

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE French (6FR01) Paper 1

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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 areas chosen by candidates were still "Lifestyle: Health and Fitness" and "Youth Culture and Concerns", but more candidates this session chose "The World Around Us" and "Education and Employment".

Candidates should not have sight of the questions before the beginning of the test. As a rule, the Edexcel-set questions were read verbatim (as is required) by examiners.

Repetitions are allowed when obviously needed or requested by the candidate, but multiple unrequested repetitions after the candidate has provided an answer, 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.

### **The first two questions**

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 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 was sometimes exacerbated when teacher/examiners added "selon vous" to these initial questions. In such cases, examiners should move on swiftly to the next question, perhaps even interrupting irrelevant developments, otherwise this part of the test can go on for too long.

### 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. Most candidates now realise what is required in this part of the test.

### Assessment : Understanding (Stimulus Specific)

Answers to all four questions are marked globally. There is no detailed mark scheme for each question. Indeed, there are often 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.

Topic area: YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

Stimulus card 1

Q1- candidates often struggled to give a global answer and the word "*objectif*" was not always understood

Q2- most candidates were able to identify the priorities (music, sport and studies).

Q3A- this provided many good answers, both positive and negative.

Q3B- "*là où vous habitez*" was not always understood. When this was the case, answers were based on Paris.

Q4A- "*comment répondriez-vous*" caused difficulty for some. Most candidates agreed with one or both of the elements suggested in the poll. Hardly any mentioned other areas where they might welcome more help.

Q4B- candidates sometimes found it difficult to develop or justify their answer.

Stimulus card 2

Q1- normally answered satisfactorily.

Q2- many good answers provided, but some candidates forgot that there were two parts to the question.

Q3A- many candidates agreed with the statement but were not always able to find reasons why.

Q3B- most candidates seemed to cope with this question reasonably well.

Q4A- answers often repeated points made in previous answers.

Q4B- this often provided lengthy prepared answers about new technology in general.

#### Stimulus card 3

Q1- "*Que veut dire*" was not always understood, but, in the main, answers were satisfactory.

Q2- few candidates identified the three elements: fashion houses, music and group identity. The second paragraph of the stimulus was not well understood.

Q3A- some good answers provided, but candidates found it difficult to justify their answer.

Q3B- few managed to produce ideas about all three elements. Most talked about the influence of "grunge".

Q4A- this was not answered as well as expected, perhaps because many missed or misunderstood "*Peut-on*".

Q4B- many good answers provided.

#### Topic Area: LIFESTYLE: HEALTH AND FITNESS

#### Stimulus card 1

Q1- the negative element in the question seemed to create some difficulty. Candidates often also answered the next question at the same time.

Q2- "*perdre du poids*" seemed to cause difficulty for some candidates.

Q3A- many candidates provided a personal answer and thus missed the more general implications.

Q3B- "*Suivez-vous ou avez-vous suivi*" caused problems for some.

Q4A- many good answers were heard.

Q4B- candidates seemed well prepared for this question.

#### Stimulus card 2

Q1- "*A qui*" and "*destinés*" were rarely understood, so there was a lot of hopeful lifting.

Q2- mostly answered satisfactorily.

Q3A- mostly answered satisfactorily, but development was hard to come by.

Q3B- as above

Q4A- many candidates ignored the "*toujours*" part of the question and therefore omitted to mention possible negative effects.

Q4B- few thought it was difficult!

#### Stimulus card 3

Q1- no particular difficulty encountered, in spite of the fact that the word "*sommeil*" was not generally known.

Q2- most candidates were able to answer, although some ignored or did not understand "*juste avant de*".

Q3A- mostly answered in the negative, because of the pressure of exams.

Q3B- mostly answered in the positive, because of the pressure of exams.

Q4A- mostly answered eagerly, quoting exams and schools as the main causes of stress.

Q4B- "*A part le sommeil*" was not always remembered when answered. Most mentioned sport as a way of combating stress and were able to go on to the benefits of exercise in general.

## Topic Area: THE WORLD AROUND US

### Stimulus card 1

Q1- candidates often only offered a partial answer instead of the expected *"il faut les mettre dans les poubelles, ou repartir avec"*.

Q2- few managed to produce the partial lift *« les déchets laissés par les touristes encouragent les pigeons et les rats »*

Q3A- answers were often disappointing. Responses mentioning the full impact of consumerism, excess packaging and the throw-away society were rare.

Q3B- the few who had to answer this question managed to produce some pros and cons.

Q4A- answers to what appeared an obvious question were often disappointingly short.

Q4B- candidates did better with this question because they could answer in a personal way.

