



General Certificate of Education

French 2651 *Specification*

FREN3 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination *2010 examination - June series*

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General

The first examination session of a new specification is always an anxious time for both teachers and candidates and examiners are pleased to report that this particular examination proved accessible to the vast majority of candidates with some questions on which virtually all were able to score high marks, while others proved challenging even to the best. There were very few cases of questions being left completely blank or of the Cultural Topic essay being clearly unfinished, which suggests that most candidates had sufficient time to complete the examination. The mean mark for this unit was 74.0.

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.

Section A

Comments on specific questions

The four listening items were generally tackled successfully. Question 1 enabled most to get off to a confident start with only part (f) presenting a difficulty to some. Question 2 proved more demanding; the majority of candidates were able to find at least three correct answers, but relatively few scored full marks, with options I and K being the incorrect answers offered most frequently. In Question 3, the majority of candidates were able to identify the incorrect details, though in part (b) some wrongly underlined *plus* and replaced it by *moins*. It should be noted that in this exercise candidates who underline two separate details in a sentence are not considered to have identified the one incorrect detail, though they may still be awarded the second mark for writing in the correct detail. Examiners also decided not to penalise minor misspellings, provided it was clear that the candidate understood what the word was. Thus in part (a), English spellings of 'Africa' were not accepted nor were versions such as *L'Afrique*, but in part (b) omission of the final *e* in *banlieue* was tolerated, as were plural versions of the word. However in part (d) *champs* proved difficult for many and attempted phonetic versions such as *chant* or *chon* were not accepted, though the singular version *un champ* was accepted. In part (c) although nearly all candidates correctly underlined *dix*, a surprising number gave *huit* as the correct answer. (It should be noted that whenever the answer is a number figures are accepted as well as words). Finally in this section, Question 4 was well answered with just part (f) proving challenging for many.

Of the three reading passages, Question 5 proved the most challenging. Phrases such as *la veille, jusque-là sans histoires, huit mois d'emprisonnement dont trois fermes* and *poignarder* all provided a challenge with the more able candidates either knowing the meanings or being able to work them out from context. There were a number of cases of rubric infringement where candidates instead of writing V/F/ND used ticks, crosses and question marks or wrote T for V and N or PM for ND. As the aim of this exercise is to test comprehension, all these answers were accepted as examiners felt that candidates should be rewarded for the comprehension despite the rubric infringement. Question 6 was generally well answered, though a number of candidates transposed *débat* and *communiqué*. Question 7(a) was also well answered, with part (i) being the most challenging, a number of candidates suggesting *emballent* or *remplis*. It should be noted that in this kind of exercise, the required term will be the same form of the adjective, noun or verb as the question, so that, for example, the answer to *plus âgés* will be the masculine plural form. It should also be noted that candidates were not awarded the mark if their answer went beyond the precise synonym (though addition of the definite or indefinite article was accepted). Thus in part (ii) for *marchandes* the correct answer

was *vendeuses* and *vendeuses de fromage* was not accepted. Question 7(b) was also generally well done, though part (v) was the least well answered.

Both the translation into English and the sentences for translation into French did discriminate effectively between candidates. In both questions, the fact that these were 'stand alone' exercises rather than the end of a longer passage in the case of the translation and a grammatical reworking of the vocabulary of the passage in the case of the sentences, perhaps made these exercises more challenging than the equivalent exercises in the legacy specification. The translation into English contained a few items, such as *insolite* which were intended to challenge even the most able, but it was more surprising that relatively common words such as *dehors*, *une trentaine*, *dont*, *plus tôt*, *jusqu'à* and *ainsi* were not well known and the tense of *avait rassemblé* was rarely rendered accurately. The principle behind the marking of this exercise is that the passage is divided into 20 boxes, and the mark for each box is awarded if the sense of the French is conveyed in acceptable English. Thus *sensibiliser les Français* could be rendered, for example, by 'to make the French aware of the problem', 'to inform/educate the French', even 'to sensitise the French' was accepted (but nothing which contained 'sensible'). Similarly, for *logement*, 'housing' or 'accommodation' was acceptable, but not 'lodging'. The working total of 20 is then halved to give the final mark out of 10. It was pleasing to read a number of fluent, well-expressed versions which conveyed the meaning of the French in natural English but less able candidates struggled to make much sense, particularly of the first few sentences. Finally on this question, it is more natural to leave place names such as *place de la République* in French, though translations into English such as 'Square/Place of the Republic' or 'Republic square/place' were accepted though nothing which suggested that the candidate had not realised that *place* was a place name.

