



GCSE

FRENCH

8658/WF Writing Foundation tier
Report on the Examination

8658
June 2018

Version: 1.0

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General Comments

The quality of work produced for this new examination was encouraging. The paper differentiated very well in that students were able to score marks over a variety of questions. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The ability to use a range of tenses was impressive and students were also able to express opinions well. Where students failed to score marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. This was mainly due to inaccurate verb formation or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, which created more scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in questions 2 and 4.

Question 1

Teachers are reminded that students are required to write four sentences about what is in the photo. Each sentence is marked separately and is worth a maximum of two marks. The best responses included successful use of phrases such as '*il y a*' or '*je vois*'. There were very few instances of students not attempting to write full sentences. Where students failed to score marks, it was mainly for the following reasons:

- information being repeated, for example « *il y a des personnes, il y a un parc, il y a des personnes dans un parc* »; the latter sentence was not credited;
- the use of '*il n'y a pas*' or '*la photo est noire et blanche*' as the rubric requires students to refer to what is in the photo;
- inaccuracy causing a delay in communication. The main issue here was when students wrote longer sentences than they needed to and often created errors as a result. Another common error was when students inaccurately described the weather with language such as '*il faut*' rather than '*il fait*'.

Advice to students

Keep the sentences simple to ensure that a clear message is being communicated.

Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points are compulsory and must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

Content

The criteria for assessment address both coverage of the bullet points and clarity of communication. The most successful responses were concise and addressed all bullet points. The first two bullet points, '*les matières*' and '*les professeurs*' were the most accessible and students addressed these well. '*Les bâtiments*' was not widely known and in some cases was misinterpreted as school rules. Similarly, '*les repas*' was not always recognised. Many students were able to provide opinions about both '*les bâtiments*' and '*les repas*' and therefore were given credit for coverage of the required information. Where these bullet points were omitted, this obviously limited the marks that could be awarded. In addition, inaccurate language that led to a delay in communication, and hence 'lapses', had an impact on marks awarded for Content.

Quality of language

The vast majority of students were able to score three marks and above. There were good attempts at variety, for example different ways of expressing opinions and different persons of the verb. Where students failed to score marks, this occurred when verb formations were not accurate and where they had attempted to write much more than the 40 words and therefore created more scope for error.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. Students should be encouraged to tick off bullet points once they have addressed them.

Question 3 - Translation

For this question, there are 5 marks for *Conveying key messages* and 5 marks for *Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures*. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering grades 1 to 5, the question differentiated well, with all students able to score some marks.

Conveying key messages

I live in a village.	Village was often translated as 'ville'.
In my house there are six bedrooms and a garage.	Some students wrongly translated 'six'.
At the weekend I play on my computer.	Computer was not always known.
I adore fish because it is healthy.	Misspellings of 'poisson' that created a different meaning were not accepted e.g. 'poison'. 'Healthy' was not widely known and often translated as 'santé'
Yesterday I did a lot of homework.	The perfect tense 'j'ai fait' was not always well produced. 'beaucoup de' was also not widely known.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. Because of this, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, inaccurate language was considered. For example, language such as 'in my house, at the weekend, on my computer, yesterday' were often either incorrect or wrongly spelled, and this influenced the marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases.
- Check carefully that *all* aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words as mentioned above.

Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total, about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of work seen was generally good, with many students able to provide extended responses which demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames. Where students were less successful, this was mainly due to misinterpretation or omission of bullet points and overlong responses, which at this level led to more scope for error.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’) and this impacted on marks awarded.

Question 4.1

This was the more popular choice with students. It was a topic with which students are familiar, but it is important to remind students that this new specification requires them to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. As would be expected, bullet points 3 and 4 were well covered, with many good responses. Bullet point 1 required students to describe their preferred holiday destination. Most students responded well, but there were occasions when students either used the word ‘votre’ or did not make it clear that this was a preferred destination. The aspect of the task that was often not covered was bullet point 2: ‘*Décrivez le voyage pour aller à cette destination*’. Where students omitted the task or did not relate the journey to the destination referred to in bullet point 1, this impacted on marks awarded for Content.

Question 4.2

Again, students were familiar with most of the topics in this question and produced extended responses, especially relating to bullet points 1 and 2. Bullet point 3 required them to describe ‘*un anniversaire récent*’. The majority of students produced a good response, but some did not notice the past tense reference and wrote about a future birthday. Those students who were able to manipulate the rubric for bullet point 4 addressed it successfully, although many students who either attempted to write too much, or misinterpreted the bullet point as general plans for the future, were less successful.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. In relation to the first three elements, the following were seen: successful references to two or three time frames; different persons of the verb; synonyms ‘*j’adore, j’aime, j’apprécie, je préfère*’; structures reflecting complexity often successfully attempted, for example infinitive constructions, adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of

subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and even subjunctives. Less successful language included 'avoir/être' confusion, spellings of holiday destinations with many adjectives seen ('français, espagnol'), and the inability to express possession, for example 'ma mère's anniversaire'. In relation to the time frames, attempts at the perfect tense were the most inaccurate, often with either no auxiliary verb or an auxiliary verb with an infinitive.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.
- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be manipulated to help you write a successful response. For example, in Question 4.1, the first bullet point '**vo**tre destination de vacances préférée' is easily adapted to produce '**ma** destination de vacances préférée est...'

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.