

Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2018 AP[®] French Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	191			
Total Group				
• Number of Students Scored	22,867			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	3,821	16.7	
	4	5,911	25.8	
	3	7,917	34.6	
	2	4,186	18.3	
	1	1,032	4.5	
• Global Mean	3.32			
Standard Group*				
• Number of Students Scored	17,493			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	1,922	11.0	
	4	4,402	25.2	
	3	6,634	37.9	
	2	3,649	20.9	
	1	886	5.1	
• Global Mean	3.16			

* Standard students generally receive most of their foreign language training in U.S. schools. They did not indicate on their answer sheet that they regularly speak or hear the foreign language of the exam, or that they have lived for one month or more in a country where the language is spoken.

The following comments on the 2018 free-response questions for AP[®] French Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Brian Kennelly of California Polytechnic State University. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question #1**Task:** E-mail Reply**Topic:** Following Up on an Interview Request**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.20**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.11***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were allotted 15 minutes to read the message and write the reply. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able to comprehend the e-mail, and then to write a reply using a formal form of address. The reply must address all the questions and requests raised in the message as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

The course theme for the e-mail reply was Personal and Public Identities. The task required the student to respond to the director of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Mauritius, who had been contacted regarding the possibility of an interview for the student’s high school newspaper and who had some follow-up questions. The director expresses her appreciation for the student’s interest in her NGO, reminds the student of the organization’s mission, and briefly outlines its outreach activities. The director agrees to an interview but asks for clarification. She asks how—practically speaking—the interview will be conducted, given the distance and time zone difference between Mauritius and where the student is located. She also asks why the student’s classmates might be interested in learning more about her NGO.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were generally able to understand the task, the requirement, and the e-mail to which they were asked to respond. They answered both questions—although with varying degrees of elaboration. Not all students asked for more details about the proposed interview nor about the NGO.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting to read the instructions, the introduction to the e-mail, or the e-mail prompt thoroughly, which resulted in some students believing that they themselves were to be interviewed • Not knowing the location of Mauritius, which posed problems for some students trying to answer the first question • Not understanding vocabulary in the first question (“<i>entretien</i>,” “<i>décalage horaire</i>,” “<i>plan pratique</i>,” “<i>volontiers</i>,” for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide required information (responses to questions, request for details) with frequent elaboration • Maintain the exchange with a response that is appropriate within the context of the task

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replying with questions or requests that did not pertain to something mentioned in the e-mail prompt 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composing e-mails consisting solely or principally of language taken directly from the prompt, and often revealing a misunderstanding thereof 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are fully understandable, with ease and clarity of expression Contain varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using exclamation marks, inappropriate for a formal written exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate mostly consistent use of register appropriate for the situation; control of cultural conventions appropriate for formal correspondence, despite occasional errors

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- A very long and formal closing is not necessary. “*Bien à vous*” or “*Bien cordialement*,” for example, is fine. Long formulaic closings are more appropriate for traditional written correspondence.
- Teachers should ask their students to avoid recycling language from the stimulus. Students should directly answer the questions asked in the e-mail and should strive to incorporate words and expressions beyond those included in the stimulus.
- Some student responses read more like essays than e-mails. Students should remember that this is a written interpersonal exchange rather than a written presentation. It is imperative, however, that the formal register be maintained throughout.
- There is no need to incorporate a certain number of “advanced structures” (subjunctive, for example), especially if to do so will be at the expense of grammatical accuracy. Students should focus on making their grammar serve the purpose of their message and not the other way around.
- Teachers should encourage their students to integrate transitional words into their responses and to answer the questions asked with full sentences rather than with lists.
- Students should strive to structure their responses on the page to facilitate understanding for the reader. Use of paragraph structure and transitional elements to organize the response, as well as writing legibly, can all aid in achieving this goal.
- Students should remember that this is an exercise in which they play the role of a student responding to a specific e-mail. They should therefore embrace their role to complete the task within the context provided in the prompt. Students who try to negate the premise of the task (“Oh, I am not interested in learning more about your NGO,” or “I did not reach out to you,” for example) do not maintain the exchange with an appropriate response.
- Start practicing interpersonal writing at the earliest level possible, ideally prior to the AP class. Students can practice by reading and responding to a wide variety of e-mails and letters, which will also give them the opportunity to analyze and discuss notions of register as these apply to vocabulary choice, openings, and closings.
- Teachers should remind their students that they must complete all the elements of the task (respond to both questions/requests in the e-mail and then ask for more details about something mentioned in the message) for their response to be considered clearly appropriate. Many students spend so much time composing an introduction to their e-mails that they appear to run out of time and are unable to complete the task successfully.
- Teachers should expose students to e-mails of various types and lengths so that they can better analyze their messages and determine what information is important to incorporate in their replies.
- Students should be exposed to as many Francophone communities as possible so that their responses do not include inaccurate information.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years.
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies across languages that will improve student performance.
- Begin having students respond to e-mails early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on interpersonal writing.

