



# **GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

FRENCH A LEVEL

**SUMMER 2018** 

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#### **FRENCH**

## **GCE A LEVEL**

#### **Summer 2018**

**COMPONENT 1: SPEAKING** 

#### Overview

This is the first year of the new A level specification which features an independent research project (IRP) and WJEC Eduqas offers 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.

This test consists of two tasks (a) a two-minute presentation on the IRP followed by a discussion about it, and (b) a card-based discussion. The presentation (10 marks) and the discussion of the IRP (30 marks) are two thirds of the marks awarded for the Eduqas A level French oral test. The remaining third (20 marks) are for the card-based task. The speaking test is worth 30% of the total qualification.

In addition to the comments on the A level card-based task contained in this report, centres might find the comments on the Eduqas AS level oral test useful as that test consists of two card-based tasks.

Centres were free to contact the examination board to ask advice about suitable Independent Research Project (IRP) topic titles and many did so. This did not guarantee the quality of the performance as this depended on the candidates' own research, the quality of the presentation, the accuracy of the language of study and the ability to deal effectively with questions and issues raised during the discussion. Titles were accepted if they offered a discussion point rather than a narrative or description and were clearly relevant to the country/communities where the language is or was spoken.

Indeed, the candidates' choices reflected their personal interest and discussed an extremely wide range of topics, including historical events or movements, politics, sociological issues, cultural questions, matters of regional interest within the countries where the language is spoken, sport, economics, philosophy, architecture, art and the media.

In addition to confirming that the IRP was the candidates' own work, the IRP pro forma completed by each candidate allowed the Examination Board to check that the discussion was not based on the contents of a set book or film about which candidates had chosen to answer written questions. The bullet points listing sources and issues were a useful guide for the examiner while conducting the test, though candidates must not expect the examiner to follow the issues on the outline given.

Candidates may discuss issues similar to those discussed in books or films studied specifically for component 3, but must not use the content of the book or film itself to illustrate the IRP.

Most centres did send the examiner copies of the IRP pro forma in good time. They can be scanned or photographed and sent as an email to the visiting examiner or possibly sent as paper copies to the board for forwarding to the examiner. In some centres, however, the examiner received the form on the day of the test or only two or three days before the test itself. Copies of the initial presentation are not required or desirable and do not replace the IRP pro forma.

Centres may not help candidates with their actual presentations and IRPs but can still give students general advice, for example, on some of the following issues:

- (a) choosing a suitable topic
- (b) the characteristics of a good IRP
- (c) planning and timing the process
- (d) the principles of effective research
- (e) the validity and reliability of sources
- (f) dealing with contradictions or uncertainty arising from the research
- (g) general hints, expressions for writing up the project (for oral delivery)
- (h) the oral rather than written nature of the language used in the presentation and following discussion. This affects, for example, sentence length complexity of constructions and lexis.

The presentation (10 marks) and the discussion of the IRP (30 marks) form the first task for the Eduqas French A level oral test. The second task (20 marks) is a card-based task discussing one of the specified themes.

# (A) The presentation

Two assessment objectives are used for the evaluation of the candidates' presentations: AO2 (5 marks) and AO4 (five marks). Both assessment objectives are weighted equally for the presentation.

AO2 is the candidate's ability to respond to written material from a variety of sources. The candidate needs to show that he or she has undertaken first hand research for the presentation and the IRP. As time is short, there is no time to go into the detail of the sources but suitable short references to the sources - where and when found, or quotations from whom - might strengthen the examiner's evaluation of the amount and quality of research.

The greatest indicator of the quality of research undertaken is from the content of the presentation itself rather than any oblique reference to a source.

The other assessment criterion is AO4. Here, the candidate needs to show knowledge and understanding of different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken which is relevant to the subject chosen. Even a short presentation can show the extent and depth of understanding, analysis and evaluation of issues raised by the topic under discussion.

In some instances, candidates became nervous or forgot parts of their presentation. Candidates can bring a copy of their IRP pro forma into the examination as a memory aid.

There is no single model of a very good presentation, but the following might be useful pointers:

- (a) The introduction to the IRP topic is very short as is any invitation at the end of the presentation to continue with the conversation.
- (b) The candidate explains the importance of the topic, outlines the issues or interesting features and briefly mentions sources of ideas.
- (c) The candidate gives the minimum amount of description, (explaining succinctly the sources of ideas and their reliability) to support the ideas being discussed.

- (d) Any conclusions or answers (or lack of answers) to issues raised are stated and justified.
- (e) A short conclusion encapsulating the result of the research ends the presentation.

The presentation serves as a springboard for the discussion that follows as it is likely to provide the examiner with possible lines of enquiry.

