

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2013

GCE French (6FR01)  
Paper 1A

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January 2013

Publications Code US034496

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## **EXAMINER'S REPORT ON 6FRO1-UNIT 1A: 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)*

"Lifestyle: Health and Fitness" and "Youth Culture and Concerns" were once again the two most popular topic areas, but it was good to hear an increasing number of candidates choosing to speak on "The World Around Us" and "Education and Employment" this session.

Most centres now run this part of the test very effectively. Only a very small number of examiners rephrased questions, asked supplementary questions or missed out questions. Centres are reminded that candidates should not have sight of the questions in the preparation phase.

#### **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, 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. In such cases, examiners should move on swiftly to the next question, perhaps even interrupting irrelevant developments.

#### **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. 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. 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. Most candidates now realise what is required in this part of the test, although some this session restricted their answers to information contained in the stimulus. Some obviously able and fluent candidates produced short answers and did not score maximum marks.

### **Assessment: Understanding (Stimulus Specific)**

Answers to all four questions are marked globally. Indeed, there are different, acceptable ways of answering these questions, even the first two. Brief but correct answers would normally be awarded a mark of 2/4. Many candidates were able to develop their answers sufficiently (particularly to questions 3 and 4) to be awarded 3/4 or 4/4.

Here is a review of this session's set questions which includes examples of correct answers to the first two questions for each card, consistent with the award of marks between 2 and 4 out of 4 overall (although there were many other ways of producing good, even more detailed answers to the set questions).

Topic area: YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

#### **Stimulus card 1 (*Google sait tout*)**

Q1- *Il s'agit du moteur de recherche Google qui récupère des informations privées sur les utilisateurs.*

Q2- *Pour faciliter les recherches de ses utilisateurs mais surtout pour vendre des publicités personnalisées sur les pages consultées.*

Q3- Candidates sometimes found it difficult not simply to repeat the points made in the text.

Q4- This produced some good answers, particularly when candidates considered different aspects of modern technology

#### **Stimulus card 2 (*Tendances*)**

Q1- *Il s'agit du lien entre les looks adoptés par les adolescents et leur personnalité.*

Q2- *Pour montrer leur identité et exprimer leur personnalité.*

Q3- The word "*tendances*" was not always understood and candidates often failed to produce a personal reaction to "*le style gothique et le look grunge*".

Q4- Some good answers were heard but many candidates struggled to move away from fashion.

#### **Stimulus card 3 (*Lady Gaga: pop et provocation*)**

Q1- *Elle possède une belle voix grave et les thèmes de ses chansons sont populaires chez les adolescents.*

Q2- *Parce qu'elle choque souvent avec ses costumes de scène bizarres, ses opinions extrémistes et aussi parce qu'elle copie les attitudes et la musique de Madonna.*

Q3- This question was often reduced to what candidates thought of Lady Gaga.

Q4- Produced many good and developed answers.

Topic Area: LIFESTYLE: HEALTH AND FITNESS

Stimulus card 1 (***Pour une bonne santé : bougez !***)

Q1- *C'est absolument nécessaire si on veut rester en bonne santé.*

Q2- *Parce que, souvent dans le sport, il existe un élément de compétition qui ne plaît pas à tout le monde.*

Q3- Candidates found it difficult to move beyond simple agreement; hardly any expressed any reservations.

Q4- Very few good answers heard. Most candidates stayed with sport and failed to consider other leisure activities.

Stimulus card 2 (***Cafétérias scolaires au Québec***)

Q1- *Il s'agit des cantines scolaires au Québec où on a interdit la vente d'aliments sucrés et gras ainsi que la vente de boissons gazeuses.*

Q2- *Tout d'abord ils ont abandonné la cantine pour MacDo, mais ensuite ils sont revenus à l'école pour mieux manger.*

Q3- Candidates seemed able to respond productively.

Q4- Many candidates spoke well about the need to remain active and to lead a healthy life by eschewing alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

Stimulus card 3 (***La boxe pour les enfants ?***)

Q1- *Les enfants portent tous des casques et ils miment les coups sans appuyer, donc c'est moins violent.*

Q2- *Aux enfants qui sont un peu trop violents ou ceux qui sont très timides.*

Q3- Answers could be short, often repeating points made in the text.

Q4- Most candidates had been well-prepared to answer such a question.

Topic Area: THE WORLD AROUND US

Stimulus card 1 (***Megève : ville championne de ski***)

Q1- *On dit qu'ils sont de plus en plus exigeants et qu'ils demandent de plus en plus d'équipements de loisirs en vacances.*

Q2- *Parce qu'elle offre le plus grand nombre d'activités de loisirs et d'équipements sportifs par habitant.*

Q3- Unfortunately, this question was often reduced to where candidates liked to go on holiday.