Question #2**Task:** Persuasive Essay**Topic:** Knowledge of General Culture**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 2.91**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.83***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having the student write a persuasive essay on a given topic while referencing three sources of information about the topic. Students were first allotted 6 minutes to read the essay topic and the two printed sources. Then they listened to the one audio source twice. Afterward they had 40 minutes to write the essay. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able to comprehend the three sources, and then to present their different viewpoints. They also had to present their own viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all of the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they had to identify them appropriately. Furthermore the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

The course theme for the persuasive essay was Beauty and Aesthetics. Students had to write a persuasive essay on whether one must acquire a good knowledge of general culture to succeed in the contemporary world. The first source was an article entitled, “Sciences Po eliminates the general culture test.” The author discusses how this elite school has eliminated the general culture test to increase the diversity of its students and to concentrate less on knowledge that many young people might not yet have and to concentrate more on the personality of students in admission decisions. The second source was an infographic showing what young people think about the importance of general culture, the level of general culture they believe themselves to have, and factors they believe important for the development of general cultural knowledge. The third source was an interview with a literature professor who had organized a public reading of a French classical text, which she argues underscores the continued relevance of aesthetics in society.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students by and large completed the task: answering the question of whether a good knowledge of general culture is necessary for success in the contemporary world and defending their opinion by utilizing the three sources provided.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not recognizing the need to <i>persuade</i> while answering the question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and defend the student’s own viewpoint on the topic with a high degree of clarity: develop a persuasive argument with coherence and detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting to cite and integrate the three sources appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate content from all three sources in support of the essay

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating limited cultural competency in responses (unaware of the existence of “<i>grandes écoles</i>” in the French educational system; and misunderstanding of “<i>culture générale</i>” and “<i>baccalauréat</i>,” for example) • Not realizing that “<i>La princesse de Clèves</i>” is a literary work (mentioned in the audio source) and misunderstanding vocabulary: “<i>supprimer</i>,” “<i>discrimination positive</i>” (in article); and “<i>guichetière</i>” (in audio source) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a high degree of comprehension of the sources’ viewpoints, with very few minor inaccuracies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting to organize the essay to support the point of view being presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present an organized essay; effectively use transitional elements and cohesive devices • Develop paragraph-length discourse

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teachers should remind students to proofread their work for accuracy and to avoid misquoting the sources. It is also important for students to cite the sources appropriately.
- Teachers should encourage students to write legibly.
- Teachers should help students understand how to integrate information from all three sources into their essays rather than just summarize them.
- Teachers should remind students that in addition to task completion, accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage is important.
- Teachers should ensure students’ familiarity with vocabulary from each of the course’s themes.
- Teachers should give students ample opportunities to practice developing their own points of view in writing using authentic sources in the target language: reading selections (articles); charts and graphs (some students continue to struggle with how best to interpret and integrate them); and audio selections.
- Teach students the *process* of writing (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing).
- Teachers should remind their students that the content and structure of the essay is more important than the length. They need a clear introductory and closing paragraph; body paragraphs should be for building their argument and supporting their ideas with evidence from the sources; and, transitional words or phrases are key to linking paragraphs.
- Teachers should remind students to avoid restating the opinions in the source materials but rather articulate their own opinion while integrating ideas from the source materials (whether for support or to be refuted).

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance. Have them pay particular attention to how the content from the sources is cited and integrated.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional essay tasks from previous years.

- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies across languages that will assist student performance.
- Begin having students write essays based on sources early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience. For example, have students respond first to one source (either article, chart, or audio) and then gradually build up to having students integrate two and three sources.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on presentational writing as well as the module called *Building Students' Skills in Developing Effective Written Arguments*.

Question #3**Task:** Conversation**Max. Points:** 5**Topic:** Promoting Good Lifestyle Habits**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.40**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.20***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student respond as part of a simulated oral conversation. Students were first allotted one minute to read a preview of the conversation, including an outline of each turn in the conversation. Then the conversation proceeded, including 20 seconds for students to speak at each of five turns in the conversation. The series of five responses received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The responses had to appropriately address each turn in the conversation according to the outline as well as the simulated interlocutor's utterance.

