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# GCSE **FRENCH**

8658/WH

Report on the Examination

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8658

November 2020

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## General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

## Overview of Entry

Although the size of the entry was significantly lower than in previous series, it was pleasing to note a slight improvement in the performance of students. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier with very few scoring low marks.

## General Points

Students were able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They were able to refer to different time frames, and express and justify opinions. Where students failed to score marks, this was due to inaccuracy causing a delay in communicating messages clearly. In the majority of cases, this was mainly because of inaccurate verb formations, especially when attempting to refer to different time frames.

## Question 1

### Content

Students approached this question well, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They were aware of the need to refer to the three time frames and express at least two opinions and, for the most part were successful in achieving this. The criteria for assessment for Content focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Inaccuracy and therefore lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') impacted negatively on marks awarded.

### Question 1.1

Bullet point 1 '*vosre petit job*' was very accessible to students, and they were able to produce extended responses. Bullet point 2 '*vosre opinion du travail*' was also well-covered, as students are very familiar with this type of bullet point. Although Bullet point 3 '*vos activités récemment au travail*' provided students with the opportunity to produce an account using past time frames, some students did not spot the time marker '*récemment*' and did not reference the past. Bullet point 4 '*vosre préférence pour le travail à l'avenir*' presented no difficulties for students, and they were able to cover the bullet point well.

## Question 1.2

This was the more popular choice with students as it covered topics with which they are more familiar. Bullet point 1 '*ce que vous mangez*' provided students with the opportunity to produce well-developed responses. Bullet point 2 '*votre opinion du sport*' was also well-covered, as students are very familiar with this type of bullet point. Bullet point 3 '*une activité sportive le week-end dernier*' created no difficulty for students, who were able to produce a coherent account referencing past activities. Bullet point 4 '*votre style de vie à l'avenir*' was well-covered. Some students, however, wrote about general future plans without it being clear that these were 'lifestyle' choices.

## Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. Examples of work including variety and complexity of language included: different persons of the verb, different ways of expressing likes and dislikes, infinitive constructions, a variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, the use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. Less successful language included inaccurate tense formation and minor errors such as omissions, errors of gender, adjectival agreement and singular/plural confusion.

## Question 2

Many students were able to demonstrate their ability to produce extended, detailed responses, to justify opinions and to provide a variety of language with a level of complexity. The criteria for assessment for Content focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of the bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students were able to develop ideas and express and justify opinions, but, again, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'ambiguities') which impacted negatively on marks awarded. In addition, inaccurate tense formation prevented the award of marks for those bullet points that targeted the different time frame as those messages were not always clearly communicated. Neither question proved more popular with students with approximately equal numbers completing each alternative.

## Question 2.1

Bullet point 1 '*pourquoi c'est bon d'être adolescent(e)*' provided the opportunity for students to produce extended responses that included opinions and justifications. The vast majority of students were successful in fulfilling the requirements of this bullet point. Bullet point 2 '*un problème récent avec votre famille ou vos ami(e)s*' presented some difficulty for some students in that they either did not notice the time marker '*récent*' or were not able to produce past tenses effectively so that inaccurate tense formations often prevented students from addressing the bullet point effectively.

## Question 2.2

This is a topic with which many students are familiar and they were more able to produce successful responses to this question. Bullet point 1 '*les problèmes de l'environnement dans votre région*' provided the opportunity for students to produce detailed descriptions in extended pieces of writing. It is worth noting that when bullet points signal descriptions, students must find ways of including opinions and justifications if they wish to access high marks. Bullet point 2 '*comment vous aiderez à*

*protéger l'environnement à l'avenir* presented no problems for students, and many responses of high quality were seen.

### Range 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, students were able to use a range of connectives; *'car, parce que, mais, même si'*. They also were successful in using different persons of the verb and a variety of verbs, adjectives and adverbs including the use of comparatives and superlatives. There were other successful attempts at complexity including the use of direct object pronouns and infinitive constructions. Students had also been well prepared to offer a variety of tenses, including the subjunctive. However, less successful responses were mainly due to inaccurate attempts at complex structures when students tried to reproduce language that was not commensurate with their ability.

### 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 inaccurate tense formations. Minor errors included gender errors, omissions, inaccurate adjectival agreements and minor misspellings.

### Question 3

#### Conveying key messages

Key message	Comments
I get on very well	'très' was sometimes omitted.
we often go	'souvent' was occasionally omitted.
to the shopping centre together.	'centre commercial' was unknown by some students.
I think that one must	'on doit/il faut' was occasionally confused.
I hope to live abroad	'j'espère' and 'étranger' were occasionally unknown
where I will do	When the accent was omitted on the word 'où', a different meaning was created, and therefore not accepted.

#### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent the 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, articles and prepositions in language such as **'des vêtements, aux sans-abris, aider les autres, mes études, à l'université, pour un an'** were often either omitted or wrongly spelled and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

## **Concluding Remarks**

### **Advice to students**

- In questions 1 and 2, students should identify which bullet points target the different time frames and ensure that their responses to these are accurately conveyed.
- In question 2, students should demonstrate their ability to express and justify opinions.
- They should 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.