

GCSE



Chief Examiner's Report French

Summer Series 2019



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2019 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's section on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCSE FRENCH

Chief Examiner's Report

Subject Overview

The new specification for GCSE French has led to a new style of examinations with a number of significant differences compared to the examinations of the previous specification – all units were marked out of sixty, translations were introduced in both the reading and writing units, and controlled assessments in speaking and writing were replaced with examinations. Teachers are to be commended on ensuring that their candidates were clearly well prepared for the new style of examinations and it was evident that the candidates knew what to expect. The guidance given by CCEA through the website, circulars and support events was evidently used by centres to ensure that the candidates were aware of the requirements of the new examinations.

Candidates should be reminded that marks cannot be awarded if they answer in the wrong language in the listening or reading examinations, though this was a rare occurrence. They should also ensure that they read questions carefully to ensure that their answers are relevant and accurate. In translations, both into French and English, candidates are reminded that this is an exercise which requires an accurate translation of the original text and not an exercise in paraphrasing.

The high standard of performance across all four skill areas was maintained this year and there were many excellent performances. In particular, the speaking and writing examinations demonstrated the high standard of learning and teaching in so many centres where candidates were able to produce fluent, coherent and idiomatic language of an extremely high standard.

Assessment Unit 1 Listening

Foundation Tier

The paper was very accessible for foundation candidates and the full range of marks was used. Less able candidates were able to answer many questions correctly and to respond positively to the questions posed.

- Q1, 2 & 3** Almost all candidates gained full marks in these questions which ensured candidates could achieve highly in the first section of the paper.
- Q4** Most candidates answered this question well though some encountered difficulties with “du pain grillé.”
- Q5** This was answered generally well by most candidates.
- Q6** This question proved more challenging for some candidates who confused “juillet” with June or did not know the word for ice-cream.
- Q7 & 8** These questions were generally well answered but the names of certain animals were challenging for some candidates.
- Q9** The section in French in general proved to be most taxing for all candidates. In general, candidates tended to write more than what was required which resulted in them losing marks. In hindsight, this was due to the question layout, which may have suggested they were to write in full sentences, whereas one word was all that was required.

- Q10** All candidates answered this question well.
- Q11** This was also generally well answered by most candidates.
- Q12** Most candidates performed well in this question.

Higher Tier

It was pleasing to see so many excellent responses this year in Higher Listening. Candidates had clearly prepared well for this examination and their performances indicated a detailed knowledge of a very wide range of vocabulary and structures.

- Q1** Almost all candidates gained full marks in this question.
- Q2** Most candidates answered this well but some did not know the word “chômage”.
- Q3** In Question 3(a) candidates often confused “beaucoup de” and “trop”. The rest of the question was answered well, though the word “vache” caused some difficulty.
- Q4 & 5** These were well answered by the vast majority of candidates.
- Q6** This question was a challenging one for some candidates. It is important for candidates to read the headings in the question carefully so as to put in the correct information required e.g. England and not London.
- Q7** These were generally well answered by most candidates.
- Q8** This question assessed candidates’ ability to listen carefully and respond accurately to the stimulus.
- Q9** The section in French in general proved to be more taxing for many candidates. However, most candidates responded well to this question.
- Q10** Most candidates demonstrated little difficulty with this question.
- Q11** This was by far the most challenging question in this section. Only a few candidates were able to successfully give the answer “satisfait”.
- Q12** This question was answered well and enabled candidates to complete the paper on a positive note.

Assessment Unit 2 Speaking

This year marked a significant change in the speaking tests with the move to examinations rather than controlled assessment. It was very encouraging to hear the high quality of spoken French from so many candidates. The role-plays at the start of the examination allowed candidates to begin in a positive way, speaking and gaining marks before beginning the conversations and it seemed to be a less stressful way to begin the test.

The speaking tests were generally of a very high standard and reflected careful preparation and thorough revision on the part of the candidates. It was clear that almost all teachers had followed the guidance given by CCEA for the conduct of the speaking tests. Most recordings were clear and audible, though on occasions the microphone was closer to the teacher than the candidate. Unfortunately, in a small number of cases, the recordings were not clear and this resulted in examiners listening up to five times to a recording to ensure that the candidate was assessed correctly. Background noise was a recurring problem in some centres; it is difficult for the examiners when there are fire bells, noisy corridors, traffic noise or the sounds of a class being taught in the next room but, more importantly, this is disconcerting for the candidates and therefore should be avoided.

