French GCSE AQA Higher Tier

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE

Do not even consider attempting to sit a French GCSE without having read and memorised the contents of this guide!

GCSE Speaking Exam - April Y11

Role play - 15 marks

Photo card - 15 marks

Conversation – 30 marks

12 mins preparation time / 10-12 mins exam - 25% of marks

Reading Exam – May Y11

1 hour - 25% of marks

Listening Exam – May Y11

45 minutes - 25% of marks

Writing Exam – May Y11

1 hour 15 mins - 25% of marks

Castle Mead Academy – MFL Department

MFL
at CMA

Reading Exam

Section A – Questions in English (33 marks)

Section B – Questions in French (18 marks)

Section C – Translation from French to English (9 marks)

STRATEGY : Always start with the translation which will be right at the end of the paper – it represents easy marks.

1. **Title** – note the title on the question – it gives you a context for what you are reading
2. **Instructions** - you MUST concentrate 100% on these, answer in English or in French? Tick one box or two? **Look carefully at the example! Instructions in Section B will be in French.**
3. **Question** – always read the question before you read the text – that way you are focused on what you are looking for when you read it. **Note how many points it has. Question in French answer in French, question in English answer in English.**
4. **Easy questions before hard** – when matching number and letter for example, don't do them in order – match the easy ones first, it means there are less to choose from for the harder ones. Don't spend too long on any one question – guess and move on. Put a note in the margin to remind yourself to go back to it if you have any time.
5. **Enough Information.** Write a phrase not a word even if it's just for one point – often the answer requires a verb e.g. 'the teacher is boring' rather than just 'boring'
6. **Standard English** – no slang, no 'text speak', and check that what you have written makes sense!
7. **Answers in French** – answers will be marked for communication only. Marks will not be deducted for spelling/grammatical errors as long as the French is understandable and meaning is clear.
8. **Legible** – is it clear which letter you have written in the box? Is your handwriting easily readable – an examiner will not try hard to read it…
9. **Answer EVERY question**. Even if it's a complete guess. A blank never gets a mark – a guess often does.
10. **Key words – smart guesses**. Use what clues you have from words you DO understand to make your guesses as smart as possible.

11.   **Don't panic, don't give up** – use *all* the time. Never sit and gaze into space – you can *always* make a difference even if it's just to make a really good guess.

Listening Exam

Section A – Questions in English (40 marks)

Section B – Questions in French (10 marks)

Top Tips

1. **Almost all of the top tips for the Reading Exam are also relevant for the Listening Exam!**
2. **You will have 5 minutes reading time before the recording starts – use it well! Read ALL instructions and questions carefully. Translate French questions into English on the paper to help you later on.**
3. **ALWAYS read the questions before you hear the recording** – Look at the title so you know which topic it is and note down key words or phrases you are likely to hear based on the topic and the questions. Think about synonyms and linked words for any answers listed that you can choose from, e.g. if "la natation" is an option, you may hear "nager" or "la piscine".
4. **Always have a 'hypothesis' before you hear the recording** – **make a guess at what the answer MIGHT be before you hear the recording**. What do you think the most likely answer is? Listen with it in mind to prove or disprove it. The more focussed your listening is the more effective it will be.
5. **Expect it to be hard** – the hardest part of higher is basically testing your ability to hear a lot of language that you don't understand – and NOT to panic – and instead to try to pick out key words to base your guess on.
6. **You are not expected to understand everything you hear**. You are expected to make smart guesses based on key words that you do understand.
7. **You will hear each recording twice** so if you do not hear the answer the first time, do NOT give up - focus on listening again the second time. Your brain always processes more information the second time. Equally, if you

DO get the answer the first time, you should still listen the second time to check that you are right and listen out for any traps.

8. **Avoid distracting your brain** – look down at the paper- or even close your eyes, focus entirely on what you are hearing

9. **Listen to tone of voice** – it can be really helpful if you're having to guess, e.g. if you are having to indicate if their opinion is positive or negative, quite often their tone of voice will be exaggerated to help you.

10. **Examiners are not very original** – the same vocabulary comes up time after time – and questions are often based on stereotypes – e.g. an angry old man ranting about teenagers of today.

11. **Examiners ARE mean and cunning** – they lay traps… They will plant words to lead you astray. Listen out for negatives and the trick words ('mots pièges') that are on Quizlet which change the sense of   sentence. E.g. 'J'ai voulu aller en Grèce mais finalement on est allé en Espagne.' You hear Greece first – but she actually went to Spain… They do that A LOT.

Writing Exam

Question 1 – 90 word structured writing task (16 marks)

Question 2 – 150 word open-ended writing task (32 marks)

Question 3 – Translation from English to French (12 marks)

Time management

- With three different tasks to complete in 1 hour 15 minutes, managing your time effectively is very important because if you do not leave yourself enough time for question 2 (which is the hardest) you will lose valuable marks.
- Aim to spend the following amount of time completing each section.
- Read all questions (they are all in <u>French</u>!) – 5 minutes

Question 1 – 20 minutes

Question 2 – 30 minutes

Question 3 – 15 minutes

Proofread – 5 minutes to check through everything one last time

Writing Tasks

- Remember that for Questions 1 and 2, you have a <u>CHOICE</u> of questions. You must choose one 90-word question (from a choice of 2) and one 150-word question (from a choice of two).

