



GCSE **French**

8658/WH

Report on the examination

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General Points

The performance of students this year across the paper was very encouraging. As in previous series, the variety of questions provided the opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier and the quality of work seen, especially in response to question 1 was impressive. Students were able to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria well by producing extended pieces of writing in which they were able to develop their responses, express opinions, include a variety of language and different time frames. As in previous series, where students occasionally did not score marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay or ambiguity in communicating messages clearly. Other barriers to success included inaccurate verb formations, omissions of key vocabulary, students producing much longer responses than the suggested word count thereby creating more scope for error and/or attempting to include a level of complexity of language which was unsuccessful. In addition, an occasional lack of knowledge of some key vocabulary items led to an inability to respond effectively to the targeted rubrics and bullet points which sometimes had a negative impact on marks awarded.

Question 1

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be addressed, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. As in previous series the vast majority of students were able to respond well to this question, with most students able to produce extended pieces of writing that communicated a lot of information clearly. Nearly all responses were developed well and included at least two opinions. Students were also effective in their ability to include successful references to three-time frames. As in previous series, students were less successful if they incorrectly interpreted or omitted bullet points or if they produced inappropriate time frames.

Content

When awarding marks for content, the assessment criteria reference coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Coverage of the bullet points is the most important, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that all aspects of the task must be covered for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10. In addition, inaccuracy that created a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') impacted negatively on the marks awarded for content. Students are also aware of the need to produce three-time frames, and most students were able to express these successfully.

Question 1.1

This topic is widely taught and very familiar with students. It was a popular choice with students, and many were able to produce some high quality, extended pieces of writing. As in previous

series, many students successfully produced a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 '*vos préférences pour les vacances*' provided the majority of students with the opportunity to express an opinion about holidays. Mostly, this was achieved by reference to a country '*j'adore les vacances en Espagne*' or a place '*j'aime les vacances à la plage*'. Bullet point 2 '*un repas typique pendant les vacances*' was occasionally not credited because a minority of students did not know the word '*repas*' and mentioned typical holiday activities without reference to food. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in previous series, a few students were unsuccessful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers '*l'année dernière*' and '*vos projets futurs*' which impacted negatively on marks for the award of bullet points and/or time frames.

Question 1.2

As with 1.1, most students were able to produce an extended piece of writing, addressing the bullet points effectively and developing their responses. They were able to include a range of opinions and references to the different time frames. Bullet point 1 '*vos relations avec un(e) ami(e)*' elicited many successful responses with the majority of students able to provide opinions about friends, thereby addressing the bullet point well. Bullet point 2 '*votre activité préférée à la maison*' was successfully addressed. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in 1.1, a small minority of students were unsuccessful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers '*une excursion récente*' and '*vos projets pour le temps libre à l'avenir*'.

Quality of language

The criteria for assessment focuses on inclusion of a variety of language, attempts at complex structures, time frames and accuracy. As in previous series, the following was seen relating to the successful inclusion of variety and complexity of language: different ways of expressing opinions with verbs such as '*j'aime, j'adore, je préfère, j'apprécie, je n'aime pas, je déteste*', adjectives such as '*super, intéressant, amusant, fantastique, génial, bien, barbant, affreux, ennuyeux*'. Many students also effectively included different persons of the verb and a variety of connectives and intensifiers. Other successful responses included infinitive constructions, the use of object pronouns, subordinate clauses such as '*je pense que, je crois que, je trouve que*' and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. As in previous series, some students were determined to include set structures and/or idiomatic expressions that had been recommended by teachers with varying degrees of success. In some cases inaccurate production of these structures and expressions led to a lack of clarity, which impacted negatively on marks. In addition, some students were unsuccessful when they produced work which included inaccurate tense formation.

Advice to students

- Choose the question where you feel confident that you can develop all the bullet points.
- Check that you have used the appropriate verb and tense formations in your responses to those bullet points that reference the PAST or the FUTURE.

- Practise writing in three different tenses. Pick a theme/subject and write the same sentence in 3 tenses: *'D'habitude/normalement..... Le week-end dernier/récemment À l'avenir/ samedi prochain....'*
- Use constructions that you have practised and that can be adapted to any topic. e.g. *je vais/je suis allé/je voudrais aller/j'aime aller*
- Make sure sentences are well formed rather than trying to include pre-learnt complex phrases.
- Create short lists of varied vocabulary (different verbs and adjectives that express opinions, intensifiers *'très, assez, un peu, vraiment'* and connectives *'et, mais, car, parce que, puisque'* etc.).
- Focus on correct verb formation rather than overly complex pre-learnt phrases.

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students are expected to write approximately 150 words in total about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. As in previous series, a very high quality of work was seen this year, with students writing confident, coherent and fluent pieces of extended writing demonstrating the ability to express and justify opinions and to develop their responses with a good level of complexity and accuracy.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: Relevance and detail related to coverage of the bullet points, amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students should also be reminded that in each question one of the bullet points will target a different time frame. As in previous series, many students demonstrated their ability to produce extended pieces of writing that included regular development of ideas. They were also highly skilled in expressing and justifying opinions. However, students were less successful if inaccuracy, mainly with verbs and tense formations, led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'ambiguities') and this impacted negatively on marks awarded.

