



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	French
Level(s)	Standard Grade

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

There was, once again, a decrease in candidate presentation (around 4.5%). The performance of candidates in this year's examination was, once more, highly satisfactory in most papers, but there was a slight decrease in the number of candidates achieving an overall Grade 1 (down 1%) and cumulatively at Credit level (down 1.7%) compared to 2011. The number of Grade 7 awards was the lowest to date.

The papers were generally well received by candidates, and feedback from markers and centres has been positive.

In **Reading**, performance at all grades was very similar to last year.

The distribution of **Speaking** grades was virtually identical to 2011.

**Listening** performance was more disappointing at Grade 1, down on the previous three years. Cumulatively at Grades 1 and 2 there was parity with last year, however.

Performance in **Writing** also showed a dip at Grade 1, with 3.5% fewer candidates achieving this grade compared to 2011.

Markers continue to praise candidates for their efforts in all elements and at all levels.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

**Speaking** performance continues to be good at all levels. External verification provided very positive feedback on good practice. Candidates were well prepared for tasks and produced their best efforts.

In **Writing**, many candidates produced work of outstanding quality at Credit level and, where they truly engaged in the writing process, through improvements and redrafting. Although topics were, in the main, predictable there were many excellent pieces of writing where candidates expressed opinions and reasons well and topics were treated in a mature way; clearly a good preparation for Higher. There was also ample evidence of the use of idiomatic, complex language and structures.

Nevertheless, there are still too many essay 'clones' and pieces that have been over-learned, giving the impression sometimes of candidates not being fully aware of what they are writing.

At General and Foundation levels, candidates prepared well.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, candidates coped well with virtually all questions. At General level, Questions 1(a), 2, 3, 6 and 8(a) met with the greatest degree of success by both F/G and G/C cohorts. Once again, many candidates were 'nearly there' with a number of answers, but often missed out on a required, essential piece of detail. In the Credit paper, Questions 1(c), 4(a), 4(b), 4(d), 5(b) and 6(b) stood out as being well answered.

In **Listening** at Foundation level, almost all questions were answered extremely well. At General level, candidates scored particularly highly in Questions 1, 4, 5 and 9. In the Credit paper, performance was (as in 2011) more disappointing, but Questions 1 and 8(a) were very well answered.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

In **Writing**, many Markers continue to comment that able candidates are being disadvantaged by being set mundane topics such as 'Moi' ... 'Ma Routine' ... 'Ma Famille' ... Frequently, the language used by candidates tackling such topics dips to a basic level and leads to pieces not being truly developed.

Also, where candidates were asked to write pieces that were too lengthy, this certainly did not help their performance. Some centres still produce batches of writing that are very similar in the end result and clearly they have not allowed candidates to truly engage in the writing process to allow real individualisation.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, there were very few problems. Indeed, performance was excellent at this level. However, most candidates did not understand 'lance un deux' (Q3) or 'seule' (Q8). Lack of detail often failed to get the mark for the expressions 'beaucoup de magasins' and 'touristes français'.

At General level, a number of marks were again lost by use of poor English and/or insufficient detail in answers. Also, many candidates were too hasty in jumping to conclusions based on seeing individual words rather than looking at whole sentences or larger chunks of language. Questions 7(a), 8(a) and 10 proved to be the most testing. In Q7(a), the difficulty was with the expression 'pour les élèves qui ne partent pas en vacances' and in Q8(a) 'l'occasion d'apprendre de nouvelles choses'. In Q10 (worth 3 marks), many candidates gave only part of the answers required, thus not gaining points. There were issues, too, with certain 'faux amis', notably 'travailler' ... 'notes' ... 'stage' ... 'journée' ... 'frais' ... 'formation'.

