

External Assessment Report 2013 – Higher French (summary)

Overall Performance

In general, candidates continued to have more success in the Reading and Writing components but, as in previous years, were less successful in the listening component. However, the performance overall was positive with very few really poor performances.

Reading and Translation

- On the whole, performance in Reading Comprehension was highly satisfactory.
- There was less evidence of ‘word for word translation’ of the text meaning fewer marks were lost through awkward use of English.
- However, some candidates did not achieve the level of detail required in some questions. For example, some failed to demonstrate an accurate understanding of “*risque d’embouteillages*” and “*autour des jeux de société*” within the given context.
- There was also evidence of poor dictionary use in many attempts to comprehend “*des bouchons*” and “*balades à vélo*”.
- In translation, many candidates lost marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles (*leur maison* as ‘the’ house), pronouns (*pour eux* as for ‘him’) and verb tenses, including the present tense (*ils peuvent / ne regrettent pas*).
- Some sense units proved more difficult than others. Many candidates experienced difficulty with *même* (*ils ont même trouvé*). Only the more able candidates successfully translated “*Une fois arrivés à la maison, ils peuvent passer le temps ensemble*”.

Listening

- In general, candidates had difficulty identifying unfamiliar language (*gâter*) and struggled with questions requiring more detailed responses.
- There was concern about some candidates who failed to comprehend more factual information including number **and** time phrases, as well as familiar topic based vocabulary (*des randonnées /souvent / transports en commun*).
- In many cases, there was insufficient detail given in responses. Many candidates would often understand part of the information but miss specific details, eg *un emploi permanent/ chômage parmi les jeunes*. Some candidates mistook *médecin/medicine* and *gens/jeunes*.

Writing

- There were some excellent performances in both writing tasks, but particularly in Paper 2. Very able candidates produced well-structured and accurate pieces of writing containing range and variety.
- Some candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy and relevance to achieve a satisfactory performance.

- A small but significant number of candidates produced poor and very poor performances, with little or no control of basic grammar and verb formation and with serious misuse of dictionary, eg **avoir un bon temps/beaucoup d’amusement**.
- While most candidates were able to manipulate and recombine learned material, there was concern about the number of candidates whose approach to the writing task was instead to rely on the dictionary to create new sentences.
- The vast majority of candidates managed to address all 6 bullet points in the Directed Writing, but only the most able were able to really develop the competition/team aspect of the visit in bullet point number 3 (what you did **on the days of competition**) and in number 6 (what benefits you got **from being part of a team** competing in France).
- Some recurring errors included the confusion between **rester** and **loger**, **voyage** and **journée** and the erratic spelling of **je préfère**.
- In the personal response, candidates seemed prepared to answer the first part of the question (*Où préférez-vous passer les vacances? Et pourquoi?*), but some failed to understand that the second part (*Qu’est-ce qu’il y a chez vous pour les touristes et pour les jeunes qui y habitent?*) required them to talk about their home area and not their holiday destination.
- It was felt that the essay topic area was accessible to candidates but that many did less well than might have been expected through poor grammatical knowledge of genders and verb tenses as well as poor spelling and the lack of accents.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

- Continue to reinforce the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation.
- Encourage candidates to attempt the translation **after** the reading comprehension questions, as that should make the context clear.
- Encourage candidates to answer the specific wording of the question. Discourage them from giving a word-for-word translation of the text as a response to the reading comprehension questions.
- Encourage candidates to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing

- Encourage candidates to write to the context set and to be prepared in some part of their writing **to explain the reason** for the visit to or from France.
- Advise candidates to consider, carefully, the wording of each bullet point, and to ensure that they incorporate learned material that is relevant **and** appropriate to the bullet point.
- Advise candidates to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written (spelling, genders etc), **not** to create and invent new sentences.
- Share with candidates the expanded assessment criteria for Writing so that they know what is expected in terms of Content, Accuracy, Range and Variety.

Listening/Writing

- In Listening Comprehension, encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract from the text.
- Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and not to lose marks by inaccurate rendering of numbers, prepositions and question words.
- In the Writing task, ensure candidates read the stimulus carefully and incorporate and adapt learned material that is **relevant to the aspects contained in the stimulus**.

General

- Encourage candidates to make sure handwriting is legible (particularly when writing in French).