

# **Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**J030/J130/J730/R/11**

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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## **CONTENTS**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**French (J730)**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)**

**French Spoken Language (J030)**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)**

**French Written Language (J130)**

## **EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

<b>Unit/Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Chief Examiner's Report	1
A701 Listening	2
A702 Speaking	4
A703 Reading	6
A704 Writing	8

## **Chief Examiner's Report**

This was the first full year of the new specification for GCSE French, only a small entry having been made in 2010 when the previous specification was still being offered. Centres are to be commended on their adaptation to the new specification and their preparation of candidates for the new style of examination.

## A701 Listening

### General Comments

The listening examination was generally well answered. Rubrics were followed well and the majority of candidates attempted all the questions. For the most part candidates were entered for the appropriate tier.

Candidates made good use of the five minutes' reading time; they had underlined key words or written the French for some of the icons. The presence of unfamiliar vocabulary in the recordings (a requirement of the new specification) does not appear to have caused undue difficulty for candidates.

There were some cases of unclear handwriting in the open-ended questions and individual letters in the objective exercises. It is important that candidates write as clearly as possible and make any changes to their answers equally clear so that there is no doubt as to which answer is to be marked.

### FOUNDATION TIER

**Exercise 1:** Candidates generally made a confident start on this exercise. Not all seemed to be familiar with *vêtements* (Question 2) and there were occasional problems in identifying *lire un livre* (Question 7) but the remaining items posed no problems.

**Exercise 2:** This exercise differentiated well. Candidates were generally successful in identifying *quarante ans* on Question 9 but there were occasional errors on Question 10 where *dessiner* was not known by all. On Question 11 the word *drôle* was not always known but all candidates were successful in identifying *le rugby* on Question 12. The two questions about Marielle (Question 13 and 14) were well answered. On Question 15 the word *sympa* was not known by some candidates. Many candidates selected option A ("old") perhaps assuming that this was the likely characteristic for a grandfather. On Question 16 the verb *dormir* was generally well understood.

**Exercise 3:** Candidates were required to give brief answers in English, based on people talking about holidays, which many were able to do. On Question 17 the phrase *au bord de la mer* was well known, although there was occasional confusion for those who took the final word to be *mère* and offered answers about Mme. Arnaud's visiting her mother. The phrase *deux semaines* (Question 17 (b)) was very well understood. On Question 18 (i) *montagne* was not always known and some assumed the word to be a place name rather than the geographical feature. On Question 18 (ii) the word *oncle* was not as well known as might have been expected and guesses such as "brother" were fairly common. On Question 19 (i) the word *amis* was familiar to most who recognised that, as the key phrase was "*des amis*", the plural was required. On Question 19 (ii) *bateau* was well identified. The final question (Question 20) proved more demanding. Not all candidates recognised Corsica as a place and there were frequent guesses. The word *nourriture* was quite well known (although some heard it as *nature*) but the phrase *ça ne coûte pas cher* proved more difficult.

**Exercise 4:** This exercise discriminated well. This was the first of the "crossover" exercises (constituting Ex. 1 at Higher Tier). Foundation Tier candidates scored well on Question 26 (*c'est ennuyeux*) and Question 27 (*le terrain de sports et le gymnase*). The phrase *trop de travail* in Question 21 was also well identified. Candidates found some of the phrases difficult, such as *commencent trop tôt* (Question 24) and *les élèves sont tous très gentils* (Question 28).

**Exercise 5:** The final exercise proved to be fairly challenging for Foundation Tier candidates. The best-answered questions were Question 29 Part 2 (*je fais la cuisine*) and Question 31 Parts 1 and 2 (*chercher du travail* and *sortir au cinéma*) but candidates often had difficulty in identifying *me détendre* (Question 30) and *j'apprends à conduire.....une leçon de conduite* (Question 32). The copying of answers from the list was generally clear and unambiguous. If there were any small errors of copying or omission of minor words (e.g. "watching film"), these were not penalised as long as it was clear to the examiner what the candidate's intended answer was. Unfamiliar vocabulary on this exercise was supported by familiar vocabulary. For example *je vais préparer un ragoût* was supported by *je fais la cuisine* (Question 29) and *j'ai dévoré un roman américain* was supported by *j'ai lu* (Question 32). None of the unfamiliar items such as *de fond en comble*, *bouquins*, *c'est déprimant* etc. were tested in isolation.

