

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE

GCE French (8190/9190)

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<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
Unit 6441	1
Unit 6442	9
Unit 6443	13
Unit 6444/01	23
Grade Boundaries	31

Unit 1 (6441)

Just over 2000 candidates sat this paper. As in the June 2006 session, centres were provided with both cassettes and compact discs, which contained the usual four passages, whose total running time was a little less than 5 minutes. Both the style of the paper and time allocation were familiar, and the vast majority of candidates attempted all parts, with varying degrees of success. The range of scores elicited was wide, differentiating at both ends of the range of performance. The paper was marked using exactly the same principles as in recent sessions, and its contents followed a familiar pattern. Passage 1, relating to Q1, was a multiple choice exercise worth 4 marks, concerning an arts festival in Libourne, seeking straightforward, factual information from the passage. Passage 2, about the state-owned printing works, was bisected: Q2, based on the first section, was a gap-filling exercise worth 4 marks, where candidates selected their response from a pool of items, and Q3, worth 6 marks, required the production of brief responses in French. Q4, where 12 marks were available, requiring responses in French, and Q5, stimulating two free responses of up to 40 words and 8 marks each, were based on Passage 3, concerning scientific research in the improvement of Olympic athletes' performances. Q5(a) required candidates to give an opinion on the scientific research described in the passage, while Q5(b) was more general, and sought a personal opinion on the role of commercial pressure in sport. Passage 4, a description of Azouz Begag's journey to his father's homeland, formed the basis for Q6, the English summary, for which 8 marks were available and where all parts were to be answered in no more than a total of 60 words.

Assessment Principles

In Q1 and Q2, only 0 or 1 could be scored for each part. In Q2, if the response selected was not wholly correctly transcribed, but could clearly not be confused with another item from the pool offered, it earned the mark. Thus *un tier* gained 1 mark. As in many previous sessions for this Unit, examiners assessed responses in Q4 and Q6 in the order that elements were presented by the candidates, and considered no more elements than the number of marks available. For instance, in a one mark question, only the first element offered gained credit. Repeating or re-working the question, or preambles to an acceptable response, did not count as elements in the response. While harmless additions did not cause credit to be withheld, vitiation through incorrect additions did. Q5(a) and Q5(b) were considered as separate entities, save in the instances of wholesale repetition which could not gain full credit twice, and details offered in one were not considered to vitiate the other. In either case, candidates needed to gain at least 1 mark for Content to access any marks at all for Language, and *vice versa*. The practice of enforcing word limits in Q5 and Q6 was unchanged: in Q5, examiners read no further than to the end of the sense group after 40 words in either response, where *il y a* and its variants count as a single word. In Q6 examiners considered the first 60 words only, since for this summary exercise whole sentences were not required to gain credit.

Candidates' responses

Question 1

This question, seeking simple, factual information in a non-verbal exercise, provided many candidates with a solid start, and scores of 3 or 4 were common. In (a), where accurate understanding of numbers was tested, confusion between 40 and 14 was the most frequent error. In (b), many candidates earned the mark, understanding that distracters (i) and (iii) contained *exclusivement*, so were probably incorrect on that indicator alone. (c) was also well answered, and understanding of the passage's context would almost certainly preclude (i). (d) tested the synonymy of *seulement* and *uniquement* and was generally accessible to candidates. Confusion between where the events were staged and where the spectators could come from might have accounted for the erroneous choice of (i) by a significant number of candidates.

Question 2

Candidates are perhaps becoming increasingly adept at using the grammatical context of the sought cloze response to guide their response; where an incorrect item was selected, it was, at least, grammatically plausible. Hence in (a), the commonest error was to choose *la moitié* in place of *un tiers*, since many candidates deduced that a quantity was required. (b) was generally well answered, perhaps given that in the context of the passage, increased nationalisation was improbable. However, given grammatical considerations, *nationaliser* was the most frequent incorrect response. Therefore, a combination of understanding the passage as a whole, and grammatical awareness and knowledge fostered the best scores in Q2. (c) was also a source of good scoring, given that observant candidates saw that only a masculine singular noun would do. Similarly (d) was most readily accessed by candidates applying grammatical knowledge. The English spelling *equipments* was tolerated, given that it was a transcription error from the pool of items.

Question 3

This question was based on the second section of the passage concerning the state-operated printing press. In several parts, candidates appeared to comprehend correctly, but proceeded to write in English, offer more elements than there were marks available, or transcribed directly, but obliquely, from the passage. None of these sorts of response scored. The most successful responses were often concise, or even laconic. Where 1 mark is available, only one piece of information is needed, and candidates who offered more sometimes ran out of elements or vitiating. For instance in Q3(c), *l'état* was correct, but *l'état, les employés* is self-contradictory. Where a lift was attempted, candidates did not always take care that it made sense.

Q3(a)

qui was intended to be a simple interrogative pronoun, but a notable proportion of candidates misunderstood it as *où* and responded with *un bâtiment immense. person(s)* was rejected as an English spelling, as was *autorise*, but *aut(h)orisé(e)(s)* was treated as a faulty attempt at a French form, and tolerated.

Q3(b)

This part was conceived as straightforward, and yielded lower scores than anticipated given that many candidates responded with English spellings: *passport(s)* or *permit(s)*, or due to the order of element rule: *passport, permit, feuilles d'impôt, les questions du bac*. In this example, had the third and fourth elements been the first and second, 2 marks would have been gained. Recognisable, if not wholly correct attempts at *feuilles d'impôt*, scored.

Q3(c)

A modest number of candidates understood *état* and scored, with or without including the accent. Many others heard the correct section of the passage, but transcribed incomprehensibly: *l'ETA, leta, litre*. Inferences which were plausible were accepted: *le gouvernement*. However, misunderstanding of the question, perhaps of *propriétaire*, *abounded*, and *vendre les locaux* or *vendre le matériel* were frequently offered.

Q3(d)

The main difficulty for candidates appeared to be converting the verb *disparaître* or *fermer* into a noun, resulting in *le disparaître* or *le fermer* which gained no marks. Many candidates, as in (c), correctly identified the relevant section of the passage, but transcribed without checking the sense of their rendition: *devoir disparaître l'entreprise* and *d'avoir disparaître l'entreprise* were frequent. The correctly transcribed lift *de voir disparaître l'entreprise* was a direct response to the question, and scored. The English spelling *enterprise* caused credit to be lost in some cases.

Q3(e)

This was among the most successful parts of Q3. Since the passage did not make explicit whether the employees sought new employment in the printing industry, state or private owned, or in a completely different area, all of these suggestions scored: *un emploi dans le privé, un emploi dans l'imprimerie publique, un différent emploi, un travail* or even *un boulot* were acceptable equivalents of *un emploi*. *une solution* or *un avenir* were more abstract, but equally acceptable responses. *à titre personnel* did not have to be included to score, and if garbled but harmless did not cause the mark to be lost. However *un titre personnel* was relatively common as a response, and did not score. Lifts were quite frequent, but did not address the question directly so did not gain credit either: *il est difficile de trouver une solution à titre personnel*.

Question 4

There were a number of impressively comprehensive yet concise responses which suggest that the question was well within the grasp of some candidates. In general terms, candidates displayed a better level of comprehension than of French expression, and provided that the response communicated, it gained credit. The concept of the scientific approach to Olympic performance rather than of the sports *per se* challenged the weaker candidates in particular. Thus parts which were especially successful related very closely to the General Topic Areas: (d) required an example of a sport, (f) the concept of advertising. Where English homophones were sought, as in (b) and (c), candidates also tended to fare well. Inaccurate transcription cost candidates dearly in several parts, such as (h), where *ba(i)sse* vitiated *base*, or in (i), where *rettraper* was often offered for *rattraper*.

Q4(a)

This part was not especially well answered, since many candidates failed to target *les performances* or *les sportifs*. *Ils observent (t.c.)* or *Ils observent les jeux* were both unsuccessful as they did not focus on the performance of competitors and might apply to more general observations about the conduct of the Olympics. A lift from the first line of the passage was not uncommon, but was untargeted, so did not score.

Q4(b)

This was among the most successful parts of Q4, assisted by the acceptance of recognisable if incorrect spellings of *améliorer*. Candidates gained the mark provided that they conveyed the sense of an improvement, including if no verb was used: *meilleurs résultats, améliorer les performances, or les plus bons techniques*. Where

there was no comparison, *les bons résultats*, credit was withheld. *result(e)s*, an English spelling, was not acceptable. A lift alluding to *rapprocher les sports et les scientifiques* was a means of achieving the aim, rather than the aim itself, so was not successful.

