

Modern Foreign Languages

OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE Units F701 French/F711 German/F721 Spanish
Notes for Candidates – Oral Test

Notes for Candidates

As a candidate, you will want to perform at your best during this part of the examination. These notes are intended to help you do that.

FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

The examination consists of two sections, which will take place in the following order:

- Section A: A role-play exercise (5 minutes)
Section B: Discussion of a topic which you have prepared (10 minutes).

If your test is being conducted by a visiting examiner, he or she will want to meet all the candidates in a group at the start of the day, to explain to you the format of the examination. The examiner will speak to you in the foreign language during this meeting, so that you may become accustomed to his/her voice. If you are unsure about any aspect of the oral test or if you do not understand anything the examiner says, you should ask him/her to explain. At this preliminary meeting the examiner will collect from you the top copy of the oral topic form on which you have written your headings for the discussion.

Section A: ROLE-PLAY

- You have about 20 minutes in which to prepare the role-play. You may make notes on the sheet if you wish. You take the sheet into the examination with you, but it will be collected at the end of the role-play.
- You are NOT allowed to use any dictionary during the preparation time.
- In this part of the test, the examiner will be looking to see whether you can request and supply information and whether you can carry out the task set (as well as assessing the quality of language which you use). Make sure that you understand both your own role and the role which the examiner will be playing.
- The candidate's sheet will be divided into three main sections. The first points will require you to find out information from the examiner. The second will require you to supply information from the English text in response to the examiner's questions, and the final set will broaden out the discussion. Here, you may find sections of the English text useful, but equally you may have to rely on your own ideas and imagination.
- Remember that you are required to use the information in the English stimulus material in response to the examiner's questions - you are not expected to do a word-for-word translation, nor to summarise the whole text. Your candidate's sheet will give you a good idea of the parts of the English text about which you are likely to be asked, and you should use your 20-minute preparatory time to concentrate on these areas. It is quite likely that there will be parts of the text to which no reference is made.

Section B: DISCUSSION OF A TOPIC OR TEXT

- The examiner will already have the top copy of your form listing the areas which you would like to talk about in the discussion. When completing the form, you should write your headings in the foreign language. This is your chance to define the areas that you want to talk about; headings consisting of a single word will not help the examiner to guide the discussion appropriately, but on the other hand there is little point in writing a mini-essay, as you only have 10 minutes for the whole discussion! You should normally aim to identify no more than 5 main areas for the topic you have chosen. You may refer to the bottom copy of the form during the discussion, if you wish.
- You may if you wish take into the examination room brief notes (such notes must be limited to one side of A4 paper) to remind you of the main points you wish to make. You must not however, write out a script to read. If you attempt to read out a prepared statement during the discussion, the examiner will stop you and, as a last resort, will take your notes away from you.
- It is quite likely - especially if you have chosen an unusual topic - that you will know more about the topic you have studied than the examiner - particularly if the examiner is not your teacher. It will therefore be up to you to show what you know and to communicate your interest and knowledge to the examiner.
- In asking questions the examiner will be guided largely by the headings given on your form. This does not, however, rule out questions on other aspects of the topic which may occur to the examiner! You should not expect to deliver a series of monologues: the discussion is meant to be a conversation, and you should be prepared for the examiner to ask questions. In particular, you should be ready to offer your own ideas and opinions, to analyse your material and draw conclusions. The examiner will want to see whether you can 'think on your feet'. If you limit yourself to purely factual material and have no ideas and opinions to offer, you cannot expect to score a high mark for the content of your discussion.
- This part of the examination tests a range of language skills - pronunciation and intonation, accuracy, range of expression, spontaneity and fluency - all of which are a natural part of conducting a conversation. If you wish to score high marks, you should use a variety of vocabulary, not just common words, and a variety of linguistic constructions - for example, tenses other than the present, relative and subordinate clauses, subjunctives etc.

Remember that the examiner is on your side and is looking to reward your strengths - but he or she cannot do this if you keep them hidden!