

EXAMINERS' REPORT

AM FRENCH

FIRST SESSION 2018



L-Università
ta' Malta

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**

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General Information

Fifty-three candidates registered for the above examination. Four candidates were absent while one candidate sat only for the oral examination. The following table shows the distribution of grades.

Table 1: Distribution of Grades May 2018

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	2	7	16	13	8	3	4	53
% OF TOTAL	3.77	13.21	30.19	24.53	15.09	5.66	7.55	100

The examination consisted of four written papers and an oral test in reading, free conversation and a dialogue on *Civilisation française*.

The overall performance shows a general improvement on past years as 47.2% of the candidates obtained grades ranging from A to C and 86.8% obtained a grade ranging from A to E, while E Grade figured at 5.66%. On the other hand, compared to last year's result, the total of grades A and B dropped by 2.04%; however, there was an increase of 1.63% of the candidates who obtained Grade C and 8.8% more candidates obtained Grade D.

Paper I

Analyse d'un texte non littéraire (60 marks)

20% of the candidates failed this exercise, while 17% obtained a mark of 75% or over. Most candidates identified the main idea of the text, though not all of them understood the finer details of the main and secondary ideas, that is, that Senegalese culture has become increasingly vibrant thanks to a number of Senegalese artists who are injecting life into their country. Some candidates indicated the fact that the country's existence has been ignored for a long time. While the majority did mention Dakar and Ousman Mbaye in their outline of the secondary themes, they did not state that the latter represents a generation of artists who are striving to keep Senegalese culture on the move. The lack of such an analysis shows that candidates stop short of critical reflection.

Only a few candidates commented on the discursive and linguistic aspects of the text, namely the use of pronouns, possessive adjectives, vocabulary, punctuation, connectors and sentence length, the use of direct speech, highlighting their effect on the reader as intended by the author. Unfortunately, the majority of candidates merely commented on vocabulary, punctuation and sentence length. Moreover, many thought that the author was absent from his text whereas his presence was often expressed by the pronoun *on*: *On va à la rencontre des créateurs et artisans* and *on avait un peu oublié le pays*. He also gives his personal opinion when he remarks *Grave erreur!*, a comment he emphasises by quoting the Afropop singer, Mao Sidibé. Nor did the candidates comment on the numerous adjectives which overtly reveal the author's inner feelings towards the various aspects being discussed, such as, *la bouillonnante capitale sénégalaise*, *l'architecture est banale et fatiguée*, while in contrast, *les rues, elles, sont pleines de vie*. Other examples include *le décor anarchique de la métropole*, as well as, *c'est une ville facile d'accès, chaleureuse, joyeuse, cosmopolite*.

Some candidates reproduced remarks that they had learnt by heart and which were irrelevant to the text in question. This was especially the case when several candidates stated the obvious by writing that the present tense was used for actions in the present and the *passé composé* for actions in the past. They then gave examples of verbs in both tenses without working on the *analyse fonctionnelle* by which they would have explained their function, thereby interpreting

the author's intention for using these tenses. Only a few candidates remarked on the use of the imperative, *Avouons-le*, by which the author included us, his readers, as well as himself, making us admit that on *avait oublié un peu* the country in question. These observations on the *analyse fonctionnelle* of verbs have already been indicated in past reports; they are being repeated in the hope of their being better heeded in the future.

The Panel would like to draw the candidates' attention to the necessity of avoiding gross grammatical errors. The Panel is concerned that at this level, candidates write "de les artistes", "il fais" and "il dis"; "il n'y a pas des mots qui montre ..."; "une phrase court" and incomprehensible sentences such as, "le joi de Dakal et son structure est pour partager avec des autres pays d'Europe".

Moreover, candidates would benefit greatly by reading articles in French newspapers and magazines on a regular basis and train themselves to read beyond the surface of the given passage by eliciting the finer nuances of meaning conveyed in the text through an examination of the discursive, linguistic and other elements, some of which are expressly stated in the examination paper under the heading *Consigne*.

