

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCE

GCE French (6FR01) Paper 1

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Unit 1 (6FR01): Spoken Expression and Response in French

The test is divided into two sections.

SECTION A

This requires students to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to the student's chosen general topic area. The teacher/examiner will first ask two questions about the general content of the stimulus and will then follow on with two other questions that invite students to express their opinions on, or give reactions to, the stimulus (Specification September 2007, p 9)

The most popular topic area chosen by candidates was "Lifestyle: Health and Fitness", closely followed by "Youth Culture and Concerns" then, some way behind, came "The World Around Us" and "Education and Employment". It was good to see that, this session, more centres offered at least two topic areas. A small number had candidates offering three and, occasionally, four topics.

As a rule, the Edexcel-set questions were read verbatim (as is required) by examiners. On occasions, if a question was followed by "*Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?*", this was not always read out, because candidates had already started their answer and had obviously been well trained to explain and justify their opinions which is perfectly acceptable. It is also acceptable to read this part of the question after a candidate has started their answer, if needed. Repetitions are allowed when requested by the candidate, but multiple unrequested repetitions, rephrasing (apart from "*vous*" to "*tu*" forms), explaining, highlighting, splitting questions (apart from the "*pourquoi ou pourquoi pas*" element) or asking supplementary questions, are not permitted in this section of the test. Answers which are given by the candidates as a result of any of these infringements to the rules are discounted for assessment purposes.

All four questions should always be asked, even if a candidate has partially answered the next question in their previous answer. There were only a very few instances of examiners missing out questions, intentionally or not.

Questions 1 and 2

These always relate to the direct content of the stimulus and normally require relatively short answers. A partial lift or lifts with a small amount of manipulation and/or paraphrasing are usually sufficient to provide acceptable answers. Many candidates produced accurate answers. There were many instances of correct but partial and therefore incomplete answers. Some simply read what they thought was a relevant section of the stimulus, hoping for a lucky score. A very small number read big chunks of the text, thus hoping that something would be relevant. These kinds of answers cannot be rewarded by the mark scheme. Some candidates had obviously been told that they should develop their answers and, often after having produced an adequate answer, chose to develop this with long and at times irrelevant additions, occasionally pre-empting the next one or two questions. Others lost sight of the fact that the answers to the first two questions are to be found in the stimulus and went into long speeches expressing personal opinions. This is only required when answering the next two questions.

Questions 3 and 4

These two questions are open-ended as candidates are required to give reactions to and opinions about the general content and issues raised by the stimulus. Candidates are expected to give developed and detailed answers, demonstrating that they have done some research and some thinking about the issues stemming from the stimulus. Many students produced excellent answers which amounted to mini-speeches or mini-debates with themselves, during which they considered different aspects of the issues raised, comparing and contrasting viewpoints, expressing a considered opinion and justifying their standpoint. This is a demanding part of the test during which examiners must remain silent, and it requires students to have been trained in giving this kind of answer and also to anticipate, during the 15 minute preparation time, what they might be asked to express. There was much more evidence of the right kind of answers being provided by candidates in this part of the test this session. Short, undeveloped one-line answers, even when relevant, are not sufficient in order to access the higher marks.

ASSESSMENT

Understanding (Stimulus Specific)

Answers to all four questions are marked globally. There is no detailed mark scheme for each question. Indeed, there are many different acceptable ways of answering these questions, even the first two. Some obviously good candidates did not always obtain a high mark because they did not answer the specific questions or gave short, throw-away answers in Q3 and Q4.

For the first time this session, six cards were provided for each topic area, based on three stimulus texts per topic area. Each card had an A and a B version where Q1 and Q2 were the same, but Q3 and Q4 were different. One card (and one card only) relevant to the candidate's choice of general topic area is allocated to each candidate. In order to avoid duplication and to increase security, the cards must be allocated to candidates according to the sequence specified on page 3 of the Teacher/Examiner version of the papers. This order was not always followed by centres. There was also some confusion between the A and B versions.