Question 2.1

This question proved less popular with students than question 2.2 but many good responses were seen. When addressing bullet point 1 most students could describe the importance of being a good friend. Many gave examples of what being a good friend meant to them which included listening to problems or helping/being helped with homework. Where students were less successful, it was because they simply described a friend or listed activities they do with friends without other contextualisation. Bullet point 2 was less successfully addressed in that many students did not spot the reference to the past tense in the rubric *'ce que votre collègue a fait pour aider les autres'* and wrote responses in the present tense describing what their school and/or teachers usually do to help people. More successful responses included past tense accounts referring to the school having organised charity events to raise money for homeless

people, ways in which students have helped the environment with their school/class/teachers or specific things the school has done to help students directly.

Question 2.2

This question was the more popular choice with students and the quality of responses seen was generally high. Responses to bullet point 1 were particularly impressive. This is a topic which is widely taught and very familiar to students. The vast majority of students were able to describe their town/region in detail, giving reasons as to why it is good for tourists. There were references to historical sites, interesting places to visit, leisure facilities and the local countryside. Many students were also able to describe improvements made to their region in relation to pollution/traffic/litter etc. There were also many successful responses to bullet point 2. These included spending money on social causes or charities, going on a shopping spree, treating their friends or family and going on holiday.

Range of Language

The assessment criteria for range of language focus on the variety of language produced and the ability to produce complex sentences with a degree of confidence. Teachers should be reminded that although direct reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, students should be encouraged to include a variety of these as this would be considered to be an attempt at complexity. As in previous series, the majority of students were able to produce a variety of tenses such as present (including subjunctive), perfect, imperfect, future and conditional tenses. A wide variety of language was seen. In terms of connectives as well as the use of *'et, mais, parce que'* and *'car'*, there was successful inclusion of *'quand, si, étant donné que, bien que, pour que'* and *'vu que'*. Students also included a wide variety of adjectives, intensifiers, adverbs and subordinate clauses, including *'je pense que, je trouve que, je crois que, je dirais que, il faut que, je dois dire que'* followed by *'parce que, car'* or *'puisque'*. In addition, as in previous series, a variety of infinitive constructions and the use object pronouns were often seen. Teachers are reminded that for the highest marks, complex sentences need to be handled with confidence. However, as in previous series, there were still many students who included templated formulaic complex sentences and/or idiomatic expressions and either overused the same phrases, used them inappropriately or had not been able to reproduce them accurately thereby producing complex structures that could not be considered to be successful.

Accuracy

The criteria for assessment makes reference to verbs and tense formations, and the different types of errors made by students. Teachers are reminded that 'major' errors are those that create a delay or breakdown in communication, and 'minor' errors, although they are still inaccuracies, do not. As in previous series, the majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Major errors were mainly inaccurate tense formations and/or the inappropriate use of infinitives. As always, minor errors seen included errors of gender, inaccurate adjectival agreements and prepositions, omissions and minor misspellings.

Advice to students

- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.
- Identify which bullet point targets a different time frame and check that you have used the appropriate tense/verb forms.
- Ensure that both bullet points are clearly covered before developing ideas.
- Make sure sentences are well formed rather than trying to be over ambitious.
- Only include complex structures when appropriate and if you are able to manipulate them in the right context.
- Check singulars and plurals of verbs and adjectives.
- Focus on verb formation – tense and endings.

Question 3

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages covered Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with nearly all students able to score some marks.

Conveying key messages

Key message	Comments
Sometimes I find	Generally, well done. However, some students used ' <i>je pense que</i> ' rather than ' <i>je trouve</i> '.
my house too small,	Generally, well done although sometimes students used ' <i>très</i> ' instead of ' <i>trop</i> '.
but next year	Generally, well done.
my brother is going to get married	The use of the reflexive verb caused issues here, and often the reflexive pronoun was omitted. In addition, the future tense proved challenging for some students.
and I will have his bedroom.	' <i>J'aurai</i> ' was not widely known, nor was ' <i>je vais avoir</i> '. In addition, the possessive ' <i>sa</i> ' was often unknown.
Yesterday evening	Generally, well done.
we made a cake	Generally, well done although the verb ' <i>to make</i> ' proved challenging for some students and they used inappropriate verbs.
to celebrate	Some students omitted the preposition ' <i>pour</i> '. Celebrate was often translated as ' <i>celebrater</i> ' or written as the adjective ' <i>célèbre</i> '.
our mother's birthday.	The possessive adjective ' <i>notre</i> ' was not widely known and ' <i>ma mère</i> ' or ' <i>nous mère</i> ' was often used. In addition, the word order proved

	challenging for many students with ' <i>notre mères anniversaire</i> ' frequently seen.
I don't have much money	Generally well done although some students used ' <i>trop</i> ' rather than ' <i>beaucoup</i> '
at the moment,	Generally well done.
therefore I am looking for	' <i>cherche</i> ' was not widely known
a weekend job.	This was generally well done although some students omitted the ' <i>week-end</i> ' idea.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent the award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. Even when key messages had been successfully conveyed, if several minor errors occurred, the mark awarded for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures was often lower than the mark awarded for conveying key messages. For example, language such as '*mon frère va se marier, j'aurai sa chambre, nous avons fait un gateau, pour fêter, l'anniversaire de notre mère, je cherche un travail le week-end*' were either incorrectly spelled or had elements omitted, and this also impacted on marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

Advice to students

- Tick off words in the English sentences to check you have translated each item.
- Revise high frequency words and phrases and their spellings, e.g. prepositions, family members, places in town, common verbs and adjectives.
- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially time markers (*quelquefois, l'année prochaine, hier soir, en ce moment*), connectives (*mais, et, donc*) and prepositions (*pour*).
- Check you have not omitted the 'little words' e.g. '*trop, pour, de, beaucoup, en, donc*'.
- Revise possessive adjectives '**ma** maison, **mon** frère, **sa** chambre, **notre** mère'

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.