Paper II

This paper consisted of two exercises, an essay and a written comprehension.

1. Essay (100 marks)

All the titles were chosen: titles b) and c) proved more popular than the rest as each title was chosen by 29% of the candidates. The candidates who chose title b), *Chaque élève doit avoir l'opportunité de participer à un échange scolaire avant de terminer ses études secondaires. Commentez cette remarque*, based their arguments on the benefits and less positive aspects of participating in student exchange programmes. The cruelty of animals at the circus was discussed by those candidates who opted for title c): *Les animaux n'ont pas de place dans les cirques. Partagez-vous cette opinion?* Titles a) and d) were chosen by nine and eight candidates respectively. Some valid arguments were expressed on the question of destiny with regard to title a): *Peut-on dire que c'est nous-mêmes qui façonnons notre destin?*, while the challenges and benefits of living in the 21st century were discussed in title d): *Vivre au XXI^e siècle, est-ce un défi?* Title e): *Écrivez une histoire intitulée : "Derrière le masque"* was chosen by three candidates who interpreted the "mask" both literally and metaphorically. In general, only a few candidates lost track of the subject and failed to connect their arguments with the title, others wrote essays that had valid arguments relevant to the title, however, with a few exceptions, their vocabulary was too poor to enable them to express their ideas clearly. These candidates also found it difficult to express themselves in simple correct French. As a result, the failure rate in this exercise was 18%, while 27% were of average standard and 33.3% obtained a mark over 75%.

As it has been stressed in previous reports, poor performance in grammar is the main reason for which candidates lose a lot of marks. Unfamiliarity with basic grammar rules included the conjugation of simple verbs ("les étudiants doit", "les études est", "les gens qui a fini ses études", "on apprend", "nous avrons", "j'ai dis"); the agreement rules of nouns and adjectives ("animaux sauvage", "animaux intelligentes", "la force utilise", "notre amis", "sa mari"); the use of the direct and indirect object pronouns ("ils aident nous", "je voulais les rendre visite", "tout le monde lui aime", "lui appelle", "j'ai lui embrassé"); relative pronouns ("la manière que"); the gender of common nouns ("une animal", "une cœur grande"); the rule regarding the partitive article ("beaucoup des"); confusion between *ces* and *ses* and writing "cettes" as the plural of *cette*, among others.

It was evident that some candidates tried spontaneous loan translations such as: "ma mère m'est pris au cirque" for ... *m'a amené* ..., or from English, "pour faire sûr" for *assurer*, "à

premier" for *d'abord*, "façon un problème" for *affronter*, "les gens qui me sont regarder" for *les gens qui me regardent*. The importance of reading in French cannot be stressed enough.

Orthographical errors abound, especially where accents are concerned. Some candidates had very limited vocabulary, sometimes resorting to borrowing words from other languages, such as "scientists" or "factors", whilst at times terminology is borrowed from other languages and written in a way which sounds French, such as "serieté" or "tragicament".

In many scripts, sentence construction was weak. Sometimes the examiner could guess what the candidate meant ("Aujourd'hui, il est très popularité à étudier dans autre école comme un échange élève"), at times even that was impossible. These are two examples: "il ne plaisent pas ses yeux" and "je pense qui maintenant, nous sommes expérimentés l'évolution du XX^e siècle".

Finally, a significant number of candidates lost marks for not observing the word limit of 350-400 words.

Candidates sitting for Advanced Level French are expected to write with the appropriate writing skills on both lexical and morphosyntactic levels and most importantly, that their writing should reflect the *vouloir-dire de la langue*. Candidates must read French texts and keep abreast with national and international events.