Great care was taken to produce stimulus cards which would be easily understood by most candidates at this level and to devise questions which would allow candidates to display their command of the language as well as their knowledge of the topic of their choice.

Topic area: Youth Culture And Concerns

Stimulus cards 1A and 1B Some candidates found the language of the stimulus difficult to understand, particularly items such as chorales *d'hommes* or *il y en a eu pout tous les gouts*, Q1: many candidates seemed a little surprised that the correct answer: *il y a souvent une fête de la musique*, was relatively short and felt a need to expand on it in ways which were not always correct or relevant. Q2: the best way to answer this question was to use the second paragraph and to add examples from the third. Many candidates achieved this. Q3a: many good answers were provided, but it was also surprising that many candidates were unable to develop or justify their tastes in music. A good way of developing their answer was to describe the kind of music they did not like and why. Q4a: answers were often disappointing and did not go beyond saying that music was indeed important in their lives. Q3b: opinions were equally divided here, but development was often lacking. Few candidates mentioned the value of learning to read and write a music score or to play an instrument. Answers were mostly about the value of listening to different types of music. Q4b: this question produced a lot of good answers with many including both sides of the argument.

Stimulus cards 2A and 2B Candidates found this card very accessible. Q1: this was often answered in a partial way. Few were able to effect the necessary changes from the first to the third person. Q2: many candidates answered this satisfactorily, but only the best were able to produce on *le juge et on se moque de lui*. Q3a: very few candidates started their answers with the expected *Je lui dirais que...* The word *conseils* often caused problems. Q4a: many candidates were at home with this concept and spoke at length about the evils of peer pressure. Q3b: this produced slightly better answers than Q3a. Some expressed a degree of irritation with his attitude, whilst many simply restated what the problems were. Q4b: many based their answer on *Pierrot* again instead of generalising. There were relatively few good answers about solitude among young people today. Peer pressure was often talked about again, at length.

Stimulus 3A and 3B There were no recurring comprehension problems with this card. Q1: many partial answers given. Few produced *C'est une rave, c'est à dire une fête musicale organisée en plein air; certaines sont légales et d'autres illégales*. Q2: again often answered partially. Q3a: this often produced reasonable answers, but not as many as expected given the assumed popularity of such events among the young. Q4a: many answers were about the health implications of drug taking, but very few considered the negative social aspects. Q3b: answers were often disappointing and many did not look at both sides of the argument. Q4b: a fairly productive question which elicited some good indignant answers about how young people are completely misunderstood by the older generations.

Topic Area: Lifestyle: Health And Fitness

Stimulus cards 1A and 1B There were no recurring comprehension problems with this card. Q1: many satisfactory answers were produced but there was often confusion between the words *interdit* and *contrôlé*. Q2: this question baffled many, although the answer was very clearly contained in the second paragraph. Q3a: many answers dealt with what the government does or does not do. Few tackled the idea of *le droit de limiter notre liberté*. Q4a: this was often answered satisfactorily, but the focus on 21st century living was not always applied. Q3b: many answers were given around the need to live a healthy life, but many missed the focus on forcing people to live healthily. Q4b: this question produced many well prepared answers.

Stimulus cards 2A and 2B There was some difficult vocabulary in this stimulus but it was composed largely of cognates or close cognates. Q1: this caused a few problems, in spite of the fact that the last sentence of the main paragraph only needs a small amount of manipulation in order to produce a correct and complete answer. Q2: again, not always correctly answered. Perhaps *réfléchissez bien* was not understood. Q3a: this produced some good answers, but often one-sided, either for or against. *Ce genre de pratiques* was not always understood. Q4a: this produced many often well-developed answers, particularly from female candidates, about the clash between health and the search for beauty in modern society. Q3b: there was a lot of potential for development here, but many answers were curtailed with expressions like *c'est leur décision!* Q4b: many good answers produced, but the element *trop de risques* was often glossed over. This question also produced a fair amount of prepared and recited answers about all the dangers to young people's health.

