



Oral component

GENERAL INFORMATION

Generally, students in 2007 handled the difficult situation of an oral examination well and with a pleasing degree of enjoyment and engagement. The standard of French orals continues to be very high and many of the comments in this report reflect students' increasing ability to cope with the demands of an oral examination.

Students should think about their presentation at the oral examination. It is a formal situation, as evidenced by the use of *vous* throughout the examination, and it behoves students to dress in an appropriate manner. Chewing gum is also not only very informal and unpleasant to see when in such close proximity, but it sometimes prevents the student being understood.

Confidence (pretended or not), cheerfulness and a willingness to participate are very profound aspects of a good student's presentation. Elaboration of answers with opinions is very desirable and is assessed under 'carry the conversation forward'. Students should have personal ideas on their topics and show that they have reflected on what they have learned.

Assessors this year were particularly aware of students who had studied by rote learning. Although some students were able to learn a lot by heart and then present it in a modulated way to show their knowledge, others had prepared mini speeches and struggled to continue when assessors interrupted them to ask questions. Of course, it is a fine balance as students do need to prepare themselves for the oral examination and cannot expect to just 'wing it'.

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

Generally students were well prepared and communicated effectively. Students need to listen to the assessors' questions and respond to what is asked, not give a global, learned answer. Students who simply give short answers and then wait for more questions do not display adequate conversational skills and do not score highly on this criterion. Most students could answer fluently about their family, leisure activities and school. Some more difficult or challenging questions were handled well by many students.

Repair strategies were not much in evidence (the practice of some teachers to have their students make an error and then correct it is to be discouraged – it would be much better to have no errors at all). Students should learn to be more systematic in reflecting on what and how they are speaking.

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

Overall, students were well prepared at a basic informational level, and the content in their answers varied from ordinary and banal to interesting and complex. Some students were not able to express and substantiate their opinions or elaborate sufficiently. Sound preparation and rehearsal carries weaker students through the examination and is a good basis from which to challenge and extend stronger students. Students need to study and prepare for a variety of questions, as their unrehearsed responses often lacked conviction.

Criterion 3 – Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

This criterion was often the one on which students scored the lowest. There was often little evidence of strong grammar and vocabulary, and problems with gender, tense (some students' use of even the perfect and imperfect tenses was not good), verb conjugations and linking words were common, though not universal. Basic errors such as using *être* for age were still quite common. It is good to practise to use the *vous* form when responding to questions couched with *vous*.

Very few students use the wrong register; therefore, when considering this criterion, assessors often concentrate on the importance of vocabulary. Original vocabulary is always appreciated; that is, vocabulary that is different and unusual, not creative! Many questions do incorporate vocabulary learned from Year 7 onwards, so it is important to encourage students to learn more sophisticated vocabulary and idiomatic expressions to enhance their communication.

Given that this is a stressful examination, most students were quite accurate with grammar (see above about rote learning). Students need to be well practised in using any specialised vocabulary and expressions that are required for their Detailed Study.



Criterion 4 – Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Students generally performed better on this criterion in the Discussion than the Conversation, perhaps because they had had a chance to ‘warm up’. Generally good communication skills were shown and students had practised their introductions well. However, recitation rather than conversational participation was a common feature of many students’ Discussions this year. The use of visual aids is to be encouraged, as they can create a good impression by suggesting thorough preparation and allowing specific focus on aspects of the topic that the student wishes to highlight.

Criterion 5 – Clarity of expression

In some cases, students’ introductions were repetitive when exactly the same topic was used by all students in a class (sometimes up to 20 students). Topics need to allow depth to be brought into the discussion. Some students would benefit from drawing more information from texts to enhance their answers. Using their own opinions also creates many possibilities for enhancing and extending the discussions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Assessors overall had a good impression of students in the Conversation section. Students were usually responsive and ready to participate fully in the conversation.