## HIGHER TIER

**Exercise 1:** Higher Tier candidates answered very well on this exercise.

**Exercise 2:** Performance on this exercise by Higher Tier candidates was better as expected, but a few candidates experienced some problems, largely on Question 10 and Question 12.

**Exercise 3:** This was well answered, with the majority getting high or full marks. The item on weather (Question 14) was sometimes incorrectly matched, as was the item about a fire (Question 19) for which "crime" was sometimes selected.

**Exercise 4:** These two news items about dogs proved to be challenging and thus a good discriminating test. Correct answers were dependent on clear comprehension of the content. On **Item A**, most were successful in identifying *un petit bureau de poste* on Question 21. Candidates who deduced (Question 22) information from *voleur, menaçant l'employé* or *une arme à feu* gave a correct answer but some assumed that the dog was the source of fear. Question 23 required understanding of the phrase *s'est jeté hors de son panier* or the concept of the dog's jumping at the thief. Guesses here, usually involved the dog's biting the man. Question 24 required understanding of the phrase *le voleur....a pris sa fuite*. Incorrect answers often suggested that the man fell, through imperfect understanding of the phrase *le voleur....a laissé tomber son arme*.

**On Item B** there were fair numbers of correct answers for Question 25, testing the phrase *plusieurs chiens utilisaient le métro* but sometimes the answer was invalidated by the inclusion of alternative forms of transport. Candidates who had understood *gens qui leur donnent à manger* successfully rendered the concept of the dogs being given food by people in the town centre. Question 27 was quite well answered (incorrect transport was not penalised here if the error had already been made in Question 25). The final question required comprehension of the concept *attendent....que le feu change au vert avant de traverser* and proved to be a very good discriminator.

**Exercise 5:** This multiple-choice exercise, designed to test grade A\*, discriminated very well. Candidates were able to correctly match *saut en hauteur* and *nulle* to "no good". Question 31 required candidates to infer meaning from the phrase *quand on gagnait ce n'est pas moi qui recevais la coupe*. Question 32 was designed to test the ability to draw conclusions about Maryse's character and was well answered. Question 33 was fairly well answered but some candidates offered answer B on hearing *aucune médaille*. Question 34 tested understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary (*le trac*), with the possibility to surmise the answer through comprehension of the accompanying material. Question 35 was reasonably well answered but some were led to answer A and the phrase *on ne gagnait pas vraiment sa vie avec* was not readily understood. The final question tested understanding of Maryse's overall view of life. The answer "pessimistic" rather than "practical" was quite often chosen here by candidates who failed to understand in full Maryse's statement about finding work at a time when it was difficult to make a living from athletics.

## A702 Speaking

In the first full year of this specification, it has been extremely encouraging to see how well prepared the students have been for the introduction of Controlled Assessment and also to see the range of tasks submitted by centres.

Centres had followed the guidelines and there was clear evidence that internal moderation had taken place. The submission of marks was straightforward and there were no delays in the process. Unfortunately in some cases, the marks for Task 2 were entered on the Task 1 mark sheet and vice versa which caused some delay in moderation.

In summary the materials required are:

- recording of Task 1 for each candidate in the sample requested (either on CD or via the Repository)
- Candidates' Notes Forms for both Task 1 and Task 2 for the candidates in the sample requested
- cover sheet for each candidate in the sample requested
- CCS160 – Centre Authentication Form
- moderator's copy of the MS1 (mark sheets)

Candidates were encouraged to use familiar purposes for the Controlled Assessment and the most common were:

- presentation on a theme followed by a discussion
- an interview (usually the candidate played the part of somebody famous and could thus draw on different topic areas of the specification)
- a general conversation
- a role play – either an extended role play, such as buying clothes or requesting tourist information about an area
- a narrative role play using visual cues

Teacher/Examiners were skilful in using their knowledge of their own candidates and appropriate questioning techniques. The most successful of the Presentation and Discussion style tasks made sure that candidates spoke for no longer than three minutes and that candidates were able to demonstrate their ability to understand unexpected questions and respond to them.

