

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

GCE

GCE French (6FR01) Paper 1A

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## Unit 1 (6FR01): Spoken Expression and Response in French

The test is divided into two sections.

### SECTION A

*This requires students to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to the student's chosen general topic area. The teacher/examiner will first ask two questions about the general content of the stimulus and will then follow on with two other questions that invite students to express their opinions on, or give reactions to, the stimulus ( Specification September 2007, p 9)*

The most popular topic areas chosen by candidates by far were "Lifestyle: Health and Fitness" and "Youth Culture and Concerns". Then, some way behind, came "The World Around Us" and "Education and Employment".

As a rule, the Edexcel-set questions were read verbatim (as is required) by examiners. Repetitions are allowed when requested by the candidate, but multiple unrequested repetitions, rephrasing (apart from "vous" to "tu" forms), explaining, highlighting, splitting questions (apart from the "pourquoi ou pourquoi pas" element) or asking supplementary questions, are not permitted in this section of the test. Answers which are given by the candidates as a result of any of these infringements to the rules are discounted for assessment purposes.

All four questions should always be asked, even if a candidate has partially answered the next question in their previous answer. There were only a very few instances of examiners missing out questions.

### The first two questions

These always relate to the direct content of the stimulus and normally require relatively short answers. A partial lift or lifts with a small amount of manipulation and/or paraphrasing are usually sufficient to provide acceptable answers. Many candidates produced accurate answers. Some candidates had obviously been told that they should develop their answers and, often after having produced an adequate answer, chose to develop this with long and at times irrelevant additions, occasionally pre-empting the next one or two questions. Others lost sight of the fact that the answers to the first two questions are to be found in the stimulus and went into long speeches expressing personal opinions. This is only required when answering the next two questions.

### Questions 3 and 4

These two questions are open-ended as candidates are required to give reactions to and opinions about the general content and issues raised by the stimulus.

Candidates are expected to give developed and detailed answers, demonstrating that they have done some research and some thinking about the issues stemming from the stimulus. Many students produced excellent answers which amounted to mini-speeches or mini-debates with themselves, during which they considered different aspects of the issues raised, comparing and contrasting viewpoints, expressing a considered opinion and justifying their standpoint. This is a demanding part of the test during which examiners must remain silent, and it requires students to have been trained in giving this kind of answer and also to anticipate, during the 15 minute preparation time, what they might be asked to express. There was much more evidence of the right kind of answers being provided by candidates in this part of the test this session. Short, undeveloped one-line answers, even when relevant, are not sufficient in order to access the higher marks.

## Assessment: Understanding (Stimulus Specific)

Answers to all four questions are marked globally. There is no detailed mark scheme for each question. Indeed, there are often different acceptable ways of answering these questions, even the first two.

Topic area: YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

### Stimulus card 1

Q1 - few candidates managed to produce the required changes from first to third person : « *parce que quand elle danse, c'est un moment où il n'y a plus rien autour d'elle; elle est dans son propre monde* »

Q2 - many ignored « *où on danse* » in the question and therefore missed the point of the last sentence of the stimulus and/or thought that Léo liked rock and techno. A full and detailed answer would have been « *il ne danse pas; il s'occupe de la musique; il essaie de discuter mais c'est difficile quand tout le monde danse et il s'ennuie* »

Q3 - most candidates sympathised with Agathe and were able to provide one or two reasons why.

Q4 - candidates often answered this personally, rather than mentioning the broader picture.

### Stimulus card 2

Q1 - many candidates answered this question correctly but then felt the need to develop their answer, thus pre-empting Q2.

Q2 - the temptation of a straight lift of the whole of the second paragraph was often yielded to.

Q3 - it was disappointing that so few candidates understood the word "fils" and this led to many repetitive and confused answers.

Q 4- many candidates provided good answers to this question.

### Stimulus card 3

Q1 - "*De qui*" was often missed and taken to be "*de quoi*" with the result that instead of the correct answer "*il s'agit des accros au net/des Français qui surfent même pendant les vacances*", candidates suggested "*il s'agit de l'internet*".

