

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

JCE FRENCH

2021

INTRODUCTION

This marking report constitutes feedback on candidates' performance from the 2021 JCE French examination which comprised 3 components. These components included Paper 1, which is the Listening comprehension, Paper 2 which was the reading comprehension examination that includes structured questions, and finally Paper 3 which comprised a structured questions that test grammar along with continuous writing task in the form of a note and a letter.

All components for the 2021 marking session for JCE French were marked between the 09th and the 21st December 2021, at St Joseph's college. Three examining teams were constituted, for which Paper had four (4) examiners, four (4) examiners for Paper 2 and nine (9) examiners responsible for the marking Paper 3. Papers 1 and 2 had no Team Leaders while Paper 3 had 2 Team leaders to share responsibilities in the supervision of the nine (9) examiners, also supervised by the Principal Examiner.

As a quality assurance initiative, examination checkers were engaged for the purposes of reviewing all clerical work for accuracy and error-free submissions of all candidate scores as marked by the different teams. All efforts were made to ensure that examiners worked under safe and secure conditions to enhance their productivity while keeping safe from COVID-19.

PAPER 1

GENERAL COMMENTS

This paper constituted a Listening comprehension whose aim was to assess candidates' ability to demonstrate their listening competencies where understanding of oral information is concerned. As has been the custom, two listening comprehension passages were recorded onto an audio CD which was read out to candidates during the time of the examination. Candidates were required to listen and

take down notes which would assist them in answering the questions that were based on the listening passages. Another CD was provided specifically for candidates with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in efforts to enhance inclusivity and access to the examination by the concerned learners. Candidates were required to apply their cognitive skills to deal with different items that were being tested. The items that were presented to the candidates were set at comparable levels compared to those of the previous year's examination, with different items calling for different levels of cognitive engagement towards determining what the correct responses were.

The performance of most candidates in this paper was poor, although they did manage to get a few marks where multiple choice items were concerned. Overall, the component required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the passages and yet they struggled to do so, as evidenced by their answers which were often not up to standard. In other instances, candidates showed that they had difficulties in understanding what the questions were looking for. This was proved by their writing responses for some questions in the spaces for other questions. It was especially prevalent for questions 11 and 12.

When compared with the previous year, the passage for the 2021 paper proved to be more challenging for most candidates to access. With expressions such as ***Je n'ai pas beaucoup d'argent*** in the passage and ***Je compte sur mes parents***, candidates appeared to struggle to decipher the meanings of such utterances.

This performance of candidates tended to vary according to different item expectations as elaborated below:

SECTION A

Item 1

This item required candidates to answer with a number, **deux-cents**. However, it proved to be the least accessible item in the whole paper as candidates who did well in the paper failed to get it. Candidates managed to get the figure **deux**, but failed to provide the word 'cent', giving responses like **deux-cinq** or **deux-sans**.

Item 2

The item required candidates to explain that the vacation is long. Candidates failed to understand this and gave responses such as 'for the holidays'.

Item 3

In this item, most candidates could relate well with the concept. They opted for the response **les animaux**. However there were a few candidates who chose the option **les paysages**.

Item 4

This was a multiple choice question and it was accessible to most candidates. Candidates seemed familiar with **supermarché** which was the correct response out of the other alternatives given.

Item 5

The candidates struggled to access the correct response for this item. A few centres did not attempt to give any response to the item. Candidates also struggled with the spelling of **l'assiste**. They gave responses such as **ma sister** and **sister** which were marked wrong.

SECTION B

Item 6

The item proved to be accessible to most candidates as they managed to get the correct answer.

Item 7

For this item, the introduction of Thapelo into the story appeared to be challenging for candidates. He was introduced as the cousin to the father of the author. However, reference to him as 'our cousin' seemed to leave other candidates in confusion.

Item 8

Candidates understood that the question required them to respond with an adjective of feelings, but struggled to find the vocabulary to express the correct answer. They gave responses such as **sour, sous, suir and sier**.

Item 9

Candidates are usually familiar with responding to questions relating to the weather, phrased as **Quel temps fait-il?** However, this specific item with a slightly different phrasing of the question saw some candidates giving the name of a season as their response rather than the weather.