Section 2 – Discussion

There often seemed to be a lack of depth in the discussions of the Detailed Study this year. Visual aids that are taken in to support the Discussion can be very useful if carefully chosen, prepared and practised with. They help to focus the discussion, especially if discussing a painting or other visual reference. The use of such resources may help students achieve more depth in their discussions

The use of stereotypes in some of the topics for the Detailed Study was often not appropriate or well thought out. Students who make statements such as ‘The French are racist’ need to justify this with research and also be prepared to discuss whether Australians could also be said to be racist.

As this section should be a discussion about French life and culture, teachers and students should attempt to choose topics that reflect more typical French ideas and values. For example, the topic of deforestation offers no insight into French culture. Topics of racism need to be properly contextualised. Of course, the best students were able to handle such difficulties with aplomb and brought depth, breadth and understanding to their topics. They offered opinions and ideas beyond the merely informative, even discussing their personal responses to the topics studied. Weaker students need to learn how to offer ideas and opinions on their topic. The mere conveying of information does not support an eight-minute discussion. Teachers and students should find topics that are conducive to a discussion and allow enough scope for ideas and opinions.

The one-minute introduction of the Detailed Study is the student’s chance to tell assessors what they have prepared and what they wish to discuss. It should be delivered at a measured pace to allow assessors to note down (if necessary) the salient points for discussion and what they might ask about.

Although the study design does not stipulate that the texts should be mentioned in the introduction, students should be prepared to talk about the resources they have used during the discussion. If they do not prepare the texts at all, they place themselves at a disadvantage. Discussion of the texts, their merits and their specific strengths or weaknesses can make for a lively and extended discussion.

Texts and other resources, when cited, need to contribute to the topic. Sometimes students mentioned resources that did not actually relate to the topic they had outlined. In larger groups, teachers might consider using some key or core texts, and have students find other resources, in French, to supplement their own specific sub-topic. Texts that link both to the theme and to each other help students to have a more coherent view of their topic. Students should also use texts in French, not in English, as this allows them to learn vital vocabulary on which to build their discussion.

The content of the Detailed Study should reflect 15 hours of scheduled class time. Reading a poem, watching a film and reading one Internet article does not give students enough vocabulary or opportunity to prepare for seven minutes of discussion. As noted above, students should be able to discuss the structure and merit of their resources, how they link to each other, which one(s) they preferred and why or how they helped them to come to a thorough understanding of the topic.



If students are not prepared to answer questions on or talk about anything they have mentioned in their introduction, then they should not say it. Students who mention something in the introduction, yet reply with 'I didn't do much on that' when questioned about it place too much reliance on the assessors' ability to carry the discussion. Criterion 1 assesses the **student's** ability to maintain and advance the exchange – this involves answering all questions and adding to their response. 'We didn't do much on that, but I did look at...' would be a much more effective way of interacting. It is important to set up the parameters of a topic and to guide the assessors to the preferred areas of analysis.

Some generally well prepared and researched topics this year included:

- *la nouvelle vague des années 60*
- *les problèmes sociaux des banlieues*
- *l'énergie nucléaire*
- *la solidarité: MSF et d'autres organisations caritatives*
- *la contestation à travers les siècles en France.*

Below are some examples of topics that did not generally allow students to perform well. Such topics generally resulted in students giving an informative presentation rather than getting involved in a discussion.

- *la pollution de l'atmosphère*
- *l'environnement*
- *la Provence and Paris, ville culturelle or ville touristique*

The following topics had scope for strong students to perform very well; however, weaker students who discussed these topics often performed very poorly. Students' abilities should be taken into account when selecting a topic for Detailed Study.

- *Québec*
- *femmes françaises*
- *la 2^{ème} Guerre Mondiale*
- *l'enfance selon les écrivains français*
- *la Révolution Française*
- *les immigrés*

Written component

GENERAL INFORMATION

Overall, students in 2007 found the French examination testing, especially Section 1. However the majority coped well with the two hour examination and were able to complete Section 3 (Writing in French) and appeared to have time to proofread their work. Most questions were attempted and fewer students answered in the wrong language. The most successful students performed at a consistently high level in the listening, reading and writing sections of the examination, demonstrating an excellent knowledge and command of all aspects of French.