At Credit level, Questions 1, 6(a) and 6(c) were the least well answered. In Q1, candidates who answered 'reads the newspaper', where the text says 'je lis les journaux' did not gain a point. 'Les gros titres' was glossed, yet a large number of candidates mentioned only preparing the headlines, rather than adding the key information 'qui vont attirer l'attention de l'auditeur'. Other language in Q1 that caused difficulty: 'tout ce que je dis est écrit' ... 'en direct' ... 'je m'occupe de' ... In Q6(a), the word 'cadre' seemed to be the problem, and in Q6(c) 'que leur enfant a grandi'.

Where candidates lost marks elsewhere in the paper, it was mainly down to giving insufficient details in answers or using poor English expression. Other words/expressions that caused difficulty were 'les auditeurs qui téléphonent' (Q1), 'à l'inverse de' (Q2), 'le chien de la star' (Q3 — a number of candidates thought this was a 'star dog'), 'une soirée pyjama' (Q4), 'quelqu'un se cache dans le noir' (Q4) (frequently translated as 'something'), 'saine et sauve' (Q4), 'sans demander' (Q5).

In **Listening**, there were very few issues at Foundation level. In Q4, 'à droite' was not well answered, the plural 'grandparents' was required in Q6, and knowledge of days of the week, numbers, times could still be improved. Also, 'ville' was often interpreted as 'village'.

At General level, a number of words/expressions caused varying degrees of difficulty — 'en car' (Q1), 'fatigant' (Q1), 'étages' (Q2), 'héberger cent personnes' (Q2), 'chauffée' (Q3). In the 'mention three things' in Q6, a large number of candidates lost all three points by not including a complete description of 'sandwich au jambon ... fromages de la region ... jus de pomme'. Candidates also found Q7 testing. As it was, marks were not given unless they included the correct weather matched to the correct time of day. Other difficulties: 'des cours intéressants' (Q10), 'un très bon sens de l'humour' (Q10), 'bien équipées' (Q11) and 'sortir avec mes copains' (Q12).

Performance at Credit level was, once again, disappointing. Although the context was different (the paper focused on the Olympic Games), the content was extremely varied and included many familiar topics and sub-topics. There were challenging expressions, and this is nothing new at Credit level, but not giving enough detail is still a major reason for candidates losing marks. Many answers were correct **as far as they went**, but were not sufficiently detailed to score marks, eg not mentioning **all** sports (Q1), **too much/a lot of** energy (Q2), **rich in** protein (Q4), **some/a few** days (Q6), a project on **the history of** cars (Q8), **lots of** clothes shops (Q10). Other language where candidates had difficulty: 'depuis l'âge de cinq ans' (Q1), 'dur' (Q3), 'jeux vidéo' (Q6), 'j'étudie les langues' (Q7), 'une croisière' (Q9), 'moins chers qu'en France' (Q10), 'la cérémonie d'ouverture des Jeux' (Q11), 'le dernier jour de compétition d'athlétisme' (Q12). Surprisingly, perhaps because of the wording of the question in Q5 and the order of words in text, the expression 'j'espère que mes parents seront fiers de moi' was very well understood by most!

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The advice to centres is very similar to that of recent years:

- ◆ Make sure that answers include detail at Credit level in both Reading and Listening. Pick out detail from longer chunks of language, rather than focusing on individual words. Get candidates to read/listen to the **whole** message.
- ◆ Train candidates to choose the correct meaning from a list of meanings in a dictionary and to beware of 'faux amis'.

- ◆ In Writing, make the task appropriate to the level of the candidate's ability. Allow more able candidates to really engage with the writing process to create personal pieces that allow them to express their own opinions and reasons and demonstrate their language skills.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### STANDARD GRADE

Number of resulted entries in 2011	23548
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	22022
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## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	16.5%
Grade 2	23.9%
Grade 3	23.6%
Grade 4	22.4%
Grade 5	10.7%
Grade 6	1.6%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.2%

### Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	26	16	11	32	18	12	33	20	13
L	25	15	10	26	14	9	27	16	12