Item 10

Some candidates gave the response as 5 which was the total number of people in the family, struggling to demonstrate adequate understanding of what the task called for in the context of the passage.

Item 11

Candidates were required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in the use and application of comparative adjectives as extracted from their use in the passage. However, the task proved to be quite a challenge to candidates and most of them failed to access the marks. Some centres could not use comparative words such as *plus...que or moins...que* and used *pendant que* instead. Others could not even compare at all and just resorted to explaining.

Item 12

The item required candidates to explain what the father would do when he gets his first salary. Candidates often struggled to provide an explanation and failed to employ appropriate vocabulary required.

Item 13

The item proved to be a challenge for most candidates. They gave partial answers in either talking about Semedo's poor family or focusing on the part of the family moving to France.

In conclusion, candidates ought to be given plenty of practice in order to improve in displaying their competencies in as far as the Listening skills are concerned. Overall, this component of the examination is not handled very well by most candidates and one can only look forward to a better performance as candidates are provided with an enabling environment to gain as much exposure to listening as possible.

PAPER 2

GENERAL COMMENTS

For the 2021 marking session, the team had to work under immense pressure in order to meet the deadline that was set for the completion of the marking exercise. The quality of the work exhibited by the candidates continued to be poor, characterized by a lot of unattempted items, use of gibberish language as well as the inappropriate use of Setswana and English where there ought to have been responses written in French.

This performance of candidates on individual questions was observed as follows:

SECTION A

Items 1-3

These were Multiple Choice questions, administered through the use of pictures that are meant to be interpreted and understood. Candidates were required to respond by selecting statements that used the correct verbs and prepositions corresponding to that which was displayed in the pictures. Generally, **item 1** was easily accessible to candidates from across all centers and all grade descriptions. The verb '*jouer*' was easily identified by most learners.

However, most candidates could not pick the preposition '*dans*' as the correct preposition for **item 2**. In the midst of other options such as '*sur*', '*entre*', most of the candidates settled for option A, '*sur*'. This could be because candidates are familiar with 'giving orders.

Item 3 did not present any problems as most candidates could correctly interpret the action as ***'tais-toi'***.

Item 4

This item required candidates to interpret a picture. They were required to describe it, pointing out the actions taking place in the picture. The picture depicted a boy/man/person who has been working and is now tired or sleeping. There were no actions in the picture, but the actions had to be inferred. The person's head was resting on the desk, with his spectacles also on the desk next to the laptop. There were also pens/pencils and papers which candidates could have used to show that the person had been working, reading or studying but now tired. Other interpretations noted and accepted were to do with responses that said the person in the picture is about to work, study, read or prepare for an examination but is already overwhelmed and decides to rest his head.

On another note, candidates across all centers tended to state what they see in the picture instead of what is happening, labelling instead of describing what key message is being communicated by the picture.

Numerous responses such as, ***'Il y a des lunettes sur la table'*** or ***'Il y a des crayons / un ordinateur / des crayons'*** were often encountered.

All these responses did not attract any marks since they were not describing the actions in the picture but rather stating what they see.

In order to get the two marks, candidates ought to interpret the picture and make mention of two notions: mention of a man or young man doing some work or typing on his laptop (1) and mention the man being either sleepy or fast asleep (with glasses placed on the table). (1)

Item 5

This item showed the map of a campus, with only a few buildings. The streets were not named, and the buildings were named alphabetically. The key could also show other buildings like the TV room, the dining area, toilets and the laundry room.

a) This item required candidates to locate a place, **'la cuisine'** in relation to Apartment H. The correct response was opposite, **'en face de'**, even though accommodations were made for responses that were based on **'devant'**.

b) Candidates were required to give directions from one point to another. The two designated points were the laundry room and the TV room. The direction was clear, and shorter compared to that of the previous year. Even though there were no street names, there were five possible turns that candidates could use to give directions.

c) Candidates were required to follow directions from Apartment H to D. The correct response was easily attainable as candidates could get 2 marks for arriving at D. Others managed get 1 mark for arriving at C, which is the building opposite the required answer. Other possible responses were,

