



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
FRENCH
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2017

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Annual Statistical Report

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UNIT 1: SPEAKING

This is the first year of the new AS specification and WJEC has provided several forms of guidance to help centres prepare for the new demands. In addition to a programme of continuing professional development for teachers, the examination board has provided a detailed specification and a full set of sample assessment materials and mark schemes. There is also a detailed *Guidance for Teaching* document. Teachers and candidates need to be aware of the demands and expectations of the new test. The essential differences are that there is no personal element in this test and all remarks need to relate to France or a country or community where French is spoken.

The new demands can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Candidates in Wales undertake two tasks which are different in nature;
 - (i) an argument task- where they have to defend (or attack) a viewpoint on a sub-theme relating to France, French-speaking countries or communities
 - (ii) a discussion task containing a short reading passage.
- (b) The mark scheme for this unit has four assessment objectives and these now include AO2 (understanding of reading) and AO4 ('relevant' knowledge of France, French-speaking countries and communities).
- (c) The mark schemes are different for Card A, ("argument") and Card B, ("discussion"). They differ in the assessment objectives included as the argument card does not assess AO2 and in the "weighting" of AO4. Half the marks for card A are allocated to AO4.

Lack of appreciation of the characteristics of this specification can adversely affect candidate performance.

Card A (the "argument" card) on *Understanding the French-speaking world*

In the "argument" task, candidates must either speak in favour of or against the theme on the card. Candidates are allowed to choose beforehand between a card on the sub-theme *Regional culture and heritage in France, French-speaking countries and communities* or a card on *Literature, art, film and music in the French speaking world*, though candidates in some centres were not aware that they had this choice.

The majority of candidates chose *Regional culture and heritage in France, French-speaking countries and communities*, but often those choosing this option were unable to give relevant detailed knowledge about the chosen sub-theme. In many instances, examiners had to suggest ideas and possible arguments to the candidates.

Candidates who chose to speak about festivals, for example, could often just name festivals but could not explain its importance or relevance to a region. They often could not distinguish between international festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, national festivals such as *Le 14 juillet* and regional or local festivals. Candidates choosing *Literature, art, film and music* often had more detailed knowledge and arguments to defend their viewpoint.

To do well in this task, in addition to good-quality French, candidates need detailed relevant information about France, French-speaking countries or communities, the ability to present information using persuasive language and the debating skills to counter arguments.

Card B (the “discussion” card) on *Being a young person in French-speaking society*

The format of the second card is more familiar as the candidates are aware that they will be asked three questions. Candidates were generally happier undertaking this task than the “argument” task even though they found the length of the discussion demanding.

What is less familiar is the short reading text on the sub-theme. Candidates need to show that they understand the ideas in this text during their discussion with the examiner. In many instances, candidates made little or insufficient reference to the text even when guided to do so by the examiner. They did not show that they had understood the ideas in the text or their relevance to the set questions or their own discussion.

The discussion is focussed on being “a French person in French-speaking society”. The whole discussion must relate to France or a French-speaking country. Candidates must, therefore, be very careful when discussing what could be called “generic” topics about youth culture (e.g. smoking, drugs, alcohol, education, relationship with family,) to fully relate their comments to France, a French-speaking country or communities where French is spoken. Comparisons with UK or talking about their own personal experiences (unless they draw on personal experience of living in France etc.) are not relevant.

All AS French orals using the new specification are conducted by the exam board's own visiting examiners and WJEC wishes to thank centres for welcoming these examiners. Consortia arrangements were useful in reducing the number of centre visits. Centres must, however, be prepared to accept visiting examiners at any time during the oral examination assessment window.

In many centres the arrangements were good, but a few centres did not realise that a supervisor was required in the preparation room for the “new” AS oral test (and will be needed for next year’s “new” A level (Unit 3) test.

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**UNIT 2: LISTENING, READING, TRANSLATION AND CRITICAL RESPONSE IN
WRITING**

Detailed answers to questions 1-6 are given in the published mark scheme as well as possible correct alternative answers.

