

# FRENCH

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Paper 1342/01  
Speaking

## Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- choose a topic which gives them plenty of scope for discussing ideas and opinions
- use the 1-minute presentation to introduce the topic that they wish to discuss
- be prepared to engage in spontaneous discussion on points relating to their topic.

## General comments

The organisation by the vast majority of centres was excellent.

Candidates, overall, delivered their material enthusiastically and skilfully and there was a vast and interesting range of topics. Where candidates chose a topic with a philosophical, economic or historical angle, they were able to be analytical and they scored good marks for content. However, when the wording of their topic led them to spending precious time describing rather than analysing, this restricted their scope for in-depth discussion.

In topics relating to French society (for example *Laïcité*, integration or terrorism), students who had a good grasp and understanding of French history and culture did well. However, when this was not the case, they tended towards generalisation. Students who chose original topics linked to strong personal interests (a topic linked to a future career choice, for example) obtained some of the best marks.

## Advice to centres

- It should be noted that the Introduction should not exceed 1 minute, and that if it does, candidates should expect to be interrupted to allow full time for the discussion.
- Examples of the wide range of topics chosen in this series are given below.
- Before choosing their presentation topic, students should be encouraged to ask themselves to what extent it will provide them with scope for analytical discussion. Choosing a topic just because one is interested in, or even passionate about it, is not enough.
- Students should be encouraged to answer only the question they have been asked, rather than moving to the next bullet point of their presentation, as this limits the scope for proper discussion and will result in the examiner having to interrupt them. They also end up reciting what they have learnt rather than having a proper exchange with the examiner.
- Centres are reminded that candidates are allowed to bring in three pieces of visual material into the exam. These documents can help to elicit very good analysis and discussion; for example, a candidate choosing a topic relating to the Algerian war of independence could have used a map; one choosing Marine le Pen could have brought a picture of the new FN logo.

## Language

There was a wide range of quality of language. Common mispronounced words were *qualité*, *cannabis*, *danger* with *alcool* being the most frequently wrong. Candidates seemed well prepared in having practised the format of the test many times. They were variously well prepared in their general knowledge, which was evident in the examples to which they could refer to support their views. Fluency, overall, was impressive.

## Examples of the wide range of topics:

Victor Hugo  
L'Art romantique

La Haine  
L'immigration  
Charlie Hebdo  
L'écume des jours  
La vie de Thomas Picketty  
La bataille d'Alger  
La laïcité  
La gastronomie française  
Tintin  
Persépolis  
Candide  
MC Solaar  
Entre les murs  
Le Front National  
L'Assemblée Nationale  
Alphaville  
La Croix-rouge  
Le Burkini

# FRENCH (SHORT COURSE)

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Paper 1342/02  
Reading, Listening and Writing

## Key points

- In the Listening exercises, candidates would be well advised to try and link the sounds they hear to words which they know and which make sense in the context, rather than relying simply on attempts at phonetic transcription.
- In the Reading exercises, candidates would be well advised to attempt to see the meaning of whole phrases rather than jumping at a single word which they recognise from another context.
- In the Guided Writing exercise, the practice of tackling the five bullet points in five separate paragraphs is strongly recommended, as is respecting the suggested word limit in the interests of preserving the quality of both language and argument. Candidates are advised to avoid over-reliance on stock 'essay phrases' and to consider whether the expressions used are appropriate to the context.

## General comments

There was a wide range of achievement, but the various exercises generally allowed most candidates to earn a fair reward, with the strongest being able to display their ability and shine. There were a number of weaker candidates whose 'productive' skills were over-stretched, but once again the cohort comprised a heartening proportion of able and very able candidates who were well-equipped to rise to the various challenges.

Although the paper is made up of several different exercises, candidates did not appear to have been under undue pressure of time. This was helped at least in part by a refreshing willingness to make the necessary point(s) in the comprehension exercises succinctly and without unnecessary preamble or addition. Most took advantage of the instruction that they did not need to write in full sentences in the comprehension exercises. A handful of the weaker candidates attempted to hedge their bets by including unnecessary text in their answers to the Reading Comprehension questions in French, but the questions are designed to discourage lifting word-for-word from the text.

There were no cases this year of candidates attempting to answer comprehension questions other than in the language specified.

## **Listening**

### **Questions 1–5**

This exercise was well handled by stronger candidates, but others focused too readily *on est restée and aire de repos* and opted either for *Elle s'est reposée* or *a joué en plein air* instead of the correct *a été laissée* in **Question 1**. A similar tendency to latch onto a familiar word rather considering than the whole sentence led others to choose either *ont été arrêtés par les gendarmes* or *ont déposé la fillette dans un café* when they heard *après s'être arrêtés pour une pause-café* in **Question 2**. In **Question 3**, most correctly identified the fact that the parents plus a brother and sister meant that there were four people in car when it resumed its journey. *Personne* gave rise to the occasional *avait été remarquée par une personne* in **4**, and rather more were tempted by *avait été hospitalisée* when they heard *patientait* or *est devenue très animée* on hearing *des dessins animés* in **Question 5**.