- i) ***Quittez la chambre de Blanchisserie, tournez à droite et allez tout droit. Au premier carrefour, tournez à gauche et allez tout droit. Puis, tournez à droite au carrefour et allez tout droit. (1). Au deuxième carrefour tournez à gauche et entrez le bâtiment à sa droite (1)***
- ii) ***Quittez la chambre de Blanchisserie et tournez à droite et allez tout droit. Tournez à gauche sur la deuxième rue et allez tout droit jusqu'au carrefour (1). Tournez à gauche et entrez le bâtiment à sa droite (1)***
- iii) ***Quittez la chambre de Blanchisserie et tournez à droite. Allez tout droit jusqu'au cinquième bâtiment/ rue/ carrefour, puis tournez à gauche. (1) Allez tout droit jusqu'au deuxième carrefour. Tournez à droite et entrez le bâtiment à sa droite (1)***

SECTION B

This section was the reading comprehension part of the examination. The 2021 reading comprehension presented a fictional reading text; a story of a businessman staying alone in Paris due to his work commitments while his family stays in the United States. The man is lonely, committed and a businessman whose life revolves around his work. One day he disappears and an intense search to look for him takes place. The story does not provide any details about his whereabouts or why he had to disappear. But one day, after a fruitless search, his staff find him in his office.

The context of the story appeared to be somewhat abstract for the candidates to easily conceptualize its events beyond the context of their immediate environment. Below are observations of their performance in the different question tasks to which they had to respond based on the same passage:

Item 6

It was an item that required the use of an adjective. Candidates were to pick one word that describe Mr. Jacques Francois. The possible responses were '**séduisant**' and '**grand (de taille)**'.

Item 7

This item required candidates to pick out the topic sentence from paragraph 2. The correct answer was, '**Sa famille habite aux Etats- Unis**'. Other responses that were considered were accepted on grounds that they did not alter the meaning of the phrase, such as, '**La famille de monsieur Jacques François habite aux Etats- Unis**'.

Item 8

This item required general comprehension of the story. Candidates had to explain why the Director disliked lazy people, in this case that being at the workplace.

The correct responses were easily identifiable from the text as being;

- i) Il croit que la paresse ne produit pas d'argent (1)*
- ii) Il pense que les gens paresseux ont de mauvaise performance (1)*
- iii) Les paresseux baissent les revenus et la performance d'une entreprise (1)*

The response was easily attainable as it came out clear in the passage. Another common response which did not, however, attract any mark was, *'il deteste les paresseux.'*

Item 9

This item called for candidates to give a synonym of the word **'employés'** as it was used in the passage. The only possible response was **'travailleurs'** which was used in paragraph 5. However, most candidates tended to give random sentences from the text which did not show any understanding.

Item 10

This item also required that candidates give the synonym of the phrase, **'il mène une vie de solitude'**. The responses were presented in the form of multiple choice from which candidates had to select the correct response. The correct response was A, which was **'il vit seul'**.

Item 11

This item required candidates to give the word that was used to describe the company. The correct response was, **'Efficace'**.

Item 12

This item required candidates to identify speakers from the text. These are the names of certain characters.

- a) Stephanie
- b) Nestor

Item 13

This item required candidates to tell the feelings/emotions of the staff of the company when their director could not be found. The correct response was, '**Le personnel s'inquiète**'.

Item 14

This was a cause-and-effect type of question where candidates had to give an answer and then justify it. This means that there were two parts to the question, one being the description of Inspector Bernard as he is depicted in the story and the second being the justification of the choice of the adjective used in the first part. In this type of response, a candidate could attain 1 mark for the right adjective and attain the second mark for stating the right grounds as justification.

A candidate could not get the second mark of justification if they did not get the correct adjective.

The correct responses were as follows;

- i) Il est un homme très curieux (1) qui pose beaucoup de questions (1)**
- ii) Il est curieux (1) parce qu'il croit que le coupable est un de membre de la famille (0)**

Item 15

This item required that candidates identify Monsieur Luciano Chiquito in relation to Monsieur Jacques François. The correct response was, '**Il est (l'ancien) ami de M. François**' for a 1 mark credit'.