Q4(c)

The markscheme credited misspellings such as *laboratoire* or *labaratoire*, and did not insist upon references to *biomécanique* or *aérodynamique*, making the 1 mark accessible to many candidates. Where there was an attempt to further qualify the laboratory, it frequently was incomprehensible, but was treated as a harmless addition. The English spelling *laboratory* was rejected, and an insufficient number of syllables was the most encountered cause of error: *labatoire. scientifique (t.c.)* was accepted, since this targeted the type of establishment accurately.

Q4(d)

Many candidates gained the 1 mark on offer, selecting most frequently *nager*, although other sports were given; some successfully, others without reference to the passage. Recognisable variants and verb forms of *nager* helped credit to be gained: *natation*, *nagé* or *nage*. Incorrect transcriptions or lifting of the competitors rather than the sports, abounded: *neiger*, *nageurs*, *handballeurs*. The bold rubric was intended to guide candidates to selecting a sport.

Q4(e)

Of the two elements required, the first, concerning improved performance, was far more frequently conveyed than the second, relating to the absence of drug taking to achieve this improvement. The 2 marks were awarded discretely, so *améliorer les performances sans le druger* earned the first mark, since the second element, although unrewardable, did not vitiate. Correct responses were often replications of Q4(b), and the same alternatives for *performances* were accepted. The focus was on general improvement. Therefore responses suggesting that one sport alone benefited gained no marks: *améliorer les performances des nageurs* or *il a un mouvement de bras différent. se doper*, with or without its reflexive pronoun, communicated *sans prendre les drogues* felicitously, but the second element was another example of candidates transcribing without understanding: *s'adoper* was not uncommon. The reflexive pronoun was not infrequently rendered as *ce doper*. Equally, while the accretion *improver* was widespread, it could not score as it has no French sense. 1 mark was withheld if a past tense was used, since the question targets the future benefit of Berton's work. Candidates alert to the tense of the question avoided losing the mark for this reason.

Q4(f)

Most candidates opted for citing the commercial pressures suffered by sportsmen and women. However, a small minority who successfully suggested that the pressure came from *soi-même. marques commerciales*, or equivalents, gained the allocated mark, including if the adjectival agreement was erroneous or absent, and where plausible alternatives for *marques*, such as *pression*, *raisons* or *entreprises* were offered. *commerciel* and *marc* were too wide of the mark or ambiguous, so forfeited the mark, as did the anglicised preceding adjective in *commerciales marques*.

Q4(g)

Some candidates attempted for a third time to gain credit with the response to Q4(b). However, in this part, as a heartening number of candidates realised, the focus has moved from the *performances*, and its alternatives, to the *équipements* conceived due to the scientific observations conducted. *équipements*, not the English *equipment(s)*, was adequately rendered by *produits*, but not the English *products*, and the past tense did not invalidate the response in this part.

Q4(h)

This 2 mark part proved elusive to many, most frequently due to *base* and *donnée(s)* being unfamiliar, and therefore examiners awarded the first mark which depended on the second element even where the second element was flawed, but recognisable: *ils ont une impressionnante base de donner*. Recognisable verb forms of *donner* did not score here, since a noun, not verb, was involved. *une grande baisse de données* was not infrequent, but vitiated. *une base de données* required an intensifier, since the size of gathered information was important in the response. References to *haute technologie*, unless a preamble, did not score, since the focus was incorrect.

Q4(i)

ratrapper was key to responding successfully: *les ratrapper* gained 2 marks. Conversely *rettrapper les Américains et les Australiens* forfeited both marks, since it carried no sense. *ils vont gagner* was also unsuccessful, since there was no comparison with American or Australian performances. However, comparison was felicitously communicated in a variety of ways: *devenir meilleur par rapport à eux* or *de regagner la tête*. A minority of successful candidates responded from a slightly different angle, alluding to the scientific race to improve performance rather than the performance itself: *ils veulent gagner cette course*.

Question 5

The average combined score for Q5(a) and Q5(b) was around 9 marks, suggesting that scores of 2 and 3 were frequent, but the full 8 marks for either or both parts were awarded to an encouraging number of candidates. It is essential for candidates to respond to all elements of the question: the highest scores in (a) could only be obtained by candidates who referred to *ces recherches*, rather than to scientific research generally. The least successful responses failed to earn any credit, as they did not allude, even tangentially, to the research described in the passage. In (b), candidates were invited to give their own opinion on the impact of commercial pressure in sport. However, whilst the best answers were broad and sometimes considered both sides of the argument, many were limited to a consideration of pressure generally, or to a specific sport, most commonly football. Candidates almost uniformly attempted both parts of the question, although with sometimes starkly differing outcomes, and generally respected the word limit. There was evidence of candidates having been trained to include certain constructions, such as a subjunctive example or expressions of opinion. These were often used to fine effect, but on occasion led to verbose and artificial responses which were so crowded with apparently pre-learned constructions that meaningful content was almost precluded.

Q5(a)

In the best responses, candidates referred to the impact of the research on performance, either positive or negative, and offered further insight: suggesting that French competitors could now seek to beat Americans and Australians, that technique would be improved, or that too much science squeezes out sportsmanship and the pleasure of participation. An opinion was sought, and references to elements from the passage, however accurate, could not score unless accompanied by some kind of judgement, if only implicit. Responses gaining the full 4 content marks were sometimes, but not invariably, nuanced. The better candidates were able to draw on information from Q4(e): *Je pense que c'est une bonne chose que les sportifs performant mieux sans se dopper*. Examiners gave the widest possible latitude in considering whether *ces recherches* rather than *les recherches* (in general) were being discussed. In the instances where a glancing reference was made to the passage, divergent Content and Language

marks were commonplace. Basic linguistic errors marred even generally sound responses: *ses recherches sont important*, or *je pense que il sont essential*. Weaker candidates, eager to include some opinion, were not careful to avoid vitiation: *Ces recherches sont un bon chose...Cependant je ne me range pas de ce coté*. It could be that where candidates had not understood the passage well, they moved onto other areas, such as the value of medical research in curing diseases. Great credit could not be awarded for such responses, since their relevance to the question was somewhat marginal. Simple but accurate responses, referring to the passage and offering straightforward further insight, gained respectable scores.

Q5(b)

Re-working of (a) was evident in a few responses, but candidates did not wholly succeed, unless it was re-focused towards (b). Linking commercial pressure with the way in which scientific observations could be exploited for commercial gain was certainly creditworthy. The majority of candidates did not refer to the passage in (b), which can be entirely legitimate. However, failure to consider *commerciales* as opposed to *la pression (t.c.)* meant that scores were limited to 2 marks for content. Pressure due to fitness problems, national team selection and expectations were all treated with varying degrees of success, but only the better candidates linked these issues into the role of business considerations in sport: *Si un sportif est malade il risque de perdre ses sponsors, et sa valeur commerciale tombe*. Candidates on the whole identified the ills which beset contemporary sports, but only accessed higher scores where they drew inferences which tied in with the question. A noteworthy minority answered by refuting the question, stating that sports are still practised by many for pleasure or health, but while this gained some credit, it did not take account of the fact that probably only higher level performance is commercially affected.

Question 6

Responses in French are now very rare, and the English summary furnished excellent marks to a small number of candidates. Of those who fared less well, there was frequent confusion between which of the Begags, whether the author or his father, was involved; and an ambiguous use of *he* was not uncommon. Where candidates translated sections without targeting the question, the word limit was sometimes exceeded before parts (d) and (e) could be considered. (e) may have been the most productive part, worth 2 marks, had it not frequently fallen, partially or wholly, beyond the 60th word.

Q6(a)

A number of candidates omitted Begag's father's country of origin, so proffered incomplete responses: *he left his home village* or *he left his Arab homeland*. Others wrote the French *Algérie* or even *Nigérie*, so had 1 mark withheld. Confusion between the generations cost candidates 1 mark if they used the present tense.

Q6(b)

This part was generally not well done, given frequent misunderstanding of whose journey was being recounted. Many candidates thought that Begag's book described his father's journey, rather than the author Begag's own, and wrote erroneously: *to recount his journey from Algeria to France*, when the converse direction was needed. Examiners insisted on reference to his father's birthplace, since: *To recount his journey (t.c.)* conveys neither the chief motivation for the journey nor the book. *to tell* or *to describe* were acceptable alternatives for the verb. *West Algeria* vitiated otherwise correct responses, since *East Algeria* was mentioned in the passage.

