

Examiners' Report / Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE French (5FR04)
Paper 04 Writing

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GCSE French 5FR04 Report 2010

Controlled Assessment Writing

Information for Centres

This first cohort for the new specification was quite small, and there were indications that candidates came from a wider age range than the legacy specification. There were fewer outstanding submissions than might have been expected had the candidature been mostly aged sixteen. Many of the younger candidates appeared to have a more limited repertoire of vocabulary and structures at their disposal.

Candidates had to write two pieces of written work under controlled conditions. All candidates were asked to write at least 100 words for each task; those aiming for grade C or above had to write at least 200 words. Centres could use stimulus material published by Edexcel, or they could devise their own. The two pieces had to differ in content and purpose. They also had to differ from the speaking assessments. The stimulus could just be a title, or it could include bullet points. It was normally written in English. Bullet points were often given. Sometimes candidates had to respond to all of these; sometimes they had a choice as to which ones to attempt.

Many candidates achieved 200 words, and indeed many exceeded this amount. It was noted by examiners that over-long pieces often lacked shape, were repetitive or contained a higher incidence of error than those which kept to the recommendation. On the other hand, many candidates struggled to write even 100 words. In some cases, they seem to have memorised a short passage of very good French which they could reproduce under controlled conditions; then their memory failed them and they stopped writing. The maximum mark for Communication and content for a candidate writing the bare minimum of 100 words was six out of fifteen. For those who wrote significantly less than this the maximum was three.

The marks for Knowledge and application of language and for Accuracy reflected the fact that in a piece of less than 200 words, candidates were not necessarily able to demonstrate the variety of language shown by those who wrote 200 words.

Popular topics were very similar to those used in the legacy 1226/4C specification. They included film reviews; holidays; daily routine; leisure activities; an interview with a celebrity; my town; my school; work experience; healthy living; environment; letter of complaint to a hotel. Many centres set their own tasks; those who used Edexcel tasks sometimes used the Sample Assessment Materials without refreshing them as they should have done.

The tasks were mostly accessible to all, but some were not likely to help candidates achieve high marks. These included the complaint letter, daily routine and town. On the other hand, the more sophisticated tasks, such as film reviews and interviews, were beyond the ability of many candidates. Few candidates were able to access the 'pleasant to read' mark category (13-15 out of 15 for Communication and content), and this could be put down in some cases to poor choice of stimulus.

Higher marks are achieved by candidates who use linking to make their work flow. Some candidates found this hard to do when set a task such as an interview, where each utterance was too short for linking to be demonstrated effectively.

During the Controlled Assessment candidates were allowed to have the stimulus, a dictionary and some brief notes (no more than thirty words plus a maximum of five small pictures.) A form (CA4) was available for note-writing, but was not used by many candidates, some of whom had no notes at all. Examiners commented on poor

dictionary use; few candidates appeared to have the skill to use their dictionary effectively.

Examiners were very grateful to those centres who dealt correctly with administrative matters. Such centres ensured that the correct documentation was supplied to examiners, including attendance register, stimulus material, CA4 forms and signed authentication forms; that folders of work were arranged in a logical manner; that every sheet of work was marked with candidates' names; and that submissions arrived on or before the deadline date. This meant that the marking process for those centres was able to be carried out quickly and efficiently.

Advice for Centres:

- A good choice of stimulus is essential – centres are recommended to use those provided by Edexcel and which can be downloaded from www.edexcel.com.
- Centres can also create their own stimulus material; if they do so, they are recommended to submit it to Edexcel's Ask the Expert online service to check if it meets the requirements of the examination.
- Centres wishing to use stimulus material published by Edexcel as Sample Assessment Materials should note that these must be refreshed by significantly changing at least one of the bullet points.
- All stimulus material can only be used for a maximum of two years before it must be replaced or refreshed in this way.
- It is recommended to include bullet points in the stimulus; they can be used to guide candidates into using tenses, descriptions and opinions as well as into using more complex language.
- Every candidate should aim to write at least 100 words per assessment session. Candidates for whom this is a daunting demand may be set two smaller tasks, so long as they are written in the single assessment session.
- Candidates aiming for grade C or above must write a single piece of 200 words in each of the two Controlled Writing Assessments.
- The two assessment tasks can be from the same theme or from two different themes. They need to differ in form and purpose. For example, one might be formal, the other informal; one might be written in the first person, the other in the third person. One might be a private message to a friend, the other for publication on a website.
- Candidates should be trained in the use of dictionaries to avoid unnecessary errors spoiling their work.
- Candidates should understand the crucial importance of correct verb formation. All three marking categories are affected by the extent to which verb forms are unambiguous.

- Marks of seven or more for Knowledge and application of language and of four or five for Accuracy can only be achieved if candidates at least attempt some more complex structures, even if these are not wholly successful. These might include subordination (*parce que, quand, si*), negative and interrogative forms, less common tenses such as the pluperfect, passive voice, past infinitive, present participle, object pronouns and so on.
- Work should not be annotated or corrected in any way by teachers.
- Work should be submitted on A4 lined paper. Every page should be marked with the candidate's name.
- Notes should be made on Form CA4, which can be downloaded from www.edexcel.com and must be submitted with the work.
- Apart from the attendance register, the work itself, the stimulus, the CA4 form and the authentication sheet, no other documentation need be submitted.
- Centres should be aware that the authentication form is likely to be in a revised format for the next exam series. This new form **must** be used; it will be available from www.edexcel.com.
- Centres may like to know that some new support materials for written Controlled Assessments can be downloaded from www.edexcel.com; these include a podcast and a Teacher Support Book.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw mark boundary	60	48	42	36	30	24	18	13	8	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	90	81	72	63	54	45	36	27	18	0

Please note that although the modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across MFL specifications are comparable at specification level.

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