



2003

LOTE: French GA 3: Examination

Oral component

Most students handled the conversation section quite competently, demonstrating good linguistic skills and a sound knowledge of the content of the prescribed topics. In some cases, students performed better in the discussion section. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in both sections.

To maximise their performance in the general conversation and discussion students should:

- be familiar with the criteria as part of being thoroughly prepared
- realise that a conversation is an exchange and not a question/answer session
- be able to respond to questions and comments without resorting to pre-learned material
- know that there are several ways of asking the same question
- be able to respond to questions in some breadth and depth and build on comments made by assessors
- acquire a good knowledge of key vocabulary and structures
- be able to converse in basic tenses such as the present, future, conditional and perfect
- be able to self correct and seek clarification
- be able to express and elaborate on ideas and opinions and justify them
- be able to use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations
- develop repair strategies to avoid lengthy pauses
- know techniques and appropriate language to enable them to engage in discussion
- be able to make comparisons
- know how to make reference to and link opinions to texts studied.

Whilst the conversation and the discussion criteria are the same they assess two very different tasks, one on familiar matters, the other on the Detailed Study which requires a more objective approach, so that the language is less predictable. The criteria assess:

- the student's capacity to maintain the exchange appropriately and effectively
- relevance, breadth and depth of information
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar
- clarity of expression.

Section 1 – Conversation

This task involves a conversation about the student's personal world; for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations.

The most successful students provided extensive answers to questions, confidently moving the exchange forward in accurate language, characterised by an impressive range of vocabulary and complex structures such as the subjunctive. During the conversation they were able to switch from one tense to another with ease. These students also demonstrated the capacity to respond to and build on comments made by the assessors. There were no unnatural pauses and a consistent pace was maintained throughout the assessment. Weaker students, however, struggled with the simplest questions, made frequent false starts and offered responses at the most basic level. The content of their answers was mediocre and, at times, minimal. They often fell back on pre-learned material or resorted to anglicisms to compensate for unknown phrases or vocabulary. They rarely knew the gender of subjects, were unable to make subject/verb or noun/adjective agreements, frequently confused such nouns as 'métier' and 'matière' and experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying opinions. Inability to use a range of tenses was also commonplace at this level of performance.

Section 2 – Discussion

The choice of topic for the Detailed Study is crucial. Students are at a severe disadvantage if the sub-topic is too complex, broad, narrow or vague. The sub-topic should not only reflect the interests of students, it must also suit their linguistic ability and promote discussion of the issues and resources studied. Descriptive or purely informative topics should be avoided as they do not generally promote discussion, expression of opinions or generate new ideas. A poor choice of sub-topic invariably inhibits the student's chances of meeting the assessment criteria, 'relevance, breadth and depth of information'.

Most students outlined the sub-topic within the one-minute time limit, stating whether the topic was Text or VCE VET, the title of the sub-topic, giving a brief elaboration of the sub-topic, focusing on the issues for discussion and letting the assessors know whether any support material had been brought. However, there was a small number who went beyond the one-minute time limit, launching into a presentation rather than giving an introduction. Others cited too many resources and were unable to discuss the content of these documents. It is essential that students structure their introduction tightly, directing assessors to their preferred areas of discussion.

Good students demonstrated an excellent knowledge of their topic, citing three or more varied resources in different text types. They were not only thoroughly conversant with the content of their Detailed Study, but also highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, substantiating them with pertinent evidence. At this level students demonstrated the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary and a range of complex structures and accurate language.

By contrast, some students were not well prepared and were unable to speak about or discuss different aspects of their chosen sub-topic. A number of students quoted only two resources or no written resource, citing only the Internet. Some students were unable to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of texts they had studied, whilst many were unable to show links between topics and texts. A small number of students chose an unsuitable sub-topic such as an environmental issue with no obvious links to a French-speaking country.

The weaker students could not express opinions or if they did, were unable to substantiate them and many were unable to diverge from pre-learned material lacking the skills to engage in a sustained, meaningful discussion.