The course theme for the conversation task was Global Challenges. In the task the student had a conversation with Sébastien, a classmate, who was part of a student committee to promote good lifestyle habits among his high school classmates. The student needed to respond to the following five audio prompts:

1. Sébastien greets the student and explains that he has a composition due the following day but that he has not yet begun working on it. He asks the student whether the student also has a lot to do. The student needed to respond by providing details.
2. Sébastien reacts, then asks what the student does to manage stress, explaining that for him yoga helps. The student needed to respond by providing details.
3. Sébastien reacts, then explains to the student that a committee, of which he is part, wants to promote good lifestyle habits among his high school classmates. The committee members are preparing a presentation for classmates in which he will provide them advice. He asks the student what the student might propose. The student needed to respond and give an explanation.
4. Sébastien reacts and invites the student to work with the committee of which he is part. As its members intend to meet the following week and Sébastien would like the student to join them, he asks whether the student has a preferred meeting day. The student needed to respond and explain the response.
5. Sébastien reacts and asks the student how the student might be reached. The student needed to respond and end the conversation.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were, for the most part, able to engage in the simulated conversation with Sébastien, as guided by the outline of the conversation and after listening to each of the five recorded turns of the conversation.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties answering the third question. Responses did not provide advice pertaining to good lifestyle habits but instead offered suggestions on how to plan and organize the presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide required information (responses to questions) with frequent elaboration

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misunderstanding the verb “<i>promouvoir</i>” and the noun “<i>conseils</i>” (in third turn) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not following the outline of the conversation Having difficulty ending the conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the exchange with a series of responses that is clearly appropriate within the context of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being inconsistent in the use of the informal register (using both “<i>tu</i>” and “<i>vous</i>,” for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contain a mostly consistent use of register appropriate for the conversation

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Students should have a good idea of how long 20 seconds last. It is important that students participate as fully as possible in the conversation, elaborating and not just giving brief responses.
- Teachers should instruct students how to use transitions effectively.
- Teachers should encourage students not to use rote answers but rather to respond with phrases appropriate to the specific context of the conversation.
- Students should practice writing interpersonal questions (flipped classroom) then incorporate them in simulated conversations with partners.
- Teachers should emphasize to students that they are receiving a holistic score for the task and should train students not to get flustered if they misunderstand a question or answer a question poorly. Students need to recover quickly and be able to anticipate, understand, and respond well to the next prompt/s.
- Students should read the instructions and the outline carefully and underline key words. They should listen to the prompts carefully and respond, following the outline provided.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional conversation tasks from previous years.
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies across languages that will assist student performance.
- Work with students so they become familiar with how long 20 seconds last so they can become more comfortable with how long their responses can be.
- Teach students how to use the conversation outline to their advantage. Look at commonalities from year to year so that students can anticipate types of responses.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on interpersonal speaking.

Question #4**Task:** Cultural Comparison**Topic:** The Place of Advertising**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 2.31**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.14***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having the student make a comparative oral presentation on a cultural topic. Students were allotted four minutes to read the topic and prepare the presentation and then two minutes to deliver the presentation. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The presentation had to compare the student's own community to an area of the French-speaking world, demonstrating an understanding of cultural features of the French-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

The course theme for the cultural comparison task was Contemporary Life. Students had to respond to the following question: What is the place of advertising in your community? Students had to compare their observations of their own community to those of a Francophone community or region. Students could refer to what they had studied, observed, and/or experienced as support for their claims.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were typically able to discuss the place of advertising in their communities. But not all students had much of substance to say about its place in a Francophone community.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misunderstanding the prompt (discussion of publications, of the public, of public places, or of advertising of public places, for example) Providing unbalanced responses (unequal treatment given to the communities discussed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively treat the topic within the context of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing lists of cultural differences, rather than comparing cultures based on the specific topic contained in the prompt Not comparing their community with a Francophone community or with another Francophone community (if already living in a Francophone community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly compare the student's own community with the target culture, including supporting details and relevant examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clearly identifying their own community (just saying “<i>ici</i>” or “<i>chez moi</i>”), or not identifying the target community 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including geographical inaccuracies (stating that Africa is a country, for example) • Not presenting information beyond stereotypes and superficial information about the Francophone communities discussed (there is no outside advertising in France; or there are neither products to buy nor advertise in African countries, for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of the target culture, including supporting details and relevant examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequately organizing the presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an organized presentation; effectively use transitional elements and cohesive devices

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teachers should collaborate with colleagues teaching economics, geography, and history as well as speech and forensics, for example, to help students address gaps in content knowledge and hone their rhetorical skills.
- Students should be explicit (not implicit) in their presentations: they should clearly state what two communities are being compared (and which one is their own community).
- Teachers should present a wide range of Francophone culture in as much depth as possible, using current authentic (audio and print) materials to ensure that students have a clear understanding of those cultures that transcends stereotypes and clichés.
- Teachers should encourage students to make good use of the four minutes they are allotted for planning and organizing their presentations. Using topics from past World Languages and Cultures’ exams (available on AP Central), teachers should have students practice the task with the technology to be used during the exam.
- Teachers should provide students effective strategies for comparing cultures: methods for introducing transitional phrases and structures needed for comparison; and, the vocabulary to present one’s opinion. When introducing these strategies, teachers should emphasize how these tools can help students go beyond listing and elevate the quality of their responses.
- Teachers should emphasize that an effective cultural comparison requires students to discuss both their own community and a Francophone community and explicitly to articulate both the similarities and differences between them.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional cultural comparison tasks from previous years.

- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies across languages that will assist student performance.
- Begin having students develop early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on presentational speaking.