



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

French

FREN1

(Specification 2650)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General

The paper appeared to have been accessible to the vast majority of students who completed the paper within the time allocated. Students seemed to have used their time effectively, dividing it appropriately between each of the three language skills. The mean mark was 77.4 in January 2012 in comparison with 77.0 in January 2011. The paper discriminated well between the varying levels of ability of students. This was particularly the case with the essay questions and also Question 4 in Section A.

Handwriting was poor in some cases, particularly where the writing was very small. A few students are still writing their answers in the essay question on alternate lines. This is not necessary and they should be advised not to do so. It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is to use black ink when writing answers. Several examiners reported that some scripts were almost impossible to read because of the use of inappropriate pens or colours.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

1(a): This was answered very well by the vast majority of students.

1(b): Many students gained the full 4 marks. Many gave the correct 20% figure required, though the wrong figure was also fairly common.

1(c): There was a lot of confusion over the understanding of the word *congé* with less able students misinterpreting it as referring to paternity tests. Again the number 11 caused problems for some.

1(d): The first part was well done (the idea of success) but some confusion arose over the meaning of *malgré l'opposition de l'église catholique*, with such answers as "because of the position of the Catholic Church".

Question 2

This question was very well done. The only parts which caused difficulty were (b) where *par manque de confiance* may not have been picked up, (d) and (f). In the latter case, *l'étendue du choix* proved to be challenging for some.

Question 3

This question was also very successfully answered by the vast majority. The least successfully answered part was (d) where some did not grasp the idea that an accident had taken place.

Question 4

Some students unfortunately wrote their answers in English and thus received no marks.

Marks were often not scored because of poor spellings of the key French vocabulary.

4(a): Problems frequently arose with spelling *merveilleuse*. More able students who were unsure of the spelling wisely chose an alternative adjective which was acceptable, such as *superbe* or *magnifique*.

4(b): Very few answers were credited with the 3 possible marks here.

It was surprising to see that so many students did not write the French spelling *insecte* but omitted the e and thus ended up with an English word which was not credited. Also *l'eau propre* was frequently transcribed as *leur propre*.

4(c): Spellings such as *practiquer* and the English words “climate” and “tourists” affected marks. The English spelling *environment* was common. Some students mentioned the points about infrastructure and the expansion of the airport, but these were not the priority of the minister. *Guides* was sometimes misunderstood or heard as *vie/qualité de vie*, and *la qualité du tourisme* was also given.

Question 5

Part (a) proved very challenging here, perhaps because of the tenses used in the options and the fact that *se passer de* is not well-known. The other poorly answered part was (d) where many failed to take into account the use of the word *tous* in option C.

Question 6

Many coped well with this gap fill task. The parts which were the least successfully answered were (e) (*avec soin*) and (g) (*du contenu*).

Question 7

Most coped very well with this question apart from part (g). Here, some did not see the link between *l'état émotionnel* and *l'humeur*.

Question 8

This question was also well answered by most. Errors tended to occur in part (c) where some did not spot that *un quart* and *la plupart* are not the same thing. Surprisingly, some thought that Virginie had thrown out her husband in (e) whereas the text is clear – *elle continue à vivre avec lui*.

Question 9

This question was done very well by able students and, as ever, proved a very good discriminator.

9(a): Many gave the masculine form *arrivé*. A few gave the infinitive or present tense.

9(b): Most got it right, but a few put *sportive*.

9(c): All 3 acceptable alternatives were seen, but *pourra* was by far the most popular. *Poura/pourrai* were sometimes seen, and there were attempts at other tenses.

9(d): About half of the students put the subjunctive. *Est/être/était/été* were seen, as well as the wrong person of the subjunctive *sois*.

9(e): The need for an infinitive after the negative *ne pas* was not often recognised here. Most incorrect answers were non-existent forms of the verb *craindre*.

9(f): *Venu* with no agreement was the most common error and *viennent* was also seen, as well as some unrecognisable forms of *venir* and parts of other verbs like *vont/vu*.

9(g): Many gave the correct feminine form. Errors included a wrong accent, omission of the accent, or the masculine or plural form.

9(h): The vast majority got this right, but a few gave the masculine or plural form or added an accent. *Dangereusse* was also seen.

9(i) *Fait/faire* were commonly seen, and the spelling *faissant*.