However, there were two more responses that were very common among candidates which did not attract any marks. These were '**un homme italien**' and '**l'ancien ami**'. Both these responses were lacking in detail as '**un homme italien**' could refer to any male of Italian nationality while '**l'ancien ami**' could refer to anybody who is an old friend. The candidates had to complete their responses by linking them to Mr François.

There was also another wrong response that was very common across all grade descriptors.

Some candidates associated Monsieur Luciano Chiquito with Madame François and gave the response, *'il est l'ancien ami de Madame François'*, which did not merit any marks.

Item 16

This item required candidates to state where Mr François upon his return. The correct responses were *'On le trouve dans son / le bureau'* or *'assis dans son bureau'*.

Item 17

This item required candidates to give a summary of the text or the gist of the passage. However, many of the candidates failed to do so and only managed to address the issue of the main character's profession but failed to address the issue of his disappearance. This led to most candidates attaining partial credit and only very few candidates getting the full marks.

Candidates had to consider these two notions.

- i) His work / company / post (1)
- ii) His disappearance (1)

These are some of the possible responses.

- I) *On parle de Monsieur François, un homme d'affaires qui disparaît et personne ne le trouve* (2)
- II) *On parle du PGD de JF Import- Export qui adore être seul mais tout le monde pense qu'il a disparu quand il n'arrive pas au bureau et il n'est pas chez lui.* (2)
- III) *On parle du PGD de JF Import- Export qui adore être seul mais tout le monde pense qu'il a disparu quand il n'arrive pas à le trouver* (2)

IV) ***On parle d'un homme d'affaires qui disparaît*** (1) (not enough detail)

In general, the candidates did not show much understanding neither of the reading text nor the questions.

PAPER 3

GENERAL COMMENTS

Paper 3 was comprised of two sections, Section A and B. Section A contained short answer structured grammar questions where the candidates were expected to handle the grammatical structures and apply them in answering. Section B comprised of a note and a friendly letter where candidates are expected to show their ability on written expression, the ability to organize their ideas in an orderly manner, and also the ability to show originality and creativity.

Generally, candidates were able to access items based on language structure in Section A, especially where they had to use possessives, questions tags and negation. Though centres managed to access Section A items, there was a challenge with cloze texts; where candidates had to conjugate verbs in a context and where they had to complete a text by putting the right determiners. Candidates displayed lack of understanding by simply copying the examples given without making effort to put the correct answer. There is therefore a need for centres to give more practice on these.

Though most centres attempted Section B, there are centres which still leave the tasks unattempted. Centres are therefore encouraged to give more practice on the mastery of continuous writing skills so that candidates can improve.

Comments on the individual Items are as follows:

Items 1-5

Candidates were required to display their ability to use possessive adjectives, and a demonstrative adjective through completing sentences for their task. The items were all accessible. Candidates did very well here although there were cases in which candidates failed to identify where they had to use the demonstrative adjective instead of the possessive. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to always study examples so that they can be able to improve.

Items 6-9

Candidates were required to demonstrate their ability to construct sentences in the imperative form. The items were accessible. However, candidates struggled with item 6, where they had to use an irregular verb '**savoir**' to construct the imperative; they failed to conjugate the irregular verb correctly. Centres need to give candidates more practice on conjugation of irregular verbs in the imperative form so that candidates may not lose marks on these. Another challenge was at item 7. A lot of candidates dropped '**s**' for the verb '**prends**'. It was evident that candidates knew the rule of dropping '**s**' with '**tu**' at '**er**' verbs, but they applied the rule with an '**re**' verb'. Centres are advised to give more practice on such verbs so that candidates may know that the rule applies for '**er**' verbs only.

This year candidates either correctly punctuated the imperative with an exclamation mark (!) or left it without any punctuation. Only just a few candidates used a question mark. Emphasis should be made at the centres for candidates to always punctuate utterances correctly, in this case, by use of the exclamation mark.