# (B) The discussion

The discussion lasts 9-10 minutes. The examiner will have made notes during the presentation of the types of question that arise from it. The examiner will also have a copy of the completed IRP pro forma.

Three assessment objectives are used in evaluating the quality of the discussion: AO1 (5 marks), AO3 (15 marks) and AO4 (10 marks).

In this part of the test, the ability to manipulate the language accurately in its spoken form is explicitly evaluated and AO3 is worth half of the marks awarded for the discussion. As the candidates responded spontaneously to questions, the level of accuracy did suffer at times suffer but in the majority of instances the language was accurate enough to ensure comprehension. In some instances, both the quality of the grammar and the knowledge of topic-related technical terms were good. Nevertheless, the usual mistakes in verb forms, tense formation (where relevant), genders, agreements (where audible), pronouns and possessive pronouns were evident, as was the inability to form more complex sentences correctly. Lack of accuracy did affect understanding of what was being said (AO4) in some instances.

Candidates could generally answer the questions the examiner asked them, and they showed that they could "understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face inter-action" (AO1), especially if they were prepared for a question. Please note, however, that in this part of the test, candidates are not expected to (or rewarded for) asking the examiner a question.

The weighting for AO4 i.e. "showing knowledge and understanding of <u>and respond critically</u> to aspects of the culture and society of the countries/communities where the language is spoken", namely 10 marks out of 30, makes it imperative that candidates give relevant information and evaluate it properly.

It is important to note that if candidates chose to discuss any films or books, they needed to concentrate on the film or book's contribution to AO4 - knowledge of country etc. of the language studied. Character studies or discussion of the plot of books or films were unlikely to do so.

Similarly, when a certain famous French person was the topic of the IRP, then the contribution of that person to France or French society was required, not a factual biography or a "generic" account of that person's contribution to science, sport, fashion etc. in general.

# (C) The card-based task (worth 20/60) Task B

Candidates are given five minutes to prepare for the card-based task in the examination room itself with the examiner. This arrangement means that there is no need for any supervised preparation time before the test. The recording continues to run during this silent preparation time. The system worked well, although some candidates forgot to bring in blank paper or pens with which to make notes.

The twelve cards in the card-based task covered the whole of the four themes of the A level specification (see page 6 of the specification) and almost all sub-themes were covered across the 12 cards.

Many candidates lacked the depth of knowledge (AO4) expected. Each theme had its own challenges. The cards on "France 1940-50: The Occupation and post-war years", for example, required historical knowledge and the ability to evaluate historical events. Discussions on cards relating to, "Being a young person in French speaking society", were often discussions about young people in general, and candidates transferred their knowledge about the UK to France or a French-speaking country. Candidates lacked sufficient information to fully discuss "Understanding the French-speaking world" and "Diversity and difference".

Many candidates did not give sufficient attention to the reading passage on the card during their discussion even when prompted to do so by the examiner. Although these reading passages were quite short, they did give some background ideas and ideas to inform the discussion. The candidate's response to reading is assessed. The content of the photos on the cards did not form part of the assessment for AO2.

In this task, candidates were required, as the specification states, to ask the examiner two questions. Some found it difficult to do so even when prompted by the examiner. Candidates should not ask the examiner any personal questions, but they were free to ask for the examiner's personal reaction to the topic under discussion. Examiners often responded by asking the candidates about their opinion about what they had just asked.

The time allowed for the discussion is only 5-6 minutes. Candidate answers had to be succinct. Candidates often tried to answer the first question at too great a length and this limited the time for the discussion. On the other hand, candidates did often find that it was possible to incorporate an evaluation of the reading passage into their response to the first question. Then a longer reply is relevant.

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#### **Summer 2018**

## **COMPONENT 2: LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION**

#### Overview

The skills assessed for this paper were AO2 for questions 1 to 9 and AO3 for question 10. The number of marks allocated for each question gives an indication of the length of the answer required, so candidates should avoid giving several answers when a question carries only one mark. Candidates need to be trained, especially in the listening comprehension, to select the relevant details instead of transcribing everything they hear. On the other hand, candidates sometimes fail to realise that for two/three marks they need to write two/three different ideas.

Generally, candidates understood the demands of the paper and the mechanics of the task. Most questions were attempted and with varying degrees of success.

Candidates who had been well prepared for the style of questions and had good knowledge of grammar were able to manipulate the language well using a range of lexis and structure. These candidates successfully avoided lifting sentences from the texts.

Detailed answers to questions 1-10 are provided in the published mark scheme as well as possible correct alternative answers.