Q6(c)

The 2 marks were awarded discretely where possible, the first being available for the notion of a long wait, the second for the return to his home village. *town* for *village* was not uncommon, despite the basic vocabulary item *ville* causing the confusion. References to his father's wish to be buried in his home village were harmless additions, so the distinction between returning to die, or returning his body to be buried in his home village did not affect scores. *return to native village* or equivalents were essential, rather than *return to Algeria*, since the latter was too general. A future tense invalidated 1 mark, but a conditional tense was tolerated.

Q6(d)

This part was well answered, and many candidates showed understanding of the author Begag discovering his roots. *to see his roots* or other suggestions of tourism rather than discovery were rejected, as were focuses on his homeland, rather than on Begag himself. *his heritage* or *his identity* conveyed the same notion successfully. *To discover his country of origin* forfeited the mark, since Begag the author was born in France.

Q6(e)

Many candidates responded correctly to both elements, despite in a sizeable number of cases, this part falling beyond the 60th word. References to the simile of a boat sometimes precluded full credit due to the order of elements presented: *he is like a boat, a Frenchman, not an immigrant* scored 1 mark only, for the second element offered. *stranger* or *outsider* for *foreigner* forfeited a mark, as a mistranslation, perhaps of Camusian inspiration, given the North African context. Responses were credited if either the first or third person was used.

Advice and Guidance

1. The number of centres attaching supplementary sheets fell sharply, and there was much less evidence of such sheets being used as rough paper. Examiners appreciate this restraint greatly.
2. Basic grammatical inaccuracy, such as tense formation and adjectival agreement continues to preclude candidates from the highest scores in Q5 and can cause incomprehensibility. It bears close attention.
3. In cloze exercises, such as Q2, sharpened grammatical awareness can assist in narrowing the range of plausible responses from a pool of items.
4. Candidates must ensure that their responses target the question, since untargeted lifts from the passage do not score.
5. The order of elements rule should be implemented when preparing for this paper. Excess elements are not credited, and may contribute to exceeding the word count, as especially in Q6 this session.
6. Candidates should aim to gain an overview of a passage before attempting the questions. Understanding the context of the passage as a whole may help to preclude many erroneous responses.
7. Candidates should familiarise themselves with question words and relative pronouns. *qui* in Q3(a) and *ce que* in Q3(d) were frequently misunderstood.
8. Candidates could gainfully widen their vocabulary through cognate tasks, which would assist responses such as in Q3(d).

Unit 2 (6442)

Description of the Unit

Four passages were set to test comprehension using a range of verbal and non-verbal question types. In addition, there was a test of continuous writing in French in response to a structured outline based on a stimulus passage, both expressed in French. In setting the material, the examiners consulted the tables of assessment objectives on pages 8 and 13 of the Specification, General Topic Areas 1 - 3 on page 15, the description of the Unit on page 19 and the Notes for Guidance on page 88. There were no changes to the paper.

Passage one was a comparison of organic and conventional farming. In Q1, worth 6 marks, candidates matched two halves of a sentence to show their understanding. Passage two concerned a town in Brittany. Q2 (6 marks) required candidates to identify the solutions the town proposed to its seasonal problems. Q3 (6 marks) required the finding of an equivalent in the text. Passage three concerned second homes. Q4 (10 marks) required answers in French to questions in French about the passage. Passage four concerned tourism in Aquitaine. Q5 (12 marks) required answers in English to questions in English about the passage. In Q6 (40 marks) candidates had to write an article of 140 - 160 words in French about vending machines in schools.

Assessment principles

The 28 marks available for questions 1 - 4 were awarded positively for correct information successfully retrieved and conveyed. Credit was withheld if understanding was not conveyed. No half-marks were awarded. For all questions, the draft mark scheme was amended in the light of the candidates' responses.

For Qs 1, 2 and 3 candidates received 1 or 0 for each part of the question.

In Q4, credit was given for the required information in French, whether in complete sentences or not, provided that errors of language did not obscure transmission of meaning.

In Q5, the marks were awarded for transfer of meaning from French into acceptable and unambiguous English.

In Q6, under a generic mark scheme for content, candidates were assessed for their degree of success in completing the task (20 marks). 20 marks were also awarded for quality of French. For Communication, the examiners took account of factors such as the candidates' understanding of the scenario, their degree of success in addressing and developing the four bullet points within the word limit, the overall structure and coherence of the answer and the suitability of the format adopted for the answer. For Quality of Language, marks were awarded for correct French which conveyed meaning, within the confines of the Grammar syllabus on pages 47-48, and for the range and variety of structure and lexis used; there was no negative marking. Language falling outside the defined grammar syllabus was ignored, e.g. the conditional perfect tense.

Candidates' responses

A wide range of achievement was represented.

Generally, the basic meaning of the passages was understandable and the subject matter was accessible and largely familiar. Nevertheless, large numbers of candidates once again lost marks probably within their grasp because they did not read the passages and the questions closely enough, or did not pay sufficient attention to the articulation of their answers.

Passage 1 Question 1

Marks were lost most commonly by misunderstanding the words *autant que*, *reçoit* and *augmente*.

Passage 2 Question 2

Most candidates understood the passage and the requirements of the question. However, many candidates lost marks in question (b) where they suggested that the mayor was trying to get more coupures d'eau, (d) where the point about hiring students who already had accommodation was missed and (e) where a large number of candidates repeated their answer for (d).

Passage 2 Question 3

The majority scored between 4-6 marks.

- (a) Usually correct
- (b) Largely correct
- (c) Many offered *résoudre* rather than *résoudre le problème*
- (d) Proved surprisingly tricky and many offered *chaque année*
- (e) Showed the greatest number of errors. The problem was *augmenter*
- (f) Generally correct

Passage 3 Question 4

- (a) Generally correct
- (b) Largely correct
- (c) Very many candidates stated that the women were looking for stress and pollution
- (d) The problem was the second item of information needed for a full answer
- (e) The problem was the function of the adjective *modestes* which was not recognised as qualifying a group of nouns
- (f) *Achat* was frequently interpreted as demand

Passage 4 Question 5

Once again the misunderstanding of some key words led many candidates to invent often bizarre answers.

- (a) Many candidates thought *Prestige* was a magazine
- (b) Generally correct
- (c) *Temps* was often interpreted as time. Many said it was because the beaches had been cleaned
- (d) *Passer la nuit* was very often taken to mean "having a night out"
- (e) Most understood this question
- (f) A surprising number said tourists camped in hotels
- (g) Few candidates managed the correct answer as it required considerable manipulation of the text

- (h) Most candidates answered correctly but many gave additional and incorrect details
- (i) There was a lot of confusion over what was distributed: tourism became equated with tourist information

Passage 5 Question 6

Content

There were few answers that were too short but there were a number that were too long, perhaps because candidates had a lot of opinions to express. Candidates must be made aware that their mark is greatly reduced if they do not answer the bullet points within the word limit. Most candidates addressed the points in order but many left out bullet two. The most successful candidates fully addressed all parts of the four bullet points in order and in separate paragraphs. They also developed each of their points with a clear sentence or two of explanation or illustration.

Quality of language

There were several outstanding pieces of writing, where candidates used a range of complex structures and idioms, made clear points and showed excellent use of conditional clauses. Written accuracy was poor, however, for a large number of candidates. Gender, adjectival agreement, and spelling were often erratic. The lack of ability to handle forms of the present and perfect tenses in the first and third person is still a major weakness for a very large number of candidates. Verb endings were once more haphazard in a large number of candidates. The most successful candidates managed to produce grammatically accurate sentences that contained subordinate clauses.

Notes for Guidance

- 1 Candidates should read the paper carefully. They should not begin answering a question until they have read the specific instructions for it. The wording of the question should be studied closely and answers should be related to the stimulus passage.
- 2 The whole text of passages 1 - 4 should be read before the questions are attempted. Candidates should try to identify the overall theme and the thread of any argument.
- 3 Candidates should be aware that the questions on passages 1 - 4 will be of varying difficulty, and that some will require deductions to be made or inferences to be drawn.
- 4 In answering questions on passages 3 and 4, candidates should try to ensure that their answer provides a **direct response** to the question set.
- 5 Answers in English should be checked for clarity and logic.
- 6 When attempting Q6, candidates should: (i) read the whole rubric carefully (ii) write within the word limits, since short answers will be self-penalising and excess beyond 160 words will not be marked (iii) try to allocate time for systematic checking of basic grammar.

