



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **French 1651** *Specification*

**FREN1      Listening, Reading and Writing**

# **Report on the Examination** *2009 examination - June series*

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**General comments**

There were a number of very good marks and the paper appeared to have been accessible to the vast majority of candidates. The examination overall discriminated well between different levels of ability. Candidates seemed to have used their time effectively, devoting an appropriate amount of time to each of the skills. There was little evidence of candidates running out of time by the end of the paper.

**Comments on specific questions****Question 1**

A small number of candidates failed to read the rubric and answered this question in French, which was a costly error since most did very well. The main difficulties encountered were with part (b) where failure to convey the idea of *avant un examen* led to vague answers which could not be credited.

**Question 2**

This question was generally very well done, though some confused Aurélie and Laure's attitudes to shopping.

**Question 3**

This question proved to be somewhat more testing although a high percentage of candidates achieved a very pleasing score. Most errors occurred on parts (c) and (d) with candidates not spotting the presence of both positive and negative attitudes.

**Question 4**

This question was quite well done, though maximum marks were rarer here. Part (k) proved to be the most difficult, since many did not understand *se comporter*. Answers (g), (i) and (j) all proved to be popular distracters.

**Question 5**

There was a very high success rate here, the only part answered incorrectly on any kind of regular basis being part (d), where the exact opposite interpretation (answer D) was often mistakenly given with frequent misunderstanding of *attrayant*.

**Question 6**

This question discriminated reasonably well, with many less able candidates failing to score marks principally on the first three parts, especially (c). There were some challenging items of vocabulary here such as *conquérir le cœur* and *avouer*.

**Question 7**

Most candidates coped well with this question with parts (a) and (b) being the ones a few candidates found challenging. Unfortunately, if the word *douleur* was not known, both questions were likely to be answered incorrectly.

**Question 8**

It should be emphasised that in answering questions in French, manipulation of the language is no longer required unlike in the legacy specification. Candidates are able simply to copy out the relevant section of the text in order to answer the question successfully. Indeed, many candidates

were clearly still working on the premise that they needed to adapt the language of the original passage, and unfortunately this led to marks not being scored because of serious grammatical errors which were an impediment to comprehension. An example was in part (a) with answers such as *elle parents se traitent comme une petite fille* being quite common. Equally, marks were not scored through very careless copying. Words such as *maquillage*, *restaurant* and *vêtements* were frequently written incorrectly.

### Question 9

This question was done very well by more able candidates and proved a good discriminator. Less able candidates struggled, with many less able students gaining very low marks. Parts (a), (f), (g) and (j) were best answered. In part (b), the agreement was frequently omitted from *devenue*. The agreement of adjectives caused severe problems for many. Very few were aware of the correct form of *comprendre* in part (e).

### Question 10

There were some exceptionally good pieces of work at the top end of the ability range, which contained mature ideas which were fully developed and illustrated, written in fluent and accurate French. At the other extreme, there were some very disappointingly poor pieces of work from the less able candidates, which would not have been worth a good grade at GCSE, since so much of what was written was unintelligible. One of the most disappointing aspects of language was the number of candidates using infinitives instead of finite verbs, even in simple present tenses. Some candidates resorted to English when they found it difficult to convey their message but phrases such as *je n'agree pas* do not impress examiners. Some answers contained very little variety in the use of vocabulary, with much repetition. On the other hand, a number of candidates were able to use correctly formed subjunctives, and even if coming across as pre-learned phrases, these provided a variety of grammatical structure. A very common expression was *autant que je sache* but it was not always used appropriately. The best responses contained examples of a range of tenses including good use of the conditional.

The vast majority of candidates had made good use of the Essay Planning Sheet provided and wrote over the suggested minimum number of words, in some cases substantially longer than the minimum. Candidates should be reminded to answer all parts of the question. This was not a problem generally with Question 10(b) but many attempting Question 10(b) did not offer many solutions to the problem and in Question 10(c), the importance of friendship was not always addressed.

The question on binge-drinking among young people was chosen by many, though this was possibly the least well answered of the three pieces of writing by average and below average candidates. Key aspects of the question were often missed, and answers tended to be too general. Many turned into discussions about the causes of stress for today's teenagers, of some relevance, but then the suggested solutions were often lacking. This was the topic where some candidates lacked the necessary vocabulary to extend their discussions fully.

The question on the internet was the most popular choice, and allowed candidates to refer to a number of usages from their own experience, and to use a range of subject-specific vocabulary: *télécharger*, *internauts*, *surfer* were all very popular lexical items. The majority of candidates answering this question were able to provide a competently balanced answer containing both the advantages and dangers of the internet, and most also produced an adequate conclusion.

There were some excellent responses on friendship, which proved to be the least popular of the three available topics, but many seemed less comfortable on this subject and tended to be superficial in response, using only a very predictable and narrow range of vocabulary.

Examiners would like to suggest the following advice to candidates tackling this section. Firstly, take time and care over the choice of question, ensuring that you have sufficient knowledge of the

key vocabulary associated with the topic and a number of relevant points which you can make. You should avoid setting out your answer as a series of bullet points. Whenever you have made a point, you should try to develop and explain clearly what you mean, illustrating it with examples. You should also make sure that you answer the whole question. You should try to vary your language and avoid repetition and anglicisms, think about logical structure and appropriate linking phrases. A brief introduction and a conclusion will enhance your answer. Finally, you must avoid including irrelevant material which you may have used in previous practice pieces for your teacher. Everything you write should have some connection with the title of the question you have selected.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### Listening Section

From the January 2010 series onwards all centres will be supplied with two types of CD. One will be a single CD which will not be tracked and which will be suitable for downloading onto mp3 players, language laboratories etc. One CD of this type will be supplied per centre. The other CD will have individual tracks recorded so that candidates using individual CD players will be able to rewind and fast forward, using these tracks. Sufficient numbers of this CD will be supplied for all candidates entered at the centre. Centres can then choose which type of CD best meets their needs.

For each question in the Listening section, both the duration of the heard material and the track numbers from the tracked CD which correspond to that material will be printed in the Question and Answer booklet and on the transcript, eg

Length of passage: 55 seconds

Tracks: 10-18

### Listening/Reading Sections

It should be pointed out that there is no longer a requirement for candidates to manipulate language in the Listening/Reading sections of this paper as the marks are awarded for comprehension only.

### Writing Section

#### Annotation of Scripts from Summer 2009 onwards

The following conventions are used by examiners on scripts when assessing Content.

✓	Point made
Irr	Irrelevant material
Rep	Repeated point
?	Lack of clarity

### **Additional Guidance for Responding to the Writing Section**

**Are candidates expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?**

Candidates are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

**Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?**

Yes, we gave ticks for personal opinions as we considered them valid as developments.

**Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?**

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

**Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 3 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 3 against with evidence?**

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

**How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?**

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and candidates will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/examples/opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, candidates must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is logical structure and they have answered fully the question set.

**Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?**

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

**Are there any other questions which teachers should be asking to get a better understanding of how candidates are to be assessed in the essay question?**

Yes, there are sets of exemplar materials for the Writing section of Unit 1 as part of the Teacher Resource Bank. The Teacher Resource Bank materials are available on the AQA website.