



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

French

FRE4T/V

(Specification 2650)

Unit 4: Speaking Test

Report on the Examination

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Administration

Schools/colleges still using audio cassettes for the recording of these tests are reminded that 2013 is the last year when this medium will be allowed. Thereafter, tests must be submitted either on CD or on memory sticks. Many schools/colleges have now moved to using hand-held digital recorders that automatically create a recording in MP3 format which can then be burned to a CD or simply copied to a memory stick.

For teacher-examiners there are far fewer potential issues with Unit 4 speaking in terms of mis-timings and topic-coverage and it was encouraging to note that the vast majority of tests were conducted according to the guidelines and instructions. There were nevertheless still some cases in the discussion of Cultural Topics, and particularly on the topics of the region and a period of history, where students were asked to present factual information and to describe aspects of the region or narrate events from the period, none of which allowed for any meaningful views and opinions to be expressed, let alone developed and/or justified. Teacher-examiners are reminded to familiarise themselves with the descriptors in the mark scheme for Interaction so that they can ensure the right type and level of questioning is used in future tests.

Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

Many students were very much in control of this part of the test. They used their preparation time productively, their one minute presentation was well organised and their arguments were presented concisely and clearly. It was obvious that they had considered the opposing views and prepared themselves to counter them vigorously and plausibly. There were many enjoyable discussions. There were, however, cases where students failed to fit their presentation into the one minute available and there were also students who were satisfied simply to repeat the points made on the card without much attempt at development. Others were not ready to defend their opinions and tended to agree with the examiner far too readily. Students are reminded of the importance of reading their speech bubbles carefully and to focus their outline on the specific issue on the card. The one minute presentation is not an opportunity to talk generally about the sub-topic on which the stimulus card is based.

Card A: Some students drifted away from the question of pressure groups and on to the more general issue of protecting the planet was evident and this led to a lack of focus. Most chose to defend Opinion 2 and considered why pressure groups are important. There was not much evidence that many were aware of any such groups other than Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth - those mentioned on the card. Not the most popular card choice, possibly because students did not feel sufficiently well informed on the matter.

Card B: A popular choice with the overwhelming majority opting for Opinion 1. There were many arguments made in favour of multicultural education and some students were able to back their case by drawing on their own educational experience. The defence of their case was not always well made, especially when having to consider the often stronger influence of the home on the child.

Card C: Surprisingly few chose this card, but those who did generally preferred Opinion 1. The counter arguments were not always well challenged, but at the top end, those who chose this card coped extremely well and were able to draw on specific examples of companies who used child labour from developing countries.

Card D: This was popular and well done, with students usually preferring Opinion 1. Some students focussed too much on the damage done by fossil fuels and pollution in general and too little on the merits of the electric car, but many found convincing arguments in its favour and managed to keep to the focus of the card.

Card E: Another very popular choice. Most were in favour of the *politique de porte ouverte* although much of the argument in its favour was unfocussed. When practical aspects were considered, the case was stronger. The factors to be considered in selection were not carefully thought through when defending the opposing point of view and most failed to supply a convincing argument.

Card F: Very few chose this card, perhaps because it did not focus specifically enough on an aspect of technology. In most cases where it was chosen Opinion 2 was the preferred choice and in fact the discussion was excellent.

Response to challenges

In the four minute discussion in Part 1 where students are responding to challenges, it is not possible for an exchange of devil's advocate interventions to be sustained: it puts unnecessary pressure on both student and examiner and there is only a limited number of *oui, mais... non, mais...* points to be made. The guidance at Teacher Support Meetings identifies a variety of different ways of challenging students including inviting further examples or explanation; asking how the candidate has arrived at a certain opinion or view; asking if friends/family share such a view; challenging the student to think through the consequence of the stand taken and react accordingly.

Part 2: Discussion of Cultural Topics

By far the most meaningful discussions of Cultural Topics were those where students had had some personal choice about the topics they studied and where there had been some element of personal research and engagement with the topic. Literary texts and film directors are among the most common topics chosen and students generally discuss these in a mature manner, showing a sound understanding of both thematic and stylistic or technical aspects. Teacher-examiners in schools and colleges with large numbers of students who have all studied the same topics often have difficulty varying the questions from student to student, and varying the topics studied would help solve this problem.

Questioning techniques that allow the student to 'set the agenda' are to be avoided (of the type *parlez-moi un peu de ...* or *quels sont les trois aspects / personnages / thèmes les plus importants ?*)

AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

The majority of students had a good command of the language using complex structures and varied vocabulary. There are, however, a number of recurring errors of which some examples are given below:

Personal pronouns: Distinction between direct and indirect pronouns and their place in a sentence are still causing problems.

Negatives: Poor use of negatives (especially with *aucun, rien, personne*) e.g. *quand personne ne fait pas rien.*

Comparisons: *La femme n'était pas comme importante comme l'homme; Ces pays ne sont pas comme riches comme nous.*

Confusion of adjectives and adverbs: *Le seulement moyen pour... la mieux influence.. C'est une mal chose.*

Then always translated as *puis* even when it means therefore.

Teacher Support Meetings

Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2012 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.

Please note that this series of meetings will be the final opportunity to attend face to face training following Ofqual's decision to restrict face to face support for teachers. All materials used at the meetings in Autumn 2012 will be placed in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website and will be available to download throughout the academic year.

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.