Candidates understood the demands of the paper and the mechanics of the tasks. Most questions were attempted with varying degrees of success and few gaps were left. Candidates who had prepared well for the style of questions and had good knowledge of the grammar showed the ability to manipulate the language accurately using a range of lexis and structure.

Q1 Almost all candidates found this question accessible, and 6 or 7 out of 8 was the usual score. Errors were on Q4 where candidates confused *écouter* and *chanter* and Q6 where candidates chose *des plats de toute la France*.

Q2 Task mostly completed well however some candidates still tick the “vrai” box and then write a correction. Similarly, some tick the “faux” box and offer no correction. Most candidates gained a high mark (8+) on this exercise and usually identified the correct sentences. It was, however, the quality of the French that lost them the marks where they corrected the sentences, usually with incorrect verb forms :

- (a) Completed well as a rule however some candidates confused *étudiants* and *étudiant*. Better candidates were able to manipulate the statement successfully.
- (b) Completed well by a number of candidates; some did not infer the expected answer.
- (c) Completed well by most candidates.
- (d) Completed fairly well; a number of candidates confused *diplômes* and *diplômés*.
- (e) Completed well by the majority of candidates.
- (f) A number of candidates answered *en équipe* or *6 à 9 mois*; proved to be the most challenging question.
- (g) Completed fairly well however some candidates only negated the statement or wrote the incorrect salary.
- (h) Completed fairly well; the figure proved problematic.
- (i) Completed well.
- (j) This proved difficult for some candidates; a number of candidates wrote what they heard with varying degrees of accuracy.

Q3 Task completed well. Some candidates made mistakes copying correct answers e.g. dates, numbers copied incorrectly. Many candidates had four or five out of five for this question. The mistakes in sentence completion were:

- (a) choosing the wrong sentence part which made grammatical sense but was an incorrect choice between two options
- (b) choosing a sentence part which did not make any grammatical sense

Q4 Task completed well by some candidates. Candidates must consider the whole of the text presented to them to gain better knowledge in terms of context of the piece. This proved problematic in the translation as well. Both parts of the extract form a whole.

There was a wide variation in the marks individual candidates gained in this task. Answer 3) *lui* caused the most difficulty. A number of candidates did not know the meaning of answer 2) *debout*.

Q5 The overall accuracy of this question was fairly pleasing. Some candidates were able to score fairly well here as they were careful to transfer the meaning correctly and idiomatically. Translation of tenses was an issue for a number of candidates.

Frequent errors included:

- *pièce* translated as in one piece/part/as one...
- *fenêtre* left out/translated as feast/curtain/door...
- *fiers* translated as fierce/strong
- *à la fois* was missed out by most candidates/translated as at times/at the time
- *petits-enfants* translated as small/little children by most candidates
- *tapis* omitted by a number of candidates
- *mari* translated as wife by around half of the candidates
- *sourit* translated incorrectly or left out by a number of candidates.

Q6 Centres need to be aware that two thirds of the mark awarded (24 out of 36) are awarded for accuracy of language and the remainder on knowledge of the film. The weighting of marks (36) for this question means that the essay is a very important component of this examination.

Candidates are given a certain amount of guidance on what their responses should contain in the questions set- but some ignored this completely or only partially followed the guidance. Many essays were long descriptions of the events in the film and did not address the question asked adequately. Where candidates write at greater length than specified, they often penalise themselves because the quality of the language deteriorates. Indeed, although candidates could narrate the events in the films, many lacked the language needed for introducing a topic, writing a "literary" body to the essay and summing up simply but effectively; arguments were not justified or supported sufficiently. Verb forms were a particular problem.

The best answers with the most accurate French were obviously topics that had been discussed or prepared in class. On occasion, however, extraneous information was introduced. Many answers did not select the required information or did so badly. Finally, a number of candidates did not specify which essay they were opting for.



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