

# A-level

# **FRENCH**

Unit 3 Listening, Reading and Writing  
Report on the Examination

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FREN3  
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## General

The examination proved generally accessible with some questions on which virtually all students were able to score high marks, while other questions proved more challenging even to the most able. There were almost no cases of questions being left completely blank and very few where the cultural topic essay was clearly unfinished, which suggests that most students had sufficient time to complete the examination.

Of the four listening items Question 1 was generally tackled successfully whereas Question 2 proved slightly more demanding, probably because some topic-specific vocabulary items such as *poignardé* and *récidivistes* were not always known. Most students also scored well on Question 3, with parts (a) and (e) causing the most difficulties, the word *licencier* and the distinction between *salaire* and *saliarié* being the stumbling block for some. Question 4 was also challenging to a number of students and relatively few identified all five correct statements, with (D) being the most frequent incorrect answer suggested as some failed to distinguish between *quatrième* and *quatorzième*.

The reading comprehension passages were also tackled successfully on the whole. Question 5 seemed to present fewer problems than similar exercises in the past, particularly as regards identifying the *non-donné* statements, though (g) was the most challenging part. In Question 6 most students used the grammatical clues (gender, number and words beginning with a vowel) successfully, though (a) and (d) proved the most demanding, with many suggesting *polluants* instead of *poïds* for the latter and consequently not giving *polluants* as the answer to (h). Question 7(a) proved to be a good discriminator overall. (i) was reasonably well answered, especially since spelling errors caused by miscopying *accueillie* were tolerated, though a number of students wrote *perçu* or *proposé*. However, (ii) proved more challenging, perhaps because many students had given *perçu* as their previous response. Common incorrect answers included *proposé*, *inespéré* or even *offert*. (iii) and (iv) were quite well answered, although a few students did suggest *enfin* or *un soutien* for (iii) and *simplifié*, *montrés* or *décrocher* for (iv). *Assister* was the incorrect answer most often suggested for (v).

The Transfer of Meaning exercise (Question 8) was generally tackled quite well, with almost all students understanding the general sense of the passage. It is worth repeating the rubric included on the first page of the question and answer booklet that the quality of a student's written language, in both French and English, is taken into account when marks are awarded. As far as English is concerned, that rubric only applies to this one question, and the principle behind the marking of this question remains that the mark for each section is awarded if the student conveys the meaning of the French in acceptable English. Spelling errors are generally tolerated provided that this did not mean that a French word appeared to be left untranslated (as was the case with *campagne*) but although the failure to distinguish between "its" and "it's" is sadly becoming all too prevalent nowadays, we still deemed it not to be acceptable English to use one where the other is required – this was also the case as far as "principle" and "principal" are concerned. There were a number of individual words which caused problems, especially *un milliard*, *relever le défi* and, to a lesser extent, *peuple* (surprisingly rendered as "pope" by a significant number of students), *un tiers* and *siècle*, while only the most able students knew or were able to infer the meaning of *à savoir*. It remains the case that attention to detail is important and those students who failed to translate tenses accurately by using a present tense for *s'est déclaré* or a past tense for *démontre* were not awarded the mark for those sections. The same is true of those who used just the definite article instead of the demonstrative to render *ce pays* or *cette campagne*. Finally, as has been mentioned in previous reports, students are strongly advised against giving alternative answers to any particular word or expression, as alternatives are rejected unless both of them are correct.

Question 9 again proved the most demanding of the language exercises and in general was not well tackled. The vocabulary was largely accessible, though a significant number of students did

not know “scientists”, “to cure” and “solve”, but this is the one exercise where absolute accuracy of written French is required (except for non-grammatical accent errors, which are tolerated) and unfortunately many students’ knowledge was only approximate. Thus a whole series of words were either misspelled or had the wrong gender, including *clair*, *la plupart*, *bénéficié*, *le progrès*, *la science*, *maintenant*, *cependant*, *le problème*, *par exemple*, and *vieilles*, while *ethniques* was frequently offered for “ethical”. As far as the grammar is concerned, only the most able students could successfully translate “some of” in (d) and were able accurately to use the *permettre à quelqu’un de faire quelque chose* construction in (e) (though *laisser* + infinitive was also accepted). This was perhaps understandable, but it is a cause for greater concern that a large number of students were unable to conjugate accurately the conditional of *devoir* in (e) or the present tense of *comprendre* in (c), were apparently unaware of the use of *ce que* (often offering *quoi*), or attempted to translate “are trying” by using *sont* followed by some form of *essayer* in the same sentence.

Finally the fact that over half of all students failed to make the adjective *difficiles* agree in (d) does suggest that much greater attention to detail is generally needed.

### Section B

As ever, there was a wide range of standards in the cultural topic essays. This year there were very few essays on topics which are not permitted in the specification, but there were again a handful of essays where a student answered the “wrong” question, for example answering Question 12 set on an author, but with reference to a film director. In such cases we have sympathy for a student who makes such an error under the stress of an examination and so will try to give credit for anything in the essay which could be considered relevant to one of the questions which were set on the appropriate topic, but almost inevitably such essays tend not to score highly. By far the most popular choice of topic was again the Artist/Architect/Musician/Film Director, with the latter being the clear favourite, and the study of a Region and a Poet/Playwright were the least popular topics.

