

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE French (4FR0)
Paper 02

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Examiner Report

Question 1

This question was generally accessible to all candidates.

Question 2

The vast majority of candidates answered all parts of the question correctly. A tiny minority of candidates did not identify *montagnes* as relating to image B.

Question 3

Many candidates did not think carefully about Q3a, answering *plus long* (a phrase they knew well) rather than *moins long* which corresponded to the phrase, *jeudi, c'est plus court*.

Question 3(b) presented the challenge of *tôt*, which is a far less commonly known word than *tard*. Not more than one quarter of candidates in the Grade C band were able to answer this question correctly.

In Question 3(c), approximately one quarter of all candidates were unable to correlate (*vers midi et*) *le choix était très limité* with (*à midi*), *il n'y a pas beaucoup de choix*.

Question 3(e) presented too great a challenge for a quarter of all candidates. There seemed to be no pattern in the correct answers chosen, indicating that the candidates were very much at a loss as how to approach this kind of question. For this type of question, teachers should consider training candidates to be able to spot the 'pairs' of words from which they need to choose to select a correct answer.

Question 4

Many candidates had not been adequately prepared for this question. Far too many candidates wrote much more than 50 words. There were examples of essays running to 100 and even, in several cases, to 150 words. Writing more than the required number of words is often unnecessary.

Question 4 is designed to test the writing skills of candidates in the Grades G to C range. Careful scrutiny of the mark scheme will show that a candidate can achieve a mark of 4 out of 5 even if there are 'minor omissions or ambiguity'. The following script illustrates the point that candidates may well do more harm than good by writing too much:

Hier, j'ai fait aux magasins. C'était bien. Il y a beaucoup des magasins. Il y a une magasin pour la cuisine, et une magasin pour le bon-bons, j'ai acheté une paquet de bon-bons frais, très deliscieux. Il y a aussi une magasin qui vend les livres. J'adore les livres et j'ai acheté quatre. (53 words) J'ai vend une casse du thé au lait dans une café. Après ça j'ai retourné au chez moi. C'était une très bien jour.

Up to the point where the candidate had written 53 words, the script would have been awarded 5 marks for Communication. The candidate has described, unambiguously, a trip to the shops and has said what s/he had bought. The candidate has also expressed an opinion. Opinions are not required, but in this case added to the interest of a rather dull and repetitive piece of writing. The sentence following the 53 word mark is ambiguous and brings the mark down to 4.

This same piece of writing was awarded 4 out of 5 for Knowledge and Application of Language. The vocabulary is 'generally appropriate to the task'. It does not have a wide range of vocabulary, but that is not required. There is little variety of vocabulary, but there is variety of tenses (*passé composé* and imperfect used appropriately / a correct connective *qui*; an attempt at an idiom *au chez moi*; two attempts at descriptors *deliscieux* / *au lait*), however, 'correct usage is not always maintained'. There are 'evident' errors, but only on one occasion do they 'interfere with communication'.

This very simple essay was therefore awarded a mark of 8 out of 10.

Those preparing candidates for this test must not be tempted to think that their very best candidates should write more than 50 words. Here is an example of a very strong candidate who has shown excellent command of French and who has expressed himself very clearly, thus gaining full marks within the confines of 69 words:

Le week-end dernier je suis allé aux magasins avec mes amis. Nous avons acheté les vêtements d'hiver parce que il faisait très froid. De plus, j'ai acheté un DVD pour mon frère.

Après avoir fait du shopping, nous sommes allés au cinéma pour regarder un comédie.

Le samedi, j'espère faire du shopping pour acheter un cadeau pour ma mère.

The last 13 words of this piece could have been omitted. The candidate would still have gained full marks with only 46 words.

