

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE French (4FR0)
Paper 3

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Publications Code UG035937

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International GCSE French

Paper 3 Speaking

Section A

A significant majority of students were able to carry out a coherent presentation. In most cases, this enhanced their level of confidence and typically indicated that the remainder of the examination would pass with comparable success. Where there was slight hesitation, this tended to be a natural part of the presentation. Centres have continued to encourage their students to make this excellent start to the speaking test, allowing the students to then settle into the less predictable elements. Successful presentations tended to be followed by discussions where students were almost as confident. This meant that there was a most natural and relevant transition from monologue to dialogue. The very spontaneous interaction between interviewer and student was in large measure due to the appropriate styles of preparation which had been implemented by teaching staff as an integral part of the teaching process.

Students chose images from a vast range of possible subject areas, their choice impacting very much on the achievement of optimal performance. Such measured choice had an even more significant impact upon the ensuing discussion. Over a number of years, students have often opted for an image portraying a family celebration or a favourite event involving their friends. Year on year, students have tended to present and discuss such images with a degree of familiarity, comfort and confidence. The issues arising from these images tend to be areas the student is willing and more importantly able to discuss, with a degree of elaboration. Students are thus in a much stronger position to influence the direction of the discussion. More confident students sometimes selected rather more abstract or unusual themes. It was clear that less confident students had been cautiously guided away from topics they would struggle to discuss.

Some students tended to find it difficult to contend with pictures where there were multiple activities taking place. This was particularly the case where students had no personal involvement with the image they had chosen.

Outstanding practice was in evidence in respect of the questioning techniques deployed by the vast majority of examiners. Only on very rare occasions were students encouraged to provide information they had already given during the presentation. Questions based upon the picture served the purpose of allowing students to use a wide range of structures and a breadth of tenses. It was pleasing to note that closed questions were avoided, in most instances. Equally, it was extremely unusual for students to be faced with several questions couched in language they could not access.

As per previous series, there were only rare instances where interviewers continually interrupted students in mid response. This is however important in that it can limit student performance. For example, there were a few cases where students were unable to expand responses via the use of subordination, as coherent responses were being interrupted. However, in those instances where an interviewer's question was misunderstood by a student, it was excellent practice to guide the student's response towards the correct theme. This was done in a most sensitive and constructive manner.

Section B

Although specimen questions appear within the Specification, there is no need to adhere to these questions. A small minority of interviewers simply asked questions from the published list. These were unlikely to elicit the optimal performances from their students. However, in most cases, the specimen questions were consulted merely as a guidance tool and therefore supported the best interests of students. An appropriate range of question styles was accessed in most cases, allowing students to use a significant range of structures and vocabulary.

Students should be allowed every opportunity to develop responses, express and clarify opinions and to show a degree of initiative. Where questions are targeted at the individual student rather than at the entire group, this tended to be achieved. The individual nature of most questions ensured that these were a consistent match with each student's abilities and interests.

Interviewers were most skilled in playing to their students' strengths and supporting the performance of less confident students by beginning conversations with very accessible questions, gradually progressing towards subjects demanding slightly more reflection and development. Where students found it difficult to respond, interviewers made great efforts and drew on experience, in order to draw students back into the conversation, steering individuals back onto an appropriate level of response. Rephrasing of questions often assisted students in regaining both momentum and confidence.

Conduct of Examination

As per previous series, centres are to be commended for making every effort to adhere to the prescribed time limits. Utterances which take place beyond these limits cannot be rewarded. In a small number of cases, but more than last year, there were conversations which were far too short, meaning that students were not able to access the full range of marks. Where the interviewer realises that the first conversation was too long, this must never be compensated by making the others too short, as each conversation is timed and assessed independently. For the presentation, there were

numerous instances where the maximum time limit was exceeded by a significant margin.

The transition between two conversations was nearly always made clear by the interviewer. This is crucial, as it may otherwise have a negative effect on the student's mark.

Interviewers who showed a clear interest in what the student was saying were typically able to promote an even better level of student response. Students always seemed enthusiastic to share their experiences and views. In these cases, they were much more likely to be more expansive, in terms of content and breadth of expression.

Administrative Matters

As in all previous series, the excellent standard of administration during this series was greatly appreciated and facilitated the assessment process.

The vast majority of CDs/USBs were correctly labelled. Accompanying documentation was also presented with excellent attention to detail. In just a few cases, some centre documentation was not sent to the examiner. The current International GCSE French Specification includes the appropriate guidelines on pages 39-42. This section is helpful for interviewers who have recently adopted this specification.

Nearly all recordings were clearly audible. However, a few were too quiet or rendered almost inaudible due to persistently obtrusive background noise. It is important that interviewers check the quality of each recording, particularly the first one they conduct. This facilitates any urgent changes to recording procedures. The placing of the microphone actually tends to be much more important than the choice of equipment. The microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the student rather than the interviewer.

Centres should be aware that from Summer 2014 the Speaking paper will be a compulsory part of this qualification.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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