



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**



Examiners' Report

IM French

First Session 2025

Examiners' Report (2025): IM French

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

As in 2024, the total number of candidates who registered to sit for Intermediate French was 66.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May Session 2025

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	3	7	26	12	8	7	3	66
% OF TOTAL	4.5	10.6	39.4	18.2	12.1	10.6	4.5	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Intermediate French 2025 First Session

Thankfully, there were significantly less candidates absent from the examination, down from 9 to 4 in the written paper, and only 3 from the oral examination.

B. THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The number of candidates absent for the oral examination was much less than last year, which had been very high at 15 (23 %). It is once again emphasised that the speaking skill is vital in linguistic communication, and that candidates need to practise the spoken component seriously.

Overall, the majority of candidates displayed good to outstanding competence in the required tasks, namely the reading passage, the subsequent discussion, and the conversation on set topics.

C. THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Free Composition

Candidates are reminded that they need to respect the word length because marks are deducted according to the marking scheme for essays which are shorter or longer than the prescribed length.

Question (a) was the most popular topic/genre and was answered by 53% of candidates. This was the argumentative essay, about the role of friends in the life of individuals of all ages and then more specifically in the life of youngsters. Title (c), a dialogue between two friends where there had to be dissuasion from an unpleasant holiday destination, was chosen by 32% of candidates, while title (d), an email to a sibling about parents having taken a disappointing decision, was chosen by 9.7% of candidates. Question (b) was not chosen by any candidate, and unfortunately, two candidates did not attempt the essay at all.

Some compositions demonstrated evidence of superficial ideas. Almost all candidates understood the question and/or the instructions, and the genre of written production that was expected of them. However, once again, turns in the dialogue were very often insufficiently developed and very far removed from natural interaction patterns. In fact, a number of the candidates who chose the dialogue failed to reach the required number of words for this task. Candidates are reminded that a coherent essay is expected of them, with a well-organised general structure including an engaging introduction and a conclusion which adequately wraps up the whole argumentation/story. Use of punctuation was generally acceptable and apart from the dialogue, ideas were organized in separate paragraphs.

Overall, many candidates failed to demonstrate satisfactory language mastery. A good number of

candidates could not build their sentences correctly, producing wrong word order and even incomprehensible sentences (« Pour ajouter si quand tu as, pas besoin, et si quand tu si en pericole » ; « Quand je suis timide, nous croire, ensemble, et apres je sentir bonne » ; « Quoi est tu pense ? » ; « Je suis gratuit pour mesa care ... ») or made mistakes in choosing and placing tonic pronouns (« J'espere tu visiter nous », « Oui, tu non preferee, ecrire me » ; « Je ecris tu parce que tu aide moi »). There was difficulty with verb conjugation (« Quand tu passer une periode difficile » ; « tous le monde veux vivre » ; « l'amitie servent » ; « je ecrivéz », « nous avons prendons le decision »), and gender/number agreements even for basic concepts (« Notre amis » ; « Notre relations », « Le moments inoubliable », « Une temps difficile »). Mistakes were also made when it came to the choice and morphology of prepositions (« Au France » ; « A Etat-Unis » ; « dans l'été » ; « du l'amitié »). It is of great concern that several candidates could not properly use the negative (« Je ne ecrit au telephone pas », « Oui non tu preferer acitivites en Espagne » ; « rien c'est parfait »), when the negative is something they are supposed to learn at the beginning of the foreign language course. On similar lines, some candidates could not use definite and indefinite articles well (« une effet profonde », « un vacance », « le confiance », « un vie saine »). Infinitives also pose a challenge to candidates (« elles font me sens très contente » ; « nous pouvons avons »). Many candidates still write « beaucoup des » in cases when « beaucoup de » is needed, and experience difficulty in using the relative pronouns qui, que and dont : « de la reflexions different que tu as qui besoin ».

Once again, English, Maltese and Italian terms and expressions were at times resorted to by candidates possessing limited French vocabulary : (« physical », « l'individuel » ; « schedule » ; « travail à summer » ; « problem », « islande », « caracteristiques », « contribuer », « object » ; « relassant » ; « enjoyables »).

Errors in spelling were not rare, and accents were frequently left out, or mistaken: « après » ; « parce que il y a » ; « par exemple » .

The range of vocabulary employed by candidates was, on the whole, limited, with only a minority displaying a more adequate command in their compositions. The use of adverbs - beyond the most basic - and, more particularly, adjectives, was conspicuously rare. A richer and more consistent use of these elements would have contributed significantly to producing more nuanced, engaging, and stylistically effective texts. In general, the quality of written French was unsatisfactory, being characterised by frequent and sometimes serious grammatical inaccuracies. In order to strengthen their skills, candidates should make systematic use of authentic online and physical resources for reading and listening in French.

