



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced level
In French (WFR04)
Research, Understanding and Written Response

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Introduction

Candidates were clearly familiar with the topic areas covered and most candidates were able to attempt all parts of the paper. Whilst many fared well with the comprehension questions in Sections A and B, Section C provided more of a challenge.

Section A – Listening

Questions 1 and 2: Multiple Choice

Students were provided with four options A, B, C, or D for each item within the question there was (the correct response, and three distractors). Question 1 was taken from the sub topic of Education systems and Question 2 from technology and communication.

In question 1, (1d) appeared to be more of a challenge for the candidates, choosing B "le sport" as their answer. A thorough reading of the question with "déplait le plus" should have helped the candidates to differentiate between "le sport" et "le français."

In question 2, in (2d) a good number of candidates opted for D, "le dernier", having probably guessed the answer from hearing "les derniers" but failed to notice that "les derniers" was preceded by "parmi".

It is vital that candidates do not rush into committing themselves to an answer. At this level, they should listen for the gist of the whole passage; a word which is mentioned in the recording does not necessarily lead them to the answer in the question paper.

Question 3: Summary completion.

Students were required to complete a summary, choosing from a list of eight words. There was a mixture of word types. Question 3 was taken from the sub topic of jobs and unemployment.

This question was generally well answered with (3c) and (3b) providing the most challenge for candidates. In 3c many answered "la pollution" instead of "le chômage."

In 3d, "seconde" was sometimes given as an answer instead of "première". In 3d candidates had to infer that it was the first time that the event had taken place from the recording "On attend avec impatience... pour une deuxième journée."

Question 4: Short Answer in French.

This required responses using a single word, a phrase or a short sentence. Each item was worth 1 or 2 marks. Question 4 was taken from the sub topic of student life.

Here, as in Section B, targeted lifts are sometimes possible. It is important for candidates to know that they can re-use the language they hear but at this level direct lifts will usually not enable candidates to score. Candidates need to manipulate the language they hear or read. Candidates should try to use their own words as much as possible to render the meaning. However, while it is possible to convey the meaning by using their own words when the information is very technical or specific, candidates should manipulate the language they hear instead of writing incoherent circumlocutions.

In this section, as in section (B), listening skills and reading skills are assessed, which means that sentences that contain grammatical and spelling errors can score, as long as the error does not lead to ambiguity. Responses to Questions 4, 6 and 7 are only marked on the basis of communication, rather than accuracy of language.

Performance in question 4

(4a) This question required the candidate to mention "*le coût du logement et le coût du transport*" to score 2. Unfortunately, many didn't mention cost.

However, if candidates wrote:

(1) "*les étudiants doivent dépenser plus pour ses loyers*"

(2) "*et payer plus pour se déplacer*"

The candidates would have scored 2 despite the spelling and grammar mistakes. They did in this instance render the meaning that students will see an increase in the cost of their accommodation and in the cost of public transport.

(4b) Provided the most challenge here as it required the candidates to infer the response from "*contrairement à ce que les gens pensent*". Many failed to notice that phrase and answered "*la vie est difficile*".

(4c) and **(4e)** were generally well answered

(4d) Required the candidates to focus on detail with the answer being "*un tarif spécifique pour les étudiants*"

(4f) Required the students to understand the word "*les frais*" and many of them failed to recognise the word, leading to very many ambiguous spelling of "*les frais*". Many candidates scored at least one in this question.

Some candidates were tempted to write far too much in their answers.

Reference to the published mark scheme will show the essence of each answer. Longer answers can often miss the point or may start with a wrong detail before eventually giving the correct answer which is therefore negated by what has come first.

Section B – Reading and Grammar

Question 5: Multiple Choice Questions

Students were provided with four options: A, B, C, or D for each item within the question there was (the correct response, and three distractors). Question 5, was taken from the topic of Technology in the French-speaking world and its impact on life and environment.

Question 6: Short Answer in French

Question 6 was taken from the sub topic of volunteering.

Answers to Question 6 were often very clearly expressed, but often candidates failed to score a mark because of their omission of a crucial detail. For example, in (a) it was necessary to state that **les jeunes** des pays francophones, not simply people; in (c) it was necessary to mention that they have to speak French in their work place.

In 6 (b) some candidates didn't score as they simply lifted "plus d'une trentaine de pays membres" and failed to mention "pays francophones".