Stimulus card 3A and 3B Two words seem to cause difficulties in this text: *outil* and *partage*. Q1: very few candidates were able to provide the correct answer *il s'agit des avantages du sport en famille*. Q2: this was a difficult question because the full answer was quite long and contained four main elements. Some skill was required in order to summarise and paraphrase. An answer was considered correct and detailed if it contained two of the required elements. Some candidates were panicked into reading out large chunks of the text. Q3a: a lot of developed answers were given about why sport is necessary. Not many dealt with whether it was always possible to practise sport. Q4a: many candidates found it easy to compare and contrast the two kinds of sport. Q3b: candidates answered this question well, as long as they understood *sans*. Q4b: it was unfortunate that the word *sans* was used again in this question. However, many good answers were offered about the need for a good diet and other ways of keeping healthy. Many candidates repeated a lot of what they had said in their answer to the previous question.

Topic Area: The World Around Us

Stimulus cards 1A and 1B The few candidates who answered questions on this stimulus did not seem to have any particular problems understanding the text. Q1: mostly answered satisfactorily. Q2: most candidates were able to mention the problems caused by golf courses and swimming pools. Q3a: this did not prove as productive as expected. Answers were mostly about transport. A few mentioned the need for bins on beaches. Q4a: a few candidates were taken by surprise and struggled to develop their answers. Q3b: some candidates struggled with this question and found it hard to develop beyond the promotion of eco-tourism. Q4b: good answers were offered, but *jusqu'à quel point* was often ignored.

Stimulus cards 2A and 2B Q1: surprisingly, candidates often struggled to produce the correct answer *ce sont des énergies épuisables comme le pétrole, le gaz, le charbon et le nucléaire* which was fully contained in the first two lines of the text. Q2: again, the obvious answer *les avantages et les inconvénients des énergies de stock* was not always forthcoming. Q3a: a productive question, often answered extensively. Q4a: many very good answers were constructed by well prepared candidates. Q3b: some excellent answers were given. Q4b: there was a certain amount of repetition of points made in the previous answer, but many satisfactory answers were provided.

Stimulus cards 3A and 3B No obvious recurring comprehension problems reported. Q1: candidates were often satisfied with a straight lift from the first two lines of the text. Very few produced *augmenter la vitesse de 320km/h à 360km/h sur certaines lignes du TGV afin de rivaliser avec l' avion*. Q2: hardly any candidates managed the first part of the answer *plus les trains sont rapides, plus les voyageurs choisissent le train au lieu de la voiture ou l'avion*. Most candidates managed the second part about cost and environmental impact. Q3a: many acceptable answers produced. Q4a: again, many acceptable answers produced. Q3b candidates had been well prepared for this kind of question, many acceptable answers produced. Q4b: candidates struggled a little to develop their answers. Some repeated points they had made in the previous answer.

Topic Area: Education And Employment

Stimulus cards 1A and 1B Very few candidates were faced with these. *Une maison d'édition* may not always have been understood. Q1: usually answered satisfactorily. Q2: easily answered by candidates. Q3a: more mature candidates seemed to be able to provide better developed answers than younger ones. Q4a: this question produced very few ideas. Q3b: candidates did not seem inspired by this question, answering it usually in the negative and struggling to develop beyond saying they found reading literature difficult or boring. Q4b: again, not a very productive question. Candidates said it was a problem, but found it difficult to explain why or to suggest solutions.

Stimulus cards 2A and 2B Again , very few candidates were faced with this card. Some elements in the text were not always clearly understood: *le concept de pâtes fraîches, maintien de sa ligne, ouvert en première expérience*. Q1 : candidates often found it difficult to produce the expected answer : *un emploi temporaire dans un restaurant de type rapide/restaurant fast food qui vend des pâtes*. Q2: many missed the simple correct answer *le restaurant Ligne de Pâtes va ouvrir*. Q3a: answers were disappointing in the main, even though a lot of vocabulary and ideas were present in the stimulus text and could have been exploited. Q4a: this was usually answered in a satisfactory way. Q3b: most candidates found it very difficult to understand or to answer this Q4b: it was expected that this would be a gift to candidates who had prepared this GTA, but, again, good, developed answers were hard to come by.

