

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE French (6FR01) Paper 1A

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The test is divided into two sections.

SECTION A

This requires candidates 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 candidates to express their opinions on, or give reactions to, the stimulus (Specification September 2007, p 9).

The most popular topic areas chosen by candidates were still "Lifestyle: Health and Fitness" or "Youth Culture and Concerns". "The World Around Us" attracted more candidates this year however very few candidates chose "Education and Employment".

Centres are reminded that candidates should not have sight of the questions in the preparation phase.

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. Some candidates had 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. Some candidates were not aware that the answers to the first two questions are to be found in the stimulus and often went into long speeches expressing personal opinions. In such cases, examiners should move on swiftly to the next question, perhaps even interrupting irrelevant developments, to prevent this part of the test from overrunning.

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 raised. Many candidates 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. It requires candidates 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 were a small number of recited pre-learnt speeches in which candidates attempted to relate to the questions asked.

Assessment : Understanding (Stimulus Specific)

Answers to all four questions are marked globally. There is no detailed mark scheme for each question. Indeed, there are different, acceptable ways of answering these questions, even the first two. Brief but correct answers would normally be awarded a mark of 2/4. Many candidates were able to develop their answers sufficiently (particularly to questions 3 and 4) to be awarded 3/4 or 4/4. Some more able candidates did not score full marks because their answers to Q3 and Q4 were insufficiently developed.

Below is a review of this session's set questions which includes examples of correct answers to the first two questions for each card, consistent with the award of marks between 2 and 4 out of 4 overall.

Topic area: YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

Stimulus card 1 (*Dialogue entre jeunes et vieux*)

Q1- *Pour encourager le dialogue et promouvoir les échanges entre les seniors et les jeunes qui apprendront aux moins jeunes comment utiliser les nouvelles technologies.*

Q2- *Non, les seniors pourront aussi apprendre aux jeunes les vertus de la patience et du silence.*

Q3A & B- Some candidates were able to give interesting and developed answers, relating the difficulties experienced by older people trying to deal with technology.

Q4A- More able candidates managed to provide a balanced answer, but the majority only looked at one side of the argument, ignoring or not understanding "vice-versa".

Q4B- The use of the word 'domaines' caused many problems, with candidates often thinking it referred to internet domains, rather than areas of possible conflict or misunderstanding.

Stimulus card 2 (*Alcool, tabac et cannabis*)

Q1- *Dans ce texte on dit que le "binge drinking" est un phénomène marginal en France et qu'il ne concerne que 3 jeunes sur dix.*

Q2- *C'est surtout les risques du tabac et du cannabis car les jeunes commencent souvent avec les copains et pas avec les membres de la famille.*

Q3A- Many candidates simply described the phenomenon rather than attempting to explain it.

Q3B- Often answered adequately, with some good ideas eg increasing prices, raising the age to 21, greater education about the evils of alcohol.

Q4A- A productive question. Many candidates successfully compared and contrasted the evils of both.

Q4B- Many reasonable answers, however some consisted of pre-learnt speeches.

Stimulus card 3 (**De la musique, toujours de la musique !**)

Q1- *Il s'agit de si oui ou non on peut vivre sans musique .*

Q2- *La musique peut motiver pendant un effort physique. Elle peut aussi aider à se relaxer ou à se concentrer.*

Q3A- A productive question which was often well answered. Q3B- Many candidates had little to say and the import of "sans arrêt" was not always taken into account.

Q4A- Many candidates were unable to answer this question. "exploités" tended to be confused with "influencés".

Q4B- This question seemed to elicit strong responses and was often well answered, although some candidates did not understand the word "lien".

Topic Area: LIFESTYLE: HEALTH AND FITNESS

Stimulus card 1 (**Les Français, champions du sommeil et de la table !**)

Q1- *Le temps que les Français et les habitants des autres pays riches passent à manger et à dormir.*

Q2- *On apprend que les Américains dorment moins que les Français mais plus que les Espagnols et qu'ils passent moins de temps à table que les Français et les Britanniques.*

Q3A & B- Relatively few candidates were able to interpret the statistics provided and draw suitable conclusions.

Q4A- Candidates often only provided partial answers

Q4B- The link between various leisure activities and health was not often made.

Stimulus card 2 (**En forme pour les vacances !**)

Q1- *Pour les jeunes qui viennent de finir leurs examens et qui veulent être en forme pour les vacances.*

Q2- *Il ne faut pas aller trop vite et surtout ne pas prendre des excitants comme le café, l'alcool ou les cigarettes.*

Q3A- Very few answers went beyond stating that the advice was good or useful.

