



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**FRENCH
AS**

SUMMER 2018

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COMPONENT 1: SPEAKING

Overview

This is the second year of the new AS specification and WJEC Eduqas continues to offer several forms of guidance to help centres prepare for the new demands. In addition to a programme of continuing professional development for teachers, the examination board has provided a detailed specification and a full set of sample assessment materials and mark schemes. There is also a detailed *Guidance for Teaching* document. In addition, the cards used in the 2017 tests are available to centres.

Many teachers and candidates need to increase their awareness of the demands and expectations of this test which is only in its second year. A significant number of candidates do not understand that there is no personal element in this test and that all remarks need to relate to France or a country or community where French is spoken.

This section of the report concentrates on the assessment objectives used to evaluate candidate performance. In addition to the weighting of each assessment objective within each card and a brief paraphrase or explanation of each assessment objective, overall candidate performance in each assessment is evaluated.

All four assessment objectives are tested in the oral examination. The test is marked out of 60 with 30 marks awarded for each card. The weighting of each element in each card is noted below, and in the general remarks that follow:

- (a) **AO1 (5/30): understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face-to-face interaction** (*Responding orally to questions and interacting with the examiner*). Generally, candidates can answer questions but there is a tendency to answer the first question (the one they can see on the card) at too great a length and this can impair spontaneity. Candidates are required to ask the examiner one relevant question as part of the interaction. Candidates often needed to be prompted to ask their question. Not all questions candidates asked were relevant to the sub-theme under discussion. Sometimes they asked the examiner a personal question or one that did not relate the question to France or a French-speaking community or country.
- (b) **AO2 (5/30): understand and respond in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources** (*Demonstrating in their answers that they understand the meaning of the text which forms part of the test*). The reading passage will contain several ideas which could well be relevant to the set question, the follow-up question or the ensuing discussion. Examiners often needed to encourage candidates to consider the text, but many candidates failed to extract the relevance of each idea. These ideas can form a useful introduction to the overall discussion. Repeating part of the text in response to an examiner prompt '*Qu'est-ce que le texte vous dit ?*' did not demonstrate that the candidate had understood the text. Candidates need to show their comprehension by rephrasing the ideas in the text. Candidate comments on the photo on each card do not contribute to the mark awarded, as AO2 refers to the understanding of the reading text.

Performance in this assessment objective has improved since last year because some candidates are more aware of the relevance and importance of the text. Overall, however, centres and candidates are advised to give more attention to this aspect of the work.

- (c) **AO3 (10/30): manipulate the language accurately, in spoken forms, using a range of lexis and structure.** Marks are awarded for three aspects of this assessment objective. These are: *the grammatical accuracy of the French, the range and variety of structures and idioms used and the accuracy of pronunciation and intonation.*

Grammatical accuracy varied considerably but, generally speaking, it was acceptable. There were the usual problems with verb forms, tense formation, dependent infinitives, genders and agreements. A lack of accuracy can lead to lack of comprehension by the examiner and this can affect the conversation as a whole. Usually candidates had the vocabulary and structures they needed to convey straightforward ideas but some lacked the language to persuade and convince in a discussion. Pronunciation and intonation was generally acceptable though some candidates' pronunciation reveals the influence of their native language's intonation and sound system.

- (d) **AO4 (10/30): show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.** The candidate needs to demonstrate *"knowledge and understanding of France/a francophone country, explain its relevance to the sub-theme under review and argue the relevance of the information to the discussion"*. Many of the sub-topics relate to problems or characteristics which are also found in the UK. In order to improve performance in this assessment objective candidates need to give facts and arguments which relate to France or a French-speaking community not present generic facts. There is no need to refer to more than one French-speaking country or community, though candidates are free to do so if it is relevant to the discussion.

Many candidates lack detailed basic information about the sub-themes in the specification. They might, for example, be able to state that smoking was a problem in France but could not say who bought cigarettes and from where, how much they cost or what government initiatives had been made to counteract tobacco abuse. This lack of knowledge affected candidates' ability to discuss.

Lack of appreciation of the characteristics of this specification can adversely affect candidate performance. Remarks in the following sections closely echo remarks made in the 2017 report on this test.