Stimulus 3A and 3B The text of this card was normally well understood by candidates. Q1: it was just about possible to answer this question with a straight lift and many did. Q2: the better answers were summaries or paraphrases of what the young people said. Some candidates simply read out large portions of the text. Q3a: many acceptable answers produced. Q4a: candidates often made use of the ideas contained in the stimulus and some developed them further. Q3b: candidates did not always answer this question. They often tried to answer the question as if the word *petits* was not included. Q4b: all candidates agreed they were very stressed. The reasons expressed were not always totally convincing, but development was often forthcoming.

SECTION B

The second part requires the teacher/examiner to engage the student in a discussion that, although still relating to the same general topic area and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus. (Specification September 2007, p 9)

It is elegant and useful if the first question in this section can be a transitional one, using something the candidate has said in Section A in order to introduce a different sub-topic to kick start the discussion in Section B . For example, if a candidate had answered questions on Stimulus 1A of the Topic Area of "Youth Culture", it would be quite easy to introduce the topic of fashion by asking "*La musique et la mode sont-elles reliées?*" Alternatively, the topic of technology could be introduced by a question such as "*vous avez dit que la musique vous passionne. Quel support utilisez-vous pour l'écouter ? Un CD ou un iphone ?*" Many good teacher/examiners used this technique very effectively this session.

The conversation does not have to cover every single listed sub-topic: one or two may be sufficient if there is depth in the discussion. A few teacher/examiners found it difficult to relinquish the topic of the stimulus and kept revisiting it .

It was not always obvious when Section A ended and Section B started. It is very useful if this can be made clear on the recording by saying something like: "*bon, alors maintenant on va passer à autre chose*". If not, markers are not sure whether the examiner has asked an extra question in Section A (which is not allowed) or has actually started the Section B discussion.

A small number introduced discussions about sub-topics from a different topic area. Having a conversation that does not move on from the topic of the stimulus or that strays into the wrong areas means that the candidate is unable to express relevant ideas and opinions or to demonstrate good understanding of his or her chosen general topic area, and is therefore penalised. Some overlap between topic areas is possible and acceptable, as long as the

main focus of the discussion remains firmly embedded in the relevant topic area. For example, several conversations about “Lifestyle: Health and Fitness” included references to the use of alcohol or drugs (which strictly speaking are sub-topics of the “Youth Culture and Concerns” topic area). This was not penalised as it seemed logical to consider these matters within a discussion on health. Similarly, candidates often referred to their experiences in school (topic area “Education and Employment”) when talking about food or sport or friends (topic areas “Lifestyle: Health and Fitness” and “Youth Culture and Concerns”). This made sense and again was accepted as completely relevant.

Assessment: Understanding (General Topic Area)

This relates exclusively to Section B

Ideas and opinions are rewarded. A long list of facts embedded in a francophone context is not required, although some facts, figures and dates display understanding of the topic area and help to formulate and justify opinions. Personal questions and answers are acceptable to a certain extent but should be used very sparingly in order to avoid possible embarrassment and to make sure that the conversation goes beyond a GCSE style of discourse. It helps if issues are considered from a more general point of view and involve a degree of analysis. In order to achieve the higher marks in this part of the assessment, one needed to hear more than basic statements of opinion such as “*Je pense que c’est bon/mauvais...*”.. Unfortunately, some centres kept the discussion (when it was a discussion) at a level which was more appropriate for GCSE than for AS.

Assessment: Quality of language (Accuracy)

This relates to the whole test.

Both pronunciation and accuracy are rewarded in this part of the assessment.

