



Pearson

# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In French (4FR0)  
Paper 03: Speaking

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## Section A

Delivery of presentations remained an area of strength across this series, with a clear majority of candidates displaying evidence of careful preparation. As this is the candidate's first experience of the speaking test, it is most important that the candidate establishes a confident foundation upon which to proceed with the remainder of the test. There were nevertheless a number of cases of natural hesitation. This does not need to have a negative impact upon the mark for Presentation/Communication/Fluency, as it shows that there is some degree of spontaneity, even at this early stage. Spontaneity is particularly important during the ensuing discussion and this was usually in evidence.

In most instances, the discussion showed less development than the initial presentation which is understandable, as the discussion is an opportunity to offer spontaneous response. Candidates did however take full advantage of the fact that the discussion was on a topic of their choice. This meant that they were generally well placed to expand upon themes raised within the presentation with clear exemplification of views. The typically smooth transition from presentation to discussion was a clear indicator that interviewers were taking full account of the content of the presentation. Some more confident candidates were actually more at ease during the discussion than during the presentation, keen to engage in a totally spontaneous discussion of a topic in which they showed a great deal of interest and insight. Such candidates thrived on more original and quite unexpected questions, rising to the challenges skilfully posed by interviewers. This provided clear evidence of excellent preparation, coupled with interviewers' familiarity with the skill level of individual candidates. Indeed, most interviewers knew candidates very well and this placed candidates in a favourable position to succeed. There were a few cases where candidates, for whatever reason, did not seem to be familiar with the person interviewing them. This tended to lead to interviewers relying to a great extent on the sample questions which are provided and such practice did not support the spontaneity of the discussion. It is recommended that candidates meet their interviewer on a few occasions, in advance of the test being held. This allows interviewers to target candidates' strengths, pitching the questions at the appropriate level. It also serves to place candidates at their ease.

In Section A, candidates chose from a very broad range of images. Most of these images reflected the requirements of the specification and adhered to the three prescribed elements within the image: people, objects and interaction. Most candidates selected an image which was based upon their own experiences and this tended to elicit a clear presentation, followed by a free flowing discussion. A very small number of presentations seemed to be based upon a picture with which the candidate was not really familiar, as if it had been selected just prior to the examination. These pictures only rarely suited all three stages of questions within the discussion element.

Pictures tended to suit their purpose very well in cases where there was much happening within the scene. Where candidates had a connection to

people and events in the picture, the discussion tended to be more natural and confident, as it was based upon personal experiences. Some less confident candidates did however struggle in cases where there was too much happening within the picture, finding the exercise somewhat confusing.

The use of cartoon pictures was slightly less popular than in previous series, although this type of scene worked most effectively for more confident candidates. The most universally successful scenario involved a picture where family members were depicted at a happy occasion, such as a birthday party. Less confident candidates often performed relatively well where they were able to discuss familiar events, involving family and friends. This is extremely important, as a candidate who is reassured by the outcome of Section A will tend to feel less nervous in relation to the ensuing Section B.

Interviewers were very skilled in leading candidates towards more complex discussions, only escalating the level of demand where they were confident that the candidate would at least cope with such a level of interaction. Only a tiny number of candidates were faced with questions which were well in excess of their reach.

**During the discussion, it is a requirement that all three stages of questioning be included.** This involves questions relating directly to the picture, questions which go further and questions on the wider topic area.

Interviewers used a range of questioning techniques during the discussion. In a few instances, interviewers seemed not to have registered what the candidate had said during the presentation, as they then proceeded to elicit identical information during the discussion. The use of closed questions was thankfully rare. In most cases, interviewers knew their candidates well and were mindful to pitch questions at appropriate levels.

There were only a few cases this series where candidates were interrupted whilst responding. This does usually limit candidates' performance, such as in cases where they are not allowed to extend a response by the use of a subordinate clause. Where a question was misinterpreted by a candidate, it was excellent practice to divert the candidate towards the desired theme. This type of interruption was typically made in an unobtrusive manner and was in the best interests of the candidate.

## **Section B**

Sample Assessment Materials (SAMS) are available to interviewers who are unfamiliar with the specification. These offer types of questions which may be asked of candidates, although these examples are only intended to serve as a guide. It is not usually helpful to the candidate if SAMS materials are adhered to very rigidly. A small number of interviewers did however adhere rather closely to this published list. These questions may however be helpful for interviewers who have only just met the candidates. Recordings typically

included a range of suitable question types, allowing candidates to convey their optimal range of structures and vocabulary.

Candidates were given access to a range of question types across conversations B1 and B2. Eliciting optimal performance from less confident candidates requires a great deal of skill from interviewers and such excellent practice is becoming the norm. This had a hugely positive impact upon many such performances, hesitation being handled with great empathy and sensitivity.

### **Conduct of Examination**

A significant majority of interviewers adhered to the requirements on timings, thus allowing candidates to access the time window available for each component.

In section A, there were some centres where most presentations lasted for between ten and thirty seconds, as opposed to the maximum one minute. In one or two instances, a three minute presentation was followed by a one minute discussion. Discussions were sometimes limited to approximately two minutes, as opposed to the maximum of three minutes. For both the presentation and discussion, there were a number of instances where the maximum time limit was exceeded.

In Section B, each conversation should last for about three minutes. In several instances, Conversation 1 was very brief, meaning that candidates were not able to access the full range of marks. Where Conversation 1 is too short, this cannot be compensated by allowing the Conversation 2 to last more than three minutes.

Utterances which take place beyond the prescribed limits during any element of the speaking test cannot be rewarded, as each element is timed independently.

Interviewers were usually mindful to denote a clear transition between the two conversations. Most responses were successful in purpose, with interviewers displaying a genuine interest. Candidates were keen to elaborate upon their experiences. Unpredictable questions tended to elicit original and generally impressive responses, allowing for further development.

The procedures concerning topic coverage were followed, in most instances. There were however several cases where more than one conversation/discussion (in either section A or B) related to the same topic area. **Each topic area can only be covered once in any of the three parts of conversation – intentionally or unintentionally.**

## **Administrative Matters**

Centres continued to offer an excellent standard of administration, with only rare exceptions. This excellent practice was greatly appreciated and facilitated the overall assessment process.

USBs/CDs were correctly labelled in most cases. Documentation was generally complete, but some centres omitted to include the pictures/photographs relating to Section A. These should be attached to the Candidate cover forms. Sub-topic areas should be indicated on the Candidate cover sheet. New centres are advised that the current Specification offers guidance on pages 44-45.

Centres are kindly asked to verify recording quality, especially following the first recording of each session and to check that CDs/USBs are not faulty. Nearly all interviewers were mindful to ensure that recordings were clearly audible. A small proportion of recordings were virtually inaudible, often due to obtrusive background noise. The interviewer could almost always be heard very clearly, but candidate utterances were occasionally very faint. The microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the candidate rather than the interviewer. Centres are to be thanked for attributing so much importance to clarity of recordings.

## **Grade boundaries**

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