The following piece was also awarded full marks (5+5):

Hier je suis allé en ville pour faire des achats avec ma copine. je voulais trouver une belle robe pour une fête mais j'ai dépensé mon argent sur la nourriture. Ma copine a acheté une boisson au café et moi j'ai pris des chips. Puis on est allé au marché. (50 words)

Typically a Grade C candidate would achieve an overall mark of between 6 and 8 for this question. The following is an example of a candidate who was awarded 3+3:

Je visité le magasins avec ma copain et ma frère. J'adore le magasins parce que est la beaucoup de choix et c'est très amusant ! Je pense que le marché est super parce que est beacoup d'achete et c'est dans le centre ville avec de magasins. Le magasins est tres expensive et le marché est ne pas expensive. C'est bon pour mes argent. (63 words)

For Communication, the task is mostly complete (it is clearly a trip to the shops) but there is 'some ambiguity', particularly because the candidates has used some English words. Overall, the message is 'generally comprehensible' – we get the gist of what the candiate is saying and there is no irrelevant material.

For Knowledge and Application of Language the writing is 'quite simple but adequate to the task' as there is an appropriate vocabulary, an attempt at the past tense, two connectives. However, the inaccuracy 'sometimes impedes communication'. It is certainly true that 'genders, spellings and verb forms are inconsistent.' All these points place the candidate's work in the band 3 on the mark grid. Looking at the band for 2 marks, there are some elements which might apply to this text, particularly 'very limited verb forms'. However, as more of the criteria from band 3 than from band 2 fitted this particular text, the candidate was allocated 3 marks.

At the lowest end, candidates were able to write a brief account by relying on the vocabulary from Question 3 (underlined):

Bonjour. Merci pour l'(illegible word). Près de chez moi, il y a beaucoup marches par semaine. C'est le samedi, entre huit heures et tres heures . J'ai arrive au marché huit heures et demie pour pouvoir tout trouver. Ma/ Moi (unclear) visité très grande commercial supermarche et aller mon copains Bob.

The last sentence is virtually incomprehensible, and so for Communication, candidate was awarded 2 marks.

In this piece, there are only 'isolated examples of accurate language' produced by the candidate. Indeed, some of the lifted phrases are incorrectly copied. The candidate could not be awarded more than 1 mark for Knowledge and Accuracy of Language. However, the 3 marks gleaned overall could well go toward a grade which reflects accurately the candidate's ability in French.

Question 5

The vast majority of candidates did well in this question. Virtually no candidates put a cross next to more than 5 boxes. Work was neat and clear for the examiners to mark.

Question 6

The exercise is intended specifically to test the skills of candidates who are aiming for Grade B and above. However, weaker candidates are to be congratulated on attempting to answer the questions.

Part of the skill in answering the comprehension questions in Section B is knowing what is the minimum information required. Writing too much has the double disadvantage of

- a) leading to extra language errors and
- b) the possibility of including incorrect information which might vitiate an otherwise correct answer.

Questions (a) and (b) were well within the grasp of the majority of the target candidates.

Question (c)

Many candidates did well to simply transform *nous avions réservé des chambres sans vue sur la mer* to *ils avaient réservé des chambres sans vue sur la mer*. Candidates who attempted to refer to the relative cost of the rooms often became bogged down in which rooms were cheaper and which were more expensive – thus often making errors.

Question (d) proved quite testing as candidates had to think carefully about the three elements required for the answer: *hearing ; the sea; no other sound*.

Question (e) was, at first sight, a very simple question. However, it discriminated extremely well between

- (i) those who read the question and the text carefully and those who did not;
- (ii) those who had a good command of French idiom and those who did not.

Those in group (i) correctly inferred that the question was about the weather. However, if they were careless, at best, they wrote *il faisait beau* and at worst *il faisait du soleil*. Both answers revealed that the candidates had not thought about the overall context of the first paragraph of the letter, which made it clear that the family had arrived at night.

Those in group (ii) had simply confused *Quel temps faisait-il* with *Quelle heure était-il* and had given the correct but irrelevant information that it was *la nuit*.