Those who answered Question 10 discussed a wide range of regions of France or another French-speaking country, and both questions were equally popular. However, although many essays contained quite a number of details about the region, analysis, explanation or discussion was frequently lacking. The impression was often created that students were repeating a previous essay rather than answering the specific question set. Thus students answering 10(a) frequently discussed the advantages as well as the problems of living in their chosen area, or how the situation could be improved, rather than what measures have already been taken. Similarly, those answering 10(b) often described the industries but did not specifically address the question as to whether the region is prosperous and to what extent this is due to its variety (or lack thereof) of industries. The majority agreed with the statement but a few argued convincingly that a region with a limited number of industries could be successful if these industries were well managed and supported – such essays were frequently awarded high marks. The weakest essays consisted of generalities such as: “Tourism is an important industry because it creates a lot of jobs but the problem is that it causes pollution”, which may well be valid but is so superficial and lacking in detail as to gain very little credit. The most successful students had as their starting point a detailed knowledge of the region and used this knowledge to support their arguments structured to provide a very precise answer to the question set.

Much the same can be said with regard to Question 11 on a period of History. The Occupation was by far the most popular choice of period, though quite a number of students also discussed the Algerian war or May 68, and both questions were equally popular. In 11(a) the most successful students not only explained why they would and why they would not have liked to live during the period studied but also gave detailed reasons and clear justifications for their views. The very best essays not only answered the question from a personal point of view but also from the position of a number of other people such as young and old, male and female, Jewish and Christian, pro- and anti-armistice and produced some very thoughtful points. For 11(b) if the students had enough knowledge of the two events chosen, their essays

were generally sound, although a significant number of students tended to give factual details without real explanation, discussion or analysis, or else did not have enough facts to support their views. A few students appeared to be reproducing an essay on the role of two different figures in the period without concentrating on two specific events as required by the question.

The most popular authors studied in answer to Question 12 were, as ever, Camus, Joffo, Maupassant and Sagan, though an increasing number of students now seem to be studying more modern novels such as *Kiffe, kiffe demain* or *No et moi*. Both questions seemed equally popular. 12(a) was answered especially successfully by students who were clear about what is meant by “society”, whereas a number of students took it to mean all the characters in the book and essentially wrote a summary of their chosen work. Those who answered the second part of the question from different time perspectives – the time the book was written and modern day – often produced the most thoughtful and perceptive essays. 12(b) was generally answered quite well. Many students concentrated on how they did or did not identify with various characters and assessed how this influenced their reaction to the book. This was a valid approach, but the very best answers often included an analysis of how factors other than the ability to identify or not with the characters contributed to the student’s enjoyment or understanding of the work.

The vast majority of students answering Question 13 did so with reference to a playwright, with the study of poetry appearing to be quite rare this year. Molière and Sartre were again by far the most popular choices, followed by Ionesco, though there was the occasional essay on Racine, Beaumarchais or Camus, among others, and 13(a) was a more popular choice than 13(b). In 13(a) the key words in the quotation are *émotions humaines*. The students who gave some thought to the meaning of these words produced good answers, but unfortunately many essays gave examples of various emotions without any real reaction, comment or analysis and the second part of the question was often overlooked. Those who answered 13(b) often did so very successfully. Many students argued that there are differences between reading and watching a play and that one often enhances the other. This is particularly the case in a play with a strong philosophical or political message, students arguing that this message is more easily appreciated if it can be re-read. Once the message is understood, the viewing of the play allows appreciation of reactions and relationships between characters as seen on the stage as well as other aspects such as costumes or setting. It is certainly beneficial to students studying the work of a playwright if they are able to see a production of the play(s) either live or on DVD as this does tend to stimulate a greater personal response to the works.

As has already been mentioned, those answering Question 14 usually did so with reference to a film director, with Jeunet, Kassovitz and Truffaut again being the most popular choices. Most essays in response to 14(a) often agreed that their chosen film director provokes strong emotions but failed to say what these emotions are or how they are provoked. The majority of students had a sound to good knowledge of the story and contents of a film but found it difficult to focus on the specific question. 14(b) was the more popular choice, perhaps because techniques and themes could be used. Many students knew the vocabulary needed but real understanding and analysis were often lacking. Most students chose one of the points already made and decided that it was the most important factor without any attempt to explain why. However, there were also some thoughtful and detailed answers in response to both questions by students who understood what the question was asking for and gave a reasoned, detailed response where examples from the film(s) were given not just as descriptions of what happened but analysed in terms of what effect they have on the spectator and how this effect is created. There were also some equally effective answers with relation to an artist or musician, though in the former case there were a number of essays where students declared that the artist uses a particular technique without giving a detailed analysis of how this technique is demonstrated in a particular painting and how it influences our perception of it. Finally, it is worth repeating that if a musician is studied some reference should normally be made to some aspects of musicality, rather than just the themes of a song.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasising that the choice of which cultural topic to study and how to study it should be made with the bullet points in the specification in mind. Those students who

produced the best cultural topic essays were those who had a detailed knowledge of their chosen topic, who spent some time planning their essay and then applied their knowledge to answer the specific question set.

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

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

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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](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion).