

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE

French (4FR0) Paper 2

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## General comments

Teachers are thanked for their careful preparation of their candidates for this examination. Candidates worked steadily through the paper and very few failed to attempt all questions.

Work was generally very well and carefully presented, although candidates should be discouraged from writing a draft in pencil and then overwriting as the pencil marks tend to obscure the candidate's writing when the page is scanned.

### Question 1 (Topic Area C – Domestic routine)

Candidates found this question almost universally accessible. At the bottom of the grade range, performance was patchy, with *jupe* in part (iii) causing the most difficulties.

### Question 2 (Topic Area B – Childhood)

This question was successfully completed by most candidates at Grade C and above. Below Grade C, candidates had considerable difficulty with part (iii) in which it was probably the word *dos* which was unknown. Part (ii) of the question also caused some difficulty as candidates may have confused the picture of the father holding his daughter's one hand with the picture of the two parents holding their child's hands (*prenons ses deux mains*).

### Question 3 (Topic Area A – Life in the town)

At this point of the examination, some Grade C candidates began to have difficulties, most notably with part (ii) of the question where candidates did not associate *vieux* with *âgés*. To a lesser extent, many candidates seemed to have been concerned about not knowing the word *célibataires* in part (iv) of the question. They had not realised that *célibataires* was irrelevant to the fact that the word *sportifs* should have been associated with *le ski* and *promenades*; two sports which should be well known by Grade C candidates.

### Question 4 (Topic Area A – Life in the town)

The vast majority of candidates had heeded their teacher's advice not to write more than 50 words. They wrote simply and to the point, thus gaining the maximum marks within their own ability range.

Many candidates in the Grade A band did not have to reach the full 10 marks if they had done well on Questions 1 to 3 and had worked carefully through the remaining questions on the paper. To reach Grade A\*, it would be expected that a candidate achieve 10/10 for this question.

Below is an answer which was rewarded with 9 marks which would typically represent the work of a Grade A candidate:

*L'année dernière, j'ai visité une ville qui s'appelle X. C'est la capitale de la Y. J'adore cette ville. Cette ville est très vieux et plein de monuments historiques. La nourriture a été vraiment délicieuse. Je suis allée avec ma maman. Nous nous sommes promenées dans la centre de ville. Cependant la ville est très occupé.*

Communication : 5/5

The task is fully complete and well organised. Although the piece shows no originality, the "best fit" mark is 5.

Knowledge and application of language: 4/5

The use of the past tense is excellent and highly accurate with a minor lapse at the end of the piece. However, there is very little variety and there are no attempts at more complex language.

A Grade B candidate would, more typically, reach 8 in Question 4. Below is an example of the type of error a candidate can make in interpreting the demands of the question:

*La semaine dernière je suis allé au tabac pour acheter les bonbons. Cependant, je n'ai pas pu acheter les bonbons parce qu'ils ont été trop cher. Donc, j'ai dû rentrer chez moi afin de prendre plus d'argent. Puis j'ai pu acheter les bonbons, et j'étais très heureux.*

Communication : 3/5

It was felt that the task had not quite been completed. Even if we assume that the *tabac* is in town, a trip to buy one particular item does not really constitute *une visite en ville*. Confirming the impression that the candidate had not really understood the demands of the question was the fact that s/he describes returning home in the middle of "the visit".

Knowledge and Application of Language: 5/5

This mark is awarded quite separately from the Communication mark and this candidate could be given full language marks for the quality of the work: two different past tenses with only minor error in the imperfect; sound use of the infinitive following relatively sophisticated prepositions, two subordinating conjunctions and one neat idiom (*chez moi*). At this level, there is no need for the candidate to use pronouns, and so the rather clumsy repetition of the word *bonbons* was not taken into account. This piece falls comfortably in the 5/5 band.

Teachers have done well to advise their candidates to avoid copying text from Question 3. It was very rare that examiners had to place a piece of writing in band 2 for Communication which states: "Some of the information may have been copied from the text without any attempt to adapt it".

