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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
French (WFR03) Paper 01

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In this unit, candidates are tested on their ability to use the spoken word in French.

The test is comprised of two parts, Section A (5 minutes) and Section B (6-7 minutes).

The first part of the test (5 minutes) takes the form of a debate. Candidates are required to take a clear stance on an issue of their choice which they present for one minute; they are then required to defend their stance against challenges from the teacher-examiner. The choice of subject is entirely up to the candidate and does not need to relate to the General Topic Areas studied. Candidates are required to conduct their own research when investigating the subject of their choice and need to refer to written sources (and may also refer to other suitable authentic sources) during the discussion. They are expected to use the language of debate and argument to discuss the issue and to defend their point of view.

In the second part of the test (6-8 minutes), the areas chosen for discussion should be unpredictable elements of the test. It is up to the teacher-examiner to choose these two further topics for discussion; the focus should be on two different areas which must be taken from within the General Topic Areas. Candidates are expected to interact effectively with the examiner and to sustain a fluent discourse. They are assessed on their ability to respond to the spoken language and should have the opportunity to show the breadth and depth of their knowledge and linguistic competence, but also the questions should challenge conceptually.

In the January 2024 series, the entry was fairly small with only 31 candidates and many of the candidates continue to focus on the more predictable topics for debate in Section A. In this Series, there were too many teacher-examiners who conducted a discussion rather than a debate and this adversely affected the candidates' marks for Spontaneity and Development and Critical Analysis. Teacher-examiners must ensure that the candidate has chosen a topic which is suitable for debate with the candidate adopting a point of view for or against; they must then robustly challenge the candidate's point of view in order to ensure that the candidate has the opportunity to use the language of argument and debate.

Candidates are encouraged to choose topics that provoke strong feelings either for or against the issue as these tend to be easier to discuss. However, while moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide do offer polarised points of view, they do not always produce a good debate if a candidate does not have a genuine interest in the topic. A successful debate is unlikely if the candidate is defending a topic which the teacher-examiner cannot easily oppose.

Candidates are reminded that their one-minute presentation should be clear and concise; if the speech is pre-learnt speech, many candidates make the mistake of speaking too fast and this has the effect of compromising the success of the communication. Candidates should be encouraged to avoid pre-learning but to try

to speak spontaneously, covering a minimal number of ideas, as the presentation is meant simply as a springboard for the discussion.

In Section A, the teacher-examiner should facilitate the debate by challenging the candidate's viewpoint and by offering opposing points of view. It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to dominate the debate or focus too much on their own points of view. In this situation, the teacher-examiner's role is simply that of a facilitator in the debate; they should challenge the candidate's viewpoint in such a way as to give the candidate the opportunity to develop and extend their ideas and points of view. A teacher-examiner should not speak for longer than the candidate. It is worth noting that if the teacher-examiner does not follow the requirements of Unit as given in the Specification, this can adversely affect the candidate's performance and it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the teacher-examiner is conducting the test correctly.

In both sections of the test, the interactions between the candidate and teacher-examiner should be spontaneous, with each speaker reacting and responding to the other's remarks; only if the discussion is genuinely spontaneous can the candidate access the top mark band for spontaneity and development. It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to follow a question-and-answer format as this does not produce a genuine discourse. Both the teacher-examiner and the candidate should address the points made by the other in order to create a genuinely spontaneous interaction.

Candidates should be discouraged from using pre-learnt material and the teacher-examiner should interrupt the candidate if they are attempting to do this. It is the teacher-examiner's responsibility to ensure that the debate in Section A and the subsequent discussion in Section B both show genuine spontaneity. There are still too many Centres where the discussion is in a question and answer format and where each speaker does not genuinely engage with what the other has said.

In Section A, candidates should provide evidenced research to support their arguments, in order to reach the higher bands of the *Reading and Research* grid. They need to mention their sources as well as giving facts and figures as, without referring to specific sources, candidates cannot achieve more than a mark of 3 in this part of the mark scheme. This requirement continues to be ignored by many Centres to the detriment of their candidates who are unable to access the highest marks for Reading and Research.

However, in Section B, the Specification makes it clear that the candidate must not be aware of the two further issues for discussion and so here it is unlikely that candidates will be in a position to give information such as sources, facts and statistics. Teacher-examiners must be aware of the importance of offering a range of different topics across the group of candidates and they should aim to explore the issues in some depth rather than addressing several topics at a more superficial level. For the candidate to access the higher mark bands in the critical analysis part

of the mark scheme, they need to be given the opportunity to analyse and evaluate; a candidate needs time to develop their ideas on a topic in order to offer a full evaluation of the issues. There should also be an appropriate level of challenge, both conceptually and linguistically; it is not appropriate at this level to ask personal questions.

The two further issues in Section B should be taken from the General Topic Areas. Centres are reminded that, if the theme is taken from one of the three A2 topic areas, the discussion must be firmly rooted in the context of the French-speaking world by the candidate. If the candidates themselves do not discuss the issue within a Francophone context, marks will be lost, even the teacher-examiner has introduced the issue within the context.

In this Series, there were candidates who were able to express their ideas successfully and who showed the ability to manipulate the language well, using a wide range of appropriate structures and lexis. At this level, candidates are expected to be able to use more complex structures and idiomatic language. Focus on accurate pronunciation and intonation can also pay dividends; if the candidate's pronunciation is poor, the communication of the message is often impaired.

In this January series, there was some evidence of successful tests where the candidates fulfilled all the requirements of the Unit and were able to access marks at the top of each one of the mark bands. Centres are encouraged to follow the guidance offered in the Specification to ensure that all candidates are given the opportunity to access the full mark range for each of the Assessment Objectives.

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