



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

French

FREN3

(Specification 2650)

Unit 3: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The examination proved accessible to the vast majority of students with some questions on which virtually all were able to score high marks while others proved challenging even to the best. The mean mark was 72.7 out of 110 in comparison with 73.9 in June 2011. 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.

Section A

Comments on specific questions

The four listening items were generally tackled successfully. However, in Question 2 a significant number of students failed to identify the incorrect detail in part (c) as they did not realise that using a different word from the one used in the recording such as *donner* instead of *rendre* or *dans* instead of *d'ici* does not make the detail incorrect. There were also some students who correctly identified the wrong detail as *le Ministre de l'environnement* and so gained one mark but were unable to write *maire* correctly, offering the English version 'mayor' or else *mer* or *mère*. It should be noted that in this exercise, errors of grammar are not penalised as long as there is no doubt over the comprehension and so in part (a) all forms of *tout* were accepted. Likewise, those who correctly underlined *deux* and replaced it by *trois*, or *elles* were awarded the 2 marks. In part (b) although the only incorrect detail was *train* rather than *camion*, students who underlined the whole of *amenée en train* and replaced it with *livrée en camion* were awarded the 2 marks. Question 4 was the most challenging of the listening items. Most students achieved 3 or 4 marks, but relatively few identified all 6 correct statements, with D being the correct answer least often identified and G and J being the most frequent incorrect answers suggested.

The reading comprehension passages were also tackled successfully on the whole. Most students scored well on Question 5, with just the statement in part (c) causing significant problems, probably because of the word *siège*. In Question 6(a) parts (ii) and (iv) were well answered and most students also found the correct answer for part (i), although some failed to score the mark as they added *agricoles* to *entreprises*. Similarly in part (iii), the correct answer was *main d'œuvre* but many students suggested *trafic de main d'œuvre* which was not accepted. It should be noted that in this type of exercise the addition of extra words which mean the suggested answer is not the equivalent to just the word or expression in the question is not accepted. However, nouns are accepted with or without the article and minor misspellings are tolerated, but not if an English word is then used (e.g. 'enterprises' instead of *entreprises*.) In Question 6(b) most students obtained at least two marks, but option F was often incorrectly offered instead of H. Question 7 is a type with which most students seemed very familiar and they used the grammatical clues (gender and number) successfully, though parts (f) and (h) proved the most challenging, with many offering *mers* instead of *sols* for part (f).

Standards varied widely in the transfer of meaning passage of Question 8. The vast majority of students were familiar with topic-specific vocabulary such as *éolienne*, *chauffer*, and *énergie renouvelable* but some were unsure of items such as *afin de* or *il y a peu de temps*. The hardest items were probably *rentabiliser*, *subvention* and *facture*, but there were also some who could not find the appropriate meaning of *rester*. For *subvention* only the more able students gave the expected version of 'subsidy' or 'grant' but as the word 'subvention' does exist with the same meaning in English it was accepted. The principal 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 and use of an inappropriate register such as 'at yours' for *chez vous* or 'well possible' for *bien possible* was not accepted. Likewise versions

which switched between ‘you/your’ and ‘we/our’, often within the same sentence, to translate *on ... son*, were not acceptable. Frequent avoidable errors in the translation are not using the correct tense (e.g. ‘could’ rather than ‘can’ for *pouvez*) or omitting words such as the full meaning of *plus toujours* in the phrase *ce qui n’est plus toujours le cas* or *donc* in the phrase *Il sera donc plus difficile*. Finally 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 proved very challenging and in general was not well tackled. Although it is understandable that the more difficult vocabulary items such as ‘parties’ and ‘expel’ in part (c) should cause problems, marks were often not scored through lack of attention to details such as spelling and gender. Virtually all students must have encountered words such as *le racisme*, *un problème*, *le taux* and *la guerre* but many could not spell them correctly or else gave the wrong gender. Other words frequently misspelled included *pays*, *occidental/l’ouest* and *extrême droite*. In terms of grammar, many students failed to use *des* after *la plupart* in part (a); the passive in part (b) was challenging and it should be noted that alternatives to *tenus responsables* such as *considérés/vus comme responsables* were accepted though, of those students who did find an appropriate version, very few managed to put *responsables* in the plural. Many students, but by no means all, recognised the need for a subjunctive in part (c) but often did not score the mark by giving a plural verb form after *le gouvernement*. In part (d) only the more able students were able both to give *auraient dû* (the accent is needed here for the mark as otherwise *du* is a different word) and then use an infinitive afterwards – many examples of past participles were offered here – and very few gave the required inversion after direct speech, though versions which placed *Ils affirment/déclarent* at the beginning of the sentence were accepted. Part (e) was tackled more successfully though *même* and *ceux qui* both caused problems for some.

Section B

Writing

There was a wide range of standards in the Cultural Topic essays. Unfortunately, some essays were on topics which are not permitted in the specification, such as discussing an actor or fashion designer under the heading of an artist/architect/musician/film director. Further guidance on what is acceptable can be found on the website in the Cultural Topics FAQ section of the Teacher Resource Bank. There were also a few essays where a student had answered the ‘wrong’ question, for example answering Question 12 on an author, but with reference to a film director. In such cases, examiners 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.

