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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In French (4FR1) Paper 01 Listening

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Introduction

The exceptional November 2020 session was the second 4FR1 01 paper set in accordance with this specification, International GCSE French 4FR. In November 2020, as in all sessions, this paper, 4FR1 01 was of equal demand to the time-zone paper 4FR1 01R. There were some 225 candidates for this single tier qualification. The marking principles and rubrics were unchanged from the first session of this specification and the total time allocated to this 40 mark paper remains 30 minutes plus five minutes' reading time. There is no optionality in this paper, and a majority of candidates attempted all seven questions. Most questions do not require productive use of French. Questions 3 and 7 elicit written French which is assessed for communication only.

It is important not to draw too many conclusions from this untypical session, but it appeared that many teachers and candidates have clearly comprehended the requirements of this specification very well and there were some excellent performances.

The questions are all taken from the five specified topic areas and their sub-topics. The six questions are of increasing demand, with early questions targeting 1 and 2 grades, and Q7 seeking to elicit grades up to 8 and 9 grades. In a number of questions, an example precedes the question, so that the candidates can see how information will be sought and needs to be conveyed.

Q1 is a visual pairing question on directions worth 4 marks, where candidates listen to quite short sentences and match them to the appropriate image. Q2 is worth 6 marks and requires candidates to indicate who refers to which sports and pastimes, from a choice of eight images, including the example. It is worth noting that not all activities shown, are mentioned. Q3, again valued at 6 marks, is a more extended passage about a voluntary work, and candidates have to produce target language responses, not necessarily in sentences. In Q4, a non-verbal question which requires a measure of deduction to work out whether the opinions of the six speakers on daily routine are positive, negative or both offered up to 6 marks. Q5 is a passage comprising three speakers about types of media. Six marks can be gained by identifying the six correct multiple-choice responses, with three distractors offered in each part. Q6 concerns a school trip to le Locle French-speaking Switzerland. Candidates select six words from a pool of thirteen to complete the sentences in the question, paying attention to both grammatical accuracy and the sense of the speakers in the passage. Up to six marks can be earned in this non-verbal question which is aimed at more able performances. A further six marks are available in Q7 for responses in the target language regarding life in the countryside or town. As in Q3, communication only is assessed, and the quality of language is not taken into account, save in so far as the responses proffered need to be unambiguous, at least in the context of this International GCSE specification.

Question 1

In Q1, 1 mark is available for each of four parts where, four times after the example, candidates have to look at the images of directions, and decide which was being described in the statements. This question is very well attempted by candidates of all abilities in this and the previous session, with a very high success rate and many perfect scores. Where were difficulties, (a) *en face de* might not be understood by all candidates and in (d) there needs to be discrimination between *tout droit* and *à droite*.

Question 2

Sports and pastimes in question 2 seemed to be a familiar sub-topic to many candidates, and as in the 2019 session, they frequently accessed full credit. The mean score was high once again. Candidates seem to be aware of the fact that not all images are targeted, and that they must offer six responses only. Words such as *jamais* and *autrement* were key in understanding that (C) was a correct response, and *la lecture* and *les échecs* in (B) and (F) were not universally familiar, though they are minimum core vocabulary items.

Question 3

In Q3, there were many excellent scores, and candidates of all abilities gained some credit. It was rare for there to be no score in Q3, full marks abounded. Please see below for Q7 and marking principles, which are common to Q3 and Q7, the only two questions which require a productive use of French in 4FR1 01. The order of elements rule is exemplified using a Q3(b) response. Candidates who attempted to transcribe without attention to the demands of the question part or stem did not tend to communicate felicitously. Carefully targeted and succinct responses could score very well. (b) is further discussed in the Q7 section of this report, but it was a generally successful part, and *sortir* was frequently offered for 1 mark. *cour* or *cours* were the most usual responses which were rejected, as they are ambiguous and common French words. (a) was the most successful part, with a majority of candidates earning the mark. *deux fois* (on its own) was the most common error, and some sense of the frequency of the two visits was needed. *de fois par semaine* was an example of an ambiguous mis-spelling. (b) needed for 2 marks, two ideas out of inability to get out, to shop or to prepare meals. *manger des repas* sadly did not convey the notion of *préparer des repas*. Although phonetically plausible, the twice notion is not clear. A majority of candidates appeared to understand the necessary information in (c), and a good number transcribed what they heard: *aucun contact humain*. However, as in the 2019 session, details are not necessarily correct if transcribed without reference to the question, and (c) focused on the advantage angle. Similarly, in (d), examiners sought either *jeunesse*, accepted in a wide range of spellings; or *famille*, and although reference to *médicaments* was potentially correct in (e), it was not the subject of discussions for the 1 mark in (d). It is difficult to reflect on the response written in the listening exam, but it is unlikely that Tancrede would be unable to accept medication, in the sense that he is the volunteer. The response needed to focus in (e) on the inability to administer medication. However, a frequently offered and correct response involved (*un peu d'*) *argent*.

Question 4

In Q4, the level of demand increases, and 6 marks were available, preceded by an example, for deciding if the speaker opined negatively, positively or equivocally. *Ça me plait* did not seem familiar to candidates of all abilities. Other vocabulary which differentiated between those comfortable with the statements and those who found them less accessible were *embêtant* and *apprécier*. Careful listening was necessary, especially in (b) where the aforementioned *embêtant* was contrasted with *génial*, and in (e) where Yolanda's equivocal response proved quite demanding. There was some inference, which eluded some lesser able candidates: the question part required *Cela me met en retard* to be identified as a negative circumstance.

