



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **French 1651** *Specification*

**FRE2T/V Speaking**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## Administration

A significant number of centres used the AQA Audio Recorder which is based on the Audacity software to record their tests which were then submitted on either CDs or USB sticks and it has to be said that the quality of such recordings was generally far superior to that of tests recorded on cassettes. With the latter some centres tried recording two tests on each side of a C60 cassette and this often meant that part of the second test had to be carried over to side 2. It is clearly not in the candidate's interests for a test to be interrupted while the cassette is changed and therefore cassettes in future must be C90.

Information about the AQA Audio Recorder can be found on the languages pages of AQA's website.

All centres should pay particular attention to the quality of recordings submitted for marking to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged. Examiners can only mark what they can hear. It is essential that the equipment for recording the tests is tested in advance of the tests to ensure both candidate **and** teacher-examiner can be heard clearly and there is no background hissing or hum.

The STMS form is now designed to be used for an individual candidate. For AS French the code used on the STMS will be either FRE2T or FRE2V. It is important that centres complete these forms carefully and accurately and that all the information requested is included. It would also be extremely useful if centres could complete the information on the envelope that holds the test: very often the sections *Number of scripts enclosed* and *Absences* are not filled in because this is not a script-based examination, but it is useful for examiners to see as soon as an envelope arrives the number of candidates who have been present for the test and the number of absences.

Although they are now significantly fewer, there are still centres where teacher-examiners do not keep to the correct timings of the different parts of the test. However the mis-timings occur they will have a negative impact on the candidate's marks. Candidates who are allowed to speak for four minutes in response to the printed questions in Part 1, for example, and who are then limited to one minute in the general discussion of the sub-topic will not match a descriptor in that one minute above a mark of 2 out of 5. If they are allowed to go on for longer with the general discussion in Part 1 then the extra time there will potentially mean lost marks for Interaction because the third topic in Part 2 will have been dealt with inadequately.

The test itself should last a total of 15 minutes and examiners stop marking at the end of 15 minutes. Within this time the "very best practice" test will have kept to the following timings:

### Part 1 Discussion of the Stimulus Card

5 minutes (approximate split 2½ for printed questions and 2½ minutes for discussion)

### Part 2 Conversation

- Discussion of candidate's nominated topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds
- Discussion of second topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds
- Discussion of third topic: 3 minutes 20 seconds.

Examiners using timing devices are generally very accurate at allocating time across the different parts but there should be no need to set and reset the device at the beginning and end of each topic under discussion. Again this is very distracting for candidates particularly when there are repeated "beeps" as different attempts to get the device to work properly are made.

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Centres are asked to pay particular attention to the following matters:

- Clear recordings with no background hissing and with candidates well-positioned in relation to the microphone so that their responses are audible
- Accurate time-keeping and the correct allocation of time to the relevant sections of tests as set out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations* booklet
- Accurate completion of AQA documentation with all information provided
- Consistency throughout the tests in the use of either *tu* or *vous* and attention paid to maintaining this consistency with possessive adjectives and all pronouns
- Responsive questioning that ensures natural interaction and engages the candidate in some degree of spontaneous exchanges rather than questions picked off from a set list with little or no follow-up on what a candidate actually says
- Differentiated questioning according to levels of ability so that less able candidates are not left struggling to respond to questions that are clearly beyond their level of proficiency
- Discouraging candidates from giving detailed descriptions of what is on a stimulus card.

### **Part 1: Discussion of stimulus card**

It is not acceptable for the discussion in the second part of Part 1 to move beyond the sub-topic stated on the card. This is happening across all topics and teacher-examiners in centres are urged to familiarise themselves fully with the sub-topic divisions. There is an argument that “drifting” from, for example, advertising *per se* to advertising on television is a logical direction for a discussion to take but the risk is that in the quite pressured situation of the test – for the examiner, that is – the switch back to advertising does not happen and a discussion about television ensues. The advice is therefore not to venture beyond the sub-topic in the first place however tempting it might be so to do. The current policy is not to penalise candidates here for the mistakes of their examiners. However if the practice continues this will have to be reviewed as there is a risk that candidates whose examiners do adhere to the rules on this are being disadvantaged.

Card A: Some candidates were tempted to give all the statistics in response to the first question which was not required and which took valuable time away from opportunities to express views and develop these. Among the best candidates, the second question prompted a good range of responses including agreement, disagreement, what surprised or shocked and how the results differed from their own tastes and preferences. Question 3 across all candidates produced some detailed and well-developed answers and it was encouraging to hear a range of appropriate cinema and film-related vocabulary. Question 4 produced some fairly stereotypical pigeon-holing of gender-based preferences. Question 5 prompted an abundance of references to *Avatar* but there were also other films – including French films – that got a mention here.

Card B: Question 1 was well-answered on the whole by means of a brief but accurate summary of the content of the card. Responses to Question 2 in many cases failed to address the significance of the *Jeux Olympiques* reference and the influence they may or may not have. Able candidates made a lot of the potential in Question 3 to develop detailed responses, often listing several advantages and often giving examples from their own participation in sport to illustrate their views. Well-prepared candidates saw the opportunity in Question 4 to relate how their participation has changed because of the pressure of revision and examinations and did

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this in a natural way. The last question sometimes – but rarely – led to discussions of the issue of overpaid professionals in certain sports; over-rated sports personalities and so on.

Card C: Question 1 produced some concise and accurate summaries but a number of candidates had problems with the pronunciation of *Michel*. There was a lot of sympathy for Michel's situation and indeed empathy with him in having to provide for all the needs of his children. Again with the *avantages* slant in Question 3 well-prepared candidates gave multiple examples of advantages and many again related these to their own experiences. Most candidates took a very positive approach to Question 4 and gave very good reasons for wanting children. Question 5 proved to be a very good discriminator in that most stayed in the territory of arguments with parents and siblings, but some discussed the case for the role of the family as a framework for discipline and education in its broadest sense.