There were some excellent Presentations and the best of these lasted for perhaps two or two and a half minutes. When Presentations were too long, it left little time for the candidate to show what they could do and what they knew. The whole task should last between four and six minutes (the introduction by the Teacher/Examiner does not count). It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of Teacher/Examiners adhered to the recommended timing. Where Assessments were considerably longer, it was clear that candidates could not sustain the level of input and the quality of their work deteriorated.

The recording quality was usually superb and there were no problems with CDs sent in the post as they had been adequately wrapped to prevent damage. The position of the candidate in relation to the microphone is important. If he/she is too far away, the recording, no matter how excellent the equipment, will still be faint and, therefore, difficult to assess. The recordings sent to the Repository were clearly identifiable and were also of excellent quality. A worthwhile precaution was to check that recordings had saved correctly as this saved much time and effort later.

## *Examiners' Reports - June 2011*

Identification of candidates was quick and easy when each recording was labelled with either the candidate's name and candidate number, or the Centre and candidate numbers. In some centres, Teacher/Examiners had included the title of the Controlled Assessment in the file name, which was helpful. When recordings were only labelled as "Track 1" or "Track 2", it took some time to identify the correct recording for the candidates.

The working mark sheets were correctly filled in with the marks for Task 1 and Task 2. The Speaking Notes Forms for the candidates were correctly submitted and showed that the candidates had used the correct number of prompts. It is good practice for candidates to have some notes to refer to in case they struggle in the test situation.



## A703 Reading

### General Comments

There was a range of performance on the Reading paper across both tiers and candidates coped well with the tasks set. Candidates who read the texts carefully and based their answers exactly on what they read did better than those who tried to apply common sense or existing knowledge to their answers.

### Foundation Tier

#### Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

There was a high degree of success for candidates with this task of giving a meaning to signs, notices and messages. Question 1 provided many correct answers but a range of days of the week were given. "Carefully" was often given as an answer to Question 7 and "Village" was often seen as an answer to Question 8.

#### Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

Overall this question which required the choice of person against work and free-time statements was well answered. No discernable pattern of incorrect answers was seen. Only Question 16 proved to be problematic, as candidates confused *libre* with *livre* and guessed answer C instead of answer A.

#### Exercise 3: Questions 17-22

This exercise about French Guiana was reasonably discriminating. In Question 18 *côte* posed some problems and it was uncommon to see both answers correct. "Beach" was a common answer for Question 18. For Question 19 very few candidates recognised *pays*. For Question 21 "plants" was a common incorrect answer followed by "insects".

### Foundation / Higher Tier

#### Exercise 4: Questions 23-30 / Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

Candidates who read and compared the texts carefully were rewarded with good marks in this exercise and it proved to be a good test, especially at Foundation level. Here, Question 25 was incorrect more often than anticipated and Questions 26 and 29 caused difficulty for some. Many foundation tier candidates answered Question 28 as "Monique" whereas at higher tier many answered "Both". It was recognised that the text could be seen as ambiguous due to the negative nature of the sentiments surrounding the use of the computer as written by Kama i.e. "they argued intensely about this". The negativity may have seemed to candidates to be at odds with a hobby. Therefore "Monique" and "Both" were accepted as answers. Many higher tier candidates found no great problem with this exercise, Questions 27-30 were often seen as a trio of correct answers.

#### Exercise 5: Questions 31-36 / Exercise 2: Questions 9-14

This was a good testing final exercise for foundation tier candidates who often gave answers close to the intended response but which lacked qualifying details. At Higher tier these two exercises differentiated well between candidates.

Question 9/31: Candidates who gave an incorrect answer opted for "in the centre".

Question 10/32: Many gave a correct response particularly at Higher Tier. At Foundation Tier there were instances of candidates not giving an answer.