### Questions 6–13

In **Question 6**, *quitter le trois familial* suggested an attempt at phonetic transcription, as did *un notre étudiant* in **Question 7** where various attempts at spelling *accueillir* and *paiement* were tolerated. *Pour gratuit* (for free) was not. Likening the system of exchanging students with another family to that of exchanging homes during the holidays was usually well understood in **Questions 8** and **9**, but *changer les enfants* did not earn the mark, nor did *le demain des vacances* or *dans les domaines de(s) vacances*, which would have suggested holiday complexes. **Question 10** required the notion of more than 50%. *Les fré(s)/fraires/offrez* suggested unfamiliarity with the word *frais* rather than misspelling in 11a, and *les alimentations* was not rewarded in **Question 11(b)**. *Une vide famille* indicated misunderstanding of *une vraie vie de famille* in **Question 12**, even if the paragraph went on to mention a void/gap in the family. *Une ville/vit de famille* fared no better. The majority saw the positive side of things in **Question 13**, although there were some unsuccessful attempts at *adoucir* in **13(a)**, whilst **13(b)** suffered from *replacer* and *cumbler* from less strong candidates.

### Questions 14–24

Rain was successfully identified in **Question 14(a)**, with most going on to say that it was colder than usual in **14(b)**. The effect on the temperature in the tent of lighting the hotplates in **Question 15(i)** was a straightforward mark for most candidates, but some suggested that it filled with steam rather than smoke in **15(ii)**. The origin of the visitors caused few problems in **Question 16**. **Question 17(i)** needed both *exhibition/display* (rather than *exposition* or *exhibit*) and *(old) farming/agricultural tools/machinery/equipment* (rather than just *a farming show*), whilst **17(ii)** needed *a market* (rather than just *a shop*) selling *regional/local products/produce*. *Breton* sometimes appeared as *Britanic* in **Question 18** and **19**, but the other entertainments on offer were usually well identified. In **Question 20**, the importance of the pancake being round was well recognised, but *l'épaisseur* as often as not appeared as *heaviness*. The provision of enough mixture for two attempts was usually understood, but *returning* the pancake was a curious concept in **Question 22**, as was the idea of being able to see *across* it in **Question 24**.

### Reading

#### Questions 25–29

**Question 25** offered a straightforward first mark to candidates who understood *la veille*. Some were misled by reading *propriétés* as *propreté*, and rather more by the two meanings of the verb *louer* in **Question 26**. (*Mis à disposition* was sometimes thought to have something to do with disposing of cigarette ends, but most correctly identified *se moquent* as an alternative to *dédaigne* in **Question 27**. The dual meaning of *affectés* caused a number to make the wrong choice in **Question 28**, but few were tempted to link *marché* with *à pied*. **Question 29** held few fears for the large majority who correctly identified answer A to replace *sanctionner les gestes antisociaux*.

#### Questions 30–35

In **Question 30**, *la restauration* and *l'hôtellerie* were sometimes thought to be synonymous with *le restaurant* and *l'hôtel*, and there was some incorrect vocabulary: *publir/publiquer* rather than *publier/exprimer/afficher* and *des commentaries/comments* for *commentaires/avis*. *Faire des notes* (rather than *attribuer* or *donner*) suggested that candidates did not fully understand the text but others successfully used *noter* and *commenter*. The idea of being able to read comments made by previous customers before one books/decides/chooses was correctly identified in **Question 31**, although some attempted to use *rester là* and *les affichés*. Potential customers could be put off *si l'établissement est sale* (**Question 32(a)**), *s'il y a du bruit la nuit* (**Question 32(b)**) or *si on trouve un cheveu* (not *cheveux*) *dans son potage*. Most pointed to *la difficulté de vérifier la source/provenance/ origine/authenticité des commentaires* in **Question 33**. Owners could write glowing reports on their own establishments or damning ones on their competitors, or enlist the help of their friends, families and employees to do this in **Question 34**. The practice of contracting agencies to invent fictitious reports was widely identified for **Question 35**.

