

French (continuers)

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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FRENCH CONTINUERS

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OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's Reports give an overview of how students performed in the school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Generally the students this year were given the opportunity to perform at their best level by completing a variety of well-designed tasks on appropriate topics, clearly linked to the subject outline.

Performance standards provide the parameters for assessment of all tasks and annotated/highlighted performance standards provide essential feedback to students and guidance to moderators. Most samples included annotated performance standards that accurately reflected the student's achievement. However, it is important that all teachers are sufficiently familiar with the performance standards to apply them to all tasks in the Folio and that the evidence provided by the students matches the descriptors in the performance standards.

There was a wide range of well-designed tasks in the folio which offered students choice and the opportunity to perform at a high level. Moderators were best able to support the teacher's judgement when provided with task sheets that defined the background to the task and clearly stated the context, purpose, audience and text type.

Text production tended to be best handled when the topic was well defined and structured, and allowed students to be creative and to write about something relating to Francophone culture, including films, short stories, songs and contemporary Francophone issues. Although there are no word limits in the Folio, students should be encouraged to write in continuous prose in the text types described for production. The best examples of oral interaction were real and spontaneous conversations that allowed the students to speak about personal experiences and aspirations and elaborate their thoughts and responses on a variety of topics.

Good text analysis tasks often contained more than one text and presented the students with a variety of question types which allowed them to show comprehension, personal reflection and an analysis of linguistic features. Very few past examination papers, especially for Listening and Responding, will meet these requirements without adaptation of the questions. It is recommended that the texts relate to the compulsory themes and provide the opportunity to address the performance standards at the highest level.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Where students were allowed to choose their own topic, responses were of a very high level. Teachers should encourage students to study topics that allow for some depth of thought and reflection, remembering that the In-depth Study is also part of their Discussion in the end-of-year oral examination, where they are required to express opinions and impressions gained through their in-depth research. As each assessment task in the In-depth Study must have a different context, purpose, audience and text type, it is not sufficient to simply write to inform. Care must be taken at the planning stage to ensure that the topic chosen allows for a variety of treatments and gives scope for reflection.

Most samples contained all required tasks and assessment was supported by annotated performance standards. Moderators can best support teachers' judgement if all tasks are present and evidence is provided of how grades were attributed.

The best examples of students' work were those where the text type features were adhered to; for example, diary entry/letter dates were chronological and appropriate to the context of the response. It is recommended that a cover sheet stating the context, purpose, audience and text type for each task be provided.

Topics that were issues based or addressed a question e.g. 'Was Coco Chanel's influence on fashion positive?' 'Is the Louvre really a people's museum?' led to comprehensive and informative In-depth Study where students could present and elaborate a range of ideas and opinions.

The word count is specified for each task of the In-depth Study and must be respected. Teachers and students are advised to keep within the word count as anything longer than this cannot be considered when assessed or moderated. Similarly, the oral presentation for the In-depth Study has a prescribed time limit, and anything over this limit is not assessed or moderated. The oral presentation is a required component and must be a presentation. There is no requirement for the audience to ask questions about the presentation.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

Students with the best responses used a variety of communication strategies, e.g. using new vocabulary encountered during the interaction, seeking clarification, using appropriate pause fillers. Many students used a number of communication strategies to maintain the interaction, e.g. self-correcting, responding to correction by the interlocutor, seeking support and clarification with occasional pauses to process questions and to search for linguistic resources.

Conversation

Students were generally able to handle a range of basic topics adequately. There was a wide range of achievement, and the majority of students were aware of the topics they were likely to encounter. However, there were some responses that were very limited and further information had to be elicited through extended questioning.

Some students stood out as they spoke with ease and fluency and were able to elaborate their ideas and opinions without intervention from the examiners.

Examiners did note that there was some confusion between *fois* and *temps* and that the word *passetemps* was not always understood.

Responses mostly conveyed the appropriate detail, ideas and information and interested and engaged the examiners. Most students addressed the questions directly and adequately. At times, some students anticipated the question incorrectly and responded inappropriately. Students are encouraged to listen carefully to questions asked.

There was a wide range of achievement in relation to the depth of ideas, information and opinions. The more able students elaborated their ideas through additional details and opinions but some students did not take the opportunity to elaborate their answers despite being given the opportunity by the examiners. Examiners observed that some students were not able to discuss what they enjoyed or what was important to them when discussing topics such as overseas travel.

Examiners encourage students to prepare and master a wider range of vocabulary and frequently used verbs e.g. *faire*, *aller* to limit problems with tenses, gender and content. Cohesive devices were simple and repetitive at times.