### Stimulus card 2

Q1- normally provided acceptable answers.

Q2- hardly any candidates managed the simple change over from the first to the third person: *"il s'était habillé..."*.

Q3A- candidates had problems expanding on their answer that the advice was good.

Q3B- there were some good, heart-felt responses to this.

Q4A- this produced some well-developed and balanced answers.

Q4B- as above.

### Stimulus card 3

Q1- satisfactory answers in the main.

Q2- the few candidates who had to answer this question provided good answers.

Q3A- candidates found it difficult to expand on why they are important.

Q3B- this produced some well-developed answers.

Q4A- satisfactory answers in the main.

Q4B- candidates seemed to be able to provide well-balanced answers.

## Topic Area: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

### Stimulus card 1

Q1- some difficulties experienced because candidates did not appear to understand the words *"entretien"* and *"embauche"*.

Q2- a straight list of the right responses was possible. Some candidates simply read out all four bullet points.

Q3A- candidates found it difficult to elaborate.

Q3B- candidates struggled to justify their answer.

Q4A- some thoughtful answers provided.

Q4B- a standard question which was normally well answered.

### Stimulus card 2

Q1- this required one change from the imperative to the infinitive in the title "*de choisir...*". Hardly any candidates managed it.

Q2- many candidates had difficulty understanding the second paragraph and struggled to answer correctly.

Q3A- few fancied this kind of career but had problems explaining why, beyond the possibility of danger and boredom.

Q3B- some good positive responses from budding policemen/women and also some strong criticism of the police.

Q4A- some misunderstood the question and carried on talking about job prospects in the police or private security

Q4B- a productive question often better answered by female candidates.

### Stimulus card 3

Q1- answers were usually satisfactory but few candidates seem able to pronounce dates.

Q2- some confusion here, again because candidates did not understand dates.

Q3A- some good arguments for and against "A" levels were heard.

Q3B- those who knew something about the French "Bac" provided good answers. Some candidates referred to the IB, which worked as well.

Q4A- some heart-felt agreements.

Q4B- some heart-felt denials.

## **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. 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. 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, it remains unclear whether the teacher/examiner has asked an extra question in Section A (which is not allowed) or has actually started the Section B discussion.

Very few teacher/examiners this session 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 unable to score highly. 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.

### **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. 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.

The standard in both this session was variable and at times disappointing. Conjugation remains a big challenge for many.

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

- Alcoui 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*, *ville* and *vie*, *fil* and *fille*.
- Sounding of *ent* at the end of verbs in the third person plural (ils mangeante.)
- Sounding final consonants (beaucoupe, les garçonz, les déchettes, le corpse.)



- Rising intonation at the end of statements.
- Recitative intonation when regurgitating pre-learned 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 !). 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  *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); trop beaucoup
- Si je serais instead of *si j'étais*
- Beaucoup de les/de le
- Confusion between *bon* and *bien*, *mauvais* and *mal*
- Confusion between *magasin* and *magazine*, *numéro* and *nombre*

### **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 had a good range of structures at their disposal. Others seemed to have very little lexis at their disposal and were unable to function even at a very basic level. 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. 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, once again, too many centres had obviously prepared a list of questions and, in some cases, 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 to exclusively 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 development. In the case of totally recited answers, 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

Most 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). Worryingly this session, quite a few were significantly short. The latter are awarded lower 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 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. The main problem 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**

An increasing number of centres used audio and data CDs. A small number of memory sticks were also sent. The quality of recording on the whole was good, but examiners are asked to make sure that the candidates' voices can be heard clearly. A few problems were experienced: corrupted sound files, unmarked tapes/CDs, 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 still too many missing oral forms 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.
- Make sure they understand and are able to express dates, figures and percentages.
- 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 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.
- 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.
- Do not mark the tests.

## MARKING GUIDANCE

### Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 7 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark in the band below, across the following assessment grids:

- Quality of Language – Accuracy
- Quality of Language - Range of lexis
- Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they should be given 5; if they would have scored 6, they should be given 4. This adjustment will not affect the other assessment criteria 'Understanding – Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding – General Topic Area'.

### Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

### Tests that do not move away from initial input

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' – limited to a maximum of 3 marks
- 'Response' – limited to a maximum of 8 marks
- 'Understanding - General topic area' – cannot score more than 0

Please note:

**Understanding – Stimulus specific** should only be used to mark **Section A** of the oral test.

**Understanding – General topic area** should only be used to mark **Section B** of the oral test

When marking the oral exam, examiners are advised to immediately allocate a mark for Section A, prior to allocating marks for the rest of the test (Section B).

**These are the only adjustments to be made.**

## **GRADE BOUNDARIES**

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

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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