

Comparison of key skills specifications 2000/2002 with 2004 standardsX015461July 2004Issue 1

Speaking Unit Commentaries

Summer 2023

International A Level

In French (WFR03) Unit 3

**International A level French Unit 3 WFR03 Commentary**

E grade Summer 2023

Total mark: 17/40 (E grade boundary 2306 = 17/40)

Topic for debate (chosen by candidate): *Les portables font baisser les notes des élèves*

**Conduct of the test**

There are problems with the way in which this test is conducted. It is the Centre’s responsibility to ensure that the candidate chooses a topic suitable for debate. In this test, the teacher-examiner does not challenge the candidate in Section A and this section does not go beyond a general discussion. In cases such as these, where the candidate does not have the opportunity to use the language of argument and debate, they are unable to access marks in the highest mark bands for *Spontaneity and development* or *Critical analysis*. In addition, in Section B, the teacher-examiner covers more than two further issues for discussion and does not challenge the candidate linguistically or intellectually. As a result, the discussion remains at a superficial level. In addition, the test is short overall (ends at 10 minutes 19 seconds).

**Section A**

In Section A, the candidate must choose issue on which they adopt a stance. The teacher-examiner must then challenge their position and arguments in a way that allows the candidate to defend their point of view using the language of argument and debate. The candidate is invited to begin the debate by presenting their point of view for a maximum of one minute.

In preparation, the candidate is expected to complete the OR3 form with a brief statement about the chosen issue, written in the target language. In addition, the candidate must initiate and conduct their own research into the issue using target-language sources and they will be assessed on the breadth and depth of their research. Candidates should therefore mention at least two written sources. In addition, they may refer to other authentic sources, such as audio-visual material, which they have used in their research.

The total time for the WFR03 test is 11-13 minutes. Timing begins as the candidate begins to speak in Section A which should last approximately five minutes. In this example, the candidate’s initial presentation lasts for 01.08 minute and Section A (presentation and debate) lasts for just over 5.40 minutes.

Teacher-examiners must ensure that the total test time is 11-13 minutes. If the debate in Section A lasts less than five minutes, Section B must be extended so that the total test time is 11-13 minutes.

In this example, Section A lasts 5 minutes 40 seconds and the total test time is 10 minutes 19 seconds. In fairness to all candidates, tests which are too short cannot be deemed to demonstrate the full requirements of the mark grids for *Accuracy* and *Spontaneity and development* and so the marks must be lowered accordingly.

**Section B**

The teacher-examiner moves from Section A to Section B with no clear indication to the candidate of her intention.

In Section B, the teacher-examiner is required to introduce at least two further issues for discussion. The issues must be drawn from the General Topic Areas and the candidate must not know in advance the issues that the teacher-examiner will choose. These must be unpredictable elements of the test. To allow the discussion to reach an appropriate level of depth, it is recommended that two topics are adequate as coverage of too many topics can lead to a superficial discussion. The questions asked must challenge the candidate at an appropriate level both linguistically and intellectually; this is no place for personal questions.

In addition, the teacher may choose to discuss an issue from any of the seven General Topic Areas. However, if the issue is taken from one of the A Level General Topic Areas (Technology/Society/Ethics in the French-speaking world), the discussion must be rooted by the candidate in the French-speaking world. Failure to do so will mean that the candidate is unable to access the full range of marks in the Critical Analysis category, as is this case in this example.

It is important that Section B should be a genuinely spontaneous conversation in which both speakers listen what the other says and respond appropriately. A question and answer format does not offer a spontaneous discourse and should be avoided. The teacher-examiner and the candidate need to listen to what each other have said and respond accordingly.

Half of the marks available for this test are awarded for *Spontaneity and development*. It is therefore important that teacher-examiners give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to be spontaneous and the chance to develop their answers by asking follow-up questions.

In this test, in Section B, the teacher-examiner introduces three further issues – *le sport, la chirurgie esthétique, la pollution*. However, the level of demand is low and the overall performance of the candidate is superficial.

Throughout the test, the teacher-examiner tone is friendly and encouraging. She does not speak too much and allows the candidate to speak much more than she does. However, there are some problems in the examining technique which have resulted in the candidate not being able to achieve higher marks.

**Assessment commentary**

**Quality of language (Accuracy)**

**Mark awarded – 2/5**

*This mark is awarded for the candidate’s performance across both sections of the test, A and B.*

The accuracy of the candidate’s language is variable and the pronunciation and intonation are generally accurate but with some occasional errors. The candidate makes frequently makes minor errors (*pour mon avis, de le telephone, je ne pense pas que c’est)* although these errors generally do not impede communication. However, due to the short length of this test, the *Quality of language (Accuracy)* mark has been awarded at 2.

**Quality of language (Range of lexis)**

**Mark awarded – 3/5**

*This mark is awarded for the candidate’s performance across both sections of the test, A and B.*

The candidate offers an adequate range of lexis but there is very little evidence of complex structures being used. The language used is quite simple and there is not enough evidence of a wide variety of lexis or structures such as subordination, different verb forms etc. This performance is awarded 3 for *Quality of language (Range of lexis).*

**Spontaneity and development**

**Mark awarded – 8/20**

*This mark is awarded for the candidate’s performance across both sections of the test, A and B.*

The candidate responds to the examiner’s questions and her answers are spontaneous. However, she is hesitant at times and this becomes more evident in Section B when sometimes her answer tails off and she is unable to complete her sentence. In Section A, she has some ideas but she does not use the language of argument and debate. In Section B, the ideas are fairly superficial and she is not able to develop them fully. However, while the performance is good enough for a mark to be awarded in the middle of the second band, because of the short length of the test, the mark must be awarded in the third band. A mark of 8 is awarded for *Spontaneity and development*.

**Reading and research**

**Mark awarded – 2/5**

*This mark is awarded for evidence of the candidate’s reading and research only in Section A of the test.*

In this example, there is little evidence of reading and research but the candidate does offer one source and some figures in the presentation. However, there is no further evidence of research and the candidate fails to back up any arguments that she makes with evidence which would support her ideas. A mark of 2 is awarded here.

**Critical analysis**

**Mark awarded – 2/5**

*This mark is awarded for the candidate’s performance across both sections of the test, A and B.*

This candidate offers only partial explanations of key issues with occasional links between her ideas. There is no attempt at analysis or evaluation and most of the discussion remains at a superficial level. This performance is awarded 2 for *Critical Analysis.*

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