Q4- This produced many acceptable answers.

Stimulus card 2 (***L'homme qui nettoie la nature***)

Q1- *Il passe tout son temps libre à ramasser les déchets dans sa ville et sa région.*

Q2- *Il aime sa région et il veut la protéger. C'est une véritable passion.*

Q3- Many satisfactory answers were heard.

Q4- The phrase "*tant de déchets*" caused problems. Very few candidates mentioned the impact of fast food packaging.

Stimulus card 3 (***La Suisse abandonne le nucléaire***)

Q1- *Parce qu'elle considère qu'elle est trop dangereuse et trop coûteuse.*

Q2- *Elle va privilégier les énergies renouvelables comme l'énergie hydroélectrique et les autres formes d'énergie verte.*

Q3- The candidates who attempted to answer this question had been well-prepared to talk about the pros and cons of nuclear energy.

Q4- Again, candidates had plenty to say on this topic.

Topic Area: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Stimulus card 1 (**Offre d'emploi**)

Q1- *Un emploi de réceptionniste intérimaire dans un hôtel.*

Q2- *Quelqu'un qui a reçu une formation dans l'industrie du tourisme, qui parle anglais et allemand, et qui sait utiliser un ordinateur.*

Q3- Answers were sometimes a little vague. A detailed analysis was often missing.

Q4- Produced some acceptable answers in the main.

Stimulus card 2 (**Les sanctions à l'école**)

Q1- *Les problèmes de violence verbale et physique à l'école qui devient de plus en plus fréquente et grave.*

Q2- *On va augmenter les exclusions automatiques, instaurer des périodes de travaux d'intérêt général et envoyer les élèves les plus difficiles dans des pensionnats spécialisés.*

Q3- Answers were acceptable but lacking in detail.

Q4- The candidates who answered this question had obviously been well-prepared!

Stimulus card 3 (**Les meilleures universités de France**)

Q1- *Les deux meilleures universités de France selon le classement mondial.*

Q2- *Pierre et Marie Curie est plus ancienne que Paris-Sud et les deux universités ont des spécialités différentes.*

Q3- Candidates tended to answer from a purely personal point of view.

Q4- Again, candidates concentrated on personal finance instead of taking a wider view.

## 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 useful to indicate on the recording when Section B is starting by saying something like: *"bon, alors maintenant on va passer à autre chose/à la deuxième partie de l'examen".*

Although it is elegant 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, it is very important that the discussion should move swiftly away and introduce other sub-topics from the same GTA. 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.

### **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. Depth rather than breadth is what is required in order to access the higher marks in the grid.

### **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 variable but better overall than in previous sessions

### **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 good. Many candidates had learned a great deal of topic-specific lexis and were able to use a good range of structures. There were frequent appropriate uses of the subjunctive, and many attempts to use 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 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 still 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. Others 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. This session, fewer centres used prepared lists of questions producing recited answers, where the lack of spontaneity affects the mark. There were 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

Many 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 this session, very few were significantly short. The average time taken to deal with Section A was around 3 minutes and that is acceptable. There is no need to prolong this part of the test artificially. 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 did this effectively.

## ADMINISTRATION

**Conduct:** do not allow candidates to see the questions on the stimulus before the test and make sure the cards are allocated according to the sequence prescribed on page 3 of the instructions to teacher examiners.

**Recording:** please could each test start with candidate name and number as well as statement of GTA choice and stimulus number? Most recordings are now on CDs or memory sticks and the increased sound quality is very much appreciated by examiners, although a few recordings on CDs seemed to cut out before the end of tests or to include blanks. There were also some problems with poor sound levels. Centres are requested to check that transfers from digital recorders or hard drives are complete and of good quality before despatch. Very few centres used cassette tapes whose quality is increasingly poor.

**Paperwork:** the oral forms and attendance lists must always be included with the recordings. There is a new version of the oral form available on the website and it needs to be signed by candidates and examiners. It is helpful if CDs and memory sticks can be sent along with a written list of candidates' names and numbers in the order of testing.

### **ADVICE TO TEACHER/EXAMINERS**

- Encourage students to choose the full range of topic areas
- Train them to give full and developed answers
- Train them how to express and justify opinions
- Make sure they understand and are able to express dates, figures and percentages
- Be aware of the different kinds of questions in Section A
- Read the questions in Section A exactly as they are printed
- 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
- Have the confidence (both examiner and candidate) to be spontaneous
- Do not revisit the stimulus topic in Section B
- Make sure the sub-topics you raise in Section B are relevant and from the correct GTA
- 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
- Do not mark the tests

## **Grade Boundaries**

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Order Code US034496 January 2013

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