



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2013**

**French**

**FRE2T**

**(Specification 2650)**

**Unit 2: Speaking Test**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **General**

Teacher-examiners are encouraged to ensure that all information is organised and at hand before each test begins, eg candidate numbers.

Most teacher-examiners appreciated the importance of keeping to the correct allocation of time across the tests and carefully observed the prescribed timings for all elements. There were examples of some timing devices proving a distraction, as some teacher-examiners made several attempts to get the stopwatches started.

The division of time in Part 1 still proved slightly problematic, with a few students taking considerably less than 2 minutes to answer the set questions, while others had still not reached the end of their prepared responses after 3 minutes. Virtually all teacher-examiners wisely interrupted students at this stage to ensure they had sufficient time for a meaningful discussion of the required sub-topic. Even in cases where the timing of the first element seemed quite good, students often failed to appreciate the need to develop a wide range of points in each answer and either answered some questions very briefly and others in great detail or spent too long developing just one key point rather than considering a number of perspectives. Where students had given over-long and not always totally relevant answers to the first three set questions, teacher-examiners had to rush them through the final two questions, cutting short any possibility of ensuring adequate development of a wide range of points. The importance of students being well practised in maximising their use of preparation time, so that they can respond as necessary, cannot be overstated.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that the optimum division of time to aim for in Part 2 of the test is as close to three times 3 minutes 20 seconds as possible. In some tests, students came very close to being penalised on their Interaction mark because the final topic only just made the required 2 minutes.

## **Quality of the recordings**

A small number of schools/colleges submitted tests recorded on cassettes and it should be noted that Summer 2013 will be the last time when this medium is accepted. The quality of cassette recordings is noticeably inferior to that of other media and increasingly tests are being digitally recorded and submitted as MP3 files. The quality of these is excellent and those school/ colleges still needing to make the change are reminded that hand-held digital recorders can now be purchased very inexpensively and are extremely straightforward to use.

The choice of rooms for the conduct of the tests is not always ideal with sometimes extremely disruptive levels of noise at lesson change-over times: these conditions are very distracting for both students and teacher-examiners in what is in any case a fairly stressful situation. It might be helpful for the comments in this report to be brought to the attention of examinations officers and/or senior managers so that more appropriate accommodation might be found in future.

## **Part 1 Discussion of the Stimulus Card**

There was evidence across the entry as a whole that all stimulus cards served the purpose of generating a meaningful conversation. Because of the large number of schools/colleges entering only one or a small number of students, the frequency with which cards were used cannot be meaningfully analysed. Some observations are offered below on the performance of students on individual cards:

### Card A

Answers to Question 2 frequently suggested students thought they just needed to say which of the two opinions they agreed with and responses were often brief and lacking in development, the most extreme case being *Je suis d'accord avec Michel parce que j'aime les sports individuels*. They should be reminded that in the interests of developing points further, it is often better to try to see and talk about both sides of a question. Almost all students answered Questions 3 and 4 quite thoroughly, exemplifying and justifying points made. Not enough attention was paid to *seulement pour les jeunes* in some cases for the final question, with answers lacking the required focus. In a minority of tests, teacher-examiners restricted students' opportunities to express and develop views and opinions in the more general discussion by asking a number of purely factual questions or else asking questions which led them to repeat points already made in responses to the set questions. Otherwise, discussions allowed students to express some interesting opinions on the role of sport in schools and in society in general, considering the legacy of the Olympics, drug-taking and footballers' salaries.

### Card B

The first three questions were generally answered quite well, with most students empathising with Laure's friend and providing constructive advice for Laure. The better students avoided repeating points made in response to the previous question when answering Question 4, often drawing on personal experiences to illustrate their ideas. Despite insisting they rarely argued with friends, quite a long list of possible sources of disagreement was put forward. The more general discussion led to repetition of points already made in a number of cases and factual questions such as *Qu'est-ce que tu fais le weekend avec tes amis?* also figured on occasion and thus did not encourage students to express views and opinions. There was also frequent topic drift to Relationships within the Family. Teacher-examiners are reminded that this discussion must remain within the sub-topic stated on the card.