Items 10-12

Candidates were required to change statements into the question format using "**est-ce que**" and the '**inverted method**'. Candidates generally scored marks for both parts, A and B. However, some candidates lost marks because they forgot to apply the elision rule on the '**que**' where it is followed by a vowel; at item 12. Some candidates lost marks because they wrote '**Est-ce que il est important de faire de l'**

entraînement tous les jours? Candidates should be reminded that ‘**que**’ becomes ‘**qu**’ before vowels so that they may not lose easy marks.

The use of inverted method seemed to have improve this year, probably because the verbs and subjects did not require them to use a -t- in the middle which always pose a problem. Again, all the subjects of the sentences were already ‘pronouns’ and therefore candidates did not have to change the subject to pronouns before inverting. However, there were many instances where candidates failed to identify the verb ‘**est**’ at item 12, and ended up losing the mark because they either used ‘**très**’ or important as the verb.

Centres are advised to give more practice using such verbs as ‘**être**’ and ‘**avoir**’ which always challenge candidates though they are commonly used verbs. Again, centres should be encouraged to expose candidates to a wide range of vocabulary so that they may understand the sentences they are transforming to questions and not just to apply the grammatical rules without comprehension.

Item 13-14

Here, candidates were expected to write questions corresponding to the given statements. Generally, candidates did not do well here. At item 13, candidates were able to identify the correct interrogative as either ‘**où**’ or ‘**quand**’; but they could not get all the marks because they failed to construct the question. They mostly wrote ‘**Où partent-elles pour ce weekend?**’ or ‘**quand est-ce qu’elles partent pour?**’ or ‘**quand est-ce que elles partent?**’.

Item 14 also presented a lot of problems. Candidates were able to identify the correct interrogative but failed to put it in the correct structure to formulate a question using either ‘**est-ce que**’ or inversion. They ended up losing a mark for failure to use the correct structure but did gain the mark for managing to communicate by using the correct interrogative with flaws in structure.

Candidates still need a lot more practice with different question words in the different centres so that they can be more at ease with these items.

Items 15-18

For these items, candidates were required to respond to the questions in the negative form. Generally, the negative construction in these items was well mastered. This year there was a lot of improvement in items of where candidates had to negate sentences with two verbs or where they had to change the articles to **'de'** in the negative. A good number of candidates accessed the items. However, there was a challenge at item 16 and 17 where candidates had to change the subject pronouns in answering the questions. At 16, **'Rigoles-tu pendant la leçon?'** they mostly wrote **'tu ne rigoles pas'** instead of **'je ne rigole pas'** and at 17, they wrote **'vous n'avez pas'** instead of **'nous n'avons pas'** or **'je n'ai pas'**. Centres are therefore encourage to put more practice on such types of questions and answers so that candidates may improve.

Items 19-23

Here, candidates were required to put the correct determiner in the spaces provided to complete a cloze text. Centres did not perform well in this part of the Paper. Candidates were mostly challenged at item 19 where they put **'en metro'** instead of **'du metro'**. This showed a lack of understanding of the **'en sortant'**, they could not conceptualize the verb **'sortir'** from the structure. Again, item 22, candidates mostly wrote **'beaucoup des bus'** instead of **'beaucoup de bus'**.

This generally indicates a lack of knowledge of grammatical structures that are associated with the language at these early stages of French learning. Centres are encouraged to explain these concepts thoroughly to their learners with ample practice opportunities for them to master these grammatical rules.

Items 24-28

The items tested the candidates' ability to conjugate verbs from different groups. Candidates' performance is however still not satisfactory in these tasks. They

managed to score marks for conjugating the ER verb at item 25, but failed to conjugate other verbs. The verbs **'faire, vouloir, and partir'** are regularly used verbs in French. However a lot of our candidates struggled to get the correct conjugation of such. At item 27, they had to leave **'essayer'** as it was because it was preceded by a helping verb, **'aller'** to conjugate in the **'futur proche'**. Candidates lost the mark because they conjugated the verb in the present tense. There is a need to continually practice conjugation of different groups of verbs at the centres and to do so in context so that candidates may not struggle especially with regular verbs. However, centres such as 0091 and 0034 displayed very good knowledge on this set of items.

