

**UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**  
**THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**  
**ADVANCED LEVEL**

**FRENCH**

**MAY 2007**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE**  
**EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**AM FRENCH  
MAY 2007 SESSION  
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

One hundred and forty candidates registered for the above examination. Five candidates were absent. The following table shows the distribution of grades.

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	Absent	Total
No. of candidates	4	16	54	21	30	10	5	140
%	2.9	11.4	38.6	15.0	21.4	7.1	3.6	100

The examination consisted of four papers, including an oral test in reading, conversation and *Civilisation française*.

### Paper I

#### Analyse d'un texte non littéraire (50 marks)

Sixteen (12%) candidates failed this exercise, while twenty-nine (21%) candidates obtained 75% or higher. These statistics show a great improvement over last year's performance. Most candidates commented about the origin of the text, its main theme, the presence of the author, the aim of the author, the coherence of the text and the vocabulary used. The secondary ideas were, however, not always coherently expressed. When commenting on the linguistic aspects of the text, many candidates simply mentioned some linguistic aspects without illustrating them with quotations from the text. Some candidates failed to comment on general aspects of syntax, for example, sentence structure, length of sentences and the sequence of sentences. Others made no remarks on the moods and tenses used. There are still some candidates who cannot distinguish between a summary and a linguistic analysis in spite of the fact that in their examination paper they are reminded of this through the *consignes*. Other candidates find difficulty in expressing their ideas in French, they make grammar and spelling mistakes and their vocabulary is very limited. Interference from other languages such as *example* for *exemple*, *verb* for *verbe* or *quotation* for *citation* is common, and this, in spite of the fact that they are allowed to use a monolingual dictionary during the examination.

### Paper II

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

#### (a) Essay (100 marks)

Thirty-three candidates failed the essay and only eight obtained 75 marks or higher. The most popular essay was (b): *Suivre un régime: quelle obsession!* Though this essay could provide interesting arguments on a subject young candidates are familiar with – in fact, most candidates proved to be very conscious about fitness and a balanced diet – the ideas expressed were very similar, and only a few essays made interesting reading. Title (a), *Les jeunes sont des égoïstes qui ne s'intéressent pas aux questions humanitaires. Commentez cette affirmation*, also proved popular. However, some candidates focused on the problems of young people instead of writing about the lack of interest or otherwise of youths in humanitarian issues. Such a shortcoming was also noticed amongst those candidates who opted for (d) *Faut-il exercer plus de discipline dans notre pays?* where some candidates highlighted today's social problems such as drugs and alcohol, but failed to discuss the issue and suggest any possible measures one can take to instill discipline in the citizens of our country. Title (e), *Une mère vient de perdre son enfant de huit ans déchiré par une bombe. Elle se confie à son journal intime...* offered candidates the opportunity

to express deep emotions in French. Those candidates who were unable to do so should not have resorted to English vocabulary and expressions. One candidate went out of point as he/she wrote an essay on terrorism. Title (c) was the least popular and was generally well tackled. As a general comment, only some essays provided interesting reading, and a good number of candidates' ideas were poor and lacked creativity and originality.

The question of French grammar needs to be tackled very seriously. At this level candidates are expected to know how to conjugate verbs, the use of the tenses, agreement rules of nouns and adjectives and of the past participle, the use of the partitive article, direct and indirect object, the use of prepositions, etc. Poor vocabulary combined with bad sentence structure make it often difficult to follow what they mean. Many mistakes are also due to negligence as the following examples taken from candidates' scripts clearly demonstrate:

- Interference from other languages: *autorité, adults, discuter, attendre cette école, les expenses, obsesse, advertisements, travaux, par exemple, exercices, modèles* (for 'mannequins'), *ceinture de sigurté, citizens, sigarettes, caractère, environnement, entertainment, pièce* (for *morceau*).
- Spelling: *témparature, achéter, parlèment, derrière, discothèque, planete, la television.*
- The use of the negative: *ne les forcent d'aller, ne laisse ses déchets, qui s'intéressent pas.*
- Expressions of quantity: *beaucoup des personnes, un peux difficile.*
- Agreement rules : *les sources principale, l'émissions de gaz, il sont prêt, le mois derniere, chaque années, générations précédents, les seuls raisons, une problème, trente minute, deux maladie, tout les aliments.*
- Verbs: *tu ne peut pas, on doit mange.*
- Using nouns as verbs, and vice-versa: *travail* (as a verb) and *travaille* (as a noun).
- Vocabulary: confusion between *où* and *ou* and between *savoir* and *connaître*.