Role-plays

Overall the role-plays were well executed, with most candidates able to achieve at least half of the available marks. The candidates coped well with the elements requiring statements and opinions, though they found it more challenging to generate the questions in the role-plays. Some candidates found the open-ended elements difficult as they had such a wide range of choice and teachers are encouraged to practise these so that candidates can familiarise themselves with this style of role-play element.

In some performances, a lack of coherent pronunciation or inaccurate tense or verb structures resulted in marks being lost. This being the first year of the new examination, there were some minor procedural issues which should be noted. After the centre number and candidate number at the start of each recording, the letter and session of the role-play should be read out by the teacher conducting the examination as this helps to identify the role-play for the examiner. The teacher should not read out the preamble to the role-play in French; this should be read as it is written in the Teacher's Booklet, in English. This is an understandable error but, as it may advantage the candidate, it must be avoided. Both role-plays should be completed before the conversations. The teacher should refrain from repeating the candidate's part, correcting what has been said, prompting a response, or adding to the prescribed dialogue with improvised material. In a few cases the teacher forgot to do the last task in the role-play. Mostly these appeared to be genuine confusions in the first year of a new specification and these issues were certainly the exception rather than the rule.

Conversations

There was a very pleasing standard of performance in the conversations in most centres and it was evident that the majority of candidates were well prepared to meet the requirements of the examination. The length of the conversations varied, with some too short and some much too long. The conversations are marked separately and therefore they should be of approximately equal length. The volume of material and the pace of delivery are both factors for the teacher to consider. A candidate who can readily deliver a lot of correct information and opinions in the prescribed time of four minutes can still access full marks. More time does not always benefit the candidate as they can make more errors, although it is understandable that the teacher wants to give a candidate the maximum opportunity to respond. The more competent candidates were well prepared and answered the questions in the conversations very capably. They achieved full marks by using more sophisticated, higher-level vocabulary and structures, such as subordinate clauses, providing relevant detail and appropriate idiomatic expressions.

Many candidates forgot to ask a question and therefore lost one mark. Sometimes two questions were asked in one conversation but none in the other. Again, candidates should be reminded that the two conversations are marked separately.

There were a few exceptional issues in a small number of centres, such as questions outside guidance in the pre-release topic, only one conversation being conducted instead of two, and very few candidates who failed to respond at all. It is helpful if there is a clear delineation between both conversations. These are issues for teachers to consider in their preparation for the examinations next year.

Assessment Unit 3 Reading

Foundation Tier

In general, candidates performed well in this paper and a significant number achieved good scores. It was very pleasing to see the standard achieved by candidates in this paper. It was pleasing to note that few candidates left blank spaces and that most answers were clearly and legibly written, ensuring that candidates were rewarded correctly for their responses.

- Q1** Most candidates achieved full marks in this question. Familiar vocabulary was well handled.
- Q2** This question was answered well. A few candidates answered Part (b) incorrectly, selecting Natalie instead of Marc.
- Q3** Part (a) - this question attracted a pleasing number of accurate responses that deserved two marks. A few responses included 'Friday' but did not include "soir" to secure the second mark. A small number of candidates did not recognise "vendredi" and chose a variety of other days of the week. Part (b) - there was evidence of good vocabulary knowledge here, which enabled some candidates to score full marks. Some who scored three marks did not recognise "je passe l'aspirateur".
- Q4** Candidates coped well with the language contained in the stimulus and demonstrated good technique in answering. Many achieved full marks. Part (c) proved more difficult as some did not identify "valise" correctly.
- Q5** Most candidates correctly identified Part (h) and Part (i). Some selected Part (a) instead of Part (b) and Part (e) instead of Part (d). Candidates should be encouraged to delay committing to an answer until they have read the entire sentence or relevant part of the stimulus.
- Q6** This question was answered well. A large proportion of candidates achieved full marks.
- Q7** The standard of responses in this question varied and very few candidates achieved full marks. Part (a) was generally well handled. In Part (b) "boulangerie" was not always recognised as 'bakery' and "près de" attracted several mistranslations. Part (c) was quite well tackled with most candidates able to deal successfully with "magasins". Part (d) was challenging for some. A good number of candidates recognised "église", but many stumbled on "au coin".
- Q8** A mixed rate of success was also evident in this question. Parts (a) and (b) proved more problematic to some candidates. Those who thought four courses were on offer for €13,50 in Part (a) did not focus on the bolded 'ou'. Part (c) was generally well answered. In Part (d), 'fish' and 'gravy' were two of a range of interesting sauces that accompanied the beef fillet. Many candidates chose to write 'strawberries' instead of 'raspberries' for "framboises" in Part (e). Part (f) was straightforward.
- Q9** Selecting the relevant word to complete the sentence proved challenging for some in this question. Those who chose to copy word for word from the stimulus were often not successful as the completed sentence lacked fluency and/or accurate meaning.
- Q10** Parts (b) and (c) were tackled successfully by many candidates due to commonly known vocabulary such as "froide" and "il pleut". In Part (a), (d) and (e) "nuages", "brume" and "tonnerre" caused difficulty. Some candidates jumbled a number of responses as they tried to connect the relevant parts of the stimulus to the question. Part (f) was unsuccessful for many candidates.