Items 29-33

Candidates were required to carry out tasks on adjectival agreement within the context of a cloze text. Candidates' performance was generally average with a lot of candidates scoring more than 2 marks. However, very few candidates got item 30 correct. For item 30, they needed to change **'sérieux'** to **'sérieuse'**. They mostly wrote **'sérieuxe'**- a sign that they knew what they were supposed to do, but failed to correctly write it.

Centres are encouraged to continue giving candidates practice on more vocabulary relating to descriptions so that they can be at ease with descriptive words.

SECTION B

This section comprised of a note, marked out of 5 marks and a friendly letter, which was marked out of 15. This part of the component is equally important since it allows candidates to apply the language acquired throughout the 3 years through written production. It is here that the candidates' ability to handle the mechanics of the language through structured items is examined.

As with the previous years, candidates continued to have challenges in this section. There were many cases of well answered scripts, with a lot of centres showing better strength in continuous writing activities. However, this year a lot of candidates left the section, either partially answered or unanswered at all.

Creative and written production is an integral part of a language syllabus and deserves to be given serious attention. Candidates ought to be trained and exposed to as much vocabulary as possible, for example through short stories, which in turn will enhance their language acquisition and strengthen their usage of French vocabulary and language structures.

Item 34

Candidates were expected to write a short note or message to their mother telling them that they are taking her money to go to the supermarket to buy some items that they are going to use to prepare dinner. Candidates mostly got marks for the structure of the note; where they had to indicate the recipient and the writer of the note. The vocabulary required of them to perform the task was very accessible. However, certain candidates struggled with the 'argent' for money. Candidates should therefore be trained to always use alternative vocabulary to communicate, for example, instead of '*je prends ton argent*', they could use '*je prends to P10.*' Again, candidates mostly lost marks for their failure to 'explain'. Centres should be encouraged to train candidates on expressing themselves to the level of giving reasons so that they may gain more marks. Centres such as '0200 and 0028' showed a lot of improvement this year and should be encouraged to continue.

Item 35

Candidates were required to write a letter to a cousin telling them about a holiday trip they took with their classmates. The subject matter was very accessible and the expected vocabulary was also easy and regularly used words in French. However, generally, candidates did not perform well. Candidates generally used the correct

layout of the letter; correct address format and the salutations. However, others lost marks which are supposed to be easy marks by closing with **'amicalement'**, or **'amitié'** while writing to family member. Certain candidates also struggled with the word **'voyager'** and used **'travailler'** which means a completely different thing. Centres are encouraged to always pay attention to **'les faux amis'** so that they can help reduce error in vocabulary.

Though the item was very accessible this year, a lot of candidates either left the item unattempted or wrote very little content and ended up losing marks. They generally struggled with constructing simple sentences which is an expectation for their level. Generally, they mostly wrote compound or complex sentences to express ideas and a lot of times they would make errors which distorted the meanings or impeded comprehension. Centres are therefore encouraged to emphasize the use of simpler and shorter sentences to communicate ideas.

Centres such as 0028, did very well here. This year, a lot of candidates from this centre scored very high marks, with candidates writing very impressive letters.

In conclusion, there was a decline in the quality of the work by the 2021 candidates with a lot of candidates leaving the item unattempted or writing English or gibberish. Centres should be encouraged to give more practice on continuous writing so that candidates can be at ease tackling any question here. There is also a need to engage learners on sentence structures and to expose them to a wide range of vocabulary so that they can be able to express themselves with the right vocabulary and correct structure.

Things that ought to be considered moving forward:

- Centres should be advised to put draft papers on a separate envelope and the envelope can be enclosed inside the script envelope.

- Candidates should be advised to keep the answer booklet as neat and clean as possible. Rough work done on the answer booklet should be done in pencil and erased afterwards.
- In cases where the candidates used continuation, centres should be encouraged to attach the continuation to the candidate script.
- Benchmarking exercises from Centres which have performed well could help those that are still struggling with certain aspects of the language and how to approach its teaching and learning in readiness for assessment.

All Centres are encouraged to take time to go through the PE marking reports, along with other associated documentation such as The Assessment syllabus that gives insight on how the different competencies will be assessed through different components.