Question 7: Short Answer in French

Question 7 was taken from the sub topic of migration.

Specific understanding of the text was necessary to gain the marks. Whilst most managed (c) and (f) the other questions often caused problems because candidates were tempted to copy a complete passage verbatim from the text without any attempt to process the information. Students usually offered short responses, where possible. In other instances, responses were composed of whole sections of language, taken from the text as part of an untargeted lift. Simple language structures tended to be the most successful.

In (a) for example, the candidates had to describe what, according to the author of the text, the French were like before. Many quoted the text and failed to notice that the text described the French now whereas the question asked what they were like before. Candidates had to infer the answer from their understanding of the first sentence "Les Français ont-ils perdu leur sens de l'hospitalité ?". Candidates were required to answer along the line of "plus accueillants, which was enough to score 1 mark.

Again in 7(b), candidates had to understand the overall meaning of the second part of the first paragraph to answer that people living in Fréjus do not want migrants in their town.

7(d) required the mention of "happily" or "with open arms".

Question 8: Sentence transformations:

Question 8 proved to be a challenge, even for competent linguists. Students were required to manipulate the sentences given to them using the information in brackets. It is essential that candidates refer to the texts from which the language has been taken as the manipulated sentences need to make sense and be grammatically correct in their original context.

The most challenging questions seemed to be:

8(a): the transfer from the present participle to a subordinate clause. A range of tenses were accepted as long as they made sense in the original text and that the verb was in the 3rd person plural. "qui proviennent" was the most common answer but "qui provenaient" was also accepted.

8(b): this proved to be one of the most challenging manipulations with a complex subordinate conjunction in the feminine plural form "dans lesquelles". No other forms of the conjunction were accepted.

8(f): the transfer from the active to the passive voice in the perfect tense was mostly incorrectly produced.

8(h): many candidates failed to use the verb in the subjunctive after "il faut que". Verbs with "Nous" and "on" were both accepted.

8(j): many candidates failed to render the meaning of the phrase provided using "bien que". Any plausible verbs in the subjunctive maintaining the meaning were accepted.

Section C

It is crucial that candidates understand the nature of what is expected in the final essay. Since marks are awarded for Content and Communication (out of 15) and Critical analysis, Organisation and Development (out of 20) as well as for Quality of Language (out of 5), it is crucial that some examination time is spent planning the response to the specific question asked. Many candidates who wrote fluent essays in French of a very high quality often scored low marks for the other two categories because their response lacked relevance or were simply a regurgitated version of everything they knew about the topic or work. It is essential that candidates select carefully what information they are going to use to answer the question. Not everything they know will be needed to answer the question.

Most importantly, candidates should realise that the thrust of the questions set is mostly in the second part. To access the higher mark bands they must engage in an analysis of the issues. Essays which relied too much on description and less on evaluation scored poorly.

Centres must also be reminded that the geographical area and the historic period must be in a French-speaking country. A handful of candidates wrote about countries in other parts of the world. In line with GCE and with other languages at International A Level, such essays could not be credited with any marks.

Questions 9(a),(b) and 10 (a),(b)

The History questions were answered by about a quarter of the candidates with 10 (b) being the most popular.

9(a)

This question required the candidates to evaluate the impact of a recent environmental problem on the population. There were interesting and well-informed submissions for instance on Paris, la Bretagne or la région PACA. In their analysis on the scope of the impact of the problem on the population, the best candidates were able to support their statements with recent statistics or information about specific laws and showed a range of supporting evidence. They were also able to evaluate the impact on different groups of population and evaluate whether the impact was negative or positive. Less successful essays tended to be too descriptive, presenting the problem but failing to reflect on the impact on the population.

9(b) required the candidates to evaluate whether a decision made by an individual was necessary. Unfortunately, many failed to be critical about the decision and only described what the decision was.

9 (a) was more popular than 9(b)

10 (a) required the candidates to analyse the reasons why living conditions differed in the period they studied. Many of the essays on historical subjects were full of relevant information and managed to present facts to support general ideas. The predominant area of study was La Deuxième Guerre mondiale and the living conditions of the les collaborateurs, les Résistants, les Juifs et les femmes.