### Card C

Question 1 prompted a number of students to describe elements on the card - what the picture shows; what the text states underneath the picture. This is not what is required in response to this first question which is an invitation to the student to summarise the main thrust of the card. Questions 3 and 4 were generally handled very well and some of the best answers to the final question considered the importance of technology in the world of work and leisure in general, with pertinent illustrations from different generations of their own families. There were some excellent discussions on communication technology as a whole, although occasionally questions were not broad enough or elicited points already made, so that students were denied access to the top mark for this section.

### Card D

This proved the most challenging card for many students. Answers to the first two questions proved that they had not fully grasped the gist of the text. Responses to Question 3 were either surprisingly brief – *Non, parce qu'on n'a pas de vie privée* – or else rather long and often of limited relevance. Most students did not talk about a specific celebrity they admired in Question 4 but gave a general list of what they perceived as desired qualities. Answers to Question 5 were frequently brief and unconvincing, either due to the fact that students could not fully explain such an obsession, just offering remarks such as *parce qu'ils sont célèbres* or else having their answers cut short by teacher-examiners due to running out of time after excessively long responses to previous questions. Many students would have benefited from teacher-examiners widening the discussion beyond that of the Cult of the celebrity to explore their views on other aspects of Fashion/trends.

## Card E

The minority of students who chose this card were all able to develop a good number of relevant points in answers to the set questions. Question 5 occasionally elicited a few points that seemed to indicate that students had, in part at least, ignored the phrase *à part le repos*, which led to some repetition of ideas from Question 4.

## Card F

The first three questions were generally handled well but *doivent avoir* in Question 4 was rarely picked up and many students struggled to give a coherent response. There were some well-thought out and often highly personal responses to the final question, although a number of students seemed to have run out of steam by this stage, having spent too long on previous responses. There was some sub-topic drift to Relationships within the Family in a minority of cases.

## General Conversation

There were many really good performances where students talked confidently and maturely on all the required topics, facilitated by good examining technique in developing interesting ideas and opinions and these tests were a real pleasure to mark. There were still a number of teacher-examiners who restricted their students' opportunities for matching the top band descriptor for Interaction, by working from a list of familiar questions and failing to follow up initial responses. While most teacher-examiners showed great awareness of the need to provide student with regular opportunities to respond spontaneously, on occasion over-frequent interruptions slightly disrupted responses and did not give sufficient opportunities for students to take the lead in developing answers fully. A minority of teacher-examiners are still failing to appreciate that appropriate "teacher-interventions" are inappropriate "examiner-interventions". Students are disadvantaged by the teacher-examiner frequently intervening to prompt them, correct errors, interpret answers or express their own personal opinions.

Part 2 was occasionally introduced in English with remarks such as *We're going to move on to the conversation now* or in a mixture of languages – *On va passer à ton nominated topic*. Transitions between topics were sometimes very abrupt, with no indication of the next topic to be discussed prior to the first question being asked. Pronunciation was generally good or very good and many students could improve their performance in this area still further through working on liaisons, final "s" and "ent" as well as practising the correct pronunciation of key words such as:-

|                   |                  |                   |                  |                |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>famille</i>    | <i>parents</i>   | <i>femmes</i>     | <i>tabagisme</i> | <i>alcool</i>  |
| <i>qualité</i>    | <i>chaînes</i>   | <i>feuilleton</i> | <i>goût</i>      | <i>semaine</i> |
| <i>intéresser</i> | <i>essentiel</i> |                   |                  |                |

## 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. Most students managed to include a few subjunctive constructions, though failed to demonstrate that they could use complex structures consistently. The following gives some of the more common errors and areas where students need to focus their attention:

- conjugation of verbs
- modals (incl. *faire*) + infinitive and misuse of prepositions after the verb
- tense usage – *quand* + future ; *si* + imperfect, main verb conditional
- subjunctive constructions

- passive verb forms
- correct use of reflexive pronouns to match the subject of the verb
- little knowledge of emphatic or disjunctive pronouns
- inaccurate use of possessive adjectives
- confusion over present and past participles
- faux amis
- invented words such as *provider interrupter expecter perfecter expresser valuer*  
*rélevant résoudre expérencer*

### **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).