Question 4 is designed to enable Grade C candidates and below to show that they are capable of writing simple French. Typically an F Grade candidate will have earned 3 or 4 marks on this question.

### **Question 5 (Topic Area E – Health issues)**

Many candidates below Grade C found this a difficult question with the answer to (e) being the most difficult. The most surprising aspect of these errors being that the factually incorrect but grammatically correct word *pour* was not the word chosen in wrong answers; it was one of the other, grammatically and factually incorrect, words in the box which was often chosen. This showed a considerable weakness in the level of grammatical awareness amongst a large number of candidates.

It was inevitable that many weaker candidates fell back on their knowledge of the phrase *être en bonne santé* and therefore used it as their answer to (b), thus giving an incorrect answer.

At the top end of the ability range, it was (a) which occasionally caught out a few of the better candidate who were perhaps being just a little careless.

Overall in this question, there was no one part which was consistently correctly (or incorrectly) answered.

### **Question 6 (Topic Area B – Work/careers)**

Teachers should continue to bear in mind that there are three different ways for their candidates to approach this question:

- Weak candidates should be trained to spot the correct part of the text and to copy that part of the text, with minimal linguistic alteration (for example, first person to third person), into the space for the answer. There is every chance that the candidate will gain a maximum Communication score relative to his / her ability;
- An able candidate should be encouraged to ensure that s/he starts answers with linking words such as *parce que* / *puisque* and use synonyms for words in the source text, but only if the candidate feels very confident that the synonym is correct;
- The most able candidates should use their own words whenever possible in answering the questions. They should ensure that their grammar is accurate and that they have shown a wide knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Guidance to these various levels of response are given in the published mark scheme. In the scheme

- the symbol (L) represents a correct answer couched in very simple French, most probably copied almost word for word from the source text. This will earn only a low mark for Knowledge and Application of Language;
- (M) indicates that a candidate will have made a moderate attempt at adapting the original language of the source text;
- (H) indicates that the candidate has will have made a good attempt at using a sophisticated range of language structures and vocabulary which will be different from those of the source text.

This exercise is generally too challenging for Grade F candidates. However, such candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions, as each point they earn will ensure they are awarded the grade they deserve.

### Communication

Many Grade F candidates were able to answer one or even two questions:

- many answered (a) with the simple *25 ans*
- a few Grade F candidates even understood (b) sufficiently to be able to answer with *les langues*.

There was no consistent range marks amongst Grade C candidates as they ranged from 3 to 9 overall.

- The most consistently incorrectly answered question was (c) - many candidates wrote *elle aimait la lecture*. This points to careless reading of the question and that candidates were assuming that question was asking "what did Mme Bourlat like doing in her free time" (a clear example of the candidates thinking back to their speaking examination).
- Amongst Grade C candidates, question (e) also presented a considerable challenge as many thought that the cost for adults was that of "buying books". This same concept of "buying books" was also frequently used to answer (f) *parce qu'elle ne pouvait pas acheter des livres* and for (g).
- The format of question (g) is still not clear to many candidates. A very small minority merely translated the phrase *le budget étant très limité* into English, others attempted to answer "why" the budget was limited and yet others just struggled to use their own words. This type of question needs constant, repeated practice in class as it is a question format which will always appear in this part of the examination.
- For question (h), about half of Grade C candidates were able to adapt *mon directeur ....* to *son directeur* or to *le directeur de Mme Bourlat*.

Grade A candidates generally answered questions (a) to (d) successfully. Candidates were not always so successful in questions (e) and (f), frequently because the candidates were not careful in couching their answers even though it was clear that they had understood the question and had spotted the right part of the text to quote. For example, in question (e) answers were vitiated in ways such as: *pour un adulte ce n'est pas cher parce que seulement les enfants ne paient pas d'inscription* and question (f) could be vitiated by an answer such as *parce qu'une grande bibliothèque est parisienne*.

### Knowledge and Application of Language

No more than 5 marks are available for Knowledge and Application of Language. The vast majority of candidates should be encouraged to use short, simple answers which will earn them up to two marks. It is only very exceptional candidates who will reach 5/5 – and these will be exclusively Grade A\* candidates.

