

Paper 2 Question 6

The aim of this question is to test the candidates' ability to write in French. Three stimuli will be provided, each with four or five bullet points which must be addressed by the candidates. Each bullet point need not be addressed in detail, but overall the candidates must write approximately 150 words on the given topic.

Marks will be awarded for Communication and Content (10 marks), Knowledge and Application of Language (5 marks) and Accuracy (5 marks). The mark grids are printed on page 13 of the Specification (Issue 1).

Rubric:

Ma famille va quitter la ville pour vivre à la campagne. Comment est-ce que je pourrai m'adapter ? Aide-moi !
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Vous devez répondre à cet e-mail de votre ami(e). Vous devez mentionner :

- vos expériences de vivre en ville **OU** à la campagne (Task 1)
- vos opinions de la ville **OU** de la campagne (Task 2)
- ce que votre ami(e) doit faire avant de partir (Task 3)
- ce qu'il / elle doit faire en arrivant (Task 4)
- des visites possibles entre vous et votre ami(e) (Task 5)

The candidate has written 190 words.

Communication and content

Communication

It is immediately obvious that the candidate conveys more than "little meaningful communication" (Band 1-2) and that it is appropriate to look first at Band 3-4.

The candidate starts with a clear statement about the difficulty of living in the countryside but states that there are advantages. There is a minor ambiguity in the use of tense in the first line, but this has not rendered the sentence incomprehensible.

The second paragraph deals clearly with the reasons for pollution, the fact that there are accidents in towns. The candidate then relieves the gloom by stating that one can meet ones friends. Again, there is minor ambiguity caused by poor spelling of *rencontrer* and the gender of the friends.

Paragraph three is a personal reminiscence of the countryside, marred somewhat by weak use of tenses.

In the fourth paragraph, the candidate becomes somewhat muddled about time frames. It is not clear when *Andrea* should meet her friends or go to the cinema.

The first sentence of the final paragraph is somewhat cryptic and difficult to understand, but the essay finishes with a perfectly comprehensible statement.

Band 3-4 does not adequately describe this essay as there is more than “limited communication” and it is not “frequently lacking clarity”. It is therefore appropriate to consider Band 5-6. Most of the communication is “clear” but there is “some ambiguity” in each paragraph. It would seem that the essay fits this band, but should it be placed at the top or the bottom of the band? To decide this, the examiner will look at Band 7-8. There is indeed a fair amount of “clear communication” but a little more than “occasional ambiguity”. Although the essay cannot be placed in this band, the writing has elements of this band and so should be placed at the top of Band 5-6.

Content

It is important to note that candidates do not need to deal with the bullet points in the same order as they appear in the rubric, nor do candidates need to write the same amount of words on each bullet point.

In general, at this level, candidates should not be encouraged to write more than 150 words and a general introduction is not required, especially from less able candidates.

The candidate has done well to attempt to dedicate one paragraph to each bullet point.

Paragraph 1 is intended as a general introduction, but in fact serves to cover Task 2. Paragraph 2 has therefore become rather irrelevant as it gives neither explicit opinions of town life (Task 2) nor does it cover Task 1, which is moderately well dealt with in paragraph 3.

Paragraph 4 seems to be an amalgam of Tasks 3 and 4 as the candidate deals both with what *Andrea* should do before she leaves town and what she should do in the first few days (presumably when she arrives in her new home in the country).

The beginning of last paragraph attempts to cover the last task, but does not correspond very clearly to the task. The last sentence of the essay is very clear, although not strictly relevant to the tasks set.

The content of the essay is clearly more than “partially relevant”. It is therefore appropriate to start by looking at Band 5-6. The response is “mostly relevant” but seems to address more than merely “some aspects of the task”. Band 7-8 must be considered next. The piece is not completely relevant, but “most aspects of the task” have been dealt with, albeit not always discretely and clearly. It is most appropriate to place the Content mark at 7.