2. Written Comprehension (75 marks)

Candidates performed generally well in this exercise - the Smartphone being a familiar subject with all candidates. Questions a), b), c) and i) were answered correctly by the majority of candidates. With regard to question d) most candidates understood the text and knew the answer but found some difficulty to express themselves correctly. The effort not to copy the text was positively noted. Most candidates answered question e) correctly. As for question f) the words that presented some difficulty to the candidates were *notamment* and *accroître* and the expression *tout à coup*. Question g) was divided into two parts, i) and ii); the answers should therefore have been separate; weaker candidates only gave one superficial answer. Question h) presented a challenge to weaker students who were not conversant with the syntactic and morphosyntactic features of the French language. As has been pointed out in past reports, candidates at Advanced Level should never answer a question by copying the text. Question j) expressly asked the candidates to give their answer in their own words, (*en vos propres mots*). Nevertheless, there were answers taken *verbatim* from the passage.

The main difficulty encountered by the candidates in this exercise was, as for creative writing, limited vocabulary and disregard of grammar rules, as well as difficulty in sentence construction.

Paper III (75 marks)

Section A

The weakest answers concerned Section A, where the main problem lay with the fact that the candidates' French was poor, consequently, even when it was evident that the candidates had some knowledge of the answer, their response was hindered by poor expression. An answer for 1a) ii), for example, was expressed as follows: "Béline veut que l'argent d'Argan sont donnez a-t-elle après lui est mort". Apart from this recurring problem of poor expression, question 1b) was well answered. Most candidates gave a superficial answer to question 1c) leaving out completely the second part of the question which required them to give specific references to sustain their arguments. As for question 1d), about half the candidates did not explain clearly the significance of Béralde's remark within the context of the character of the protagonist, the hypochondriac Argan. Only 33% of the candidates chose question 2. In question 2a) candidates

were asked to give the context of the extract and to explain the circumstances relevant to it. Few candidates mentioned the fact that it is in this scene that the audience sees on stage for the first time Doctor Diafoirius and his son who was also a doctor, and pretender of Argan's daughter's hand, Angélique. Nor did they mention the presence in this scene of Angélique and Cléante, as well as Toinette. They should also have commented on the dialogue itself as it throws light on the character of Monsieur Diafoirus, representing Molière's adverse judgement on the doctors of his time. Candidates found it difficult to answer correctly question 2b) in spite of the fact that the explanation was in the extract itself. Question 2c) was based on the comic element displayed in the extract. Answers consisted of comments such as "Il y a aussi des éléments burlesque parce que la situation c'est très stupide"; or "Cet ton sarcastique fait la farce plus forte, comme veut Molière". Some answers for question 2d) revealed rehashed material candidates studied by heart regarding the character of Toinette. The question was specifically targeted towards the extract; it was not a general question about Toinette's character. The subsidiary question only required candidates to state whether the particular traits of character revealed in this scene were in conformity or otherwise with her role in the play. This part of the question was completely disregarded by most candidates. In general, candidates need more practice regarding Section A both with regards to content and more so with regard to French expression.

Section B

All the questions in Section B were attempted. Victor Hugo's *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* was only prepared by four candidates, two of whom answered question 1 and the other two answered question 2. This report will not comment on these answers in order not to compromise the candidates' privacy. 91.2% of the candidates prepared Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt's *Concerto à la mémoire d'un ange* and they all answered question 3, except for one candidate who chose question 4. This report will limit itself to comment on question 3. 56% of the candidates prepared Joseph Joffo's *La Jeune Fille au pair*; they all chose question 5 except for three. The comments in this reports will therefore be limited to question 5. This pattern was followed with those candidates who prepared Marcel Pagnol's *La Femme du boulanger*, where all candidates but four (43.7%) answered question 8. In general, candidates did much better in Section B. Only four candidates failed in the two compulsory questions and eight candidates failed in one question. The main reasons for poor performance are the following: (1) Insufficient knowledge of the texts; (2) answers wholly or partly not related to the question; (3) weak English writing skills resulting in incoherent or confused sentences. In some cases, the answers did not satisfy the questions in the rubric and arguments were not supported by quotations and references to the text. When quotations were used, some presented inaccuracies, even in punctuation. Marks were also lost when characters pertaining to other stories were erroneously mentioned.

