

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365)

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IGCSE French Listening 4365/01

Candidates' Responses to Specific Questions.

Section A

Questions 1-5

The vast majority of candidates scored maximum marks for all items.

Questions 6

Most candidates were successful across all elements of the question. There were just a few instances where candidates did not process the entire message, particularly item 6(iv). Likewise, a small minority of candidates were unfamiliar with the term "dessin".

Question 7

Large numbers of candidates recorded full marks here. Very few indeed made errors in the first two items. Where only a single error occurred, it tended to be in relation to item 7(d), involving the use of negation.

Section B

Question 8

Overall scores for this question varied considerably, with the item involving comprehension of numbers proving to be the most challenging to candidates. Quite a few candidates found difficulty in distinguishing between "quarante" and "quatre-vingts".

Question 9

Significant numbers of candidates seemed extremely well prepared for this question, evidently familiar with the expression of personal opinions and views. They were equally at ease with phrases involving partial agreement and disagreement. Candidates are to be applauded for their generally excellent mastery of more complex vocabulary. Nevertheless, there were a few instances wherein even more able candidates seemed unable to grasp the overall requirements of the question.

Questions 10-12 General remarks.

It is pleasing to report that far fewer candidates than in previous years were tempted to extract entire phrases from the recordings. Nearly all candidates made a clear attempt to convert the information into a correct response. This was particularly in evidence in question 10. Candidates who had even some knowledge of environmental issues seemed to possess enough relevant vocabulary to excel in this section.

Question 10

A significant number of candidates were successful in both responses. Whereas the recording was often understood, responses were not always coherent. For example, reference to “chez moi” or “ma maison” led to ambiguity, as key language was not manipulated. There was equally a need to be specific eg “On entend les oiseaux qui chantent”. Most spellings of “oiseaux” were comprehensible, whereas reference to “C’est à deux minuits de chez Yannick” was incorrect. Overall, question 10 proved to be more challenging than questions 11 and 12.

Question 11

Possession of key vocabulary and related expressions enabled candidates of virtually all levels to score at least one mark for this question. Centres are to be congratulated for having emphasized this to candidates preparing for the examination. Spellings of terms such as “ordures”, “pluies acides”, “incendie” and “tempête” were clearly recognizable in a significant number of instances. As a contrast, incorrect attempts at the spelling of “pluies acides” included “les plus acides”, “pliaside” and “les puis acides”.

Question 12

Candidates who were able to extract the three key ideas often circumvented the need to manipulate the language used in the recording. Candidates often secured full marks by offering concise responses to the three items. It was however important to be precise. For example, “peu d’espaces verts” was accepted whereas “il n’y a plus d’espaces verts” was rejected. The spelling of “bruit” varied enormously, including “broit”, “brie”, “brille”, “bruile”. However, many other attempts were immediately comprehensible and credited accordingly. A significant number of attempts at conveying the idea of “circulation” were successful. It was again encouraging to report that most candidates possessed at least some of the key terminology involved in this contemporary issue.

Administrative Matters

Centres are to be commended, as in previous series, for the excellent standard of administration during this series.

IGCSE French Reading and Writing 4365/02

Section A Part 1

Question 1

A significant number of candidates had difficulty distinguishing between *château* and *église*. Whilst the examination does not test cultural knowledge as such, all candidates should be able to recognise a picture of a typical French *château*. Teachers might wish to consider familiarising their candidates with as many images of French life as possible. Section on this paper will always rely heavily on images to test the reading text.

Question 2

The word *courses* was unfamiliar to many candidates. All average Grade C candidates answered (i) - (iv) correctly, whereas only 75% of those same candidates correctly identified (v) as Picture G.

Question 3

Average candidates scored well on this question, generally achieving a mark of 4 out of 5. Typically, it was 3(b) which they answered incorrectly. Weaker candidates in the Grade F band found this question challenging and often answered (b), (d) and (e) incorrectly.

Section A Part 2

Question 4

The Examiners were delighted to be introduced to so many talented actors and actresses (real or imaginary) across the world. Candidates wrote with enthusiasm, if not always with accuracy. As half the marks are for "Content", such enthusiasm for and knowledge of the favourite star served the candidates well.

There were very few over-long pieces. Candidates have been well trained to write a short piece in which they can display their knowledge of basic French.

Some candidates did, however, wander off into descriptions of the children of their favourite actor or other digressions. These tended to lower the "Content" mark.

Section B

Question 5

This question proved to be more challenging to candidates than expected with a majority of Grade C candidates not only failing to answer 5(ii) and 5(iv) correctly but showing very little awareness of the grammatical structures concerned. On the whole, answers to 5(v) did show awareness of grammar, and candidates were almost evenly split between answer D (incorrect) and answer I (correct).

Question 6

Teachers are to be thanked for training their candidates to answer this type of question carefully and succinctly. Many quite weak candidates were able to glean a few marks on this question. Now that they are familiar with the format of the question, more able candidates are able to reach high marks (typically 10 or 11 for Grade A candidates).