Card A Being a young person in French-speaking society

The discussion is focussed on being "a French person in French-speaking society". This is made clear in the material in the reading passage and the way that the initial and follow-up questions are phrased, and the way examiners subsequently express their questions. Many candidates do not understand fully that the whole discussion must relate to France or a French-speaking country/community. Candidates knew a lot about being a young person in general and could discuss what could be called "generic" topics about youth culture (e.g. smoking, drugs, alcohol, education, friendships, peer pressure, relationship with family etc.) in a UK or English context. They could not, however, fully relate their comments to France, a French-speaking country or communities where French is spoken. Comparisons with UK or talking about their own personal experiences (unless they draw on personal experience of living in France etc.) are not relevant.

Card B *Understanding the French-speaking world*

These sub-themes are less familiar to the candidates, and, as a result, they found it difficult to maintain a discussion for the 6 or 7 minutes specified. This is true of both *Regional culture and heritage in France, French-speaking countries and communities* and *Media, art, film and music in the French-speaking world*. Candidates also ignored useful information found in the reading passages which could have been the starting point for answers to the set questions and for their discussion with the examiner.

Candidates allocated a card to speak about festivals, for example, could often just name festivals but could not explain their importance or relevance to a region. They often could not distinguish between international festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, national festivals such as *Le 14 juillet* and regional or local festivals. Candidates allocated a *Literature, art, film and music* card on music often had more detailed knowledge about the sub-topic chosen.

Although individual candidates may have found either Card A or Card B more accessible, the overall performance was generally similar in both sets of cards.

Centre-conducted orals

Very few centres conduct their own orals and consequently it is difficult to make generalised statements.

WJEC wishes to thank those centres who conducted their own tests, as the instructions to teacher examiners and examiners are detailed. The arrangements for uploading the tests generally worked well. Each centre will again receive a brief report on the conduct of the test in their centres and the exam board hopes that the remarks will continue to be helpful for conducting similar tests in the future.

Most of the centres showed a good knowledge and understanding of the specification and were able to conduct their tests appropriately. Some centres, however, allowed candidates to answer the first set question at too great a length without interruption. This impedes interaction. They failed to ensure candidates made sufficient reference to the reading passages, fed possible answers, allowed discussions to become personal, discussed topics from a previous specification or did not insist sufficiently that the discussion should refer to France or a French-speaking country or community.

Centre arrangements

WJEC wishes, once more, to thank centres for the welcome extended to their examiners. In many centres the arrangements were good, and centres now realise that an invigilator is required in the preparation room for the “new” AS oral test. Centres are reminded that they must be prepared to accept visiting examiners at any time during the oral examination assessment window.

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COMPONENT 2: LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

General comments

Most questions were attempted with varying degrees of success and few gaps were left. Candidates understood the demands of the paper and the mechanics of the tasks. Most candidates completed all the questions in the time allotted. Candidates who had prepared well for the style of questions and had good knowledge of the grammar showed the ability to manipulate the language accurately using a range of lexis and structure and idiom. Detailed answers to questions 1-8 are given in the published mark scheme as well as possible correct alternative answers.

- Q1** This multiple-choice question was done well. Candidates who achieved less than 6/6 tended to make errors in 3 or 6.
- Q2 (A)** This was a 'Vrai/Faux' question type with corrections of 'Faux' responses. Most candidates chose the correct true/false answer with very little misunderstanding.
- Antonyms were given in negative responses rather than negatives.
 - Adjectival agreements and verb conjugations were inconsistent but understanding of what had been heard was clear.
- Q2 (B)** Candidates coped very well with this question but where errors were made, candidates had not considered whether what they had chosen as the second part of the statement actually made sense in French.
- Q3 (A)**
- (a) Problems occurred here by candidates not using the future tense or writing phrases such *va ouvert*
 - (b) Many misunderstood the idea of *prix maximum* and wrote '*entre 7 et 12 €*'
 - (c) Very well done
 - (d) Candidates heard the correct information but often did not convey it correctly to answer the question.
 - (e) and (f) were the least well done, often because of grammatical or lexical errors which made the answers incomprehensible:
 - (e) *les chaises bougies*
 - (f) wrong tense used.
- Q3 (B)** There were some issues with task completion for this question.
- Some candidates wrote in the word that they heard in the recording. This is not the aim of the exercise.
 - If the candidates write the word in the gap, they can then read the phrase to check if they have selected the right answer. Many candidates who merely wrote in or circled the letter lost marks this way.
- Q4 (A)** This question was very well done with most candidates selecting the 5 correct phrases.
- Q4 (B)** Another highly scoring question which showed that the text had been understood by candidates.

