

Frequently Asked Questions

OCR A2 GCE French F703 (Speaking) and F704 (L,R,W 2)
OCR A2 GCE German F713 (Speaking) and F714 (L,R,W 2)
OCR A2 GCE Spanish F723 (Speaking) and F724 (L,R,W 2)

GENERAL

1. Is training available for teachers who are new to this specification?

Yes, training courses are held each academic year during the Autumn and early Spring. For full details, see the OCR website: http://www.ocr.org.uk/training/alevel_inset_training.html
If you have missed the relevant course, the document "Instructions for internally conducted oral examinations" gives a wealth of information. Follow the link below and search under "Key Documents":
http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/asa_levelgceforfirstteachingin2008/french/documents.html

2. What entry option should we use for the oral exams?

There are three component options:

Option A / Component 01: Centres record speaking tests in digital (mp3) format and send **via internet** to OCR Repository.

Option B / Component 02: Centres record speaking tests onto CD and send **by post** to OCR.

Option C / Component 03: Examination conducted and assessed by a visiting examiner provided by OCR where candidature is 20 or more at both provisional and final entry stages. (Centres in close proximity may join together for this purpose.)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

1. Are candidates allowed to choose anything they like to talk about for the topic discussion?

No, the overarching principle is that the topic chosen must relate to one of the A2 topics or sub-topics as detailed in Section 2.2.2 of the specification.

2. If a candidate is given a card with an article about a topic which is the same as their chosen topic of conversation for the second part of the oral, can they still use their topic?

The teacher conducting the examination should avoid giving candidates an article that covers the same topic chosen for the topic conversation. In the Instructions for Internally Conducted Oral Examinations for F703/F713/F723 part 6.1 (third paragraph), it states: "The teacher must ensure that the discussion of article text is not on the same topic area as the topic Discussion topics."

3. Are candidates allowed to talk about a literary text other than in the Literature and the Arts sub-topic area?

Yes – they can choose any literary text and should link their discussion of it to an A2 topic or sub-topic (as detailed in Section 2.2.2 of the specification). They should avoid giving a general description of the plot (“telling the story”) and should concentrate on issues arising from the text that link to the A2 topics or sub-topics.

4. Does the topic discussion on the new A2 speaking component F703/F713/F723 still need to be current (i.e. relevant to the target language country in the last 7 years, as per the legacy spec)?

We **no longer** specify a time limit of 7 years. On page 15 of the specification it states "The titles should relate to aspects of the **contemporary** society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries or communities whose language is being studied."

As one of the Culture sub-topics is Heritage and History, candidates may choose to discuss an historical event which has influenced or impacted on contemporary society.

5. Can candidates choose a film or a play?

Yes – and any film or play studied has to be in the target language. The discussion should be a critique, focusing on the analysis and evaluation of the impact of the film or play linking it to the A2 topics or sub-topics, rather than “telling the story”.

6. Can a candidate do the subject of L’IMPRESSIONISME at A2 for French?

This could be appropriate under the A2 Culture topic area, but only if the candidate focuses on the impact and influence of this on contemporary society/artists etc in a country where the language is spoken. As a general rule, A2 topics must either be contemporary, or be talked about in terms of their contemporary significance in a country where the language is spoken.

7. Some of my candidates want to talk about a “political personality” from the Target Language country. Is this acceptable?

Yes, provided that the **personality** is related to the A2 topics or sub-topics. Remember, however, that candidates will need to develop a range of ideas and justify points of view, so talking about a personality is more than describing the person or focusing on their biography.

8. How specific do candidates have to be as regards the Target Language country if they have chosen a topic such as “pollution”, “unemployment” or “gender” for example?

The specification states that topics have to be approached within the context of a TL country / countries. Candidates are expected to have researched within this context. Even if the general views they express could equally apply to other countries, they will be expected to be able to quote examples and produce evidence to support their points of view that originate from the TL country. For example, if talking about the growing issue of unemployment, a German candidate could quote action taken by the German government to solve this problem.

- 9. We note that candidates will be allowed to bring in one A4 page of notes for the oral examination. Could you please clarify if this is typed or handwritten – roughly how many words would be acceptable? Also, will OCR require centres to send them these notes?**

Candidates' notes may be handwritten or typed – in a normal size font (e.g. Times New Roman 12), with normal page set-up and margins on one side of A4 paper. Candidates need to be made aware that these should be notes for reference only. Reading from prepared notes would be reflected in the mark awarded under Grid E.2: fluency, spontaneity, responsiveness. Centres will be required to keep these notes – they will not usually be sent to the awarding body.

A2 UNIT 4: SECTION C – WRITING

- 1. Can a candidate write an essay in Section C on (Unit 4) based on the same topic, or sub-topic, that they have used for their oral topic (Unit 3)?**

Should the candidate be "fortunate" enough to have prepared a topic for the A2 Speaking exam (Unit 3) which they feel they could use in response to one of the 8 (unseen) essay titles in section C of the Unit 4 paper, the candidate would not be penalised for having used that same or similar material for both.