- 7 In preparing for Q6, candidates should have experience of writing letters (formal and informal), reports and articles. They should address each bullet point explicitly and give one or two extra points to develop their answer to each bullet.
- 8 The instructions and guidance given in the Specification and the Teachers' Guide should be followed.
- 9 Candidates should write their final answers in ink.
- 10 Candidates should write within the borders of the page and avoid use of supplementary pages whenever possible.

Unit 3 (6443)

The purpose of this unit is to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their level of oral proficiency while allowing them a considerable degree of personal choice and freedom. The required personal research will enable them to *"explore and develop their understanding of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries whose language is being studied"* (Specification Page 7).

The test is designed to:

- assess the candidates' ability to present information and opinion about a topic relating to a francophone country.
- assess the quality of language used by the candidates when doing this.
- assess the extent of the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- assess the candidates' ability to engage in a genuine, spontaneous discussion on their chosen topic.

Preparation for the Test

1. Choice of Topic

"Students will be required to prepare a topic dealing with an aspect of culture and/or society in the relevant country of the target language..." (Specification Page 21)

Appropriate choice of topic is essential in this Unit as AO4 is only tested in the Oral examination at AS level. All examiners commented on the pleasingly large variety of topics chosen by candidates this session and the obvious amount of research that had been done. Many candidates displayed a high degree of both knowledge and understanding as well as considerable enthusiasm for their chosen area of study.

There was continuing interest in all aspects of life in "les banlieues", with frequent references to the riots of 2005. The film "La Haine" was again often used either as an illustration or as a support for dealing with social issues such as racism, immigration, integration, unemployment, police violence, insecurity etc...

The forthcoming French presidential elections sparked a lot more interest than usual in all aspects of French political life, including political parties (UMP, FN) and personalities (Ségolène Royal, Nicolas Sarkozy and Jean-Marie Le Pen). Frequent references were made to the elections of 2002. "Les 'Evènements de Mai 68" also featured.

There was a lot of interest in various aspects and personalities of "Le Septième Art". "Truffaut et la Nouvelle Vague", "Les films de Luc Besson", "Les films de Jean-Pierre Jeunet", "Les Choristes", "Etre et Avoir", "Gérard Depardieu", "Brigitte Bardot" were the most popular.

It was pleasing to hear so many good tests on demanding historical and literary topics by candidates who had obviously done a lot of research: "Napoléon Bonaparte", "Marie-Antoinette", "L'Affaire Dreyfus", "Talleyrand", "Victor Hugo", "Baudelaire", "L'Etranger" to name but a few.

Old favourites and most popular personalities by far were “Coco Chanel”, “Zinadine Zidane”, “Marie Curie” and “Claude Monet”.

There were fewer instances of topics on various aspects of health in France, though “Le Tabagisme” was again very popular. Thankfully, the new laws that have been passed in France allowed most centres to keep the discussions embedded in the French context. Nevertheless, some candidates allowed their discussion to stray from the French context and become too general when speaking on topics such as “L’Obésité”, “L’Alcoolisme” or “La Santé des Jeunes” for example.

Many candidates chose a geographical topic such as “La Bretagne”, “Le Tourisme dans les Alpes”, “Paris et ses Monuments”, “Le Togo”, “Les DOM-TOM”. These were often successful when candidates avoided the pitfall of remaining purely factual and descriptive.

Finally, there was an impressive number of original and stimulating topics chosen by candidates this session. It is impossible to name them all within this report but the following stood out : “Les origines du Ballet en France”, “Le piratage des logiciels en France”, “La fête de l’escalade à Genève”, “L’histoire de Juifs à Strasbourg”, “Les relations de la France avec le Rwanda”, “Olympe de Gouges”.

Material which is not rooted in a francophone context cannot be given credit under Knowledge and Understanding

2. Source Material

“In preparation..., students will need to research their chosen area and undertake extended reading from a variety of sources in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the contemporary society and/or cultural heritage of the target language countries or communities.” (Specification, page 21)

Thorough research is an integral part of the preparation for this unit. It was clear that a good proportion of candidates this session had made extensive research, using a variety of sources. A few facts from a course book or a single newspaper article are insufficient and anecdote is no substitute for genuine research. Topics based on personal experience of, for example, an area of France visited on holiday, only rarely demonstrated an appropriate level of research.

As in previous sessions, the best tests were those where the candidates had a genuine interest in the topic chosen, had carried out sensible research and were given every opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of facts and their understanding of the French context, supporting what they were saying with evidence. Many centres are to be commended for facilitating this research and supporting their students in this integral element of the Unit.

Oral forms

“[Students]...will be permitted to take into the examination a list of 5 - 10 target language headings, as a prompt to remind them of key aspects of the topic.” (Specification page 21)

This is a very important document and great care must be taken when filling it. Advice given in previous reports seems to have been followed in most cases and few problems were experienced this session.

Forms should give the title of the topic selected and between five and ten brief target language headings.

Headings should indicate to the examiner the areas of research undertaken by the candidate. There is no value in including in the headings *Introduction, My opinion or Conclusion*.

In a very small number of centres the Headings consisted of the first 3 - 4 words of each sentence of the presentation; such headings are completely meaningless and give no indication of the research undertaken. A very small number listed all the factual information, dates, figures, statistics or proper names required in various headings; when these provided the only factual information proffered in the test, the candidates were unlikely to attain a high mark for Knowledge and Understanding.

Most forms included a title, but there was, on occasion, an apparent discrepancy between the title, the headings and the ensuing discussion.

The correct version of the form (with mark grids) can be downloaded from the Edexcel Website. They can also be copied from the current *Handbook of Instructions for Centres - Edexcel GCE Oral Tests*.

Conduct of the test

The test should last for 10 - 12 minutes. The candidates are first invited to make a presentation of the chosen topic lasting 1 - 2 minutes. This presentation may well be learned by heart, as it gives the candidates the opportunity to overcome initial nerves and feel ready to face the discussion. If possible, candidates should be dissuaded from presenting their topic unnaturally fast.

At the end of the presentation (or at two minutes if the candidates seem likely to speak for too long) the examiner effects a move to the discussion, seeking information from the candidates supported by example, clarification, detail and opinion. It is important that the conversation be as natural as possible in the circumstances. This discussion is pursued in such a way as to enable the candidates to demonstrate their control of the language as well as knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen.

It is not necessary to cover all the headings offered on the form in the course of discussion, and there is no negative effect on the candidates' marks if they do not. Although it is not wrong to work through the headings as they stand, this tends to lead to an unnatural discussion,

encouraging the production of pre-learned speeches, which must be avoided. After between 10 and 12 minutes the test is brought to a smooth conclusion; there is no benefit to be gained by long tests, since examiners are instructed to stop marking after the allocated time.

Most teacher examiners respected these timings this session, although there were examples of presentations being too short or too long. Short tests lasting less than 10 minutes were penalised.

"Examiners will also be expected to test students on their ability to engage in a conversation that goes beyond the target-language headings but remains within the chosen topic area." (Specification, Page 21)

This is the element that is referred to as the "unpredictable" questions, that is to say questions **on the topic** but not to be anticipated from the headings submitted. It may be that these unpredictable areas arise naturally in the course of the discussion; if they do

not, it is part of the examiner's responsibility to ensure that this is addressed. Many teacher examiners were able to comply with this essential requirement this session. However, "Unpredictable" questions should **not** be general ones on eg the candidates' taste in films, leisure activities, future or holiday plans or their smoking and drinking habits. Nor should they be on totally different topics in the style of Unit 4.

In too many Centres once again this session, candidates were allowed to produce lengthy pieces of pre-learned material, thus turning what is supposed to be a discussion into a series of recitations. If candidates are to do themselves justice they must be deflected from regurgitating such language. "*Students should not attempt to read aloud from their Oral form or recite material learnt by heart: this will earn no credit and wastes valuable time.*" (Specification: Notes for Guidance Page 89); they also tend to lose control of pronunciation and intonation at such times. It is important that the dialogue is authentic in that the examiner's questions respond to what the candidates have previously said and that the candidates actually answer the question asked.