Q5 (A) For this question candidates read a text and had to find a word to fill the given gap in the text. The facility factor for this question was low. Many incorrect words were chosen, especially for (2) – *venus* was not known, and (4) – where *musicale* was chosen instead of *dessinée*. Candidates should read over the text and look at the words they have chosen in the context of the passage.

Q5 (B) This question was generally well done with candidates selecting the correct synonym from the text.

Q6 (A) There was a mixed response to this question:

- 6 (b) was sometimes not well answered
- 6 (d) - there very few correct responses here as candidates had to infer the answer

Q6 (B) The answers to this question demanded inference and deduction on the part of the candidates and proved difficult for those who did not really understand the text nor the demands of the question. There was evidence of misunderstanding and incorrect answers as a result.

- Candidates had to infer *les inconvénients* for each person – some gave positive comments and advantages.
- In the case of Aurélie many thought that she had already had a baby and it was even stated that *elle va partir en congé de maternité dans dix mois !*

Q7 The overall accuracy of this question was very pleasing. Candidates were able to score well here as they were careful to transfer the meaning correctly and idiomatically. Translation of tenses was mostly good. A large number of candidates did not know that *la Corse* is Corsica.

Frequent errors included:

- incorrect translation of *depuis* and ensuing tense
- *histoires* – histories, *contes* – accounts
- *habitants* – a surprisingly high number of candidates just wrote ‘habitants’ and not ‘inhabitants’
- *coquillage* caused problems and produced some imaginative translations such as ‘relic’, ‘shipwreck’, ‘pebble’, ‘stone’ and ‘cockereel’
- *plages* – plagues
- *œil* was often mistranslated and included ‘ear’, ‘life’, ‘wail’, ‘oil’, ‘oil well’, ‘olive’, ‘owl’, ‘voice’ and ‘sand’. Also, ‘St Lucy of the Eyes’
- ...*un porte-bonheur* : ‘door/gate to happiness’, ‘a doorway to heaven’, ‘a fun pastime’.

Q8 Translating into French candidates should look at the English carefully and translate all the words in the sentence.

1. ‘Good news’ was often poorly translated with words such as *informations* and *journaux* being used. *Les droits* caused an issue here as candidates confused the word with *doigts/lois* etc. The infinitive construction ‘not having to’ was often translated incorrectly. Many candidates did not use an infinitive after *pour*. Leisure time - often literally translated *le temps de loisirs*.
2. ‘earned respect’ and ‘peers’ - very few candidates knew the vocabulary here. In ‘As for’ lost marks. Not many knew this and there were many literal translations. *Comme pour*. Almost no candidate knew the past participle for *satisfaire*.
3. ‘failure at school’ was translated in many different ways - usually incorrectly or literally. Candidates could not distinguish between *parce que* and *à cause de*.

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COMPONENT 3: CRITICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

Overview

Choices:

- The most popular choices were the films *Intouchables* and *Les Choristes* followed by the novel *No et Moi*. Hardly any examples were seen of the remaining film and texts.
- The candidates who chose *No et moi* wrote some good answers and had good understanding of relationships and character and the themes of the novel. The essay on M. Bertignac, option (a), was mainly well done and focused on the title, although some candidates brought in extraneous and irrelevant details. On the life of *une jeune SDF* (b) some candidates brought in a lot of background information on homeless young people in France which was not relevant to the title.
- Candidates who chose *Intouchables* opted mainly for the question about how Philippe's life changes (a). The better candidates looked at the changes in his emotional life and attitudes to society. Some candidates lacked focus on the title and spent too long on Driss and his life (e.g. difficulties of *la banlieue*).
- For the essay about the meaning of the title (b), the better candidates looked at the deeper meaning in the film of two very different men who were both on the edge of society. They dealt well with the themes of handicap, exclusion and marginalisation.
- *Les Choristes* essays were mainly on Mathieu's influence (a). The better candidates wrote well-structured essays about his methods of discipline, the changes he encouraged and the effect that this had on the boys. The impact of these changes was well discussed using the example of the influence of music in the school.

