



**GCSE**  
**French**

8658/WH Paper 1 Writing Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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## General Points

The overall performance of students this year was very pleasing. As in previous series, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The quality of work produced across the paper and especially in the responses to Question 1 was extremely impressive. Students were able to produce extended pieces of writing that included a range of tenses and a wide variety of language. They were also very skilled in expressing and explaining their opinions. This enabled them to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria for questions 1 and 2. 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 if students produced much longer responses than the suggested word count and/or attempted to include a level of complexity of language not commensurate with their ability, thereby creating more scope for error. In addition, an occasional lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and the inability to respond to the targeted rubrics and bullet points sometimes impacted negatively on marks awarded.

## Question 1

Teachers are reminded that 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. The vast majority of students were able to respond well to this question, with many producing extended pieces of writing that communicated a lot of information clearly. They were aware of the need to develop their responses, to produce three time frames and to express at least two opinions. On the whole they were successful in achieving this. As in previous series, students were less successful if they incorrectly interpreted or omitted bullet points or if they produced inappropriate 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 that creates a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’) impacts negatively on the marks awarded for content. 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. Students were aware of the need to produce three-time frames and it was pleasing to note that the vast majority of students were able to communicate these successfully.

## Question 1.1

Nearly all students understood the requirements of the question and managed to address all the bullet points with a good degree of success. The topic is very familiar with students, and they were able to produce some well-constructed, extended pieces of writing. On the whole, students successfully produced a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 ‘*vos activités pendant votre temps libre*’ provided the vast majority of students with the opportunity to produce extended responses. Bullet point 2 ‘*votre opinion des réseaux sociaux*’ was well covered with some excellent developments. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in previous series, a small number of students were

not successful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers ‘*un week-end récent*’ and ‘*vos projets pour la semaine prochaine*’ and therefore the required time frames could not be credited.

### Question 1.2

The vast majority of students were able to produce extended pieces of writing addressing the bullet points effectively and developing their responses. As with 1.1, they were also able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Although bullet point 1 ‘*votre jour préféré au collège*’ elicited many detailed responses that included a variety of opinions, in some cases the word *jour* was either incorrectly interpreted as *jouer* or disregarded altogether, with some students writing about favourite aspects of school that did not relate to the days of the week. Bullet point 2 was successfully addressed. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in 1.1, some students were unsuccessful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers ‘*la récréation hier*’ and ‘*vos préférences pour vos études futures*’ thereby not successfully referring to the required time frames.

### 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, different ways of expressing opinions, for example, *j’adore, j’aime, j’apprécie, je préfère*, together with a greater variety of adjectives such as *c’est génial/fantastique/amusant/super/nul*, infinitive constructions, a variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses such as *je pense que, ma mère dit que* or *mon père pense que*, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. As in previous series, at this tier, simple expression was often the most successful. Again, some students were determined to include set structures and/or idiomatic expressions that had been recommended by teachers with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, sometimes inaccurate production of these structures and expressions led to a lack of clarity, which impacted negatively on marks. As in previous series, less successful language also included inaccurate tense formation and occasional inappropriate use of the infinitive.

### Advice to students

- Choose the question where you know what all the bullet points mean.
- Check each bullet point to make sure you know which ones require reference to the PAST or FUTURE.
- 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 ‘*hier, la semaine prochaine*’.
- Practise writing in three different tenses. Pick a theme/subject and write the same sentence in 3 tenses: *D’habitude/normalement... La semaine dernière/hier ... À l’avenir/ le weekend prochain...*
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives *votre/vos* to *mon/ma/mes*.
- Learn basic recyclable verb phrases that you can use in many topics eg *je vais/je suis allé/j’ai joué/je voudrais aller*
- Make sure sentences are well formed rather than trying to pre-learn complex phrases.
- 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 with a good level of complexity and accuracy.

**Content**

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail related to 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, many students demonstrated their ability to produce extended pieces of writing that included regular development of ideas. They were also highly skilled in expressing and justifying opinions. However, where students were less successful, this was when inaccuracy, mainly with verbs and tense formations, led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’) and this impacted negatively on marks awarded.

**Question 2.1**

This was by far the most popular choice with students. The quality of responses seen was generally high. The vast majority of students were able to write successfully about both the positive and negative aspects of holidays. There were many examples of extended pieces of writing offering opinions and justifications about various aspects of holidays including holiday destinations, experiencing different cultures and spending time with family and/or friends. Negative aspects tended to relate mainly to the cost of going on holiday or relationship issues with others. Where a minority of students were unsuccessful, it was because they failed to address both the positive and negative aspects of holidays. Students addressed bullet point 2 very well. This is a topic that is well-known and widely taught and students were able to include information about past holidays with a great deal of detail.