Written component

Section 1 – Listening and responding

To improve their performance students should:

- practise sound-discrimination exercises
- listen to a range of texts in various text types
- practise picking out key points in French listening texts
- learn to respond in complete sentences or phrases as required
- practise the necessary skills by listening to spoken French in films or the news on SBS
- spend their ten minutes reading time examining the questions in Section 1 to determine what kind of information is required
- listen intently from the outset of the Listening and Responding Section
- use the note-taking space effectively by making notes while the examination is in progress
- address the key words in the question to respond accurately to what the question is asking
- consult their dictionary for unknown key words during the pauses between the first and second readings of texts
- have a sound knowledge of basic tenses
- check the English translation of the questions in Part B to focus on what the question is asking
- acquire a range of vocabulary from the Themes and Topics table in the Study Design. (p.13).

Part A

The tasks were designed to assess the students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts. Many students found this section of the examination challenging, although a significant number obtained high scores. The main problems were a lack of consistent practice in listening to a range of texts in different text types and an inadequate range of vocabulary.

Possible answers

Text 1

Question 1

News item 1

(a) (bank) holdup/(bank) robbery

(b) three

(c) dropped address book/police finding his address book.

News item 2

(a) Central Africa

(b) Geneva/Switzerland/refugee centre/accommodation centre.

News item 3

cycling.

Text 2**Question 2**

(sim) card/telephone does not work.

Question 3

Three of:

1. Go to a Téléphone Jaune Agency/Yellow Telephone Agency.
2. Take the card.
3. Take the mobile.

Question 4

One of:

1. It's annoying to have to take everything to the telephone agency.
2. This fact was not stated in their advertisements.

Text 3**Question 5**

She has already spent 20 euros (some) of her pocket money.

Question 6

Three of:

1. She has not helped her mother this week/has not done the household chores/did not even make the bed.
2. She had an English essay to do/English homework.
3. She had two pages of Maths to complete/Maths homework.

Question 7

Two of:

1. Make a list of her homework/schoolwork.
2. Write down what she has to do in the house.
3. Put the list on the fridge.
4. Tick off each thing when she has finished.
5. Organise herself.

Question 8

Three of:

1. Make her bed.
2. Feed the cat.
3. Empty the dishwasher.
4. Put everything back in the cupboard.

Part B

The tasks were designed to assess the students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and to convey information accurately and appropriately. Most students showed a sound understanding of the content of the texts and many were able to respond in phrases or sentences, as required. The most successful students presented almost error-free responses, but less able students misinterpreted questions, producing irrelevant or incorrect information in faulty French, marred by basic spelling and/or grammatical mistakes.

Text 4**Question 9**

One of:

Jules Martin (Il) peignait/(faisait) des portraits. (complete sentence required)

Question 10

One of:

D'un village français/du village du guide/du village Cauchy-sur-Loire.

Question 11

One of:

Son attention aux détails de ses costumes/les détails de ses costumes/beaucoup de détails de ses costumes/l'usage restreint de ses couleurs.

Question 12

One of:

Le boulanger porte une tunique brune aux larges poches/La petite ouvrière porte un tablier blanc sur une robe bleue/une robe bleue (foncé). (complete sentence required)

Text 5**Question 13**

La destination proposée par Marie est populaire parce qu'elle reçoit autant de visiteurs que la Tour Eiffel/ On sait que la destination est populaire parce qu'elle reçoit autant de visiteurs que la Tour Eiffel (complete sentence required)

Question 14

One of:

Des commerces/des ateliers/des restaurants/des divertissements.

Question 15

1. les soldats
2. les artistes.

Question 16

One of:

Les visiteurs viennent des quatre coins du monde/Il serait possible que Damien rencontre des Australiens ou des étrangers aux Puces parce que les visiteurs viennent des quatre coins du monde. (complete sentence required).

Question 17

Des cadeaux (pour sa famille).

Section 2 – Reading and responding**Part A**

This section assesses the students' capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. Most acquitted themselves well in this section of the paper and it is worth noting that very few answered in French.

To perform well students should:

- read extensively in French
- select a wide range of texts in different text types
- try to determine the gist of the passage without looking up every word
- during the second reading of the text in the examination, check the meaning of key words
- be able to use a dictionary effectively.

Text 6**Question 18**

Two of:

1. (bush)walkers/hikers
2. animal lovers
3. animals in the wild/natural surroundings
4. nature lovers
5. environmentalists
6. marmot watchers.

