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# GCSE FRENCH

8658/WH: Writing Higher  
Report on the Examination

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8658  
June 2022

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Version: 1.0

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## General Points

The overall performance of students this year was very encouraging. The increase in choice for Questions 1 and 2 provided all students with the opportunity to produce more confident responses in which they could demonstrate their skills and knowledge. As in previous series, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. Students were able to refer to different time frames and express opinions and reasons and the quality of work generally seen across the paper and especially in the responses to Question 1 was impressive. As in previous series, where students failed to score marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. The main reasons for this continue to be inaccurate verb formations, the use of an infinitive instead of a conjugated verb and major omissions. As in previous series, in some cases, students are being encouraged to produce complex language that is not commensurate with their ability level and as a result successful attempts at complexity were limited. Some students were also unsuccessful due to a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary, especially in Question 3 and the inability to respond effectively to some 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 addressed, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. As stated earlier, the increase in choice for this question provided all students with the opportunity to produce more confident responses in which they could demonstrate their skills and knowledge. All students approached this question well, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They are aware of the need to produce three time frames and express at least two opinions and, for the most part, were successful in achieving this. As in previous series, students were less successful if they incorrectly interpreted or omitted bullet points.

## 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, inaccuracy and therefore lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’) can impact negatively on marks awarded. Students also need to be aware that in addressing the bullet points, they should avoid using the possessive adjectives *votre* or *vos* in their responses, as this can negate the message. Although students are now aware of the need to produce three time frames, there was occasionally some mismatch between the time markers in bullet points three 3 and 4 and the time frame produced in the response, which also negated the message. However, this was rare to see at this level.

## Question 1.1

This question was generally completed well. It was a topic with which students were familiar and they were able to produce extended pieces of writing. Bullet point 1 ‘*vos rapports avec vos ami(e)s*’ provided many students with the opportunity to develop detailed responses, although some students did not understand the word *rapports* and wrote generally about activities with friends with no mention of their relationship which meant that they had not addressed the bullet point effectively.

Similarly, some students wrote about their family rather than their friends, which could not be accepted as a successful response to the bullet point. Bullet point 2 '*votre réseau social préféré*' was well covered. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. Where there were less successful responses, this was because some students did not make clear the references to '*sur votre portable*' or '*avec vos ami(e)s*' in order to address the bullet points effectively.

### Question 1.2

This choice was by far the most popular with students as the task covered topics with which the students are very familiar. Bullet points were fully addressed, leading to some very impressive and detailed extended pieces of writing. Where a minority of students were unsuccessful, it was because they did not express an opinion in their response to bullet point 2 '*votre transport préféré pour aller en ville*' but this was rare to see.

### Question 1.3

The majority of students who attempted this question were able to address all four bullet points successfully. However, some students did not always effectively address bullet point 1, mainly due to their misunderstanding of the phrase '*règlement scolaire*'. This often led to students describing the school itself, the subjects they enjoyed and/ or their favourite teachers and did not address the concept of school rules. Bullet point 2 was well covered. Most students were able to understand that a past time frame was required for bullet point 3, although some students confused the word '*journée*' for 'journey' and wrote about travel. However, those students who contextualised this by making a reference to school, demonstrated that they had addressed the bullet point effectively and were awarded the task. Most students understood that a future time frame was required for the fourth bullet point and addressed it well. Where students were less successful, was if they wrote about future studies without mentioning a profession which could not be seen as addressing the bullet point effectively.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. As in previous series, the following was seen relating to the successful inclusion of variety and complexity of language: different persons of the verb, synonyms *j'adore*, *j'aime*, *j'apprécie*, *je préfère*, infinitive constructions, a wide variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and a good variety of tenses including subjunctives. There was also effective and successful use of phrases such as '*je dirais que*' and '*autant que je sache*'. Less successful language occasionally included inaccurate tense formation (particularly perfect tense, where the auxiliary verb was often omitted or the past participle was replaced by an infinitive) and the inappropriate use of the infinitive. There were also some examples of the use of *votre*, *vos*, *préfér  * used as a verb (e.g. '*je préfér   Instagram*') and *scolaire* used as a noun from the bullet points.

### Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Mention all the 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. Use the time markers in the bullet points and include them in your response e.g. *'hier soir, samedi dernier, le week-end prochain'*.
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives *votre/vos* to *mon/ma/mes*.
- Practise manipulation of the bullet points when writing your answer to ensure you have provided the information required e.g. *Mon transport préféré est... / Mon club scolaire préféré est ...*

## Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students are expected to 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. A very high quality of work was seen this year, with many students writing confident, coherent and fluent pieces of extended writing demonstrating a good level of complexity and accuracy together with the ability to express and justify opinions. As with Question 1, the increase in choice provided all students with the opportunity to produce more confident responses. Where students were less successful, it was because they had either incorrectly interpreted the bullet points or wrote much longer pieces than required, the latter increasing the scope for error. In addition, students need to be reminded that they should tailor their knowledge to suit the demands of the tasks, rather than reproduce pre-learnt language which might not address them effectively.