Students are advised to write more legibly. Responses completed in pen are generally clearer and easier to read. Crossing out neatly and re-writing is better than going over an answer, which can result in the answer being unclear. Punctuation is also important, as it can change the meaning of a sentence.

It is not advisable for students to rewrite whole answers, especially in Section 3. There is not enough time for this.

Common mistakes that should be avoided when writing in French include:

- incorrect position of adjectives and adverbs
- agreements of adjectives and past participles
- verb endings
- expressions of quantity followed by *des* instead of *de*.

Another common fault was students' inability to change the given interrogative form to a corresponding introductory statement. Hence answers often began:

- *les clients se sentent-ils traités comme des rois parce que...*
- *cet avion a de surprenant et de contradictoire est...*



It was pleasing to see some excellent use of the subjunctive, the present/participle/gerund, relative clauses and other more complex structures. The use of the past historic, although appreciated, was not always successful.

Students are advised to use the reading time wisely to prepare for the examination. They should read the questions in Section 1 to help anticipate the content and context of the listening passages, and to be aware of the exact information they need to listen for. Students should then read the Section 2 reading passages and anticipate which words they might need to check in a dictionary and also try to get an understanding of the passage as a whole before they concentrate on individual sections, phrases or words. Checking the questions may in fact give a guide to unknown vocabulary without having to look up the word at all. Students should also read through the five topics in Section 3 and make a preliminary choice of the writing task to be attempted. Changing tasks midway through a Section 3 response is not a good idea, as students may then run out of time and not complete their answers.

Throughout the examination it is vital that students read the whole question, as questions may contain two parts. Even the best students lose marks when an otherwise excellently written response fails to address part of the question.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Students were asked to show their capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. The number of marks available for each question indicated the number of points or responses required.

Generally the order of questions corresponded to the order in which information was presented in the listening passages; however, students should be aware that some questions related to the passage as a whole and some information may have been found in different places in the passage.

Although prior knowledge may have helped students to understand a passage better, answers needed to be based only on the material given in the text.

Multiple-choice questions were included (Questions 6 and 7). Most students correctly answered Question 6 and over half gave the correct response to Question 7. Some students lost marks by ticking two boxes.

Text 1

Question 1

An iPod MP3, because (two of):

- it is very compact
- it has a colour screen
- it only costs 79.90 euros.

Question 2

Both of:

- they are too expensive
- Eric tends to lose everything.

Question 3

Any one of:

- the store is expecting new stock/is out of stock
- it is not yet available
- it may not be delivered on time (for her son's birthday).

Question 4

Any two of:

- wonderful graphics
- spectacular animations
- very high/good picture quality
- it's a technological marvel.

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Question 5

Both of:

- she does not want her son to be glued/stuck to a screen/monitor for hours
- she prefers to buy him a (mountain/exercise) bike/she prefers him to exercise.

Text 2

Question 6

B. which encourages good eating habits

Question 7

D. Ali Baba

Question 8

Any three of:

- offers a wide range of products
- produce is very fresh
- he thinks their products are the best
- counter-balances the fast food industry
- Rungis supplies millions of/30 million consumers
- attracts the most famous restaurateurs/wholesalers
- size/biggest market/223 hectares.

Part B – Answer in French

Text 3

This section proved to be the most challenging for students. However, the more able students understood the content of the passage and conveyed the required information in excellent French.

In this section students were assessed according to the following two criteria:

- the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts (10 marks)
- the capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately (five marks).

Individual marks are not given for each question. Students should be aware that 10 marks are allocated to comprehension of the passage and should use the reading time to ascertain where the 10 marks could be expected. Marks were also lost for not answering in full sentences. Students were also expected to rephrase information, not just to copy passages from the text.

