



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

IM French

First Session 2024

Examiners' Report (2024): IM French

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for French was 66.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the Main 2024 session of the examination

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	1	11	18	8	7	12	9	66
% OF TOTAL	1.5	16.7	27.3	12.1	10.6	18.2	13.6	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for French 2024 First Session

There was therefore an increase from last year's total of registered candidates, which was 53.

B. THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The number of candidates absent for the oral examination was very high at 15 (23%), three more than the total number of candidates absent for the written examination. Thus some candidates chose not to sit for the spoken component of the examination, which is very worrying. This is because speaking is a crucial language skill; candidates need to engage in it with effort during their post-secondary course, and teachers need to educate their candidates about its importance and give them the opportunity to practise it regularly and to gain confidence in speaking the target language. It is also a pity that by not attending the oral examination, candidates miss out on the opportunity to gain more marks. In fact, 15 candidates (22.7% of candidates present for the oral examination) showed excellent preparation for the oral paper and obtained a mark of 20 out of 25 or more. Three candidates were awarded full marks for their impeccable performance. Another 22 candidates (43%) obtained a good mark, ranging between 16 and 19/25. Therefore, 66% of the candidates who sat for this component of the examination showed good or remarkable competence in the exercises set in the paper, that is the reading passage, the discussion on the reading and the conversation on set topics. Only 2 candidates failed to obtain at least 50% of the mark. The remaining candidates obtained slightly above 50% of the mark.

C. THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Free Composition

In the free composition, regarding the choice of question, question (a) was by far the most popular topic / genre, as it was answered by 67% of candidates. This was the argumentative essay, about whether candidates think that it is important to have a hobby in life. Titles (c) and (d) were chosen by an equal number of candidates (15% each). These were the dialogue between two friends in which the candidate had to discuss a friend's decision to become a DJ, and an email to inform a sick friend about what was happening at school. The narrative title (question b), for which an introductory statement was provided, was only chosen by 2 candidates.

In the case of the argumentative question (a), some candidates failed to tackle the topic in a balanced manner. They were expected to mention the benefits of having hobbies, with an intelligent introduction to the subject. They would also be expected to mention some dangers that could be associated with having a hobby, such as spending too much time and money on it if it becomes an obsession, or the danger that some hobbies may keep you away from socializing or exercising, etc.

They need to end the essay with a convincing conclusion in which they would state for instance the need to choose a hobby wisely, and to practice it with moderation and in a way that it can contribute to mental and physical health. However, some compositions were completely biased or did not demonstrate evidence of deep enough thinking.

Almost all candidates understood the question and/or the instructions, and the genre of written production that was expected of them (for instance, dialogue vs. story vs. email). However, turns in the dialogue were very often too brief. Candidates need to ensure that they write a coherent essay with a correct general structure including an introduction and a conclusion, and with intelligent and well-developed ideas. Use of punctuation was generally acceptable and ideas were organized in separate paragraphs.

Overall, the performance of many candidates in the composition was very unsatisfactory. A number of candidates could not construct their sentences properly, producing wrong word order (« ... je vraiment veux voir tu en train de faire le DJ ») or experienced difficulty with tonic pronouns (« avec ils », « si tu gagne un événement me téléphone »); demonstrative adjectives (« cette sujet »); verb conjugation in all tenses used by the candidates (« vous crée »; « je fait »; « je crois »; « je suis parlé », « je dorma », « Les passe-temps était une chose qui aide les personnes », « je commançé étudie »), and gender / number agreements even for basic, frequently used terms (« ton meilleure amie »; « un personne », « les meilleurs personnes », « Votre parents »). There were also difficulties with the choice of prepositions (« tu as parles sur cette choses »; « dans l'été »). It is extremely worrying that a significant number of candidates showed that they cannot even properly put a verb in the negative (« un passe-tempe non est suffi », « il est très facile pour oublie dans un vie n'calme pas », « c'est ne pas une problème », « un personne qui non faisons des passe-temps », « je n'ai pas sais c'est une probleme difficile a la maison »). At times, not even definite and indefinite articles were used well (« pour faire bon chose », « les passe-temps sont très utile dans la vie, pour mieux santé », « beaucoup aiment de faire de choses à la maison », « personne decidé il n'est pas travail plus »). The use of infinitives, whether not present when they are necessary or the opposite, leaves much to be desired (« tu peux regardé à la television », « j'aimer la musique », « Pour un personne avais un passe-temps était très importante »).

Some candidates with a poor knowledge of French vocabulary thought of English, Maltese and Italian terms and expressions, using them unchanged or, very often, creating approximate words or expressions that are wrong in French (« aider le relaxation », « Si comme tout le monde a une vite remplie »; « en combination de movement physical »; « d'habbits sain »; « pour exemples », « personnellement », « les skills comme la socialisation », « aller à la plage pour rillaser », « le principal au lycée »).

