

Principal Moderator's Report January 2013

GCSE French 5FR02 2A

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Introduction

Centres have a choice of three tasks:

- a presentation and follow-on discussion
- a picture-based discussion
- an open interaction.

Each candidate must undertake at least two of these three task-types but only one has to be recorded and submitted. Centres are asked to submit recordings of at least two different task-types in the moderation sample.

Once again the majority of centres opted for the presentation and discussion and picture-based discussion, although an increasing number of centres undertook the open interaction. Most centres gave their candidates a task sheet and there were fewer instances of candidates receiving just a title such as *Holidays*. Centres are reminded that all tasks have to be refreshed every two years. The best tasks will be a title with 5–6 bullet points to guide and support candidates: the task can then be refreshed at the end of two years by changing at least one of these bullet points.

Centres should note that the specification states on page 16 that the picture within the picture-based discussion task-type is intended to be used as a 'prompt to discussion'. Therefore the discussion should start with reference to the candidate's picture. The spirit of this task-type is that candidates will bring in their own picture, rather than all being given the same one.

Most centres undertaking the open interaction created their own stimuli and tasks. Some centres customised ones from the Edexcel bank in order to develop tasks that suited the interests of their own candidates, thus allowing them to perform well.

Tasks

Centres are reminded that candidates do not all have to do the same task. Where centres gave all their candidates the same task, there was very little differentiation within the tasks set to cater for the relative aspirations of their candidates. Tasks that offer higher-achieving candidates little or no scope for stretch and challenge will not allow such candidates to achieve their potential. On the other hand, tasks that overstretch lower-achieving candidates may lead these candidates to under-perform. Centres are reminded that controlled assessments allow candidates access to tasks that are tailored to their ability level.

Themes

Popular themes included Holidays, School, Family, Media, Lifestyle, Leisure, My town and Sport. Many candidates used the opportunity to talk about subjects that were of genuine interest to them, eg favourite films, celebrities or sports stars, and it was evident that they had carried out ample research within the preparation period.

Candidates may undertake both tasks on the same theme if they wish, although there should be no direct overlap of content.

Presentation and discussion

In the presentation and discussion task-type, candidates must give a presentation lasting between 1 minute minimum and 3 minutes maximum. There were, however, teacher examiners who did not allow their candidates to speak for at least 1 minute and consequently these presentations were too short. Teacher examiners should note that in these cases candidates will incur a deduction of 2 marks on the Content and Response grid. Centres are reminded that overlong presentations of more than 2–3 minutes could mean less time for the more interactive, spontaneous part of the task, thus limiting the marks that could be obtained by candidates.

There were many good performances that were a pleasure to listen to. However, there were also many candidates who had prepared their presentation thoroughly and performed well but who had little left for the all-important interaction. The presentation section fulfils part of the assessment criteria but the follow-up discussion also fulfils other areas. It is therefore very important to ensure that both sections are well prepared and completed.

It is also important that the follow-up discussion takes the conversation forward, expanding on detail and opinion, or takes it in a new direction. It should not cover the same ground and language as the presentation. Where the teacher examiner asks a question about something that the candidate had already stated in the presentation, this frequently causes hesitation and confusion. This has negative implications for the marks that may be awarded. Teachers might wish to consider suggesting content for the presentation that is different from content for the discussion by way of the bullet points in order to overcome this.

It is not in the spirit of the controlled assessment for each candidate's presentation to be followed by the same sequence of questions. Asking all candidates the same questions will not provide enough challenge for more able candidates. There was evidence that the questions had been well rehearsed in some centres. This practice may have allowed weaker candidates to access their potential grade but the lack of spontaneity and unpredictability definitely limited the marks of the more able candidates. Moderators are looking for spontaneity, interaction and an ability to deal with unpredictable questions.

Picture-based discussion

In the picture-based discussion, candidates clearly enjoyed talking about their pictures and this is a popular choice with centres. Candidates bringing their own photo or picture made for much better interaction.

Candidates may give a presentation (maximum of 1 minute) but there is no requirement for this. It should be noted however that 1 minute is the maximum time allowed for any such presentation and teacher examiners should interrupt the candidates after 1 minute.

Whereas some candidates are able to give a short presentation and this boosts their confidence for the rest of the oral, others find it too daunting and feel more comfortable going straight into the discussion. Either approach is acceptable.

It should be noted that a short presentation or brief discussion on the photo or picture usually led on to wider conversation that was interesting to listen to. Personal pictures of a holiday scene, family or a celebrity were common and clearly captured candidates' imagination, giving rise to opportunities to express opinions and speak with enthusiasm.

Open interaction

Although an increasing number of centres undertook the open interaction, this continues to be the least popular option. Where the task was exploited correctly, candidates of all levels were able to engage in a genuinely spontaneous role-play-type dialogue. There were some excellent performances, eg candidates in a tourist office, with a tourist asking for information on the area, or candidates at a job interview.