#### Questions 36–45

**Question 36** required candidates to say that Matthieu had rowed across the Atlantic, or that he had crossed it in a rowing boat. Stating that he *had sailed across it/crossed it in a small boat* or *raft* or *a boat with no engine* was not enough. The misunderstanding of *seul* to mean *only in a rowing boat* invalidated. Most correctly gave his age and his roots in St Jean de Luz in **Question 37**, but *libraires* produced *librarians* and *book-keepers*. Lying on a psychologist's diva was an improbable way of learning about oneself in **Question**

**38(a)**, and others went too far in suggesting that Matthieu had *studied/delved into/learnt about psychology*. Some resorted to *defying himself* in **38(b)**, but a good number successfully offered *challenging/pushing/stretching himself mentally and physically*. The effect of the current was widely identified for **Question 39**. *Le poisson pêché cru* emerged as *the fish he thought he had caught* or *smoked salmon* in **Question 40**. **Question 41** produced *to clean the sea floor/the backside of the boat* – but most understood the purpose of his daily swims. Matthieu's use of the verb *sentir* to mean *to smell* was appreciated by the stronger candidates in **Question 42**, whilst the ability to deduce what *la voie lactée* might mean proved to be as good a discriminator of the most able as any on the paper in **Question 43**. *Arks in the sky* was an improbable offering, as was the occasional *cakes*. Damage to his hands was generally well expressed in **Question 44**, but *17 kilos de moins* emerged as *less than 17 kilos* in a number of scripts. The *manquer à* construction in **Question 45** was by no means understood by all, and the rendering of *déjà* as *still* caused further loss of marks.

## Writing

### Questions 46(a) and 46(b)

#### Content

The two topics – the threat to bees and the lack of women in science – both appeared to be subjects to which the candidates could relate, and provoked some lively and thoughtful responses. On both topics, most candidates had relevant ideas and opinions which they were able to express, often with conviction and coherence.

In **Question 46(a)**, concern was expressed about the potentially disastrous effects on world agriculture and food production of a rapidly diminishing population of bees as the main pollinators. Candidates suggested that man is contributing to their disappearance by invasive farming techniques and the use of pesticides and other chemicals, to which bees are particularly vulnerable. The use of natural predators to reduce harmful pests, the setting aside or planting of bee-friendly natural spaces, the protection of biodiversity and efforts to reduce pollution global warming were all seen as possible solutions. Stronger candidates then broadened things in their final paragraph to consider the threat of extinction to other species and man's duty to protect them.

In **Question 46(b)**, candidates lamented the lack of women involved in scientific research and were strong in their condemnation of the sexist remarks attributed to a Nobel prize-winner. They were highly critical of the notion which they felt was still prevalent in some quarters that Sciences are for the boys and Arts for the girls, despite the superior achievement of girls in the Sciences. They called on teachers and parents to demolish the myth by publicising the opportunities and rewards on offer, although idea of positive discrimination and the imposition of quotas was resisted by a good number. They suspected that men felt threatened and were anxious to preserve the status quo out of self-interest. Here again, stronger candidates broadened the scope of their final paragraphs to point out other areas in which sexual discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice still exist in modern society.

The better candidates both made direct reference to the texts to provide evidence for their arguments (whilst resisting the temptation simply to regurgitate the given material) and were happy to express their own views and to give examples from their own experience. In other words, they used the texts as a prompt and a spring-board, which is what is intended. They were also generally willing to use the opportunity offered in the final task to broaden the range of the issue under discussion. Weaker candidates showed less confidence in moving away from the vocabulary, structures and ideas provided by the text.

There was evidence of an ability to organise an answer and generally to use paragraphs appropriately. Most candidates organised their essays into the five paragraphs suggested by the questions/prompts, which is strongly recommended. This helps the flow and coherence of the essays. Commendably, nearly all candidates covered at least to some extent all the five tasks, and helped themselves considerably by working through them sequentially and systematically. They also helped themselves considerably by observing the 220–250 word requirement and organising their material succinctly within it rather than producing over-wordy and rambling essays which tend to degenerate linguistically and in structure as they go on and are therefore self-penalising.

## Language

The standard of language displayed by the better candidates was again very encouraging. There were a few who struggled to express themselves, but nearly all could use the language sufficiently accurately to convey most of their intended messages. The stronger candidates displayed a most impressive range of vocabulary and idiom and a sensitivity to appropriate register.

There were the usual errors in verb forms among the weaker candidates, but elsewhere tenses and modal verbs were generally manipulated with a good degree of confidence and competence. Impressive too was the confidence with which many candidates handled the subjunctive and incorporated it into their essays.

The weakest candidates' work was marred by basic errors of agreement and pronoun usage, a somewhat phonetic approach to spelling, and English patterns as well as vocabulary. Elsewhere though, an encouraging proportion of candidates demonstrated a refreshing level of security in their handling of the language, and an ability to add variety through the confident use of adverbs/adverbial phrases and adjectives.

Once again this series, there was often a tendency to over-use pre-learned stock 'essay phrases', even if they lacked relevance in the context. Phrases such as *autant que je sache, nombreux sont ceux qui ... ; nul ne saurait nier que ...* remained popular, to the extent of appearing two or three times in some essays. This could result in rather contrived and stilted phrasing.

That said, a good proportion of the candidates wrote with a spontaneous flair, fluency and accuracy, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a robust control of structure which made their essays a pleasure to read.