Examiners have expressed concern once again at the lack of complex questions in a number of tests. If the "questioning" is restricted to «*Parle(z)-moi de*», «*Je vois que vous voulez parler de... Allez-y or Continue(z)* », the candidates cannot achieve the upper mark ranges for response. Opinion is not a mere proffering of personal response, but considered thought supported by evidence drawn from the candidates' research; understanding and more abstract ideas cannot emerge if questions are not asked beyond the purely factual. Vague, unsubstantiated assertions and sweeping generalisations do not demonstrate understanding.

In many centres the examination was conducted in the right spirit and it was a pleasure to listen to candidates who sounded as though they were enjoying the experience and therefore achieved the best that could be expected of them.

Teacher examiners should resist the temptation to help candidates by providing vocabulary or completing phrases or sentences; nor should they offer alternative ideas or rephrase questions before the candidates have had time to formulate their initial response. No benefit is gained if the teacher examiner summarises the points that the candidates have made (or intended to make) or if a possible answer is given in the phrasing of the question. The teacher examiner's role is to facilitate the performance of the candidate by asking a range of **open** questions, pressing for clarification or development without becoming too intrusive.

Assessment Principles

The candidates are assessed positively for: **quality of language**, including pronunciation and intonation, accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and structure, idiom, grammar and ability to deal with the unexpected; **response**, including comprehension, spontaneity and the ability to develop answers; **knowledge and understanding**, including information, evidence of research, organisation of material, awareness of implications of topic, relevance, presentation, opinion and justification.

Candidates' Responses

Many candidates were well-prepared and understood what was required of them; they had clearly conducted careful research and were able to give examples to support their assertions, encouraged by skilful questioning from well-prepared teacher examiners.

Although many teacher examiners conducted the test appropriately, varying questions based on the candidates' responses with requests for further information, using the headings on the form or 'pushing' the candidates to develop and substantiate their ideas or assertions, there were areas of difficulty in some tests:

- candidates were allowed to speak uninterrupted for too long, using pre-learned material (a very frequent problem again this session)
- candidates were asked directly for comparisons with the UK or other non-francophone countries (thus losing focus on the francophone context)
- candidates were not asked about the specific situation in France (or the relevant country).
- candidates were not asked to engage in a conversation going beyond the target language headings (candidates will not be able to access higher grids for Quality of Language and Response if they have not moved away from predictable areas.)
- candidates were allowed to remain at the narrative/factual level even when it seemed clear that they could have ventured into more complex areas of discussion.
- candidates were not given the opportunity to develop responses.

Quality of Language

Many candidates had clearly researched carefully appropriate lexis for their chosen topic and some were able to produce a good range of structures. The best candidates were able to make spontaneous use of subordinate clauses and natural linking phrases and expressions, some subjunctive structures as well as a range of tenses when the questioning allowed. There were good examples of candidates at ease in dealing with abstract notions, who had the necessary language at their disposal. On the other hand, there were also too many tests conducted purely in the present tense, where no complex questions were asked and it was clear that insufficient thought had been given to the possible linguistic development of the topic. Pronunciation continues to be a problem, even with some of the best candidates: there were particular difficulties with the following:

- vowel sounds (*crier* for *créer*, *idie* for *idée*, *ouvre* for *œuvre*, *célebritie* for *célébrité*, *soulement* for *seulement*, *essailer* for *essayer*, *aillant* for *ayant*, *lycie* for *lycée*, *debout* for *début*)
- final silent consonants were very frequently pronounced (*et*, *effet*, *cas*, *Paris*, *art*, *ils regardent*, *blanc*, *beaucoup*, *trop*) as were other consonants (the s in *c'est*, the g in *magnifique*, *ignorant* and other similar words)
- endings of words not pronounced (*tout le mond*, *ensuit*) and other consonant problems (*sucer* for *succès*, *fil* for *fil*, *démocratie*)
- confusion between the ss and z sounds (*bassé/basé*, *ils ont/ils sont*, *mesures/messures*, *établissent/établisent*, *produisant/produissant*)
- nasals (*la fin*, *en principe*, *enfin*, *important*, *symbole*)
- key vocabulary for the selected topic (*l'alcool*, *peindre/peintre/peinture*, *l'extrême droite/droit/doigt*, *tabac*, *Jean d'Arc*, *musulmain*)
- anglicised pronunciation (*parents*, *dangerous*, *communitie*, *ethnique*, *couple*, *racisme*, *problème*, *européen*, *exploiter*, *scène*, *société*, *nation*, *rare*, *monarchie*)
- regular problems (*vie/ville*, *pays/paille*, *pour cent/per cent*, *magasin/magazine*, *fille/file*, *faim/femme/fème*, *gens/gènes*, *gens/jeunes/jaunes/jounes*, *qwalification*, *guerre/gare*, *l'amour/la mort*, *couture/culture*, *joue/jeu*, *juillet/jouet*, *qwand*, *producshion*, *internashional*)

Particular concern was expressed by examiners that candidates were unable to pronounce key lexis for their chosen topic correctly. Pronunciation errors can, and

frequently do, impede comprehension and cause candidates to gain lower marks for Quality of Language. Intonation is often an additional difficulty under the pressure of trying to recollect pre-learned material. Many candidates made impressive attempts to pronounce French correctly, on the other hand there were some who seemed to think that correct pronunciation is unnecessary or irrelevant.

It seems clear that the greatest linguistic difficulties remain at a basic level, and particularly in terms of conjugation, even with the better candidates. On the other hand, good structure or lexis acquired more recently was used with a certain degree of confidence. However, very high language marks cannot be gained just by the insertion of several good phrases if there is a consistent incidence of basic errors. It is unimpressive if candidates can produce a phrase containing a subjunctive but are unaware that the same structure still requires a subjunctive later in the discussion. In order to attain a good mark for quality of language the candidates need to demonstrate a consistent ability to manipulate the language.

Common errors noted this session were:

- wrong or unclear genders (particularly of key vocabulary for topics eg *une problème, le mère, le femme, une manque, une pays, le nationalité, la monde, la risque, la Tour de France, un chose, un personne, un loi, le police, un fin, une lycée, la public and la porte de la voile*) This is sometimes exacerbated by careless pronunciation, so that it is difficult or impossible to tell which gender is intended.
- basic noun/adjective agreements
- subject/verb agreements (*les femmes doit...*), particularly, but not solely, with *qui*
- basic verb forms in all tenses (*ils buvent, ils choisent, elle envoyera, ils prendent, j'allerai, vous di, nous devons, il a prendu, ils sont travaille, ils ont vaincre*)
- problems with tense sequence and tense choice
- anglicised lexis, structures and word order (*pour le gouvernement solver la situation, ils seulement jouer, le français langue, un beaucoup de, il ne prend pas de interest, il a voulu Henry jouer*)
- inability to produce contracted forms of articles or misuse of contractions eg *aux les*
- confusion of *avoir* and *être* (*il est raison*), (*c'est/il y a*) and as auxiliary verbs (*il a mort*)
- dependent infinitives not used when required (*il doit fait, on peut choix, on doit pense*)
- wrong, inappropriate or invented vocabulary (*agricultural, un area, mosque, polluter, distributer, reflecter, un range, avoider, résoudre, l'améliorement, constructer, objecter, le commence*)
- faux amis (*supporter/support, assister/assist, place/place effectif/effective, location/location, caractère/character, usé/used, audience/audience*)
- possessives (*les livres de moi, s'aventure, son mère, Zidane's famille, sa père, ses/leur(s)* confused)
- selection of pronoun (*les femmes/ils, le/lui*)
- *assez/très/plus/trop* - frequently confused
- *il est/il y a* - especially in other tenses than the present
- prepositions (*en Paris, dans (la) France, dépendre sur, rencontre avec, sur/dans la télévision*)
- *mal/mauvais, bon/bien, gens/personnes, huile/pétrole, temps/fois, monnaie/argent, ministère/ministre, matière/sujet, dictateur/dictature*
- *parce que/à cause de, avant/avant que/devant*
- *qu'est-ce que/ce que, qu'est-ce qui/ce qui, qui/que*
- omission of *que* (*je pense il est...*)
- *on/tu/vous* - sometimes all used in the same sentence

- number (*quarante-vingt-trois, il est mort à dix-neuf quarante-cinq*), including decimals (*six point cinq*)
- there was considerable confusion over nationalities, countries and languages eg *la France aux Françaises !, un Allemagne, il parle Espagne*
- *gens, personnes* and *chose* in particular *les gens français, un gens intelligent, les personnes suisses* and *un bon chose*
- confusion of *dire* and *parler* (*je vais parler à Marie Curie* but *je dirai sur le racisme*)

Response

Many candidates listened to the questions, answered them appropriately and were able to develop the discussion. However, too many were allowed to regurgitate pre-learned material without interruption, frequently using the next "question" as a cue to move on to the following area of "script". **The oral examination is supposed to be a genuine discussion, not a series of pre-learned monologues.** Examiners are not always convinced that candidates actually understand what they are saying in such circumstances.

