

## **Guidance notes for candidates on writing the essay in the WJEC FN2 examination 2011, 2012.**

The FN2 written examination is worth 60% of the marks for AS and 30% of the marks for A level. This examination paper tests listening, reading and writing in French. The last question on this two and a half hour long paper is an essay in French.

The following are guidance notes for candidates who are preparing to write the essay set on this paper, and are given in good faith, though in the end it is your responsibility, as the candidate, to make sure that you perform to the best of your ability.

Answering this question well is vital because it is worth 35 out of the 98 marks allocated to this paper.

### **1. Understand the criteria for assessment for FN2 essays.**

It is important to understand how the marks for this question are allocated. Twenty of the thirty five marks are allocated to 'Quality of response" i.e. how well the essay is written as an essay and how well it answers the question set. Being able to write a good essay is an important skill used at university and in this country, the AS and A level examinations are used as possible university entrance examinations.

You need to know and understand the criteria used in assessing the question and to understand the marking scheme used. Get hold of a copy and discuss with your teachers and colleagues.

The instructions to these questions go something like this.

“Choisissez UNE des questions suivantes. Ecrivez 200-250 mots en français.”

### **2. Write to the length specified.**

The first thing to note is that the length of this essay is specified as **200-250** words. This is probably shorter than essays you've written in English or Welsh Language examinations. **AVOID WRITING MORE THAN THIS** because it will be crossed out and not credited.

Candidates who write essays that are longer than specified often have the following weaknesses:

- a) They have overlong introductions.
- b) Some essays do not start discussing the topic properly until the word limit has been reached.
- c) The conclusions are at the end of the essay- but are not read because they are outside the word limit. The essay is then assessed as having no conclusion.
- d) Long essays tend to waffle and become repetitive.
- e) The quality of the French often deteriorates.

If you do write less than 200 words, the marks obtained will be reduced e.g. if you only write 100 words any marks awarded will be halved. You must ensure, therefore,

that you leave enough time to do justice to the essay when answering the question paper.

You are then offered a choice of one of usually four questions which are based on the AS topics

## AS

- (a) **Leisure and Lifestyles**, including travel and tourism, sport, hobbies, entertainment, customs, traditions, healthy living – health and nutrition, diet and exercise; unhealthy living - drugs, aids, smoking, alcohol, etc
- (b) **The Individual and Society**, including relationships and responsibilities, gender issues, youth culture (values, peer groups, fashions and trends etc.), education, vocational training and future careers.

(current WJEC AS and A level specification for French, published in 2009)

### 3. You need to be able to discuss these topics in French.

Ensure that you have:

- a) A knowledge of structures for presenting and supporting arguments - for agreeing and disagreeing, for starting and finishing essays.
- b) Good ideas about the topics set and be able to write these in French.

This is where your individual learning is important as well as the role of your teachers.

### 4. Your choice of question is crucial.

In questions 1-5 of the FN2 paper, the examiner has specified exactly what you have to write. In question 6 - the essay – you have a choice.

The essay questions on this paper consist of two elements – a statement and a following question. **Both are important.** They will tell you what the topic is e.g. sport but also, crucially, the 'slant' or specific aspect(s) of a topic that the examiner wishes you to discuss.

**LOOK** at all the questions. Consider what slant or aspects of the topic set the examiner wants you to discuss in each of the questions before making your choice.

**CHOOSE** the question you can answer best.

**NOTE** all the key words that are important in the aspects of the questions set.

**DO NOT** choose to write on a topic because you recognize one word, such as 'sport', 'fashion' and then reproduce a general essay you've written previously in class on that topic. It is very unlikely to meet the demands of the question.

**DO NOT** answer a question if you are unsure what the question means or unsure what the examiner is looking for.

**DO NOT** automatically answer a question on which you have strong views or like **unless** you understand the implications of the question set and have suitable ideas and language skills.

## **5. Planning the essay carefully is important.**

You only have 200-250 words. You will need an introduction, the main body of the essay and a conclusion. Make every word count.

### **A) The introduction (about 30-40 words).**

Here, you will demonstrate that you have understood the demands of the question. State these demands clearly. You may already have an opinion which you wish to support in the rest of the essay or you may say that you want to discuss opposite views before coming to a decision.

### **B) The main body of the essay (about 150 words only).**

The number of paragraphs will depend on the number of 'points' you want to make in support of your argument. If you have five points, then you may only have 30 words per paragraph. If you have four 'points' then you may have about 40 words per paragraph.

Each paragraph needs to do the following:

- a) Relate what you are about to say to the question set.
- b) State the point or argument you wish to make.
- c) Give a useful illustration or example of the point made.
- d) Evaluate how relevant, correct, valid the point you've made is to your argument. (i.e. justification).

### **C) Your conclusion (possibly 30 words).**

State your final opinion and evaluation of the question set. State perhaps the relevance / importance of the slant of the question set to young people in general and to you in particular.

The above sounds like a very 'mechanical' way of writing an essay and you may feel that it limits your freedom of expression or lyricism. That may be so but it is better to make the structure of the essay a bit obvious so that it contributes to the quality of the response.

Both the quality of your ideas and the examples that you choose to support them are important. Very often the examples or ideas you use will be the same as you used in your 'general' essay on the topic. The skill lies in making sure that ideas you already have are arranged in such a way that they clearly relate to the slant of the essay.

## **6) Write the essay carefully.**

- a) Keep the structure of the essay clear.

