

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In French (6FR03) Paper 1A
Spoken Expression (TE)

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Purpose of the unit

The Unit is designed to test candidates' ability to participate in debate and discussion of issues that are intellectually and linguistically challenging. They must show that they can follow a sophisticated argument and respond accordingly. They are rewarded for their ability to do this spontaneously, in unpredictable conditions.

To achieve this, candidates must

- conduct independent research on an issue of their own choice
- adopt a position "For" or "Against" the issue and defend this stance in the face of a critically robust challenge
- use what they know appropriately to discuss 2 or 3 further issues in some depth

Structure of the test

The test lasts between 11- 13 minutes. Short tests are penalised and material produced after 13.30 is disregarded.

It is divided into 3 Sections:

- a 1 minute presentation to allow candidates to present their stance
- a 4 minute debate during which candidates defend their position from attack by the examiner, who will take the opposite position
- a 7-8 minute discussion of 2 or 3 further issues of a similar nature during which the examiner will no longer be confrontational but still critical in order to probe for knowledge and understanding.

All tests are recorded whether conducted by a Visiting Examiner or a member of staff. It is recommended that centres use USB sticks as some CD's cannot be played on a computer or a CD player. Centres are asked to ensure that sessions are finalised.

Centres are asked to provide information on the running order of candidates to make identifying individuals easier.

Centres are also requested to check the sound quality before proceeding with the recording.

Common problems:

- candidates being too far away and inaudible
- examiners being too close and too audible
- "echoey" conditions
- machine hum
- automatic microphones "correcting" for external noise
- telephones/school bells

- passing colleagues
- playground noise
- mobile phones

Advice to centres

The Oral Form

This document has recently been re-designed. Centres are asked to ensure that they use the latest version (available on the Edexcel website).

Centres should read the marker's comments carefully as these will provide useful information regarding the conduct of the examination.

The form should be filled out in French. Some centres use English to express the candidate's stance. The form should be signed. This is so that the test – anonymised- can be used at standardisation meetings. Candidates who object to this will leave the form blank in this regard.

Centres should impress upon candidates the need to ensure that what they intend to argue for or against is actually what they have written on their Oral Forms. It is disappointing to hear a candidate who has elected to defend a position that is against abortion explaining that she is for it in certain circumstances. It shows a lack of considered thought.

Centres using a Visiting Examiner should ensure that the Oral Forms arrive 3 weeks before the examination date.

Choice of issue

This is a crucial decision. Centres should advise candidates to choose issues that:

- can support argument
- are weighty enough to provide material for argument from both sides
- are not matters of faith
- open pathways for the further discussion

Judicious choice of the candidate's chosen issue can be helpful to candidates at the next stage. For example, during the course of the initial debate, a variety of associated issues may be touched upon, any one of which could constitute the first of the further issues. So, a candidate choosing to debate "le port du voile" will touch upon related issues such as the condition of women in society, religion, the freedom of the individual, immigration etc... A well-conducted test

would return to one of those for the first further issue and seek to discuss it in greater depth. Similarly, in discussing this issue, further questions will present themselves for development and so the discussion progresses organically. In this way, candidates will have the assurance that at least for the first of the further issues, they will not be confronted with completely unimagined matters. Issues such as “je suis pour la voiture électrique”, whilst worthwhile in itself in terms of how contentious they may be, do not present the same number of obvious “follow-on” issues as does “je suis pour le retrait du R-U de l’Union Européenne”.

Caution

Centres should not conclude from these remarks that the whole test can be built on issues touched upon in the debate. Unpredictability is a key feature of the test and so the second and third issues should be taken from what arises in the course of the discussion of the first further issue. Too many tests are predictable and become a series of rehearsed monologues in response to key word cues. These tests do not conform to the requirements of the exam and this is reflected in the final mark.