Q3B- A little more productive than 3A, but few candidates considered the possible difficulties.

Q4A- Candidates responses seemed to reflect that younger people are much more stressed than the older generation!

Q4B- Answers were often rather simple or anecdotal.

Stimulus card 3 (**Pas assez de médecins en France !**)

Q1- *Il n'y a pas assez de médecins généralistes en France et leur distribution sur le territoire français est inégale.*

Q2- *Parce qu'il y a moins d'étudiants en médecine, que beaucoup de médecins français vont travailler à l'étranger où ils sont mieux payés et parce qu'ils préfèrent devenir spécialistes.*

Q3A- Few candidates considered the implications of both adjectives in the question.

Q3B- Mostly produced very short negative answers to do with whether candidates liked "sang" or not.

Q4A- Answers were mostly positive but undeveloped.

Q4B- The word "gratuits" was often not understood. Many candidates were unable to explain some form of means testing.

Topic Area: THE WORLD AROUND US

Stimulus card 1 (**Le tourisme en France**)

Q1- *Il s'agit de la reprise du tourisme en France après la crise économique et des destinations favorites des touristes.*

Q2- *Parce que les touristes font attention aux dépenses et que le camping et les pique-niques coûtent moins cher que l'hôtel et le restaurant.*

Q3A- Many good answers were heard.

Q3B- Candidates seemed surprised by the suggestion that holidays might not always be necessary.

Q4A & B- Candidates who answered this question were very prepared for this topic.

Stimulus card 2 (**Qualité de l'air en France**)

Q1- *Le trafic automobile qui produit du dioxyde d'azote et le chauffage qui produit des particules fines.*

Q2- *Elle irrite les voies respiratoires et elle est responsable de nombreuses morts prématurées, de crises d'asthme et d'allergies chez beaucoup de Français.*

Q3A- Most candidates answered by mentioning a reduction of car traffic.

Q3B- Answers often involved repeating points made in the text.

Q4A- Many candidates were able to describe the dangers of both, but few came to a conclusion.

Q4B- Candidates found it difficult to think of other forms of pollution and often repeated points made before. Some mistook "*gens*" for "*jeunes*".

Stimulus card 3 (**Nouvelles sources d'énergie ?**)

Q1- *Parce que la consommation mondiale en électricité va probablement doubler d'ici 2050.*

Q2- *Elles sont intéressantes et certains pensent qu'elles présentent de réelles possibilités, alors que d'autres estiment qu'elles ne sont qu'illusion.*

Q3A- A productive question, allowing candidates to compare various sources.

Q3B- Candidates were less successful in developing their answer.

Q4A- A very open question but candidates did not always make the most of it.

Q4B- Some good, indignant responses heard.

Topic Area: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Stimulus card 1 (**Les métiers de la radio**)

Q1- *Il s'agit des journalistes qui travaillent à la radio.*

Q2- *Non, parce qu'il faut bien se préparer, travailler dur et être passionné.*

Q3A- Candidates were unable to find reasons for or against.

Q3B- Sport or fashion seemed to be the specialisations of choice, but reasons for this choice were very limited.

Q4A & B – Candidates usually went for both elements and were able to provide good, developed and balanced answers.

Stimulus card 2 (***Les femmes au travail***)

Q1- *Le succès des hommes et des femmes dans leurs études scolaires et universitaires.*

Q2- *Non, parce que souvent les femmes travaillent à mi-temps et elles sont moins bien payées que les hommes.*

Q3B- There were some interesting answers, however, not all of them were positive. Q4A- The concept of positive discrimination was not always understood.

Q4B- Candidates usually thought that both were important and were thus able to give a suitably developed answer.

Stimulus card 3 (***La guerre des écoles***)

Q1- *Les conditions et les résultats dans les collèges privés et les collèges publics.*

Q2- *On remplace toujours les professeurs absents et les résultats au brevet sont meilleurs.*

Q3A & 3B- The ideas expressed in both were often fairly limited and repetitive.

Q4A- Some candidates seemed very well prepared for this kind of question whilst others had very few ideas.

Q4B- This question was not widely answered, however those who did, answered well.

SECTION B

The second part requires the teacher examiner to engage the candidate 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. 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. There were several tests where section B was entirely devoted to further questions on the sub-topic of the stimulus or to sub-topics from a different General Topic Area (GTA). Such tests are heavily penalised by the mark scheme.

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/à la deuxième partie de l'examen”*. 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.

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.. Issues should be considered from a more general point of view and involve a degree of analysis. Depth rather than breadth is what is required in order to access the higher marks in the grid.

Assessment: Quality of language (Accuracy)

This relates to the whole test.