Discussion

Many students were prepared and keen to present their topic with the optional one-minute introduction, and the subsequent Discussion showed evidence of thorough and in-depth research and preparation. The range of vocabulary was generally wide and sophisticated, indicating a good understanding of their chosen topic. However, some students displayed very limited preparation and basic, superficial knowledge about their topic. There seemed to be a very heavy reliance on the internet as the source of information. Students are encouraged to source their information from a variety of resources.

Examiners noted that more contemporary and challenging topics such as 'Changes in modern French language' or 'The changing role of women in French society' allowed students to express opinions and engage in an authentic discussion with examiners.

Topics such as '*Les desserts français*' or '*le fromage*' are narrow and limited and do not lead to much in-depth discussion.

Generally students' comments were relevant to their topic. Most responded well to the headings on their summary sheet as the dot points related logically to their topic. Students and teachers are encouraged to carefully consider the dot points included on their support sheet for appropriateness and cohesion.

Students and teachers are reminded that this component is part of an in-depth study during which the student has thoroughly researched a topic or aspect of French or Francophone culture and society and formed opinions about what they have learned and discovered. This represents work done during the year and students are expected to have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their chosen topic. Opinions should be justified with examples from the research accompanied by analysis of findings. This was not always evident in the discussions. '*C'était très intéressant*' is not a justification.

Written Examination

Listening and Responding

The overall performance in this section was very good with most students scoring in the A and B range; there were, however, some very low marks which reduced the average scores.

Question 1: Most students correctly responded, and only a few did not give enough examples of advantages.

Question 2: A few did not mention the end of the school year, or specify the emotions described. It was necessary to say why Bernard did not like the films. Most students mentioned the main points, but left out essential details such as the name of the DVD, the time they would meet and that Anne would bring drinks.

Question 3: The vast majority scored full marks for this question; those who did not omitted to state the need to be fashionable in order to be accepted by others.

Question 4: Students found this question the most difficult to answer as they did not have the vocabulary to name the strategies used by the speaker and describe the tone of the speech. Students showed that they had understood the content of the speech, but the majority of marks related to its style.

Question 5: This text was quite challenging. A number of students misunderstood the points that were made and often generalised from their own knowledge and experiences instead of providing examples drawn from the dialogue. It is important to listen carefully to the whole text and not go off on a tangent inspired by a word or phrase heard and understood.

Reading and Responding A

Students found the text about General de Gaulle very difficult and few scored full marks for this section. They need to be able to interpret the information given and analyse how it is expressed as well as showing their understanding of the facts provided.

It is also very important to read the questions carefully and ensure that the answers relate directly to what the question is asking.

Question 6(a): Students should have mentioned that in 2005, French people voted for de Gaulle as the greatest man in their history. If students thought that the order of the questions related to the sequence of the text, this may have been challenging for them as that information was at the end of the text. However, there were other points that could have been made: he was a war hero who inspired the Resistance; or he was a strong president.

Question 6(b): This question was very rarely correctly answered. The two points that students needed to make were that the anniversary of de Gaulle's call to resist on 18 June 1940 is still commemorated today and that his philosophy '*Gaullisme*' remains at the heart of French politics.

Question 6(c): Students seem to lack the vocabulary necessary to describe the parts of speech used for effect in texts. In this answer, it was necessary to mention that

strong adjectives (including superlatives) and nouns are used and then give some examples, e.g. '*essentielle*', '*grande passion patriotique*', '*a incarne la France libre et resistente*', '*le plus grand home*'.

Question 6(d): Students tended to focus on what the people did (demonstrating in the street) and what de Gaulle then did (retired humiliated), rather than answering the question which was 'what led to' these events. The points required were that de Gaulle's government was indifferent to the demands of the people and he himself had become ineffective as he had been too long in power.

The text about the presidential elections in the form of blogs was much better handled as the prose was not continuous and the language was much less challenging. Far more students scored full marks in this section. It is important to note, however, that English expression can make a difference to scores. If students do not express their understanding clearly it is not always possible to give them credit for their answer.

Question 7(a): Most students mentioned unemployment, but some found it difficult to express that the other issue was cynicism about politicians. If they managed to convey this concept using different words, their answers were accepted.

Question 7(b): The majority of students were able to identify at least 3 features and the best students described all of them. However, a number of students misinterpreted the question which asked them to generalise about the characteristics of all the blogs as a whole. Many students took each blog separately and listed its stylistic features rather than talking about what characterises blogs in general. If the stylistic features of each blog were correctly identified, credit was given.

The points looked for were: all blogs have a provocative title (either a question or an exclamation); most blogs use short sentences, typical of conversational language; slang is used; exclamations and questions are used to suggest the intensity of the feeling expressed; they make their point quickly and succinctly (they are short); they all include the date, the author's name, age and town of residence.

