are as plausible as possible, and that this a paper which rewards information retrieved from the passage. Although it may be assumed that older people might find Zoom B horrible, the passage does not bear this out. D might also be an instinctive perception, but it is not grammatically possible.

Question 7

This question targeted the familiar sub-topic school trips, even though candidates' personal experiences could have been curtailed of late. Unambiguous communication in Q3 and Q7 is assessed, there is no language penalty or reward. The marking principles in Q3 and Q7 are consistent, and examiners emphasise that they take as flexible an approach to ambiguity as is reasonable. The order of elements rule applies, so that in a 1 mark part, the first element only is considered. This is so that examiners do not accord undue credit to an untargeted transcription of chunks of the passage, whereas candidates whose responses are a targeted retrieval of information, profit from their selection of information. The mean score in Q7 is not high, but this need not be discouraging, as this question targets the highest grades. Examiners tolerate mis-spellings, even if they stray into another language, provided that they are comprehensible, generally within one letter of the correct spelling. Some candidates failed to earn credit, as they repeated information which was provided in the example. The concepts sought in Q7(a) and Q7(b) were that the pupils, or nous, learnt a lot and that the guides explained well. bien expliqué with the intensifier was needed. Conversely, in Q7(c), responds which indicated that the teacher could not provide the requested information, scored: le professeur n'a pas su donner des informations. Responses using pouvoir were acceptable badders. Q7(d) and Q7(e) targeted the notion of getting to know a particular classmate well or making a new friend with a particular boy, so responses in the plural did not score: Marc a fait de nouveaux amis. apprendre la tolérance was another way to earn 1 mark. In Q7(f), examiners had to reject suggestions that everyone was unpleasant, but we rewarded indications that some classmates were less amiable, with some latitude: certains élèves sont peu sympatiques is a bit strong, but the notion is sufficiently clear. Unfortunately, as in previous sessions, some candidates proffered correct information, but in the wrong parts. For example, la patience was sometimes offered in Q7(f), or candidates suggested getting to know a less outgoing classmate was characterised as a negative.

Advice

The following guidance is based on June 2022 performance, the first almost full session after the pandemic. There are 28 marks on offer for non-verbal questions, and there is a gradual ramping up of demand, as the questions target performances as increasing high grades.

1. Candidates should refer to the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and especially to the several past papers which are now available. This will give some sense of the question types and rubrics of this paper.

2. Q2 carries 6 marks. If candidates offer more than six responses, 1 mark is forfeited for every response in excess of six.

3. Q3 and Q7 require responses in French. We do not assess grammar, but responses need to communicate sufficiently in French to score.

4. Candidates should check their Q3 and Q7 responses with particular care in the limited time available, for ambiguous mis-spellings or excessively faulty phonetic attempts risk compromising communication.

5. Consolidation with a range of types of listening are very useful preparation, including in non-verbal exercises. Quite long passages appear early in the paper, and practice of notetaking under time limitation has its place in Q3 preparation.

6. It is worth reading the example. Not only does this show how to approach a given question, but particularly in Q7, it avoids candidates offering the same material in their own responses, where examiners cannot credit it.

7. We urge candidates and teachers to consult the Specification, including the programme of grammar study, specified topics and sub-topics and minimum core vocabulary, as this may help to focus preparation most usefully. Time spent on learning the minimum core vocabulary is especially useful preparation when addressed thematically, even for the purposes of the receptive skill of Listening.