



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In French (4FR1) Paper 03

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Overview

This speaking assessment consists of three tasks:

Task A	Picture-based discussion
Task B and Task C	Conversations on two different topic areas

The exam is conducted in the exam centre and assessed by Pearson.

Total assessment time: between 8 and 10 minutes.

This exam is worth 25% of the International GCSE qualification.

The total maximum mark is 40.

Content overview

Candidates are assessed on their ability to convey their understanding of spoken French through three speaking tasks. Candidates must be able to:

- describe the contents of a picture
- describe possible past or future events related to the people in the picture
- respond to questions about the picture and its related topic
- take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics

Assessment overview

- Task A (2-3 mins/12 marks) requires candidates to answer five questions about a picture.
- Tasks B and C (3-3.5 mins each/28 marks in total over tasks B and C) are conversations on two different topic areas, determined by the grid supplied by Pearson.

Please see pages 23-31 of the Pearson specification for International GCSE French (first teaching 2017) for further details of this assessment, and for the mark grids used for assessment.

Please see the same document (page 14) or the end of this report for a list of the topic areas for this specification.

Task A

The candidate chooses a picture for Task A. This picture must contain the following elements:

- people (at least two people)
- objects (in the background)
- interactions (showing what people are doing)

The picture must be a photo rather than a cartoon-style picture. The picture can relate to any of the sub-topics of the International GCSE (please see the end of this report for a list of topic areas) except sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4. These sub-topics will not be assessed in the speaking exam.

The candidate can choose a photograph or an illustration of a single event. The picture can relate to any of the sub-topics of the International GCSE except sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4. These sub-topics are not to be assessed in the speaking exam.

Task A should last 2-3 minutes. Timing begins as the candidate begins to answer the first question.

Where Task A is too long:

- If the teacher/examiner is speaking at 3 minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at that point.
- If the candidate is speaking at 3 minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at the end of the sentence/the next sense break.

It is important that teacher/examiners observe the timings. On occasion in this series, candidates were not able to access the entire range of marks available as they did not have the opportunity to answer all five questions within the three minutes allowed. A common issue was that the answer to question 1 was disproportionately long, meaning that there was insufficient time available for the candidate to answer all of questions 2-5.

Teacher/examiners are reminded that they may not practise Task A with their candidates using the picture to be used in the final test, though they may practise using other pictures on the same topic. A lack of spontaneity in Task A may affect the mark awarded for *Communication and content*.

The candidate gives the teacher/examiner a copy of the picture in advance of the exam. The teacher/examiner must prepare five questions of the types specified to ask each candidate about their chosen picture, but must not share these questions with the candidate before the test.

Candidates may not take any notes into the examination room, but should take into the exam a copy of the picture they have chosen to talk about.

In Task A, the teacher/examiner asks five questions about the picture and the related sub-topic. The pattern of these five questions must follow the examples in the SAMs and the instructions given in the specification.

Question type 1: A description of what you can see in the picture.

Question type 2: Specific factual information about the picture.

For example, describe a person or persons in the picture.

Question type 3: Past or future hypothesis.

This question must ask the candidate to imagine a possible past or potential future event relating to the picture. This is the opportunity for the candidate to use an additional tense and time frame. It is not necessary to use both time frames.

Question type 4: Opinions about the picture.

This question elicits the candidate's opinions on an aspect of the topic illustrated.

Question type 5: Evaluation.

The teacher/examiner should elicit an evaluation from the candidate. This question will move away from the content of the picture and exploit a wider aspect of the sub-topic.

As an example, if the candidate chooses a picture of a group of young people playing in a football match (Topic E, sub-topic 2: Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise), the five questions could be:

Question 1 Décris cette image.

Question 2 Décris le garçon à droite.

Question 3 À ton avis, qu'est-ce que ces garçons vont faire après le match ?

Question 4 Et toi, est-ce que tu préfères les sports d'équipe ou les sports individuels ?

