



2012

Languages: French GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The quality and presentation of students in the 2012 French oral examination was generally impressive. It was evident that teachers and students were aware of the criteria used to assess the examination and how to prepare for each section.

The following are some general comments on student performance in the examination.

- Pronunciation – Poor pronunciation negatively affected many students' communication strategies and capacity to link with assessors. Some students communicated well despite poor pronunciation. Examples of poor pronunciation were with words that end in 'ier' (*en particulier, le monde entier* and *papier*) or the 'eu' that was often given an 'r' at the end (*un peu* became *peur*).
- Fast-speaking students do not always communicate better than students who speak more slowly and clearly. Speaking too slowly, however, can disrupt the intonation required to communicate effectively.
- Students are encouraged to advance the conversation, but should be aware that they must not dominate it.
- Some students had little to say unless they were prompted by questions from the assessors. The *VCE French Study Design* suggests that students be prepared to continue talking on the designated topics and not just give minimal answers. For example, if a student is asked to describe their family, instead of saying '*Ma famille consiste de quatre personnes, mes parents et mon petit frère*', they could give information about each member of the family, an anecdote about a recent incident, discuss how they get along with their parents and/or siblings, relationships and activities, not just lists.
- Many students gave in-depth answers on the various aspects of general conversation. These students were confident and able to use a good range of structures and vocabulary within a viable context.
- While students must learn material for the different sections of the oral examination, it is how well they internalise it to present in the examination that contributes to their success and is a mark of their linguistic aptitude. Students who present slabs of pre-learned material without regard to the specific question asked may not score well on Criterion 1, Communication.
- The subjects chosen for the Detailed Study should be related to French life and culture, and should be suited to each student. Some students did not have the linguistic ability or the maturity to cope with some topics. The topic chosen should allow the student to express some personal interest and be appropriate to their level of knowledge.
- Assessors may ask a range of questions for which students may not be as well prepared.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

The characteristics of a high-scoring performance included solid and sophisticated preparation of familiar conversation topics (such as family, studies and plans for the future). The use of anecdotes on various topics lends enjoyment, individuality and the potential for using a variety of structures and vocabulary, as well as the opportunity to use different tenses.

Criterion 1 – Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Most students communicated effectively but many stopped after giving only one or two sentences, requiring the assessors' constant support. Most students moved easily between topics and displayed a lively interest in communicating with the assessors.

Criterion 2 – Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Many students presented content that was of a very high standard.

Criterion 3 – Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Some students used poor sentence structures, omitted verbs or displayed only limited understanding of basic grammatical structures; the most notable errors were with tenses and agreements. There was often good use of the subjunctive, although some students overused it. Students' knowledge of the use of '*jouer à*', '*jouer de*' and '*faire de*' with activities was poor.



Section 2 – Discussion

It is important for students to remember that anything (resources, ideas, details, etc.) mentioned in the introduction may be discussed in the ensuing seven-minute conversation. Students should be very familiar with the information they give in the introduction as assessors are likely to ask questions about anything mentioned.

Criterion 1 – Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

There were many confident responses. The less successful students were often unable to elaborate on or defend their ideas. It is useful for students to prepare adequately by anticipating questions based on their introduction, and by practising answers, elaborating on their themes. This will allow them to build confidence and respond with something more than an extension or repetition of a basic response.

Criterion 2 – Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

The more successful students provided opinions that displayed their command of the topic effectively. However, for some students further ideas and detail were needed to explore topics more thoroughly.

Criterion 3 – Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Responses ranged from poor to very good. Many students used simple and predictable language and others used a good variety of structures. Many students found the formation of the *passé composé* difficult. Major errors this year included the use of verbs such as '*ouvrir*', '*découvrir*' and '*souffrir*'; most students did not know how to form past participles and treated them like regular IR verbs.

It is vital that students are well prepared for the examination, including its structure and what to expect from the assessors. Students are invited into the room by one of the assessors and asked to sit down. On the table they see papers and stationery, an MP3 recorder and a timer; they may hear beeps as the different machines are turned on or off. One of the assessors will ask, in French, for the student to say their student number in English (this number will be on the Examination Advice Slip that they take into the room with them, so it does not need to be memorised) and then the advice slip will be taken from them. The assessors then ask a question to start the Conversation, which lasts for approximately 7 minutes. At the end of that time, they will thank the student and say that the second section of the examination has begun. They will ask the student about their '*Etude Approfondie*' and the student will begin their one-minute introduction on the topic studied in class. Students should note that assessors will take notes during this time and will refer to them during the discussion. In the introduction the student should outline what they wish to talk about and direct the assessors to their topic, their main points and/or the resources they used in their research. After they finish the introduction, the assessors will ask questions and discuss about what the student has outlined. The discussion lasts for approximately 7 minutes. At the end of the 15-minute examination, the assessors will thank the students and escort them out of the room.

The following are some general comments on the Detailed Study.

- Some topics presented were not sufficiently detailed and did not reflect 15 hours of scheduled class time.
- Many students should have included more specific detail and opinions to give the discussion more substance.
- Some students were able to summarise their topic and make effective, even interesting, references to their resources. Many students made good use of excellent resources, often linking them and the topic to their own interests.
- The use of three resources should give students a deeper understanding of some topics. The use of only one or five or more resources may not be beneficial.
- There was a lack of depth and understanding of historical concepts in some topics. This often made it difficult for assessors to ask relevant questions. Students repeated information and had little material to discuss. Students and teachers should choose topics that provide the opportunity for depth of study and scope for students to present their opinions.
- The complexity of some topics for the Detailed Study challenged the less successful students and affected the language used. Often, sophisticated vocabulary and the grammatical structures needed to convey complexity in a topic were beyond them and they struggled in this section of the examination.
- Some students listed resources but were not familiar with them and others used resources that were not in French. Students are strongly advised to study resources in the target language.

Good topics

- targeted a student's own interests
- offered possibilities for a lot of questions

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- required analysis and offered the opportunity to take a stance on the topic
- often used films that provided a lot of discussion material.

Poor topics included those that

- were purely descriptive
- did not have any French or francophone component
- were too technical and did not allow average or weak students to extract meaningful opinions from them
- were superficial and did not provide students with ways to highlight their opinions
- only allowed students to 'present a topic' rather than engage in a discussion.

Visual supports were often used to good effect in the second part of the examination. The use of a visual support can facilitate the discussion and gives the student a focus. Students could select an appropriate image as part of their research and this would give them scope for discussion and comparisons.

Good resources included films, interviews, surveys, internet sites, pictures, photos, diagrams, poems, songs, magazine articles, newspapers, websites, témoignages, biographies, *reportages audio-visuel*, *rapport sur les chiffres*, radio and podcasts.