Question 19

One of:

mountain pastures/open pastures/alpine pasture/open ground/high mountains

Question 20

Three of:

1. closes the burrow
2. rolls up into a ball
3. sleeps for six months/hibernates
4. lines/insulates the burrows with hay.

Question 21

Two of:

1. to warn of danger from an eagle/fox/walker/bushwalker
2. to communicate with one another/say hello.

Question 22

1. moving
2. talking.

Text 7**Question 23**

meeting an archeologist from Egypt.

Question 24

1. He was deeply interested in Egyptian civilization.
2. He taught himself (several) languages/Oriental/Middle Eastern languages.

Question 25

1. teaching
2. as a curator of a museum.

Question 26

1. hieroglyphics
2. Ancient Egyptian/Egyptian signs
3. Ancient Greek.

Question 27

1. analysis
2. comparison
3. deciphering/decoding symbols.

Part B

Students are required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of a text and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately. The task was to write an informative personal profile in response to an advertisement from the SSA Foundation in France.

Students were required to address the following points in their personal profile:

- a willingness to help underprivileged children
- a willingness to stay a minimum of nine months in France
- the ability to speak basic French
- the capacity to work independently
- the capacity to work in a team
- a willingness to supervise dormitories weekly
- a willingness to supervise excursions weekly
- the ability to participate in activities such as craft, computer games, sports
- state what other skills they have to offer.

This task appealed to the interest of the students, as there was a note of enthusiasm in most responses and many had little difficulty in finding the points and responded appropriately.

The more successful students followed the instruction to write a personal profile under the given heading, whilst others presented the personal profile with the ending for a letter. The writing of better students was characterised by a wide range of vocabulary and structures, the observation of the prescribed word limit and the capacity to express the information in their own words. The profiles written by less successful students failed to observe the word limit, being either too short or too long. The poorest profiles lacked cohesion and were often marred by irrelevancies or inaccurate language.

Students should:

- make a plan so that the writing flows
- combine points where possible
- avoid irrelevant details
- use paragraphs, topic sentences and ensure that sentences lead on logically from one to the other
- use appropriate connectives
- write in the appropriate text type, style and register
- observe the word limit
- allow time for proofreading.

Section 3 – Writing in French

Students should:

- practise writing regularly in French on a variety of themes and topics
- observe time and word constraints
- read their writing critically before submission for correction
- read pieces written by their classmates, exchanging pieces to correct errors
- plan their response before attempting to write
- be familiar with styles of writing and common text types in the French Study Design (pp.48–50)
- know key elements of the grammatical concepts listed in the French Study Design (pp.14-17).

This section assesses the students' ability to express ideas through the creation of original text in French and assesses the following criteria:

- relevance, breadth and depth
- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

Students were required to write (approximately 200–250 words) on one of four topics, each of which represented a different text type and style of writing.

Question 29

Some students took the opportunity to use prelearned material by writing about a trip to Noumea or France, superimposing an element of surprise usually in the final paragraph or sentence. The content of these pieces was predictable and often mundane. However, many able students presented excellent pieces on this topic, describing the place, company and a memorable situation in vivid and accurate language. There were very few students who were unable to observe the conventions of letter writing, with only a small proportion using an inappropriate conclusion or incorrect register.

Question 30

This question elicited some excellent pieces. One imaginative student told the story from the viewpoint of a lost dog, first describing how the dog became lost, then the family's desperation at losing their pet and finally the joy of the dog and family when they were finally reunited. More successful students were able to create a time, place and atmosphere with a touch of tension or humour. They were skilled in the use of the devices of storytelling such as narrative and demonstrated a good range of language appropriate to the thread of the story. A number of pieces went over the word limit (these were penalised) and others were marred by inaccurate spelling and grammar.

Question 31

This was a popular choice with students and most handled the topic competently. Many gave their article a title and were able to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in part-time work while still at school, giving a lucid explanation of ideas leading to a summing up of their line of argument. The language used was accurate, appropriate and wide ranging. Less successful students failed to give their article a title or address both sides of the argument and did not demonstrate the features of evaluative writing.

Question 32

This popular topic had the more successful students following the suggestion to consider the physical, mental and social aspects of health and this helped them to present a convincing argument. Their writing was characterised by coherently organised content and appropriately persuasive language. Less successful students were unfamiliar with the conventions of speech writing and presented an informative rather than a persuasive script for a speech.

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