



Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In French (4FR1) Paper 01

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2311 4FR1 01 Principal Examiner's report

Introduction

November 2023 is the first session in which 4FR1 01, Listening, is on offer in November. It is set in accordance with the specification, International GCSE French 4FR. This paper was of consistent demand, as ever, with previous papers in this specification. This session, there were some 130 candidates for this single tier qualification, so a small entry in its first November session. The marking principles and rubrics for this specification remain consistent with previous sessions, returning to 2019 standards. The total time allocated to this 40 mark paper is 30 minutes plus 5 minutes' reading time. There is no optionality in this paper, and most candidates in the small candidature attempted all seven questions. Five questions do not require candidates to write in French. Questions 3 and 7 are the only questions to require the productive use of French. As always, examiners assess for communication only. even within the small candidature, there was a wide range of performances. The questions are all taken from the five specified topic areas and their sub-topics. The seven questions are of increasing demand, with early questions targeting Grades 1 and 2, and Q7 seeking to elicit performances up to Grades 8 and 9. In a number of questions, an example precedes the question, so that the candidates can understand how to retrieve and communicate the relevant information in response to the various question parts. Q1 is a visual pairing question on means of transport, worth 4 marks, where candidates listen to fairly brief utterances and match them to the appropriate image. Q2, about freetime activities, is worth 6 marks and requires candidates to indicate the activities the speakers like to undertake, from a choice of eight images, including the example. The passage does not mention every activity shown. Q3, again totalling 6 marks, is a more extended passage about school trips, in this instance, pertaining to an exchange visit in Canada. Here, the question requires candidates to produce brief target language responses, not necessarily in sentences. In Q4, a non-verbal question to deduce whether the attitude of the six speakers on life in the town or countryside, are positive, negative or both, yielded up to 6 marks. Q5 is a passage talking about the environment. Candidates can earn up to 6 marks by identifying the six correct multiple-choice responses, with three distractors offered in each part. Q6 concerns School life. Candidates select six words from a pool of thirteen, including the example, to complete the sentences in the question, heeding both grammatical accuracy and the sense of the speakers in the passage. There are up to 6 marks on offer in this non-verbal question which is aimed at higher grades. Six marks are available in Q7 for responses in the target language pertaining to one's abode. As in Q3, examiners assess responses for communication only, not for quality of language, save that candidates' responses need to be unambiguous, in the context of this International GCSE specification.

Question 1

As is typically the case in the first question of the listening paper, there was a great measure of success with the vast majority of candidates, earning all four marks on offer. It seemed that the means of transport tested were well familiar to candidates. (d), assessing the word *bateau*, was perhaps the most demanding of the four parts of this question. Across the ability range, there was much success here.

Question 2

Even though this question was a little more demanding than Q1, there was once again a very high level of success. There were some distracting elements, such as a speaker mentioning that she did not like sports such as rugby. However, there were many scores of five or six marks. There were again quite a number of candidates who offered too many or too few responses. It was also evident that many candidates were well familiar with the items of minimal core vocabulary targeted in this question.

Question 3

As ever, examiners are careful to ensure that they reward communication, even if it is at a quite straightforward level, bearing in mind that this is only Q3, focusing on school visits. Candidates responded well to the fact that relatively succinct, indeed, laconic responses, suffice to obtain full credit. Where there were less successful responses, candidates did not seem to think clearly about their responses. Therefore, in (a), an exchange is not a means of communication. In (b), candidates earned the mark, simply by writing *chien*, so examiners tolerated further harmless additions. In (c), the fact that the distracting piece of information came after two correct pieces of information meant that the order of elements rule did not depress the scores of many candidates. Spellings of *saucisses* were quite varied, but examiners accepted them if they communicated. The one mark available for *fromage* was perhaps the most frequently obtained in this question. In (d), *classe* on its own, seemed to be a logical extension of *camarades de classe*, so earned credit.

Question 4

Candidates and teachers seem to be increasingly accustomed to this question type and have a significant body of past papers with which to work. Again, it was clear that many teachers and candidates had focused their preparation on minimum core vocabulary and were able to distinguish the various opinions astutely. Candidates should remember that only one opinion matches each person. The question parts which were most demanding required some inference and understanding of more demanding vocabulary. For example, in (e), candidates had to appreciate that being in better health in the countryside is a positive. Equally in (f), candidates needed to deduce from two indications, namely, that people do not know each other, and that the speaker feels alone, that living in an urban setting is negative in the context of this passage.