Q2 - the word "*lecteur*" was often not understood. The change from the imperative to the infinitive "*d'écrire au journal et de leur envoyer leurs témoignages*" defeated all but the best candidates.

Q3 - good candidates took their time and answered all three questions contained in the second paragraph. Many were confused by the number of questions and panicked, providing partial answers.

Q4 - often disappointing. Many candidates thought that new technology was useful, but few considered whether any aspects of it were good or bad for society.

Topic Area: LIFESTYLE: HEALTH AND FITNESS

### Stimulus card 1

Q1 - candidates were often able to say what McDonald's had done but many missed the "*pourquoi?*" element.

Q2 - the word "*surprenant*" was not always understood and many candidates missed the irony.

Q3 - most candidates seemed able to produce an answer to this question.

Q4 - not often well answered, with many candidates merely stating what healthy eating entails.

### Stimulus card 2

Q1 - mostly answered satisfactorily.

Q2 - most candidates provided the required two reasons (exercise and charity)

Q3 - mostly answered competently in the affirmative.

Q4 - many candidates restricted their answer to the need for taking part in sport, thereby missing the main point of the question.

### Stimulus card 3

Q1 - usually correctly answered, occasionally pre-empting Q2 when fully developed.

Q2 - most candidates were able to answer.

Q3 - this produced many well-rehearsed answers.

Q4 - many candidates seemed to think that smoking was more dangerous than drinking. The best answers considered the dangers of both.

Topic Area: THE WORLD AROUND US

### Stimulus card 1

Q1 - not always understood, either because "*à qui*" or "*conseils*".

Q2 - candidates often answered this question without referring to the stimulus text.

Q3 - candidates found it difficult to develop their answer.

Q4 - "*Leur propre pays*" was not always understood, but some well-prepared candidates were able to speak at length, comparing the advantages and disadvantages of "staycations" and holidays abroad.

### Stimulus card 2

Q1 - few were faced with this, but those who were usually managed a fair answer ("*des voyages en camping-car*").

Q2 - it was possible to get away with a straight lift from the end of the second paragraph.

Q3 - mostly answered satisfactorily.

Q4 - the "*comment?*" part was not always dealt with.

### Stimulus card 3

Hardly any candidates had to cope with this card.

Topic Area: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

### Stimulus card 1

Q1 - no particular problem reported.

Q2 - the correct and detailed answer "*La présentation qui doit être soignée et le contenu qui doit consister de l'essentiel*" was rare and most candidates relied on a lift from the second paragraph.

Q3 - candidates found it difficult to elaborate.

Q4 - this produced some very well prepared answers.

### Stimulus card 2

Hardly any candidates were faced with this card.

### Stimulus card 3

Q1 - the few candidates who dealt with this card answered this question correctly.

Q2 - there were quite a few things to include, and candidates produced at least some of the elements required.

Q3 - some good, developed and even emotional responses were heard.

Q4 - mostly produced well rehearsed answers.

## SECTION B

*The second part requires the teacher/examiner to engage the student in a discussion that, although still relating to the same general topic area and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus. ( Specification September 2007, p 9)*

It is elegant and useful if the first question in this section can be a transitional one, using something the candidate has said in Section A in order to introduce a different sub-topic to kick start the discussion in Section B. Many good teacher/examiners used this technique very effectively this session.

The conversation does not have to cover every single listed sub-topic: one or two may be sufficient if there is depth in the discussion. A few teacher/examiners found it difficult to relinquish the topic of the stimulus and kept revisiting it. There were several tests where Section B was entirely devoted to further questions on the sub-topic of the stimulus. Such tests did not score well.

It was not always obvious when Section A ended and Section B started. It is very useful if this can be made clear on the recording by saying something like: *“bon, alors maintenant on va passer à autre chose/à la deuxième partie de l’examen”*. If not, markers are not sure whether the examiner has asked an extra question in Section A (which is not allowed) or has actually started the Section B discussion.