- Q11** This question produced a wide range of performances. Awareness of language and sound application of grammar enabled a small proportion of candidates to achieve a good score. There was, however, clear evidence across the cohort that this question type caused difficulty. Most scripts contained answers that seemed to be guesswork rather than confident problem-solving. Centres are encouraged to train candidates to look for clues in order to identify answers that are grammatically possible before selecting from the pool of responses.
- Q12** Candidates performed well in this question, though Parts (d) and (f) were less well handled and some did not choose correctly in Part (g).

Higher Tier

Candidates performed well in this paper and many achieved excellent scores. As at Foundation Level, candidates of different abilities had the opportunity, via a variety of questions and tasks, to show what they knew, understood and could do.

- Q1** This was a very straightforward question that enabled most candidates to score full marks. A very small number of candidates opted incorrectly for Natalie in Part (b).
- Q2** The six details shared in relation to the new phone gave candidates a very good opportunity to select two correct ones. Most selected 'send messages' and 'go online'. Very few selected 'do everything'.
- Q3** Part (a) the phrase "plusieurs fois" caused difficulty for some candidates. Part (b) a pleasing number of candidates recognised "dormir". The most common incorrect answers included 'stay' and 'get'. Part (c) the adjective "inoubliable" was reasonably well handled by most candidates. Common incorrect answers included 'incredible', 'unbelievable' and 'amazing'. Part (d) this was the most successfully answered part of the question.
- Q4** Many candidates achieved full marks in this question demonstrating good understanding and technique. Only a very small number of candidates lost marks by selecting Part (a) instead of Part (b) and/or Part (e) instead of Part (d). It was pleasing to note that candidates observed the requirement to tick four boxes only.
- Q5** This was a very accessible question that helped maintain confidence as candidates approached the halfway stage of the paper. The vast majority of candidates answered all four parts correctly.
- Q6** Part (a) some candidates did not recognise "réussir" or "vie". Part (b) this question was answered very well by most candidates.
- Q7** The standard of responses in this question varied. It was pleasing that some candidates achieved full marks. In Part (a), candidates who did not pay attention to the bolded "ou" were led to conclude incorrectly that either three or four courses were on offer for €13,50. Parts (b) and (c) were generally well answered. In Part (d) "poivre" was recognised by less than half the cohort and some candidates wrote 'pear'. 'Strawberries' was a common incorrect answer for Part (e). Part (f) attracted a very large number of correct responses.
- Q8** As expected, there was a wide variety of responses evident in this question and some candidates found certain items of vocabulary such as "voisin", "fermier" and "champs" challenging. Parts (a) and (c) were answered more successfully than Part (b) and (d). Part (a) responses were generally satisfactory, although a number of responses featured the past tense 'went'. Part (b) few candidates achieved full marks here as many candidates did not recognise "notre" or misinterpreted "fermier". Part (c) omission of the direct object pronoun in "... je l'aide" was common. Some who did recognise the pronoun translated it incorrectly as 'them'. Part (d) candidates found this part more challenging.

