

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE French (4FR0)
Paper 01

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Examiner Report

Section A

Questions 1-5

A significant majority of candidates achieved full marks in questions 1-5. Some items offered a marginally higher level of challenge. Knowledge of key verbs was occasionally an issue.

Question 6

Many candidates scored well, securing all available marks across this question. Candidates usually demonstrated excellent comprehension of most aspects of physical description. Nevertheless, some stronger candidates lost a mark or two, where key vocabulary relating to parts of the body had not been mastered.

Question 7

In question 7(i), many candidates succeeded in establishing the appropriate link between 'maisons' and 'bâtiments'. Those who were less sure may have benefited from the presence of 'détruit' in both the recording and on the examination paper.

The only other reference to 'maisons' was in the example, so this should not have caused any confusion.

Candidates dealt well with question 7(ii). However, a few seem to have been tempted to associate 'accidents' with 'avions', as there may have been an understandably common link. There was equally occasional confusion with the concept of falling over during snowy conditions.

In question 7(iii), the link between 'aéroports' and 'avions' often helped to point candidates in the appropriate direction. Where confusion occurred, it seemed to follow very little pattern and would best be associated with candidates' difficulty in picking out the term 'aéroports' from the recording.

In question 7(iv), candidates were able to establish the link between 'animal aimé' and 'chien'. On occasions where the item was not grasped, this was almost inevitably due to the candidate being unable to discern the pronunciation of 'chien' within the recording.

In question 7(v), candidates needed to perceive a link, such as 's'est cassé une jambe' and 'blessée', although there was at least one more clue in respect of the correct response. A few candidates were tempted by the reference to 'pont cassé'.

Most candidates had been very well prepared in terms of listening for the global meaning of a message, as opposed to 'locking into' a single word.

Section B

Question 8

Overall, question 8 was attempted with at least a partial degree of success, in a clear majority of cases.

Associating Béni's teacher with the writing of the piece proved to be within the grasp of most candidates. A few seemed to have been put off by the possessive 'notre' in the recording.

Distinguishing between the beginning and end of the school year proved more challenging, with some candidates choosing to associate 'trimestre' with 'année scolaire'.

'Méchant tigre' and 'animal sauvage' were successfully linked, in a number of instances. Candidates who were tempted to extract the idea of 'apprendre le texte' often chose the distracter as their response.

Candidates needed to establish a contextual link between 'amuser' and 'drôle', although some struggled to contend with the high density of adjectives within that element of the recording and on the actual examination paper.

Candidates' mastery of the core vocabulary helped them to deal with synonyms, but they equally needed to navigate a set of plausible distracters. Evidence indicates that teachers are training their candidates well in this respect.

Question 9

This question required a depth of linguistic awareness, as candidates were expected to deal with more complex vocabulary, negatives, infinitives, prepositions and even a range of tenses. Whereas not all these elements of language were actually being tested, it did require candidates to discriminate between different options.

Question 9(i) was successfully attempted where candidates were at their most perceptive. Quite a number of candidates seemed to overlook the negative used to introduce the question.

In question 9(ii), even a number of less confident candidates offered the correct response to this item. Whilst most candidates had a strong command of the core vocabulary, it would seem that some were less secure in respect of key prepositions.

Overall, candidates succeeded in dealing with the relatively unusual context in which the question was set. It was equally clear that candidates had diligently practised tasks relating to those which had appeared within previous series.

Question 10

Candidates are more and more able to deal with the challenge of distracters. Indeed, where there are two grammatically plausible responses available for a single item, candidates do need to base their response on evidence from the text and should avoid the temptation of choosing a response for the sole reason that it makes grammatical sense. This skill is evidently on the increase and candidates even seek to rule out certain responses, in addition to seeking the correct option. This is evidence of excellent practice within centres.

In question 10(a), candidates needed to be very mindful of the presence of 'étonnés' and recognise that it referred to members of the audience, rather than 'Béni'. The appropriate link between 'content' and 'plaisir' was established by many candidates.

In question 10(b), whereas some candidates were tempted by the reference to 'abandonné', this distracter was much less plausible. Equally, the language of the final sentence of the recording was not too complex.

Questions 11-12: General remarks

Candidates are becoming much more skilled in the way they avoid the temptation of merely lifting segments of language from the recording. This ensures that responses are much more evidence based and allows candidates to be much more precise and concise. Although candidates are only awarded marks for comprehension rather than language, many responses displayed a beautiful breadth of expression, with accuracy to match. At this level, many candidates possessed an excellent depth of vocabulary. Equally, only a small percentage of candidates secured full marks here. All candidates should therefore feel empowered and encouraged to make some attempt to complete this section. Most responses were clearly legible, but a general reminder of the need for clear handwriting is always advisable.

Question 11

In question 11(a), the key requirement was the reference to 'fini'. Many candidates dealt appropriately with the question, whereas many others used the infinitive 'finir', which could not be rewarded. Many offered 'terminé', which was quite acceptable. Candidates who had clearly not grasped the response offered responses such as 'payé' which, although incorrect, proves that teachers are prudently encouraging candidates to enter a response, which is at least plausible.

In question 11(b), candidates needed to convey the idea of 'une demi-heure'. 'Trente minutes' was naturally accepted as an alternative. A small number referred to 'une heure trente', for which a mark could not be awarded. In a few instances, candidates seemed to have understood the question and then added an ambiguous element to their answer, thus vitiating the response.

In question 11(c), it was pleasing to note that a significant number of candidates offered a correct response of just a single word. The notion of 'inquiète' was conveyed in a variety of ways. Essentially, the emotion expressed needed to be sufficiently close to the correct idea. Therefore 'anxieuse/mal à l'aise' were deemed acceptable, whereas 'triste/malheureuse' were not. Candidates should be careful not to negate a correct answer by adding additional incorrect and/or unnecessary information. However, harmless and unobtrusive additions to correct responses do not affect the awarding of marks.

In 11(d), a very brief response was quite possible eg 'monter dans l'avion' or even 'partir', as were other responses such as 's'en aller' and 'quitter les parents'. Candidates sometimes offered much more elaborate responses. It was often prudent for candidates to be as concise as possible.

Question 12

In question 12(a), candidates needed to express the idea of 'elle donne des conseils à Danielle'. Some omitted the second part of that response. Even in context, the candidate needed to specify to whom the advice was actually given. Many responses were not specific in detail and could not be rewarded. Some candidates misinterpreted the question by concluding that Danielle had given advice to her mother.

In question 12(b), 'elle embrasse ses parents' was the most popular correct response. Awarding of the mark depended upon the spelling offered. Some variations on 'embrasse' were accepted, but 'embrace' could not be rewarded, as it conveyed a different meaning. Where candidates offered answers such as 'on brasse', this was not rewarded.

In question 12(c), the idea of 'téléphoner à ses parents' proved accessible for many candidates. A small minority of candidates expressed a correct answer in relatively complex French. This would be most appropriate in a response which could be rewarded for language, but candidates are advised to be mindful of the unnecessary risk of being over ambitious.

In question 12(d), 'ses jambes tremblent' was the most popular correct response, but there were other equally acceptable variations. The notion of 'elle a les mains humides de sueur' was naturally accepted as a correct response. Less confident candidates sometimes offered a single adjective, such as 'humide' which could not be rewarded.

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