



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

French

FRE2T/V

(Specification 2650)

Unit 2: Speaking Test

Report on the Examination

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Administration

Schools/colleges still using audio cassettes for the recording of these tests are reminded that 2013 is the last year when this medium will be allowed. Thereafter, tests must be submitted either on CD or on memory sticks. Many schools/colleges have now moved to using hand-held digital recorders that automatically create a recording in MP3 format, which can then be burned to a CD or simply copied to a memory stick.

Issues specific to centre conducted tests

Teacher-examiners are reminded of the two issues in conducting the tests that can have an adverse impact on the student's score for Interaction. If the timing of the switch in topics is such that the topic discussion of the fourth and final topic area lasts for less than two minutes, the score for Interaction is reduced by one band. Likewise, if the teacher-examiner fails to cover any one of the four topic areas in the course of the test, this also results in a reduction in the mark for Interaction. It should be noted that if both of these were to occur in any one test, the student would be penalised only once.

Throughout the test, teacher-examiners must ensure that the questions they ask will allow students to express and develop views and opinions. There are still too many instances of GCSE style questions that invite the student to give personal or factual information or to narrate past events such as holidays or leisure pursuits. These are not appropriate at this level and should be avoided. As a rule of thumb, if a question is not going to elicit views or opinions, it should not be asked.

'Safe' questioning techniques whereby students are never or rarely invited to develop a response to a previous question and where examiners simply pass from one question to the next will not enable students to access the higher band marks for Interaction.

Notwithstanding all of the above, it has to be said that the standard of testing is improving year on year and it is encouraging to see that points of advice and guidance featuring in teacher-support meetings are finding their way into the actual practice of conducting tests. There were very few examples this summer of students being allowed to deliver an uninterrupted nominated topic presentation and few tests that did not cover all of the topic areas. The quality of the recordings was generally good, although there were cases where excessive background noise was a distraction for those marking the tests and assessing the performances and where it must therefore have been a significant distraction for students and examiners. The source of such noise varies - noisy students at lesson change-over time; discussions between colleagues very close to the examination area; excessive banging of doors – but in most cases, it seems the noise could be reduced for the sake of those students sitting the examination.

Part 1 Discussion of the Stimulus Card

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

Part 2 Conversation

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

Teacher-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 students, particularly when there are repeated "beeps" as different attempts to get the device to work properly are made.

Schools/colleges are asked to pay particular attention to the following matters:

- clear recordings with no background hissing and with students well-positioned in relation to the microphone, so that their responses are audible – examiners cannot mark what they cannot hear
- 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 (MFL/TN) available on e-AQA in the Secure Key Materials section and in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website for GCE French
- 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 students in some degree of spontaneous exchanges rather than questions picked off from a set list with little or no follow-up on what a student actually says
- differentiated questioning according to levels of ability, so that less able students are not left struggling to respond to questions that are clearly beyond their level of proficiency
- discouraging students from giving detailed descriptions of what is on a stimulus card.

Aspects of student performance

The vast majority of students made good to excellent use of their preparation time in thinking through developed and detailed answers to the printed questions. They were succinct enough to deal with these answers in the recommended time of between two and two and a half minutes. There were a few cases where students gave too lengthy a description of what was on the card in response to the first question and some students had difficulty expressing an opinion about an opinion. Students are reminded that they are allowed – indeed encouraged – to see and express views about both sides of an argument and they do not have to either agree or disagree with an opinion.

Card A: Despite the general popularity of the topic of Fashion and Trends, this was not a popular choice of card, perhaps because students were not aware of the term *chirurgie esthétique*. Those who opted to do this card had some good ideas to express on the advantages and disadvantages of tattoos and piercings but on the question on *chirurgie esthétique*, the answers were generally limited to opinions against those who have such surgery for reasons of vanity. Very few mentioned those for whom a physical disfigurement can pose real problems of low self-esteem and so on.

Card B: This prompted some very lively exchanges in both the printed questions and the ensuing general discussion. Most examiners managed to sustain a discussion about views and ideas rather than being tempted by the narrative questions. Many students could identify with and give detailed examples of stress in their lives, drawing on a range of causes of which the speaking test was but one example!

Card C: This was a popular choice and was generally well handled, although the pronunciation of Maryvonne posed problems. Many students in response to Question 2 could see both sides and many could identify various advantages and disadvantages about the *familles recomposées*. A number of examiners commented that most students seemed to be tackling this from personal experience and it is commendable that they can discuss these issues in a very mature way.

Card D: This card was open to a number of interpretations, some more valid than others. A few students seemed to miss completely the focus on advertising and talked instead about road safety and how mobile phones should not be used by drivers when driving. Question 4 should have been seen as an opportunity to discuss both the positives and the negatives of advertising but many students just chose to say that it was always positive.

Card E: This was a popular choice but many who chose it tended to answer the questions they thought they saw printed on the card rather than the questions that were there. This was the case certainly with the last two questions where the general perspective of the questions was abandoned in favour of a more personal perspective. With the last question, students talking about the importance of music for them (rather than for young people more generally) tended to go over ground already covered in Question 3.

Card F: Definitions and examples of *sports extrêmes* were varied. Swimming was probably the most extreme example of a not extreme sport! The last question was well handled with the very able students giving a comprehensive range of reasons in favour of sport that were mainly but not exclusively health-related.

Part 2 General Conversation

The conversations in Part 2 almost invariably showed that students had engaged with the range of topics studied in their AS course: there was no shortage of ideas, views and opinions expressed in respect of all of these topics and many of the conversations were a real pleasure to listen to.

AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

The following gives some of the more common errors and areas where students need to focus their attention:

- *Ils / elles ; mal / mauvais ; ses / leurs ; c'est / il y a ; savoir / connaître ; meilleur / mieux ; faire / rendre ; avant / devant ; ils ont / ils sont ; qui / que*
- *Quand + future*
- Modals (incl. *faire*) + Infinitive and misuse of prepositions after the verb
- Comparisons and confusion between *de* and *que*
- Prepositions : *à + les ; de + les*
- Expressions of quantity (*trop beaucoup ; beaucoup de l'argent ; plusieurs des gens*, etc)
- Reflexive pronouns (eg. *je vais se marier...* ; *ça m'aide à se détendre ; cela s'aide à...*)
- Possessives : *ma père*, etc
- Emphatic pronouns (*avec ils*, etc) and DO pronouns (*cela aide moi ... ; ils traitent nous ...*)
- Translations of « What » : *quoi / ce que / qu'est-ce que ...*
- Confusion of *seul* and *seulement* (e g *la seulement solution ...*)
- Negatives of all sorts, including frequent omission of *pas* but also including use of *pas* where it should not be. (ne ...pas rien / personne / jamais)
- Sequence of tenses: esp. imperfect + conditional
- Faux amis : e g *prévenir; avertissement; actuellement; définitivement; effectif*
- Invented words: e g *provider; interrupter; expecter*
- Literal translations, where prepositions are left dangling at the end of the sentence: 'someone to talk to', 'friends to meet up with', 'a sport that I'm interested in', etc.

Teacher Support Meetings

Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2012 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) in due course.

Please note that this series of meetings will be the final opportunity to attend face to face training following Ofqual's decision to restrict face to face support for teachers. All materials used at the meetings in Autumn 2012 will be placed in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website and will be available to download throughout the academic year.

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.