
GCSE

FRENCH

8658/WH: Writing Higher
Report on the Examination

8658
June 2019

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2019 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

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 had been entered appropriately for this tier. Students were able to refer to different time frames and expressed and justified opinions. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was impressive. In comparison to Foundation tier, students were better able to produce more accurate and complex pieces of work. Where students failed to score marks, 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. In addition, in some cases, students are being encouraged to produce language which is too complex and as a result, their responses were not able to produce successful complex sentences. Other barriers to achievement were a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and the inability to respond to targeted rubrics and bullet points, although the latter was rare with the overlap questions at Higher tier.

Question 1

For this question, there were 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 need to be addressed, 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 were 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, which target the different time frames and the opinion, can be presented in any order. As last year, less successful responses were mainly due to incorrect interpretation, omission of bullet points and overlong responses, which 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, as all aspects of the task must be covered in order to achieve 7 – 10 marks. In addition, inaccuracy, and therefore lack of clarity in 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 1.1

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 collègue* 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 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 with direct reference to school were uncredited, as they had not covered the bullet points.

Question 1.2

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, overall, 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, periods 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 use of language included inaccurate tense formation, particularly in the perfect tense, where the auxiliary verb was often omitted or where the past participle was replaced by an infinitive. Inappropriate use of the infinitive, confusion of *avoir* and *être* and inability to express possession (e.g. *mon frère's anniversaire*) were also noted, along with the position of *ne ... pas*, and the use of *votre vos* and *préférée* (e.g. *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 e.g. *hier au collège*, *projets scolaires*, *festivals de musique*.
- Avoid writing overlong responses which might sometimes lead to lower marks.

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students are advised to write approximately 150 words in total about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. Students' responses were generally very good with most able to cover both bullet points in detail. They demonstrated well their ability both to justify opinions and to provide a variety of language

with a level of complexity. As last year, where students were less successful, it was because they had either incorrectly interpreted the bullet points or written too much, the latter increasing the scope for error. In addition, they need to be reminded that they should tailor their knowledge to suit the demands of the tasks, rather than reproduce pre-learnt language, which might not be totally relevant. This was particularly the case with Question 2.2.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of the bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students should also be reminded that in each question one of the bullet points will target a different time frame. As last year, students were able to develop ideas and express and justify opinions, but, again, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’) which impacted negatively on marks awarded. In addition, inaccurate tense formation prevented the awarding of marks for those bullet points that targeted the different period, as those messages were not communicated.

Question 2.1

There were some impressive responses to this question. Students were able to produce extended pieces of writing, addressing elements such as completing homework, downloading music, chatting on social media, sharing photos, shopping online and watching films. Common disadvantages mentioned were cyberbullying, danger of intimidation, identity theft, health issues (e.g. it can be bad for your eyes) and the expense. Where students were less successful was when they did not clearly communicate a disadvantage of technology, did not notice the *récent* reference of bullet point 2, or used an inappropriate tense.

Question 2.2

This was a more popular choice with students as it addressed a topic with which they are very familiar. Students were able to provide detailed and extended responses, conveying a lot of information. However, where students were less successful, it was due to the overuse and indiscriminate reproduction of pre-learnt material. Advantages and disadvantages given did not always directly address the bullet point, with some students making reference to more than one holiday, and references to general holiday problems such as bad journeys, lost passports, illness etc. which although they are disadvantages, do not directly address the rubric *les désavantages de votre destination*. In addition, bullet point 2 referred to *une soirée mémorable* and if students did not directly refer to an evening activity, this had a negative impact on marks awarded for content, as no direct reference to evening created ambiguity and did not clearly communicate, given the requirement of the task.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, as last year, students were able to use a range of connectives; *car, parce que, mais, même si*. They also were successful in using different persons of the verb and a variety of verbs, adjectives and adverbs including the use of comparatives and superlatives. Students were able to produce a range of negatives but there were still errors in the positioning of *ne ...pas/jamais* by some students, and they should be reminded that it is this type of error where

the notion of ‘success’ in attempting complex sentences influences marks awarded. There were other successful attempts at complexity; *en revanche, je dirais que, si* clauses, *après avoir* and the use of direct object pronouns and infinitive constructions using *on doit, il faut, pour, avant de, au lieu de*. Students have also been well prepared to offer a variety of tenses, including the subjunctive. However, as last year, less successful responses were mainly due to inaccurate attempts at complex structures when students tried to reproduce language that was not commensurate with their ability.

Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations, and the type of errors that students make. It is to be noted that a ‘major’ error is one that interferes with communication, and a ‘minor error’, albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. As last year, the majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Common major errors included inaccurate tense formation and, in particular, formation of the perfect tense. Minor errors included gender errors, inaccurate adjectival agreements and minor misspellings.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words suggested.
- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response, for example, whether there are two elements (advantages **and** disadvantages) and which bullet point targets a different time frame.
- Target the key words in the bullet points and refer to them in your response e.g. *récemment, soirée*.
- Tailor the language you know to suit the demands of the question, rather than just writing everything you know about the topic.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

Question 3

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with all students able to score some marks.

Conveying key messages

Key message	Comments
When I was young	‘young’ often translated as <i>petit</i> or plus jeune neither of which convey the message effectively.
I used to play badminton often	Some students were not able to produce the imperfect tense.
with my friends because it was fun.	Generally well done.
Last Saturday we went	Some students unable to use the <i>nous</i> or <i>on</i> form of the verb.
to town by bus.	Generally well done.
If we take public transport	The verb <i>prendre</i> created problems for some students.
we can	Some students unable to use the <i>nous</i> or <i>on</i> form of the verb.

reduce pollution.	'reduce' not widely known.
At Christmas I received tickets	'received' not widely known. <i>billets</i> sometimes incorrectly translated as <i>tickets</i> .
for a tennis match	Generally well done.
that I will see in June.	As this phrase was targeted at the highest ability, there were obvious issues with <i>qui/que</i> confusion, the inability to form the future tense of <i>voir</i> correctly. The month <i>juin</i> was not always translated well.
Next year	Generally well done.
I would like to work in a sports shop.	Generally well done although <i>magazine</i> was occasionally seen.

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 *en ville en bus*, *le transport public/en commun*, *un match de tennis*, *dans un magasin de sport* were often incorrect, wrongly spelled or with the wrong word order, and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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