

Examiners' Report

Summer 2010

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365)
Paper 03 Speaking

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Section A

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated confidence when presenting their picture, with few instances of hesitation. Such a successful beginning to the examination allows slightly nervous candidates to settle, whilst allowing the interviewer to pursue the process of asking a wide range of relevant questions.

Centres are to be applauded for generally supporting the needs of candidates by guiding the choice of image. This ensures that candidates perform at a level broadly consistent with their potential. This is facilitated where candidates refer to pictures of a more personal nature such as photographs of family members, friends or holidays. This equally ensures a spontaneous and authentic discussion, across the ability range. Areas such as the environment or health issues demanded levels of knowledge that were very (too) demanding for some candidates, although more able candidates still performed extremely well with these, accurately deploying a whole wealth of linguistic structures.

As a general guide, where slightly weaker candidates can identify with the pictorial theme, they tend to optimize their performance. The strategy of describing photographs of friends and family served the purpose of placing many such candidates at their ease. Nevertheless, even some of the most able candidates may be well served by such images, as they inevitably exploit the scene by extending the conversation to more abstract areas.

Instances where several candidates from one centre use the same picture are thankfully rare, as this tends to impede the interviewer's attempts to discriminate in terms of question types.

Most interviewers refrain from the practice of eliciting information which has already been offered by the candidate whilst presenting the picture. Nevertheless the occasional process of asking very basic closed questions on the picture caused some concern, especially when asked of very strong candidates. Interviewers are generally mindful to avoid asking complex questions of candidates who would struggle to navigate these successfully.

It is a pleasure to report that more and more centres adhere to a previously stated guideline which discourages interviewers from interrupting candidates. In those rare cases where the practice still occurs, it tends to work to the detriment of candidates. For example, in terms of accessing subordinate clauses, the candidate is interrupted before being able to say why a particular holiday destination is preferred.

Section B

Interviewers continue to conduct the examination in such a way that the specimen questions serve the best interest of candidates. In rare cases where interviewers adhere rather too closely to the specimens, the responses tended to lead to mostly limited responses. It is very important to allow candidates to display their full wealth of language during the brief time available and so the questions provided should be regarded as just one way of engendering discussion.

As a general guideline, question types should be encouraged that allow candidates to expand their answers, give and justify opinions and to show initiative. Where interviewers used the specimen questions as an approximate guide, candidates tended to be able to access their own optimum individual level of construction. There was consistent evidence of questioning which matched the needs of individual candidates, with interviewers paying close attention to the couching of questions within the appropriate context.

Where candidates found it difficult to engage in initial discussion, interviewers gently and skilfully led them into the conversation by deploying accessible questions. Once a reasonable flow of conversation had been established, these candidates were given the opportunity to extend their responses.

Interviewers tended to interact extremely well with candidates. What is equally to be applauded is that closed questions figured much less than in previous series. On the contrary, intelligently phrased clusters of questions were in evidence. Candidates responded accordingly, by showing a certain initiative and even some originality of response. Where candidates struggled to understand an initial question, rephrasing was deployed at the appropriate level.

Conduct of Examination

Timings for each component of the examination were generally adhered to. This is excellent practice, as utterances which take place beyond the maximum limits are not awarded. On those rare occasions where conversations were clearly too short, candidates were unable to maximize their overall performance. In cases where an interviewer realises that the first conversation was too long, this cannot be compensated by making the others too brief, as each conversation is assessed independently.

In the case of the presentation, there were some instances where the maximum time was exceeded by a significant margin. In order to be unobtrusive, interviewers discreetly time the three conversations, as opposed to using loud bleeps. Interviewers generally made it clear when the transition was being made between two conversations.

Interview techniques were often excellent, showing interest in what candidates had to say and a real sense of empathy which led to many interesting and pleasing conversations. Overall, the vast majority of candidates performed well due in no small part to the way in which the interviewers performed their roles.

Administrative Matters

Centres are again to be commended for the overall excellent standard of administration during this series.

The vast majority of tapes/CDs were correctly labelled. Other essential documentation was equally presented with a high degree of care. There remains a few cases of documentation not being enclosed. Interviewers who are unfamiliar with this component are asked to follow the guidelines included on pages 39-42 of the current IGCSE French Specification.

Clarity of recordings was usually excellent, but a small percentage were not clearly audible, due to very "quiet" recordings or obtrusive background noise. Interviewers should check the quality of each recording, particularly the first they conduct, whether on CD or cassette. This precaution allows necessary changes to be put in place for the subsequent recordings.

The microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the candidate rather than the interviewer.

Grade Boundary

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Grade for Spoken French (optional) (max 60)	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7	0

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