A small number introduced discussions about sub-topics from a different topic area. Having a conversation that does not move on from the topic of the stimulus or that strays into the wrong areas means that the candidate is unable to express relevant ideas and opinions or to demonstrate good understanding of his or her chosen general topic area. Some overlap between topic areas is possible and acceptable, as long as the main focus of the discussion remains firmly embedded in the relevant topic area.

### **Assessment: Understanding (General Topic Area)**

This relates exclusively to Section B

Ideas and opinions are rewarded. A long list of facts embedded in a francophone context is not required, although some facts, figures and dates display understanding of the topic area and help to formulate and justify opinions. Personal questions and answers are acceptable to a certain extent but should be used very sparingly in order to avoid possible embarrassment and to make sure that the conversation goes beyond a GCSE style of discourse. Issues should be considered from a more general point of view and involve a degree of analysis.

### **Assessment: Quality of language (Accuracy)**

This relates to the whole test.

Both pronunciation and accuracy are rewarded in this part of the assessment. The standard in both this session was better than in the Summer, but many similar problems emerged. Here are some of the most common errors in terms of pronunciation and intonation:

- Alcou instead of *alcool*
- Tabaque instead of *tabac* and tabaguisme for *tabagisme*
- Dangeur or dangère instead of *danger*
- Diphthongisation of single vowel sounds (oo for *ou*, ow for *au/o*, ey for *é/ai* etc)
- *Ait* or *aient* as aille, or ayente
- Nachional, alimentachion, sosailleté instead of, *national*, *alimentation*, *société*
- Confusion between French *ou* and *u* sounds
- Confusion between *la mort* and *l'amour*
- Inability to differentiate between nasals (*an*, *in*, *un*, *on*)
- Incorrect French pronunciation of *Rs*, particularly internal ones as in *droit*, *arrêter*, etc)
- Confusion between *jeunes* and *gens*, *ville* and *vie*, *fils* and *fille*
- Sounding of *ent* at the end of verbs in the third person plural (*ils mangeante*)
- Sounding final consonants (*beaucoup*, *les garçonz* etc)
- Rising intonation at the end of statements (American/Australian influence ?)
- Recitative intonation when regurgitating pre-learnt material

Other very common errors, "en vrac" :

- *Ce texte s'agit de* instead of *dans ce texte il s'agit de*
- Frequent use of the un-idiomatic expression *il y a beaucoup de problèmes avec*, instead of *X cause beaucoup de problèmes* or, *il y a beaucoup de problèmes en ce qui concerne...*
- The gender of *problème* (*une/cette problème !*). Other basic gender errors (*la père*, *mon mère*, *ma frère*, *un sœur*).
- *Ça dépend sur* instead of *ça dépend de*
- *Possiblement* instead of *peut-être*
- *Les célèbres* instead of *célébrités*
- *Le fumer*, *le fumage* or *le fumier!!* instead of *fumer* as a noun
- *A France*, *à l'Angleterre* instead of *en France*, *en Angleterre*
- *Les langues étranges*, instead of *étrangères*
- Increased confusion between *très* and *trop* (possibly because of modern common usage)
- *Si je serais* instead of *si j'étais*
- *Beaucoup de les/de le*
- Confusion between *bon* and *bien*, *mauvais* and *mal*

### Assessment: Quality of Language (Range of Lexis)

This relates to the whole test.

The quality and variety of vocabulary is considered, as well as the range of structures used. Overall, the standard this session was better and often good or very good. Many candidates had learned some topic-specific lexis and had a good range of structures at their disposal. There were frequent appropriate (and inappropriate) uses of the subjunctive, and increasing confidence in the use of the conditional mood. There is no definitive list of structures that need to be heard in order for candidates to have access to the higher boxes of the grid. The structures used need to be appropriate to the kind of discourse taking place between candidate and teacher/examiner. The level of complexity which involves a range of sentence structures, tenses and moods, and enables functions such as describing, agreeing, disagreeing, contrasting, conceding,

questioning, explaining, exemplifying, justifying, surmising etc... was what determined the quality of the mark awarded. There was often a marked contrast between the range of language used in Sections A and B.