As has already been mentioned, the fact that candidates could not rely on a previous text to find the vocabulary needed for the sentences of Question 9 did make the exercise more challenging and as a result examiners were slightly more tolerant in terms of the vocabulary accepted than had been the case in the previous specification. Thus for 'harmful' in part (a) *dangereux*, *graves* and *mauvais* were accepted as it was felt that in this context the sense of the English was conveyed adequately, if not precisely. However, other than 'obvious' in part (d) and 'provided that' in part (e) – many candidates tried to render the latter by inventing a word based on the verb *fournir* – the difficulties were mainly of a grammatical nature. While it was expected that only the most able would be able to use *aucun ... ne ...* correctly (though *il n'y a pas de/un pays qui* was accepted if followed by the subjunctive) many candidate also found relatively common grammatical structures challenging. Thus in part (a) the difference between *les* and *des*, in part (b) the position of the adverb and the feminine form of the adjective, in part (c) the tense after *si* and the use of *de* after an expression of quantity, in part (d) the gender of *problème* and in part (e) the use of the subjunctive and the agreement of *nécessaires* all caused difficulties. As with the translation, each sentence was divided into 4 boxes and the mark for each box is awarded if the English is rendered in correct French (only non-grammatical errors of accent are tolerated). The working total of 20 for the exercise as a whole is then halved to give the final mark out of 10. Again it was pleasing to see a good number of candidates with a firm grasp of the basic structures of the language but worrying to see a significant number unable to form even regular verbs and adjectives correctly.

Section B

Writing

The Cultural Topic essay produced a complete range of responses. At one extreme, a number of candidates showed a detailed knowledge of the topic, answered the question precisely with a wide range of examples and/or evidence, showed the ability to analyse and evaluate and expressed their ideas in confident, fluent and accurate French. Such candidates were awarded full marks and there were a number of these for each of the five topic areas. At the other end

of the scale there were a few candidates who showed very little knowledge of the topic and had great difficulty in expressing their ideas. They were inevitably awarded a very low mark. It should also be said that there were a few examples of rubric infringement, that is, for example, a candidate answering Question 12 (on the work of a French author) but with reference to a film director, or a candidate answering Question 13 (on a poet/playwright) but with reference to a novelist. Similarly, there were a very few examples of a topic being studied which was clearly outside the specification such as the French Revolution being studied as a period of 20th century French history. As this was the first year of the specification, it was decided **for this year only** to accept these essays and mark them according to their worth as if the question had been on their chosen topic or the topic had conformed to the specification. **However, it is essential that centres and candidates realise that in future years such an essay will be awarded 0 as it shows no knowledge relevant to the question set or to the prescribed topic.** There were also a very small number of candidates who wrote more than one essay; in such cases both or all essays were marked and the essay which scored the highest marks was credited. Likewise, if a candidate did not indicate which question he/she was attempting, it was assumed that whichever question it seemed to be addressing most closely was the one under which it should be assessed. Candidates should be instructed to write the question number clearly in the box provided on the question paper.

Whichever topic was chosen, the key to success was for the candidate to answer the question, the whole question and nothing but the question. There were quite a number of essays where the candidate had adopted the 'all I know about ...' approach or where a previous essay was reproduced without being adapted to the requirements of the specific question. Such essays tended to be placed in the 'sufficient' band for Content at best, and it should not be forgotten that the marks for the Quality of Language cannot come from a higher band than those awarded for Content.

Of the questions on a French-speaking region, Question 10(b) was more popular than Question 10(a) and a wide range of regions was discussed. However, it is important to note that it must be a region where French is the main language spoken or else the essay must focus on the French-speaking community of that region, so that, for example, Vietnam, while retaining some French speakers, is not an appropriate topic unless the essay is focused solely on those speakers. Those candidates who chose a very small region, such as the town of Cannes, tended to find that they did not have sufficient information to answer the question in the required degree of depth and detail. Successful responses to Question 10(a) focused effectively on the economy of the region and tended to include a detailed study of industries while the aspect of evaluation was provided by a reasoned response to the second part of the question on how positive or negative the changes have been. In Question 10(b) a number of candidates wrote as if the title had been whether they personally would like to live in the region and the weaker candidates often limited themselves to a description of tourist attractions. The best answers usually examined the question from a variety of perspectives, analysing the advantages and disadvantages from the point of view of different age groups or sectors of the population, for example, and considered the importance of *vivre*.

The most popular periods of history studied were the Second World War and mai 68 and Question 11(b) was more popular than Question 11(a). Those who did answer Question 11(a) often limited themselves to an account of the main changes which took place during the period, but the best answers focused on the question which was to analyse how the lives of the French were changed. Again, candidates who considered different sectors of the French population usually achieved the highest marks. For Question 11(b) de Gaulle and Pétain were the most popular figures discussed, though many essays lacked detail. For example, many candidates selected de Gaulle as the most important figure in the Second World War, but their essays often boiled down to his broadcast from London and his encouraging the French Resistance. To achieve high marks candidates, must show a much more detailed knowledge

and analyse exactly how his ideas/actions influenced the period with specific reference to events.

