



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2011**

**French**

**FRE2T/V**

**(Specification 2650)**

**Unit 2: Speaking Test**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Administration

Staff in teacher-conducted centres may be interested to know of the development that took place this year with the Visiting Examiner option: these examiners used a portable digital voice recorder to record the tests and store them directly as MP3 files. The quality of these recordings when played back through a lap-top or PC is excellent and the machine is very unobtrusive. The equipment is also not expensive.

Although they continue to become fewer year on year there are still centres where teacher-examiners do not keep to the correct timings of the different parts of the test. However the miss-timings occur, they will have a negative impact on the student's marks. Students who are allowed to speak for four minutes in response to the printed questions in Part 1, for example, and who are then limited to one minute in the general discussion of the sub-topic will not match a descriptor in that one minute above a mark of 2 out of 5. If they are allowed to go on for longer with the general discussion in Part 1, then the extra time there will potentially mean lost marks for Interaction because the third topic in Part 2 will have been dealt with inadequately. All teacher-examiners are therefore urged to allocate the correct amount of time to each part of the test and to encourage their students to use their time efficiently when responding to the printed questions.

### Part 1 Discussion of the Stimulus Card

5 minutes (approximate split 2½ 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.

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.

Centres 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
- 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.

### Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

There are still cases where teacher-examiners move beyond the sub-topic in the general discussion on the stimulus card. It is not acceptable for the discussion in the second part of Part 1 to move beyond the sub-topic stated on the card. This is happening across all topics and teacher-examiners in centres are urged to familiarise themselves fully with the sub-topic divisions. There is an argument that 'drifting' from, for example, advertising *per se* to advertising on television is a logical direction for a discussion to take, but the risk is that in the quite pressured situation of the test the switch back to advertising does not happen and a discussion about television ensues. The advice is therefore not to venture beyond the sub-topic in the first place, however tempting it might be so to do.

A very small number of centres failed to treat this first part of the test as a discussion and allowed students to talk uninterrupted for five minutes about the stimulus card, using the printed questions as prompts for the aspects to be covered. The correct way to conduct Part 1 is set out very clearly in the booklet provided for teacher-examiners and is exemplified in the Teacher Support materials available in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website.

Before considering each card, it is helpful for centres preparing students to know that students are expected to develop their responses to **all** but the first printed question in order to access the highest mark available here. There was in evidence in some centres a clear trend towards briefer, less fully developed responses to the second and third questions with students targeting the fourth and fifth questions more for full development.

**Card A:** responses to this card were generally good. The more discerning students made good use of the opportunity in the second question to say that they had some sympathy with each point of view and thus allowed themselves greater scope to develop their answer. There were good answers on the importance of marriage (or lack of it) but responses to the age questions were often disappointing, as students gave only one or two reasons why they thought 16 or 17 was too young. The last question prompted some thoughtful and well developed answers.

**Card B:** the time-span covered in the text was not always well-understood with most students focussing on Christmas and thus not appreciating or mentioning the prolonged pressure on children from the end of summer onwards. Many students made good use of their own experience as young children of advertising in response to the second question. The bad effects of advertising for most outweighed the good effects and in respect of the latter there was generally some awkwardness in expressing views about the benefits of public information advertisements. There were varying degrees of honesty in respect of the last question: many claimed not to be at all influenced but when further questioning explored this, opinions changed somewhat.

**Card C:** students choosing this card were for the most part musicians and they had plenty to say in response to all of the questions, though a disappointing number claimed they thought music was an exclusively young people's 'thing'. There were some very sincere expressions of an enthusiasm and indeed a passion for making music with very well articulated benefits and advantages.

**Card D:** the irony of Pierre's *cinq portions* was missed for the most part. Many chose to agree with Pierre and left it at that, whereas a stand that acknowledged both sides of the healthy eating arguments would have allowed more scope for development. As a general point of guidance, students should be encouraged, whenever possible, to see both sides of an opinion. There was very little originality in suggestions for encouraging young people to pay more attention to their health: the general response seems always to be that *le gouvernement doit faire quelque chose* but often an angle that starts with responsibility closer to home or school can be more productive.

Many students missed the point of the last question and talked of the dangers of *un mauvais régime*.

**Card E:** this card more than any of the others prompted very polarised responses. The able students produced excellent answers which gave a clear and comprehensive evaluation of Marie-Claire's situation, a wide range of advice, a full and detailed 'job and person specification' for a good parent and a thoughtful analysis of factors that can get in the way of good parent-child relationships. At the opposite end, there was extensive lifting from the text to describe Marie-Claire's situation; there was an awkward misuse of imperatives to express the advice and the response to good parenting and difficult relationships was very limited.

**Card F:** this was a popular choice and was generally well handled, although there was little attempt by students to 'unpack' the concept of reality television and indeed to appreciate the diverse range of examples of it. There was a heartening response to the good television questions, with many quoting news programmes and documentaries of various sorts as their preferred types of programme. The majority of students in the last question spotted the opportunity to deal with both aspects of the answer and gave some very good answers to this.

