



GCSE

FRENCH

8658/WH Paper 4 Writing Higher Tier
Report on the Examination

8658/WH
June 2023

Version: 1.0

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General Points

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

The overall performance of students this year was very encouraging. 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 a variety of opinions and reasons. 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 continued to be inaccurate verb formations and omissions. Another barrier to achievement was when students wrote much longer responses than the suggested word count and/or attempted a level of complexity of language not commensurate with their ability thereby creating more scope for error. In addition, a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and the inability to respond to the targeted rubrics and bullet points also impacted negatively on marks awarded.

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. All students approached this question well, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They were 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 or if they used incorrect time frames.

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 were aware of the need to produce three time frames, as in previous series there was occasionally some mismatch between the time markers in bullet points three 3 and 4 and the time frame or verb form produced in the response, which also negated the message. However, this was rarely seen at this tier.

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. On the whole, students were able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 '*la musique que vous écoutez en ce moment*' provided many students with the opportunity to develop detailed responses and the vast majority effectively included opinions in their responses to this bullet point. Bullet point 2 '*votre film favori*' was also well covered. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4 and produced some impressive pieces of extended writing.

Question 1.2

This question was also completed well as it was also a topic with which students were familiar and the vast majority of students were able to produce extended pieces of writing. As with 1.1, the vast majority of students were able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 '*une destination de vacances que vous aimez*' elicited a detailed response with a variety of opinions. Bullet point 2 was not always successfully addressed given that the vocabulary item '*la météo*' was sometimes unknown and was either omitted or misinterpreted. A number of students made reference to methods of transport maybe because they read '*météo*' as '*méto*'. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4, producing a high quality of extended writing.

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 variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. As in previous series, less successful language included inaccurate tense formation and the inappropriate use of the infinitive.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words. Students who wrote approx. 90 words in clear sentences were more successful than students who wrote 3 or 4 times that amount but made more errors.
- Choose the question where you know what all the bullet points mean.
- 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.
- Look for clues in the bullet points (*normalement, récent, mémorable, projets pour l'avenir, l'année prochaine...*) Use the time markers in the bullet points and include them in your response eg '*l'année dernière, à l'avenir*'.
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives '*votre/vos*' to '*mon/ma/mes*'.
- Focus on simple but correct verb formations (*je joue, j'ai joué, je jouerai, je voudrais jouer*).
- Create short lists of varied vocabulary (different adjectives, connectives etc.).

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. As in previous series, a very high quality of work was seen this year, with students writing confident, coherent and fluent pieces of extended writing demonstrating the ability to express and justify opinions and to develop their responses using a good level of complexity and accuracy. 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 identify which bullet points have two elements to address and which target different time frames.

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 award of marks for those bullet points that targeted the different time frame as those messages were not clearly communicated.

Question 2.1

The quality of responses seen was generally high. Most students were able to write successfully about both the positive and negative aspects of school life. There were many examples of extended pieces of writing offering opinions and justifications about a number of aspects of school life including homework, teachers, facilities, uniform and school subjects. Where students were unsuccessful, it was because they failed to address both the positive and negative aspects of school. The majority of students addressed bullet point 2 very well. They were able to reference a past trip and included lots of information about trips abroad or day trips within the UK. However, some students talked about a school day in the past rather than a trip and were unable to be credited for this when this only included specific references to time spent in school.

Question 2.2

This question was addressed well. The vast majority of students who attempted this question were able to address both bullet points successfully. For bullet point 1, the positive and negative aspects of the region were wide-ranging and included descriptions of the local area, access to shops, public transport, homelessness, anti-social behaviour, pollution and facilities for teenagers. Where students were unsuccessful, it was because they failed to address both the advantages and the disadvantages of their area. There were also some highly successful responses to bullet point 2 with references to recycling, saving energy, charity work and helping the homeless. However, where students were unsuccessful, it was because they used inappropriate tenses or verb forms which could not be credited as addressing the bullet point effectively.

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 (including subjunctive), perfect, imperfect, future and conditional tenses. In terms of variety of language, as in previous series, students were able to use a range of connectives; ‘*quand, si, même si, bien que, quoi que, parce que, car*’. 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. For the highest marks, there needs to be evidence of work in which students are able to handle more complex sentences with confidence. There were many responses where students had tried to reproduce more complex

set phrases but had not understood how to use them appropriately. Indeed, some students used these pre-learned phrases at the expense of producing accurate basic language structures therefore conveying information that did not communicate clearly.

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 and the inappropriate use of infinitives. As in previous series, minor errors included errors of gender, inaccurate adjectival agreements and prepositions, 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 aspects positifs et négatifs, les avantages et les inconvénients*) and which bullet point targets a different time frame.
- Use contrast in sentences to ensure coverage of the 'double element' bullet point: Eg '*Les professeurs à l'école sont sympathiques mais les devoirs sont difficiles*' or '*Ma ville est très animée, cependant en été il y a trop de touristes.*'
- Only use complex expressions which you feel 100% confident using and check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.
- Focus on verb formation – tense and endings.

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
Our history teacher	Generally, well done. ' <i>Notre</i> ' sometimes proved challenging for some students.
is quite strict	Generally, well done.
but I get on well	Generally, well done.
with him.	' <i>lui</i> ' was not known by a number of students.
He thinks that	Generally well done.
my grades in this subject	The vocabulary ' <i>notes</i> ' proved challenging and ' <i>matière</i> ' was not always successfully translated with ' <i>métier</i> ' often seen. The demonstrative article ' <i>cette</i> ' was not widely known.
are really good.	The word " <i>très</i> " was used more frequently than ' <i>vraiment</i> '.
However, I would prefer	The spelling of ' <i>préférerai</i> ' caused problems for some with the incorrect ' <i>préfèrais</i> ' often seen.

to study biology at university	Generally, well done.
because I have always loved flowers.	'J'ai aimé' proved very challenging, as did 'toujours'.
Recently, I spent a week with my cousin.	Generally, well done although some students had difficulty with 'récemment' and the verb 'passer'
We went camping in the countryside	'faire du camping' was not well-known and 'aller au camping' was often seen, which conveyed a different message.
near to a river.	'près/proche' and 'rivière/fleuve' were not widely known.

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. Even when key messages were successfully conveyed, there were several minor errors, which often meant that the mark for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures was lower than the mark for conveying key messages. For example, language such as '*notre professeur d'histoire, sont vraiment bonnes, étudier la biologie à l'université, j'ai passé une semaine avec mon cousin*' were either incorrect, wrongly spelled or had elements omitted, and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially time markers (*récemment, toujours*), connectives (*mais, cependant, parce que*), possessives (*notre, mon/ma*), intensifiers (*assez, vraiment*) and prepositions (*dans, à l', à la, près de*).
- Proofread your work by looking out for specific issues eg verb tenses and formations, genders, spellings, omissions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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