



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	French
Level	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, this year, an 8% decrease in candidate presentation. The performance of candidates in this year's examination was highly satisfactory in most papers, with a similar number of candidates achieving an overall Grade 1 compared to 2010, and a 1% increase in awards at Grade 2. The number of Grade 7 awards was the smallest to date.

The papers were generally well received by candidates, and feedback from Markers and centres was, once again, positive.

In **Reading**, the percentage of candidates achieving a Grade 1 was slightly up on last year and cumulatively at Grades 1–2, the improvement on 2010 was 3.5%. Candidates performed less well at General level.

Speaking again showed a slight improvement at each of Grades 1–4 and. Being double-weighted, this impacted on overall performance.

Listening was very good at General and Foundation levels, but not so at Credit level. The Credit level performance was significantly poorer than in 2010 and is clearly an area for improvement.

The performance in **Writing** showed a slight improvement at Grade 1 and a 1% improvement at cumulative Grades 1–2.

Candidates were well prepared for the examination in all elements, with the main disappointment being achievement at Credit level in Listening.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Speaking performance continues to improve at all levels, with candidates preparing well for tasks and producing of their best.

In **Writing**, the improvement at Credit level was very pleasing, with many of the pieces being vibrant and refreshing in terms of style and content. At the upper level, the majority of candidates expressed opinions well, and the range of colloquialisms used was impressive. Where candidates really engaged in the writing process, the outcome was very satisfactory. Indeed, candidates performed well at all levels, although the range of topics chosen was narrower this year.

In **Reading**, at Foundation level, candidates coped well with almost all questions. At General level, Questions 1 and 5 were particularly well answered.

In the supported questions, there was a more mixed performance this year, probably due to the fact that all of these items were of the sentence-completion type and poor English expression let a number of candidates down. In the Credit paper, Questions 1 (b-d), 2 (b), 4

(a) and 6 (a-c) stood out as being very well answered, with candidates scoring particularly highly in Question 6 (b,c).

The performance in Foundation and General **Listening** was very heartening, particularly at Foundation level. At General level, most questions functioned well, with the exception of Q1, Q3, Q10 and Q12 (b). The performance at Credit level was disappointing, with only Questions 1 (a), 3 and 12 standing out as having been successfully tackled by most candidates.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Writing**, although the overall performance was very commendable, a significant number of candidates are still being disadvantaged when presented with mundane topics such as *Moi...Ma Famille...Mes Repas...Mes vêtements...* Frequently, in these cases, the language tends to be of a basic and repetitive nature. Occasionally, too, less able candidates struggled when set a topic that was clearly too difficult, eg on the environment or a film review.

There was a narrower range of topics evident this year, and there are still pieces of writing that have been developed to a narrow template. The topic of 'School' was the most popular — ranging from the very predictable (subjects, hours, likes/dislikes) to the exceptionally good where pros/cons of school rules and homework were introduced and other threads covered, eg plans for the future.

In **Reading**, at Foundation level, a number of candidates slipped up in Q1, interpreting *sable* as *shortbread* and looking at the word *jeux* instead of the whole *jeux vidéo*. Dictionary use again in Q5, with *port de pêche* sometimes mentioning *peaches* or *sin*. Overall, though, an excellent performance at this level.

At General level, a lot of marks were lost by the use of poor English or insufficient details in answers, including the supported questions, which were all of the sentence-completion type this year. Questions 9 and 10 caused most difficulties for both F/G and G/C cohorts with, again, lack of detail or poor expression losing marks. Finding the correct definition in a dictionary to fit the text was also a hindrance to many candidates, eg *propre* (Q2), *vaisselle* (Q4), *fête* (Q4), *cuisine* (Q5), *seuls* (Q5), *carte* (Q9).

In terms of lack of detail, a large number of candidates failed to give the complete message in *festivals de musique traditionnelle* (Q2), *on parle de tout* (Q3), *quand je travaille à l'ordinateur* (Q3), *chaises contre les murs* (Q5), *quatre heures par jour* (Q6), *se marient jeunes* (Q8), *créer des menus spéciaux* (Q9), *si je les aime, je les ajoute à la carte* (Q9).

In Q 10, candidates were frequently getting part of the message, but not enough to gain points. Also, small words such as *très*, *assez*, and *trop* were ignored. At Credit level, Questions 2 (b), 3 (a) and 5 (b) were least well answered.

Words/expressions which caused difficulty in the paper were *ils ont peur de se faire des amis...*, *qui ne laissent personne à côté...*, *la grasse matinée...*, *je renseigne sur les heures d'ouverture des musées...*, *la location de voitures...*, *dessiner le plan de Paris les yeux fermés...*, *me demandent...*, *je fais toujours de mon mieux...*, *pour faire fonctionner...*, *qui*

facilitent notre vie quotidienne..., *au lieu de...*...Lack of detail and weak expression in English also made a difference for a fair number of candidates.

In **Listening**, there was some knowledge of basic Language at Foundation level which could be improved (jobs, weather), but overall performance was very good.

At General level, language where difficulty was experienced included *coûtent très cher* (Q2), *en plein air* (Q4), *mettre la table* (Q6), *j'achète des vêtements* (Q8), *gagner des billets* (Q9), *la gare* (Q10), *nuages* (Q11).

Question 1 turned out to be very challenging. Very few candidates understood *l'uniforme, ce n'est pas pour moi*. Lack of a detailed response in Q5 penalised many candidates, who answered with only part of the message.

In the Credit paper, performance overall was disappointing. Candidates did find certain words/expressions challenging -- *ils ne pensent pas à leurs problèmes* (Q4), *tard* (Q6), *paresseux* (Q6), *il passe des heures à...* (Q6), *je n'ai plus envie de...*(Q8), *animée* (Q10), *distractions* (Q10), *espaces verts* (Q11), *circulation* (Q11). However, there were a significant number of more accessible words/expressions -- *trois semaines* (Q1), *tout près* (Q2), *je ne dois pas payer de transport* (Q2), *les journées passent très vite* (Q3), *de bonne humeur* (Q4), *devant l'église* (Q7), *une réduction de dix pour cent* (Q7), *les langues* (Q12). All of these seemed to cause some problems. On balance, the level of difficulty of the paper, and the detailed answers expected, was on a par with previous years. Clearly, the candidate performance was not. Apart from words/expressions being misunderstood, there was often insufficient detail in responses to gain the points.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

The advice to centres is similar to last year.

- ◆ Detailed answers are generally required at Credit level reading and Listening. Pay particular attention to words like *assez, très, trop, vraiment* and to negatives.
- ◆ Get candidates to read/listen to the **whole** message.
- ◆ Candidates should take care when using dictionaries where a word has more than one meaning.
- ◆ Beware of *faux amis*.
- ◆ Candidates should re-read their answers to make sure that they make sense and that English expression is as good as it can be.
- ◆ In Writing, at Credit level, beware of candidates underperforming where the topic is mundane — *Moi...Ma Famille...Les Repas... Les Vêtements*. Set topics which allow development of language, an opportunity to express opinions and demonstrate language skills.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Standard Grade

Number of resulted entries in 2010	25638
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	23548
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	17.5%
Grade 2	24.5%
Grade 3	24.4%
Grade 4	21.0%
Grade 5	9.5%
Grade 6	1.5%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.5%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element

Assess-able Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	26	17	12	32	18	12	33	20	13
L	25	15	10	26	15	10	27	16	12