The standard in both this session varied from utterances barely recognisable as French, up to beautifully accurate and authentic language. Many candidates achieved at least the 4-5 box in the grid. In terms of accuracy, the main problems concerned gender, agreements and conjugation. The weakest candidates seemed to use the infinitive form of the verb for all persons in all tenses. Better candidates displayed reasonable control of regular and irregular verbs in several tenses. A maximum mark of 8 was often awarded for performances which were not faultless, but showed good control of more complex language.

Here are some of the most common errors in terms of pronunciation and intonation

- *Alcou* instead of *alcool*
- *Tabaque* instead of *tabac* and *tabaguisme* for *tabagisme*
- *Dangeur* or *dangère* instead of *danger*
- Diphthongisation of single vowel sounds (*oo* for *ou*, *ow* for *au/o*, *ey* for *é/ai* etc)
- *Ait* or *aient* as *aille*, or *ayente*
- *Nachional*, *alimentachion*, *sosailleté* instead of, *national*, *alimentation*, *société*
- Confusion between French *ou* and *u* sounds
- Confusion between *la mort* and *l’amour*
- Inability to differentiate between nasals (*an*, *in*, *un*, *on*)
- Incorrect French pronunciation of *Rs*, particularly internal ones as in *droit*, *arrêter*, etc)
- Confusion between *jeunes* and *gens*
- Sounding of *ent* at the end of verbs in the third person plural (*ils mangeante*)
- Sounding final consonants (*beaucoupe*, *les garçonz* etc)
- Rising intonation at the end of statements (American/Australian influence ?)
- Recitative intonation when regurgitating pre-learnt material

Other very common errors, "en vrac" :

- Ce texte s'agit de instead of *dans ce texte il s'agit de*
- Frequent use of the un-idiomatic expression il y a beaucoup de problèmes avec, instead of *X cause beaucoup de problèmes* or, *il y a beaucoup de problèmes en ce qui concerne*
- The gender of *problème* (une/cette problème !)
- Ça dépend sur instead of *ça dépend de*
- Possiblement instead of *peut-être*
- La porte de la voile instead of *le port du voile*
- Les célèbres instead of *célébrités*
- Le fumer , le fumage or le fumier!! instead of *fumer* as a noun
- A France, à l'Angleterre instead of *en France, en Angleterre*
- Les langues étranges, instead of *étrangères*
- Increased confusion between *très* and *trop* (possibly because of modern common usage)
- Si je serais instead of *si j'étais*
- Beaucoup de les/de le
- Confusion between *bon* and *bien*, *mauvais* and *mal*

Assessment: Quality of Language (Range of Lexis)

This relates to the whole test.

The quality and variety of vocabulary is considered, as well as the range of structures used. Again, the standard in this part of the assessment varied enormously. Some candidates were unable to display any knowledge of the most basic lexis and structures. On the other hand, many candidates had learned an enormous amount of topic-specific lexis and had a good range of structures at their disposal. There were frequent appropriate (and inappropriate) uses of the subjunctive, and increasing confidence in the use of the conditional mood. There is no definitive list of structures that need to be heard in order for candidates to have access to the higher boxes of the grid. The structures used need to be appropriate to the kind of discourse taking place between candidate and examiner. The level of complexity which involves a range of sentence structures, tenses and moods, and enables functions such as describing, agreeing, disagreeing, contrasting, conceding, questioning, explaining, exemplifying, justifying, surmising etc... was what determined the quality of the mark awarded. There was often a marked contrast between the range of language used in Sections A and B.

Assessment: Response

This relates to the whole test.