Question 5

Q5 is a non-verbal question worth 6 marks. Candidates in this sub-topic are inclined to use their general experience to guess responses, but as close as adherence to the passage is advisable. In (a), (B) is especially plausible, but Loïc states that he does not

need a computer, hence he has no computer to access. In (b), (C) referred to the cost involved, and *gratuit* in the passage perhaps led some candidates to this distractor. (B) was frequent in (c), which is perhaps a response to the current situation rather than to the passage. It is logical that for those few contacts whom one sees often, the internet is not essential, even if it is for more general keeping in touch. In (d), the minimum core vocabulary word *écran* was vital to understand *on peut se voir*. Candidates needed to understand the construction *manquer à* in (e) and in (f), they needed to deduce, which the more able candidates did successfully, by matching the notions of *mal considérés* and *regretter*.

Question 6

Q6 remains a demanding question type, worthy of particular practice, as candidates must comprehend the passage, the items in the pool of words, and the vocabulary and grammatical constructions of the sentences in the questions. Fortunately, many candidates score in a good number of parts and (a), (c) and (f) were largely accessible. *plupart* was tested in (b) and is a quantifier worthy of revision. Candidates had to deduce again in (c) where *malheureusement* was a clear pointer to Christine's negative reaction. *mouvementé* reinforced this sentiment. *acheté* and *emprunté* in (d) were confused, perhaps due to the very plausible idea of purchasing replacement clothes. In (e), some working out was again necessary, and some candidates successfully deduced that *comprendre facilement* equated to *sans problème*.

Question 7

This question targeted a familiar sub-topic of life in the countryside and in the town. Unambiguous communication in Q3 and Q7 is assessed, there is no language penalty or reward. The marking principles in Q3 and Q7 are consistent. Vitiating in responses is tolerated on the order of elements principle. For example, in Q3(b): *sortir faire des cours*. *sortir* scores, and although *faire des cours* is not correct for *faire des courses*, the correct element *sortir* (in its own) is not spoiled by the second incorrect and, indeed, vitiating element. The clients are not incapable of going out to teach in this passage. Mis-spellings are tolerated, even if they stray into another language, provided that they are comprehensible, generally within one letter of the correct spelling. Verb endings need to be existent to communicate. In a one-mark part, the first element of the response only is assessed, and in a 2-mark part, only the first two elements are assessed. Excess elements are disregarded. However, in a one-mark part, where two elements are offered and only the second is correct, the response does not score. This is so that an untargeted transcription of chunks of passage is not rewarded, whereas a targeted retrieval of information is successful. Examiners applied this rule to advantage candidates. Thus, if a candidate offered: *sortir faire des cours, préparer les repas*, 2 marks were earned. With some benefit of the doubt, *faire des cours* was not considered an element, but extra information for the first element *sortir*, so credit could be accessed for the *préparer les repas* notion.

Candidates need to be careful to offer responses which focus on the prompts. There was a notable minority of responses where positive details appears in the *aspects négatifs* (c) and (f) parts, or vice versa, so, unfortunately, could not score. With some thought and checking *pas de vie privée* would clearly be a negative aspect of country life, therefore. It was accepted as long as the spelling had not strayed too far into another language which does not communicate, thus *la vie private* was rejected. (a) and (b) gained credit if there was reference to walking as a noun or verb and mention of *le collègue est tout près* was a further possible correct element. In (e) and (f), the notions of music and sport were frequently retrieved, but not always in the context of a new opportunity or *devenir member d'un club de musique*. The passage couched living away from home

vivre loin de la famille as a positive, so could not score as a negative aspect for (f). *pollution* was frequently the way in which candidates earned the 1 mark in (f), while references to asthma and transport difficulties were also correct, though less often proffered. Candidates who inferred information from other parts of the passage, which was not evidenced in the passage could not gain credit for these responses, thus *pas de pollution* could well be true in the countryside, but this is not explicitly mentioned, and is an inference from (f) air pollution problems.

Advice

The following guidance is based on November 2020 performance, which we repeat is perhaps based on an unusual candidature, but still might be of general value:

There are 28 marks on offer for non-verbal questions, and there is a gradual incline of demand.

1. Candidates should refer to the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and to the four past papers which are now available. This will give some sense of the question types of this paper. For example, multiple choice questions have an extra distractor in contrast to the legacy specification.
2. Q2 carries 6 marks. If more than six responses are offered, a mark has to be withheld for every response in excess of six.
3. Q3 and Q7 require responses in French. While grammar is not assessed, only unambiguous responses earn credit.
4. Candidates should check especially their Q3 and Q7 responses in the limited time available, for ambiguous mis-spellings or excessively faulty phonetic attempts could impede communication.
5. Practice with a range of types of listening are invaluable preparation, including in non-verbal exercises. Quite long passages appear early in the paper, and practice of note-taking under time limitation has its place in Q3 preparation.
6. Candidates and teachers are urged to consult the specification, including the programme of grammar study, specified topics and sub-topics and minimum core vocabulary, as this may help to focus preparation most usefully. Reference to the minimum core vocabulary is especially useful preparation when addressed thematically.

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