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GCSE

**FRENCH**

8658/WH Writing Higher tier  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

The quality of work produced for this new examination was encouraging. The paper differentiated very well in that students were able to score marks over a variety of questions. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a higher standard than at the Foundation tier. The ability to use a range of tenses and more complex language was impressive and students were also able to express and justify opinions well. Where students failed to score marks, this was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. This was mainly due to inaccurate verb formation or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, which created more scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in questions 1 and 2.

### Question 1

For this question, 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 covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of work seen was generally good, with many students able to provide extended responses, which demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames. Where students were less successful, this was mainly due to misinterpretation or omission of bullet points and overlong responses, which led to more scope for error.

### Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’) and this impacted on marks awarded.

### Question 1.1

This was the more popular choice with students. It was a topic with which students are familiar, but it is important to remind students that this new specification requires them to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. As would be expected, bullet points 3 and 4 were well covered, with many good responses. Bullet point 1 required students to describe their preferred holiday destination. Most students responded well, but there were occasions when students either used the word ‘votre’ or did not make it clear that this was a preferred destination. The aspect of the task that was often not covered was bullet point 2: ‘*Décrivez le voyage pour aller à cette destination*’. Where students omitted the task or did not relate the journey to the destination referred to in bullet point 1, this affected marks awarded for Content.

## Question 1.2

Again, students were familiar with most of the topics in this question and produced extended responses, especially relating to bullet points 1 and 2. Bullet point 3 required them to describe '*un anniversaire récent*'. The majority of students produced a good response, but some did not notice the past tense reference and wrote about a future birthday. Those students who were able to manipulate the rubric for bullet point 4 addressed it successfully, although many students who either attempted to write too much, or misinterpreted the bullet point as general plans for the future, were less successful.

## Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. In relation to the first three elements, the following were seen: successful references to two or three time frames; different persons of the verb; synonyms '*j'adore, j'aime, j'apprécie, je préfère*'; structures reflecting complexity often successfully attempted, for example infinitive constructions, adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and even subjunctives. Less successful language included '*avoir/être*' confusion, spellings of holiday destinations with many adjectives seen ('*français, espagnol*'), and the inability to express possession, for example '*ma mère's anniversaire*'. In relation to the time frames, attempts at the perfect tense were the most inaccurate, often with either no auxiliary verb or an auxiliary verb with an infinitive.

## Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- In some cases, the language used in the bullet point can be manipulated to help you write a successful response. For example, in Question 1.1, the first bullet point '*votre destination de vacances préférée*' is easily adapted to produce '*ma destination de vacances préférée est...*'.

## Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students write approximately 150 words in total, about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of responses was generally high, with most students able to complete both bullet points in each question, showing good ability to express and justify opinions. Many students were able to produce fluent pieces of extended writing with few lapses and a variety of language. Again, the philosophy behind this new specification is for students to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. Where students were less successful, it was because they had misinterpreted the bullet points or wrote very lengthy responses, which increased the scope for error.

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## Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of both bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, but there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’) and, again, this impacted on marks awarded.

### Question 2.1

Although question 2.2 was a more popular choice, this question had a more successful outcome as the bullet points were both addressed well. Nearly all students were able to make a statement about the importance of money, many going on to provide detailed descriptions of the ways money is important to them personally and in life in general. The second bullet point was well addressed by practically all students, with most describing in detail a visit to town with a range of activities. What was also encouraging was the ability of many students to include information from the topic poverty/homelessness, with many references to donating money to charity and helping the homeless. This demonstrated an ability to use their knowledge to produce a more creative response.

### Question 2.2

This was a more popular choice with students but was less successful, mainly because of the misinterpretation of bullet point 1. Many students overlooked the rubric that mentioned ‘*travail*’ and interpreted the first bullet point as ‘the advantages and disadvantages of teachers’ rather than ‘of being a teacher’. This led to extended pieces of pre-learnt material relating to the topic of school. Although this material would not be seen as irrelevant, if it was not related to the bullet point it would not achieve marks in the 13 – 15 band. Some students attempted to be creative and took on the role of the teacher. They were able to express the advantages/disadvantages of their position, but this sometimes led to confusion in completing bullet point 2 when they came to discuss their future employment plans. In addition, a number of students were able to express views on one side of the discussion without mentioning the other. Bullet point 2 was more successfully addressed. Again, this is a topic with which students are familiar and they were able to provide a great deal of information.

## Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, there was an impressive variety of connectives seen; ‘*car, parce que, mais, meme si*’. A range of negatives was attempted by some students; ‘*ne...jamais, ne.....que*’, although there were errors in the positioning of ‘*ne ...pas*’ by some students, and it is this type of error where the notion of ‘success’ in attempting complex sentences influences marks awarded. There were other successful attempts at complexity: ‘*quand, si, après avoir, il faut que, depuis, y*’, and the use of direct object pronouns and infinitive constructions. There was also a wide range of tenses, including the subjunctive. It is also worth noting that the criteria refer to style and register. This was not generally an issue with the quality of the work, but there were instances of attempts to include idioms that were sometimes highly unnatural and did not always reflect an appropriate style or register for the piece.

## Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations, and the type of errors that students make. It is to be noted that a 'major' error is one that interferes with communication, and a 'minor error', albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Common major errors included the inappropriate use of infinitives and poor formation of the perfect tense. Minor errors included gender errors, inaccurate adjectival agreements and minor misspellings.

## Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required.
- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

## Question 3 – Translation

For this question, there are 6 marks for *Conveying key messages* and 6 marks for *Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures*. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well, with all students able to score some marks.

### Conveying key messages

Key message	Main issues
Last Saturday	<i>L'année samedi dimanche</i>
I did my homework	<i>J'ai fais Je faisais Je faire</i>
And some recycling	<i>Du recycle Du recyclément Du recyclé</i>
Then I spent the afternoon	<i>Depuis, après for puis/ensuite. je suis allé, je suis passé, j'ai dépensé</i>
In the countryside with my grandmother	<i>A la campagne au/ dans le paysage</i>
We ate	<i>Nous mangé</i>
In a small cafe	
I forgot my mobile	<i>J'ai perdu je n'ai/avais pas.</i>
So it was	'so' was widely unknown
a bit boring in my opinion	'a bit' was widely unknown
Next weekend	
I would like to go to the sports centre	<i>centre de/les loisirs sports centre</i>

	<i>au gymnase</i>
As I want to stay fit.	'as' not well accomplished. Frequent use of ' <i>comme</i> ' Idea of 'stay' not always accomplished. ' <i>Rester sain</i> ' rather than ' <i>en forme</i> '

### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. Because of this, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, inaccurate language was considered. For example, language such as '*j'ai fait, du recyclage, puis/ensuite, grand'mère, nous avons mangé, dans un petit café, donc c'était*' were often either incorrect, omitted or wrongly spelled, and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

### Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words.

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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