Knowledge and Understanding

A large number of candidates had obviously enjoyed research into their chosen topic and were able to produce a wealth of facts and examples as well as pursue more abstract aspects. However, candidates cannot score highly for Knowledge and Understanding if their tests become too general and lack the French or francophone focus **throughout**. In addition, the teacher examiner needs to have considered how to enable the candidates to demonstrate Understanding; this is where informed opinion should come to the fore, with candidates having to consider the information they had provided and formulate views on it. Difficulties were compounded by those teacher examiners who asked for candidates' personal views on issues of a general nature that had little or nothing to do with the topic.

There were again instances of native or bilingual candidates who had assumed that they would be able to perform well in this Unit and had therefore neglected careful research. Indeed they sometimes did not attain the highest grid for Quality of Language as their French lacked range and was sometimes in the wrong register for such a discussion.

Problem Areas

Particular areas are detailed below in the hope that Centres will be able to avoid such difficulties in the future.

Topics

- Some were too general and lacked focus on the French context eg *les problèmes des jeunes, l'environnement, l'anorexie, la boulimie, l'alcoolisme, les drogues*
- Some candidates spent too long comparing with (and therefore talking about) the situation in the U.K. or in another non-francophone country
- Some topics offered insufficient scope or were clearly not based on any research
- Some topics were too wide eg *la musique en France, l'art en France, l'éducation en France, la culture française dans le monde*

Presentation

- There was no presentation or it lasted under 1 minute or it was interrupted too soon.
- The presentation contained everything the candidates knew and they could offer nothing in response to questions for the remaining 8 - 10 minutes.

Oral Form

- There was too much factual information eg dates, statistics, proper names
- There were fewer than five headings
- No title was given or the title on the form was different from the title on the tape
- Headings were in English
- It was a vocabulary list
- Headings were part sentences used to cue in the presentation or answers to questions

Timing

- The presentation was too short (15 - 30 seconds) or non-existent
- The test was too short (some were under 6 minutes)
- The presentation was too long (e.g. 5 minutes out of an 9 minute test)
- The test was too long (some were over 20 minutes; marking will stop shortly after 12 minutes)

Recordings

Centres are responsible to their candidates for the quality of the recording sent to the Edexcel examiner. Inaudible material can gain no credit.

- The background noise made the candidates all but inaudible
- Noisy machines were used
- The examiner's voice was far louder than the candidate's - the placing of the microphone should favour the candidate although **both parties should be clearly audible**
- Some candidates spoke so quietly that the volume had to be at maximum to hear them at all
- Old tapes were used, so that the recording was blurred or the previous recording could also be heard.
- There was interference from mobile phones. Mobile phones have no place in the examination room.

Advice and Guidance

Attention to the following should ensure that the candidates are well-prepared:

- careful selection of an appropriate topic, avoiding the general or insufficiently focused
- avoidance of a comparative approach
- availability of appropriate source material
- a clear and thoughtful presentation which will give the candidates confidence and provide a secure springboard to the discussion
- preparation for development of the topic, including examples to substantiate assertions made
- consideration of problems/solutions/implications of the topic chosen
- thorough and accurate grasp of topic-specific lexis
- avoiding rehearsal, but rather making sure that the candidate knows the essentials of the topic and is equipped linguistically to deal with them
- ensuring that candidates have practice in answering questions directly and that they will actually recognise the relevant interrogatives. Centres should study carefully the Specification (including Notes for Guidance pp 90-91), the Teachers' Handbook pp 30 - 33, previous Subject Reports and the Oral Training Guide (July 2003)

Teacher Examiners should study carefully the Handbook of Instructions for Centres in advance of conducting the examination.

Practical Matters

Attention to the following would make the marking process operate more smoothly:

- ensuring that recording is of good quality
- ensuring that both candidate and examiner are audible
- ensuring that all tapes are rewound to the start of Side A
- using C60 tapes for Unit 3, with 2 tests on each side
- ensuring that cassettes themselves (as well as boxes) are labelled with centre and candidate numbers
- ensuring that centre and candidate numbers are announced on the tape
- ensuring that Oral forms are sent to the marker with the cassettes and that the correct forms are used
- ensuring that correct timing is adhered to
- ensuring that cassettes are carefully packed so that everything arrives intact

Administration

There were few administrative problems this session. Some attendance registers were not sent, but the examiners appreciated the fact that some Centres included a register of their own giving candidate names and numbers. A number of Centres conducted their examination outside the specified examining period. The dates are available on the main timetable and can be confirmed with Edexcel.

The Examiners greatly appreciated the impeccable manner in which many Centres carried out the administrative procedures.

Unit 4.1 (6444.1)

The nature of the examination

There have been no changes since last year in the format or the criteria of the test. It is a 14 - 15 minute test divided into 2 main sections: the first, lasting for 5 minutes, in which candidates take a stance in favour or against an "issue" and are subjected to rigorous cross-examination on their position; the second, lasting a further 9 - 10 minutes, in which they are required to debate 2 or 3 further issues in some depth.

They are rewarded for their "grasp" of the issue, which means the degree to which they are able to show that they have an appreciation of the wider implications of the issue. They are also rewarded for their ability to debate. By this is meant the way in which they express, justify and substantiate personal views on further issues.

The implication for centres is that examiners should frame their approach to questioning/debating so as to facilitate this. This means that they should choose productive issues and encourage debate by probing candidates' views. Too often, the later stages of the test descend into a "question and answer" session with no attempt being made to uncover underlying assumptions or views. Too many examiners use this part of the test to run through the topics studied in class. This has several undesirable consequences. First, as already stated, it does not promote debate. This will limit the candidates' mark for Justification and Debate to the lower reaches of the grid. Second, rehashing issues produces "un-spontaneous" responses that raise questions about candidates' ability to use language creatively and could incline markers to the view that there is no "unpredictability" in the conduct of the test. This again may have repercussions on the allocating of marks for Response.

Unfortunately, it is still the case that in too many centres the initial challenge by Teacher Examiners is not robust enough. Candidates are required to defend their stance on an issue in the face of challenging questioning and to attack the position adopted by the examiner. Questions that seek merely to ascertain why the candidate holds a particular view without pointing out the inherent weaknesses in that position will not allow the candidate to perform as required and as a result the mark awarded for this section of the exam will be adversely affected. Seeking factual information in the initial and further issues is not appropriate. Stating the consequences of consuming too many units of alcohol per week or explaining which components of tobacco are responsible for cancer will not attract rewards.

At the same time, the candidates have a responsibility to observe the rubric in the Specifications which requires them to carry out reading and research to support their arguments. If they rely solely on assertion and fail to produce evidence to back their stance, their performance will be self-limiting.

It is worth stressing that candidates must spend time investigating opposing views if they are to ensure that proper grasp of the issues is demonstrated.

Centres must ensure that they adhere to the overall and internal timings of the test. This is crucial if candidates are not to be penalised. The test should last for 14-15 minutes. The first section should not exceed 5 minutes and the examination should not be curtailed. Furthermore, examiners should not return to the initial issue in the second part of the test; something that happens too often still. Clearly short tests do not give the candidate the same opportunities to express and defend views and to demonstrate competence in dealing with unpredictable areas: marks cannot be awarded for material not produced. Thus, candidates from centres presenting tests of this type

should expect to see a corresponding impact on the marks given for Response - because too much time will have been devoted to predictable issues - and Justification and Debate - because there will have been inadequate debate of further issues. Long tests, particularly when the initial debate is extended beyond the time specified - in the worst cases, taking up most or the entire test - present the problem of insufficient time being devoted to unpredictable further areas. This disproportionate focus inevitably affects the marks.

