

# 2015 VCE French written examination report

## General comments

The majority of students responded adequately to most sections of the 2015 French written examination, demonstrating a sound knowledge and understanding of the examination structure.

Section 1 proved to be a challenge for many students, whose responses missed vital pieces of information and lacked accuracy. In Question 3, a number of students struggled to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information. Students who achieved a high result tended to take notes effectively, thus reinforcing the importance of extracting essential information from aural French text through aural practice. Students need to take time to review what they have written to ensure that their answers are coherent before moving on to the next section of the examination.

Students who were awarded high marks for Section 2 demonstrated high-order thinking skills: they did not simply translate the information from the text, but were able to analyse, compare and grasp the subtleties of the texts while inferring the appropriate meaning. When responding in French (Question 5) students should be mindful not to copy large sections of the text in their answers. They need to respond as much as possible in their own words, as it is their ability to write in French that is being assessed.

In Section 3, although most students demonstrated the ability to incorporate complex language and idiomatic expressions, responses often lacked depth. Furthermore, many students did not appropriately integrate basic grammatical features such as gender, verb conjugations in all tenses, prepositions, use of articles and spelling of words. It is essential that students read the question carefully to ensure that their response is appropriate and not off-topic, which was the case with many responses. Although students appeared to be comfortable with the various text types, they did not always respect the features of different text types; for example, the use of rhetorical questions, etc. in order to successfully tackle the different essay topics. Students are also advised to adhere to the word limit so as to avoid repeating themselves and incorporating irrelevant elements in their responses.

## Specific information

**Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

## Section 1 – Listening and responding

This section assessed students' capacity to understand general and specific listening texts.

### Part A – Answer in English

#### Text 1

##### Question 1a.

Marc just finished his VCE.

Students were not awarded marks if they used the word 'Bac' instead of VCE or any equivalent.

##### Question 1b.

Any day/full time/at all times

##### Question 1c.

Three of:

- he is punctual/arrives on time
- he likes to work with people/gets on well with people
- he knows about/is interested in food
- has a letter of recommendation from his teacher.

#### Text 2

##### Question 2a.

The visitor is a university student who needs to write a report on medieval architecture/buildings.

Students were not awarded marks if they did not use the words 'report', 'medieval' or 'architecture'.

##### Question 2b.

All of:

- the fact that it is a walled village/is surrounded by walls
- one (remaining) magnificent gate/door
- the Mélusine Tower
- a picturesque church.

Very few students were awarded full marks for this question.

##### Question 2c.

All of:

- when Mélusine washed she had to hide, because her legs changed into a snake's tail
- once her husband discovered her secret, she disappeared, never to return.

##### Question 2d.

Because she was renowned for her beauty and her mysterious character/personality/demeanour.

Both elements were required in order to be awarded the mark.

## Part B – Answer in French

In this part of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand a text spoken in French by responding in French.

Full French sentences were required for this section of the examination.

### Text 3

#### Question 3a.

Four of:

- *la mort des animaux qui mangent du plastique, une tortue morte a été trouvée avec plus de mille morceaux de plastique dans son estomac* (The death of animals who eat plastic, a dead turtle was found with more than a thousand pieces of plastic in its stomach)
- *la mort des animaux qui sont piégés dans les filets de pêche abandonnés* (The death of animals trapped in abandoned fish nets)
- *des traces d'éléments chimiques dans les plumes des oiseaux (marins)* (traces of chemicals on the feathers of [marine] birds)
- *des traces de contaminants chimiques et plastiques dans la chair de certaines espèces marines* (Traces of contaminating chemicals and plastic in the flesh of some marine species)
- *les êtres humains qui tombent malades après avoir mangé des fruits de mer.* (Human beings who become ill after having eaten seafood.)

Students were not awarded marks if they failed to mention *abandonnés* and *fruits de mer*.

#### Question 3b.

- *un continent de déchets, deux fois plus grand que les Etats-Unis* (a continent of waste, twice the size of the United States)
- *une énorme couche de plastiques qui flotte (dans l'océan pacifique)* (an enormous floating layer of plastic [in the Pacific Ocean])
- *dix millions de tonnes d'objets en plastique finissent dans la mer* (ten million tonnes of plastic objects end up in the sea)

The critical word was *l'étendue*, therefore *deux fois plus grand que les Etats-Unis* had to be included to be awarded a mark.

#### Question 3c.

All of:

- *Je m'engagerais dans une association qui protège les océans* (I would join an association for the protection of oceans)
- *J'éduquerais les autres au sujet de ce problème* (I would educate others about the issue)
- *Je me méfierais des plastiques et les utiliser le moins possible* (I would be wary of plastic products and I would use them as little as possible)
- *Je travaillerais comme bénévole avec les scientifiques (en participant à des projets de conservation).* (I would work as a volunteer with scientists [taking part in conservation projects])

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*D'abord pour résoudre ce problème on pourrait devenir membre d'un association qui protège l'océan pour éduquer au sujet de pollution causée par les objets en plastique. Deplus on pourrait utiliser d'autres matériaux qui sont moins toxiques. Enfin, on pourrait travailler comme bénévole avec des scientifiques, en participant à des projets de conservation.*

## Section 2 – Reading and responding

This section assessed students' knowledge and skills in analysing and responding to information from a written text.

### Part A – Answer in English

#### Text 4

##### Question 4a.

All of:

- films were no longer produced in studios, but in real settings
- the aims of the films were a quest for truth and not simply entertainment
- films didn't necessarily have a happy ending.

Students had to explicitly mention the differences between French movies and the conventions of the time.