Question 5 Pourquoi est-ce qu'il est important de pratiquer une activité sportive régulièrement ?

Teacher/examiners may ask additional questions (from the options below) in Task A, and indeed it is good practice to do so in order to encourage candidates to develop their answers. However, teacher/examiners are reminded that the **only** additional questions that may be asked are:

- Pourquoi (pas) ?
- Autre chose ?
- C'est tout ?

There must be no other supplementary questions and teacher/examiners must not deviate from these prompts. Where a teacher/examiner asks in Task A an additional question which is not one

of these prompts, the candidate's response to that prompt is ignored when assessing their performance.

Teacher/examiners may repeat a question if necessary. If a question is repeated, it should not be rephrased. Candidates should know how to ask in French for a question to be repeated.

In a number of centres this series, Task A was not conducted correctly. While examiners apply the mark grids positively, incorrect conduct of the test is likely to prevent the candidate accessing the entire range of marks available.

On occasion, the teacher/examiner asked a question which was potentially confusing. This was a frequent issue in question 3 which requires a candidate to use a past or future time frame in the response. A question such as

« À ton avis, qu'est-ce que ces jeunes ont fait après le petit- déjeuner ? requires a response using a past tense, but the use of « après » often confuses candidates.

It is important to note that, as only one question of the five prescribed types requires the candidate to use a tense other than the present tense, the candidate does not have to use all three time frames (past, present and future) in order to access the entire range of marks for *Linguistic knowledge and accuracy* in Task A. A candidate who uses, for example, only present and future time frames in Task A can access all four marks available for *Linguistic knowledge and accuracy* in this section of the test. Candidates must use at least two time frames successfully to access a mark of two (out of four) or above for Linguistic knowledge and accuracy in Task A.

Task A

Picture choice

The majority of candidates this series chose a suitable picture. Where they did not, this had no automatic effect on the mark awarded for Task A, but may have made it more difficult for the teacher/examiner to ask a question or questions of the required type. In all cases, examiners award marks positively for what they hear.

Most candidates used stock photos. Others used personal photos and tended to include information not evident in the picture and which could, therefore, not be credited. When an illustration was selected, this was often very "busy" and led to a disproportionately long response to question 1. Popular themes included holidays, customs, family and friends and sport.

Candidate performance

The majority of candidates were well prepared for Task A in this series and coped well with this section of the test. However, candidates must respond to all 5 questions and not give a presentation or monologue.

- Question 1 The majority of candidates (given that they know that the first question is always to describe the picture) had prepared well for this question and were able to give extended answers, though some were rather brief. Some candidates introduced the picture using a timeframe, eg. « J'ai choisi cette photo de... » thus fulfilling the requirement to use at least two time frames from the outset. In describing the picture, though, candidates are expected to use the present tense.
- Question 2 Much depended on what the teacher/examiner asked. Whereas some asked open questions, such as « Décris la dame à gauche. » others were very specific and limited the scope of the answer, for example, « La dame à gauche, qu'est-ce qu'elle porte ? » Teacher/examiners, of course, know their candidates and are usually well-placed to ask a question which they know the candidate would be able to answer.
- Question 3 Most candidates listened carefully to the question and answered using an appropriate time frame. The response should relate to the people in the picture and not to the candidate personally (unless it is a personal photo). Some candidates expanded responses to include several examples of the tense. The perfect tense was prone to errors and the simple future tense was rare.
- Question 4 Nearly all candidates could give an opinion, though not all could justify it. The prompt « Pourquoi (pas) ? » can be used to good effect here to encourage candidates to give a reason for their answer.
- Question 5 Some teacher/examiners started this question off very well with « Dans quelle mesure... ? » or « Tu préfères A ou B ? », thus encouraging the candidate to weigh up positive and negative aspects of the question and come to a conclusion. While some candidates justified in detail their evaluation, others offered only an opinion.

Task A: Advice for teacher/examiners

- Ensure that the candidate chooses a suitable picture for Task A.
- Prepare, in advance of the test, the five questions you will ask about the picture (NB: these questions may NOT be shared with the candidate).