This year again, candidates chose wisely in the main. The usual issues featured strongly: - ***l’avortement – la peine de mort – l’euthanasie – le mariage gay – l’adoption homosexuelle – la légalisation du cannabis/des drogues douces – le droit de vote aux prisonniers – la chirurgie esthétique – les droits des femmes – l’immigration – les concours de beauté – l’énergie nucléaire – l’énergie renouvelable – l’interdiction de fumer en public – l’expérimentation animale – Les mères porteuses – l’éducation privées – la liberté d’expression – le maintien du Royaume-Uni à l’Union Européenne***

Assessment Objectives

Features of the Mark Scheme

Centres are advised to study this document carefully. Proper understanding of it will inform the way the test is conducted and thereby the outcome for candidates.

There are 50 marks available.

By far the largest portion of these reward performance features - 36 out of 50 – in the areas of Response and Comprehension and Development. Centres are advised that in preparing their candidates they should concentrate on Listening and Speaking skills.

Caveat

Centres regularly find that candidates who have produced a lot of language and information have been poorly rewarded. On investigation, it is invariably the case that this is a result of poor conduct of the test as a result of incomplete understanding of the Mark Scheme.

There are 4 areas to be assessed:

- Response
- Accuracy
- Reading & Research
- Comprehension and Development

Accuracy is marked out of 7 and as long as what a candidate says is comprehensible both linguistically and logically, a mark of 4 at least will be gained. If the incidence of basic error becomes intrusive this will go down to 3.

Most candidates achieve 5 and many do much better.

Reading & Research is likewise marked out of 7. It rewards the amount of detailed knowledge shown, largely in the debate and the level of general awareness and understanding of current issues.

Candidates generally score well on this element.

Comprehension and Development is the first of the “performance features” and is marked out of 16. The first part of this objective substitutes for the absence of a separate listening test in this specification. Candidates receive a mark for how well they understand the questions put to them. This covers how accurately they decode the language as well as how well they are able to infer meaning and deal with the implications of what is being said. It is important that examiners ensure through their questions that there is a sufficient level of difficulty both in form and content. “Qu’est-ce que tu penses de ...” is fine as an opening gambit but if the remainder of the questions do not go beyond this level of difficulty, candidates are not being tested.

In other words, examiners must ensure that candidates have to deal with questions or comments that test their level of understanding as well as inviting them to talk about a certain aspect of the issue. Where this is not the case, candidates cannot be rewarded.

Similarly, if the topics being discussed are more appropriate to AS level than A2, this will be reflected in the mark.

An unfortunate feature that emerged last session was encountered again this year. Several examiners asked candidates what they would like to talk about – “quels sont les problèmes qui te préoccupent” – “quels sont tes soucis?” This is

to be avoided. It gives some candidates an unfair advantage over those for whom the test is completely unpredictable.

Similarly, asking questions of a personal nature about family life or future plans is not appropriate. It does not test the candidate's awareness of proper issues.

The mark for Comprehension is generally high.

It is tempered by how well candidates develop the issue under discussion. The intent is to reward those who seek to take the lead in discussions by introducing appropriately related sub-issues that further illustrate their knowledge and understanding.

Candidates who have not been encouraged to do this, who are content to give the correct answer and wait for the next question have not been well advised. The more they are able to sustain discussion on the issue being explored the greater their reward. Examiners who have a list of issues to be covered regardless, fail to offer their candidates the opportunity to demonstrate depth of knowledge and range of opinion and limit their reward.

Response is marked out of 20. It assesses the candidate's ability to engage in meaningful debate or discussion spontaneously, called "spontaneous discourse".

Spontaneity is not an easy notion to grasp. It refers to the ability to respond to a situation by recalling learnt material and selecting from it appropriately to provide a coherent and cogent answer. It does not imply that candidates must produce entirely novel utterances but it does preclude them from rehearsing learnt material that makes only passing reference to the point raised.

This is a situation that arises too often and is largely the result of wrong examining technique, possibly arising from a misunderstanding of the term "discourse".