For question (f), candidates had been extremely well prepared for this type of question. There were many excellent and succinct answers.

Many candidates had a fair idea of what they wanted to say for question (g), but the jump from *on nous servait d'une manière professionnelle* to *on les servait d'une manière professionnelle* was beyond even many of the best candidates. Unfortunately, the main approach by candidates was to turn the sentence around and to attempt to use the passive: *they were / the family was served in a professional manner*. The use of such a structure was, again, beyond the range of all but the very best candidates.

Question (h): Very sensibly, many weaker candidates simply replaced *Nos filles goûtaient avec plaisir les petits gâteaux* with *Les filles goûtaient avec plaisir les petits gâteaux*, thus earning a mark for Communication.

Candidates who attempted *Elles ont aimé les gâteaux* did extremely well, as they used simple, correct language not lifted directly from the text. It was not only the weakest candidates who did not realise that *filles* is a feminine word. *Ils ont aimé ...* was a very common response. It was accepted for Communication but was damaging to the Knowledge and Application of Language mark.

Question (i): The most common error was to assume that the intention was *faire une réservation*. This question discriminated well between candidates who were clearly aware of the past tense in the text (*nous avons déjà fait*) and the future time frame of the question (*l'intention de faire*). The answer *Ils ont déjà fait une réservation* alone was incorrect, but if that answer was followed by an answer along the lines of *parce qu'ils veulent retourner*, that was quite adequate to gain the point.

Knowledge and Application of Language: it was pleasing to see that very few correctly entered candidates did not receive at least 1 mark for language. Many weaker candidates were able to glean 2 marks by carefully copying the text with minor adjustments from the first person plural to the third person. Again, it was pleasing to see how well candidates had been trained for this test and how much more willing candidates were to put pen to paper.

Question 7

Candidates had been very well trained to answer all bullet points, to keep approximately to the 150 word suggestion and to keep within the scannable area of the question paper.

Question 7a

This was the second most popular question. It was chosen by approximately 35% of all candidates.

The first hurdle candidates had to overcome in attempting this question was the word *scolaire*. The examiners accepted a wide range of interpretations (school outing / trip to an old school / trip to a new school etc) but some candidates failed entirely to mention school friends and/or teachers, thus revealing their inability to understand *scolaire*. Candidates should be reminded that they should not tackle an essay title unless they are very confident that they know the meaning of the title.

Many candidates failed to gain full Communication marks as they had not realised that the first two bullet points required the use of the future tense. However, Knowledge and Application of Language marks and Accuracy marks were sound as the candidates were on known territory: they had plenty to say, they knew the vocabulary and managed to use a wide range of structures.

Question 7b

This was the least popular question. Again, candidates had learned much of the relevant vocabulary (although there was much searching for the correct verb to use with *aspirateur*), tenses were generally used correctly and there were plenty of excuses as to why the candidate was not going to be doing any housework next week. This latter made a perfectly acceptable ending to the essay.

Question 7(c)

This was the most popular essay. It was attempted by some 43% of candidates. At the lower end of the ability range, the attraction of this question was possibly the chance to copy large sections of language (*je ne fais pas beaucoup d'effort pour le sport; je pense que le sport est essentiel pour avoir une bonne santé; oui, je vais regarder un événement sportif le week-end prochain.*) Such essays tended to be repetitive both in content (lists of sports ; going to different sports venues on different days) and in structures (*j'aime / je joue le cricket* etc)

At the other end of the spectrum were those candidates who were able to start confidently with *Oui, je m'intéresse* (without the second person ~s) *aux sports* and continue in the same vein.

As each bullet point does not have to have the same number of words devoted to it, candidates were quite at liberty to say, in just a few words, that they liked sport, that they had played a sport last weekend and that they are going to a match next weekend. The rest of the essay could be devoted to opinions on sport in relation to health. Candidates who chose to say that sport was not important or that a good diet was more important than sport were generally well rewarded for Communication as they had been thinking for themselves.

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