



General Certificate of Education

French 1651

Specification

FREN1 Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

2011 examination - January series

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General

The paper appeared to have been accessible to the vast majority of candidates with little evidence that candidates had insufficient time to complete the paper. The mean mark was 77.0 out of 110. Candidates seemed to have used their time effectively, devoting an appropriate amount of time to each of the three language skills. There were comparatively few papers scoring very high marks, though the majority of candidates scored very well in both listening and reading comprehension. The questions which discriminated most effectively were Questions 3, 7 and 9 and the writing question. Once again, for online marking, it should be stressed how important it is for candidates to write in black ink or ballpoint pen, as instructed on the front of the question paper as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen. Candidates should also be encouraged to write as neatly as possible since several examiners commented on the difficulties caused by illegibly written answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Fewer candidates this time answered this question in French. The main difficulties encountered were with part (a) where failure to specify that the ban applied to primary schools led to candidates not scoring the mark. In part (b), the word *maux* was often mistaken for *mots*, but this question was generally well answered. In part (c) *la dépression* was almost always correctly conveyed but *le cerveau* caused some misunderstanding and there were references to servers and the cervix. Part (d) was accurately done by most candidates.

Question 2

This question was generally very well done, though some had difficulties in part (f) where the word *varié* was spoken by Liam but the correct answer was Florine since she says: *bien qu'il n'y ait pas un grand choix de nourriture*.

Question 3

This question discriminated well and maximum marks were far rarer here. Part (a) proved quite challenging, with many failing to score because of inaccurate spellings of *secret* and *inviter*. The expression *les stars elle-mêmes* caused misunderstanding with many writing *elle m'aime*. In part (b), most were able to transcribe *rapporter une fortune* but many found *si on réussit à la vendre à un magazine* much more difficult, though luckily they had already gained a mark by this stage. Part (c) was often successfully answered, though there were some who had difficulties with the word *trop*. Part (d) proved challenging for many. The phrase *quand on sort la poubelle* caused particular problems (*content sort la poubelle*). Some had the press taking photos of or hiding in the dustbins or stealing sandwiches. In part (e), many managed to convey that the friend was unharmed but the cause of the accident was more elusive with many seeming to think that the photographers were trying to take pictures of her unconscious in her car.

Question 4

This question proved to be very straightforward with a high percentage of candidates achieving a very pleasing score.

Question 5

There was a very high success rate here, the only parts incorrectly answered on any kind of regular basis being parts (e) and (f), where *les lèvres* and *les pattes* were not well known.

Question 6

This question discriminated reasonably well, with a range of answers for each of the sentences. As usual, the *information non-donnée* questions caused the most confusion, with part (h) frequently answered incorrectly.

Question 7

Most coped very well with parts (a) and (b) in this question. However, the subsequent parts were answered far less successfully, with part (e) causing particular problems, since *cadets* was not well known.

Question 8

In answering questions in French, manipulation of the language is **not** required and candidates who try to adapt the original text run the risk of failing to score maximum marks because of inaccuracies leading to confusion. There was a very high success rate in part (a) but a significant minority used the infinitive *écrire* and a number misused *fait* by preceding it with *Loïc*. Part (b) was quite well done, though there were some examples of poor copying such as *demader* and *le problem*. Candidates coped well with parts (c) and (d).

Question 9

This question was done very well by able candidates and, as ever, proved a very good discriminator. The sentences which caused problems for some candidates were (c), where the plural form *internationaux* was not familiar to many, (e) where the agreement was often absent and (g), where most used the feminine despite the clue in *prestigieux*.

Questions 10, 11 and 12

There were few exceptionally good pieces of work though a small number of candidates impressed examiners with the maturity of their thoughts and their ability to express themselves in clear and well-ordered French. Such candidates developed and illustrated their answers fully, and expressed themselves in fluid and accurate French. At the other extreme, there were some very disappointingly poor pieces of work from the less able candidates, which contained barely a single comprehensible sentence.

The impression of examiners is that candidates who have prepared previous years' essay titles are not adapting what they write to the specific demands of the title in question. Each of the three questions produced content not strictly relevant to the set task; *vivre seul* led to answers on marriage and divorce, *les causes du stress et ses solutions* often depended on the irrelevant consequences of drinking and smoking and *les différents moyens de regarder un film* answered a recently set question on the cinema and thus neglected the home cinema dimension.

The essay on stress proved the most popular. Candidates attempting this essay produced perhaps the most convincing ideas, revolving around school (homework and exams), family and friends. Some candidates profitably explored how peer pressure and advertising can be causes of stress, such as the need to have the latest and most expensive gadgets. Solutions tended to be rather less convincing, though some used their knowledge of other topic areas to offer explanations of the benefits of exercise.

The cinema question also tended to contain a reasonable level of relevant content, and candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of technical developments enabling films to be viewed at home with a pleasing use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Unfortunately, very

few candidates gave anything other than a very brief mention of the second half of the question, on the future of the cinema, and this prevented many candidates from accessing the very top of the mark range.

The essay on living alone was the least popular choice and nearly always completed in a rather unstructured way, with little evidence of any depth of study of the topic, often revealed by an absence of appropriate topic specific vocabulary. There were a small number of excellent essays on this topic but the title also gave rise to the least successfully written pieces.

Quality of Language was, on the whole, disappointing. Some had attempted to translate word for word from English into French with disastrous results. One of the most disappointing aspects was the use of English words (*les relationships*) when the French equivalent was not known and misspellings of key words given in the rubric (*le stressé*). The use of words such as *provider* was alarmingly common. Some answers contained very little variety in the use of vocabulary and structure, with much repetition. While a fair number of candidates may be able to reproduce carefully learned subjunctives (*autant que je sache* is very popular) there is often a failure to be able to form the present tense of regular verbs.

Other examples of a weak grasp of grammar include the constant use of the infinitive, poor application of reflexives and possessives (*nous allons au cinéma pour se détendre* or *quand ils sortent avec ses amis*), incorrect use of preposition with verb and the inclusion of *de* before many infinitives (*ils veulent de voir un film*). Even commonly used vocabulary was often misspelt (*beacoup / heresement*). The difference between *mieux* and *meilleur* is still a closed book to many.

Nevertheless, many candidates attempted to write at some length on the various topics and are genuinely trying to make valid points which are then developed appropriately. This is the correct approach and an essay which contains a fair number of relevant arguments, expanded wherever possible, will always be well rewarded in terms of content.

Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Candidates must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those candidates who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the Essay Planning Sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are dispatched for marking.

Additional Guidance for Responding to the Writing Section

Are candidates expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Candidates are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?

Yes, we give ticks for personal opinions as we consider them valid as developments.

Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 5/6 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 5/6 against with evidence?

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and candidates will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/examples/opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, candidates must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is logical structure and they have answered fully the question set.

Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

Centres are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web pages <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/french/materials.php>. These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, reports on the examination and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For FREN1 the TRB includes for the Writing Section additional specimen questions (to supplement past papers from previous series) and candidate exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing candidates for future examinations.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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