- Encourage the candidate, when necessary, to develop their answers (using only the allowed prompts: Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ? C'est tout ? Autre chose ?) so that the Task A lasts between 2 and 3 minutes.
- Observe the timing.
- Do not let the candidate speak for too long in answer to question 1 so as to ensure that the candidate has the opportunity to respond to all five questions within the three minutes allowed for this task.
- Make sure that the candidate knows how to ask, in French, for a question to be repeated.
- Do not correct the candidate's language during the test.
- Ensure question 5 prompts an evaluation and not just a second opinion.

Tasks B and C

Tasks B and C are two conversations on two different topic areas and different areas to Task A. The topic areas to be used in Tasks B and C are determined by the grid provided by Pearson. Note that the following sub-topics will not be assessed in the speaking test: A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4 (see below for a list of topic areas).

Each of the two conversations should last between 3 and 3½ minutes. Timing begins as the candidate begins to answer the first question.

Where Task B or Task C is too long:

- If the teacher/examiner is speaking at 3½ minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at that point.
- If the candidate is speaking at 3½ minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at the end of the sentence/the next sense break.

Both Task B and Task C are timed separately, so a short Task B is not compensated by an overlong Task C, and vice versa.

In the majority of cases this series, Tasks B and C were conducted correctly, though a number of centres did not observe the requirements. The topic area in Task A cannot be used for Tasks B or C. In each task questions must relate to the specified topic area, though they may cover different sub-topics within the area.

Some teacher/examiners did not encourage candidates to produce spontaneous speech. If candidates do not respond spontaneously to questions, they may not be able to access the full range of marks available for *Interaction and spontaneity*. Teacher/examiners should not work through a list of pre-prepared, unconnected questions but, instead, react to and build on what

the candidate says. In this way a spontaneous conversation develops. Equally, the candidate should not be asked a single question and deliver a monologue.

Teacher/examiners must also be sure to listen to what the candidate says and to make sure that questions follow on logically. In an example such as the following, the candidate will be left bewildered:

Teacher/examiner: Tu t'entends bien avec tes parents ?
Candidate: Je suis interne, mes parents habitent à l'étranger.
Teacher/examiner: Qu'est-ce que tu as fait avec tes parents le weekend dernier ?

It is very important that teacher/examiners listen carefully to the candidate's responses, so as not to cause confusion.

Tasks B and C: Candidate performance

The randomisation grid was adhered to in almost all cases, as were timings. The standard of candidate performance varied considerably. Some candidates could sustain a conversation at length with impressive structures, vocabulary and spontaneous interaction with individual thoughts whereas others struggled to put thoughts together in a coherent form or to respond at all.

Candidates seemed to be most at ease discussing familiar topics such as holidays, school, house and home, travel and food. There were, however, some interesting discussions of the more "challenging" topics such as environmental issues and communication technology. Unfortunately, there was some discussion on Topics C3 and C5 which is not permitted.

Most candidates demonstrated use of the three time frames (past, present and future), but on occasion the candidate was not given much scope to use time frames other than the present. This could limit the candidate's opportunity to access the full range of marks available for Linguistic knowledge and accuracy, where the candidate's ability to refer successfully to past, present and future events is credited. There were instances of candidates intermingling time frames leading to ambiguity.

There were many instances where candidates were able to use more complex structures such as use of the subjunctive, « après avoir », « lequel » etc. It was very pleasing to hear that many candidates at this level were confident using complex language in extended responses.

Tasks B and C: Advice for teacher/examiners

- Be sure, in advance of the exam, to check which conversation topics are to be discussed with each candidate (consult the grid provided by Pearson to determine which topic areas to discuss with each candidate).