This list is far from being exhaustive.

Many candidates did not respect the word limit (they either exceeded 400 words or wrote shorter essays) and marks were deducted when the word limit was not observed.

### **(b) Written Comprehension (70 marks)**

The comprehension exercise proved quite challenging for the majority of candidates. In fact, 41 out of 140 candidates did not obtain a pass mark.

Regarding question 1, candidates either misunderstood the expressions which they had to explain or else found it difficult to express themselves in order to give the meaning. On the other hand, the answers for questions 2 and 5 were generally good. Some candidates gave Jean-Luc Besson's job as "*criminologue est catégorique*"; this shows that they copy directly from the text without understanding what they are writing. They made similar mistakes in their answers to question 3, 7 and 11. Question 6 carried the largest number of marks but only a few candidates seem to give any importance to this detail; in fact, many candidates simply gave the three examples and left out the second part of the question. The word "Reformulez" in question 4 was misunderstood by some candidates who simply changed the structure of the sentence using the same words of the text without doing the least effort to re-write the sentence in their own words. The answers to question 10 were very poor. It goes without saying that if candidates do not know the grammar rules, neither do they know the terms relating to the different parts of speech. As a result, they gave an example of the *passé composé* for the *participe passé*, while others seem never to have heard of the word *adverbe* or of the *infinitif*.

**Paper III  
Literature (100 marks)**

All the literature questions were attempted, however the text chosen by the majority of candidates was *La Symphonie pastorale*. On the other hand, only eleven candidates answered a question on *Le rêve*. Fifty candidates (35.7%) failed in this paper; ten candidates obtained 75% or higher. Most of the answers were written in English, a few were in Maltese; none was in French. Three candidates left out one question and two candidates answered only one question.

It is worth repeating the general comments about this paper that were made in last year's report as no improvement was registered.

- (1) Candidates should read the question carefully and plan their answer accordingly. They should not make use of memorized material totally irrelevant to the question.
- (2) Candidates do not give enough references and quotations to support their arguments.
- (3) Quotations are only valid if they support relevant argumentation.
- (4) In many cases, the quotations were not exact.
- (5) Only a small number of candidates mentioned some biographical notes and/or commented on the author and his times when this information was relevant to the question.

1. Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

Both questions (a) and (b) were tackled, however, half the candidates who chose (b) failed as they did not read the question carefully. They reproduced memorised material on the comic element in the play, thus stopping after the first phrase of the quotation they had to comment on and completely ignoring the rest. Others went completely out of point as they wrote about the exploitation of M. Jourdain by his tutors and by Dorante. Those candidates who answered question (a) by relating the story of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* also went out of point. They should have discussed whether Molière's message is that of accepting or otherwise one's social status.

2. Musset, *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*

Almost all the candidates who answered the questions on this play obtained a good result. Only 5 candidates failed to give a satisfactory answer to this question. Question (a) was by far more popular and the candidates succeeded in portraying adequately the link between the past of the two protagonists and their perception of love. In question (b) candidates did well to comment on the tenacity of the characters of young Camille and Perdican and the tragic consequences of their behaviour, however, marks were lost when no allusion was made to the biographical details that were necessary to justify the quotation.

3. Zola, *Le Rêve*

Question (a) proved more popular than question (b). However, in spite of the fact that the questions were very straightforward, candidates obtained rather poor marks. The reason for this was that in (a) they lost sight of the question and did not comment on the effect on the reader's imagination of the dreamlike atmosphere created by the author and in (b) marks were lost because candidates only gave descriptions of the three characters of their choice and did not analyse these characters from the point of view suggested by the question.

