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Edexcel

Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Subsidiary Level  
In French (WFR03/01)  
Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

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## The requirements of Unit WFR03/01

In this unit, candidates are tested on their ability to understand and use spoken French.

The test is comprised of two parts, Section A (approximately 5 minutes) and Section B (approximately 6-8 minutes).

### Section A

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 questioned by the teacher/examiner. They have a free choice of subject, which does not need to relate to the general topic areas studied. Candidates 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 discussion. They are expected to use the language of debate and argument to discuss the issue and to defend their point of view.

There was a relatively small entry for this series. The choice of topics for Section A (debate) showed some variety; centres are advised that the candidate's stance (for or against the topic) must be clearly stated on the OR3 form in French. As has been stated in previous series, the role of the teacher/examiner is key in this section; the candidate should present his/her point of view and should then be challenged in a way which offers him/her the opportunity to use the language of debate and argument.

Some centres are still not advising their candidates of the requirement to provide evidence of research to support their arguments in Section A. Candidates are expected to offer information about sources as well as facts and figures to back up their arguments. Those candidates who do not fulfil this requirement will be unable to access the higher bands of the *Reading and research* mark grid where marks are awarded for AO2 (understanding and responding in speech to written language). Centres are reminded of the wording in the specification, "students will be assessed on the breadth and depth of their research in their presentation. As such, candidates should mention newspaper and magazine articles, online written sources, journals, literary texts and any other suitable written source that can be referenced."

It was pleasing to see that, in some centres, the test produced a lively debate, with the teacher/examiner challenging the candidate's views. However, it is important to stress that, in this test, spontaneity plays an important role and centres need to guide candidates away from reliance on pre-rehearsed material, the use of which inevitably means that the discussion between the teacher/examiner and the candidate is not a genuine discourse. Many centres are now producing genuinely spontaneous exchanges, which is to be praised. Centres where the candidates are trying to use pre-learnt material which the teacher/examiner does not attempt to challenge or interrupt, need to be aware that these candidates will be unable to score a high mark for Spontaneity and Development. This is true in both sections of the test.

It was pleasing to see some variety this year in the choice of topics for Section A (debate); centres should encourage their candidates to choose a topic on which they have strong views as this will lead to a more genuine debate. Candidates are more likely to have strong views on whether their parents should be allowed to limit their use of their mobile phone or

whether schools should impose a dress code than on moral dilemmas like abortion and euthanasia (still the most popular of these topics). Unfortunately, many centres are still encouraging their candidates to 'play it safe' and these topics often lead to a dull exchange. The chosen topic needs to be something that can be debated, with two opposing viewpoints, and it is the role of the teacher/examiner to challenge the candidate's points of view so that the candidate has the opportunity to use language that is relevant for use in a debating situation. Care should be taken to avoid topics that lead only to a discussion rather than a debate; it is the centre's responsibility to offer guidance in the choice of topic.

In this section, the best candidates responded spontaneously to the teacher/examiner's questions, offering convincing arguments for their stance and showing the ability to reject the opposing point of view while maintaining their own.

## Section B

In the second part of the test (6-8 minutes), the areas chosen for discussion should be unpredictable elements of the test (but linked to the general topic areas described in the specification). At least two further issues should be discussed. It is up to the teacher/examiner to choose these further issues for discussion; the candidate should not have any prior knowledge of the areas that are to be discussed and the teacher should choose at least two different areas of discussion. Again, too many teacher/examiners focus heavily on the 'moral dilemma' topics; by choosing different topic areas, they may be more likely to engage the candidate in a meaningful discussion. There is no need to explore more than two further issues; an attempt to cover too many areas may lead to a superficial discussion which does not give the candidate enough opportunity to develop his/her ideas. It is not appropriate to offer the candidate the opportunity of selecting the issue to be discussed.

In Section B, it is important that the areas chosen for discussion are not communicated to the candidate before the test. Candidates should not attempt to offer pre-learnt answers; a successful candidate should engage spontaneously in the conversation with the teacher/examiner and it is important that this is a natural discussion, not a series of questions and answers. Both candidate and teacher/examiner should address the points made by the other to facilitate the discourse. The teacher/examiner has the responsibility of ensuring that the test is unpredictable by responding to the candidate's opinions and points of view; candidates should also be advised that they should react to the teacher/examiner's questions and comments in order to produce spontaneous and fluent discourse. The candidate should aim to develop his/her ideas and the teacher/examiner should offer an appropriate level of challenge in order to allow the candidate to reach his/her potential. Any test that is not conducted with these principles in mind is unlikely to result in the candidate achieving high marks. In addition, teacher/examiners should remember to vary the issues covered in Section B; it is not appropriate to ask all candidates similar questions or to focus on the same issues.

This section requires the introduction of *at least two further issues for discussion*; these issues can be taken from any of the broader themes but, if the theme is taken from one of the three A2 topic areas, candidates must base their comments in the context of the French-speaking world. It is not enough for the teacher/examiner to introduce the French-speaking context; if the candidate does not base his/her comments within the context, marks will be lost. Section B requires a discussion, not a debate; there is no requirement for the teacher/examiner to challenge the candidate in the same way as in Section A. In addition, because the issues must be unknown to the candidate before the exam, there is no expectation for the candidate to back up their comments with detailed evidence although,

of course, a candidate may wish to include a mention of something they have studied which backs up their point.

### **Quality of Language (A03)**

In this unit, candidates are 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 and of their linguistic competence. This year, many candidates used the language well, offering a range of lexis and complex structures, and showed a good level of accuracy. Good candidates used a range of complex structures but weaker candidates often made basic errors in adjectival agreements and verb endings, which made the overall message more difficult to understand. Centres should stress to their candidates the importance of accurate pronunciation and intonation; if the pronunciation is unclear, the message may not be successfully communicated.

### **Conduct of the tests**

Many tests were well-conducted with teacher/examiners making clear the moment of transition from debate to discussion and also from one topic to another in Section B; this is good practice, as it makes it clear to the candidate that the topic is changing, and it is also helpful for the examiner. All centres are reminded of their responsibility to ensure that the test is conducted in line with the requirements of the specification and that the teacher/examiner clearly understands his/her role. This is especially important where candidates are not examined in their own educational establishment.

### **Administration**

Centres are reminded once again that submission of the audio files and the interactive OR3 forms should be via secure file transfer to Pearson. It is not appropriate to upload scanned versions of the OR3 forms; only the interactive version should be used. Similarly, there is no requirement to send the Attendance Register by post; this can be scanned and uploaded via secure file transfer.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it is pleasing to see many IAL candidates using the spoken language with confidence and fluency, offering and developing a genuinely personal response in both the debate and the discussion, and using a range of linguistic structures to express their ideas.