### Content

The criteria for assessment 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 should also be reminded that in each question one of the bullet points will target a different time frame. As in previous series, students demonstrated their ability to develop ideas and express and justify opinions, but there were occasions when inaccuracy, mainly with verb formations, 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 frames as those messages were not clearly communicated.

### Question 2.1

The quality of responses was generally high, with most students able to complete both bullet points, showing good ability to write at length in detail and express and justify opinions. Where students were unsuccessful, it was because they failed to address both the positive **and** negative aspects of sport with students only writing what they liked about sports or just listing sports they liked. In addition, many students referred to sport as being tiring as a negative aspect but sometimes there was confusion with the use of *fatigue* or *fatigué* for *fatigant*. This, together with some students using English words to make reference to sports injuries, created ambiguity and therefore impacted on marks awarded for Content. The majority of students addressed Bullet point 2 very well. They either described major sporting events they had been to in some detail or made reference to smaller sports matches they had played in themselves. Where they were unsuccessful, it was because they used inappropriate tenses or infinitives and therefore the response to the bullet point could not be credited.

### Question 2.2

The majority of students who attempted this question were able to address both bullet points successfully. For Bullet point 1, students were able to include a wide range of reasons to explain why life was difficult in their area, for example, homelessness, pollution, anti-social behaviour, cost of living, the lack of green spaces, public transport and/or traffic pollution. There were also some highly successful responses to Bullet point 2 with references to recycling, charity work and helping the homeless. However, as with Question 2.1, where students were unsuccessful, it was because they used inappropriate tenses or infinitives which could not be credited as addressing the bullet point effectively.

### **Question 2.3**

There were many high-quality responses to this question. For Bullet point 1, students were able to include a wide range of reasons to explain why it was important to work well at school, for example, gaining good grades and/ or job prospects. Where students were less successful was when they gave a general description of what they liked/disliked about school and failed to address the importance of hard work. This is an example of the need for students to tailor their knowledge of the topic to suit the demands of the task. However, there were some excellent answers relating to Bullet point 2, where students were able to discuss what they hoped to study in the future and their job prospects. A minority of students who were less successful wrote responses relating to taking a gap year with no reference to studying and/or future plans of a general nature that were unrelated to study.

### **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. The majority of students were able to include a variety of tense usage with use of present, perfect, imperfect, future and conditional tenses. There was also wider evidence of the subjunctive used successfully. In terms of variety of language, as in previous series, students were able to use a range of connectives; *car, parce que, quand, où, même si*. There was a good use of a variety of adjectives, intensifiers, adverbs and subordinate clauses to express opinions; *je pense que, je trouve que, je crois que*. Modal verbs and infinitive constructions were also frequently seen. Other successful attempts at complexity included; *si'* clauses, *après avoir*, constructions such as *bien que ce soit, autant que je sache, étant donné que, vu que* and the use of direct object pronouns and infinitive constructions. More often this year, candidates had attempted to use idioms and set phrases in order to add variety, some examples being '*ce n'est pas ma tasse de thé*' and '*ça coute les yeux de la tête*'. Although these were often included successfully, on occasions they appeared out of context or were repeated more than once within a response. There were also occasions where students attempted to include idioms or examples of complex language at the expense of clear communication because of errors and/or omissions. Therefore, less successful responses were mainly due to unsuccessful 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. As in previous series, the majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Common major errors included inaccurate tense

formation, especially with the formation of the perfect tense and the inappropriate use of infinitives. Minor errors included gender errors, inaccurate adjectival agreements, omissions and minor misspellings.

### Advice to students

- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response. For example, whether there are two elements (*'les bons et les mauvais aspects'*) and which bullet point targets a different time frame.
- Tailor the language you know to suit the demands of the question, rather than just writing everything you know about the topic.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

### Question 3

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	Comments
I go to the cinema	Generally well done.
every month	Generally well done. However some students wrote <i>moins</i> for <i>mois</i>
but my friend prefers films online.	Generally well done although some students wrote <i>préféré</i> which created a different meaning.
This morning	Many students were not able to produce the demonstrative adjective <i>ce</i>
we listened to music	The key message was often communicated despite errors. Some students successfully used <i>on</i>
with our teacher.	Generally well done although <i>nous</i> was sometimes used for <i>notre</i> .
I would really like to play an instrument.	Generally well done although some students did not include the word <i>vraiment</i>
I don't like living in the countryside,	Generally well done although some students were not able to spell <i>campagne</i> correctly.
so when I am older,	This was a 'high demand' message and only the most able translated this correctly.
I'll buy a flat	Generally well done despite many misspellings of <i>appartement</i> .
in the town centre,	Generally well done.
even if	Generally well done.
there is a lot of pollution.	Generally well done although <i>pollué</i> was often seen.

### 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 '*je vais **au** cinéma, nous avons écouté **de la** musique, jouer **d'un** instrument, **à la** campagne, **dans le** centre-ville, beaucoup **de** pollution*' were either incorrect, wrongly spelled or omitted, and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

### Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives, possessives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words (*au, dans, de*).
- Proofread your work by looking out for specific issues e.g. verb endings, genders, spellings, omissions.
- Double-check whether the singular or plural form of a noun is needed. (*mon ami* or *mes amis*)

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### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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