When it comes to spelling, accents were frequently left out, or misplaced. For example, words like « j'apprécié » and « sante » were misspelled due to mistakes on the level of accents.

It is therefore evident that the range of vocabulary used was limited, although a small number of candidates showed a better grasp of vocabulary in their composition. Overall, adverbs (except for très and very few others), and especially adjectives, were extremely rare to expand on and to support

the nouns and verbs candidates used. Using adverbs and adjectives would give essays that extra edge and result in a more interesting and colourful text. Overall, the quality of writing in the French language was extremely poor and riddled with grammatical mistakes, and it is a great pity that most candidates who are obtaining a Grade C or better are managing this thanks to the literature and civilisation tasks, not due to their competence in French. Reading and listening to French on the Internet are a must if candidates wish to improve their competence in the language.

Summary

A number of candidates found this exercise quite challenging, even though most candidates demonstrated relative understanding of the text (which concerned a YouTuber who set out to walk across Wales in a straight line). A significant number of candidates, after their post-secondary course, do not seem to have mastered the technique of the summary: the main ideas of the passage were sometimes omitted, and chunks of the text were copied from the passage without being reworded or expressed sufficiently well. It is therefore strongly encouraged that teachers assiduously prepare their candidates to learn the proper technique of the summary.

Candidates demonstrated great difficulty in using correct French to write their summaries. They made mistakes as regards gender (« cet aventure » ; « le semain » ; « un experience »). Others failed to put the verb in the infinitive after a preposition or put an infinitive instead of a conjugated verb: « Tom Davies inviter ses fans a participée à ce challenge ». There were mistakes when it comes to agreements, such as between noun and adjective (« de nationalite anglais »). Verb tenses and conjugations were often mistaken, as was the choice of verb on the level of vocabulary (« il a découvri » ; « il a tombé » ; Tom Davies a persuadé un défi » ; « trois parfois Davies marchant plus de défi initial »). This last clause illustrates how in some cases it was not even possible to understand what the candidates were trying to express.

Sentence structure was wrong in quite a few cases, which, combined with lexical difficulties, also led to undecipherable sentences or parts of sentences, as in « il a géré de courir dizaines de kilometres dans un peu de jours, qu'on peut voir avec ses vidéos, que ont la nature superbe du Pays, car il la doit conquérir pour traverser. » ; « et aussi pour aller trop distance de chez eux ». Some candidates do not know (how to use) the French possessive adjectives (« sa aventure » ; « Le YouTuteur retrouver ils equipment »).

Spelling mistakes were frequent although competence in spelling should be better at this level, and this concerns basic words too, such as « alors » ; « ce jeun YouTuber » ; « adolescent ».

Literature Essay

Most candidates did well in this exercise. However, 8 candidates (15%) obtained less than 50% of the mark. There were no less than 21 candidates (39%, up 10% from 2023) who obtained an excellent mark though, between 11 and 15 out of 15. Candidates whose mark was in between these two scores would have done better had they further developed the literary analysis of their studied text and included higher order comments. This is a question where marks can be easily obtained with proper preparation, so candidates would do well to study sufficiently so they can obtain a good mark.

This year also, the novel *Oscar et la dame rose* by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt was by far the most popular choice. There was a distinct preference between questions 3(a) on the existence of God as presented in the novel and 3(b) on the fact that the author deals with the delicate topic of the illness and death of a child. Twenty-eight (52%) candidates chose question 3(a) and 17 candidates (31.5%) chose question 3(b). Seven candidates (13%) chose question 3(c) on Philippe Delerm's *L'Envol*, concerning the contrast between M. Delmas' boring life and the flying men in Folon's painting. Only two candidates answered question 3(d), on the significance and consequences of M. Delmas' being fascinated by Folon's painting. Seven of the nine essays on *L'Envol* were of good quality, and obtained relatively high marks.

Civilisation

All candidates attempted the culture section. Candidates could choose six questions out of eight. The majority of candidates performed well in this section, showing that candidates studied the civilisation syllabus content well and were prepared to tackle all types of questions (multiple choice, matching, complete the sentence, etc). High marks were obtained by a good fraction of the candidates, and in some cases these were full or almost full marks (15/15 or 14.5/15). The lowest mark was 6.5. It is a pity that some candidates do not obtain high marks in an exercise which may easily allow them to achieve a good mark if they study properly.

Concluding remarks

The Examiners' Panel wishes to underline the importance of the oral language skill, and the need to give it the importance and practice it deserves. Candidates are encouraged to watch videos and news on television and online media in French, as this enhances their understanding of French speech and their own spoken production in French. Reading magazines and books of the right level is also crucial to help with understanding written texts and writing, apart from the fact that all this practice helps candidates' higher order thinking and argumentative skills. The above report needed to stress the poor level of candidates' writing in French and thorough and disciplined practice is necessary if candidates wish to achieve a better level of competence in the French language. In the literature question, more quotations need to be included and candidates need to make sure that these are pertinent to the points being developed and accurately reproduced.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2024