Students had problems with the following words: *bonheur* and *bonne heure*, and *bruyant* which was perceived as *brouillon* or *brillant*. Some students also tried to draw from prior knowledge, but often failed to answer appropriately.

Question 9

Any two of:

- *il a dû faire face au froid/affronter le froid/se soumettre au froid (du nord canadien)*
- *il a dû affronter les températures du Sahara/le Sahara/la chaleur/les températures extrêmes*
- *il a dû atterrir dans dix aéroports différents.*

Question 10

In this question, students had to contrast two characteristics. The following points were required.

- *Malgré sa taille/ses quatre turboréacteurs/deux ponts/vingt-deux roues, il est très léger.*
- *Malgré sa taille il est très léger et gracieux/c'est un géant mais il est très léger.*
- *Malgré sa légèreté, il peut transporter jusqu'à 880 passagers.*

Question 11

All of:

- *il est bruyant/il fait du bruit*
- *il est polluant/il pollue/il est mauvais pour l'environnement*
- *il a du retard/il n'est pas terminé à temps/il a un an de retard.*

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Question 12

Either of:

- *le huit est un chiffre porte-bonheur en Asie/C'est un chiffre/numéro populaire en Asie*
- *il y a le chiffre/numéro huit dans son nom.*

The first response above provided more information and was therefore awarded more marks than the second example.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

In order to prepare for this section students should:

- read intensively in French
- practise identifying the main points and ideas in passages
- familiarise themselves with their dictionaries
- avoid excessive use of dictionaries
- learn to rephrase
- read a passage to the end to try to get the general gist before looking up words.

Part A – Answer in English

Students were again asked to show their understanding of general and specific aspects of the texts read. All questions were answered equally well

No credit was given for confusing the answers to Question 13 and Question 14.

Text 4

Question 13

Both of:

- World War II
- the Treaty of Maestricht.

Question 14

Both of:

- the Soviet Block/Soviet Union
- the American trade market (not America).

Some students confused *le marché* with *la marche* and wrote about *la marche américaine*.

Question 15

This question required students to find information from throughout the text.

Advantages (any six of):

- common passport/freedom to move
- common currency
- common economic policy
- common flag
- common security policy
- common political stance
- common agricultural policy/agriculture
- being part of a large group of consumers
- free circulation of goods.

Disadvantages (all of):

- difficulty of preserving individual culture
- difficulty of preserving individual language
- difficulty of preserving individual economy
- difficulty of reaching unanimous decisions
- difficulty in reaching quick decisions
- not having a clear identity.

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Question 16

Any two of:

- 27 member countries
- 450 million people
- has grown from six countries
- the recent addition of Bulgaria and Romania.

Question 17

Any two of:

- wonders what a Europe of 27 countries represents
- wonders whether a united Europe really exists
- states that it is difficult to define a European identity
- expressions such as 'difficult', 'one may wonder', 'can one speak of'
- use of the title 'myth or reality'.

Part B – Answer in French

In this section students were asked to show their capacity to:

- understand general and specific aspects of the text
- convey information accurately and appropriately in French.

Each criterion was worth five marks.

Answers had to be in full sentences, and students were also required to make some deductions. Answers to Question 20 had to be given in the first person singular *je*, or *on*, which required them to rephrase information.

Most students had little difficulty in selecting the relevant points required for their answers. Excellent students presented cohesive answers in their own words with ideas that were appropriately sequenced and joined by suitable connectives. Less able students tended to quote chunks of text in the hope that the correct answer would be somewhere in the sentences they copied. This often resulted in use of the wrong syntax.