- Time spent understanding the questions and REALLY thinking about what you could say for each is time well spent! Choose the question you KNOW you understand fully and you can write the most about accurately.

- The key to doing well in this exam is remembering that what you write <u>does not have to be the truth</u>. You should use this exam as an opportunity to show the examiner what you know well and what you can write accurately.
- <u>THINK</u> before you write. Spend 3-5 minutes planning what to write. Only include phrases you are confident you know how to spell. Your plan should be short bullet points only.

Before you start writing, think:

- What do I **already know by heart** that could answer the question?
- CAN I SPELL IT?

If it passes both those two tests – you're good to go. If it fails the second one – THINK AGAIN! Do not write what you instinctively WANT to say to answer the question, <u>write what you know</u>.

Avoid writing more than the word limit (90 or 150 words). You won't be penalised if you do but you are more likely to make mistakes or repeat yourself if you write more.

90-Word Question

The 90-word question rewards simple accuracy. You should aim for full marks, it is easily achievable. You only need one correct verb in each tense to score – but verbs MUST be correct. Focus on knowing a few verbs really well.

- For the 90-word question there are 4 bullet points. You must cover <u>ALL</u> 4 bullet points. If you miss out a bullet point, you cannot score more than 6/10 for content so you will have lost out on at least 4 valuable marks! You

do not have to write the same amount for each bullet point though so if there is a bullet point you are unsure about, write less for that bullet point but more for the others.

- You need to include opinions in your answer. There is always at least 1 bullet point which asks for your opinion of something.
- You need to use 3 tenses in your answer. The bullet points help you to do this and they are almost always present tense, present tense past tense and then future. You need to look for tense indicators.
- The requirement to use a past tense is often indicated by *"récémment" or "récent(e)"*
- Requirement to use a future/conditional (would) tense may be indicated by *'prochain(e)'* or *'à l'avenir'* or *'idéal(e)'* or *'projets'*
- Approach the question by finding a simple statement or two for each bullet point which answers the bullet point – this should get you the content mark. **IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ATTEMPT ALL PARTS OF THE QUESTION EVEN IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF ONE PART OF IT**. The mark scheme rewards an 'attempt' to answer all parts. If there is no attempt you will be heavily penalised.
- Once you have found content for each bullet point – take it up to the 90 words with opinions and simple quality vocab, ONLY using words/phrases you can spell and not ones you just WANT to use! This is NOT the part of the exam to show off!

150 Word Question

- Take time to plan what you are going to write (see advice for planning in 90-word question)
- FORQ it!
- Answer the question with a **F**act **e.g.** *je fais des devoirs tous les soirs*
- Give an **O**pinion using some **Quality Opinion** language e.g. *je suis d'accord qu'il est important de faire des devoirs mais ça ne me plait pas*
- Add a **R**eason to explain your opinion e.g. *car ça m'embête énormément*
- Include some **Q**uality structures and vocabulary to show off the variety of advanced structures you can use. Make sure you use them in an appropriate place and NOT for the sake of it. Read back through your work and THINK, does it sound natural in English?
- The two bullet points will represent 2 different tenses, make sure you know which ones they are and show that you can use these tenses

accurately. Try to use some verb forms other than 'je' if you are **confident** you can do so accurately (e.g. il, elle, on, nous forms).

If you are aiming for an 8 or a 9

Try and include a good range from the Route 89 Quality Knowledge Organiser

1. **Adverbs** e.g. *heureusement*
2. **Negatives** e.g. *je ne m'ennuie jamais quand*
3. **Infinitive structures** e.g. *– j'ai décidé de jouer*
4. **Reflexive verbs** e.g. *je m'amuse avec mes amis*
5. **Direct/indirect object pronouns** – e.g. *ma mère me dit…*
6. **Idiom** – *ça coûte cher, une perte de temps, c'est normal*
7. **Avoir phrases** e.g. *il a tort, j'ai de la chance*
8. **Subjunctive** e.g. *bien que ce soit…*
9. **Present participle** e.g. *en regardant la télé je….*
10. **Perfect infinitve** e.g. *après avoir fait mes devoirs je…*

Example 8/9 quality answer which includes all the above:

Ça me plaît énormément (1) d'aller (3) sur mon portable (après avoir fini (10) mes devoirs bien sûr!) car je m'amuse (4) en allant (9) sur Snapchat et ça me (5)détend, personnellement je trouve qu'il est important de tchatter (3) avec des amis pour me détendre (3). Je ne m'ennuie jamais (2,4) quand je vais sur Snapchat. Malheureusement (1) ça va sans dire que(3) (1) mon père n'est pas d'accord (6)! Il me dit (5) sans cesse que c'est une perte de temps (6), mais il a tort (7) à mon avis.