Almost half the candidates who chose question 3 performed well obtained a mark of 75% or over. These candidates selected the right stories that dealt with the theme of redemption and made judicious comments, supporting their arguments with correct references and quotations. Less than a third of the candidates who answered question 5 obtained a mark over 75%. The answers were generally satisfactory, with a failure rate of just under 10%. Poorer answers provided a summary of the plot rather than an answer related to the rubric. They failed to mention some of those episodes in Wanda's search and subsequent discovery of who the Jews really were, starting with her insistence on working as *filles au pair* with a Jewish family and ending with her decision to go and live in Israel. Just over 20% of the candidates who chose question 8 obtained a mark of 75% or over. These candidates commented on the superiority complex of the marquis. They remarked to what extent he was a catalyst to the development of the novel, both as regards his having unwittingly been the cause of the infidelity of the baker's wife who eloped with his shepherd, as well as his undertaking to direct the operations which were organised to bring her back home.

Paper IV (30 marks)

Only one candidate failed this exercise and the general performance was good, with 44% of the candidates obtaining a mark of 75% or over. The reading of the dictation in groups of words gives candidates an overview of what the text is about. The second reading and the five minutes for a final revision, together with the application of basic grammar rules should leave only a small margin, if any, for spelling mistakes. Yet, the first phrase, *Pour ne pas vous ruiner* was written: "Pour n'est pas vous ruinés", and in many cases, candidates did not realise that *vous* was the object pronoun, not the subject, so they wrote "vous ruinez". Another common mistake was due to the fact that candidates have not mastered the difference in pronunciation between, say *poison* and *poisson*, so that they wrote *combinaison* and *occasion* with a double s. Another phrase that presented some difficulty to many candidates was *faites-en l'expérience*, where different versions of *faites-en* were wrongly given, including, "faitez-en". Accents still give candidates a hard time; unfortunately, even with regard to common words like *très*, *généralement*, and *vélos*. Certain words were written with an accent, even if they don't have it (*exact*, *exigez*) or, and in some cases the accent was simply left out as for *départ*. In other cases, it was not clear whether the accent written was grave or acute. The importance of reading in French, which would go a long way towards enriching the candidates' vocabulary and orthography among many other benefits that have already been mentioned, cannot be stressed enough.

The Oral Examination (60 marks)

The oral examination consisted of a reading exercise (15 marks) and a dialogue made up of two parts, namely, free conversation (20 marks) and a dialogue based on a set text on French culture (25 marks). It is a pleasure to report a marked improvement in the oral skills of the candidates from previous years. 77.6% of the candidates obtained a mark over 75%; of these, 44% obtained a mark over 90% and there were no failures.

The Reading Examination (15 marks)

While articulation was generally good, candidates are advised to pay more attention to the articulation of nasal sounds and to liaisons. On the other hand, a better effort should be made at intonation. Vocabulary that presented some difficulty included *ville*, *architecte*, *ville-musée*, *vestibules*, *inondés*, *maillage*, *entourée*, *a eu*, *blanche*, *prudent*, *XXI^e siècle* in *Lecture 1* and *on le conçoit*, *haut*, *différentes*, *commun*, *cuite* and *toutes* in *Lecture 2*. Candidates are advised to pay more attention to the articulation of nasal sounds and *liaisons*.

The Free Conversation Examination (20 marks)

All candidates made an effort to maintain an interesting conversation on the chosen topic. They made good use of the preparation time and referred to their notes without actually reading them out. They generally expressed themselves in idiomatic and correct French even when the examiner directed the conversation. Some candidates would have done better had their limited vocabulary not prevented them from expressing their ideas clearly.

Dialogue on a set text (25 marks)

Most candidates were well prepared and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the third component of the oral test, namely the Dialogue based on *Civilisation française*, as they answered correctly and without hesitation the questions that were put to them.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2018