Essay structure:

- Generally speaking candidates have very good knowledge of plot, theme and characters but it is vitally important that they answer the question set and not write long detailed essays which often have no relevance to the question. After selecting the question candidates should then plan an essay around this. The rubric states *Écrivez environ 250 mots en français*. Many essays were well in excess of this and candidates produced several pages of writing. Long introductions, especially of the "*Tout d'abord je vais aborder la question ".....", "En premier lieu je vais....., en deuxième lieu je vais..."* were very common. Candidates set out everything that they intend to discuss in the essay then went on to repeat these ideas and expand upon them. This is a waste of words. Some candidates use 50-60 words or more writing such introductions. Such essays lacked focus and often had little relevance to the title set. Conclusions often repeated or rephrased previously stated views and opinions and many essays came to an abrupt end.
- In some cases, it was difficult to know what question was being answered as there was confusion between both questions on the same film or text. Candidates must write the number of the question in the margin.

Assessment of the essay

The questions set are designed to be answered in the suggested word limit. Lengthy essays suffer when the assessment objectives in the mark scheme are applied.

The skills assessed on this paper are AO3 and AO4.

1. For AO3 the candidate must demonstrate that he/she is able to manipulate French accurately in written forms, using a wide range of lexis and structure.
2. For AO4 the candidate must show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects (in context) of the literary work or film studied.

1. AO3.

- The longer the essay, the more errors occur. The overall standard of written French for the essay question was not good and many candidates lost many marks for AO3.
- Many candidates wrote well over the word count without direction or structure in their response. They tended to be incorrect or irrelevant in subject knowledge, characters and plot details were sometimes confused and grammar was poor. Those who made a decent plan tended to be the most focused in their answers. Candidates would be best advised when preparing for this section of the examination to write a range of practice essays about theme and character and need to ensure that their basic grammar is correct in order to allow their sentences to flow accurately.

2. AO4

- For AO4 a successful critical response to the question set is one which clearly demonstrates that the candidate is able to present and justify points of view, develop arguments and draw conclusions based on knowledge and understanding of the work studied.
- Many candidates ignored the questions set and wrote very long essays which encompassed everything they knew about the film or book and many essays were merely descriptions of characters or recounting of the plot. This encouraged story-telling, digression, irrelevant and superfluous information in relation to the question set.
- In some essays the quality of the French was so poor that it was difficult to understand what the candidate was trying to say.
- During the time available for this component candidates should plan carefully in French and keep the plan relevant to the question set. By doing this, extraneous and irrelevant material can be discarded in favour of relevant and meaningful information and examples.
- The best essays produced were concise and relevant, answering the question directly without a long introduction or repetitive conclusion. These candidates were able to answer the question set in accurate French using evidence from the film or text appropriately and in a pertinent and succinct manner.

Common errors

- Mis-spelling of character and place names.
- Adjectives and adverbs confused e.g. *mauvais/mal, meilleur/mieux, vite*.
- Adjectives not agreeing or incorrectly used e.g. *les vêtements salés,*
- Common gender errors e.g. *la film, le voiture, le maison, une problème, le premier scène, son vieux vie.*
- Poor use of possessive and demonstrative adjectives e.g. *sa attitude, son famille, ça vie, se film, ses garçons (for ces), sont papiers.*

- Object and disjunctive pronouns caused many problems e.g. *Driss aide il, Lou donne elle, entre ils.*
- Proliferation of English words for cognates, lack of appropriate accent.
- *Parce que* and *à cause de* confused.
- Present tense of common verbs not known e.g. *ils font, elles vont.*
- Incorrect auxiliary verbs in the perfect tense and wrong past participles e.g. *ils ont parti, elle a mort, elle a mouri, elle est mort, sa femme avait mort.*
- Second verb infinitive often ignored.
- Anglicised structure and idiom e.g. *Philippe's vie, il a un bon temps, pour la premier temps.*
- Prepositions e.g. *en Paris, en l'école, au le forêt.*



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