#### **Question 1**

Most candidates understood the style of question (summary).

The following areas should be noted:

- For the first point some candidates did not understand a été présente sur les scènes les plus prestigieuses or en présence de chefs d'état et de membres de familles royales. Some candidates thought that Mireille was un membre de la famille royale. Others misheard the number of songs and albums or wrote irrelevant anwers.
- For the second point some candidates gave the incorrect number of children and there was confusion between seize and ses. Poor manipulation of s'occuper de led to incorrect answers.
- For the third point *ferveur* was often written incorrectly as *faveur*.

# **Question 2**

Most candidates correctly matched up the sentences.

#### Question 3

Most candidates answered this question well but sometimes did not make clear which was the intended answer e.g. circling or underlining two statements. The most common wrong answers were found in 3(b) *les cours* and 3(d) *de faire des bêtises*.

#### Question 4

Most candidates attempted all elements of this question and all acceptable alternative answers were credited. The key question words in all elements caused difficulty (*Qui*, *Que*, *Comment*, *Où*, *Pendant combien de temps*, *Quel est le but* and *Pourquoi*). Some candidates found certain vocabulary items challenging.

#### Question 5

Most candidates performed well in this question.

- For the first point there were many possible answers.
- The second point was usually well answered but answers such as *pour honorer les auteurs et les héros* was considered incomplete and not rewarded.
- For the third point those who mentioned the places without mentioning the activities did not get any marks.

#### Question 6

Candidates who were well prepared for this type of question performed well. Candidates are advised to re-read the passage to check that the chosen words make sense in the context.

#### **Question 7**

Candidates generally performed well in this question. However, some candidates gave an incomplete answer.

#### **Question 8**

The performance on this question was varied. Key question words again caused difficulty. Where candidates did not understand the question word, the wrong information was provided in the response. Some vocabulary was not known e.g. se faire soigner and some candidates found concepts in (g) and (h) challenging. Misunderstanding of tenses in the questions also led to incorrect responses.

## **Question 9**

Candidates were able to score well in this question if they were careful to transfer the meaning correctly and idiomatically.

Some candidates did not pay enough attention to the tenses used in the French text and lost marks by using the wrong tense in their translation.

#### Frequent errors included:

- bilan was not known
- incorrect translation of tense of apparait
- outre was not known and produced many incorrect translations
- des voies ferrées was not known translations included 'motorways', 'valleys', 'ports' and 'ferry ports'
- milliers was mistranslated as 'millions'
- Face à l'ampleur des dégâts was poorly translated with words such as 'amplitude' and 'disgust'
- réalisés was mistranslated as 'realised'
- in the final sentence candidates found the order of tenses difficult and did not spot that the reference was to the future and not the past

- années quarante and années cinquante were mistranslated as 'forty/fifty years ago', 'in 40/50 years' time' and 'of/from/about 40/50 years'
- very few candidates translated *définitivement* correctly, many opting for 'definitely' or 'definitively' instead of 'completely' (the correct translation in this context).

#### **Question 10**

This proved to be the most challenging question for candidates. For some candidates translations into French were adversely affected by some incorrect use of tenses, lack of subject specific vocabulary[LD1], incorrect adjectival agreements and incorrect subject/verb agreement. However there was much evidence of candidates having a very good knowledge of grammar, relevant vocabulary and the skill to transfer meaning into idiomatic French. These candidates paid close attention to detail in their translation from English into French and produced fluent and accurate work.

Further details are noted in the mark scheme[CE2].

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# **COMPONENT 3: CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING**

#### Overview

It was very pleasing to see how many candidates met the demands of this Component, often producing two essays of high linguistic quality and knowledge of the text/film. However, there was sometimes a marked difference in attainment between the two essays, both linguistically and in their knowledge and understanding of the text/film.

The inclusion of the new theme, 'France 1940-1950: The Occupation and post-war years', appears to have produced a greater interest in and understanding of the titles that dealt with that period. In essays on *Les Choristes, Au Revoir les Enfants* and *le silence de la mer* some candidates seemed to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding in the issues involved, and a more acute empathy with the characters, for example, in *Monsieur Batignole*. In addition, their knowledge base is considerably increased and this is apparent in their handling of questions on these works. However, some of these essays contained a lot of extraneous material which was not relevant to the question set. Candidates should take care to focus on the title and choose material which is pertinent and relevant.

