



External Assessment Report 2010

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, once again, a slight decrease in candidate presentation, but performance in this year's examination was highly satisfactory. The percentage of candidates achieving each of the Grades 1, 2 and 3 was significantly higher than the previous three years and there were also fewer No Awards.

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

In **Reading**, the percentage of candidates achieving a Grade 1 was slightly down on 2009 but higher than the previous two years. There were improvements at Grades 2–6 and, with this element being double-weighted, this impacted on the overall distribution of grades.

Likewise, **Speaking** is double-weighted and there was a small upward movement of awards at all grades, with cumulative Grades 1–2 showing an increase of 2.6%.

Listening showed an improvement in the upper grades and this, too, contributed to the overall improved performance in candidates.

The element which bucked the trend was **Writing** where 16.5% of candidates achieved a Grade 1 compared to 18.8% in 2009. There were also a lower percentage of Grade 2 and Grade 3 awards than in 2009, but the figures were on a par with the previous two years.

Markers continue to praise candidates for their efforts in all elements and at all levels — but frequently comment on poor expression and spelling in English answers.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Speaking performance continues to be good at all levels, with external verification providing very positive reports of good practice and pupils being well prepared for tasks.

In **Writing**, many candidates produced work of outstanding quality and were clearly at ease with the language. Where candidates engaged in the writing process, through improvement and redrafts, the outcome was very pleasing (learning chunks of language which mean little or nothing to the candidate does little for the development of good writing skills). Success was also frequently achieved when candidates did not attempt overly lengthy pieces of writing. Most candidates performed well at all levels where the topics were matched to their abilities.

In **Reading** at Foundation level, candidates coped well with most questions. At General level, Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 10 achieved the greatest degree of success by both F/G and G/C cohorts. As usual, many of the F/G cohort were 'nearly there' with a number of answers, but often missed out on a crucial, required piece of detail. In the Credit paper, Questions 1 (a), 2, 3 (b), 4 (b) and 6 (a) stood out as being well answered, with many candidates picking up full points in Question 6 (a), which was worth three marks.

The performance in all three **Listening** papers was very heartening and there were fewer 'blank spaces' than in recent years, with candidates attempting all or nearly all questions. Most pupils coped very well with the Foundation paper. At General level, performance was fine but some difficulty seemed to be experienced by both cohorts from Question 10 onwards. At Credit level, Questions 1 (a), 3, 8, 9 (a) and 10–12 met with the greatest success.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Writing**, Markers continue to comment that able candidates are being disadvantaged by being set mundane topics such as *Chez moi... Ma Famille... Ma Routine...* Frequently, the candidates' language is at a basic level. Also, the topic of 'school' — attempted by a large number of candidates — only really works where it goes beyond a listing of subjects, times of lessons, description of uniform, and likes. Of course, there are many excellent attempts which bring in extras such as opinions, advantages/disadvantages of homework, views on school uniform and school rules, and plans for the future.

In **Reading**, at Foundation level, Questions 5 and 9 posed a degree of difficulty — mainly because a lot of candidates looked at individual words rather than the complete message. Misuse of the dictionary and knowledge of common words like *petit déjeuner* were also issues.

At General level, Questions 6 (a), 6 (c), 7 and 9 were the most difficult for a lot of candidates. Problematic words/expressions were *en pleine montagne, le materiel, fourni, aux heures les plus chaudes, à voix haute*. Also, again, lack of detail in answers and misuse of the dictionary lost valuable marks.

At Credit level, Questions 1 (b), 3 (c), 4 (a), 5 and 6 (b) were less well answered than the other questions. Words/expressions which caused difficulties were *j'avais l'impression d'être face à un mur, secouriste, les animateurs, plein de jeux, sur le plan sportif, a été interdit à toutes compétitions*. Lack of detail and poor expression in English also made a difference for many candidates.

In **Listening**, some lack of knowledge of basic language at Foundation level included numbers (*sept ans... soixante professeurs*), description (*les cheveux longs*), places (*la cantine*), directions, weather. At G/C level, candidates sometimes feel that they coped better at Credit level than at General level. On the face of it, this would seem a bit odd. However, it is sometimes the case that at Credit level there a number of clues in larger 'chunks' of language, whereas at General level success can frequently hinge on knowing/not knowing/not immediately hearing individual words of vocabulary or short phrases in relatively short utterances.

Language where difficulty was experienced at General level included *au troisième étage, en face de l'ascenseur, sur la place, devant la mairie, elle va être professeur d'histoire, lunettes de soleil, bouteille de vin, beaucoup de voitures, pollué*.

At Credit Listening, Questions 4–7, 9 (b) and 13 proved to be the most challenging. It was sometimes difficult to know whether the problem was the pieces of language or the lack of

detail given in the answer. Individual words and expressions included *sauf le lundi, on peut faire de la peinture, se rencontrer en sécurité, surveiller les enfants, pour tout le monde, ma meilleure amie...*, *job à temps partiel, grignoter entre les repas, en plein air*.

Certainly, some of the time, marks were lost due to a lack of detailed answers — *every night except Monday* (Question 1), *playing a musical instrument* (Question 2), *meeting friends in a safe environment* (Question 3), not distinguishing between past and present attendance numbers (Question 5), *activities organised for everyone* (Question 6), *taking the bin out on Sundays* (Question 7), *looking after brother after school* (Question 7), *best friend* (Question 8), *part-time job* (Question 9), *eating between meals* (Question 10), *don't let her out during the week* (Question 12), *regular physical exercise* (Question 11).

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The advice this year is very similar to last year:

- ◆ Emphasise to candidates that they must give detailed answers at Credit level — both in Listening and Reading. At General level, some additional detail is sometimes also required.
- ◆ Read/listen to the **whole** message.
- ◆ Use dictionaries with care where a word has more than one meaning. Use the meaning which makes sense!
- ◆ Beware of *faux amis*.
- ◆ In Writing, make sure that more able pupils are given topics which allow them to develop their language and demonstrate their writing skills.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	27986
Number of resulted entries in 2010	25638

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	17.9%
Grade 2	22.9%
Grade 3	25.4%
Grade 4	20.3%
Grade 5	9.9%
Grade 6	2.0%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.6%

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	18	13	32	20	14	33	20	13
L	25	15	10	26	15	10	27	16	12