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GCSE

**FRENCH**

8658/WF: Writing Foundation  
Report on the Examination

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## General points

It was encouraging to see an improvement in the overall performance of students this year. The variety of questions on the paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. As last year, the vast majority of students were entered appropriately for this tier. Students were able to refer to different time frames and could express opinions, which form a large part of the assessment criteria for Questions 2 and 4. Where students failed to score marks, this was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. The main reasons for this were, as last year, inaccurate verb formation or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count thereby creating more scope for error. Other barriers to achievement focused on a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and the inability to respond to targeted rubrics and bullet points.

### Question 1

Teachers are reminded that students are required to write four sentences about what is in the photo, ie a phrase that contains a verb. Each sentence is marked separately and is worth a maximum of two marks. The best responses included successful use of simple phrases such as *il y a* or constructions using the verb *voir* eg *je vois, on voit, on peut voir*. Teachers are reminded that this question is not marked for quality of language. For this reason, there is no need to provide any complex or variety of language. Where students failed to score marks, it was mainly for the following reasons:

- inaccurate use of the present tense eg *ils sont manger*
- ambiguous use of numbers eg *il y a un quatre personnes*
- ambiguity created by inappropriate adjectives eg *ils sont amusants, ils sont drôles*
- when attempts at describing the weather were rendered with an incorrect verb form eg *c'est soleil, c'est chaud*
- when students attempted longer, more complex responses.

### Advice to students

- Keep the sentences simple to communicate a clear message.
- Avoid adding a variety of details to individual sentences.

### Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of language. Students are advised 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. Students generally understood the bullet points and nearly all were able to offer some information on each of them. Students are advised to write about 40 words but many responses were far too long. Some covered each bullet point more than adequately but supplementary material sometimes created lapses (where communication is delayed), often influencing marks. The best pieces were 40–60 words long with two or three sentences on each bullet point. The first bullet point *votre petit déjeuner typique* was generally answered well with most students able to produce a successful reference to breakfast although some students omitted

this task completely, possibly not understanding *petit déjeuner*. The second bullet point *une activité physique que vous aimez* also elicited some good responses, but some students failed to offer an opinion and were not credited with the task. The third and fourth bullet points, *le fast-food* and *les cigarettes*, were addressed effectively, although some students, instead of using the stimulus *les cigarettes*, attempted to use a version of *fumer*. In some cases, they produced inaccurate versions eg *je n'aime pas les fumes* and were not credited with the task.

### Quality of language

As last year, the vast majority of students were able to score 3 marks and above. There were good attempts at variety, for example, different ways of expressing opinions, different persons of the verb and use of intensifiers. Again, where students failed to score marks, this generally 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 suggested.
- Mention all the 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.
- Often using the words in the bullet point (eg *le fast-food, les cigarettes*) will ensure the bullet point is addressed effectively.
- Express simple opinions *j'adore, j'aime, je n'aime pas* and *je déteste*.

### Question 3

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

My father is a doctor.	<i>médecin</i> was not widely known. It is worth mentioning that misspelling words that alter the meaning are not accepted eg <i>médecine</i> .
It rains a lot in March.	<i>il pleut</i> and <i>mars</i> were also not widely known. <i>Beaucoup</i> was sometimes given as <i>trop</i> , which was not accepted.
I like to listen to the radio in the kitchen.	Generally well done, although <i>cuisine</i> caused problems for some students.
Tomorrow I am going to help at the museum.	<i>demain</i> and <i>aider</i> were not widely known. In some cases, <i>musée</i> caused problems.
Last weekend I bought a mobile phone.	This sentence was the most successfully translated with the main issues relating to accuracy of the formation of the perfect tense.

### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent the awarding 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 inaccurate spellings of *docteur*, *beaucoup* and *cuisine* and incorrect or wrongly spelled versions of *en mars*, *j'aime écouter*, *dans la cuisine*, *je vais aider* and *j'ai acheté* influenced the marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

### Advice to students

- Ensure all parts of the phrase to be translated have been covered.
- Re-visit general vocabulary items.
- Learn and practise high frequency key words.

### Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of language. Students are advised 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. Students approached this question well, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They are aware of the need to produce three time frames and express at least two opinions and, for the most part, were successful in achieving this. It is worth pointing out that bullet points that target the different time frames and the opinion can be presented in any order. As last year, where students were less successful, this was mainly due to incorrect interpretation 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 of them 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, inaccuracy and therefore lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') can impact negatively on marks awarded. Students also need to be aware that in addressing the bullet points, they should avoid using the possessive adjectives *votre* or *vos* in their responses, as this can negate the message.

### Question 4.1

This was the more popular choice with students. It was a topic with which students are familiar and they were able to produce extended pieces of writing. Bullet point 1 *votre opinion du college* provided many students with the opportunity to develop detailed responses, although they need to be reminded that they are required to express an opinion. A description of school without an opinion could not be credited as addressing the bullet point. Bullet point 2 was well covered. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. Where there were less successful responses, this was because some students did not recognise the time marker *hier* and did not refer to past activities. In addition, some students ignored the notion that both the past activities and future plans needed to refer to school. Activities and plans that could take place in school were accepted but students who, for example, referred to recent visits to the cinema or future holidays without a direct reference to school could not be credited for covering the bullet points.

### Question 4.2

Although this was a less popular choice with students, the task covered topics with which they are familiar and bullet points were often fully addressed and rarely omitted, leading to some very

impressive responses. Bullet point 1 was generally well covered with most students offering *Noël, Aïd* or *mon anniversaire* and developing the response in some detail. Interpretation of bullet points 2 and 3 presented no problems for students, although inaccurate tense formations sometimes had a negative impact on marks. Bullet point 4 also elicited some good extended responses, although where students were less successful was when they referred to music in general without making reference to festivals, which was a requirement of the task set.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. As last year, the following were seen relating to variety and complexity of language: different persons of the verb, synonyms *j'adore, j'aime, j'apprécie, je préfère*, infinitive constructions, a variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. Less successful language included inaccurate tense formation (particularly the perfect tense, where the auxiliary verb was often omitted or the past participle was replaced by an infinitive), inappropriate use of the infinitive, confusion of *avoir* and *être*, inability to express possession (eg *mon frère's anniversaire*), position of *ne ... pas*, and the use of *votre, vos* and *préférée* (eg *je préférée Noël*) from the bullet points. There was also confusion of the following adjectives: *fatigué/fatigant, excité/excitant, stressé/stressant, mal/mauvais, amusé/amusant*.

### Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Mention all the 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 regularly across the piece of work.
- Practice manipulation of possessive adjectives *votre/vos* to *mon/ma/mes*.
- Target the key words in the bullet points and refer to them in your response eg *hier au collège, projets scolaires, festivals de musique*.
- Avoid writing over-lengthy responses that might sometimes lead to lower marks.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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