



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In French (WFR03) Paper 1

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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 2025 series, while there were some successful debates with the teacher-examiner opposing the candidate's point of view, too often Section A deteriorated into a general discussion on the topic chosen. As a result, the candidate was not given the opportunity to offer a range of language appropriate for argument and debate and so could not access the highest mark bands for spontaneity and development or critical analysis. Candidates should give a clear statement on the OR3 form (ideally in French) of their stance; it is clearer to offer *Je suis pour/contre...* than to give a general statement on the topic e.g. *Les réseaux sociaux sont dangereux pour la santé mentale* as this type of statement inevitably leads to a general discussion rather than a debate. In addition, it is important that the topic is one on which the teacher-examiner can find counterarguments. Centres should approve their candidates' choice of topic (and the statement for the OR3 form) before the research begins.

In Section A, it is the responsibility of the teacher-examiner to offer a robust challenge to the candidate's arguments, presenting an opposing point of view. Candidates should be able to use language that allows them to contradict, e.g. *Je crois que vous avez tort...*, *je ne suis pas d'accord avec ce que vous dites...*, *je ne partage pas votre point de vue*, etc. The role of the teacher-examiner is a crucial one; unfortunately, in this Series, there were again some tests in which the teacher-

examiner incorrectly managed this section, meaning that the candidate was not able to access the highest marks.

The Centres which offer the candidates a robust challenge and allow the candidate to develop their arguments produce lively debates which allow the candidate to access the highest marks.

In Section A, candidates are required to provide evidenced research to support their arguments to reach the higher bands of the reading and research grid. These marks are awarded for AO2 (understanding and responding in speech to written language) and so candidates must research in the target language, using written sources in French. Candidates should cite their sources clearly 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. Once again, there were too many candidates who made no reference to any sources and who provided no or scant evidence to back up their arguments. General knowledge is not enough to score high marks here; the candidate should provide figures, statistics and facts and should offer named written Francophone sources.

In Section B, the teacher-examiner is required to introduce *at least two further issues for discussion*; these issues should be taken from the general topic areas. These areas of discussion must not be known to the candidate prior to the examination, and it is not appropriate to focus on the same subjects for all candidates. There should be no or minimal overlap between the topics offered to the candidates in a Centre.

For a 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. For this reason, it is recommended that two (or possibly three) topics are adequate as a candidate needs time to develop their ideas on a topic to offer a full evaluation of the issues. If the teacher-examiner covers too many topics, this will put the candidate at a disadvantage as their evaluation of the issue is likely to be superficial.

In addition, the two further issues must be taken from the General Topic Areas. 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. It is not enough for the teacher-examiner to introduce the context; if the candidate does not discuss the issue within the context of the French-speaking world, marks will be lost. This is frequently the case when moral issues are discussed in Section B.

It is also important that the debate, as well as the discussion in Section B, should be spontaneous, with each speaker reacting and responding to the other's remarks, in order to produce a genuine discourse; candidates should not produce pre-learnt material and teacher-examiners should not adopt a question-answer format. It is essential that each speaker engages with the other. The teacher-examiner should prevent the candidate from delivering pre-rehearsed language by interrupting the flow. The teacher-examiner should respond to what the candidate says so that the interaction remains genuine, with an element of unpredictability. It is also important that there is an appropriate level of challenge, both conceptually and linguistically, so that the candidate has the chance to show their true potential. It is not appropriate for the teacher-examiner to ask personal questions at this level.

In this Series, there were candidates who offered a good level of spoken French using a range of language. However, some candidates need to focus more on the inclusion of a wider range of complex structures such as the use of pronouns, subordination, more complex tenses and the subjunctive mood as well as idiomatic language. Candidates also need to be aware of the register of the language they use; this is not a forum for the use of slang or "lazy" forms of speech, e.g. *ouais*. Inaccurate language or pronunciation can sometimes mean that the message is not successfully communicated; centres are advised to work on phonics and clear enunciation to ensure that the candidate can communicate clearly.

Timings were occasionally an issue in some Centres; it is important to follow the timings given in the Specification. Tests should last for a minimum of eleven minutes and a maximum of thirteen minutes; a short test will inevitably affect the candidate's mark as they will not have offered the amount of material required and, in a long test, examiners will not consider material after thirteen minutes, so this puts the candidate under unnecessary pressure for no reason.

All recordings should be clear and audible and should be conducted in a suitable quiet venue. All tests must be submitted by the deadline given by Pearson for them to be marked in good time. Centres where the teacher-examiner has clearly understood and complied with the requirements of the test given in the Specification give their candidates the best chance of achieving a good mark. The role of the teacher-examiner remains a crucial one and it is essential that the tests be correctly conducted for the candidates to have access to a full range of marks.

The profile of a well-conducted test is:

- accurate timing
- a clear debate in Section A (not a discussion)
- evidence of reading and research in Section A with named Francophone sources
- a genuinely spontaneous discourse between the teacher-examiner and the candidate
- discussion rooted in a French-speaking country when discussing a topic within the A2 themes questioning which challenges conceptually and linguistically

This test was marked by Pearson Assessment Associates; no marking was undertaken by the Centres.

This assessment produces a similar set of results from Series to Series; it is not dependent on an examination paper and the format has remained the same throughout this Specification.

The entry for this Series was low (59 candidates in total) although higher than in previous January series.

As in previous Series, many candidates do not mention their sources or the results of their research in Section A and are therefore unable to access the marks of 4 and 5 in the Reading and Research category.

Similarly, candidates continue to lose marks for Critical Analysis due to a failure to discuss iA2 topics in the context of the French-speaking world.

Some tests were poorly conducted by the teacher-examiner to the detriment of the candidates; in particular, in some Centres, Section A was conducted as a discussion not a debate. This impacted candidates who were unable to access the highest mark bands for spontaneity and development and critical analysis.