Summary

It was evident that several candidates found this exercise to be the most demanding, despite the fact that most showed a reasonable understanding of the passage, which dealt with illegal underground excavations for the theft of ancient treasure in Naples. However, it was regrettably clear that many have not yet mastered the technique of summarising: key ideas were at times overlooked, while lengthy portions of the text were once again reproduced verbatim. It is therefore strongly recommended that candidates make every effort to grasp and apply the correct method of summary writing.

Candidates demonstrated great difficulty in using correct French to write their summaries. There were errors concerning gender and number, and consequently the use of definite and indefinite articles, and demonstrative adjectives (« cette acte criminelle » ; « un eglise » ; « les police »). Others used an infinitive when a conjugated verb was necessary: « La police italienne arriver et intervenir ». Verb tenses and

conjugations were often mistaken, (« ils trouvés » ; « ont été découvri » ; « la police italienne arrêté un entrepreneur »).

In some cases the ideas that candidates were trying to express were undecipherable : « La police premiere decouvertions d'une eglis » ; « Le surpris et l'amont de fouiller clandestinement les souterrains dans un train » ; « Parce-que ça, ce patrimoine culturel a tout perdu et plus de ville comme les Grecs » ; « Tous les objects summer des plus de millions ».

Spelling did not satisfy expectations at this level, and this concerns basic words too, such as « veïux » ; « eglis » ; « objects ».

Literature Essay

Overall, most candidates performed satisfactorily or fairly well in this exercise, with the vast majority obtaining a fair mark. The level of performance is disappointing, considering that the answers were written in the candidates' L1. Many responses consisted largely of narrative retelling, with little evidence of analytical engagement or reflection in relation to the question set. This trend suggests an over-reliance on rote learning, as many candidates perform strongly in areas requiring memorisation (notably the civilisation component) but show limited capacity for critical interpretation. The literature component offers an opportunity to secure high marks with adequate preparation; candidates are therefore strongly advised to dedicate sufficient time to structured study and textual analysis.

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 important rôle of la Dame Rose in the novel and 3(b) on the fact that the author deals with profound notions linked to the very essence of life and death. Not less than 41 (67%) candidates chose question 3(a) and 13 candidates (21%) chose question 3(b). Four candidates (6.5%) chose question 3(c) on Philippe Delerm's *L'Envol*, concerning the implications of the metamorphosis in M. Delmas' life after encountering a particular painting in an exhibition. Only one candidate answered question 3(d), on M. Delmas' thirst for freedom from a boring, repetitive life. Candidates are reminded that they need to clearly indicate their choice of essay, where 3(a) or 3(b); or 3(c) or 3(d). In fact, in the case of two candidates who answered the question on *Oscar et la Dame Rose*, without indicating their choice, the essay looked like a summary and could not be attributed to either option.

Candidates opted to write in English, except for two who wrote in Maltese and one who wrote in French. Whereas the introduction was generally engaging, candidates tended not to outline their essay's main themes/arguments. Also, their conclusion did not summarize the main points.

Whereas most candidates did discuss three themes per chosen question, some, however, discussed two themes. Others discussed extended variations of the same theme. Separate themes could have been better delineated by the candidates. The candidates' write-up was overall coherent.

The length of the write-up varied. Some candidates wrote 4 to 5 pages; others wrote extensively (for instance, 8 pages or more).

Quotations in French were included by most of the candidates, many of which were relevant. However, some candidates simply reproduced a quotation and an accompanying text which they learned by heart, without showing deep understanding. Some candidates did manage a good interpretation of the quoted text.

As to knowledge about the author, candidates shared and reproduced the same repetitive and very scant information, namely a reference to the series *Cycle de l'Invisible* for Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt and *Folon's Le Cri* for Philippe Delerm. They would benefit from (more) autonomous learning and research.

Candidates are once again reminded that inadequate essay structure carries a penalty. The ability to organise ideas coherently and logically in a literature essay is an essential skill in its own right, distinct from the presentation of relevant content and arguments, and must therefore be mastered.

Civilisation

Candidates are reminded that they need to choose six questions out of eight; in the case when they reply to more questions, only the first six are taken into consideration. Most candidates answered question 4c, 4g and 4d. The least answered question was 4f.

The majority of candidates performed well in this section. A substantial proportion achieved high marks, with several candidates obtaining full or nearly full scores.

D. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Examiners' Panel wishes to reiterate the central role of oral proficiency in language learning and to emphasise the need for it to receive the attention and regular practice it merits. Candidates are strongly advised to engage frequently with French through television, online news, and other audiovisual materials, as this exposure greatly improves both comprehension of spoken French and the quality of oral expression. Reading magazines and books at an appropriate level is likewise essential to strengthen reading comprehension and writing skills. Such consistent practice also contributes to the development of higher-order thinking and argumentation.

This report has highlighted the unsatisfactory standard of written French among candidates; sustained and disciplined practice is indispensable for improving linguistic competence. With regard to the literature component, candidates are encouraged to cultivate deeper analytical skills, to support their arguments with well-chosen and accurately reproduced quotations, and to ensure that these references are directly relevant to the points under discussion.

Chairperson

Examination Panel 2025