- (a) *pour la fête* is an acceptable answer, but gives the candidates little opportunity to show his or her mastery of grammar. Candidates should be advised to write *Ils viennent pour la fête des jumeaux*. This will then prove that the candidate knows how to remove the inversion of the verb in the question form and that he or she is aware of what the *fête* is about.
- (b) In questions ending in *Pourquoi*, candidates should be encouraged to start their answer with *parce que* and discouraged from copying out the first statement in the rubric. Such copying can earn no marks.
- (c) Candidates need continued training in using simple pronouns. *Le village* should be replaced by *il*. The candidate can then be rewarded for manipulation of language at a basic level.
- (d) The majority of candidates failed to think about what was being asked in this question. The key word was *faire*. The answer therefore had to include at least one verb. The following was a simple way of showing understanding both of the text and of the use of modal auxiliary verbs:
 - (i) *on peut manger un (grand) repas*
 - (ii) *on peut regarder un spectacle*.
- (e) All candidates were obliged to manipulate language for this answer as the first person *j'ai eu le très grand plaisir* had to be changed to *il a eu.....*. The Examiners were delighted if whenever a candidate was bold enough to say *il était (très) content* - simple language but a giant leap in thinking and of grammar manipulation on the part of the candidate.
- (f) Again, the majority of candidates were not thinking about what the question required. For those who did realise that the names of countries were required, there was a range of possible manipulation from the very simple:
 - (i) *Amérique* (or other relevant name)
 - (ii) *Chine* (or other relevant name)to the far more complex - and highly rewarded:
 - (i) *ils viennent des Etats-Unis* (etc)
 - (ii) *et de la Chine* (etc)
- (g) The Examiners were a little disappointed that relatively few able candidates were able to find a suitable phrasing for (g). There were large numbers of candidates who either copied out the words of the rubric for 6(g) (often adding errors in the process) or who copied out other, inappropriate, parts of the text.

The answers to (d), (e) and (f) gave candidates the most opportunity to use their own expressions and to adapt the text.

Section C

Each essay title was chosen by roughly the same number of candidates. Many essays were of excellent quality. Relatively few essays exceeded the suggested number of words. Candidates very wisely opted for quality rather than quantity.

Across all candidates, the average mark for 7(c) was the highest, but this disguises the fact that candidates at Grade C and below fared considerably worse on 7(c) whereas the more able candidates did extremely well.

Essays (a) and (b) were designed to encourage candidates to use both past and future tenses. They might have suited the average candidate with fairly sound grammar but who had not yet got beyond the stage of recounting a simple narrative. Essay (c) was discursive and whilst not encouraging the use of a range of tenses, made greater demands on the candidate's ability to write about concepts.

In preparing candidates for the examination, teachers should remember that there is no requirement for the bullet points of the rubric to be mentioned in the essay in chronological order (see (a)(iii) below).

Candidates also need to know that they do not need to develop each bullet point equally (see (a)(iv) below).

The bullet points for each essay are deliberately short for two reasons:

- so that they do not become a reading comprehension test and
- to allow the candidates as much freedom as possible.

However, candidates do need to be trained to identify the limits of each bullet point (see b(i) and (c)(ii) below)

(a)

(i) Candidates had little difficulty in explaining why a parent was absent.

(ii) Weaker candidates did well to avoid the comparative and use the more simple: *la maison est + adjectif + maintenant*. More able candidates were comfortable with the comparative form: *la maison est plus + adjectif + maintenant*.

(iii) Many candidates made very clear their reactions right at the end of the essay when they said how happy they were that the parent had returned. This was very acceptable.

(iv) Candidates knowledge of "helping around the house" was patchy. Cooking was the most common, and perhaps most easily expressed, form of help. *J'ai fait la cuisine* or *j'ai préparé les repas* is quite adequate for this bullet point if candidates wish to develop other bullet points more fully.

(v) Many weaker candidates found this bullet point difficult. There were even some of the more able candidates who omitted it entirely. This may have been the effect of working under time pressure at the end of an examination, or simply fatigue.

(b)

(i) Candidates did not always know where to start their account. Getting up in the morning and dressing was considered as an irrelevance. However, there were many simple, accurate accounts of arriving at the airport and going to the hotel. This was rewarded.

(ii) Many candidates did not realise that a *visite guidée* was an abstract concept and actually named the *guide* as *Monsieur X*. This did not significantly alter the candidates' marks as long as they then went on to describe a trip around Montreal.

(iii) This bullet point did not need to be developed as it merely served as a pivotal point between the past and future tenses. However, many candidates did develop it well by saying they were tired and spent their evening in their room writing their diary.

(iv) Weaker candidates, as ever, confused *journée* with the English *journey*. However, in this essay, it would have been quite possible for a candidate to have made a short trip during his or her *journée libre*, so again, marks were not significantly lowered as long as the French was comprehensible (for a basic "Communication" mark) and accurate (for higher language marks).

(v) This bullet point was often not well treated. See remarks on (a)(v) above.

