



GCSE **French**

8658/WF

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 it was extremely rare to see blank responses. There was an improvement in the quality of responses to questions 2 and 4. 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 did not score high marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay or ambiguity in communicating messages clearly. Major 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, a lack of knowledge of some key vocabulary items led to an inability to respond effectively to the targeted rubrics and bullet points which had a negative impact on marks awarded.

Question 1

Teachers are reminded that students are required to write four sentences about what is in the photo, i.e. either a phrase that contains a verb or the construction '*voici*' or '*voilà*'. Each sentence is marked separately and is worth a maximum of two marks. As quality of language is not assessed in this question, there is no need for teachers to encourage any complex or variety of language. As in previous series, the most successful responses included the use of simple phrases such as '*il y a, je vois*' or '*voici/voilà*' followed by a noun. Where students did not score marks, it was mainly for the following reasons:

- Including pre-learnt items that were inappropriate e.g. '*ils sont dehors*' and weather expressions e.g. '*il fait beau*' when the photo was of an interior setting.
- Incomprehensible spelling of key vocabulary e.g. '*getter*' for *gâteau* '*norritement*' for '*nourriture*' and/or use of English words that do not exist in French e.g. '*ils celebrater*'
- Words that communicated a different meaning, e.g. the use of '*chevaux*' for '*cheveux*'
- The attempt of longer, more complex responses, often adding unnecessary and unclear messages e.g. '*Il y a 5 personnes qui sont dans un party*'
- Confusion with '*être*' and '*avoir*' thereby creating ambiguity e.g. '*Ils ont heureux, Ils sont un gâteau*'
- Inaccurate use of articles and number leading to ambiguity e.g. '*Il y a une cinq personnes*'.
- Incorrect verb used e.g. '*c'est*' for '*il y a*'
- Misspelling of numbers e.g. '*sank*' or '*tres*'.

Advice to students

- Use '*il y a/voici/je vois*' plus noun to ensure accuracy and clarity.

- Avoid trying to create a continuous present tense in French that creates ambiguity e.g. *'Ils sont manger un gâteau'*.
- Write numbers as figures rather than words.
- Concentrate on what there is in the photo rather than what people are doing.
- Keep the sentences simple to ensure that a clear message is being communicated.
- Don't assume that pre-learnt language will fit every photo.

Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

Content

When awarding marks for content, the assessment criteria reference both coverage of the bullet points and clarity of communication. The vast majority of students were able to address and develop all bullet points. The first and last bullet points *'votre collègue'* and *'le sport au collège'* were easily recognised and successfully addressed. However, as in previous series, when some students used *'votre'* in responses to bullet point one, their responses could not be credited. The second and third bullet points *'la récréation'* and *'la cantine'* were less successfully addressed when students either did not know the vocabulary or did not refer directly to break or the canteen and provided incorrect or unclear responses. However, as in previous series, many students were able to respond effectively to these bullet points either because they knew what the words meant, or because they produced a meaningful response that expressed an opinion, for example *'J'aime la cantine car c'est super'*.

Quality of language

As in previous series, the vast majority of students were able to include a good variety of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in their responses. Students successfully expressed opinions by using a variety of verbs and adjectives and often used four different sentence starters, as well as a variety of adjectives to reference the four bullet points. The most successful responses also included different persons of the verb as well as examples of intensifiers and connectives. In addition, the majority of students were also able to produce responses that were generally accurate and therefore were able to access the top band of marks. Where students did not score high marks, this was mainly because verbs were either inaccurately formed, in the infinitive or omitted. However, as in previous series, the majority of errors seen were minor.