For example, if a candidate has prepared a literary topic for the Speaking exam and a literary essay title appears on the Listening, Reading & Writing 2 paper, the candidate could attempt that question in the Unit 4 paper.

However, as there are only 2 essay titles for each of the 4 topic areas of the A2 specification, there may be occasions when there is no specific literary title, so candidates would need to be prepared to answer on a different sub-topic or to apply their literary study to the sub-topic of the arts in general.

Please see spec. section 2.2.2 for a full list of the A2 topics and sub-topics and have a look at the Unit 4 exemplar paper on the OCR website.

- 2. Why is there to be no pre-release of topic areas?**

For this examination, candidates need to learn to write, in exam conditions, an essay that has not been pre-learnt. There are 15 marks awarded for the structure and analysis of the essay (assessment grid O), 20 marks for the quality of the language used (grids C.2 and F.2) and 10 marks for relevance and points of view (grid N). Examiners will be looking for a coherently structured and organised essay which develops an argument. (Please see 9 below).

- 3. How will candidates know that there will be questions on topic areas they have covered?**

They need to prepare a range of sub-topics. In this section candidates are given 8 questions (on two sub-topics per each topic area) and have to answer only **one** of them.

Candidates need to learn how to write an essay: a good candidate will be offering points of view and opinions supported by factual evidence (from the target language). These responses will have a coherently organised structure that shows the candidate is able to develop an argument and has a sound grasp of the target language's complex grammatical structures for A2.

4. How much, or how little, 'relevant information' should a candidate include in an answer?

Relevant information should support candidates' points of view and opinions; therefore, in developing an argument the candidate should cite appropriate factual evidence from target language countries to support each point that has been made.

5. Unit 4, Section C. In the mark scheme the words *imaginative* and *original* are mentioned at the top end of grid N. Does this apply to candidates writing the discursive essay, or is it reserved for the other more open-ended task? As we are telling our candidates to concentrate on the discursive questions it would be good to know what is meant by 'imaginative' and 'original' in this context.

The words "imaginative" and "original" are included in Grid N "Relevance and points of view" and would apply equally to discursive and non-discursive essays. It is intended for work that demonstrates an interesting and relevant response to a question. So for a discursive essay, a candidate may eclectically synthesise knowledge and understanding from different topics studied to respond to a question on one topic, e.g. they might choose to answer a question on the Culture sub-topic "Literature and the arts" and also draw on material they have studied for the sub-topics in Society - or vice versa.

It is also intended to reward 'originality' shown by candidates who produce their own response to the question - so at the very top of the range they have shown that they have thought about it, reviewed what they know from what they have studied, carefully selected relevant information to use and - significantly - not produced a pre-learnt / standard response.

6. How will Grid O be applied to the imaginative essay option?

It will be applied in the same way as it is applied to a discursive essay. An imaginative essay option will also need to be coherently structured and organised in order to gain marks in the higher bands

7. Unit 4, Section C. With regard to grid F.2 it would be helpful to know how *range* and *variety* might be quantified to give students a clearer idea of how much needs to be included over an average essay of around 300 words.

For Grid F2, candidates need to demonstrate a sound grasp of A2 structures (as given in the grammar list in the specification) and show a wide variety of sentence types, especially complex sentence structures, within their essay. These should read easily - (i.e. not appear forced or unnatural) and should not be repetitive (i.e. they produce a wide range of different sentence types which show their knowledge and understanding of the language).

8. Unit 4, Section C. What could be included under the 'Literature and the Arts' in the Culture sub-topic?

If asked to write about 'Werk(e)', 'oeuvre(s)' or 'obra(s)', candidates could include information about a film, a painting, a book, a play, a piece of music or any other work(s) of art.

9. What indicators will examiners look for when applying Grids N and O to ensure that this is not merely a subjective process?

At the standardisation meeting the examiners (led by the Principal Examiner) will look at the grids and the examination paper and assess whether a candidate's response:

- expresses points of view or opinions
- supports these with facts
- demonstrates originality
- is coherently structured and organised when developing an argument

Looking at actual candidates' work will help them to define the mark scheme and to apply it consistently across the whole cohort.

10. Unit 4, Q10 Specimen Paper (Spanish) - What knowledge are 17-18 year olds expected to have of laws guaranteeing human rights?

(The question in the Spanish paper is: Can all Spanish citizens feel protected by the laws guaranteeing human rights?).

They are not expected to be lawyers. They are expected to have the knowledge that any informed citizen would have on the subject by reading newspapers, watching TV or observing the target language country/community. The reference is within the sub-topic of integration and exclusion, which the candidate would have studied in class; on the Spanish paper, candidates could answer by selecting one group of people in society in order to discuss whether that group is adequately protected by the law.