



General Certificate of Education

French 1651 *Specification*

FREN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination *2010 examination - January series*

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FREN1

General

There were a number of high marks and the paper appeared to have been accessible to the vast majority of candidates with a mean mark of 82.8 out of 110 marks. There was no evidence that candidates had insufficient time to complete the paper. Candidates seemed to have used their time effectively, devoting an appropriate amount of time to each of the three language skills. However, by far the greatest sources of differentiation were, once again, Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12.

On-screen marking was introduced for this unit for the first time and candidates should be reminded that they must answer the questions in the spaces provided, as instructed on the front cover of the question paper. It is also very important that the instruction to candidates to write in black ink or ballpoint pen is adhered to, as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Unfortunately, a small number of candidates failed to read the rubric and answered this question in French, which was a costly error since the marks were quite accessible. The main difficulties encountered were with part (a) where failure to understand the significance of *les informations* led to some answers which lacked clarity. In part (b), some failed to be specific about programmes helping viewers to relax, but the vast majority scored for educational programmes and encouraging people to read. Part (c) was almost always correctly conveyed.

Question 2

This question was generally very well done, though some failed to understand the reference to lack of violence in part (h).

Question 3

This question proved to be very straightforward with a high percentage of candidates achieving a very pleasing score.

Question 4

This question discriminated well and maximum marks were rarer here. Part (a) proved quite challenging, with many failing to recognise the correct tense and therefore choosing the wrong country. Parts (b) and (e) were less successfully answered than parts (c) and (d).

Question 5

There was a very high success rate here, the only part incorrectly answered on any kind of regular basis being part (d), where *des pâtes* was not well-known.

Question 6

This question discriminated reasonably well, with less able candidates failing to score marks principally on the first two parts. Parts (f) and (g) also caused some difficulty.

Question 7

Most coped very well with this question. The key vocabulary for this topic area, expressions such as *union libre*, *concubinage*, was well-known by virtually all candidates.

Question 8

As mentioned previously, in answering questions in French, manipulation of the language is **not** required. Candidates are able to copy out the relevant section of the text in order to answer the question successfully. The vast majority coped very well here, though part (a) was the least successfully answered due to some vague answers to do with royal hats. There was some evidence that less able candidates find it difficult to copy accurately and all should be encouraged to check answers carefully for inaccuracies and English spellings, notably *marriage* and *hostesses*. Part b was well answered as was part (d).

Question 9

This question was done very well by able candidates and proved a very good discriminator. Parts (a), (b), (d) and (f) were well answered. In part (c), *ils faisent* was frequently seen. In part (e), *pouvent* was often given as an answer. The correct form of 'long' in part (g) proved very challenging. Many failed to notice the need for the imperfect tense in part (h) and the future in part (j), while the past participle in (i) often lacked the necessary agreement. Examiners would like to stress how important legible writing is at this point in the paper since the detail in some answers was difficult to decipher.

Questions 10, 11 and 12

There were few exceptionally good pieces of work though a small number of candidates impressed examiners with the maturity of their ideas. Such candidates developed and illustrated their answers fully, and expressed themselves in clear, fluent and accurate French. At the other extreme, there were some very disappointingly poor pieces of work from the less able candidates, which contained barely a single comprehensible sentence. One of the most disappointing aspects was the use of English words when the French equivalent was not known. Some answers contained very little variety in the use of vocabulary, with much repetition. A large number of candidates were able to use correctly formed subjunctives, though not always appropriately. The best answers contained examples of a range of tenses including extensive use of the conditional tense. Question 12 was the most popular option, and this did give candidates the opportunity to look at two sides of the issue. Unfortunately, some of the answers to Questions 10 and 11 were not fully relevant since some candidates were determined to discuss the disadvantages of the cinema and holidays. Examiners felt that the choice of questions meant that the questions were accessible to all candidates. The best answers showed evidence of good planning, with a logical sequence of ideas, which were developed in a clear and unambiguous manner.

Of the three pieces of writing Question 10 was possibly the least well answered by average and below average candidates. Some candidates seemed unable to suggest other reasons for going to the cinema, and some spent too much time talking about the advantages of staying at home to watch a film. Many discussed the drawbacks of the cinema, even complaining about the price of popcorn

Question 11 on holidays allowed candidates to refer to their own experience of holidays such as making friends, practising a language and getting on better with their families. Unfortunately, this was the least well-structured essay in many cases, with some pieces of work apparently ending with no conclusion.

There were some excellent responses in Question 12 on mobile phones, which proved to be the most popular of the three available topics. Most candidates had plenty to say on this topic. On the other hand, this was the main area where lack of appropriate vocabulary was apparent. Frequently, sentences such as *le portable est utile en cas d'urgence* were seen, and the likelihood of theft was not always clearly expressed.

Examiners noted the following errors which occurred regularly in all three topic areas:

confusion between *mieux* and *meilleur*.

the use of the infinitive rather than a conjugated verb form.

confusion with reflexive verbs, *j'adore se relaxer*.

misuse of pronouns, *j'aime partir avec ils, les parents les donnent un portable*.

anglicised constructions, *ils ne savent pas qui ils parlent avec*.

On a more positive note, many candidates demonstrated a pleasing knowledge of key vocabulary in each of the three topic areas, and genuinely tried to expand their answers. Very few short answers were in evidence.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Listening Section

From the January 2010 series onwards all centres have been supplied with two types of CD. One is a single CD which is not tracked and which is suitable for downloading onto mp3 players, language laboratories etc. One CD of this type is supplied per centre. The other CD has individual tracks recorded so that candidates using individual CD players are able to rewind and fast forward, using these tracks. Sufficient numbers of this CD are 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 are 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

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Candidates must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those candidates who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the Essay Planning Sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are dispatched for marking.

Annotation of Scripts

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 give ticks for personal opinions as we consider 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 5/6 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 5/6 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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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