Choice of Issue

Many candidates favoured traditional ethical favourites, such as *pour / contre la peine de mort, l'euthanasie, l'avortement, l'interdiction de fumer* (which many candidates persist in referring to as *le tabagisme*) *dans les lieux publics, la dépenalisation du cannabis, le mariage homosexuel / le droit des homosexuels d'adopter des enfants /, le clonage, les OGM, l'expérimentation animale, la chasse au renard*. Political issues such as *l'énergie nucléaire, les éoliennes, l'union européenne, l'entrée de la Turquie à l'Union Européenne, l'immigration, le port du foulard islamique* were other recurring choices. Some candidates chose social and personal issues such as *la chirurgie esthétique, la greffe des organes pour les alcooliques, le fast food*. It was encouraging that many candidates exercised independent choice and debated issues less frequently considered, such as *les bébés sur mesure, la biométrie, les taxes vertes sur l'aviation*. The requirement to choose a genuinely debatable issue appears to have been heeded. There were hardly any "un-debatable" issues.

Declaration of Issue Forms

Most candidates entered a clear stance but some still simply offered a statement. Some candidates entered their issue as a question without any indication of their stance. The teacher examiner then had to establish what the stance was before debate could commence.

A few candidates did not enter their Unit 3 and / or Unit 5 options. Centres are reminded that the whole form should be completed by the candidate, with the issue in the Target Language.

Quality of Recording

Most centres produced clear tapes but there were too many cases where the recordings were of very poor quality with persistent hum, hiss or crackle or where there was distracting background noise. Automatic microphones often produce problems and the correct positioning of the microphone is vital. In a few cases, the recordings were barely audible and marking was difficult. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring that candidates and teacher examiner can be clearly heard, and that they do their candidates a great disservice in not checking equipment, choice of recording environment and quality of tapes and recordings before submitting the tests for marking.

Conduct of tests

Candidates should initiate a debate by introducing a stance on their chosen issue, which teacher examiners will then challenge to enable the candidates to justify and defend their viewpoint with supporting evidence. After five minutes, the teacher examiner is instructed to effect a transition to discussion of at least two other unpredictable issues, moving on and away from the initial issue and lasting a further ten minutes, and not to return to the initial theme.

While some teacher examiners had clearly understood the requirements of the test and conducted their candidates' tests in accordance with these, a few did not respect the rubric and their candidates were sometimes disadvantaged as a result. The following problems have been pointed out in previous reports, but are repeated here because they recur.

Problems included:

- **Timing** - in some cases presentations of stance ran well over one minute, and / or the subsequent debate exceeded the time specified, thus limiting the opportunity to respond within unpredictable wider areas. A few tests were devoted entirely to the initial issue or to associated themes. There were some instances of short tests, where clearly candidates did not have the maximum time and space to express and justify views, thus restricting potential mark achievement in all three categories, but overlong tests were more frequent. Long tests can gain no additional credit, since Examiners are instructed to stop marking after the allocated time, and in cases where the debate section has overrun, as explained above, the time remaining for further areas will be cut short.
- **In the Debate** - insufficient challenge to the candidate's stance. While some teacher examiners entered into the spirit of the test as 'devil's advocate' and used considerable skill in seeking out all possible counter-arguments, many others did not offer a robust challenge but instead pressed for factual information, or simply asked why the candidate held this opinion, or where research sources had been found. This tended to produce narrative or anecdotal material rather than stimulate the language of debate. Some questioning was only on the level of Unit 3.
- Too much input from the teacher examiner with convoluted questions, prompt phrases or suggestions of expressions or ideas, insistence on voicing personal points of view or intrusive and distracting interjections.
- Conversely there were a few cases of insufficient preparation on the part of the teacher examiner, who appeared not to have considered adequately what points to put, and this resulted in quite lengthy gaps and hesitations and created difficulties for the candidate.
- **In Further Areas** - failure to move away from the Initial Issue and / or choosing themes which were too closely related and did not give sufficient scope or stimulus for wider response to different areas (for example, a debate on *le port du foulard* followed by a discussion on *la laïcité* and *la religion*). It was sometimes unclear when and where the debate for the Initial Issue ended.
- Returning to the Initial Issue after the debate or allowing the candidate to do so.
- Allowing the candidate to produce learned monologues without deflection, or asking questions which had been pre-rehearsed and appeared to be anticipated.
- Asking factual questions, which were sometimes exclusively related to France (for example about how the *baccalauréat* is organised), and which did not afford opportunities to express opinions or to justify views. Such questions appeared in many cases to be anticipated, since candidates were able to deliver immediate

funds of statistics, dates, laws etc. It should be noted that specialised factual knowledge is not required in this part of the test (cf. Specification, page 24) and that teacher examiners "...must ensure that students are not aware in advance of the further issues that will be discussed." If it is apparent to a marker that "scripting" of any part of the test has taken place, appropriate action in respect of the marks will be taken.

- Asking personal questions relating to the candidate's family, holidays, leisure pursuits or future plans; such questions were inadmissible.
- Abrupt changes of areas or dislocated questions with no logical transition (such as *le clonage / l'élargissement de l'union européenne / Est-ce que l'égalité entre les sexes est acquise*)
- In some cases too many further areas were covered, which resulted in superficial discussions and insufficient opportunity to develop ideas. The teacher examiner failed to follow up what the candidate had actually said.
- A few teacher examiners continued to maintain a confrontational style throughout. "You should not take an adversarial stance in this part of the conversation." (Handbook of Instructions for Centres, page 9).

Performance of candidates

Quality of Language

Accuracy

The linguistic skills of the best candidates were most encouraging. They used a wide range of lexis, handled complex structures naturally and had authentic pronunciation and intonation. The weakest area for most candidates remains that of accuracy. All the basic errors of gender, verb forms, concords, agreements, pronouns, partitives etc. highlighted in previous reports were still very evident. Many examples of such difficulties were listed in the Examiners' Reports for June 2005 and 2006, but in this examination series, the main problems included:

- incorrect forms of verbs in the present, and the use of the nameless 'non-tense' infinitive-sounding ending (*le gouvernement doit / peut // ils doivent / ont // vous dites / ils font / ils prennent / les gens penser / il n'aider pas / je préférer*)
- problems with attempts at other tenses (*j'aura / elle a mort / j'utilisé / il a vi / j'ai resté*) and with tenses often used indiscriminately, particularly confusion over perfect v. imperfect, future v. conditional
- problems with use of negatives, *ne* or *pas* being dropped, or *pas* included with another negative, eg; *il ne va pas jamais*, or incorrect word order, as in *n'être pas obèse / pour ne parle pas*
- concord of subject and verb (often a plural subject with a singular verb) such as *les médecins qui n'a pas... / la famille ont... / les politiciens fait ... / le gouvernement ont... / des mesures qui va... / les personnes qui dit ... /*
- finite verbs needing dependent infinitives (*ils veulent travaillent / il peut donne...*)
- difficulties with pronouns ([*les filles musulmanes*] *ils portent le voile / ils aident leur-même / le gouvernement les a donné ...*)
- partitives (*beaucoup des gens / il y a des autres choses / il gagne un peu de l'argent / quelque chose intéressant*)
- basic gender errors (often followed by ensuing wrong agreements) including *accident, choix, chômage, chose, drogue, emploi, état, façon, femme, forme,*

manque, pays, port, problème, qualité, racisme, règle, risque, système, sondage, voile.

- *incorrect plural forms, eg. -als for -aux*
- *à + le(s) and de + le(s), eg. aux les problèmes, de les situations*
- *articles omitted eg. France a besoin... / il y a problèmes*
- *incorrect prepositions (sur la télé, en Paris, il dépend sur, au même temps, sur le sujet de...différent à...) frequent confusion between penser à and penser de ; incorrect use of preposition, eg. plusieurs de..*
- *confusion of adjectives and adverbs (eg. bon / bien , meilleur /mieux, mauvais / mal)*
- *confusion over intensifiers (trop beaucoup) ; très for trop*
- *inability to use peut-être correctly*
- *incorrect use of aussi at the beginning of a sentence or clause.*

The major area for improvement is subordination. There were far too many examples of candidates who were unable to use the correct form of the verb in the case of dependent infinitives or subordinate clauses. It is considered that this is a skill that should not be beyond the reach of A level candidates. Centres are encouraged to pay attention to this feature if only because failure to master it leads to candidates being limited to the lower categories.

Another feature that figured prominently this session is the inability of many candidates to express obligation correctly. *Je faux/le gouvernement doive/on besoin* argent and others suggest that this is notion that would benefit from some attention.