Teachers should take heart that four of the questions in Question 6 are designed to be accessible primarily to Grade A\* candidates and that a further 4 are designed to test Grade A candidates. Candidates who earn marks on this Question have been well prepared.

### Question 7

Candidates were to be congratulated on keeping to the 150 word limit or thereabouts. They generally wrote succinctly, carefully following the prompts of the question they had chosen.

The vast majority of candidates remembered to “tick” the box at the top of page 11 to indicate which essay title they had chosen. Teachers are thanked for impressing upon their students the need to do this.

### Question Q7a (Topic Area D – The media - film)

This question was by far and away the most popular of the themes. It was chosen by more than 80% of all candidates. Candidates were clearly comfortable with the topic

- Few candidates had any difficulty saying who accompanied them to the cinema.
- Some candidates omitted to say “why” they had gone or had difficulty being clear in explaining the reason why.
- Explanations of what the candidate did before seeing the film tended to stretch the credibility of the examiners (long periods of shopping for clothes, detailed descriptions of meals etc) but were all acceptable for the each of the mark grids.

- Thoughts about a recently seen film had evidently been well rehearsed in class and most candidates could give an accurate account of the type of film or of a favourite actor in a film
- Many candidates struggled to understand the significance of the last bullet point. The examiners accepted the use of the future tense for all three mark grids, but it was rare for candidates in the lower bands to be able to express themselves clearly on this point.

### **Question Q7b (Topic Area A – Customs)**

This question was chosen by a very small minority of candidates. These were not always the strongest candidates, and yet statistically the results were higher than for either of the other essay titles.

- Although the vocabulary of the first bullet point might have looked a little daunting, candidates who attempted the question did very well by starting quite simple *le couple s'est rencontré* and then adding a simple phrase such as *à l'université ; quand ils étaient en vacances*.
- There were some very interesting presents given. Candidates had no difficulty "cutting their coat according to their cloth" – if the only word they know was *un livre* then why not give the happy couple a book as a wedding present. Money was also a popular gift, with some candidates embroidering on how they envisaged the money being spent.
- There was frequently a minor slip in the time frame used, as some candidates assumed that the wedding was in the past rather than the future, but this did not influence the marks for any of the mark grids in any major way
- Dancing and singing feature at weddings across the globe, so all candidates were able to attempt some description of a traditional wedding in their country. The main criticism of candidates is that they occasionally tried to be too complex in their descriptions, hence losing marks for clarity and accuracy
- Here the future tense was well spotted and most candidates were well able to talk about the happy couple going to a named country, or simply just *en vacances*.

### **Question Q7c (Topic Area B – Work/careers)**

Candidates who chose to answer this question achieved statistically slightly lower marks than those candidates who had chosen the other two questions. It is possible that candidates who have no experience of working during the summer holidays might have struggled at answering this question confidently.

- This part of the question was dealt with well and was a familiar topic to most candidates.
- reasons for working or not working tended to be rather convoluted and in general, candidates did not do well in this part of their answer.
- candidates had difficulty expressing opinions and so did not do well in this part of the answer.
- Several candidates did not seem to have the life experience necessary to deal with this bullet point, although the few candidates who simply said *Dominique peut écrire à mon patron* were deemed to have covered the point
- There were some very sensible suggestions as to how Dominique could prepare for work: *il peut acheter une (nouvelle) cravate; il peut faire des sandwichs* – not sophisticated answers, but perfectly acceptable for Communication, limited Knowledge of Language and for Accuracy.

The essay question is designed to enable all candidates to show how much French they know and can write. This is a high level, productive task, so it is important that candidates of lower ability are encouraged to write simple accurate French and to check carefully that they have covered all the bullet points listed under the outline of the essay.

Candidates should be encouraged to think for a few moments about which essay they wish to choose as, in the experience of the examiners, that choice is crucial to the success or otherwise of the candidate's essay.

### **Grade Boundaries**

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

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