- b) Do not repeat or waffle.
- c) Do not go 'off message' and bring in irrelevant references to other topics.
- d) Do not 'go off on a tangent' with a new idea or story.
- e) If you illustrate from personal experience, show how this is relevant to the slant of the question.
- f) Use 'ready made phrases and links' very sparingly. Their use must be appropriate.
- g) You are writing in French. If the French is not clear and accurate then this will affect the quality of response as well as the quality of the language.

## **7) Check through your essay.**

You should leave enough time to read through your essay so that you can :

- a) Check that what you say is clear.
- b) Correct any errors in the French.

## **8) To sum up.**

### **A) Before the examination:**

- 1) Become familiar with the way the essay is marked and the assessment criteria.
- 2) Learn suitable ideas on the topics in good French.
- 3) Practise and discuss 'spotting the slant or aspects of a topic' in essays that are set.
- 4) Practise the planning and writing of essays.
- 5) Eliminate common errors in the French.

### **B) During the examination:**

- 1) Leave enough time to do justice to the essay when answering the question paper (35/98 marks).
- 2) Do not exceed the essay length required.
- 3) Make the correct choice of essay, having worked out the aspect(s) of the topic to be discussed.
- 4) Plan the essay carefully.
- 5) Write carefully with a clear structure - introduction, body of essay, conclusion.
- 6) Check your essay and read through before submitting it.

## **Guidance for candidates sitting the Fn2 examination- Reading comprehension.**

The texts (usually found in a separate folder) are central to this examination. You need to do well when answering the comprehension questions on these (usually) two texts as you are competing directly against other candidates in these and all other questions. 'Dropping' marks for no good reason could mean that you drop a grade or two or fail the examination completely.

You require many skills, not just good French, when answering these sections of the paper.

- a) You need to understand the question.
- b) You must find the location of the information required in the text.
- c) You need to follow the instructions to use your own words in the answer.
- d) You must understand what the answer is supposed to be and it must be as full as necessary to answer the question.
- e) You must give the correct answer(s).
- f) Your written French must be of good enough quality to ensure that the answer is clear and easily understood.

### **A) Understanding the question.**

Care needs to be taken here.

- a) Look at the question words- pourquoi, qui? Qu'est-ce qui/ qui est-ce qui, quand, depuis quand, pour/ pendant combien de temps etc.
- b) Check what tense has been used to ask the question. You are very likely to have to answer using the same tense.
- c) Check whether specific information/ideas are required or whether you will have to infer the answer from the text.
- d) Check how many ideas are required to answer properly. Some questions have more than one mark allocated to them.

### **B) Finding the location of the information**

The questions generally follow the order of the text. Without spoiling what you can read in the folder, it might be useful to locate answers in the text e.g. by // in the margin or by underlining.

- C) **Obey the rubric** (a Rubric is an instruction on the examination paper).

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO ANSWER THE COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS IN YOUR OWN WORDS IN FRENCH. In the comprehension tasks, more marks are lost because candidates do not answer in their own words than because of poor French or incorrect answers.

DO NOT JUST COPY THE APPROPRIATE PART OF THE TEXT. If you do so, the examiner will put R (for rubric) by the side because you have not followed the instructions and not credit the answer.

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO CHANGE THE TEXT AT LEAST A LITTLE IN YOUR ANSWERS.

You do this in the following ways:

- a) use a word or a phrase with the same meaning e.g. affaires ('things' = choses), craindre (to be frightened = avoir peur), le repas(meal= la nourriture, ce qu'il mange (etc), habillé (dressed= 'avec'/qui portait des vêtements). Jeter/ lancer (to throw)
- b) You can, in some instances, use a tense which is the equivalent of another tense e.g. future can be replaced with aller +infinitive. Il manger/ il va manger, il se reposerait (conditional), il allait se reposer.
- c) You can change the construction e.g. à cause de la pluie =parce qu'il pleuvait
- d) In some instances people are quoted either directly e.g."je vais manger", a dit Jean or indirectly e.g. je croyais que j'allais mourir. These can be changed to he/she/ they and indirect speech :X croyait qu'il allait mourir/ mourrait.

**D and E,) Give a full and as correct an answer as required.**

This is particularly true of time and location. Perhaps 'two o'clock' will not be enough, you'll need to say two o'clock in the morning/afternoon. In 2001 (figures are acceptable) might not be the full answer required- it could be in the Spring of 2001 etc. It could be at the beginning of the day, the middle of the afternoon etc. 'In France' might not be enough –it could be the South/North of France etc

**F) Answer in good quality French which is not ambiguous.**

- a) Make sure that you use the right tense of the verb that is required in the answer. What does the question suggest the tense of the answer should be–Present? Future? Conditional? perfect/imperfect?
- b) Any English, Spanish, German, Welsh word in the French answer will immediately make the answer wrong as you have not followed the instructions in the question to answer the question in French. Be careful not to use English words for "le problème", "la société", "l'environnement" and other common words which are similar in both languages.
- c) Make sure that any time reference is correct e.g. 'for two years' is 'pendant deux ans' if it refers to the past but 'pour deux ans' if it refers to the future.
- d) Make sure that what you write is accurate because some mistakes are grammatically very significant 'il regardait' is correct but an *ais*, *aient* ending would make the meaning unclear.

**Finally,**

Make sure you have enough time to look over your answers before you submit the script. Check verb forms and tenses, pronouns, adjective endings and make sure you've answered the question correctly by checking a)the question word- why, where, when, b) the time reference c)how much information is required d) that you have not just copied out the text in your answer.