- Q9** This question was very well answered with many candidates achieving full marks.
- Q10** Many candidates demonstrated good technique and coped well with this question. Parts (a) and (f) were more successfully handled than the others. In Part (b), some realised a noun was required but opted incorrectly for “avenir”. Many candidates who had already correctly identified “contente” for Part (a) were able to correctly deduce that the only remaining adjective “utile” had to be the answer for Part (c). Part (d) was the least well answered part of this question. Those who managed to answer correctly here generally made good sense of the entire question. Part (e) was, by comparison, better handled than Part (b), (c) and (d). It was pleasing to note that some candidates achieved full marks.
- Q11** A pleasing number of candidates tackled this question well and were able to extract the relevant vocabulary to answer accurately. Parts (a) and (d) were generally successful. Parts (b) and (c) were less well done by some candidates.
- Q12** Most candidates achieved good scores in this question demonstrating knowledge of topic vocabulary and an ability to select appropriate language from the short stimulus texts. Part (a) yielded many good responses and both elements of “automobilistes parisiens” were needed to gain two marks. Part (b) was very well answered. In Part (c) both elements of “jeudi dernier” were required to secure the mark. In Part (d) both elements of “gaz/à effet de serre” were required. The variety and inaccuracy of responses for Part (e) and (f) pointed to possible misunderstanding of the interrogatives “pour qui” and “comment”.

Assessment Unit 4 Writing

This paper elicited a wide range of responses, from a very few candidates who wrote only a handful of words to others who might have performed well in the higher level paper. It was clear that teachers have familiarised themselves and their candidates very well with the format and demands of the new specification. On the whole, candidates showed their understanding of the rubrics used throughout the paper and an awareness of the requirements of the mark scheme.

- Q1** Part (a) - Most candidates scored well on this question. It should be remembered that candidates are only instructed to write a word for each part of this question; there is no need to write a sentence (“je voudrais...”) nor to include an article. Part (b) - Again, many candidates scored well here. Candidates are reminded that only 2 – 3 words need be written. A number of candidates wrote more than this and self-penalised as they lost marks through inaccuracies in the superfluous material. In part (ii), many candidates mentioned a time, but others were rewarded for accurately mentioning a place (e.g. “ma maison”). In Part (iii), many mentioned food, but credit was given to those candidates who correctly mentioned a place to eat (e.g. “au restaurant”).
- Q2** This was approached well by the majority of candidates. It should be noted that the rubric calls for a sentence to be written each time; unlike Question 1, a conjugated verb is required to create a complete sentence. As before, there is no requirement to write more than one sentence as this can become self-penalising.
- Part (a) - largely dealt with appropriately. Part (b) - largely dealt with appropriately though some candidates used “je suis” rather than “j’ai” and there was a wide variety of ages, including “six” and even “soixante”. Part (c) - mostly fine although some candidates did not conjugate the verb correctly. Part (d) - often good, but some candidates misunderstood “récréation” and wrote about their hobbies. Part (e) - the best answers were simple and uncomplicated. However, some candidates misunderstood “jour”, apparently seeing it as “jouer” and so they wrote about sports.

Q3 It should be emphasised that this question requires accurate translation into French; a small number of candidates seemed to write statements on the topic of each English sentence, as though repeating the style of Question 2. For those who did approach the translation task as required, often they did not gain both marks for an element, due to grammatical errors, incorrect use of verbs and errors in spelling.

Part (a) - with two verbs here, a seemingly straightforward sentence was not answered by many candidates in such a way that two marks could be awarded. Part (b) - answered reasonably well by a lot of candidates, but it must be stressed again that this question requires translation rather than a paraphrase of the stimulus. Part (c) - largely answered well, though few candidates wrote “intéressant” with correct spelling and use of the acute accent. Part (d) - also answered well, though “beaucoup” was rarely spelt accurately, nor was “restaurants”. Part (e) - as with 3e, a number of candidates found the use of an irregular verb followed by an infinitive to be challenging.

Q4 Context 1 was the most popular choice, followed by Context 2. Those who did choose Context 3 did not score so well. Most candidates were familiar with the requirement to write five balanced bullet points and were aware of the word count suggested at information meetings and on the website. As elsewhere, candidates who write too much or too little can self-penalise. Some candidates wrote more unbalanced pieces with almost a full page for one bullet point and then only a sentence for another. A small number did not follow the order of the bullet points in the question, answered more than one context, wrote a combination of bullet points from all three contexts or based their whole answer on only one bullet point from one context. Such cases were infrequent but deserve to be mentioned so that centres can advise their candidates on best practice, as is already very clearly evident in the vast majority of candidates’ work.