Overall Communication and content mark

As the communication mark was high in Band 5-6 and the content mark low in Band 7-8, the candidate would be given the benefit of the doubt and be given 7 marks overall.

How to improve content marks

Students should generally avoid writing an “abstract” introduction to their essay. Instead, they should focus one paragraph on each of the tasks set in the rubric perhaps ticking them off on the question paper when they feel they have addressed them fully

Knowledge and application of language

Note: candidates are free to copy language elements from the rubric but they will not be credited for using “lifted” language.

The candidate has attempted an impressive range of structures (*Tout d’abord, difficile de; compris que; N’oublie pas, à cause de; par contre; moi, quand; qui, important que; donc*) as well as successfully deploying dependent infinitives and the partitive article. On the other hand, basic idioms are almost non-existent (*avoir 5 ans*) and the range vocabulary is very basic (*ville; école; jours; amis; samedi*) and frequently consists of English cognates (*difficile; avantages; transports; accidents; pollution; relaxer, air; musique; professeur; important; positive; visite; parcs, cinema, restaurants*). There are some attempts at adjectives and one attempt at an object pronoun (*qui aide-moi*) but overall there is nothing which lifts this essay out of Band 3-4, and it lies the middle of the band.

The candidate has made a valiant use of the imperative, but otherwise, application of tenses is very patchy, with a heavy reliance on the present tense, particularly *il y a*. There was far more scope for the use of the future tense than the candidate was able to make use of. The use of tenses would be at the bottom of Band 3-4. The candidate has shown some knowledge of the imperfect (*il était*) but has been unable to apply the tense consistently.

It must be remembered that the formation of verbs is taken into consideration only within the mark grid for Accuracy. As long as a candidate has made a recognisable attempt at a verb tense, credit will be given for Knowledge and Application of Language.

Overall mark for Knowledge and application of language

The essay does not reach higher than a mark of 3, particularly as the range of attempted verb tenses is quite limited.

How to improve Knowledge and application of language mark

This candidate did well to use three dependent clauses. To achieve a higher mark, the candidate would have needed to use a greater range of dependent clauses.

To reach Band 5, candidates need to use “some complex lexical items”.

Above all, candidates are required to use, confidently and unambiguously, a range of tenses. Although in this essay the candidate has managed to use one future tense, there is much scope for using the future tense more extensively. The candidate has managed to use just one imperfect tense. To reach a higher mark, more examples of both the *passé composé* and the imperfect would be required.

Candidates are encouraged to use object pronouns to improve the quality of their writing.

Accuracy

Despite a poor start (*je compris*) verbs are generally correctly formed (*il y a; n’oublie pas, on peut; il était; qui aide; pour ... écouter; tu es; va être; ma famille et moi allons; je vais faire; j’espère; tu aimes* with at least one serious error (*j’ai resté*). On the other hand, spelling is often poor: *à cause de; recontre; professeurs; restaurants* in basic, familiar vocabulary which the candidate should have been able to spell correctly.

Above all, it is clear that the candidate has not mastered gender /adjectival agreement and the number of errors mars the essay: *grandes batiments; l’air fraise; un petit école; les professeurs sont ... bon; nouvelles amis*.

Elisions are occasionally faulty (*que il est difficile; de avantages*) and although the candidate has a fair grasp of the indefinite article, the accuracy of use is not consistent (*à cause de transports; il y a de accidents*).

As there is nothing in the essay which tends toward Band 5 and as the essay is just outside Band 1-2, it is appropriate to place the mark at 3.

How to improve accuracy mark

As each and every student tends to have different weaknesses (adjectival agreement and gender in the case of this candidate), it is important that teachers help their students to identify given weaknesses and provide sufficient exercises and writing work to help them overcome each particular student’s blind spots. The candidate would have done well to concentrate on quality of accuracy rather than the quantity of words.

Overall mark for the question

Communication and content = 7

Knowledge and application of language = 3

Accuracy = 3

Total = 13/20