Card D: The first general question was well-answered. Question 2 provided the most material for those candidates who said they agreed in part with both opinions and developed good examples to illustrate their response. There were some rather weak responses to Question 3 from candidates who had not thought outside the box of product-advertising but there were also some very good answers from candidates who had and who referred to road-safety campaigns, anti-smoking campaigns etc. Answers to Question 4 suggested that many candidates are not aware that tobacco and cigarette advertising is already banned: many wanted alcohol advertising to be banned and some thought that advertising toys to young children should be banned. They then linked this in very effectively to their answers to Question 5.

Card E: The *caritatifs* element on this card was overlooked by very many who chose it. There was no reference to it in response to the first question and the second question was interpreted as earning money for the musicians. This reinforces the need for candidates to read the card carefully not because misinterpretations of this sort cause them to lose marks but because it means that the range of opportunities to develop views and opinions is limited. Music – like cinema – is a topic that candidates enjoy talking about and talk about at length. The remaining questions were well-answered generally.

Card F: The first question and Question 2 produced some good answers with a range of reasons given to explain the appeal of alcohol for young people. A 'yes' answer to Question 3 was somewhat restricting and again, candidates should think not so much of how they personally would answer a question but rather which way of answering offers the most scope for developing views and ideas. There were some quite stringent, even draconian, proposals to address the fourth question which the majority of those proposing them would have been very much against once their AS examinations were over this Summer! Question 5 produced some very full and detailed responses with a range of dangers listed and reasons for their being dangers.

## Part 2 General Conversation

In general terms with centre-conducted tests the discussion of the nominated topic tended to follow a rather predictable pattern of *alors parle-moi de...* to introduce a mini-presentation around each bullet-point. This nominated topic is the first of the three topics talked about in Part 2 and does not constitute a separate part of the examination in its own right. The purpose of the nominated topic is to give the candidate a confident start to the conversation and should be treated in the same way as the remaining two topics. When there is little or no follow-up to points made by the candidate this will not attract a high mark for Interaction. Sometimes such an approach characterised the discussion of the remaining topics but there did seem to be an increased willingness by teacher-examiners to probe a little bit further some of the responses candidates made.

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Teachers are also advised to avoid moving from one topic to another with no clear indication of a change of topic. This practice creates difficulties for examiners who need to be aware of the time spent on each of the topics. Each topic should be introduced in the target-language by the teacher so the change is clear to the examiner.

With each of the three topics for discussion it is important that teacher-examiners consider their questions in the context of the mark scheme if candidates are to be given every opportunity to do their best. Too much time, in some cases, is being spent on question types that elicit factual information: in the context of a film, *De quoi s'agit-il?* is not the most effective question as it will invite and encourage a narrative summary of the film and the time taken to deliver that is so much better spent – in terms of the marks the performance will attract – on questions that elicit views and opinions. Likewise *Parle(z)-moi de...* in the context of family, friends, favourite television programmes, advertisements etc is also something of a 'high risk' (rather than a high mark) type of question. *Que fais-tu / faites-vous...?* in the context of sport and healthy living are again question types that do not readily lend themselves to being dealt with to elicit opinions.

In terms of preparing candidates for the test and linked closely to this would be the advice for them to avoid excessive use of *je* statements. Many candidates fail to hear in a question the more general perspective that is being sought: *que devrait-on faire...?* will be converted by the candidate to *que fais-tu / faites-vous?* It is challenging but very useful to encourage candidates to operate in *je* mode only when it has been introduced by *par exemple, moi*. Such a constraint encourages the discipline of concentrating on a more general perspective, on opinions and views, and also on developing such opinions and views through examples relevant to the candidate himself or herself. Factual information is useful as a source of development and exemplification of an answer: at this level it will not attract many marks for Interaction if it is all or most of what the candidate offers.

It is clear across all candidates that the topics in the new specification are ones with which candidates can engage and that despite the fact that they are performing in a test they derive a lot of enjoyment and pleasure from communicating in French. Very many of the conversations are a pleasure to listen to and centres are to be congratulated on the confidence they engender in their candidates.

### AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

Below are listed the type of points of language that tend to hinder the performance of some candidates:

- *Ils / elles ; mal / mauvais ; ses / leurs ; c'est / il y a ; savoir / connaître ; meilleur / mieux ; vite / rapide ; faire / rendre ; avant / devant ; ils ont / ils sont ; qui / que*
- *Quand + Future*
- *Parce que ... + verb ; à cause de ... + noun*
- Modals (incl. *faire*) + Infinitive
- Comparisons (requiring ... *que*)
- Expressions of quantity (*trop beaucoup ; beaucoup de l'argent*, etc)
- Prepositions: *en école ; sur la télé ; sur le dimanche*, etc
- Relexive pronouns (eg. *je vais se marier...* ; *ça m'aide à se détendre ; cela s'aide à...*)
- Emphatic pronouns (*avec ils*, etc) and D.O. pronouns (*cela aide moi ...*)
- Translations of « What » : *quoi / ce que / qu'est-ce que ...*
- Negatives of all sorts, including impossible combinations (*je ne d'accord pas...*)
- Sequence of tenses : esp. Imperfect + Conditional
- Literal translations involving prepositions : "someone to talk to", "a role model to identify with", "a film that I'm interested in", "programmes that you can choose from"

### **Annual Teacher Support Meetings**

Centres are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2010 covering both Unit 2 and Unit 4. These meetings will be full day meetings and free of charge. Further details can be obtained from the Events page of the AQA website ([www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)) in due course.

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

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