



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

French

FRE4T/V

(Specification 2650)

Unit 4: Speaking Test

Report on the Examination

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Administration

The quality of recordings was generally good with fewer centres using cassettes although there remain some problems with the audibility of responses from quietly spoken students. Voice projection and the positioning of microphones can obviously help to improve audibility. Few such problems are encountered with the use of the digital voice recorders mentioned in the FRE2T/V report which can be positioned on the surface of the table or desk that examiners and students are using.

Centres are asked to check carefully that paperwork is completed correctly including legible documenting of student names, numbers, stimulus card letters, topic titles and examiner name, in the case of teacher-examiners.

Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

The best prepared students had concentrated in their preparation time on two aspects of their Part 1 performance. First, they had given thought to presenting a range of four or five points with elements of development that can be realistically given in the sixty seconds available. Best practice that emerged in this second series of this examination included very clearly structured presentations: *premièrement, deuxièmement; troisièmement; et finalement*, a disciplined approach which seemed also to help students ensure their points were quite distinct and different. Secondly, and as important, some preparation time had been spent considering what was going to come after the one minute presentation and where this was the case, it was clear that students had looked at the opposing speech bubble and had spent time anticipating possible lines of questioning. This meant that they were very much in control of most of the content of the full five minute discussion.

Weaker performances in this part of the test continued to be characterised by one or more of the following: a failure to keep to the one minute allowed and a tendency to repeat points made in the speech bubble on the card; a lack of clarity about which opinion was being defended or developed and a lack of focus on the specific opinion; a tendency in the ensuing discussion to 'switch sides' and agree with arguments put by the examiner without any attempt to develop a counter argument. There was also evidence of 'cross-contamination' between cards so that students discussing, for example, aspects of racism talked of *l'importance de faire de petits gestes*.

Card A: nearly all students chose the second opinion, but in both cases summaries tended to offer broad generalisations about threats to the environment rather than being sharply focused on the angle presented on the card, with a lot of points about switching off lights, saving water by showering, using public transport and recycling being listed. There was generally a lack of focus on the need for campaigns to educate or persuade people to protect the planet and more of a general argument on the merits of saving the planet.

Card B: the few students who defended Opinion 2 delivered their ideas quite convincingly. Many who opted for Opinion 1 made over-general points on racism rather than focusing on the importance of groups such as *SOS Racisme*, and often struggled to exemplify the work of such groups in any meaningful way when challenged.

Card C: although the majority of students opted for the second opinion, those choosing the first viewpoint were able to present and defend their stance with some conviction. Students generally are well prepared to deal with this topic and it is one which stirs some passionate reactions and responses.

Card D: the vast majority of students chose Opinion 1, but tended to list examples of *petits gestes* in a rather simplistic way. Almost all wavered in their stance at some point when

challenged about the responsibility of businesses and the role of Government in combating pollution, as well as their own habits and life-styles. Those who resolutely defended their opinion throughout all seemed to live near enough to walk or cycle to supermarkets!

Card E: Opinion 2 was the more popular with some reasonable development of familiar pro-immigration points, though several students shared the examiner's point of view a little too readily at times when challenged about the current economic situation. Those in favour of *les cultures différentes* tended to offer very limited examples of the benefits such as food outlets and music.

Card F: this was the least popular choice of card but the one that produced the most highly focused pertinent summaries. Most students were very much in favour of *caméras de surveillance*, though points were not always well developed, with an over-reliance on material on the stimulus card in many instances. Those opting for the second opinion argued very strongly in defence of individual freedom and cited well-known or personal examples of crimes where cameras were demonstrably ineffective.

Part 2: Discussion of Cultural Topics

Teacher-examiners must remain vigilant about the allocation of time to these two topics: there should be an even allocation of five minutes per topic. In a number of cases, after an over-run in Part 1 and too lengthy a discussion of the first Cultural Topic, there was only a three minute discussion of the second topic and so the deduction of 2 Interaction marks had to be applied (see Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations: June 2011).

The other issue that teacher-examiners need to be aware of in testing students and that teachers need to be aware of in preparing students is that topic knowledge *per se* is not rewarded in the mark scheme for this part of the test. Questions eliciting factual information must be avoided in favour of those which require students to express views and opinions. This relates particularly to the topic of the region where many students came into the examination equipped with an abundance of facts and figures which they proceeded to give in response to questions eliciting facts and figures. This sort of content will not attract high marks for Interaction.

The content of some discussions was too descriptive or narrative, especially in respect of regions and periods of history but on the whole the cultural topics provided plenty of variety and range and within that, plenty of evidence of studies that had been engaging and enjoyable. There was evidence that in many centres one Cultural Topic had been studied by all students but for the second topic, there had been more individual choice and this made for more varied discussions. There is across the entry an impressively wide range of topics being undertaken.

AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

It was pleasing to listen to a good number of students using complex structures and quite sophisticated vocabulary with a high level of accuracy. However, there were still many students who made the most basic of errors conjugating common verbs. Passive constructions and all *si* sentences caused considerable problems.

Verbs: *ils commettre..., il éduquer..., l'armée sont..., la police ont..., nous peux..., il comprenne..., nous vu..., j'avais crois;il a simplement veut montrer..., ils devraient ont..., 'ils avaient vivre.*

Negatives: *ils ne pas aident..., c'est ne pas riche..., ils n'a pas faim..., pas de personnes..., supporter le gouvernement.*

Subjunctive: used inappropriately: *s'ils sachent...*, *pour sache...*, or not used when it should have been : *bien que j'aimerais...*, *jusqu'à il est...*, *je ne pense pas qu'il est...*, *il faut que je fais ça...*, *il veut quelque chose à changer*.

Pronouns: *avec il...*, *pour ils...*, *il me peut aider...*, *il voulait montrer nous*.

Confusion of adjectives and adverbs: *des conditions mal...*, *le seulement film...*, *le mieux truc...*, *une bien vie;nous sommes heureusement...*, *il marche bon*.

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) 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.