Question 7(c): Nearly every student was able to answer this question giving appropriate supporting evidence. Some excellent responses provided substantial justification.

Reading and Responding B

Students generally coped quite well with the task, but there were very few A or A+ responses. About 25% of students wrote very solid responses in the A to B+ range, approximately 35% scored in the range B to C+, while 25% scored C, C- or D+. There were few students beyond this range, although the task proved very difficult for some.

The biggest problem of a general nature was that many students failed to write enough, some only achieving half the length. The depth and breadth of treatment required is unlikely to be found in a shorter response.

Almost all students understood that they had to write a speech, but the context was not always explicitly explained in the opening remarks which often did not make the audience clear. '*Mesdames and messieurs*' is not the best way to open a speech given at a school assembly. Students need to give more careful thought to the matter

of audience and make sure that linguistic features and style are appropriate for the audience specified. A number of students misunderstood the purpose of the speech.

There is a need for students to understand what context, audience and purpose are and to ensure that the features of the text type required are adhered to. Although most responses were quite coherent and logically developed, they did not attempt to engage the audience in any way; which is an essential aspect of a speech.

Students were generally able to identify most of the relevant characteristics which made the person of their choice suitable for the conference, but many failed to mention the desire of this person to 'broaden horizons/make a difference/meet people from other parts of the world'. Sometimes students moved away from the purpose of the speech and gave irrelevant information about their person's prowess at sport or academic ability.

Many students were content to make a list of the qualities of their chosen person without developing these qualities or giving anecdotal evidence of them. Within 250 words, it is not possible to develop every idea/quality, but some development of some points is expected, and this was a major differentiating factor between A and B responses.

There were few responses which demonstrated linguistic sophistication or used the cohesive devices one would associate with a speech (e.g. firstly, in addition, did you know, you have surely noticed). Many responses contained basic errors in expression and many were not organised into paragraphs.

Writing in French

The majority of students answered question 10, with 32% choosing question 9 and only 14% doing question 11. Most students interpreted the questions well, although there was a wide range of marks both in ideas and expression. Most students scored in the C range with a very few in the D and E. Approximately 45% of students achieved in the A and B range.

The students who achieved in the A range wrote relevant, interesting, accurate and well-structured texts. The best responses contained original ideas, were creative, fluent and authentic. Overall, the top responses dealt with the questions with depth and the students were able to elaborate and support their opinions.

Some answers were too short and superficial; too often there were no links between paragraphs, or no paragraphs at all.

Expression varied, with many students successfully using the subjunctive, but basic errors being made with the *passé composé*, articles, direct and indirect object pronouns. Generally, the range of vocabulary used was not wide and adjectives, conjunctions and adverbs were often repeated. Students should aim for variety in structures and vocabulary, writing well-connected texts, using effective cohesive devices.

Question 9: Very few students used the appropriate format and language for a report which should have an introduction, sub-headings, a conclusion and be written in formal language. There was a tendency to write a letter rather than a report and some students wrote in far too informal language. It was necessary to refer to all the aspects of the camp listed in the question and also to give details about personal benefits and future plans. Some students misread the question and did not write

about a language camp in a French-speaking country. On the whole, students who chose this question did not score as well as those who chose questions 10 and 11.

Question 10: In general, the diary entry format was well done, but many students made basic mistakes in writing the date and a few students wrote letters instead of diary entries. Some students made an excellent start and also finished strongly, but were much less fluent in the body of the writing which gave the impression that pre-learnt material had been used. Other diary entries did not include reflection on the week's work experience, but instead focussed on the career. There are risks that by using pre-learnt material students will not meet the criteria for relevance and cohesion. The best responses addressed the diary directly more than once, used reflective language, rhetorical questions and speculation, expressing feelings and impressions as well as facts.

Question 11: Students who chose this topic scored a higher proportion of As than for the other topics as it gave them scope to use a wider range of vocabulary and enabled the best of them to engage in some quite poetic description of people, places and feelings. In some cases, the story was not relevant to the picture.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

The learning and assessment plan (LAP) must accurately reflect the work included in the package. The addendum is to be used for any changes to the tasks as outlined in the LAP. Teachers are encouraged to use the Variations – Moderation Materials form to identify any missing tasks from a student's sample.

The oral presentation and the written task should be clearly described in the In-depth Study; outlining topic, context, purpose, audience and text type.

Recording of the Folio: Interaction and the In-depth Study: Oral Presentation are required and teachers are encouraged to record each student separately and for the CD and tracks to be clearly identified. Teachers are encouraged to check the recordings to ensure that they are audible and accessible.

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