Overall, candidates showed good ability to read the question carefully and were aware of how to earn marks according to the requirements of the mark scheme. The best answers were written clearly and concisely, showing good knowledge of the topic and were able to express ideas and opinions with some justification. Those earning the highest marks for Question 4 included a range of vocabulary and structures and some language of a more complex nature. It must be noted that the incorrect use of verbs and tenses led to problems for many candidates. The final two bullet points in each context called for the candidate to relate past and future events but it was rare to find this done successfully.

It was pleasing that most candidates wrote legibly and on alternate lines, which makes it much easier for examiners to identify good quality French and to reward candidates appropriately. Where handwriting was more difficult to read, it was a greater challenge for examiners to do this.

Higher Tier

Candidates entered for this paper produced, in the main, some excellent French, much to the credit of their teachers. They read the requirements of each question carefully and answered appropriately. There was ample evidence that centres had prepared their candidates very well and had familiarised them with the guidance provided by CCEA.

Q1 Most candidates respected the requirement to write a sentence (which would require a conjugated verb to be used) for each section of Question 3. Candidates should, however, be wary of writing more than this as this was sometimes self-penalising if the candidates included errors in the additional material, having written the initial sentence in such a way that would have merited full marks.

Part (a) - there were few problems here. Part (b) - this was largely fine though there were some examples of candidates adding material and self-penalising as mentioned above. Part (c) - many candidates made judicious use of language from the question, whilst those who adapted their answer were often able to conjugate the verb correctly e.g. “Les cours commencent...”. Part (d) - this was often answered very well. A number of candidates misunderstood “récréation” and wrote about hobbies. Part (e) - there were many good answers here, the simplest often being the most efficient. Occasionally, candidates misunderstood “jour”, reading it as “jouer”.

Q2 Centres had prepared their candidates very well on the topic of healthy lifestyle, candidates demonstrating a lot of topic specific knowledge and language.

Part (a) - candidates had few problems with this question. Part (b) - generally speaking, candidates managed this question well, though quite a few did not mention both fruit and vegetables in their answer. An occasional issue was the spelling of some vocabulary in English e.g. tomatoes, bananas and carrots, rather than in French. Part (c) - many good answers here although a significant minority of answers did not include an opinion which the wording of the question requires. Part (d) - even some of the best candidates missed the requirement to mention more than one sport and that a past tense was required in the answer. Part (e) - conversely, most candidates were able to make appropriate reference to the future.

Q3 Candidates must be aware that this question requires translation into French; a few wrote generally on the topic of the English sentences. However, many candidates performed well here, showing good knowledge of vocabulary and structures.

Part (a) - candidates were largely familiar with the vocabulary required but very few spelt “nouveaux” correctly or placed it appropriately. Part (b) - largely managed well, and candidates displayed knowledge of a range of appropriate vocabulary. Part (c) - this was well answered by most candidates. Part (d) - this was another well answered question with “chaque jour” being an acceptable alternative to “tous les jours”. Part (e) - this was also well managed by many candidates.

Q4 Context 1 was by far the most popular choice, though quite a few chose Context 2. Although those answering Context 3 were fewer in number, most of those who did so had clearly been very well prepared by their teachers. Almost all candidates were very well prepared for Question 4. Once again, candidates appeared to be very familiar with the requirements of the mark scheme and produced answers that were balanced against the bullet points, using ideas and opinions, and often very high quality language. Many candidates used a variety of tenses throughout their answers, and skilfully so. Question 4 was laid out very clearly by almost every candidate, often using alternate lines, and so legibility was almost never a hindrance to examiners.

In Context 1, the third bullet point did not require a full discussion of both television and cinema. In Context 3, some examples were given in bullet point 4, but it was not essential to use those examples so long as the candidate wrote relevantly.

It is to be hoped that many of these candidates pursue their study of French beyond GCSE as they are already writing French of a very high standard, due to their talent and hard work and also thanks to the dedication of their teachers.

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