**Question 2.2**

This question proved less popular with students but those who attempted it addressed it well with the vast majority of students able to address both bullet points successfully. For bullet point 1, problems mentioned tended to be about negative relationships with and/or negative opinions about friends or disagreements with friends about free-time activities. There were also some highly successful responses to bullet point 2 with references to travel, future career or lifestyle choices mainly relating to healthy living. However, where a minority of students were unsuccessful, it was because they used an inappropriate tense or verb form which could not be credited as successfully addressing the bullet point.

**Quality of language**

The key elements of the assessment criteria for Quality of language include the variety of language produced and the ability to produce complex sentences with a degree of confidence. It is worth reminding teachers that reference is not made to time frames or a variety of tense usage in the criteria, but including these is considered to be an attempt at complexity. The majority of students were able to produce a variety of tenses such as present (including subjunctive), perfect, imperfect, future and conditional tenses.

Students were also able to produce a variety of language, which included a range of connectives; *quand, si, même si, bien que, pour que, afin que, quoique, parce que, car*. A good variety of adjectives, intensifiers, adverbs and subordinate clauses were also widely seen, including ‘*je pense que, je trouve que*’ and ‘*je crois que*’ followed by ‘*parce que, car*’ or ‘*puisque*’. Similarly, modal verbs and other infinitive constructions were accurately produced, and the use of object pronouns was also successful. Other attempts at complexity included language such as ‘*il me semble que, selon moi/ma mère (etc), je dirais que, je le trouve*’ and ‘*il faut dire que*’. Teachers are reminded that for the highest marks, students must demonstrate the ability to handle more complex sentences with confidence. However, as in previous series, there were many students who attempted to include complex set phrases and/or idiomatic expressions and had either overused the same phrases, used them inappropriately or had not been able to reproduce them accurately thereby producing complex structures that could not be seen as being successful.

### Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations, and the different types of errors made by students. Teachers are reminded that ‘major’ errors are those that impede communication, and ‘minor’ errors, although they are still inaccuracies, do not. As in previous series, the majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Major errors included inaccurate tense formations and/or the inappropriate use of infinitives. Common 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*) and which bullet point targets a different time frame.
- Keep sentences simple and only include complex expressions which you feel 100% confident using. Make sure sentences are well formed rather than trying to be over ambitious.
- Check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.
- Check singulars and plurals of verbs and adjectives.
- 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 nearly all students able to score some marks.

### Conveying key messages

Key message	Comments
I spend a lot of time	Generally well done although <i>passer</i> was not known by some students.
with my cousin because	Generally well done.
we get on well together.	The use of the reflexive verb caused issues here, and often the reflexive pronoun was either omitted or incorrect. <i>ensemble</i> was quite often omitted.
Sometimes we go	'Sometimes' was not known by a number of students with <i>souvent</i> incorrectly provided. Some students were unable to conjugate <i>aller</i> accurately.
to the old market	Many students did not know <i>vieux</i> and/or <i>marché</i> .
but last week	<i>week-end</i> was sometimes incorrectly substituted for <i>emaine</i> .
we chose to do	<i>choisi</i> was not often produced successfully with many students writing <i>on a decide</i> .
our homework in the library.	<i>devoirs</i> was widely known but in many cases the possessive adjective 'our' was either omitted or incorrect.
It was well equipped	Some students did not know the word <i>équipé</i> .
and I saw a website for a charity.	In some cases students did not know the word for 'charity' or incorrectly used the word <i>charité</i> .
If I could,	<i>je pourrais</i> was often used instead of <i>je pouvais</i> .
I would like to help	Generally well done.
the homeless in my town.	Generally well done.

### 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. Inaccurate language was therefore taken into consideration when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Even when key messages had been successfully conveyed, where several minor errors occurred, this often led to the mark for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures being lower than the mark for conveying key messages. For example, language such as '*je passe beaucoup de temps, on s'entend bien ensemble, on a choisi de faire nos devoirs dans la bibliothèque, j'ai vu une site web*' were either 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 (*quelquefois, la semaine dernière*), connectives (*mais, parce que*), possessives (*nos, mon, ma*) and prepositions (*au, dans*).
- 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.