Unfortunately, too many teachers conducted this task as a question and answer session – more of a general conversation than an unscripted role-play scenario in response to a stimulus (which candidates will have prepared under supervision ahead of the test). A common example of a task that did not work well was *You talk about your holiday with a French penfriend*. In this scenario, there was no obvious role to play. Centres are advised that there is no 'general conversation' task-type in this specification.

In this task, there must be a context and the candidate must be given a definite role to play. Similarly, the teacher examiner must also have a role to play. A support stimulus should be used and candidates should be reminded to ask questions. The task must be structured and should not be conducted as a general conversation.

Well-structured open interaction tasks can really encourage high scores in the Content and Response category due to the level of genuine interaction. The nature of this task gives a real flavour of how language is used in a way that is personal and unique to each individual candidate. The open interaction task often enables weaker candidates to achieve better marks. The task is more structured and often the sort of 'unpredictable questions' that might be asked are more predictable.

It should be noted that, in the specification, there is an expectation in the open interaction that candidates will ask the teacher examiner questions and the vast majority of tasks reminded candidates of the need to do so. If candidates forget to ask questions, it is perfectly acceptable for teachers to prompt candidates in this respect with *Vous avez des questions à me poser?* However, greater interaction and spontaneity are elicited if this happens at appropriate times within the task. Should candidates fail to ask questions, centres should refer to the marking principles below for details on how to apply the marking criteria.

Timings

Each oral task should last between 4 and 6 minutes and most centres were able to keep to these limits. Centres should be aware that moderators stop moderating after 6 minutes to ensure fairness to all candidates. In any case, prolonging the oral rarely, if ever, brings any advantage to the candidate – often the reverse is true.

At the other end of the time scale, centres are reminded that some weaker candidates may struggle to achieve the minimum time; there is, therefore, some leeway and performances over 3 minutes 30 seconds are accepted. Anything less than this will be considered short and centres should refer to the marking principles below for details on how to apply the assessment criteria in these cases.

Centres should note that in order to access the full mark range, the oral must last between 4 and 6 minutes. An oral that lasts only 3 minutes 30 seconds will not be able to access the full mark range.

Recordings

Just one recorded exemplar per candidate for moderation should be sent to moderators. This session no centres submitted their recordings on cassettes, preferring either CDs or USB sticks (with orals recorded as both mp3 files and music/audio files). Each candidate must undertake at least two of the three task-types but only one has to be recorded and submitted, although centres must submit in the moderation sample recordings of at least two different task-types for which they are submitting marks across the whole centre cohort. It is certainly the case that orals recorded digitally and saved as mp3 files greatly facilitate for centres the selection process for the moderation sample. The quality and clarity of the recording are also better. While it is not necessary to conduct the controlled assessments one-on-one in a dedicated room, there is a need for minimal background noise. There were a number of cases where performances were difficult to hear due to high levels of background noise.

Centres are kindly requested to label CDs or USBs carefully – centre number, candidate name and number, language and series details should be clearly given on both the CD and USB. It would help moderators tremendously if the task-type were indicated next to the candidate's name on the CD/USB listing sheet. It also avoids confusion if these details are announced clearly at the start of each oral.

Unfortunately, inadequate details were given in a number of cases and the moderator had to search through all recordings to find candidates.

Marking

The vast majority of teacher examiners showed a good understanding of the assessment criteria and were able to differentiate performances among their candidates. Unfortunately, there were still some centres whose marks needed adjustment.

Some centres tended to overvalue their candidates' performance in the Content and Response section. It should be remembered that the assessment criteria are applied globally on a best-fit basis and that an ability to interact well with the teacher and respond spontaneously to unpredictable questions is necessary to attain marks in the higher bands. Moderators are looking for candidates to produce their own language throughout the task or manipulate the language used by the teacher examiner to make it their own. All too often this section was overvalued where there was a lack of interaction and it merely consisted of a question and answer session – typically, one question followed by a one-sentence answer. In extreme cases, there was also evidence of mini-presentations in response to questions, which similarly did not allow for good interaction. Teacher examiners are encouraged to follow the responses of candidates carefully and respond to candidate's responses in continuing the task rather than follow a pre-determined set of questions. This allows candidates to reach their potential and attain the higher mark bands.

On the other hand, the weakest candidates were often under-marked in this section. Candidates who had been able to give a mix of short sentence answers or phrases and maintain the conversation for 4 minutes were put in the 1–3 mark band where their responses fitted more appropriately into the 4–7 mark band.

Within the Range of Language and Accuracy sections, marks are largely dependent on the amount of French conveyed by the candidate and it is unusual for a candidate who scores in the lower mark bands for Content and Response to score highly in these grids since there is not the breadth of language required. Tenses other than the present must be used in order to have the opportunity to access the 5-mark band for Range of Language. There is a requirement to produce unambiguous use of different verb tenses and a range of structures, including subordination. It is also important when deciding on a mark for Accuracy that the mere absence of error does not mean that the candidate can score highly; there must be an attempt to use more complex language and the candidate's pronunciation and intonation must be generally good. Within the 3–4 mark band for both these sections there is the principle of best fit and that whether it is 3 or 4 will be judged by also looking at the mark band above and below.