The study of an author was the most popular choice of all the Cultural Topics, with writers such as Joffo, Camus and Sagan being particularly popular, though it was also pleasing to see some contemporary writers such as Faiza Guène also being studied. One important point to make is that if a short-story writer such as Maupassant is chosen, candidates should study a collection of stories and if an essay is set on a general subject such as the themes or techniques of an author's work then reference should be made to a number of stories. However, as the Cultural Topic FAQs on the AQA website makes clear, if an essay asks for a study of a character then it is permissible to refer to just one story. Thus in Question 12(a) some candidates discussed the relationship between an individual and others in just one story (usually *Boule de Suif*) whereas other candidates analysed how the relationships worked in two or more stories. Both approaches were equally acceptable. Both the questions set seemed equally popular; again the most successful essays were those which analysed rather than merely relating the plot, but which also gave plenty of evidence to support the views expressed. It should be noted that this evidence does not have to take the form of quotations; a specific reference to an incident is equally valid. In Question 12(b) some candidates analysed first one character then the other, before drawing together in a substantial final section the differences and similarities, whereas others established the comparisons on a point by point basis. Again, both approaches were equally valid.

For the poet/playwright topic, Question 13(a) was the more popular for those who had studied a poet whereas Question 13(b) was the preference for those who had studied a playwright. Among the former, Prévert was clearly the most popular choice while for the latter Sartre, Molière and Camus all figured prominently. The most successful answers to Question 13(a) covered a range of aspects, not just themes but in the case of a poet, poetic technique (imagery, rhythm etc) and in the case of a playwright, aspects such as character or dramatic tension, for example. For Question 13(b), the very best answers did consider whether poetry or drama has functions other than to make one think and considered entertainment value or appeal to the emotions. However, it was accepted that this level of sophistication is rare among A Level students and the majority of candidates concentrated on how the poet/playwright provoked reflection in the reader/spectator and such answers, if well done, did have access to the highest marks.

Of those who studied the final Cultural Topic, answers on an architect were very rare and a film director was the most popular, with Truffaut, Malle, Kassovitz and Jeunet being the most frequently offered. There was also a reasonably large number of answers on a musician, ranging from Debussy to modern rap artists, and a smaller number on an artist, Monet being the most popular. Both questions again proved equally popular; those who answered Question 14(a) were at liberty to analyse whichever aspects of the work(s) they wished, but in order to achieve the highest marks, candidates did have to consider a good range of aspects and also address the issue of why the work is so important – this was frequently omitted or mentioned only in passing. Some candidates who attempted Question 14(b) seemed to ignore the key word *techniques* and simply wrote about the themes of the artist's work, sometimes prefaced by a statement on the lines of: 'His technique was to discuss these themes'. Such an approach simply failed to answer the question set and invariably showed either 'limited' or 'little' understanding of the task. For both Question 14(a) and Question 14(b), a number of candidates who answered with reference to a film director or musician also ignored the very medium of the work and merely analysed it as if it were a work of literature. It should be realised that for a musician some reference to musicality is expected (whether it be instruments, melody, rhythm or whatever) and for a film director cinematographic aspects, which may include aspects such as camera work, imagery or the sound track, should also form part of an analysis, especially of techniques. Finally those who studied a painter sometimes gave a good description of the techniques in general and may have mentioned the titles of

paintings but failed to show exactly how these techniques were used or what effect they had. Once more the key to success was to analyse the aspect required, but in addition to give a wide range of specific evidence to support the views.

The following information and guidance is provided on the suitability of some of the topic choices this summer.

General

A very few topics may fall into two categories (Brassens & Brel as poet or musician; Hergé as author or artist.) However whichever question is answered, the topic discussed must fall into that category. Hence if a question is answered on Hergé as an artist, then it is his artistic technique which must be discussed and if question is answered on Brel or Brassens as a musician, then some aspects of musicality (rather than just the themes of the songs) should be discussed.

French-speaking Region

Where a country has some French speakers but French is not the language generally spoken, such as Vietnam, then it is inappropriate unless referring just to those French-speakers. Similarly, where a country has a French-speaking region such as Canada or Belgium, then it is only that region which should be discussed, not the country as a whole. A single city or town (such as Cannes) with little or no reference to the surrounding area will probably not allow sufficient depth and detail in the response.

Period of 20th Century History

Too wide or too narrow a period.

Author

It is unwise to answer a question on characters in a short story with reference to one very short story. Candidates who answered with reference to “Boule de Suif” did have sufficient material to answer well; those who chose a story such as “Un Duel” did not show sufficient depth and detail to access the higher marks. Some candidates answered this question with reference to a poet/playwright or film director; next year such answers will score zero.

Dramatist/Poet

Nothing specific which was inappropriate though it is difficult to answer questions on poetry effectively without some quotation. Some candidates answered this question with reference to an author or film director; next year such answers will score zero.

Director/Architect/Musician/Painter

For the topic of a director, architect, musician or painter, candidates should refer to work produced by one person; a film on which two directors worked in collaboration, for example, would not be appropriate. A musician must be defined as someone who writes music rather than just a singer and answers should contain some reference to musical aspects rather than just the lyrics. The topic of ‘painter’ cannot include sculptor, fashion designer or photographer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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