

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

Speaking Unit Commentaries

Summer 2023

International A Level

In French (WFR03) Unit

**International A level French Unit 3 WFR03**

**Commentary**

A\* grade Summer 2024

Total mark: 39/40 (A grade boundary 2406 = 37/40)

Topic for debate (chosen by candidate): *Pour le féminisme*

**Conduct of the test**

Overall, this test is conducted correctly. This teacher-examiner demonstrates some examples of good practice and there is some challenge in Section A; however, it is important that the level of challenge remains robust as this section must take the form of a debate and should not be allowed to deteriorate into a discussion. In Section B, this teacher-examiner does explore more than the two recommended topic areas and this candidate is able to develop their ideas; however, for a less competent candidate, limiting the discussion to two subject areas would give more opportunity to fully develop their ideas. The teacher-examiner should focus on a topic area and then move on; it is not a good idea to revisit the same topic area twice (as happens in this test with *le féminisme* and *la politique).*

**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 just over one minute and Section A (presentation and debate) lasts for 05.40 minutes in total.

**Assessment commentary**

The candidate speaks confidently throughout the debate; they offer very well-developed arguments and there is excellent evidence of reading and research with three named Francophone sources mentioned as well as reference to a Senegalese writer, Fatou Diome. The information gathered from the research is used effectively by the candidate to reinforce their arguments during the debate. The candidate uses a wide range of relevant vocabulary throughout this part of the test, including the language of debate and argument, as well as a range of complex structures. While there are occasional minor errors, the message is always clearly and successfully communicated.

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 but the total test time is 13 minutes 43 seconds, which is slightly too long. No credit is given for language produced beyond 13 minutes.

**Section B**

The teacher-examiner clearly indicates the move from Section A to Section B but then allows the conversation to stray back towards the topic of the debate.

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*; teacher-examiners must give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to be spontaneous and the chance to develop their answers by asking follow-up questions.

**Assessment commentary**

Throughout this test, the teacher-examiner is friendly and encouraging. She asks questions which allow the candidate to develop her answers and responds to what the candidate has said but she does not speak too much; in this test, the candidate speaks much more than the teacher-examiner.

The first question in Section B takes the candidate into the topic of *La politique;* this is a reasonable direction to take, moving away from the *féminisme* topic but maintaining a logical link. (There is no requirement to do this, however, and it can be seen that it is often better to make a clean break from the topic in Section A.) The topic of politics is found in the General Topic Area *Society in the French-speaking world* and so the candidate’s arguments must not be generic but must be centred on a Francophone society, which this candidate does not do. The teacher-examiner then incorrectly moves back to the Section A topic of *féminisme* before moving on to the environment. There is also some discussion of *les réseaux sociaux.*  Unfortunately, there is some recycling of topics by the teacher-examiner here which is not helpful to the candidate but it is noticeable that the candidate copes well, responding to all questions and developing their responses in detail. As in Section A, the candidate offers a wide range of structures and topic-based vocabulary and, while there are occasional errors, the candidate employs repair strategies very successfully and consistently communicates their message, despite their exam nerves.

**Quality of language (Accuracy)**

**Mark awarded – 5/5**

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

The candidate’s language is highly accurate but not error-free. They make excellent use of repair strategies and the errors that remain, such as errors of gender *(cet mouvement),* never prevent the clear communication of the message. The candidate’s pronunciation and intonation are both authentic and they show the ability to manipulate the language. This performance is awarded 5 for *Quality of language (Accuracy).*

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

**Mark awarded – 5/5**

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

This candidate showcases a wide range of language, including complex structures (e.g., *pour qu’ils puissent, bien que je comprenne, en ce qui concerne, étant donné que, d’après moi, ce qui est*), relevant topic-based vocabulary (*s’assurer que, subjuguer, créer l’égalité*) and the language of debate and argument *(je ne suis pas du tout d’accord avec cet argument, je suis plutôt d’accord avec, je suis beaucoup plus persuadée que)*. The candidate is able to use a good range of lexis appropriate to both the topic of the debate and to the issues in Section B. They use the language confidently and there is very little evidence of any limitation on the candidate’s ability to offer the range and quality of language required at the top of this mark band. This performance is awarded 5 for *Quality of language (Range of lexis).*

**Spontaneity and development**

**Mark awarded – 20/20**

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

The candidate’s responses show a high incidence of fluent speech. They are able to respond to the examiner’s questions without hesitation and the candidate uses the language spontaneously in both sections. In Section A, they offer convincing arguments and develop their points of view thoroughly. They offer a range of ideas and points of view which are developed and expanded and which show critical reasoning. There is a similar level of performance in Section B; the candidate sustains the discourse well and there is little or no hesitation in responding to the questions asked, with repair strategies being successfully employed when necessary. The candidate responds readily to all the teacher-examiner’s questions and they offer detailed development in their responses. There are minimal errors but these never adversely affect the successful communication of the candidate’s ideas. A mark of 20 has been awarded as this performance meets the criteria for the top half of the top band for *Spontaneity and development*.

**Reading and research**

**Mark awarded – 5/5**

*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 excellent evidence of reading and research as the candidate offers statistics and relevant facts and cites three named Francophone sources (*IPSOS, le Parisien* and one other, the name of which is not entirely clear). As the marks here are awarded for AO2 (understanding and responding in speech to written language), the candidate must mention the sources of the research and should use the information researched to evidence their arguments. This candidate does so very successfully and so this performance is awarded 5 for *Reading and research.*

**Critical analysis**

**Mark awarded – 4/5**

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

In both sections of the test, the candidate consistently justifies links between ideas and attempts to evaluate. They offer very insightful observations and they are clearly capable of mature thought and of offering a very successful individual response. However, the first part of the discussion in Section B is based on *la politique* and the candidate does not anchor this part of the discussion in the French-speaking world. The remainder of the discussion in Section B involves the sub-topics of *l’environnement* (covered in the GTA ‘Environment and travel’ and *les réseaux sociaux (*covered in the GTA ‘Youth Matters’*)*; in these two sub-topics, there is no requirement to refer to the Francophone world in the discussion.While this response does contain some excellent critical analysis, the candidate’s arguments in the section on *la politique* are too generic and so they cannot access the full range of marks here. This performance is awarded 4 for *Critical Analysis.*

**Conclusion**

Overall, this is an impressive performance and is worthy of an A\* award; it must be born in mind that a candidate does not have to produce a totally flawless performance or be a near native speaker to achieve high marks in this Unit. As well as a high level of language and the ability to respond spontaneously and develop their answers, an A\* candidate must show evidence of in-depth research and wide reading into their chosen topic and the ability to centre a discussion in the context of a Francophone society where necessary.

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