Advice to students

- Make sure you address all the bullet points. Try to make direct reference to the bullet points by using the words in the bullet point themselves.
- A variety of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures can be achieved as follows:

Practise writing a simple statement and then extend it in some way by using a connective, an additional adjective and/or a different person e.g. *'J'aime mon collègue. J'aime mon collègue car j'adore le français. J'aime mon collègue car j'adore le français mais je déteste les maths.'*

- Learn a variety of phrases to express likes/dislikes and include a different one for each bullet point. For example, short, simple sentences using *'j'adore, j'aime, je préfère, je n'aime pas, je déteste'* and *'c'est super/genial/formidable/nul'* are the most successful.
- Use a variety of connectives ; *'mais, et, car, parce que'*, intensifiers *'très, assez, vraiment'* and/or time phrases such as *'souvent, toujours, normalement, quelquefois'*.
- Include a different person of the verb e.g. *'j'aime le football mais mon frère préfère le tennis'*.

Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages covered Grades 1 to 5, the question differentiated well with nearly all students able to score some marks.

Conveying key messages

Key message	Comments
I have a big family.	The vocabulary here was accessible to many students. However, some students confused <i>'j'ai'</i> and <i>'je suis'</i> .
My brother works in an office.	This sentence created difficulties for students in that <i>'travaille'</i> was either unknown or the noun <i>'travail'</i> was used as the verb. Although <i>'bureau'</i> was not widely known, the word <i>'office'</i> was accepted.
I prefer to watch a film at the cinema.	Accents were an issue for the first key message in this sentence in that if students wrote <i>'je préféré'</i> , it could not be credited given that this would communicate a past tense and therefore the wrong message. <i>'Au'</i> for <i>'at the'</i> was also often omitted.
I don't like my town because it's very boring.	The vast majority of students were able to convey the messages and score marks here. However, occasionally there was the omission of <i>'pas'</i> , the use of <i>'village'</i> instead of <i>'ville'</i> and incorrect use of <i>'trop'</i> for <i>'très'</i> .
Yesterday evening I went to the swimming pool.	This sentence was targeted at the most able students in that it contained several high demand elements. Although many students were able to convey the perfect tense

	successfully, there was some lack of success with the misuse of ' <i>natation</i> ' for ' <i>piscine</i> ' and the omission of ' <i>à la</i> ' for ' <i>to the</i> '.
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Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

As in previous series, minor errors did not prevent the award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were clearly communicated. However, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, errors relating to the formation of the perfect tense '*je suis allé*', the infinitive construction '*je préfère regarder un film*' and incorrect or omitted prepositions '**dans** un bureau, **au** cinéma' and '**à la** piscine' had to be taken into account.

Advice to students

- Revise time markers together with high frequency words and phrases and their spellings, e.g. prepositions, family members, places in town and adjectives.
- Annotate the script to ensure correct time frames, prepositions, time markers have been recognised.
- Check you have not omitted the 'little words' e.g. '*dans, au, très, hier, soir, à la*'.
- Tick off words in the original sentence to check you have translated each item.
- Practise some basic sentences using '*j'ai*' and '*je suis*' e.g. '*J'ai deux sœurs. Je suis grand(e).*'
- Practise changing sentences into different tenses e.g. '*Le samedi, je vais au cinéma. Demain soir je vais aller au cinéma. Hier soir je suis allé au cinéma.*'

Question 4

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 most students were able to respond well to this question, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing that communicated a lot of information clearly. Most responses were developed and included at least two opinions. Students were also aware of the need to include references to three-time frames which were on the whole successful. 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 4.1

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 not always successfully addressed in that some students did not know the word '*repas*' and mentioned typical holiday activities without references to food. Students who successfully addressed this bullet point did manage to reference various types of food or meals. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in previous series, students were unsuccessful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers '*l'année dernière*' and '*vos projets futurs*' which in some cases impacted negatively on marks for the award of bullet points and/or time frames.

Question 4.2

As with 4.1, 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 4.1, 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*'. Despite some students being unfamiliar with the vocabulary '*excursion*' and '*le temps libre*', the vast majority of students were able to produce successful responses to these bullet points.

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, students were unsuccessful when they produced work which included inaccurate tense formation, especially with the formation of the perfect tense.

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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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