

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The majority of students responded adequately to most sections of the 2014 French written examination, thus demonstrating a sound knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the examination.

To achieve high marks, students needed to demonstrate the ability to understand and use complex grammatical features and rich vocabulary. This requirement reinforces the importance of students being exposed to a wide range of themes and topics through authentic texts.

Students who successfully tackled the reading section not only demonstrated an understanding of the overall meaning of the texts but were also capable of analysing, comparing and grasping the subtleties of the readings.

It is important that students re-read their answers to ensure that they have responded logically to all questions, both in English and French.

High-scoring responses demonstrated the students' ability to incorporate complex language without overlooking basic grammatical features such as gender, verb conjugations in all tenses, prepositions, use of articles and spelling of words. It is essential that students give themselves enough time at the end of the examination to edit their work to avoid mistakes.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

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

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

This section assessed students' capacity to understand general and specific texts. Overall, students performed adequately in this section; however, there was a significant number of students whose answers were incomplete and lacked accuracy. Students are advised to take detailed notes during the playing of the texts to avoid missing vital information.

Text 1

Question 1a.

Brother and sister

Question 1b.

They both want to borrow their mother's car.

Many students were not awarded marks for this question as they failed to include the word 'borrow' or synonyms such as 'use'.

Question 1c.

All of:

- ask their father to drive her to the party
- walk
- Paul will pick her up.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Four of:

- close by/four hours
- beaches
- islands

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- shopping
- interesting mix of cultures/mix of French and Melanesian cultures.

Students were not awarded marks if they mentioned only a single culture or if they mentioned an incorrect culture, such as ‘Malaysian’.

Question 2b.

Two of:

- fascinating city/big city
- good or unforgettable food/cuisine
- nice people.

Students were not awarded any marks if they responded with ‘interesting city’.

Question 2c.

Both of:

- long flight/24 hours by plane
- extreme cold.

A significant number of students were not awarded any marks for the question as they did not mention a ‘long flight’ or a ‘plane’. They were not awarded marks if they failed to use the word ‘extreme’ or a synonym for this.

Question 2d.

Both of:

- three weeks in each/three weeks in Quebec and three weeks in New Caledonia
- to experience two aspects of the French-speaking world.

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. Students were awarded ten marks for comprehension and five marks for their capacity to convey information in French. This section of the examination proved to be a challenge for many students. Very few students were awarded full marks and a significant number were not awarded any marks for comprehension. These results reinforce the importance of being exposed to a wide range of listening texts and to practise responding to a range of aural texts to ensure that students have a knowledge of basic key vocabulary and develop appropriate dictionary skills. Full French sentences were required for this section of the examination.

Text 3

Question 3a.

Possible answers included:

- *Sébastien fait pousser des vignes/du raisin*
- *Sébastien fait pousser des arbres fruitiers, des pommiers et des poiriers/des pommes et des poires.*

Students were not awarded a mark if they wrote *Sébastien fait pousser du vin*.

Question 3b.

Possible answers included:

- *Les vendanges ont lieu 2/3 semaines plus tôt*
- *Elles sont faites début septembre au lieu de fin septembre*
- *Les poires et les pommes mûrissent plus tôt*
- *On cueille les pommes et les poires en août au lieu de septembre.*

The following is an example of an excellent response.

Il a observé que les vendanges sont maintenant fait 2 ou 3 semaines plus tôt que dans le passé. Il a vu aussi que les fruits mûrissent plus tôt, et donc ils sont récoltés en août, plutôt qu'en septembre.

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Question 3c.

Possible answers included:

- *la sécheresse*
- *ces dix dernières années ont été les plus chaudes depuis 150 ans.*

Students were not awarded marks if they failed to mention *dix dernières années* or *150 ans*.

Question 3d.

Possible answers included:

- *Il économise l'eau/Il utilise moins d'eau*
- *Il suit le rythme/le changement des saisons*
- *Il récupère l'eau de pluie/les eaux usées/Il recycle l'eau.*

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

The passage contained complex vocabulary and students needed to take the time to read the text several times before answering the questions, in order to understand the passage. It was important that students identified false cognates (such as *amende*, meaning 'a fine' in French) to avoid translation issues (such as translating *amende* as 'to make amends'). In terms of time management, students needed to avoid excessive use of the dictionary.

Text 4

Question 4a.

Both of:

- Rodin's works revolutionised sculpture
- his impact on today's sculptures is still present.

The majority of students were awarded full marks for this question.

Question 4b.

Eight of:

- lived in the same time/they were contemporaries
- Rodin was heavily influenced by Baudelaire/Rodin had a deep admiration for Baudelaire
- both were artists
- devoted themselves to one main body of work (Rodin, *La Porte de l'Enfer*; Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*)
- changed/transformed the notion of beauty
- used the same themes: desire, excess and decline
- their works represent the human condition
- their work led to controversy/criticism/they were criticised
- after their deaths, Rodin's main work was acclaimed and Baudelaire's was published.

Very few students were awarded full marks for this question.

Question 4c.

He wanted to prove that he did not make moulds from live models.

Students had to include the words 'mould(s)' and 'live' in order to be awarded the mark.

Question 4d.

Three of:

- some of his poems were judged immoral
- Baudelaire had to pay a fine
- thirteen of his poems were censored
- his collection of poems was seized.

