



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In French (4FR1)

Paper 02R: Reading and Writing

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Introduction

The 2025 session of the French IGCSE 4FR1 02R paper revealed a broad range of candidate performance, reflecting both secure preparation in core areas and some persistent challenges. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of familiar themes and responded confidently to straightforward comprehension and writing tasks. Where language was used with precision and responses were well structured, outcomes were strong.

At the same time, the paper highlighted areas where greater grammatical control, vocabulary depth, and task interpretation are needed. Issues such as inaccurate tense usage, limited rephrasing, and the mechanical use of memorised material were recurring features in weaker responses.

This report outlines key performance patterns across the paper, drawing attention to common strengths and areas for development, with the aim of supporting Centres in preparing future candidates effectively.

Question 1

Most candidates approached this task with confidence and accuracy, and many achieved full marks. Their performance indicated a solid grasp of basic vocabulary and a well-developed ability to extract key details from the text with precision.

Recommendations: To support continued success in this type of question, candidates should be encouraged to read the text carefully and avoid relying on first impressions. Where errors did occur, they were typically the result of overlooking subtle distinctions between similar options. Developing habits of thorough reading and double-checking responses can help candidates minimise these small but avoidable mistakes.

Question 2

Candidates generally approached this task with confidence, showing a clear understanding of how to identify suitable words to complete the sentences. Most were able to select options that were grammatically sound, though a number of errors arose where the chosen word did not align with the intended meaning of the sentence, despite being correctly formed.

Recommendations: To prepare effectively for this task, candidates should be encouraged to read the entire passage carefully before completing the gaps, paying close attention to both grammatical and contextual cues. Focused practice in distinguishing between similar word types, and understanding how each functions within a sentence, will help candidates make more accurate lexical choices.

Question 3

Most candidates responded well to this task, particularly in parts 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3f, where they successfully identified key information from the text. These responses suggested secure preparation in basic reading comprehension and confident handling of familiar vocabulary. Centres had clearly ensured candidates were familiar with the matching format and able to extract straightforward information effectively.

However, difficulties were noted with questions involving subtler distractors, particularly 3d and 3g, where candidates were more likely to be misled by superficially plausible but incorrect options. Some also selected more than the permitted eight answers, a procedural oversight that compromised otherwise accurate work. A smaller number of candidates selected options that were not valid, suggesting misinterpretation or lack of close reading.

Recommendations: Candidates should be routinely reminded to observe the requirement of eight crosses only. Strategies such as process of elimination and inference training would benefit those who struggle with distractors. Providing regular exposure to texts that include nuance, ambiguity, or idiomatic language will help candidates develop the critical reading skills necessary for the most demanding items in this question type.

Question 4

This comprehension task generally elicited confident responses to the earlier items. Candidates were successful in questions such as 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4f, which relied on direct information retrieval. However, questions requiring more contextual understanding, or grammatical manipulation, notably 4d, 4e, and 4g, proved more challenging.

A common error was the inclusion of lifted phrases from the text without necessary grammatical adaptation. In 4d, for example, many responses contained the phrase 'dormaient chez eux' directly, rather than expressing the answer in a rephrased or grammatically coherent way. Similarly, 4e was often incomplete due to the omission of 'sur son visage', and 4g showed repeated incorrect use of 'faire le tour de la ville', which was not linked to the cathedral context, thereby missing the mark.

Recommendations: To prepare candidates more effectively, Centres should continue encouraging precision in reading and interpretation. Candidates must be taught to avoid reliance on direct lifts and instead be trained to rephrase accurately when necessary. Attention should also be paid to questions requiring candidates to understand the link between an activity and the location it occurs. Grammatical completeness, especially where a verb is required to accompany a noun phrase, should be a focus in teaching comprehension skills.

Question 5

This question served as an effective discriminator and revealed key differences in candidates' ability to interpret, manipulate, and respond to language. While some questions, like 5d, 5e, and 5f, were tackled with reasonable success, others, notably 5a, 5b, and especially 5g, proved more difficult for some candidates.

An over-reliance on lifting was noted for this question, with candidates copying full phrases from the text without adjusting tense or pronoun, particularly in 5a and 5b. In 5g, candidates often failed to form a suggestion in the future tense and defaulted to an indicative or infinitive form. A significant number of responses did not address the question's underlying intent, especially where subtle shifts in meaning or structure were required.

