

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

FRENCH

MAY 2011

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**IM FRENCH
MAY 2011 SESSION
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

One hundred and twenty-one candidates registered for the French Intermediate examination. One candidate was absent, one candidate sat only for the written examination, while four candidates sat only for the oral examination. The following table shows the distribution of grades.

Table 1 : Distribution of Grades May 2011

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	Abs.	Total
No. Of Grades	9	17	26	28	24	16	1	121
% of Total	7.4	14.0	21.5	23.1	19.8	13.2	0.8	100

The examination consisted of one written paper and an oral examination.

The Written examination

1. Free Composition (25 marks)

As candidates rarely read, if at all, in French, their expression is weak, and interference with English, Maltese and Italian is very common. In the scripts, one comes across phrases translated literally from other languages they are familiar with, such as, "il est meilleur", "dire leur opinion", "après une personne fini l'école", "è possible", "être attente". For *faire une difference* a candidate wrote "différer" and for *rendre meilleur* another candidate invented "meilleurer"! The most popular title, chosen by 42% of the candidates, was (c) which dealt with the use of social networking websites. Title (b), a narrative demanding some imagination, was slightly more popular than the first essay title; it was an argumentative essay about the extension of school hours. 27% of the candidates chose title (b), while 24% chose the third one. The letter candidates were asked to write (title (d)) appealed to the rest, some 3%; 4% of the candidates did not sit for the written examination. This year, there was a marked improvement in this exercise as 23% of the candidates obtained a mark equivalent to 75% or over, while 17.5% failed. One candidate wrote less than 20 words which made no sense at all and one candidate left out the essay altogether. Marks were lost for the following main reasons, namely, ignorance of basic grammar rules, carelessness, bad spelling, a very limited vocabulary and writing less than 230 words or exceeding the word limit of 250 words. Often, adjectives did not agree with the nouns they qualify, as in the following examples: "Ils sont toutes humains", "son avantages", "les parents restent calme", "images publié", "cette programmes", "toutes les monde", "ces information", "tout les choses sur nos vie personal"; some candidates confuse the possessive adjectives in the third person: "les enseignants et ses élèves", as well as the partitive article: "des autres themes", "trop des raisons". The conjugation of common irregular verbs was often wrong, for example, "nous prendons", and verbs taking the auxiliary *être* in the *passé composé* were conjugated with *avoir*. Confusion between the *passé composé*, the *imparfait* and the *plus-que-parfait* was mostly evident in the narrative essay (b). The use of the pronoun *on* has not been mastered by several students and many wrote *un* instead. A number of candidates even mistook *on* for *ont*. Candidates are advised to ascertain that they copy correctly the essay title, as they give a very bad impression when they misspell words that are given in the examination paper itself!

2. Summary (25 marks)

As many candidates (17%) failed in this exercise as those who obtained 75% or higher. A few candidates did very well. The passage was generally well understood, except, in many cases, for the important detail *porter plainte* on the part of the heirs. Ideas were quite well organised and many kept to the word limit. While candidates are encouraged, indeed required, not to give the same wording as in the passage, efforts should not be made to substitute certain words, such as *héritiers*, for which some candidates gave *successeurs*! On the other hand, as candidates have, in general, a very limited vocabulary, they tend to copy whole sentences from the passage, which makes them lose marks. The same problems encountered in question 1 regarding grammatical errors and orthography were repeated in this exercise and that was the main cause of loss of marks.

3. Literature (15 marks)

Only five candidates failed in this exercise, one of them did not tackle this question at all and 40% obtained 75% or over. The majority of the students wrote their literature essay in English and a few wrote in Maltese. No one wrote the essay in French. Almost all the candidates chose to answer the questions on Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's book *Monsieur Ibrahim et les Fleurs du Coran*, with a marked preference for question (d) where students were asked to discuss how Momo's outlook on life changed because of Monsieur Ibrahim. Candidates showed a good understanding of the book in question and supported their arguments by giving relevant quotations. Many of their ideas were relevant and well organised. Although a number of candidates did include an introduction and conclusion, more practice is needed in those areas as these were either too short or totally irrelevant. In the latter case, they gave a brief summary of the book or a presentation of the characters. Only 3% of the candidates answered a question on the play *Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon*. These essays lacked a good understanding of the play and tended to narrate rather than discuss.

4. Civilisation (15 marks)

Just over a third of the candidates answered question A. 25% of the candidates obtained 75% or over, while 23% failed in this exercise. This is an improvement over last year's performance, however more effort should be put into this interesting aspect of French culture. Some candidates rush into answering a question without giving themselves the time to understand exactly what they are being asked. This was the case for question A 1 (i) where candidates answered vaguely about the economic progress France has made since World War II, and to a lesser degree in the case of A 1 (ii) with such answers as Alcatel or Renault. It is a pity that most of the candidates who knew the correct answer to the latter question made such spelling mistakes as "L'Etas-Unis" or "les Etas-unis", "l'Allemande", "l'Espagne" and "le Grand Bretagne". Question A 2 was generally answered correctly, except for such careless mistakes which included gross errors such as "produits culturel", an expression they should have made the effort of copying correctly! Those candidates who chose to answer exercise 4 B generally gave the correct answers, sometimes with similar careless mistakes as already pointed out. Some candidates misunderstood question B 1 (ii) and just gave a list of the various invasions that took place in France until the 9th century. As for question B 1 (iv), while most candidates had an idea of what is meant by *tourisme vert*, they expressed themselves very badly.

The Oral Examination (20 marks)

Two candidates were absent for this part of the examination. Only three candidates failed this test, while almost 40% obtained 15 marks (75%) or over. While candidates generally prepared themselves well for the dialogue, they gave less attention to prepare well the reading passage. The main difficulties encountered in the reading passages concerned the nasal consonants: *humanisation* and *reluisant* in the first reading and *information*, *transport en commun*, *passant*

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and *enfin* in the second one; the silent *h* in *humanisation*, *hébergé*, *historiquement* in *Lecture 1*, the *é* in *créé* and *créée* in both readings, as well as *voiture* (*Lecture 1*) and *voituriers* (*Lecture 2*). Interference with English occurred in *entreprise* (*Lecture 1*) and *accès* (*Lecture 2*). The acronym *SNCF* was often pronounced in English! Some readers read *construites* (*Lecture 1*) as if the past participle were in the masculine, whereas the diphthong *ai* in *laisse* in the same passage was wrongly pronounced as in *lasse*. Finally, the expression *de plus en plus* in *Lecture 2* was read, in most cases, without pronouncing the *liaisons*. Through their reading some candidates showed that they did not understand parts of the passage. Moreover, more attention should be given to articulation.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners

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