Question 11/33: Many candidates gave the answer "same as his brother". Some centred their answer on *carrière* and suggested "courier, carrier/postman".

Question 12/34: There was some difficulty here as candidates were unable to express *cong * appropriately.

Question 13/35 (a) and (b): Both marks were often achieved, particularly by higher tier candidates who showed understanding of the detail of the text. "Beautiful" was almost universally known, but was sometimes used incorrectly to refer to the shops rather than the "things". Similarly, "expensive" was commonly known, but some answers lacked the critical "too".

Question 14/36 (a) and (b): Some candidates did not understand *bilingue* or, if they did, thought that French and English were spoken in Brussels. Many coped well with the accent being funny, but some thought it was "weird", "hard", "boring" or "tedious". However, they were less successful with the concept that Thomas understood the language perfectly. Only the best candidates gave all the correct answers. A few invalidated the last answer by stating that he understood a bit or that he was bilingual with French / English.

## Higher Tier

### Exercise 3: Questions 15-22

Many candidates did well on this exercise. Question 20 and Question 22 were sometimes problematic; some candidates thought that *maison* in the last sentence of the text held the key to the answer, but that *plus propre* meant being "more appreciative".

### Exercise 4: Questions 23-28

This was an exercise that differentiated well. Attention to detail in reading a text of this length and complexity is required to demonstrate comprehension at this level. The exercise also required close reading of the questions and precise responses in English. Some candidates were only successful on one part of Question 27 and Question 28. Questions 23-28 were good differentiators. Only some candidates understood *ordonnance*, *conseil* and *blessures*.

Question 23: Prescription was not a well-known vocabulary item. Some stated that the pharmacist's job was to dispense them without showing understanding of the text.

Question 24: Candidates were fairly successful with this question, although *malade* led many to think that Victor had replaced a bad pharmacist.

Question 25: Candidates were reasonably successful with this question, although in some cases "students" and "foreigners" were offered as answers. Some candidates gave "going on holiday" as an answer and some did not recognise the word "tourists".

Question 27 (a) and (b): These were perceived to be the most challenging questions on the paper. The principle for the correct response for (a) was the idea of stock control and several different ways of expressing this were accepted. In the other part of the question, the idea was that of eliminating errors.

Question 28: This was often answered correctly, but some candidates tried to include the idea of his not having time to rest which could not be allowed.

### Exercise 5: Questions 29-36

At this level candidates are expected to be able to cope with longer and quite complex sequences of text and to understand difficult vocabulary. They should be able to work out the meaning from the context and as is mentioned on page 13 of the specification "should read for gist comprehension".

Questions 29, 30, 31, 35 and 36 produced the highest success rate in this exercise. In Question 32 *la grasse matin e* was not always understood; *grasse* was often mistaken for *grosse* which led to incorrect selection of A. In Question 33 "*habitudes*" seemed to be a stumbling block for some candidates. To get the correct answer, candidates had to associate *un bon roman* with *lire*.

## **A704 Writing**

### **General comments**

There were many successful pieces of writing this year which clearly revealed a pleasure in language learning and a sense of genuine achievement. A good number of centres have adjusted well to the demands of this new specification and have embraced the opportunities which it offers.

### **Writing notes forms**

The Candidate's Notes Form is a vital part of the preparation process. Candidates may choose not to use this form, but it is good practice to do so. Some candidates had been well prepared in how to make good use of this form. Various strategies for the preparation and successful use of the Note's Form are available on the OCR website.

### **Task titles**

The new specification is designed to allow centres to create tasks appropriate to the ability and learning experience of their candidates. Centres are free to base the tasks on the exemplars in the specification or to create open-ended tasks which give freedom of response to candidates.

It is a task title not a topic area that is required.

To provide a more meaningful experience for candidates and to remove the formulaic nature of previous examination and coursework tasks, candidates need only declare a title. Each response is assessed for relevance and coherence in relation to the declared title; no marks are withheld for omission of details. The new specification sets out to encourage individuality of response, to move away from dictated content and to allow maximum opportunities for student/centre choice. In addition the new assessment criteria place less emphasis on rigid production of language and a "variety of structures" is required rather than strictly 3 tenses.