This refers to what goes on when 2 people talk about the same thing. They listen to what the other has to say and react by making appropriate comment in the desire to move the conversation on. Too many examiners do not listen to what their candidates say. They move on to their next discussion point and cue for more rehearsed material. This defeats the point of the test and accordingly does not get the reward people feel it should. Examiners should encourage candidates to do more than just state a position. They should pick up on specific points, encouraging them to justify, exemplify, hypothesise and speculate.

Candidates who engage in properly conducted discussions and may appear to be less than fluent will generally outperform those for whom the test is little more than a form of recitation.

Candidate performance

Almost without exception candidates were well prepared. They had done the research. To varying degrees, they were able to present ideas and opinions. The

ability to discuss these varied widely with some of them producing debate and discussion of the highest level both linguistically and intellectually but in the main even less able candidates were able to provide some sort of defence of their positions.

Pronunciation and Intonation are generally good but do interfere with understanding on occasion. Final consonants, nasal vowels, “silent” verb endings, vowel discrimination – jeune/gens/jaunes/jeun: but/bout - being the most obvious. It is disappointing that candidates still pronounce “ilz/ este / sonte” at this level.

Tenses are generally limited to the Present and the Conditional because candidates are asked to say what they think about something and what needs to be done. The Imperfect and Passé Composé are frequently encountered but the more complex tenses are largely ignored. Correct selection of the auxiliary depends on which of the “être” verbs is being used. So, **nous sommes allés / il est venu** are usually correctly chosen, although **il né** is equally likely, but it is pretty much a lottery for the rest and **il a devenu** is more likely to be preferred than the correct form. Use of the Future Perfect is virtually unknown, as is the Past Conditional.

The **Subjunctive** mood appears in stock phrases and its use is widespread but only the more able candidates know that it is required in many more situations. However, this is an area that has improved markedly over the years and centres are to be congratulated on this achievement.

Puzzlingly the **Passive Voice** defeats all but the most able. English language interference and lack of grammatical awareness explain sentences such – **les immigrés sont donnés trop de bénéfiques / les enfants doivent être enseignés que ...**

Modality continues to cause problems. The conditional of *devoir* is correctly used to convey the notion “should” in the main although it is also confused with the Imperfect. There are frequent examples of candidates putting both verbs in the conditional as in – **le gouvernement devrait donnerait des subventions** – or using the conditional of *être* as a direct substitute for “should” and producing phrases such as - **les frais d’université serait être réduits**

Subordination continues to bedevil many performances. “*Qui*” and “*que*” are interchangeable for too many candidates or often omitted. At this level, candidates should know that in French, clauses need to be linked. Lack of syntactical awareness leads to incorrect constructions such as **le film que je parlais de** or **la chose qu’ils ont besoin de** or **la carrière je suis intéressé dans**.

Relative pronouns are rare.

Ce qui and **ce que** are encountered but candidates are more likely to use **qu'est-ce que** as in « **Je ne comprenais pas qu'est-ce qu'il voulait** » or "**quoi**" as in « **je ne sais pas quoi il s'agit de** ».

Verbs in subordinate clauses are generally in a finite form but not always, especially if the subject is remote from the verb. Unfortunately, the **Dependent Infinitive** too is also more than likely to be in a finite form – **les parents devraient interdire leurs enfants de utilise les ordinateurs trop**.

Gender and agreement continue to confuse many candidates. Even if gender is difficult to ascribe correctly on occasions, it is odd that once ascribed it should change from encounter to encounter as in "**les femmes devraient avoir le choix de terminer une grossesse parce qu'ils ont le droit de disposer de sa corpse**".

This would seem to indicate a lack of grammatical awareness.

Negatives continue to be used erratically. It is generally understood that there should be two parts but using them both at the same time and in the right place is often a step too far.

Object pronouns are avoided if possible in favour of **cela** or repeating the noun. Disjunctive pronouns are not widely known and mostly replaced by Personal Subject pronouns – **c'était une surprise pour ils** or even with the adjective pour **leurs**. **Demonstrative pronouns** rarely appear.

Response

As mentioned above, candidates respond in 2 ways usually. When the test is conducted correctly, candidates are able to produce spontaneous, coherent and informed responses. When the test is treated like a "question and answer" session, they produce more or less appropriate information in an unspontaneous manner.