Marking principles

The following marking principles should be followed by teacher examiners when marking candidates' controlled assessments:

Tests that are too short, ie less than 3'30" (NB 3'29" is too short):

- Automatic deduction of 2 marks on the Content and Response grid.
- There is no penalty applied for either Range of Language or Accuracy.

Tests that are too long, ie more than 6 minutes:

- Stop listening and assessing at the end of the first sentence after 6 minutes have elapsed.

Tests that are a monologue and include no interaction:

- No more than 7 for Content and Response.
- There is no penalty applied for either Range of Language or Accuracy.

Open interaction tasks only

There is an expectation in this option that the candidate will ask the teacher examiner two or more questions since it is a transactional task-type.

If candidate asks only one question:

- Deduct 1 mark from the Content and Response.

If candidate asks no questions:

- Deduct 2 marks from the Content and Response.

The other two assessment criteria will not be affected.

Presentation and discussion

- The presentation must last 1–3 minutes (maximum). If the presentation is shorter than 1 minute, deduct 2 marks for Content and Response.
- Where no presentation takes place, candidates can only score a maximum of 11 for Content and Response.

Marks for Content and Language are awarded discretely, ie if a candidate scores 8–11 for Content, there is no imposed ceiling on either of the other assessment boxes for Range of Language or Accuracy.

Although interaction is important in all three task-types, there is no requirement for candidates to ask questions in the Presentation and discussion or in the Picture-based discussion task options.

Administration

Many centres completed the administration admirably. Others had omitted to include vital documents but responded quickly to moderators' requests for material.

Centres are advised to refer to the *Administrative Support Guide (Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessments)* available on the Edexcel website for each controlled assessment session as this details exactly which materials should be sent to the moderator.

Moderators felt that moderation went most smoothly where centres had carefully followed the guidance in the *Administrative Support Guide*.

The candidates required for moderation are identified with an asterisk by Edexcel, but centres should ensure that they send their highest-performing and their lowest-performing candidates on the 2A task (ie the task for moderation) in addition to the requested sample. Moderators will moderate the 2A task only. They do not moderate the 2B task. Consequently, centres should not send to moderators any paperwork relating to the 2B task. However, the 2A task should not be the same task-type for all candidates in the moderation sample. Only one Speaking task is needed for each candidate within the sample.

Candidate mark sheets

Centres are reminded that the Code of Practice requires that assessment evidence provided by candidates has been authenticated. The CM2 is also the authenticity form and must be signed by both candidate and teacher. The CM2 form is the updated *Candidate Mark Sheet* and replaces all previous mark sheets. It is available as an appendix in the *Administrative Support Guide* referred to above. In order to reduce the administration burden on centres, the revised form has a box for centres to indicate whether the candidates used the CA2 form.

CA2 forms

The CA2 form is the pro forma on which candidates may write up to 30 words of notes and make up to five small drawings. They may take this form into the assessment with them. Moderators must see this form to check exactly what support candidates had while taking their speaking assessment. If candidates do not use a CA2 form during their assessment, this should be indicated on the CM2 form above.

CA2 forms were not always used to their best effect, especially by weaker candidates, who often wrote more complex vocabulary items. It was apparent that they did not know how to pronounce them, and consequently communication was impaired. A list of 30 discrete lexical items does not always represent the most helpful use of this form and centres would benefit from spending some time discussing with their candidates how the allowed 30 words can best support them. Complete sentences should not be written on the CA2 form nor is it acceptable for candidates to use code, eg *jsaeF – Je suis allé en France*.

Task sheets

Centres are reminded that a copy of each task used in the moderation sample must be sent to the moderator. Moderators are able to moderate a candidate's performance only if they have access to the task used in the assessment.

The task sheet should be just that, a task sheet with no reminders to use a range of tense, express opinions, etc. Such reminders should be achieved via the bullet points,

eg *Mention an activity you did last week* (to encourage past tense), *Say why this was enjoyable* (to encourage opinions and reasons), etc.

Support

The following sources of support may be useful to centres.

- The GCSE 09 French webpage on the Edexcel website offers a wealth of support to teachers on the Speaking Controlled Assessment.
- In addition to the GCSE French webpage, there is a generic languages webpage where it is possible to subscribe to regular newsletters with updates and advice.

Teachers with a query about any aspect of the Controlled Assessment process should send an email to TeachingLanguages@pearson.com or telephone: 0844 576 0035 (from outside UK: +44 (0) 207 010 2187).

Teachers can also send an email to one of the Senior Examiners for French at Ask the Expert gcsefrench@edexcelexperts.co.uk. A reply will be received within 48 hours.

Summary

There was a small cohort entered in this moderation session for the Controlled Assessment in French Speaking. The best orals were characterised by:

- imaginative, creative and genuinely interesting content
- a definite sense of a natural conversation
- evidence of interaction and spontaneity
- a wide range of vocabulary and grammar.

In general, the orals were well conducted and allowed candidates to achieve their best. Skilful and appropriate questioning from the teacher examiner afforded candidates the opportunities to fulfil their potential in line with the assessment criteria.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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