Question 5

This question is possibly the most demanding in terms of reading the paper in the listening exam, for candidates listen to quite substantial utterances and have to choose between a number of sometimes quite finely differentiated distractors. Examiners targeted the more abstract topic of environment, hopefully in an immediate and plausible way. While ensuring that the question is a real test of listening, rather than of general knowledge, many candidates gained some credit in this question and some gained five or six marks. (a) was quite demanding for working out the context in which these young people were helping the environment. In (d) and (f), some candidates were perhaps less confident of what the distractors meant, and to which parts of the passage they applied. Examiners encourage candidates, very strongly, to use the reading time before the recording, in order to read particularly this question, where there is quite a demand on reading the possible responses. Sometimes there is quite fine variegation between the correct responses, and the example shows candidates what is going to be required.

Question 6

This question targets more able candidates, but this does not mean that candidates of all abilities accessed some credit. All candidates benefit from looking at the grammatical context of the words in the pool, and seeing how they fit into the six sentences, which are preceded by an example. As in Q5, the reading time before the passages are played is useful to gain a sense of what the sentences generally mean. (c) is worthy of attention because candidates need to work out that three out of six lessons indicates *plusieurs*. In (e), candidates also need to deduce because a decision made last week needs to match up with the adjective *récente*. It seems that when candidates are aware that the exact word from the pool may well not appear in the passage, they begin to understand how best to score in this question. Again, a sizeable corpus of past questions of this type is available, so Q6 does not prevent candidates across the ability range from obtaining some credit, especially when maximising the five minutes of reading time before the listening is played, to take account of what is grammatically accurate in the options, as the questions are presented.

Question 7

This question is sometimes more successful than Q6, although it theoretically targets higher grades and requires writing in French. Examiners are once again very clear that minimal but ambiguous responses in context are able to score and quite a lot of candidates gained credit relating to the kitchen being either *belle* or *traditionnelle*. Where examiners had to be quite specific, was where candidates clearly referred to *cuisine* as food rather than kitchen. In ambiguous situations, examiners gave benefit of the doubt, but in examples such as *la belle cuisine délicieuse*, the response is unfortunately unequivocally incorrect. Many candidates earned the one 102.4 FM mark available for *grand congélateur*, but the omission of an adjective cost the mark for some candidates. In (c), there were a large number of lifts from the passage, which did not yield a targeted response: *maman ne veut pas de four à micro-ondes*, was indeed in the passage, but is not a targeted response because it does not give an opinion. In the second part of the passage again, there was quite a lot of success relating to the opportunity to relax in the *salon* or *dans un fauteuil*, or *avec une tasse (de café)*. Some candidates successfully referred to the old style of the lounge, and by implication, *salon agréable* enters the Accept column. Words such as *hi-fi* proved quite elusive, although minimum core vocabulary items, and *chaîne* without qualification could not score, as it was ambiguous. There

was much correct retrieval of the idea, *pas de chauffage* to score the mark, but this was perhaps the most elusive mark in the question, because *pas de chauffage dans le salon* was necessary to give the information needed to score. While this is quite a demanding part, other parts of this final question provided credit for candidates across the ability range.

Advice

The following guidance is based on November 2023 performance, the first such session of this Specification. There are 28 marks on offer for non-verbal questions, and there is a gradual ramping up of demand, as the questions target performances at gradually higher grades.

1. Candidates and teachers could benefit from referring to the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and especially to the many past papers. This will give some sense of the question types and rubrics of this paper, which are consistently set to the same guidance.
2. Q2 carries 6 marks. It is still worth reminding candidates that six responses should be offered, no more and no fewer for this 6 mark question.
3. Q3 and Q7 require answers in French. Examiners assess these responses for communication only. Especially in Q3 very succinct responses sometimes suffice to earn full credit.
4. Candidates should check their Q3 and Q7 responses with particular care in the limited time available, for ambiguous mis-spellings or incomprehensible phonetic attempts which compromise communication.
5. Consolidation with a range of types of listening are very useful preparation, including in non-verbal exercises. Quite long passages appear early in the paper, and practice of note-taking in French under time limitation is valuable Q3 preparation.
6. It is worth looking at the examples. Not only do they show how to approach a given question, but particularly in Q7, it avoids candidates offering the same material in their own responses, where examiners cannot credit it.
7. In Q5 and Q6 especially, candidates could use some of the reading time to understand the questions, ready to slot in the relevant information when they hear it. Trying to read these questions carefully for the first time during the playing of the passages, is challenging.
8. We urge candidates and teachers to consult the Specification, including the programme of grammar study, specified topics and sub-topics and minimum core vocabulary. Our papers are focused on these areas.