Some essays provided good evaluations of the reasons why people lived differently, and some essays, who were the most or the least affected by the war. However, a number of essays tended to rely on vague generalisations rather than providing detailed evidence.

10(b) was the most popular question in section C and required the candidates to evaluate the importance of an event. Most essays concentrated on the Armistice in 1940 by Pétain and the impact on France. As above, the most successful essays focused on the question throughout and the candidates didn't lose focus, providing detailed evidence to support their ideas whereas the less successful essays tended to be a mere description of the event with little analysis as to why it was an important event. It was clear in a lot of essays that the candidate had a sound knowledge of the event but lacked the skills to use their knowledge to provide a critical analysis.

Literature and film- Questions 11- 20

The most common texts studied were *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and *Kiffe kiffe demain*. The most common films were *Jules et Jim* and *Monsieur Lazhar*.

On a general note, candidates need to know that it is not necessary to introduce the essay with general information about the genesis of the work. In fact, this produced a poor start when it appeared. Better candidates provided an opening paragraph which identified the issues to be addressed in the essay with direct reference to the essay question set.

As for the History and Geography essays, it is essential that the candidates focus on the analysis and refrain from retelling the story. The least successful essays tended again to contain a great deal of irrelevant material or were simply a regurgitated version of everything they knew about the book or the film. It is essential that candidates select carefully what information they are going to use to answer the question. Also, as the candidates write their answer, they must ask themselves whether the information they are providing is answering the question. It was indeed, often, impossible from reading the essays to know what the essay question was as candidates tend to lose focus and use so much irrelevant information.

Careful planning may well have avoided this. The best essays were in clear paragraph form with a main sentence to introduce the paragraph, followed by several examples. A final evaluative sentence then often referred back to the essay title in some way.

11- *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

11(a) Required the candidates to evaluate whether Cléonte was a victim in the play. The most successful essays demonstrated how at the start of the play Cléonte could be perceived as a victim, especially during his first encounter with M. Jourdain and explain why he was a victim and then moved on to explaining why, at the end, he was not a victim as he managed to deceive M. Jourdain. These essays evaluated clearly the evolution of the character and suggested that actually M. Jourdain was a victim.

The least successful essays tended to be a mere display of what the candidate knew about the play, *la comédie ballet* or *la turquerie* and little room was left to the analysis of the character. Candidates must remember that an essay is not about displaying everything they know but an activity that requires them to select carefully some of the information that they know in order to answer a specific question.

14- *Kiffe kiffe demain*

14 (b) Required the candidates to evaluate whether the language used in the book effectively conveyed the messages of the author. The most successful essays presented 3 or 4 different aspects of the language and analysed how they presented the main messages of the book, with for instance the use of slang and

the social background of the character, the use of Arabic words and the origins and the environment in which Doria lives and the change in the tone from the start to the end, showing Doria's transformation. Most candidates demonstrated that the language conveyed the messages well with only a few questioning the effectiveness of the use of the verlan/ slang being a barrier to communication. Less successful essays either concentrated on one aspect of the language, the most popular being the verlan without reflecting on its effectiveness to convey the main messages.

17- Monsieur Lazhar

The most successful essays in 17 (a) presented some of the cultural differences such as differences in education, food, upbringing, relation with others and focused on how the director presented them, commenting on the messages he wanted to convey. A range of supportive evidence was carefully selected and the essay content remained focused throughout.

Unfortunately, 17(b) proved to be the least successful question of the two with many candidates failing to concentrate on the opening scene in the playground and going on to present the scene when the teacher was discovered, which was not in the playground but in the classroom. These essays scored very low on content and analysis as the candidates wrote an essay on a different part of the film from that referred to in the essay title.

18- Jules et Jim

18 (a) was by far the most popular of the two questions and showed that the candidates had a sound knowledge of the films and interesting views on Catherine.

The most successful essays focussed on the feminist dimension that Catherine brings to the film, with for instance being sexually liberated, against all the values and morals of the time and being so different to the other women in the film. The essays were coherent throughout and remained focused on the question, with the candidates providing carefully chosen evidence from the film to support their ideas as to why Catherine brought a feminist dimension. The less successful essays failed to analyse the feminist dimension and merely described Catherine as a complex character. Again, it was clear in a lot of essays that the candidate had a sound knowledge of the character but lacked the skills to use their knowledge to provide a critical analysis.

Grade Boundaries

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