



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In French (4FR1)

Paper 03: Speaking

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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 understanding of spoken French and ability to communicate relevant information through three speaking tasks. Candidates must be able to:

- Describe the contents of a picture and respond to further questions on the picture and its related topic
- Take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics.

Assessment overview

- Describe the contents of a picture and respond to further questions on the picture and its related topic
- Take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics.

Each candidate chooses their own picture and this choice determines which topics are used for Parts B & C as indicated on the Pearson randomisation grid. The topics available for oral discussion are determined by Pearson and are listed in the specification.

In view of the large number of entries, all of the available topics received some attention. These topics were particularly popular:

- A1 Life in the town and rural life
- A2 Holidays
- B1 School life and routine
- C1 House and home
- C4 Relationships with family and friends
- D1 Environmental issues
- D4 The media
- E2 Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise.

Inevitably, in an oral NEA much depends on the style of questioning and, in this case, the choice of picture.

Part A

The majority of candidates this summer chose a suitable stock photo, occasionally a personal one. Where they did not, this had no automatic effect on the mark awarded for Task A. There were examples of cartoons, composed pictures, possibly using AI (which is not permitted), and, in one unfortunate case, Pearson specimen material. The time allocated to this part varied considerably. In all cases, examiners awarded marks positively for what they heard in the first 3 minutes. Overall, the impression is that candidates were well prepared and appropriate questions asked, though not in every centre.

- Question 1 Since candidates know that the first question is always to describe the picture, most had prepared well for this question and were able to give extended answers, though some were briefer. Though the present tense is anticipated some candidates introduced the picture using a past tense, thus fulfilling the requirement to use at least two time-frames from the outset. Sometimes the response was so long and detailed that later questions were rushed or omitted.
- Question 2 Much depended on what the teacher/examiner asked. Whereas some asked open questions, others were very specific and limited the scope of the answer; thankfully some candidates showed initiative. In some centres this question was omitted, especially if the answer to question one had been extensive, meaning the candidate was unlikely to access the top band of marks.
- Question 3 Most candidates listened carefully to the question and answered using the required time frame. Some candidates expanded their response to include further evidence of tense usage. The perfect tense was prone to errors, and the simple future tense was rare. The phrasing of some questions confused the candidate as to the expected tense; candidates are not expected to give answers in both past and future tenses.

- Question 4 Nearly all candidates could give an opinion, however brief, though not all could justify it. Prompting (as outlined in the specification) could be used to encourage candidates to extend their answer.
- Question 5 The questions here varied considerably in scope and did not always lead to an evaluation. Some questions encouraged the candidate to weigh up positive and negative aspects of the question and come to a conclusion while others elicited only an opinion; others only elicited a narrative.

Only these 5 types of question should be asked, though encouragement can be offered with the approved prompts. Additional questions must not be asked.

Task A: Advice for teacher/examiners

- Ensure that the candidate chooses a suitable picture for Task A
- Prepare in advance the five questions you will ask about the picture
- Encourage the candidate, when necessary, to develop their answers so that Task A lasts between 2 and 3 minutes
- Adhere to the timing
- Do not let the candidate spend too long in answering question 1 to ensure that the candidate is able to respond to all five questions within the time
- 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

Part B and C

In many centres the questions were sympathetic to the candidate and allowed the candidate to develop their potential, whatever their level may be. The standard was very variable; some candidates struggled to put a few words together whereas other (non-native) speakers could develop longer sequences of speech independently at their ease.

The randomisation grid was adhered to in almost all cases.

While timings were mostly adhered to, there were wide variations. Short timings limited a candidate's ability to access the full mark range while some candidates were audibly flagging in Task C.

Candidates seemed to be most at ease discussing familiar topics such as holidays, school, house and home. There were, however, some interesting discussions of the more demanding topics such as environmental issues and the media.

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 access to the full range of marks available for Linguistic knowledge and accuracy. There were instances of candidates mixing time frames, leading to ambiguity.

It was pleasant to hear instances where candidates were able to use more complex structures such as using the subjunctive, « après avoir », « le quel » etc. though more could have been done. Candidates using pre-learnt structures needed to ensure they were used appropriately and not to keep repeating them. Many candidates at this level were confident using complex syntax in extended responses. However, opportunities for some to use a variety of structures and vocabulary were limited by the style of questioning. Conversely, on occasions, the demands of the questions were clearly beyond the candidate's abilities.

Unfortunately, in a handful of centres the tests were not conducted according to the specification; instead, teacher/examiners created their own format, for example, a self-presentation, a role-play and random questions on a picture or merely an unstructured series of questions. Even so, examiners did what they could to credit any material compatible with the specification.

Tasks B and C: Advice for teacher/examiners

- Observe the timings – each conversation should last 3-3½minutes
- 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 push each candidate to reach their “linguistic ceiling”
- Ask questions which require 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 the candidate to develop their answers, to offer opinions and reasons for these opinions
- Ask “open” questions
- Keep your interventions as short as possible
- Avoid correcting the candidate's language during the test.

Summary

The successful completion of this examination depended on the diligence of the teacher/examiner and in most cases, this was forthcoming to the benefit of the candidates. Apart from the incorrectly conducted examinations, there were issues with the quality of some recordings, notably extraneous noise, and incomplete uploads of documents.

The format of the examination allowed opportunities for all candidates, particularly if the questions were tailored to the candidate's interests and ability. The marks awarded covered the entire range available, so the examination proved to be an effective discriminator.