Pronunciation and Intonation

The quality was very variable. While some candidates had generally good control of sounds and intonation, in the case of others who were not able to produce authentic p/i or whose first language patterns intruded, sounds and stress patterns were often inauthentic. This was exacerbated in cases where candidates were over-prepared and launched into long, learnt monologues. Among the recurrent errors were:

- *poor intonation with sentences ending in a rising tone ('upspeak') or a flat monotone, sometimes a characteristic of pre-rehearsed, regurgitated material*
- *inauthentic stress patterns*
- *problems with nasal sounds such as important, intention, censurer, compréhension, compte, principal, contemporain, éolien, infidélité, enceinte, enseignant, symbole*
- *anglicised words such as société, identité, introduction, nationalité, immigration, éducation, varié, tradition*
- *pronunciation of unsounded consonants in words such as art, tabac, et, est, cas, coût, droit, ils / elles pensent, les jeunes, succès, beaucoup, gens, cas, dignité, ignorer, mort, temps, transport*
- *incorrect pronunciation of femme, danger, fille, emploi, méthode, eu, alcool, idée, créé, européen, euro, organe*

- poor vowel sounds resulting in unclear distinction between *jeunes* and *gens*, *pays* and *paille*, *amour/ meurt / mort*, *ait* and *aille*, *chose* and *choix*, *magasins* and *magazines*, *corps* and *coeur*, *introduire* and *interdire*.
- mispronunciations such as *fable* [for *faible*], *mailleur*, *amigrés*, *annocent*, *tout le mon*, *les déchats*, *les attentes* (for *attentats*), *un pêche* (for *un péché*) *l'obisité*, *communité*, *basse* for *base*, *baiser* for *baissier*, *le beef*, *la pain* [*peine*] *de mort*

Range

Candidates were generally able to express their ideas, though with varying degrees of competence. Some candidates were able to handle the language of justification and debate, using abstract concepts and expressions which conveyed reflection, hypothesis and considered opinion. Candidates and examiners are advised not to adopt too informal a register and to avoid conversational *mots familiers* and the use of *tu*, and should again be counselled against the use of over-dramatic and sometimes excessive expressions such as *tu es fou ou quoi? Mais non, c'est ridicule!* Whilst language such as this is observed in a friendly or family setting, it is not what is required in a formal context.

Better candidates showed a confident use of tenses, including the conditional, though the passive voice still seems to cause confusion. For general statements candidates rarely used *on*, but relied (wrongly) on *tu*.

For weaker candidates, satisfactory completion of sentences was often difficult and there were basic lexical errors and anglicisms such as *political*, *physicalement*, *chimicaux*, *significant*, *obsessé*, *financier*, *un change*, *expresser*, *investir*, *exercisé*, *le catholicisme*, *l'argent d'Etat*, *ministère* for *ministre*, *La Bretagne* for *La Grande-Bretagne*, *en particulère*, *patrimoine*, *c'est d'accord* (for *c'est juste*) *vous êtes droit / vous êtes vrai* [addressing the teacher examiner], *un Maghreb*, *plus et plus, moins en moins d'une choix*, *la Belge* [for *la Belgique*], *il incombre aux écoles*, *le fumer*, *le tabagisme* [meaning 'smoking'], *faire mieux cette situation*, *autour du monde* or *dans tout le monde* for *partout dans le monde* or *dans le monde entier*.

misuse of *parce que* instead of *à cause de*

confusion between *place* and *endroit*, *passer* and *dépenser*, *devoir* and *devenir*, *gens* and *personnes*, *le mode* and *la mode*

use of *les gens français* rather than *les Français*

use of *les Françaises*, *les Anglaises* for *les Français*, *les Anglais*

use of *d'après* and *depuis* to mean 'after', *devant* for *avant*

Response

Candidates generally responded readily but often lacked the ability to answer in a well-structured way or to take the issue forward.

There were some good spontaneous performances with genuine and well-developed debate and discussion, and these tended to gain higher marks for Response, even for less able candidates, than those which sounded contrived and pre-rehearsed, with a set routine of questioning. The general level of comprehension overall was good. Where the initial issue did not overrun, candidates had the opportunity to respond within unpredictable areas and to develop their ideas. Native speakers, of course, had no difficulty with comprehension, but this did not always imply fluency: as with range, not all francophone candidates were willing to extend themselves to produce developed responses.

The differentiating factor in reaching marks in the higher boxes was the ability to develop ideas. Some candidates had difficulty in sustaining exchanges and tailed off

with phrases. In a few cases, the teacher examiner seemed to be providing prompts for these prepared monologues, and indeed a small number of tests appeared to be scripted. It must be emphasised that candidates whose teacher examiner encouraged a natural exchange of ideas had the opportunity of attaining the highest marks for Response. Some candidates who were asked inappropriate questions (see Conduct of Tests above) were disadvantaged.

Justification and Debate

The Debate

Where candidates had prepared with all aspects of the issue in mind, they were able to conduct a vigorous debate. The best defended their stance with genuine passion and supporting evidence. Weaker candidates had little to contribute once they had voiced their main prepared points and they relied on repetition, re-assertion of opinion or anecdote.

Markers reported that in many cases inadequate research had been undertaken to provide evidence and support for the candidate's arguments and to parry contrary views. Candidates were in many cases unable to argue convincingly with suitable justification for their views. They should be encouraged to learn how to use the facts they have gathered through their research to substantiate their position, using them in an argumentative way rather than just presenting them as facts.

Discussion of Further Issues

Better candidates continued to contribute opinions cogently on a variety of themes, though others limited their input to a superficial or simplistic level.

As stated previously, the success or otherwise of this section of the test depends crucially on the approach adopted by the examiner.

Advice and Guidance

The attribution of five marks for stance in the initial issue will be determined by evidence that candidates have undertaken research to argue their case (cf. Specification, page 24) and that they are able to demonstrate knowledge of the issue to be debated, and are not merely voicing unsubstantiated opinion or arguing only by assertion. The concept of "grasp" of all aspects of the issue, referred to above, is very important in this respect. Such knowledge may include relevant laws, practice, statistics, mores, attitudes, precedent or data drawn from evidence, which may be historical, economic, geographic, social, political, scientific etc.

A clear understanding of the Specification is essential for both teachers and students. In addition, Centres should read the Teachers' Handbook and the Oral Training Guide. Teacher-Examiners need to study carefully the Handbook of Instructions to Centres in advance of the Oral Examination.

Centres should also note the following points:

Timing - up to 1 minute for declaration of stance
 up to 4 more minutes for debate
 up to 10 more minutes for discussion in further unpredictable areas
TOTAL: 14 - 15 minutes

Choice of Issue - while there is no stipulation restricting choice of issue, it is not advisable for candidates at a Centre to all choose similar issues or to have a restricted range of issue choices. An appropriate issue is one that is

- an area of concern or debate, i.e. 'arguable'
- is morally possible to debate

- is clearly defined to permit candidates to analyse and provide supportive evidence
- will be “productive” in that it will lead to areas that candidates will have ideas about

Guidance - candidates will need to be directed to possible research sources, as thorough research on the initial issue will be required to provide supporting evidence for their arguments and to show a thorough knowledge of their chosen Issue during the debate in the first five minutes of the test. They should note that it is not necessary, or indeed desirable, to explain at length what their sources were.

Preparation for the debate - confidence can be gained from training of a general nature to argue and debate: voicing opinions, presenting and supporting ideas, challenging and parrying contrary points of view with relevant evidence, and justifying opinions.

Acquisition of appropriate lexis, and practice in speaking in the formal register of argument and debate, should be encouraged.

Stance - this is a clear statement of opinion which the candidate is prepared to defend, entered on the Declaration of Issue Form normally in the form of *Je suis pour / je suis contre...* and introduced in the one-minute presentation, which is designed to be a useful launching point for the subsequent debate, outlining the candidate’s views without exhausting all the key points.

Preparation for the discussion in further areas - candidates should practise discussion and debate over a wide range of issues and familiarise themselves with areas of interest - for example, social, moral, political, philosophical, legal - which are currently being debated in the press, on radio and television, in the family and in schools and places of work. They are strongly advised to prepare not just their own arguments but to think about the countervailing viewpoint and prepare refutation of these. Such practice will give them the opportunity for genuine self-expression and authentic reactions without dependence on pre-rehearsed question routines and responses or on prepared monologues.

GRADE BOUNDARIES

Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	30	26	22	18	15
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	54	48	43	38	33
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3 Prepared Oral Topic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	43	38	33	28	23
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	45	40	35	30	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

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