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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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In French (WFR03) Paper 3

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Report by the Principal Examiner on iAL Unit WFR03/01 January 2020

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

The first part of the test (5 minutes) 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. Section A should last five minutes only. 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 to which they should refer 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.

The entry for this Unit in January 2020 was small; there were some excellent performances, with candidates engaging in a lively debate with the teacher/ examiner and it was pleasing to see a more varied range of topics being chosen for the debate. The more successful candidates were able to back up their arguments by using facts and statistics from their research, as is required by this Specification. Candidates should mention specific written target-language sources, as well as giving facts and figures, and they may also refer to other authentic sources they have used, such as online audio-visual material. However, there are still some Centres where candidates seem unaware of this requirement and, as a result, their mark in the *Reading and research* category is restricted. The marks here are awarded for AO2 and so it is crucial that candidates should be able to show evidence of reading and research into the chosen issue.

In Section A, the most successful candidates showed excellent critical analysis and spontaneous responses to examiner questions, and were able to deliver convincing support for their stances. Candidates should be advised not to try to use pre-rehearsed material; the key to success in both sections of the test is spontaneity. The debate should be a genuine exchange between the candidate and the teacher/ examiner in which each responds naturally to what the other has said. More Centres are now responding well to this challenge but there are still some Centres where candidates are focusing on producing pre-learnt responses. In the case of the latter, the teacher/ examiner is often reluctant to challenge the candidate and so Part A is affected by the absence of a genuine debate. This will adversely affect the candidate's mark.

The trend towards a greater diversity of topics in Section A is both pleasing and to be encouraged. In this series, there was some variety, from adoption by gay couples, obligatory vaccination and a ban on advertising for nicotine containing products to the more predictable topics such as animal testing, for or against vegetarianism and for or against the death penalty. Candidates are encouraged to choose a topic about which they feel strongly as this leads to a livelier debate. Again, there was a minority of Centres where the "debate" was no more than a discussion with the candidate not choosing a definite stance and the teacher/ examiner not attempting to oppose a clearly stated point of view. In order for the candidate to be able to access the top mark bands, the debate must be natural and spontaneous; candidates should be looking to produce a genuine exchange which shows an individual response. It is the responsibility of the Centre to guide the candidates in their choice of topic for the debate and to ensure that they are challenged at the appropriate level.

It was disappointing to note that a small minority of Centres did not conduct the test appropriately, which had an adverse effect on the candidates' marks. The debate (5 minutes) must be followed by a discussion in which the teacher/ examiner examines two further unpredictable topic areas (6-8 minutes). These should be unknown to the candidate;

it is not appropriate for the candidate to know in advance which topics will be discussed or to have the opportunity of selecting the topics.

Although Section B requires the introduction of *at least two further issues for discussion*, an attempt to cover too many topics will inevitably lead to a superficial discussion. The candidate must be given the opportunity to develop his/ her points of view and, again, it is an opportunity for the teacher/ examiner to push the candidate to expand and develop his/ her ideas and opinions. However, Section B is not a debate and the candidate is not expected to defend any point of view but the discussion must again be a genuine exchange between the two speakers, with each addressing the points made by the other. In this way, the teacher/ examiner can ensure that the test contains an element of unpredictability while, at the same time, offering an appropriate level of challenge, in order for the candidate to realise his/ her potential.

Centres are advised that, if they choose to discuss topics from the iA2 general topic areas, all of which focus on the French-speaking world, candidates must aim the focus of their arguments on the situation in a French-speaking country; it is not enough for a candidate to discuss, for example, euthanasia or the death penalty in an abstract way without anchoring their ideas in the French-speaking world. Failure to do so will affect their mark for *Critical analysis* (A04). This is the responsibility of the candidate; it is not enough for the teacher/ examiner to ask the question in the context of an issue in a French-speaking country.

In this Unit, candidates are being assessed on their ability to respond to the spoken language and they should have the opportunity to show the breadth and depth both of their knowledge but also of their linguistic competence. In this series, several candidates showed a good level of competence, offering a range of lexis and complex structures, and a good level of accuracy. Candidates should aim to use complex structures and to avoid making basic errors in subject-verb agreement or adjectival agreements. It is important that the language should be accurate enough for the candidate to be able to convey clearly his/ her points of view; if comprehension is impaired, then the mark will be affected.

Centres are reminded that they are responsible for seeing that the tests are well-conducted. In Centres where the teacher/ examiner is not the class teacher, it is important that the teacher/ examiner is made aware of the requirements of the Specification and of this Unit in particular. There were many examples of good practice in this Series, with teacher/ examiners clearly marking the moment of transition from debate to discussion and also from one topic to another in Section B; this is helpful both for the candidate and for the marker.

While this was only a small entry, it was encouraging to hear many competent and confident performances by candidates who offered a genuine personal response as well as an encouraging range of structures and appropriate vocabulary at this level.

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