Those who answered Question 10 discussed a wide range of regions of France or another French-speaking country, and part (b) was a much more popular choice than part (a). The key words in part (a) were *les changements dans la population*. The majority of essays concentrated on changes but did not focus on the population. Although the second part was usually tackled, there was frequently a lack of focus due to the general nature of the answer. Answers to part (b) often failed to concentrate on *vivre* and mentioned good and not so good things about their chosen region, particularly for visitors. Weaker essays were largely descriptive and contained factual detail without any comment or assessment of the details. They read a bit like tourist brochures. Students who had considered the geography of their region often produced thoughtful answers to the second part of the question, though there was no agreement over what actually constituted the geography, some considering aspects such as transport to be ‘geography’. However, in the best essays, students often argued that the influence of the geography was not as significant as other aspects.

Among those who studied a period of history, the Occupation was by far the most popular choice, though quite a number of students also discussed the Algerian war, and Question 11(a) was a much more popular choice than Question 11(b). Pétain and De Gaulle were the most common duo in part (a), although many students wrote more about Pétain. Only the best essays attempted to discuss/evaluate/explain the influences of the two men chosen and the reasons for naming the more influential did not always show a detailed knowledge and a sound understanding of the issues of the day. Those who chose part (b) often produced the best answers. It was pleasing to see students refer to the importance of the lessons to be drawn and discuss this importance both from the point of view of the past and the present.

Those who answered Question 12 offered a wide range of authors, with favourites Camus, Joffo, Maupassant and Sagan again being the most popular choices. In part (a), students tended to struggle with the concept of *méthodes*. Many wrote about ideas and themes, which was occasionally relevant to the question, but only very able students discussed in depth methods such as first person narration, description, imagery, structure etc. The more popular choice was part (b) where unfortunately many students often told the story/stories and failed to explain adequately (or sometimes not at all) why they would (not) recommend the text to a friend. However, students who did get to grips with the question produced some very thoughtful answers. They analysed aspects such as depth of characterisation, the messages conveyed, narrative technique and the relevance to young people of today and they explained why they would recommend it and, occasionally, what their friend would miss if he/she did not accept their advice.

Question 13 was the least popular option, the playwrights most frequently studied being Sartre and Molière and almost all essays on a poet discussed either Prévert or Baudelaire. Most students chose part (a). Many essays gave a list of ideas but students did not often analyse or discuss them in any depth. Those who had studied Sartre often referred to existentialism but were not always able to express the concept with any clarity (the same was often true of essays on *L'Étranger* in Question 12). Students who did analyse/discuss were able to quote from a play/poem and to discuss how the ideas were expressed and whether they agreed with these ideas. It was especially pleasing to see some detailed analysis of how the poet uses language to express ideas. The best essays tended to come from part (b) where the detail, discussion, analysis and especially sensitivity were impressive.

Question 14 was the most popular of the five topics and although there were a good number of essays on artists, especially Monet, and a few on musicians, film directors were by far the most common choice, with Kassovitz, Truffaut, Malle and Jeunet being the most frequently offered. In part (a) most students were able to list – if not always analyse - some key ideas or themes, though there was rarely any attempt to differentiate between principal themes/ideas and others. A significant number of students seemed determined to concentrate on techniques and gave the impression that they had come into the examination ready to write a pre-prepared essay. There were, however, some very good essays which discussed the main themes/ideas, reacted to them and suggested why they are so important. Those students who answered part (b) often produced good essays which explained what was original and assessed its success, though only the best were able to show **how** their chosen artist/musician/film director was able to create something original whether it be in terms of themes/ideas or techniques. Finally, it is worth repeating that if a musician is studied, some reference should be made to some aspects of musicality, rather than just the words of a song.

In conclusion, the students who produced the best Cultural Topic essays were those who had a detailed knowledge of their chosen topic and applied this knowledge to answer the specific question set. The advice remains the same: answer the question, the whole question and nothing but the question.

The following information and guidance is provided on the suitability of some of the topic choices this summer.

General

A very few topics may fall into two categories (Brassens & Brel as poet or musician; Hergé as author or artist.) However, whichever question is answered, the topic discussed must fall into that category. Hence if a question is answered on Hergé as an artist, then it is his artistic technique which must be discussed and if a question is answered on Brel or Brassens as a musician, then some aspects of musicality (rather than just the themes of the songs) should be discussed.

French-speaking Region

Where a country has some French speakers but French is not the language generally spoken, such as Vietnam, then it is inappropriate unless referring just to those French-speakers. Similarly, where a country has a French-speaking region such as Canada or Belgium, then it is only that region which should be discussed, not the country as a whole. A single city or town (such as Cannes) with little or no reference to the surrounding area will probably not allow sufficient depth and detail in the response.

Period of 20th Century History

Too wide or too narrow a period should be avoided.

Author

It is unwise to answer a question on characters in a short story with reference to one very short story. Students must not answer this question with reference to a poet/playwright or film director.

Dramatist/Poet

Nothing specific which was inappropriate though it is difficult to answer questions on poetry effectively without some quotation. Some students answered this question with reference to an author or film director which is not permitted.

Director/Architect/Musician/Painter

For the topic of a director, architect, musician or painter, students should refer to work produced by one person; a film on which two directors worked in collaboration, for example, would not be appropriate. A musician must be defined as someone who writes music rather than just a singer and answers should contain some reference to musical aspects rather than just the lyrics. The topic of 'painter' cannot include sculptor, fashion designer or photographer.

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.