# Assessment of the essay

The questions set are designed to be answered in the suggested word limit. Lengthy essays suffer when the assessment objectives (AO3 and AO4) 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. A large proportion of candidates observed the word count of approximately 300 words but there were some essays which were excessively long and these lost focus. There are candidates who self-penalise by greatly exceeding the limit and there is often a discrepancy seen between the candidate mark for AO3 and AO4.
- 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. AQ4

- For AO4 a successful analytical 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. This
  leads to lower attainment in AO4 (knowledge of book/film).
- 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 or relevant and meaningful information and examples.
- Candidates should avoid lengthy introductions where they set out a lengthy plan: "En premier lieu..." etc., then go on to repeat what they have said in a more detailed way. They should tackle the question straightaway and not waste words. The same can be said for repetitive conclusions.
- 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. To produce a coherent and
  relevant essay in 300 words, which answers the question and contains sufficient
  evidence and analysis, it is essential to plan.

# No et Moi

This was a very popular choice. Candidates engaged well with the themes and responded to the topicality of the issues dealt with. The answers were generally of a good standard, the most common failing being excessive description, especially in question 1, the importance of *la famille*. For example, it was important to mention the death of Lou's sister and the effect it had upon Lou's relationship with her mother; it was not necessary to recount in detail how her mother's life changed. The word limit simply did not allow for this. A further observation is that in writing about the importance of family, several candidates omitted to mention Lucas. Good answers focused on the family circumstance of Lou, No and Lucas

The second question on the relationship between Lou and Lucas was less popular but well-done on the whole. A lot of candidates gave well-considered analytic responses while others merely described their relationship via a sequence of examples. A few essays were seen where there was reference to "le film" and not "le roman".

# Une année chez les Français

Only two essays were seen for this text and although they were overlong they displayed excellent knowledge of and empathy with the novel, its characters and themes.

# **Antigone**

A few centres had chosen *Antigone*. The standard of essays was good. Very few candidates chose to write an essay on Antigone's relationship with Hémon, while most chose to write about the inevitability of the tragedy. The Greek concept of tragedy obviously appealed and

candidates demonstrated a pleasing understanding of the concept. The role of the Chorus was understood and the contribution of the respective characters to the unfolding of the tragedy, and the pattern of interaction created among them, was handled skilfully and thoughtfully in most cases. There were some unnecessary digressions into Sophocles.

# L'Étranger

As ever, a popular choice – but perhaps with more references to the Nazis and Camus's stance than in previous years, no doubt on account of Theme 4. These were not relevant to the question.

In some essays there was too much digression into Camus's philosophy, differences between him and Sartre, how Camus's views as expressed in *L'Etranger* mirror (or not) views expressed in his other works. *L'absurde* and *existentialisme* were given lengthy treatment by some candidates and one even spent a large part of the essay describing Meursault's role in life as a *nihiliste*. Quite a number of candidates tried to make the question fit their interpretation of Camus's philosophy, as they understood it, rather than answering the question as set.

Question 7: This was the more popular choice. Raymond was generally perceived as a thoroughly 'bad guy' but in addition to his detractors there were several who found much that was positive in his friendship with Meursault. The majority view was that Raymond was using Meursault to fulfil his own nefarious ends. Much was made of the contrast between the immoral Raymond and the amoral Meursault (candidates' own terminology). This question gave rise to a lot of description and story-telling at the expense of analysis.

Question 8: This was the less popular choice. Again, there was a surfeit of 'philosophy'. Some candidates attempted to explain Meursault's actions not through the effect upon him of the natural world but again, in terms of his *absurdisme*. Symbolism was well considered by many candidates (e.g. *la mer* which consoles him for the death of his *mère* and his desire to return to the womb when swimming with Marie). These are very good general points but by the time these issues have been explored, there is not much space left to answer the question. As a result, essays were overlong and prone to digression.

However, there were, as usual, some excellent answers, both linguistically and in terms of content and understanding. Again, planning was the key. The spelling of "Meursault" varied considerably, sometimes in the same essay.

#### Le silence de la mer

Candidates had engaged well with the texts and the issues involved and as mentioned above, their greater understanding of the period enhanced their appreciation of the text. However, in some essays too much emphasis was placed on wartime France which was not relevant to the question set.

Both questions were attempted, but the first question produced the better answers. In the second question, some candidates became a little confused and essays tended to lose focus, but overall, essays on this text were satisfactory.

# Boule de Suif et autres contes de guerre

Many candidates were able to produce high quality essays displaying a thorough knowledge of the characters, the themes and the historical and social setting of the stories. It is worth noting that any of the "contes de guerre" can be explored in the essays and that candidates are not obliged to include the title story "Boule de Suif".