Translation

Read the whole text first to get the overall gist. Then, read a sentence and then translate it. Never translate word for word as you are sure to make grammatical errors.

DO NOT LEAVE BLANKS - they never score a mark. Either put a similar word you do know or if you can't think of anything, make a guess. They do not remove marks for guesses that are wrong. DO NOT just write the English word!

The translation usually requires you to use different tenses: (1) past, (2) present (3) future. So think carefully about which tense you need to use.

Example from Specimen Paper:

Last August I spent (1) a month on holiday in France. I stayed (1) in a hotel which was very comfortable. During the day my father went shopping (1) and I swam (1) in the pool. Next summer I would like to go (3) to Spain with my friends. I need (2) to earn some money because it is (2) quite expensive.

Speaking Exam

(12 minutes preparation time, 10-12 minutes exam)

Part 1 – Role play	2 mins	(15 marks)
Part 2 – Photo card	3 mins	(15 marks)
Part 3 – Conversation	5-7 mins	(30 marks)

It is ESSENTIAL that you use breathing exercises before and during the 12 minutes' preparation time to slow your heart rate down.

- A racing heart (normal reaction to stress) will lead to you feeling panicky and out of control - and then to you underperforming.
- Simply forcing yourself to repeatedly breathe in and out very slowly to the count of 5 will slow your heart down.
- Tell yourself that you are excited and ready to perform brilliantly (there is science behind this – your brain can't be told that it's calm as it isn't – but excited and anxious are similar brain states so you CAN persuade your brain that it is excited, not stressed)
- In the exam, sit up, chest out, in a confident posture and SMILE!

Smart use of preparation time

- You can make as many notes as you like during the preparation time and you can use these notes to help you in the exam for the role-play and photo card tasks. **No notes allowed for the conversation**.
- You can read from your notes but be careful that this does not affect your pronunciation by including ONLY phrases you know how to say well.
- No dictionary allowed during the preparation time so you will have to rely on what you know.
- Spend the 12 minutes' preparation time on the role play and the photo card – NOT on the conversation, you know nothing new for that part of the exam.
- Split the time equally between role play and photo card. Do not spend too long on the role-play if it is a hard one.
- First focus on UNDERSTANDING what the role play is asking you to do. Imagine you are in that situation (this may help you to guess any bullet points you are unsure of, e.g. if it is set in a hotel, think about what information you are likely to give when booking a room in a hotel.)
- Then think about what you KNOW that could answer the question. Lay out your answers in bullet points and keep your answers <u>fairly</u> <u>short and simple for the role-play</u>.
- Remember there will be a question you haven't prepared indicated with a '!'. You need to pause and LISTEN carefully here. Try to guess beforehand what questions you are likely to be asked based on the situation and what you've have already been asked.
- You are also required to ask a question. This is indicated with a '?' and it tells you what you have to ask a question about. You cannot ask any random question, e.g. if it says '? – parking', you have to ask a question about car parking.
- For the photo card, read the 3 questions on the card. <u>Fully</u> prepare an answer to these questions as you get marks for developing your answers.

Role play

This is the hardest part of the exam. **DO NOT** panic if you aren't going to score full marks – any marks you do score here are a bonus! Keep calm and keep it quite simple but accurate.

Photo card

There are 3 questions you will have seen and prepared as well as 2 'unseen' questions on the same topic. If you have prepared answers for certain topics for the **conversation** part of the exam and these answers are relevant to the questions on the photo card – USE these answers!

Conversation –

- This is a part of the exam where you should score HIGHLY – it represents the easiest marks in the speaking exam.
- Remember that you MUST ask your teacher a question. This can be at any point of the exam as long as the question is relevant and understandable. If you don't ask a question, you will lose 1 mark.
- The easiest way to ask a question is to follow up the teacher's question with "Et vous Madame?" once you have given your answer.
- You will be asked to talk about two of the three themes. The first theme will be the one you have chosen (remember a theme covers multiple topics and although you will have chosen the theme, you will not know which topics/questions you will be asked on this theme). The second theme your teacher will choose.
- The conversation MUST cover 3 different tenses. Make sure you recognise all the 'tense indicators' e.g. *normalement, dernier, prochain* – and have practised responding accurately using key verbs in 3 tenses
- Remember to add opinions and to justify your opinions – automatically and consistently – it offers high points for almost zero effort.
- There are 'easy marks' to be had for acting. Practise talking like a 'normal person'. Saying simple things with good, natural intonation (rather than like an express train or a robot with flat batteries) always sounds impressive.
- Your teacher will mainly ask questions for which you have prepared answers but there will also be 'unexpected questions'. You will not be expected to give such long answers to these questions – but you do need to practise 'blagging' a response so that it SOUNDS like you welcome the question, it's just that your answer happens to be short!
- It is also very important to learn some 'coping phrases' to help you out of tricky situations or to ask for a question to be repeated. E.g. '*je n'y ai jamais pensé*' when you have no answer or '*comme j'ai déjà dit…*' when your only answer is something you have already said.