##### Question 4b.

2013

- films lacked innovation/were mediocre
- fewer spectators watched French films/there was a drop in ticket sales
- the films had banal/simple stories

2014

- films were audacious/bold/daring
- there was an increase (of 7.7%) in tickets sold compared to the previous year
- films had unexpected storylines

##### Question 4c.

Both:

- films about contemporary reality or that had something to say
- films that showed cause for reflection.

Some students found this question difficult.

##### Question 4d.

Six of:

- the title of *Bird People* is in English
- one of the main characters in *Bird People* speaks English
- in *Bird People* the action moves (without any transition) from the airport of Charles de Gaulle to that of Dubai
- one minute the viewers are in Gary's hotel room in Paris and the next in his wife's apartment in New York
- in *Deux Jours, Une Nuit/Two Days, One Night* most of the employees come from overseas/other countries
- there is a reference to mixed marriages
- ticket sales for French films have risen overseas.

In general, students responded well to this question.

#### Question 4e.

One of:

- questioning the meaning of life
- reflection on what one is doing with their life.

#### Question 4f.

- The film highlights immorality and greed in today's society. This is portrayed through the attitude of a boss who puts money above human values.
- It is illustrated when the boss asks his employees to vote either for a bonus or for the reinstatement of a colleague returning from sick leave.

Students had to mention both negative aspects as well as the example in order to be awarded full marks.

## Part B – Answer in French

In this section, students were asked to show their ability to understand general and specific aspects of the text and to convey information accurately and appropriately in French.

### Text 5

#### Question 5a.

Both:

- The use of a series of questions addressed directly to the reader (*vos, vous*)
- The suggestion of something new to offer (*la possibilité de découvrir*) evident in vocabulary/expressions of encouragement (*tout en profitant, dans un cadre calme et nature!*).

#### Question 5b.

One of:

- *aider les fermiers à augmenter leur revenue* (to help farmers increase their revenue)
- *aider/soutenir les régions rurales défavorisées.* (to help/support underprivileged rural regions.)

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

*Le tourisme de ferme, autrement dit l'agrotourisme a vu le jour dû au besoin de soutenir des régions rurales qui ne sont pas privilégiées en se tournant vers davantage de sources de revenus tels que l'hébergement restauration(...)*

#### Question 5c.

Both:

- *une expérience éducative pour tous les âges* (an educational experience for all ages)
- *à la campagne/en plein air/dans la nature.* (in the countryside/outdoors/among nature.)

## Section 3 – Writing in French

In this section, students were asked to show their ability to write an original text of 200–300 words in French on one of five topics, using the following criteria.

- relevance, breadth and depth of content
- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

Question 6 was the most popular question, followed by Question 10 and Question 8.

### **Question 6**

Students were asked write a letter to a friend in Australia, in which they reflected on their experience of being in charge of a group of Australian students on exchange in France for several weeks. They needed to mention positive experiences as well as more challenging times.

Students' responses often lacked depth and were limited to describing events without depicting feelings and emotions. A significant number of students responded as if they were on an exchange rather than being in charge of a group of exchange students.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- description of the group and the destination
- recounting of mishaps and positive experiences: travelling/family experience/misunderstanding/sickness/misbehaviour/loss
- conclusion: whether or not they would take another group on exchange

### **Question 7**

Students were asked to write a story about a child who is stranded on a deserted island with their dog.

Students need to follow story writing conventions to avoid a lack of cohesion.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- description of the island and the circumstances of their arrival
- logical progression to a positive outcome
- climax/storyline/ambiance
- description of inner feelings/emotions

### **Question 8**

Students were asked to write an article for their former school's newspaper, as a leading person in their field, informing other students of the path they followed to get to where they are today.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- description of their present career and how they got to where they are today
- coverage of time between when they left school and the present
- concluding by giving advice to students
- title/fictional name/imperative/subjunctive.

### **Question 9**

Students were required to write a letter to the editor, evaluating the pros and cons of a proposed change to the law to allow all shops to open on Sunday.

Students did not always use the format of a formal letter and omitted the sender or the receiver's address, the date and a correct signing off.

This question was the least popular.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- at least two positive arguments: more lively places/attraction for tourists/economic potential for shop owners and for workers/possibility of part-time work for students/higher pay on weekends
- at least two negative arguments: health/increase of consumerism/free day when everyone is at work/lose family connections/fewer opportunities to engage in activities as a family or with friends

- formal letter ending and beginning/register/complex and varied sentence structures

### Question 10

Students were required to write the script for a speech in which they had to persuade students at their school to help newly arrived refugees in their community.

Many students incorporated events from current news items. Responses could have included some of the following features.

- details of measures that can be taken to provide support, such as introducing refugees to sport, helping them with their English, familiarising them with the neighbourhood (shops, surgeries, churches, etc.)
- fundraising and making decisions about the ways in which the money can be used
- imperative/conditional/subjunctive/persuasive expressions

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*(...) En tant que bénévole au centre des réfugiés, j'ai entendu des tas d'histoires touchantes et émouvantes qui ont eu un impact sans précédent sur ma vue de monde. J'aimerais en partager une avec vous ce matin. Aïsha avait juste 17 ans - le même âge que nous – quand elle a dû quitter son pays d'origine pour chercher une meilleure vie à l'étranger. Sa famille, parmi beaucoup d'autres familles irakiennes, était persécutée à cause de son opinion politique. Complètement seule, elle est arrivée en Australie, où elle a dû apprendre l'anglais et s'intégrer à l'école. Elle m'a dit les mots suivants : « Mon angoisse, c'est de vivre entre deux cultures. Je ne me sens pas chez moi ni en Irak, ni en Australie ». Croyez-moi : la situation est pareille chez beaucoup d'autres réfugiés.(...)*