Text 5

Question 18

Both of:

- *la vallée de la Loire compte de très beaux châteaux*
- *elle a une grande richesse historique/elle est riche en histoire/elle contient beaucoup de sites/trésors historiques.*

Question 19

Any four of:

- *il est entouré d'une forêt dense/mystérieuse/presque impénétrable*
- *il a inspiré Charles Perrault*
- *il a inspiré Walt Disney*
- *c'est le château de la Belle au bois dormant*
- *c'est un décor de conte de fées/ce château est un joyau.*

Question 20

Any four of:

- *les clients peuvent porter des costumes d'époque*
- *ils ont des repas inspirés par les chefs de François Premier*
- *à l'hôtel on s'occupe des clients/des touristes/d'eux comme s'ils étaient un prince ou une princesse*
- *on leur offre un grand bal (avec sons et lumières)*
- *on peut/ils peuvent monter à cheval.*

Section 3 – Writing in French

In this section students are to show their ability to write an original text of 200–300 words in French, and are assessed on the following criteria:

- relevance, breath and depth

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- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary.

Each criterion is worth five marks.

This section was generally well done, with students writing some excellent responses. The five topics were attempted fairly equally, although Question 24, the diary entry, was slightly more popular. Some students went over the 200–300 word limit. The material studied for the Detailed Study was widely used, but often without connecting it well enough to the chosen topic. Students would be advised to carefully read their topic before launching into the task.

Most students were able to successfully sequence their writing but lost marks by not conforming to the characteristics of the various text types. These are listed on page 58 of the *French VCE Study Design* and students are expected to be familiar with them. Frequent errors were:

- stories without a title
- letters without an address, date or opening
- articles without a title or author's (fictional) name
- diary entries that began with *mon cher journal* and included a formal signing off sentence or a signature
- speeches without a form of address, some acknowledgement and mention of the purpose.

It is important that students observe the word limit. Students who wrote significantly less than 300 words, even within the word limit, usually disadvantaged themselves by inadequate depth and breath of ideas. Writing in excess of the word limit was not assessed.

Question 21

Students were asked to write an imaginative story that included:

- a title and a fictional name for the author
- a suitable layout with a conclusion
- an element of surprise.

Many students wrote interesting stories, with a twist at the end. Some used the old dream theme, meeting their favourite pop star, but did not always plan the story and sometimes rambled on too much.

Question 22

Students were asked to write a formal letter that included:

- a date, address, introduction, signing off and signature
- the purpose of the letter
- at least three reasons for reopening the swimming pool.

Many valid and interesting points were raised, such as that the swimming pool would provide work during the holidays for young people; is a venue for the family; is a meeting point for friends; would be good for business since it would attract people from out of town; and that sport is important and swimming helps fight obesity.

Not all students remembered to write a formal letter and to include the correct form of address, etc.

Question 23

Students were asked to write an informative article which needed to include

- a title
- a fictional name
- a date
- an introduction to the topic and a purpose
- an appropriate conclusion.

Most students were careful to address their article to both parents and students and concluded convincingly by encouraging school exchanges. Some were too verbose and went over the word limit; in these cases a more structured plan would have been advisable.

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Good points that were raised included the differences in school life and family life; homesickness; the desire to go overseas again; and the bonding with host brothers and sisters. Students who had been on an exchange drew from their own experience but did not always use their material appropriately to fit the topic.

Question 24

Students were asked to write a diary entry, which needed to have the correct structure and show feelings and concerns. One single entry was required – writing multiple entries was not a good idea, nor was writing their diary entry a few days later, since the topic was in the present and asked for reflections during that first weekend.

Many students wrote successfully about feeling lonely, missing their family, being worried about not being able to pay the rent, having second thoughts, or being happy to be able to go out and to watch their favourite TV shows.

Question 25

Students were asked to write an evaluative speech that showed:

- positive and negative aspects of computers
- what influence computers have had on their life and on the wider world
- a suitable form of address, appropriate structure and a conclusion.

This question was aptly handled by more capable students. Some concluded their speech well by asking the audience if they had any questions.

Some students did not give examples from the wider world and relied only on their own world. Positive points included: helping with homework; emailing pen pals in France; emailing each other; and using the Internet. Negative points included: not doing enough sport; spending too much time in their rooms; chat rooms; and pornography.