There are five elements in this section of the assessment that come into play: comprehension, fluency, spontaneity, development and initiative. Some performances were spontaneous, but not very fluent. Many were very fluent but totally lacking in spontaneity. Comprehension was much less of a problem in Section B (well rehearsed questions) than in Section A (totally unrehearsed questions). Development of discourse only took place in largely unrehearsed exchanges. Unfortunately, too many centres had obviously prepared a list of questions and asked their students to learn answers by heart. Whilst it is understandable that areas of discussions will have been prepared, it goes totally against the spirit of the examination exclusively to recite pre-learnt answers in what is supposed to be a discussion and not a dry question and answer exercise. There is no opportunity in this case

for displaying initiative. This was particularly evident in some large centres where all candidates prepared the same topic and when the teacher/examiner asked every single candidate the very same questions which produced a series of pre-learnt recitations. When this happened, the maximum mark available under Response was 8 out of 20 and was often less. Fortunately, there were also many tests where a genuine discussion took place (often starting with a measure of learnt material, but going beyond) and which were reasonably fluent (but included all the hesitations and false starts that normal conversation entails) . These were appreciated and suitably rewarded.

CONDUCT OF TESTS BY TEACHER EXAMINERS

An increasingly larger number of tests were conducted accurately and in the right spirit. There were many tests where a genuine conversation took place, sometimes at a very high level reminiscent of the best A2 (old Unit 4) debates. In most cases, timings (8-10 minutes) were adhered to. There were however, quite a few tests that went on much beyond 10 minutes (markers are asked to stop listening, much after 10 minutes). Fortunately, very few were significantly short. The latter are penalised by a downgrading of marks for Quality of Language (Accuracy and Range), as well as Response. The average time taken to deal with Section A was around 3 minutes. There were some instances of incorrect examining technique used by teacher/examiners: using the wrong stimulus card, prompting, correcting, repeating questions in Section A when the candidate had not requested it, repeating the same question until the candidate gave the right answer, splitting questions, asking extra questions and offering comments in Section A, not making clear when Section A ended and Section B started, asking the candidate what they wanted to talk about, asking the candidates to make a presentation at the beginning of Section B and jumping from sub-topic to sub-topic without any obvious link. The key to good examining is to listen to what the candidate says and to base the next question on something they have said, by asking them to explain, justify or expand their point(s). Only in this way can a degree of spontaneity be achieved. Many teacher examiners do this effectively.

ADMINISTRATION

Most centres recorded their tests on audio cassettes. An increasing number used audio and data CDs. Audio CDs which can be played on an ordinary CD player are preferred. It would be useful to the examiner if centres can indicate if a CD is an audio or data one. A small number of memory sticks were also sent.

The quality of recording on the whole was fair, but teachers are asked to make sure that the candidates' voices can be heard clearly. A few problems were experienced: blank tapes, unmarked tapes/CDs, tapes recorded at the wrong speed, intrusive background noise, interference from mobile phones, failing to state at the beginning of the recording the topic area and the stimulus about to be used. There were many missing oral forms (some centres were obviously still under the impression that these are no longer needed) and attendance lists. Centres are reminded that the correct version of oral forms (OR1) can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and that the completed oral forms (which are used for marking and feedback by examiners) together with two copies of the attendance registers should be sent to the examiner along with the recordings.

ADVICE TO TEACHER/EXAMINERS

- Encourage your students to choose the full range of topic areas.
- Train them to give full and developed answers.
- Teach them how to express and justify opinions.
- Do not allow your candidates to see the questions on the stimulus before the test.
- Be aware of the different kinds of questions in Section A.
- Read the questions in Section A exactly as they are written.
- Do not ask extra questions in Section A or offer comments.
- Make it clear when you are moving from Section A to Section B.
- Do not prepare and rehearse a list of questions.
- Do not allow your candidates to recite pre-learnt material for very long.
- Make sure Section B is a discussion, not a series of recitations.
- Do not revisit the stimulus topic in Section B.
- Make sure the sub-topics you raise in Section B are relevant.
- Listen to what candidates say and pick up on it for the next question.
- Keep to the specified timings.
- Do not correct or prompt your candidates during the test.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw mark boundary	50	38	33	29	25	21	17	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	60	48	42	36	30	24	18	0

Please note that although the modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across MFL specifications are comparable at specification level.

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