Recommendations: Centres are encouraged to train candidates to approach such questions analytically, understanding the tense and function required before composing a response. Building familiarity with modal and future forms, as well as developing strategies for paraphrasing and adjusting source material, will help improve performance. More broadly, a focus on task awareness, reading each question for what it asks, rather than where a key word appears in the text, remains crucial.

Question 6

The majority of candidates approached this short writing task with confidence, successfully including all four stimulus words and remaining within the thematic scope of the environment. Some responses displayed a sophisticated range of vocabulary, and where planning was evident, candidates often scored highly.

However, the task also exposed recurring challenges. A number of candidates altered the form or spelling of the stimulus words. Misunderstandings of time phrases such as *le week-end dernier* were also observed, leading to tense mismatches. Additionally, some candidates produced responses far beyond the expected length, which sometimes reduced linguistic accuracy and increased the number of unforced errors.

Recommendations: To support success in this task, teaching should reinforce the need for concise writing, with all four stimulus words used in their original form and integrated naturally. Centres may find it helpful to model effective short responses in lessons and to train candidates to highlight or underline each required word as they write. Greater attention should also be paid to the use of time markers and consistent use of tenses, particularly between past and present.

Question 7

This extended writing question produced a wide range of outcomes. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task, structured their responses effectively, and addressed each bullet point with relevant content. When candidates varied their vocabulary,

used a range of tenses appropriately, and included opinions and justifications, their writing was coherent and purposeful.

Weaker responses, however, often lacked full coverage of the bullet points or misunderstood key prompts. For example, some candidates interpreted 'après l'école la semaine dernière' as a general routine rather than a specific past event, or confused 'prochain' and 'dernier', leading to inconsistent tense use. In 7b and 7c, bullet points involving explanation or future scenarios were sometimes answered with vague or off-topic content, especially where candidates had limited vocabulary or misunderstood key terms such as 'les spots publicitaires'.

Recommendations: To strengthen outcomes, Centres should continue to guide candidates in analysing each bullet point carefully before writing. Practice in structuring responses clearly, with a paragraph per bullet, will aid clarity and coherence. Attention should be paid to time markers, verb endings, and choosing the appropriate question based on full understanding of all its parts. Training candidates to plan effectively and avoid over-reliance on pre-learnt phrases will ensure more authentic, well-targeted responses.

Question 8

This final grammar-based question presented a notable range of outcomes, with some candidates performing very well, while others struggled with consistent accuracy across all ten gaps. Items involving the present tense and basic agreement (e.g. 8b, 8c, 8d) were handled with greater confidence. However, the final items (particularly 8i and 8j) exposed persistent difficulties with the future, conditional, and the imperfect tenses.

Common errors included using infinitives in place of conjugated verbs, omitting auxiliary verbs, or producing incorrect agreements, especially in compound tenses. Several candidates left gaps blank or appeared to guess based on word shape rather than grammatical function. These issues point to insecure knowledge of verb morphology and a lack of routine practice in applying grammar in context.

Recommendations: Centres should incorporate regular and progressive grammar practice into their schemes of work. This includes verb drills, conjugation tables, gap-fills, and translation activities that reinforce tense recognition and application. The distinction between near and simple future, and the formation of compound tenses with both avoir and être, should receive particular attention. Time should also be allocated during the exam for this question, as it was noted that some candidates rushed or left items incomplete.

Summary

The 2025 session of the 4FR1 02R paper offered a range of tasks designed to assess comprehension, grammatical knowledge, and written communication. Many candidates demonstrated familiarity with the exam format and were able to engage confidently with the content, particularly in tasks involving direct retrieval of information and structured writing.

Responses to short comprehension items were generally secure, although more demanding questions requiring inference, rephrasing, or nuanced understanding highlighted ongoing challenges. In several instances, candidates lifted phrases from the text without adapting them grammatically, or omitted key elements of information, particularly where complete sentences were expected. Extended writing tasks revealed a wide spectrum of ability: the strongest candidates produced clear, organised responses, showing control across a range of tenses, while others struggled with relevance, tense consistency, or full coverage of bullet points.

The grammar-based gap-fill task continued to differentiate effectively across the cohort. While early items were completed with greater confidence, later gaps involving compound and future tenses revealed weaker understanding of conjugation and agreement, especially in irregular forms.

Candidates would benefit from continued practice in grammatical manipulation and precise interpretation of prompts. Centres are encouraged to integrate structured grammar work, contextualised vocabulary use, and planning strategies across all skills. Supporting candidates in developing accurate, flexible language use, both receptive and productive, remains key to success in this qualification.

