



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2013**

**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 it within the allocated time. As is usually the case, students found the grammar test in Question 9 and the essay to be the most challenging questions. These questions discriminated well between the varying levels of ability of students and there was a wide spread of marks here. This was also the case with Question 3 in Section A, where poor spelling lost marks.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- 1(a) The vast majority of students scored at least two marks on this question. The most common incorrect answer concerned *souvenir de vacances* where many made vague references to being on holiday rather than remembering a holiday.
- 1(b) Many students gained the full 3 marks. Some lost a mark for not emphasising the serious nature of illnesses.
- 1(c) There was a lot of confusion over the understanding of the word *matériel* with less able students misinterpreting it as referring to cloth or material of that kind. Others rendered *gants* as gowns, and the words *nettoyer* and *peau* caused some difficulty.
- 1(d) This was well answered, though some students thought the length of time was a week rather than a month.

### Question 2

This question was very well done, with over 90% of students scoring on each part, except for part (c) where *la détente* was less well known than other items of vocabulary.

### Question 3

Less able students had difficulty with this question, mainly due to lack of vocabulary or an inability to use a recognisable form of the verb.

- 3a) The main problems here were harmful additions such as *en train* (rather than *entre*). A few answered with *abandonner la lutte*.
- 3b) *Pardonner* was frequently misunderstood with *pas donné* featuring quite frequently. Some students failed to use a correct form of the past tense.
- 3c) This question was more successfully answered.
- 3d) The main problem here was *dessous* appearing for *décue*. There were frequent misspellings of *malheureuse*.
- 3e) Many students wrote in the wrong tense here (*elle va avoir un bébé*) or misheard *autre*, with answers such as *notre enfant*.
- 3f) This question caused a lot of problems and a third of students failed to score. The following French words caused problems: *carrière*, *concentrer*, *maintenir* and especially *mari*.

#### Question 4

Parts (a), (b) and (e) caused little difficulty. In part (c) *maillots de bain* was not well-known and in part (d) some students failed to spot the clues in the use of the words *carburant* and *volant*.

#### Question 5

Part (b) proved the only challenging question here, perhaps because of the need to infer that the child was being insolent. More than 90% of students were successful in the other parts

#### Question 6

Many students coped well with this gap fill task. The parts which were the least successfully answered were (a) (*toile*), (c) (*grand-chose*) and (f) (*tournage*) because of the unfamiliarity of these vocabulary items.

#### Question 7

There was a wide spread of marks on this question. 99% scored a mark for part (a), but only 37% for part (e). This was due to the use of the verb *se passer*. *Le sommeil* caused problems for some in part (d).

#### Question 8

Generally this question was successfully answered by most. Errors tended to occur in part (b) where some did not understand *à la hauteur*. Some did not appear to understand the meaning of *romans* and therefore did not gain a mark for part (g). The use of *les miens* caused some difficulties in answering part (i).

#### Question 9

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

- 9(a) Many gave the form *aidez*, perhaps understandably.
- 9(b) Most got it right, but a few put *sociales*, despite the use of *tous*.
- 9(c) This proved to be beyond the majority of students. The present tense of common irregular verbs still causes severe problems for many.
- 9(d) About half of the students gained a mark here, with *lisent* a common incorrect answer.
- 9(e) The need for the imperfect caught out many students here.
- 9(f) Despite this adjective appearing on a previous paper, many gave a wrong answer, often omitting the accent. Some used an adverb as the answer.
- 9(g) Many gave the correct feminine form, though some used the incorrect spelling *nombreusses*.
- 9(h) The vast majority of students answered this correctly.
- 9(i) A huge variety of tenses was used here and not always correctly formed.
- 9(j) There were many examples of the inevitable *apprendu*. Fewer than half the students scored a mark.

## Questions 10, 11 and 12

All three questions were tackled, though there was a pronounced preference for Question 10 on new fast food.

As usual, there was a wide variation of standard in the answers offered with a small number of impressive scripts which demonstrated a high level of maturity in both language and content.

There were, however, many essays where insufficient planning had been done, as shown by repetition or irrelevant sections. Too often, points were made briefly or they were not sufficiently developed. There were some essays where whole sections were barely comprehensible. The majority of essays were awarded satisfactory marks for content (the 9-12 band). 29% gained marks in the 13-16 good band, and 22% in the 5-8 limited band. Comparatively few essays gained marks in the top band or the lowest band.

Question 10 proved a popular question with students clearly feeling this was within their knowledge. Able students responded to both parts of this question, giving valid reasons for fast food's popularity and the dangers of this type of food. However, a substantial number of essays became irrelevant when students wrote at length about how the dangers could be tackled and why people should eat fruit and vegetables and do sport, clearly answering a different or possibly pre-learned question. Some less able students wrote essays which would not have scored well at GCSE level. Unfortunately, there were a lot of low scoring answers, where many responses were fairly unintelligible or very repetitive in nature. Use of made up words was common – *le fast-food est affordable, il provide la cuisine vitement* and so on. Dangers tended to concentrate on the health risks but more able students also mentioned the environmental consequences, the threat to regional cuisine and the ubiquitous nature of fast food chains.

The Question 11 essay on celebrities produced some good topic specific vocabulary (*les vedettes, les peuples*) although some of the less able students resorted to English words for role model, charities and so on. The first part of the essay (the advantages) was generally better done than the disadvantages with many just limiting themselves to the lack of privacy for this section. Occasionally, valid anecdotes about the lives of people such as Justin Bieber or Katie Price lead to an unbalanced essay since there then tended to be a lot of superfluous detail given.

The final essay (Question 12) on divorce produced the most interesting and well-structured essays, particularly from able students. There was a good balance between the two parts of the question. However, some essays concentrated too much on the reasons for the decline of marriage and did not really tackle the possible positive or negative consequences of divorce. Less able students tended to go off the subject and talk about marriage in general, rather than divorce in particular. Common errors in this answer included the spelling of *marriage*, the inability to distinguish between *marier/se marier/épouser*, misuse of *individu/individual* and *trop de divorces sont occurants*.

In Quality of Language the lowest marks tended to be for Accuracy, with only 2% of students scoring the maximum of five marks. 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 peuvent*)
- Not using an infinitive after *de* and *pour*
- *Beaucoup des gens, beaucoup des jeunes pensent que...*
- Anglicisms (*c'est un difficile problème à résoudre*)
- Invented words, *providier, la pressure, promoter* are still frequently seen

- Incorrect use of pronouns (*c'est un problème pour ils*)
- *ce, cet, cette, ces* cause significant problems. *Cette est pourquoi ..., cette un problème.*
- Confusion over the correct use of reflexive verbs.

There was generally a good attempt at including topic specific vocabulary, even by the less able students, with the result that well over half of students scored at least three marks for variety of vocabulary. Although there are many over-used pre-learnt link phrases (*autant que je sache, c'est un sujet brûlant de l'actualité, en guise de conclusion* are extremely common) there were many genuine attempts to include a good variety of structures, especially with the subjunctive. Again a large number of students (75%) scored three marks or more in this category. Overall, once again, examiners felt strongly that students' approach to the written section is improving in terms of structure and use of vocabulary and structures, whereas their accuracy is sadly deteriorating.

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

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