(c)

(i) Less able candidates fell into one of two categories: there were those candidates who simply listed what there was in the countryside: *il y a des arbres*, *il y a une rivière* and then there were those who were too adventurous and tried to use vocabulary and verbs which they had not mastered. It is often forgotten that the present tense can be far more difficult to master than the past tenses.

(ii) This bullet point gave candidates the opportunity to give a simple account of a trip to the countryside. It could be written in the past tense or in the present tense. This leeway allowed by the rubric might have confused some candidates.

(iii) and (iv) These two bullet points suited candidates who had studied "the environment". There were some excellent analyses of pollution and transport as well as many excellent examples of the sense of community to be found in small, country communities.

(v) On the whole, candidates had interspersed their opinions, even if only implicitly, throughout this essay. As such opinions had not been left until the very last moments of the examination, they were more clearly expressed: for example *l'année dernière j'ai fait une promenade dans la forêt. C'était ennuyeux* would cover both bullet points (ii) and (v).

General comments

Teachers are thanked for their efforts in preparing their candidates for the examination. Candidates had respected the restraints on where and where not to write on the examination paper. Handwriting was generally very clear

and legible - a triumph for those candidates who do not normally use a Roman script.

Section A

Most candidates tended to use the picture stimulus very effectively, leaving the interviewer the opportunity to promote expansion of the discussion. Choice of picture or photograph for use in the presentation component remains an area in which most centres continue to support the best interests of candidates, by encouraging candidates to choose an image which can be exploited to optimise individual performance. Cartoon type beach images relating to environmental issues were extremely popular this year and worked well in cases where the candidate could rise to the appropriate level of language demanded by the ensuing questions. Nevertheless, such images did not always meet the needs of less able candidates who tended to struggle when questions went beyond the realms of the beach holiday context, involving too much hypothesis. This was equally the case in respect of pictures depicting developing world issues. More universally successful were authentic photographs depicting family and friends. These images tend to relate more directly to personal experience. Less confident candidates felt at ease within such a comfort zone, whilst stronger candidates seized the opportunity of maximising the scope of even the simplest images.

It was pleasing to note that more and more centres are refraining from eliciting information already provided by the candidate during the presentation. There were equally only isolated examples of able candidates being asked very basic questions based on the picture stimulus. On the other hand, there are still more serious instances of candidates being asked a whole series of questions which are well beyond their individual grasp. The vast majority of interviewers seek to elicit an appropriate range of tenses and other constructions. Interrupting of candidates remains rare, but was recorded in a number of cases.

Section B

Interviewers tended to use the specimen questions in the manner for which they had been intended, avoiding too much direct reference to questions extracted from the guidelines. This strategy served the needs of the whole range of candidates, giving rise to an extensive range of responses. This equally allowed the opportunity for candidates to access, in a spontaneous manner, their optimum breadth of language structures. In a few instances, stronger candidates found it difficult to offer more complex responses, as only relatively simple questions from the specimens were being asked. Certain questions types tended to elicit answers based upon lists, whereas others sought a greater level of extension.

Eg *"Pourquoi préfères-tu passer tes vacances à la montagne?"* In the latter, candidates tended to be more successful, as there was the explicit need to clarify a previous response. Candidates equally benefited where interviewers provided them with sufficient time to complete responses. It is encouraging to note that the use of closed questions is now a rarity. Where necessary, the rephrasing of questions generally allowed candidates the time needed to gather their thoughts and to proceed with greater confidence. It was naturally to the advantage of candidates where interviewers employed a range of question types.

Conduct of Examination

The vast majority of interviewers adhered to the stipulated timings. This is extremely important, as marks cannot be awarded for responses offered beyond the specified time limits. In those rare instances wherein conversations were much too short, candidates were not in a position to achieve their potential. If the initial conversation is too long, the other two should not be rendered too short, as each is marked separately. It is equally most important that candidates are allowed the stipulated time for the presentation. The use of loud bleeps to indicate the end of a conversation can prove unsettling to candidates. The vast majority of interviewers made the transition between different conversations very clear. There were only isolated instances where this was not the case. Interviewers are again thanked for displaying a high degree of empathy towards their students, by making great efforts to place candidates at their ease.

Administrative Matters

Once again, centres are to be commended for the overall excellent standard of administration during this series.

Virtually all tapes and other important materials were correctly presented and clearly labelled. In a few instances, the pictures relating to the presentation were not included. For interviewers new to this component, guidelines are provided on pages 39-42 of the IGCSE French Specification.

Recordings were very clear in nearly all cases, but some were not clearly audible, due to very "quiet" recordings or obtrusive background noise. Centres are politely requested to check the quality of each recording, whether on CD or cassette, but particularly that of the first candidate. The recording must never be stopped once the candidate has started his / her examination.

The microphone should always favour the candidate rather than the interviewer.

2008 Statistics

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Subject Grade (all candidates) (max 100)	89	79	69	59	50	41	32	23

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Grade for Spoken French (optional) (max 60)	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7

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