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Edexcel

Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner's Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International AS Level  
French (WFR03) Paper 1  
Understand and Spoken response,

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## The requirements of Unit WFR03/01

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

The test is comprised of two parts, Section A (5 minutes) and Section B (6-7 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. The choice of subject is entirely up to the candidate and 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 previously, the role of the teacher-examiner is key in this Section; the candidate should present their point of view and should then be challenged in a way which offers them the opportunity to use the language of debate and argument. This discussion must show genuine discourse to allow the candidate to score high marks; both the teacher-examiner and candidate should respond in a natural way to what the other has said. A series of questions and answers does not constitute discourse.

It is important that Centres advise their candidates of the requirement to provide evidence of research to support their arguments in Section A. Candidates should give 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, students should mention newspaper and magazine articles, online written sources, journals, literary texts and any other suitable written source that can be referenced."

In this series, some tests produced a lively debate, with the teacher-examiner challenging the candidate's views. It is important to stress that spontaneity plays an important role in this test and therefore it is essential that Centres guide students 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. Some Centres produce genuinely spontaneous exchanges which are a pleasure to listen to; these discussions offer the candidate the opportunity to express themselves freely and naturally in a genuine exchange of views and, as a result, the candidate is more likely to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and Development. In tests where the candidate is trying to use pre-learned material and the teacher-examiner does not attempt to challenge or interrupt, the candidate is unlikely 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); candidates who choose a topic on which they have strong views are more likely to perform

well and produce a genuine debate. They are more likely to have their own views on school uniform, the dangers of social media or the advantages of vegetarianism or veganism than on moral dilemmas like abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty (still very popular in some Centres). It is refreshing to see some Centres encouraging their candidates to move away from the topics that are seen as 'safe', but which often lead to a dull exchange, to topics where the candidate is genuinely engaged and ready to defend their point of view.

The Centre has the responsibility for ensuring that the candidate's choice of topic is a suitable one for debate, with two opposing viewpoints. The role of the teacher-examiner is to challenge the candidate's points of view so that the candidate can use language that is relevant for use in a debating situation. Care should be taken to avoid this part of the test from becoming a discussion rather than a debate.

In this section, the best candidates responded spontaneously to examiner questions, offering convincing arguments for their stance. They showed 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. It is up to the teacher-examiner to choose these two further topics for discussion; the focus should be on two different areas which must be taken from within the General Topic Areas. Again, many teacher-examiners focus too heavily on the 'moral dilemma' topics; by choosing very different topic areas, they are more likely to engage the candidate in a more meaningful discussion and this in turn gives the candidate the opportunity to showcase their knowledge of other vocabulary. There is no need to explore more than two further topics; an attempt to cover too many topics will inevitably lead to a superficial discussion which does not give the candidate enough opportunity to develop their ideas. It is not appropriate to offer the candidate the opportunity of selecting the topic to be discussed.

This Section requires the introduction of *at least two further issues for discussion*; these two 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 context; if the candidate does not base their comments firmly 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 candidate will not know which themes have been chosen for discussion 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 mention something they have studied which backs up their point.

It is a requirement of the test that, in Section B, the areas chosen for discussion are not communicated to the candidate before the test begins. 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 to produce a spontaneous and fluent discourse. The candidate should aim to develop their ideas and the teacher-examiner should offer an appropriate level of challenge so that the candidate has the opportunity to realise their true

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 topics covered in Section B; it is not appropriate to ask all candidates similar questions or to focus on the same topics.

### **Quality of Language (AO3)**

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, 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; however, weaker candidates often made basic errors in adjectival agreements and verb endings and this 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 is not 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 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 their 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. No audio files should be sent through the post. It is not appropriate to upload scanned versions of the OR3 forms; Centres should use only the interactive version of the form. The candidate's stance must be recorded on the form in French. Similarly, there is no requirement to send the Attendance Register by post; Centres should scan and upload the Attendance Register via secure file transfer.

### **Conclusion**

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

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