



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **French 1651** *Specification*

**FREN1      Listening, Reading and Writing**

## **Report on the Examination** *2010 examination - June series*

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## General

The examination overall discriminated well between different levels of ability. The mean mark was 76.1 out of 110. As usual, Question 9 (cloze test) and Question 10 (essay) discriminated very effectively, but also Question 4 in the listening section and Question 6 in the reading section also differentiated well. The vast majority of candidates finished the paper well within the time limit and their work was well presented and well planned. Most, for example, had clearly spent time planning their essays.

On-screen marking was used for this unit 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. Unfortunately, a few candidates were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were very hard to decipher.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

A very high percentage of candidates scored high marks on this question. The vocabulary was accessible for all parts of the question. The principal cause of not scoring a mark was a misunderstanding of the phrase *à la recherche de la nature*, producing answers such as 'researching nature'. The other stumbling block was the phrase *sports d'hiver* in part (c), where many thought that a variety of sports (diverse sports) was on offer. Unfortunately, a small but still significant number of candidates answered in French thereby scoring zero.

### Question 2

This question was generally found to be straightforward, with almost all candidates scoring highly.

### Question 3

Another straightforward question with a high percentage of candidates scoring maximum marks. Most errors occurred on parts (e), (h) and (i).

### Question 4

Only a very small minority of candidates achieved full marks on this challenging question, with part (a) proving by far the most challenging, requiring a reference to *le moyen âge*. Part (b) was far more successfully answered but parts (c) and (d) proved to be difficult for many. Marks tended not to be scored because of poor spelling of such key words as *niveau*, *meilleur* and even *château*.

### Question 5

A very high success rate here, the only part incorrectly answered on any kind of regular basis being part (a), where many candidates did not understand the significance of the word *sombre*.

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**Question 6**

This question discriminated very well, with many less able candidates not scoring marks principally on parts (a) and (c). Many of the words suggested to fit the gaps did not fit grammatically due to incorrect gender or number. Part (b) was well answered by many.

**Question 7**

Part (c) caused the greatest difficulty here, with many failing to understand *la demande est croissante*. Generally, the remaining parts of the question were well answered.

**Question 8**

A lot of candidates are still trying to manipulate the language of the source text unnecessarily, and this can lead to marks not being scored through serious grammatical errors and the wrong use of tenses which can become an impediment to comprehension. Part (a) was very well done, but some in part (b) became confused between Lucette and Jean-Pierre. Many examiners were disappointed by inaccurate spellings of key words such as *restaurant* in part (c) despite the word being in the original text.

**Question 9**

A very wide range of marks was observed in this question. All parts caused difficulties for some candidates but (a), (f) and (g) were best answered: those requiring understanding of the rules of adjectival agreement caused great problems. *Saturé* often lacked the feminine ending required and *personnel* frequently lost an 'n'. The correct form of the verb required after *en* was only known by the most able. Very few were aware of the correct form of the verb *venir*.

**Section B**

There were wildly fluctuating standards in the essay question. Many wrote essays full of a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and structures, with relevant, logical and coherent arguments. It is good to see that most candidates wrote at least the recommended number of words and tried hard to develop and illustrate their ideas. At the other extreme were plenty of essays which were very difficult to understand or which started confidently but very quickly appeared to run out of steam and contained a great deal of repetition.

The essay on smoking was the most popular choice and allowed candidates to suggest a number of reasons why young people smoke and possible solutions. The content of this essay tended to be the most extensive. Less able candidates however attempted to write material which had clearly been pre-learnt and which was therefore not entirely relevant. Many were determined to talk about the harmful effects of smoking, for instance. Some failed to put forward any suggested solutions and candidates need to be reminded to answer **all** parts of the question set. The question on marriage, though a less popular choice, led to some very thoughtful and mature essays by able candidates which made use of a range of subject-specific vocabulary, with reference to *union libre*, *concubinage* and *le Pacs*, for example. There were also some excellent essays on music, but many seemed less comfortable on this topic and tended to have less to say, with some writing about the disadvantages rather than the importance of music in order to achieve a reasonable length.

Considering the candidates are only one year on from GCSE, the majority of candidates were able to structure a coherent and well argued piece even if on occasion their accuracy let them down. The main difficulties reported by examiners were the lack of adjectival agreements, problems with pronouns, in particular the wrong use of the reflexive pronoun (*les parents se*

*donnent de l'argent*), poorly formed present tenses of common irregular verbs (notably *pouvoir, devoir, vouloir*) and inappropriate use of the subjunctive. Most candidates were able to use some specific vocabulary appropriate to the topic at some point, though the least able often resorted to English (the verb *provider* is particularly popular). The more able candidates have an impressive grasp of structure and use many complex phrases with ease and confidence. Less able candidates struggle to form more complex sentences with appropriate conjunctions and their use of tense can sometimes be confusing.

The best advice for tackling the essay questions is summarised in the rubric. Candidates should plan the essay on the sheet provided, keeping the title in mind at all times to avoid repetition and irrelevance. Ideally, there should be a brief introduction and conclusion. The piece of writing itself should contain a number of valid points, illustrated and developed appropriately. Candidates should make sure they use topic specific vocabulary which they have acquired when studying the topic, use longer sentences wherever possible and bear in mind the common pitfalls mentioned above.

## 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 despatched for marking.

## ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO THE WRITING QUESTION

**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 in the January session 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 a logical structure to the essay 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 two 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.