4. Gide, *La Symphonie pastorale*

Both questions (a) and (b) proved popular with the candidates who prepared this novel. The answers were generally good. Candidates clearly understood the meaning of the key words *émotions* in question (a) and *souffrance* in question (b) and made a good analysis of these themes with arguments well supported by references from the text.

5. Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*

The performance of most candidates was satisfactory in both questions (a) and (b). There was a tendency in the answers to question (b) to simply narrate episodes from the story. Other candidates did not understand the question and only described the encounter of *le Petit Prince* with several protagonists. Some quotations had many spelling mistakes.

6. Camus, *L'Envers et l'endroit*

Most candidates prepared this text and opted for question (a); in fact, only one candidate answered question (b). Possibly, the reason why question (b) was avoided stems from the fact that candidates were unable to answer it as they were not familiar enough with the author's biography. Although most candidates understood well what was required of them in question (a), they did not illustrate their arguments with references, much less so with quotations, from the text.

## Paper IV

### Dictée (30 marks)

The general performance in this paper was quite encouraging as only nine candidates failed and forty-eight candidates obtained a mark over 75%. The mistakes candidates make fall mainly under these categories:

(1) Interference with English, Italian or Maltese, for example: *l'orizzont, l'orizon, l'horizont, l'orizone, raconte, fotos, movements*.

(2) Incorrect conjugation of verbs: *un long serpent de voitures descendent; prênet, prenné, prenait, prenaient, prenaient; je le voie*.

(3) Non application of basic grammar rules: *cet rivière; sa ferme perdu; sa maison y est adossé; la plupart de bars; le plus grande; la vieux ville*.

(4) Limited vocabulary: (a) Confusing homonyms: *sept* for *cette*; *ce jeter* for *se jeter* and *se vieillard* for *ce vieillard*, *ca maison*, *ca ferme*, *ça ferme* for the possessive adjective *sa*; *a* for *à*; etc.; (b) bad spelling as candidates are unfamiliar with such common words as *brouillard*, *bière*, *pluie* or the verb *s'éclaircir* or *agrandir* or the expressions *loup de mer* and *peu à peu*.

(c) The wrong accent is used in the spelling of the most basic vocabulary, such as *après*, *été*; often accents are put where they do not exist, for example: *mèr* or *intèrnet*.

Many candidates did not follow the punctuation that was dictated. Many commas were left out, the *points de suspension* were understood by some as *point d'exclamation*. One candidate wrote the instructions the examiner was giving: *ouvrez les guillemets*, etc.. For the year 1989, candidates gave at least 6 versions, including 1985, 1949, 1999, 1909 and 1969.

### The Oral Examination (50 marks)

The oral examination was composed of a reading exercise (15 marks) and a dialogue made up of two parts, namely, free conversation (15 marks) and a dialogue based on a set text on French culture (20 marks).

Seven candidates failed the Oral examination and twenty-seven (19%) obtained 80% of the mark or over. Candidates should make better use of the time they have in order to prepare the reading

passage. They should show by their intonation that they have understood the passage and that they understand the use of punctuation marks. Their articulation should be clear. A common mistake in their reading is the pronunciation of the -er ending where many pronounce the "r" (*respecter, gâcher* in *lecture 1*, *dossiers* in *lecture 2*.) As regards the free conversation, candidates often have to be helped by the examiner and find it quite difficult to engage in a discussion. Their total lack of general knowledge and of current affairs does not help them at all. Obviously, they are not tested on this *per se*, but there are themes they should expect to be asked to talk about or give their opinion. Regarding the dialogue which tested candidates on *civilisation française*, while roughly half the candidates did well or very well, the rest had only a vague idea of the text set in the syllabus and gave confused answers or no answers at all. Candidates should be encouraged to read books and magazines in French, to listen to French transmissions on the radio and to watch TV5, especially the news.

Chairman  
Board of Examiners

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