### **Assessment: Response**

This relates to the whole test.

There are four elements in this section of the assessment that come into play: comprehension, fluency, spontaneity and development . Some performances were spontaneous, but not very fluent. Many were very fluent but totally lacking in spontaneity. Comprehension was much less of a problem in Section B (well rehearsed questions) than in Section A (totally unrehearsed questions). Development of discourse only took place in largely unrehearsed exchanges. Unfortunately, once again, too many centres had obviously prepared a list of questions and, in some cases, asked their students to learn answers by heart. Whilst it is understandable that areas of discussions will have been prepared, it goes totally against the spirit of the examination exclusively to recite pre-learnt answers in what is supposed to be a discussion and not a dry question and answer exercise. There is no opportunity in this case for development. In the case of totally recited answers, the maximum mark available under Response was 8 out of 20 and was often less. Fortunately, there were also many tests where a genuine discussion took place (often starting with a measure of learnt material, but going beyond) and which were reasonably fluent (but included all the hesitations and false starts that normal conversation entails) . These were appreciated and suitably rewarded.

### **CONDUCT OF TESTS BY TEACHER/EXAMINERS**

Most tests were conducted correctly and in the right spirit. There were many tests where a genuine conversation took place, sometimes at a very high level close to Unit 3 style debates. In most cases, timings (8-10 minutes) were adhered to. There were however, a few tests that went on much beyond 10 minutes (markers are asked to stop listening, much after 10 minutes). Fortunately, very few were significantly short. The latter are penalised by a downgrading of marks for Quality of Language (Accuracy and Range), as well as Response. The average time taken to deal with Section A was around three minutes. There were some instances of incorrect examining technique used by teacher/examiners: using the wrong stimulus card, prompting, correcting, repeating questions in Section A when the candidate had not requested it, repeating the same question until the candidate gave the right answer, splitting questions, asking extra questions and offering comments in Section A, not making clear when Section A ended and Section B started. The main problem in Section B was working through a list of prepared questions and thus jumping from sub-topic to sub-topic without any obvious link. **The key to good examining is to listen to what the candidate says and to base the next question on something they have said, by asking them to explain, justify or expand their point(s). Only in this way can a degree of spontaneity be achieved.** Many teacher examiners do this effectively.

## ADMINISTRATION

Many centres recorded their tests on audio cassettes. An increasing number used audio and data CDs. A small number of memory sticks were also sent.

The quality of recording on the whole was fair, but examiners are asked to make sure that the candidates' voices can be heard clearly. A few problems were experienced: unmarked tapes/CDs, intrusive background noise, interference from mobile phones, failing to state at the beginning of the recording the topic area and the stimulus about to be used. There were still too many missing oral forms and attendance lists. Centres are reminded that the correct version of oral forms (OR1) can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and that the completed oral forms (which are used for marking and feedback by examiners) together with two copies of the attendance registers should be sent to the examiner along with the recordings.

## ADVICE TO TEACHER/EXAMINERS

- Encourage your students to choose the full range of topic areas.
- Train them to give full and developed answers.
- Teach them how to express and justify opinions.
- Do not allow your candidates to see the questions on the stimulus before the test.
- Be aware of the different kinds of questions in Section A.
- Read the questions in Section A exactly as they are.
- Do not ask extra questions in Section A or offer comments.
- Make it clear when you are moving from Section A to Section B.
- Do not prepare and rehearse a list of questions.
- Do not allow your candidates to recite pre-learnt material for very long.
- Make sure Section B is a discussion, not a series of recitations
- Do not revisit the stimulus topic in Section B
- Make sure the sub-topics you raise in Section B are relevant
- Listen to what candidates say and pick up on it for the next question
- Keep to the specified timings
- Do not correct or prompt your candidates during the test

## Grade boundaries

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