Accuracy

Despite a notable incidence of basic error - wrong gender, failure to make the adjective agree with the noun, singular verbs with plural subjects, incorrect choice of relative pronoun - very few candidates make themselves incomprehensible.

Reading and Research

The better candidates provide facts or opinion attributable to a recognised authority or source. The majority prefer to stay in the realm of assertion of personal beliefs. Detail is often lacking.

Comprehension and Development

Very few candidates have trouble understanding the examiner. Only a few are sufficiently pro-active, as described above, to register a score in the upper reaches of the range for this box.

Conclusion

Overall the majority of candidates are able to hold intelligent conversations on a wide range of testing issues. Many are excellent and perform in a truly authentic manner. Communicatively, their receptive and active skills are good.

The knowledge of the workings of French is an area that needs improvement. In particular, a lack of grammatical analysis is a continuing source of loss of marks. With the new specifications centres will be aware that this aspect of language learning is being revived and it is to be hoped that evidence of this will emerge in future oral tests.

Generally, centres should concentrate more on encouraging spontaneous production of language and less on rehearsing performance with candidates. Hard as it may seem to believe, candidates who are properly examined and have to deal with the linguistic and performance demands of the test spontaneously do, despite what might be a halting conversation at times, achieve better marks than those whose apparent fluency is largely fictitious.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

The timing of the test begins the moment the candidate starts the presentation.

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds (including a 30 second tolerance).

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5–8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9–12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13–16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12 for Response, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. A similar adjustment would be made to the mark for Comprehension and Development. This adjustment should not be applied to marks for Quality of language or Reading and Research.

Tests that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence/sense group.

Tests that do not have a debatable or defensible issue

e.g. *where the candidate does not present or defend a definite stance, or the teacher-examiner fails to give the candidate an opportunity to justify their opinions.*

- Candidates will be limited to scoring a maximum of 4 for 'Reading and Research'.
- This may affect the marks given for 'Comprehension and Development'.

Tests that do not move away from initial issue/topic

e.g. *further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered and/or a monologue.*

- Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 12 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 8 marks

Reading and research	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 4 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 3 marks

Comprehension and development	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 10 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 7 marks

Spontaneity/Response

A performance which is, in the marker's view, *largely* recited, and demonstrates *very little* spontaneity as well as impaired intonation may suggest pre-learning. If the examiner believes that a test has been pre-learnt then the mark for **Response** will be limited to 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

A pre-learnt test may also affect the mark given for **Comprehension and Development** if it does not permit a natural and logical interaction.

It is important that the PE and team leaders can see clearly the justification for marks awarded and examiners should note briefly on the OR3 form the reason for any caps which are applied in marking an oral test.

Spontaneous use of language arises from manipulating the reservoir of structures and lexis they have acquired in preparing for the examination in response to the unpredictable nature of the discussion as it unfolds. The unpredictability is created by the teacher/examiner picking up on a remark and probing for greater clarity or further explanation or opinion.

Discourse

Discourse is a discussion where the candidate demonstrates the ability to interact on an issue. This means developing the line of argument and exploring it in more depth.

Discourse describes the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the candidate and the teacher/examiner. In practice, this means that each participant addresses the points made by the other. The candidate and the Teacher/Examiner should respond appropriately to each other's input, whether that be a question, a comment, a remark. To reach the full range of the marking criteria there will be frequent examples of such discourse.

Challenge

Evidence of challenging questions is required to demonstrate that candidates have engaged in discussion and debate at an appropriate intellectual level for A2.

In the first part, there must be evidence that the teacher/examiner has confronted the points of view presented by the candidate. In the second part, there must be evidence of opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their full understanding of the issues.

Development

Development means appropriately expanding on an idea and point of view. This can be in the form of justification, illustration, exemplification, clarification, comparison of the candidates' ideas and views.

If a score of '0' is awarded for any of the assessment grids, the recording should be referred to your Team Leader.

