

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

GCSE

GCSE French (5FR04) Paper 01

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GCSE French 5FR04 Examiners' Report - January 2011

Information for Centres

This was the second cohort for this paper, and was entered by a greater number of candidates from a wider range of ability. Examiners noted a very large number of pleasing submissions; the majority of centres are to be congratulated on their preparation for this Controlled Assessment.

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. They could be on one or two of the themes offered in the Specification; or they could be on a Centre-devised theme.

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. The best examples used between four and six short bullet points which candidates could choose to use if they wished, providing they kept to the title.

The Specification allows weaker candidates the option of writing two shorter pieces for each Controlled Assessment task, so long as they are on the same theme; this option was hardly, if ever, used by centres.

Most candidates achieved the required 200 words, and indeed many exceeded this amount. They were not penalised as such, but 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.

A number of candidates appear to have memorised passages of good French - either a model answer given them by their teachers, or work they themselves have produced - which they could reproduce under controlled conditions. This was especially helpful for weaker candidates who then had a framework which they could reproduce; the down side of this was when their memory failed them and they stopped writing. It is not necessarily helpful for the best candidates, who are perfectly capable of being creative even under controlled conditions.

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 compared to those who did write 200 words.

Popular topics were very similar to those used in the former 1226/4C specification. They included film reviews; holidays; leisure activities; an interview with a celebrity; my town or area; my school; work experience; healthy living; environment; a 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 which they should have done.

Some of the most successful tasks involved taking an imaginative new angle on an old topic, for example, a description not of the candidate's school, but of one resembling St. Trinian's; one centre's candidates wrote the memoirs of a reformed drug addict.

The least successful tasks did not encourage candidates to vary their language. For example, descriptions of towns often overused *il y a* and *on peut*; and reviews of TV programmes used too many English words - titles and names of actors.

The tasks were mostly accessible to all, but some were not likely to help candidates achieve high marks. These included the complaint letter and a description of a town or area. On the other hand, the more sophisticated tasks, such as film reviews and interviews, were beyond the ability of some candidates. When candidates were able to access the 'pleasant to read' mark category (13-15 out of 15 for Communication and content), this could often be put down to a wise 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. Similar problems befell those who wrote a diary or a brochure describing their town or area.

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 all candidates. Examiners commented on poor dictionary use; only the best candidates appeared to have the skill to use their dictionary effectively.

A good example of a CA4 form for the topic 'My Town' was as follows:

De nos jours : a/peut/fait/joue
Autrefois : avait/pouvait/faisait/jouait
Hier : a eu/pu/fait/joué
A l'avenir : aura/pourra/fera/jouera
Ville idéale : aurait/pourrait/ferait/jouerait

Administration

While many centres provided the required documentation correctly, a number failed to do so. Please note that the Controlled assessment authenticity record sheet - Writing that appears in the specification has now been replaced by a new Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4: Writing - this includes authentication statements and space for you to insert the task titles as well as space for Edexcel examiners to insert marks. Please use the new form or transfer information from the previous version, Your cooperation is much appreciated - the introduction of the new form will help to streamline the overall administration process for both teachers and examiners. Importantly, this will enable examiners to focus more time on marking student work and less on administration.

The Administrative Support Guide (Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessments) 2011 has details of what centres are required to send their examiner and the copies of the new forms to be used are held within the appendix. The Administrative Support Guide is available on our website at

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/spanish/Pages/default.aspx> under 'Exam Materials'.

Below is a checklist of materials to send to your examiner.

| | |
|---|---|
| For every candidate: | ✓ |
| Stimuli/tasks | |
| Form CA4 (Candidate Notes Form) | |
| Candidate work (2 pieces of writing) | |
| *(Updated)* Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4: Writing - signed by both candidate and centre-assessor. Any candidate unable to provide an authentication statement will receive zero credit for the component. | |

Advice for Centres

- Centres must refer to the latest *Administrative Support Guide*, which can be downloaded, along with other useful material, from: <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/french/Pages/default.aspx> located under 'Exam Material.'
- A good choice of stimulus is essential - centres are recommended to use those provided by Edexcel and which can be downloaded from the link given above.
- 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 four to six 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 be written legibly using black or blue pen.
- The use of correcting fluid is not permitted.
- Work should not be annotated or corrected in any way by teachers.
- It is helpful if candidates give an indication of the number of words written.
- Work should be submitted on A4 lined paper. Every page should be marked with the candidate's name.
- Original work must be submitted, and not photocopies.
- Notes should be made on Form CA4, which can be downloaded from the link given above and must be submitted with the work.
- Apart from the attendance register, the work itself, the stimulus, the CA4 form and the authentication/mark sheet, no other documentation need be submitted.
- Centres should be aware that the authentication/mark sheet is in a revised format; the one printed in the original Specification booklet should no longer be used.
- The work and documentation for each candidate should be placed in a punched pocket or folder or held together with a treasury tag.
- Work should be submitted in candidate number order.
- Work must be submitted by the deadline.
- Centres may like to know that some new support materials for written Controlled Assessments can be downloaded from the link given above; these include a podcast and a Teacher Support Book.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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