Question 4e.

Both of:

- instead of motionless bodies, Rodin made moving bodies
- instead of entire bodies, Rodin made fragmented bodies.

Students had to mention explicitly the differences between Rodin's art and the artistic conventions of his time.

Question 4f.

All of:

- for Baudelaire, beauty is the goal of art. Baudelaire wanted to look for beauty out of evil/to transform negativity into beauty
- in the title *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the word *Fleurs* indicates something beautiful
- for Rodin, the most important goal is truth, truth being synonymous with beauty
- the title *La Porte de l'Enfer* is obviously not representing something beautiful as it attempts to depict the reality of our human condition in the face of our mortality.

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. Five marks were given for conveying information accurately in French.

It was imperative that students rephrased the elements they selected from the text in order to avoid copying chunks of text and being penalised.

Text 5

Question 5

Five of:

- *populaire en Europe*
- *économie de temps et d'argent/réduit le trajet journalier*
- *économie (sur la location des bureaux) pour l'employeur/compétitivité*
- *moins fatigué/mois stressé*
- *jongler entre les demandes familiales et le travail/un meilleur équilibre entre la vie familiale et le travail*
- *plus productif.*

High-scoring students used the first person and the conditional.

The following is an extract from an excellent response.

Premièrement, je dirais que travailler à distance rendrait les employés heureux. Si j'avais l'opportunité de rester à la maison je pourrais consacrer plus de temps à mon travail que je peux maintenant parce qu'il faut du temps pour se rendre au travail.

Section 3 – Writing in French

In this section, students were asked to write an original text of 200–300 words in French on one of five topics.

Responses were assessed using the following criteria:

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

Overall, most students demonstrated the ability to structure their responses appropriately and to use a variety of linguistic structures.

Students needed to read the question carefully in order to answer it appropriately. Any prior knowledge gained throughout the year had to be relevant and adapted correctly in order to answer the exam question appropriately. Students also needed to allow themselves enough time to edit their work.

Question 6 was the most popular question, followed by Question 10 and Question 9.

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Question 6

Students were asked to write a letter to the director of an overseas organisation explaining why they wished to work as a volunteer for the organisation.

Students did not always give valid reasons for wanting to obtain a working post for the organisation. They sometimes cited personal reasons that had very little to do with the question.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- the desire to help people who are less fortunate
- to make a difference in the life of others
- to save lives
- to discover another way of life
- a description of the relevant qualification
- personal qualities such as altruism

Question 7

Students were asked to write a short, imaginative story in which they had been transported to Paris in the year 2020 via a time machine. The story had to commence with: 'If I had not seen it with my own eyes ...'

Some responses were not logically organised and lacked a climax or a satisfying conclusion. The stories also lacked complexity and depth.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- a description of the mood and the setting
- a description of feelings such as shock, surprise or joy
- a comparison with modern-day Paris

The following is an extract from an excellent response.

Si je ne l'avais pas vu de mes propres yeux je ne l'aurais jamais cru. Jamais de la vie ! Bon, mon histoire s'est passée il y a deux ans. Il pleuvait beaucoup cet hiver-là, et un jour, en rentrant de l'école, un orage a commencé. C'était une tempête incroyablement forte. J'ai appris plus tard qu'un est mort foudroyé ! Mon ami Clotard ne voulait pas partager son parapluie avec moi « dans tes rêves ! » il m'a dit, « non ! Si je te le prête, tout le monde pensera qu'on est en couple, non, tu n'a qu'à t'en trouver un autre ! ». Frappé par l'inhumanité, je suis allé dans un garage qui était ouvert par chance. Dès que j'y suis entré, la porte a fermé, et une lumière blanche m'a tout enveloppé

Question 8

Students were asked to write a report for a literature class on an autobiography by an Australian author that had inspired them.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- information on the life of the author and his/her achievements
- a description of the author's achievements
- aspects that had impressed the students

Question 9

Students were asked to write an article for their school magazine in which they had to respond to a question about whether the development of information technology was a hindrance to private life. Students had to give at least two arguments for and two arguments against this proposition.

Students were familiar with the text type and most responses were relevant to the topic.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

Not a hindrance

- reinforced security thanks to firewalls
- the ability to protect anonymity
- our concept of private life has changed

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A hindrance

- everything that is posted is available forever
- identities and passwords can be stolen
- everything is traceable
- employers can access one's profile and social media platforms

Question 10

Students were required to write the script for a speech as the elected leader of a group of activists working for the protection of animals. Students had to explain why the movement was important and what it hoped to achieve.

Although most students responded adequately, many answers lacked an appropriate introduction and a convincing conclusion.

Responses could have included some of the following features.

- a description of how animals are mistreated
- an explanation as to what can be done to save them
- formal greetings, an introduction, a body, a conclusion and formal closing

The following is an extract from an excellent response.

Vous savez déjà que plusieurs entre nous ont des animaux domestiques, mais saviez-vous que 32% de ces animaux souffre d'abus ? En tant que « maman » de deux petits chiots, ces chiffres me choquent. De plus, environ 3000 animaux domestiques sont abandonnés chaque année ici à Aix-en-Provence et malheureusement ceux qui ne sont pas adoptés au refuge ne survivent pas.