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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In French (4FR1) Paper 02 Reading and Writing

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Introduction

There were over 200 candidates for this Autumn 2020 session. The total time allocated to this 80-mark paper was 1 hour 45 minutes. Questions 1 to 6 were compulsory and in Q07 candidates selected from three tasks, each worth the same number of marks. Finally, Q08, a grammar exercise, was the final question of the paper. The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions drawn from the five prescribed topic areas, with varying outcomes. Teachers have clearly supported their candidates in achieving some excellent performances with regard to the requirements of the paper.

Question 1

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Shopping and Money matters within the Topic Area E: Social activities, fitness and health. To be successful, candidates had to read the text thoroughly in order to answer the six questions with multiple options. The vast majority of candidates did exceptionally well in this question, often scoring full marks. They ensured that they only ticked one option per question and showed very good understanding of the vocabulary from the minimum vocabulary list.

Question 2

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Customs within the Topic Area A: Home and abroad. Candidates answered most questions extremely well, which shows that they have practised the format of the exercise. To select the correct answer for each question, candidates had to read the text thoroughly, determine the type of words relevant to fill in the blanks, and know the meaning of the options based on the minimum vocabulary list.

Question 3

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Role models within the Topic Area C: Personal life and relationships. The candidates who scored full marks in this question ensured that they had ticked eight boxes and noted that one statement may have more than one ticks and some statements may have no ticks at all. In addition to showing an excellent grasp of the vocabulary from the minimum vocabulary list, it was important for candidates to show good knowledge of adverbs. The vast majority of candidates scored full marks in this question.

Question 4

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Environmental issues within the Topic Area D: The world around us. The text of this question was well understood and it was tackled well by the majority of candidates. Where problems arose, this was in the following parts of the question:

- Q04(b): many candidates answered this question with 'la plage', which did not score because the accident took place near the Brittany coast.
- Q04(c): some candidates answered this question with 'bleu', which did not score. It was important for candidates to know the meaning of the past participle 'disparu' to understand that the blue of the sea had disappeared.

The candidates who scored high marks in this question demonstrated very good understanding and application of the vocabulary from the minimum vocabulary list.

Question 5

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Future plans within the Topic Area B: Education and employment. This question met with more varied success as it was more demanding - expectedly so given that it appears in a more demanding part of the paper. The candidates who scored high marks in this question read the whole text thoroughly, they had a good knowledge of French question words, and they ensured that their answers were clear and correct. Less successful candidates lifted part of the text without showing clear understanding and those who used guesswork to provide answers were not consistently lucky. It is important that candidates manipulate the text when required to score the points available. Where problems arose, this was in the following parts of the question:

- Q05(a): many candidates answered this question with the lift 'chercheurs d'emploi', which did not score because the latter does not address the idea of challenges faced by the young people in the Republic of Mali.
- Q05(d): some candidates answered this question with 'cinq millions' or 'huit cent mille', which did not score. It is key that candidates offer precise answer in order to score the point. In this case, 'plus de' before 'cinq millions' was needed to score.
- Q05(e): On one hand, lifting the relevant sentence from the text provided the opposite answer to what was required, therefore, some candidates failed to score any points for this question. On the other hand, some candidates understood the text but failed to include 'en Europe' or 'à l'étranger' in their answer, which prevented them to score the two marks available. It is important for candidates to be precise and exhaustive when offering their response.
- Q05(g): this question was not well answered as many candidates response mentioned 'envoyer', which produced the wrong answer as the question targeted the parents and not their children.

The candidates who scored high marks in this question offered concise and precise answers, they demonstrated very good understanding and application of the vocabulary from the minimum vocabulary list, and they were able to manipulate the text to offer correct answers.

Question 6

The sub-topic area targeted for this question was Food and drink within the Topic Area E: Social activities, fitness and health. This question was very well tackled and many students chose to underline the four words which needed to be included in the written piece. Candidates seemed to have been well prepared on the whole for this question, with the majority successfully including the four prescribed words in a nice, logical order. Candidates who were less successful often concentrated on offering a short-written piece on their routine rather than their eating habits.

Question 7

The sub-topic areas targeted for question 7a was House and home within the Topic Area C: Personal life and relationships. This option was the second most popular question chosen by candidates. The first bullet point was addressed by all candidates. The second bullet point was generally well understood, albeit with weaker candidates struggling to produce correct past tense verbs. The third bullet point proved challenging for some candidate as they confused the meaning of 'propre chambre' (own bedroom) with 'chambre propre' (clean bedroom). It was essential that candidates used the conditional tense in order to complete the task successfully.

The sub-topic areas targeted for question 7b was School rules and pressures within the Topic Area B: Education and employment. This was the least popular option chosen by candidates. Whilst many candidates addressed bullet points 1 and 2 very well, some candidates struggled to offer a comprehensible answer to bullet point number 3 and the accuracy of their written work suffered when using the past tense. It was essential that candidates used the conditional tense in order to complete the task successfully.

The sub-topic areas targeted for question 7c was Holidays, tourist information and directions within the Topic Area A: Home and abroad. This was the most popular option chosen by the candidates and many wrote excellent pieces for this. Candidates should ensure that they address all the four bullet points and use the relevant tense for each bullet point. The successful candidates ensured that they wrote about the benefits of holiday rather than what they generally do during their holiday.

Overall, there were some superb pieces for this question which exceeded the expectations for use of language at GCSE. Many were able to use different tenses confidently and there were some good idiomatic phrases. Many candidates scoring in the 7 - 8 band of the mark scheme with work being mostly coherent with significant evidence of accurate language. A significant number scored in the highest band because they used more complex language, were successful with verbs and produced relevant and coherent answers. Often the candidates who kept to the recommended word count were those who scored the highest marks as they were less likely to go off the point. There was often a mix up between future and conditional tenses which cost candidates some valuable marks. Also, the past tense was used with varying success though most candidates could express something in the past even if it was not sustained. The compulsory bullet points are designed to help candidates express themselves in three different time frames. Therefore, they must ensure that they write using three different tenses in order to reach the highest mark in the Linguistic knowledge and accuracy section of the mark scheme.

Question 8

The sub-topic areas targeted for was the media within the Topic Area D: The world around us. A majority of candidates completed this question successfully, offering correct answers especially for the questions targeting the present tense and adjectival agreements. The candidates who did not score full marks often failed to offer the correct answers for the present participle, the future and conditional tenses. It is important that the candidates review all the grammatical points specified in the examination specification.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Only lift part of the text when it is relevant.
- Check the spelling of their written work carefully.
- Ensure that they know how to form all the tenses specified in the examination specification.
- Have a sound knowledge of the vocabulary from the minimal core vocabulary list.
- The future and the conditional tenses are distinct tenses and they should be applied as such.
- All topic and sub-topic areas should be given the same attention when studying and revising for paper 4FR1_02.

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