## Part 2 General Conversation

Comments remain pretty much what they have been in the past in that in general terms with centre-conducted tests the discussion of the nominated topic tended to follow a rather predictable pattern of *alors parle-moi de...* to introduce a mini-presentation around each bullet-point. When there is little or no follow-up to points made by the student, this will not attract a high mark for Interaction. Sometimes such an approach characterised the discussion of the remaining topics, but there did seem to be an increased willingness by teacher-examiners to probe a little bit further some of the responses students made.

With each of the three topics for discussion it is important that teacher-examiners consider their questions in the context of the assessment criteria if students are to be given every opportunity to do their best. Too much time, in some cases, is being spent on question types that elicit factual information: in the context of a film, *De quoi s'agit-il?* is not the most effective question as it will invite and encourage a narrative summary of the film and the time taken to deliver that is so much better spent – in terms of the marks the performance will attract – on questions that elicit views and opinions. Likewise *Parle(z)-moi de...* in the context of family, friends, favourite television programmes, advertisements etc is also something of a 'high risk' (rather than a high mark) type of question. *Que fais-tu / faites-vous...?* in the context of sport and healthy living are again question types that do not readily lend themselves to being dealt with to elicit opinions.

In terms of preparing students for the test and linked closely to this would be the advice for them to avoid excessive use of *je* statements. Many students fail to hear in a question the more general perspective that is being sought: *que devrait-on faire...?* will be converted by the student to *que fais-tu / faites-vous?* It is challenging but very useful to encourage students to operate in *je* mode only when it has been introduced by *par exemple, moi*. Such a constraint encourages the discipline of concentrating on a more general perspective, on opinions and views, and also on developing such opinions and views through examples relevant to the student himself or herself. Factual information is useful as a source of development and exemplification of an answer: at this level it will not attract many marks for Interaction if it is all or most of what the student offers.

It is clear across all students that the topics in the specification are ones with which students can engage and that despite the fact that they are performing in a test, they derive a lot of enjoyment and pleasure from communicating in French. Very many of the conversations remain a pleasure to listen to and centres are once more to be congratulated on the confidence they engender in their students.

### AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

There were very few really poor performances, with most being reasonable and a good number where students demonstrated an impressive grasp of a wide range of vocabulary and structures, which they used to good effect to develop their ideas and opinions in a mature and spontaneous manner.

Many students managed to include a couple of subjunctive constructions, though sometimes used the subjunctive quite inappropriately: *s'ils aillent...*, *je sais qu'elle soit...*, while missing cases where it was needed: *avant on a...*, *je voudrais qu'elle être...* It should be noted too that there is a risk of over using the subjunctive with repeated sentences starting with *bien que* and a tendency to assume that the subjunctive alone is the key to accessing the higher mark bands.

Far too many examples of verbs not being conjugated at all or incorrectly occurred in lots of tests: *je regarder...*, *ils télécharger...*, *on avoir...*, *nous faire...*, *elles est...*, *ils a...*, *ils peut...*, *nous peuvent...*, *je sera...*, *ils sont souffrent...*, *ils sont encourager moi...*, *je suis m'amusé...*, *moi et ma mère disputé elle a devient*.

Verbs + infinitive fared little better: *j'aime de jouer...*, *je ne peux pas vu...*, *ils doivent joue*.

*Avoir* and *être* were frequently muddled: *il est 16 ans...*, *elle a jolie*.

Negatives caused problems even in their most basic forms: *il n'est cher pas...*, *ils n'ont rien besoin*.

Pronouns were frequently misused with one examiner struggling to keep her composure after the following exchange: *Tu aimes le cinéma? Oui, je t'aime!* Other less amusing errors included: *je voudrais se marier...*, *avec il...*, *pour ils...*, *ils regardent elles...*, *j'y peux aller...*, *il écoute moi*.

Adjectives: *mon sœur...*, *ma père...*, *ils sont belles...*, *ils amis...*, *elle vêtements...*, *lui opinions...*, *toi family...*, *un régime sain...*, *nouveaux choses*.

Confusion between adjectives and adverbs: *une bien attitude...*, *le seulement genre...*, *un mal note...*, *rhythme vite*.

Comparatives: *plus bon...*, *plus mieux...*, *ils sont très vieux que moi*.

Passive: *le produit vendra...*, *les pubs devraient interdire*.

There was considerable confusion over the use of participles: *fatigant/fatigue...*, *stressant/stressé*.

Plural nouns used in the singular: *un gen...*, *une vacance*.

Qui & Que: *les vêtements qui on porte*.

Further confusion was seen in the use of *savoir/connaître...*, *devant/avant...*, *parce que/à cause de...*, *temps/fois...*, *cours/courses...*, *magasins/magazines...*, *raconter/rencontrer...*, *jouer à/de...*, *penser à/de...*, *très/trop/plus*.

Misuse of *sur*: *sur dimanche...*, *sur la télé*.

Inability to express everywhere: *dans tout le monde* or 'to have a good time': *passer un bon temps*.

There were the usual Anglicisms/inventions: *provider...*, *improver...*, *acter...*, *expresser...*, *experience...*, *interrupter...*, *advertiser...*, *available...*, *vegetables...*, *issues...*, *relationships...*, *especialement*.

### **Annual Teacher Support Meetings**

Centres are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2011 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](http://www.aqa.org.uk)) in due course.

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