- Observe the timings – each conversation should last 3-3½minutes (use a stopwatch or timer).
- Ensure the candidate knows how to ask, in French, for a question to be repeated.
- Ask questions at an appropriate level for each candidate, but do not limit them; push each candidate to reach their “linguistic ceiling”.
- Ask questions which prompt the candidate to use past, present and future time frames in both Task B and Task C.
- Listen to what the candidate says and follow up appropriately.
- Encourage spontaneous speech by the candidate.
- Encourage the candidate to develop their answers, to offer opinions and reasons for these opinions.
- Ask “open” questions (see below)
- Keep your interventions as short as possible.
- Introduce Tasks B and C briefly in French, so that the candidate knows the topic is changing and which topic will be discussed e.g. « Maintenant on va parler des vacances »
- Do not correct the candidate’s language during the test.

Open questions

In all three tasks, it is important to ask “open” questions, i.e. questions which cannot be answered using only one or two words (“closed” questions). “Open” questions encourage candidates to answer using an extended phrase or sentence, which in turn allows them to access the entire range of marks available.

Example:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Closed question | Est-ce que tu aimes le sport ? |
| Open question | Pourquoi est-ce que tu aimes le sport ? |
| Closed question | Est-ce que tu es allé en Espagne ? |
| Open question | Décris tes vacances en Espagne. |

General advice

Preparing candidates for the International GCSE French speaking test:

Advice for teacher/examiners

- Make sure candidates are confident using past, present and future time frames.
- Practise with candidates extending answers using conjunctions, opinions and reasons with more complex syntax.

- Ensure that candidates know that they will be expected to speak spontaneously, and give them the tools to do so.
- Share the mark grids with candidates, so that they are aware of what is expected of them.
- Make sure that candidates know how to ask, in French, for a question to be repeated.
- Make sure that candidates know the question words, so that their answer is relevant to the question.
- Make sure that candidates listen for the time frame of the question, so that they answer appropriately.

Teacher/examiners should make sure they are familiar with the following documents (available on the Pearson/Edexcel website):

- Specification: International GCSE French (first teaching 2017)
- International GCSE MFL Oral Examination Training Guide.

Administration

The majority of centres followed the guidance for the administration of these tests. On occasion, the requirements were not followed, and centres had to be contacted to provide documents and/or replacement recordings.

Recording tests

- Make sure that both the candidate and the teacher/examiner can be heard clearly; where only one microphone is used, make sure that this favours the candidate.
- Introduce the candidate's name and number clearly at the beginning of the test.
- Do not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test.
- Tasks A, B and C should be conducted in that order.
- Check that the whole test has been recorded clearly, particularly after the first candidate, so any necessary adjustments can be made.

Uploading the tests to Learner Work Transfer (LWT)

There are 3 items to upload for each candidate.

- Label the recording, candidate cover sheet (CCS) and picture clearly.
- Upload the correct recording, candidate cover sheet and picture for each candidate.

- Please see the document International GCSE guidance for oral recordings (available on the Forms and administration/Assessment support tab of the International GCSE French page of the Pearson/Edexcel website) for instructions as to how to label these items and how to upload them to Learner Work Transfer.

Topic Areas

Topic

Sub-topics

A. Home and abroad

- 1 Life in the town and rural life
- 2 Holidays, tourist information and directions
- 3 Services (e.g. bank, post office)*
- 4 Customs
- 5 Everyday life, traditions and communities

B. Education and employment

- 1 School life and routine
- 2 School rules and pressures
- 3 School trips, events and exchanges
- 4 Work, careers and volunteering
- 5 Future plans

C. Personal life and relationships

- 1 House and home
- 2 Daily routines and helping at home
- 3 Role models*
- 4 Relationships with family and friends
- 5 Childhood*

D. The world around us

- 1 Environmental issues
- 2 Weather and climate*
- 3 Travel and transport
- 4 The media
- 5 Information and communication technology

E. Social activities, fitness and health

- 1 Special occasions
- 2 Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise
- 3 Shopping and money matters
- 4 Accidents, injuries, common ailments and health issues*
- 5 Food and drink

*Sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4 will not be assessed in Paper 3: Speaking

