Bac Exam: Recommendations

I. General issues:

Test item writers should:

-Vary the themes dealt with in the reading comprehension, the language exercises and the writing tasks.

-Give clear, simple and concise instructions.

-proof-read / revise for language accuracy and appropriacy and content validity

-Suggest accessible materials and tasks to the average pupil

-Make sure the test taker/examinee is familiar with the question types and the language used

-Avoid the heavy and demotivating cultural load and the depressing and shocking themes in texts/paragraphs/tasks suggested

-Avoid time-consuming tasks

-Have a clear rationale for each suggested task/exercise/question, etc.

-Avoid testing the same thing twice

-Avoid repetition or overuse of a question type

-Avoid suggesting materials taken from coursebooks and commercial extracurricular workbooks « livres parascolaires »

 N.B -Regional commissions involved in exams proposals are requested to provide copies of the sources/references cover page and the pages containing the text, the language exercises and the guided writing tasks

II. Specific issues:

1. Reading Comprehension

Test item writers should:

-Consider the number of words (observe the specifications pertaining to the length of texts in the Ongoing Evaluation documents, Secondary education)

-Vary the questions to « demonstrate comprehension of text content <u>and</u> organization »

-Suggest texts containing topical issues (recent, up-to-date themes, subjects which are of particular interest at the present time). Suggesting accessible literary texts conveying universal values is also possible.

-Design comprehension questions according to text suitability for a good exploitation

The following option has been considered as a realistic and practical solution:

The Arts (Lettres) branch (15 items): 6 or 7 questions maximum

The Sciences branch (12 items): 5 or 6 questions maximum

-Avoid designing questions which require a variety of possible answers, <u>with the exception of</u> the question which requires test takers to "express reaction to the content of the text or the characters or people involved".

-When asking test takers to complete a summary with words from different paragraphs, test developers should :

•Indicate <u>in the instructions</u> the paragraphs where the words exist

•Ask the test taker to identify and copy the words as they are. That is to say; without making any changes to the words.

-Make sure the adjectives or the adverbs suggested in the question type: Circle/tick/underline…. the adjectives/adverbs which apply to ….., are familiar to the pupils, that is to say, the words are mentioned in the word lists/ book maps/module maps/ exist in lessons, etc. and ask for no more than <u>two items</u> –two adjectives or adverbs-to be identified in the list suggested.

- In the question type: Complete with details from the text,
•The detail ranges from <u>one word</u> to <u>one full sentence</u>, but no more.

•The detail should be explicitly and completely written. Dots (…….), or ellipsis, are not accepted and the answer is considered false.

- For "identifying evidence that a given statement is false", the instruction is worded as follows:

*For each of the following statements, pick out **one** detail from the text showing that it is **false.***

The paragraph where the detail exists **must** be indicated (the paragraph number).

- Test item writers should design a correct option and distractors in the multiple choice items of equal length: containing almost the exact number of words as in the correct answer.

2. Language exercises

Test item writers should:

- Provide a complete sentence at the beginning of the paragraph/ leave the first sentence integral to set context.

-Avoid ungrammatical words in the multiple choice items.

-Spread items. Do not overload one or two sentences with test items

-Suggest "bare infinitive" in tense/form exercise as a rule. (Bracketed words)

-Strike a balance between tenses and forms.

-In the tense/form exercise, avoid items requiring a double task such as adding a prefix and a suffix. For example (avoid) to get unavoidable.

-Vary the items in the multiple choice question (prepositions, tenses, forms, lexical words, etc.)

-Refer to the word lists/ book maps/module maps/ lessons to make sure the selected lexical items are existing. Broadly speaking, each lexical test item should be found somewhere in the teaching materials in one of the official coursebooks in use.

3. Writing tasks

-In developing full sentences from notes, test item developers should make sure notes are not single words, but chunks / series of words separated by slashes.

-Avoid overloading tables / biography data with many details and notes. Suggest a reasonable amount of information to be developed in a written paragraph / short text in the specified and provided number of lines.

- In the **productive task**, suggest a topic that should "interest and motivate the pupil to write.

- Suggest a theme that relates to the curriculum.

-Design a task that allows the pupils to use their own ideas, activate and reinvest personal knowledge and language resources and express attitudes. The task should not be suitable for memorizing and learning off by heart data and ready-made sentences and rewriting them. It shouldn't lend itself to rote learning.

-Avoid tasks that are ill-defined. The task should specify: topic, a communicative situation, purpose, audience, clear context, and genre / text type.

- Specify a clear functional organization (e.g. narrative, argumentative, description of a process, contrast and comparison, cause and effect, making suggestions, etc.)

-Suggest a task which is manageable within the time allotted and which doesn't require much background knowledge some pupils might not have.

-Avoid scaffolding i.e. providing the test takers with helpful notes and hints in the free writing, just the instructions.

-Quotes- when used- should not confuse or mislead the test takers .They should be clear enough, carefully selected, guiding and connected / related to the issue raised in the task.

- Provide clear and appropriate lay-out.

- Specify the length of the written text, i.e., the number of lines required.