



Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In French (WFR03)

Research, Understanding and Written Response

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In this unit, candidates are tested on their ability to use the spoken word.

The first part of the test takes the form of a debate. Candidates are required to take a clear stance on an issue of their choice which they present for one minute, and then defend, when challenged by the teacher/examiner. Candidates have a free choice of subject which does not need to relate to the general topic areas studied and they are required to conduct their own research when investigating the subject of their choice and need to refer to written sources (and may also refer to other suitable authentic sources) during the debate. They are expected to use the language of debate and argument to discuss the issue and to defend their point of view.

It was pleasing to see that the tests in many Centres produced a lively debate with the teacher/examiner robustly challenging the candidate's views. Many candidates were well equipped with language which allowed them to reject the challenge politely and firmly and these debates were interesting to hear. However, this was not always the case and Centres are reminded of the importance of spontaneity and that this should be a genuine debate where the teacher/examiner challenges what the candidate has said, not a general discussion on the topic. Moreover, a question and answer format does not constitute discourse and candidates should be discouraged from producing large amounts of pre-learnt material, as this limits the mark they can achieve for spontaneity and development.

In a minority of cases, the candidate was allowed to talk for the entire five minutes without interruption or the teacher/examiner only asked for clarification or tried to elicit information rather than challenging the candidate's point of view. This cannot be considered to be a debate and so the candidate is unable to access the higher bands in certain mark grids. Centres are reminded of the importance of the teacher/examiner's role as, if the test is not conducted according to the requirements of the Specification, the candidate's chances of success can be hindered.

The choice of topics for Section A (debate) was surprisingly limited, with the most popular being for or against the death penalty, abortion and euthanasia. In some of the Spanish-based centres, arguments based around bull-fighting were also quite popular. It was disappointing to see this limited range when candidates have a free choice of topic. The chosen topic needs to be something that can be debated, with two opposing viewpoints; too often candidates made the mistake of choosing a topic against which it was difficult for the teacher/examiner to argue (*e.g. against racism or abuse of animals*). Although in a minority, there were candidates who chose a more unusual topic (*e.g. against the wearing of the burka in public places or for the replacement of man by robots in certain professions*) which provoked a lively debate and a more individual response. A more unusual choice of stance, such as the candidate who chose to defend *la monarchie de Louis XIV*, generally led to a more interesting and genuine exchange. Candidates should

be encouraged to choose a topic on which they have definite opinions and on which they can offer a genuine personal response.

In addition, in Section A, candidates are required to provide evidenced research to support their arguments in order to reach the higher bands of the *Reading and research* grid. Centres are reminded that they should advise candidates on the importance of referring to their research and to specific sources written in French, using this as evidence to back up their argument in the debate. Candidates should mention suitable written sources but they may also refer to other authentic sources they have used, such as online audio-visual material; all sources should be in the target language. At present, the production of evidenced research is only being done in a minority of centres.

In the second part of the test (6-8 minutes), candidates are expected to discuss two further issues, which must be unpredictable elements (but linked to the general topic areas described in the specification). When discussing issues which are taken from the iA2 general topic areas, candidates must base their comments in the context of the French-speaking world. Candidates are expected to interact effectively with the examiner and to sustain a fluent discourse. They are assessed on their ability to respond to the spoken language and should have the opportunity to show the breadth and depth of their knowledge and linguistic competence, but the questions should also challenge conceptually.

Centres are reminded that the areas chosen for discussion must be unpredictable elements of the test. Candidates must give spontaneous responses and are unlikely to demonstrate spontaneity with material that is largely recited. Each participant in the discussion should address the points made by the other to facilitate the discourse. It is the teacher/examiner's responsibility to respond to the candidate's views, thus creating the unpredictability of the test, and to provide the appropriate level of challenge to allow the candidate to reach his/her potential.

Section B requires the introduction of *at least two further issues for discussion*; however, if there is an attempt to cover too many topics, this can lead to a superficial discussion which does not give the candidate enough opportunity to develop his/her ideas. In addition, Centres are advised that Section B requires a discussion, not a debate; some teacher/examiners continued to challenge the candidates in the same way as in Section A.

In Section B, it is not necessary for the teacher/examiner to focus entirely on the iA2 topics; the topics for discussion can be selected from any of the seven General Topic Areas. Many teacher/examiners chose to focus on moral issues, even in this part of the test, and the large majority of candidates who discussed these topics failed to base their comments in the context of the French-speaking world; as a result, they were unable to access the top band in the Critical Analysis grid.

Centres are reminded that any discussion on any of the sub-themes in the iA2 General Topic Areas [Technology/Society/Ethics in the French-speaking world] must be a discussion held in the context of a French-speaking country. In this series, few Centres had taken this requirement into consideration and the discussions were too general and unfocused. In addition, it is not appropriate for the teacher/examiner to ask several candidates the same questions on the same topics; each debate and subsequent discussion should be different.

Candidates should be encouraged to use a wide range of lexis with some good examples of complex structures; accurate pronunciation and intonation are also very important as, if the pronunciation is unclear, the message cannot be conveyed.

On the whole, the tests were well-conducted; timings were accurate and the transition from debate to discussion was made clear by the teacher/examiner. Centres are reminded of the importance of selecting a suitable venue for the tests where noise will not be a problem at any time of the day. There were some Centres where background noise was an issue; this is unsettling for the candidate as well as being difficult for the examiner. In addition, Centres should be sure to conduct a sound check before the tests begin; the microphone should be placed so that the candidate's voice is clear and so that it is not knocked inadvertently by the examiner when the candidate is speaking, as was the case in some Centres.

Centres are reminded once again that submission of the audio files and the interactive OR3 forms should be via secure file transfer to Pearson; tests should not be submitted to the examiner by post on CDs or USB sticks.

Overall, it is encouraging to see so much good work being produced at this level by IAL candidates, many of whom are using the spoken language with confidence and fluency, offering and developing their ideas and using a variety of linguistic structures.

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