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

Below is a list of common errors in terms of pronunciation and intonation :

- Alcou instead of *alcool*
- Pérents for *parents*
- Tabaque instead of *tabac* and tabaguisme for *tabagisme*
- Dangeur or dangère instead of *danger*; dangeroux for *dangereux*
- 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*, *ville* and *vie*, *fils* and *fille*
- Sounding of *ent* at the end of verbs in the third person plural (ils mangeante)
- Sounding final consonants (beaucoup, les garçons, les déchettes, le corpse)
- Rising intonation at the end of statements. Recitative intonation when regurgitating pre-learned material.

Further common errors, "en vrac" :

- Ce texte s'agit de instead of *dans ce texte il s'agit de*
- C'est ça va for the English *it's OK*
- 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 !). Other basic gender errors (la père, mon mère, ma frère, un sœur)

- Ça dépend sur instead of *ça dépend de*
- Possiblement instead of *peut-être*
- Les célèbres instead of *célebrités*
- Le fumer, le fumage or le fumier!! instead of *fumer*
- A France, à l'Angleterre instead of *en France, en Angleterre*
- Les langues étranges, instead of *étrangères*
- Sur la radio, la télé, le téléphone instead of *à/au*
- Increased confusion between *très* and *trop* (possibly because of modern common usage); trop beaucoup; plus beaucoup
- Si je serais instead of *si j'étais*
- Beaucoup de les/de le
- Confusion between *bon* and *bien*, *mauvais* and *mal*, *seul* and *seulement*
- Confusion between *magasin* and *magazine*, *numéro* and *nombre*, *médecin* and *medicine*.

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. Overall, the standard this session was extremely variable. Many candidates had learned some topic-specific lexis and were able to use a good range of structures. Others seemed to have very little lexis at their disposal and sometimes resorted to invented words like "des riotes", "une diète", "inclure", "constricteur", "advertiser", "expérencier" etc. There were frequent appropriate (and inappropriate) uses of the subjunctive, and many attempts to use 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 four elements in this section of the assessment that come into play: comprehension, fluency, spontaneity and development. Some performances were spontaneous, but not very fluent. Others were very fluent lacking in spontaneity. Comprehension was much less of a problem in section B (well rehearsed questions) than in section A (unrehearsed questions). Development of discourse only took place in largely unrehearsed exchanges. Unfortunately, it seemed like many centres had prepared a list of questions and, in some cases, asked their candidates to learn answers by

heart. This is severely discouraged as such practice leaves no opportunity for development. In the case of recited answers, the maximum mark available under Response is 8 out of 20. 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

Many tests were conducted correctly and in the right spirit. There were many tests where a genuine conversation took place, sometimes at a very high level, close to Unit 3 style debates. In most cases, timings (8-10 minutes) were adhered to. There were however, a few tests that went on much beyond 10 minutes (markers are asked to stop listening, much after 10 minutes). 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 is no need to prolong this part of the test artificially. The main issue in section B was working through a list of prepared questions and thus 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 did this effectively.

ADMINISTRATION

Conduct : do not allow candidates to see the questions on the stimulus before the test and make sure the cards are allocated according to the sequence prescribed on page 3 of the instructions to teacher examiners. Do not mix questions from different stimulus cards.

Recording : Each test should start with candidate name and number as well as statement of GTA choice and stimulus number. Most recordings are now on CDs or memory sticks and the increased sound quality is very much appreciated by examiners, although a few recordings on CDs seemed to cut out before the end of tests or to include blanks. There were also some problems with poor sound levels. Centres are requested to check that transfers from digital recorders or hard drives are complete and of good quality before despatch. Some centres still used cassette tapes whose quality is increasingly poor.

Paperwork : the oral forms and attendance lists must always be included with the recordings. There is a new version of the oral form available on the website which needs to be signed by candidates and examiners. It is helpful if CDs and memory sticks can be sent along with a written list of candidates' names and numbers in the order of testing.

ADVICE TO TEACHER/EXAMINERS

- Encourage your candidates to choose the full range of topic areas
- Train them to give full and developed answers
- Teach them how to express and justify opinions
- Make sure they understand and are able to express dates, figures and percentages
- Be aware of the different kinds of questions in section A
- Read the questions in section A exactly as they are printed
- 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
- Have the confidence (both examiner and candidate) to be spontaneous
- Do not revisit the stimulus topic in section B
- Make sure the sub-topics you raise in section B are relevant and from the correct GTA
- 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
- Do not mark the tests.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the oral units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners have worked closely together to ensure their application of the common oral marking criteria is consistently applied across these three languages. This has been in response to queries from centres about the results at unit level on the oral examinations.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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