There was a measure of caution in the choice of tasks in this first full year of a new specification. Holidays, school, leisure activities, home and family, home area were all frequently seen. Healthy living and environmental issues were explored by some centres and the nature of these latter topics allowed for more detailed and frequent expression of opinions and justifications, which allowed candidates to demonstrate the skills required by the top bands for Communication. Film reviews were quite a popular choice. Many candidates could have benefited from more knowledge of the necessary technical vocabulary. Also, a lot of answers included a predominance of English words, as titles and the names of characters and actors.

There was some evidence of excessive over-preparation which resulted in candidates producing substantial sequences in which the detail and the language used were identical. Centres are reminded that form CSS160 guarantees that candidates have worked independently and that all work submitted has been produced according to the published guidelines.

## Task completion

Many candidates managed to produce effective and coherent responses within the recommended word count. There were some overlong pieces of work and these showed a lack of control of detail and language. Repetition and irrelevance in such responses sometimes meant that the piece did not reach the level which might have been achieved by a more concise and shorter exposition.

The word length is a recommendation, not a requirement; it is possible to produce work which demonstrates the skills and linguistic control identified in the top bands of the assessment criteria in fewer than 300 words.

Some candidates chose to submit a word processed piece. This is allowed within the specification. Care needs to be taken about accents and also about words having their spelling adjusted to that of an English word. Proofreading is essential, as examiners assess what is on the page and not what the candidate might have intended.

As a dictionary is the only resource available for the writing of the final draft, it is vital that candidates are trained to use one effectively. For example, some candidates attempted to find a translation for 'is'. Some dictionaries include 'is' as a head word, referring searchers to 'be'. Some candidates therefore used the infinitive instead.

Neatly presented work is a must as examiners can only assess what is legible.

## Communication

Candidates of all levels of ability are expected to express opinions and to attempt to justify them. Each task should offer such opportunities so that candidates do not just produce purely narrative pieces.

Many candidates had been trained to provide opinions and justifications. These were often expressed using *aimer, détester, préférer* and *c'est / c'était / ce sera / ce serait + adjective*. More ambitious candidates used *je pense que ... , je crois que ... , je trouve que ... , à mon avis ...*. Justifications were most frequently introduced by *car ...* and *parce que ...*. Some candidates were familiar with the use of *comme ...* and *puisque ...*. It is worth remembering that a justification can still be rewarded if it is in simple sentence form, without the use of a conjunction, for example; *Je déteste les devoirs. Je dois travailler deux heures tous les soirs, c'est trop.*

The best work, at all levels, was characterised by the well-ordered presentation of information in paragraphs: a reflection of careful training and good use of the preparation time.

## Quality of Language

Work which matched the criteria of the top bands demonstrated some confident use of a variety of structures and uses identified in the specification: secure use of a range of tenses, object pronouns, comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, present participles, perfect infinitives and a variety of subordinate clauses such as *qui, que, parce que, car, comme, puisque, quand, lorsque, où, or tandis que ...*. Well ordered narratives and arguments featured a range of connectives, adverbs and adverbial phrases. Use of prepositions seems to be an area to focus on in teaching.

Reference to idioms in the specification is not to colourful colloquial language but to the use of grammatical idioms, such as:

*J'ai 16 ans.*

*Mon frère a toujours faim.*

*Il fait froid en hiver.*

*J'étudie le français depuis 5 ans.*

*Je viens de commencer un petit job le week-end.*

*Il vaut mieux éviter le fast food.*

*J'adore les bandes dessinées de Tintin. Il s'agit toujours ...*

When colloquial idioms were introduced, they rarely added to the effectiveness of the message.

Some centres had introduced candidates to the subjunctive mood. In most instances this took the form of a set phrase which could be used in an argument at an appropriate point, in a number of cases it was clear that candidates had acquired an understanding of this form of the verb which allowed for more flexible use. It should be noted that this is not one of the linguistic features listed in the specification, but it is pleasing to see that candidates are being stretched to extend their active grammar.

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