9(j) There were some poor attempts at the future tense such as *voira/vera*. Other tenses such as *voit/a vu/verrait* were given, and there were some unrecognisable forms of the verb.

Questions 10, 11 and 12

All three questions seemed to be equally popular with a possible slight preference for Question 11 on healthy eating.

As usual, there was a wide variation of standard in the answers offered with some impressive efforts which showed a high level of maturity in both the language used and the content.

There were, however, many essays where insufficient planning had been done. Some essays were rather short and lacked sufficient material to score well. Not enough points were made or they were not sufficiently developed. At times too much personal anecdote was included (particularly on the subject of family arguments).

The **Question 10** essay on relationships between adolescents and their parents produced a lot of reasons for arguments. While some students did make some interesting suggestions regarding possible solutions to the problems, it has to be said that the first part of the essay was usually better accomplished. Money, school, housework and choice of friends were widely given as topics of dispute. There was incorrect use of *s'agit* in the sense of arguing about something (*je me dispute s'agit les vêtements*). There was a good knowledge of *s'entendre avec* but this did not extend to *se comprendre/se fier à*. Many students brought up the subjects of smoking, drinking, drugs, healthy eating, mobile phones and computer use. Although it is true that these topics are often the cause of an argument, there was the underlying feeling that students were determined to bring in these subjects at all costs, almost as though they had prepared for a different essay. This was especially the case when students started to talk about the dangers of drug use, often at some length.

The **Question 11** essay on eating a balanced diet produced some good topic specific vocabulary although not always with the correct spellings, with some of the less able students resorting to English versions for minerals, vitamins, etc. Again the first part of the essay was generally better done than the suggestions on how to encourage young people to eat well. Some limited themselves entirely to a discussion of the benefits of fruit and vegetables and did not take the opportunity to broaden their answer to include the benefits of other foodstuffs. Most mentioned the benefits of eating well for health reasons, appearance and happiness. Obesity was a popular topic, as well as eating disorders and a variety of ailments brought about by a poor diet. In the second part of the question, there were some good suggestions of healthy school lunches, cookery lessons in schools and advertising campaigns on TV, as well as suggestions like free fruit and taxes on unhealthy foods. Some students wrote generally about a healthy lifestyle, especially sport and exercise, and not just about healthy eating, meaning that parts of the essay were irrelevant and that the structure became unbalanced.

The **Question 12** essay on advertising produced the most interesting and well-structured essays, particularly from the able students. There was a good balance between the three parts of the question. Many discussed anti-smoking campaigns, public health awareness

and the work of various charities as positive aspects. The point was also made by many that advertising creates jobs, increases competition between businesses and therefore benefits the economy. In lower scoring essays, *advertisement* and *expensive* were often given in English. As for the negative aspects, some of the more able students explored the idea that advertising leads to overspending, debt and even eating disorders. There were many examples of good vocabulary, such as *surconsommation*, *surendettement* and *le lavage de cerveau*.

In quality of language the lowest marks tended to be for Accuracy. The most common errors were as follows:

- The use of infinitives instead of a conjugated verb and insufficient command of the present tense (for example *ils veulent*).
- The use of the infinitive instead of a past participle
- Not recognising the need for an infinitive after *de* and *pour*.
- Anglicisms (*c'est un difficile sujet à parler de, ils n'ont personne de parler avec*).
- Invented words, *provider, la pressure, promoter* were frequently seen as were such expressions as *les ados ont des issues avec leurs parent, ils sont impliqués dans les drogues, il faut educater les ados, les parents doivent allouer une somme d'argent de poche*.
- Incorrect use of possessive adjectives (*les jeunes se disputent avec ses parents*).
- direct/indirect preceding objects – many students seem unaware of *lui/leur* and much confusion caused by statements such as *quand ils regardent les, ils aident à eux, si les parents parlent à ils*.
- students cannot distinguish between *qui* and *que, ce qui* and *ce que*.
- *ce, cet, cette, ces* cause significant problems. *Cette est la raison pour ..., cettés problems sont ... et je n'aime pas cette*.

There were generally some good attempts at including topic specific vocabulary, even by the less able students, and some appropriate turns of phrase, though many over-use pre-learnt link phrases (*autant que je sache* is a particular favourite). An introduction and conclusion were usually included and certainly a willingness to express personal opinions. Overall, examiners felt that students' approach to the written section is improving, whereas their accuracy is not.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.