The candidates showed sound knowledge of both the characters and themes contained in contes such as Boule de Suif, Mademoiselle Fifi, Deux Amis, La Mère Sauvage, Walter Schnaffs and Un Duel and were able to both describe and analyse the relevant aspects of

the Franco-Prussian war in the context of contemporary French society and also explored well elements of patriotism

#### Intouchables

This was a popular choice of film and both questions were well-represented. Apart from instances where excessive description detracted from the quality of the answer, the questions were well handled, and no specific issues stood out. Candidates engaged well with the themes and characters but must focus on the question set in their essays. The spelling of "Philippe" varied considerably, sometimes in the same essay.

#### Les Choristes

Another popular choice. The first question on Pierre Morhange (frequently misspelled) was chosen by the majority. The most frequent short-coming with this question was that some candidates digressed into an examination of the role and importance of Clément Mathieu generally, rather than limiting themselves to his importance to Pierre Morhange. Many incorrectly stated that Pierre became a "chanteur célèbre/fameux", a "conducteur" or a "tête de l'orchestre" and that his "belle voix was "un cadeau". The importance of the (present day) opening scenes was ignored by some candidates.

The second question was less well represented; Pépinot was hardly mentioned at all.

# La Haine

A very popular choice of film. There was sometimes too much time devoted to Kassovitz and events in Paris and "la banlieue" which inspired his creativity in making the film, especially the role of "la police" et "les CRS" in the riots. Similarly, while the cinematographic effects are significant, they were sometimes excessively described. Such examples highlight the use of extraneous material which if not relevant to the question set.

Question 19 on the role of the police was the more popular and answers were fairly predictable, but the essays on question 20 were significantly more interesting and some demonstrated a penetrating and very mature appreciation of the meaning of the quotation. These essays were generally of a higher quality.

# Au Revoir les Enfants

This remains a popular choice and essays were satisfactory on the whole, but as usual, some were marred by excessive length and too much description. In some essays, lengthy details were included on the privations of *I'* Occupation which were not relevant to the title and some referred at length to "la rafle en 1942". There was very noticeable 'cross over' in content in essays on the two titles, especially in question 22, where the conditions created by the Occupation were often dealt with at the expense of Jean Bonnet's role. However, most candidates knew the film well and demonstrated great empathy in their handling of both titles.

# Monsieur Batignole

In essays on this film and as with other works dealing with the war years, candidates demonstrated considerable empathy. Both questions were well represented. Candidates displayed detailed relevant knowledge and engaged very well with the themes of the film and its characters.

One of the aspects of the film which received a great deal of attention in answers to both questions was the cinematic effects, as with *La Haine*. The specialist terminology used was quite impressive, but at times was rather over-done, at the expense of dealing with the

demands of the question. Although candidates have impressive understanding and use of cinematographic terminology it is usually a case of 'less is more'.

#### **Conclusions**

Overall, this was a very encouraging 'first year' of this examination. Candidates had engaged well and, in most cases, had obviously worked hard, as had their teachers. However, the usual criticisms must be made: excessive length in some cases, too much description at the expense of analysis, and, in too many scripts, hand writing which was almost impossible to read.

## Common errors:

- Mis-spelling of character and place names. Confusion between "personnage" and "caractère"
- Adjectives and adverbs confused. Incorrect adverbs: vitement. Adjectives not agreeing or incorrectly used: l'amour paternelle, les garçons défavorisées
- Common gender errors, for example, le maison, le musique, la film, la rapport, la dévelopement
- Poor use of possessive and demonstrative adjectives: sa père, son maison, ses famille, ça humeur
- Object and disjunctive pronouns caused many problems: *Mathieu aide le, Le policier est hostile vers ils*
- Proliferation of English words for cognates, lack of appropriate accent
- Parce que and à cause de was confused.... parce que de No
- Present tense of common verbs not known, for example, ils apprendent, vous peuvez, Jean connais, quand Werner est disant l'histoire.... elle suffrir,
- Incorrect auxiliary verbs in the perfect tense and wrong past participles, e.g. il a recevu, elle a trové,
- Second verb infinitive often ignored: peut fini, il voudrais à aidé
- Anglicised structure and idiom:
   Philippe's vie comme il est âgé et culte, pour la premier temps, Morhange a un cadeau de voix, le papier de postage, un circle visieaux, la Bertignacs famille
- Prepositions e.g. en le banlieue, en Paris, en la guerre, dans la Grec ancienne.

# Requests

It is requested that candidates indicate on the front cover of their script which questions they have attempted. Where a rough draft of an essay has been produced, it would be extremely helpful to the examiner if the candidate clearly crosses out the draft. It is NOT helpful to write 'draft' at the end of it! When additional loose sheets are used, candidates are asked to number these so that the examiner can navigate the answer.

Eduqas A Level French Report Summer 2018/ed



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