



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**French**

**46553**

**(Specification 4655)**

**Unit 3: Speaking**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Administration

Centres are requested to note the following points for future series.

- Errors in additions on Candidate Record Forms were noted at times and total marks also need to be copied onto Centre Mark Forms correctly.
- Centre Declaration Forms were often correctly enclosed with samples but occasionally had to be requested.
- Centres are reminded that task sheets must be provided to the moderator. Moderation cannot take place without the task sheet.

## Tasks

This unit produced a lot of high quality work on the part of both teachers and students. There were many impressive performances and interesting dialogues and materials were presented in a neat and consistent manner in many centres. There were some issues to address however and it is hoped that all of these will be resolved in the future.

AQA exemplar tasks were used but many centres had devised their own and used a range of tasks within the centre. Centres are reminded that each centre has a Controlled Assessment Adviser who will be able to advise and comment on centre-devised tasks and any other issues not covered in the FAQ document relating to Controlled Assessment on AQA's website. Centres can use the [mfl@aqa.org.uk](mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk) mailbox for the details of their adviser to be sent.

The themes of Free Time, Holidays, Healthy Living, Home and Education were much in evidence. In most centres, the more able students were able to talk at length and teachers allowed them time to develop answers fully. This was not always the case however and some teachers asked too many questions and students appeared to be confused as a result. Very few centres made use of the non-compulsory sub-divisions which had been publicised both on the AQA website pages, but also at Teacher Support Meetings organised throughout the year. These sub-divisions can be a useful support to students at all levels.

The last bullet point on the task sheet is an exclamation mark and this signifies that the teacher will ask a question for which the student has not been able to prepare an answer. Teachers are advised not to make the unpredictable bullet point too complicated since this proved to disadvantage many, in particular the less able students. Many centres had a selection of unpredictable bullet points which they varied well. An opinion was often asked for here and students would usually develop this with a reason (although this is not a requirement). Students should always be made aware of the fact that although short answers here are quite acceptable, there needs to be a verb. Not all centres provided a list of unpredictable questions however and in some instances, the list did not correspond with the question asked. Centres also need to be reminded that they must cover all of the bullets on the task sheet, including the unpredictable question in the allotted time if students are to have access to the top mark for Communication (see paras 2 and 3 on pages 7 and 8 of this report).

## Timings

The length of tasks varied enormously, although there were few which exceeded the 6 minutes by a significant amount. Teachers did not always adhere to the 4-6 minutes per task and they need to understand how marks for Communication can be affected by going under

4 minutes or going over 6 minutes. Many centres were too lax with timings or did not seem to understand how marks could be affected. On a few occasions, a vital tense was only used outside the 6 minute maximum and there were some instances of the final, unpredictable bullet point not being addressed before the 6 minutes were up.

Many centres were too lenient in awarding marks for Communication, Range and Accuracy and Pronunciation and Intonation in particular. To access the top bands, teachers must understand the need for variety of structure (not just the use of two tenses), opinions with explanations and full responses. Less frequently, teachers were rather severe in their assessment of all the criteria. Where this happened, it often stemmed from an unwillingness to award full marks to students who deserved to receive them, but also this was in evidence at the lowest end of the range, where some less able students were under-marked.

## **Recordings**

Moderators noted that in several cases there were delays in centres sending materials and some centres sent the wrong or incomplete materials. Recordings need to be labelled appropriately as specified in the 'Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations' booklet available in the Secure Key Materials section of e-AQA. Teachers should announce all students in the correct manner at the beginning of the test as specified in the 'Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations' mentioned above. However, there were also a lot of very well organised materials, with memory sticks/CDs generally proving much easier for moderators to work with. In some centres, cassette tapes were still used and some were of poor quality and/or included other recordings, sometimes in a different language or there were many students on the same tape. If recordings are made on cassettes, centres must use a separate cassette for each candidate.

Indeed, the quality and media used varied tremendously. Many centres used sound files on memory sticks or CDs and quality was often very good, although moderators also complained of poor/inaudible recordings, together with examples of intrusive background noise. In some cases, students were not identified and the whole centre was recorded as one single sound file which rendered finding specific students for moderation exceptionally difficult.

Some CDs would not play on computers or CD players and in some cases sound quality was poor or very low. Where an external microphone is used, it is essential that both the teacher and student can be heard clearly. Centres may like to consider using digital voice recorders which are now available at approximately £30-£40. They are the size of a mobile phone, automatically record in MP3 format, produce very clear recordings and do not need an external microphone. AQA's GCE MFL Visiting Examiners used these devices very successfully for the first time this summer and found them very easy to use.

Centres are reminded that sound files must be in MP3 format. WAV or AUP files will not be accepted.

## **Task Planning Forms**

These need to be scrutinised more carefully by teachers and edited prior to the test. There were very few instances of students exceeding the maximum number of words permitted which was pleasing. However, it was often the case that conjugated verbs appeared on the form or had not always been obliterated or had been crossed out but were still visible. Teachers are reminded that no credit can be given for any utterances where these verbs are used in the task itself.

## Student performance and assessment

There was evidence of excellent use of a variety of linguistic structures: *après avoir/être*+ past participle, *en*+present participle, *depuis*, direct and indirect object pronouns, appropriate use of adjectives, adverbs, connectives and time phrases, good use of a variety of tenses (many showed use of the subjunctive!). There was also evidence of the development of opinions/ideas and narration of events. Many able students were able to talk about topical issues such as the Environment, Healthy Living, Relationships, and comparison of French and English schools.

In performances at the lower end of the ability range, students struggled with verbs: *-er/é* endings, confusion with *avoir* and *être*, and omission of verbs, particularly after *car/parce que*. Students would muddle up the order of the tasks and finally, there were many examples of poor pronunciation, perhaps because this had not been practised orally at Stage 1 before the task was given.

## Terminology – a glossary

Task Sheet	The sheet containing the bullet points in English which forms the task.
Unpredictable Question	The last question asked by the teacher, which the student has not prepared in advance. Shown as ! on the Task Sheet.
Task Planning Form	Downloadable from the AQA website, this is the form that a student uses as a prompt during the task. It is not compulsory.
Centre Mark Form	There are 2 of these, one for the recorded task and another for the unrecorded task. There are 3 copies, white, yellow and pink. Before May 7 in the year of entry, the marks for all students are entered on the form. The white copy goes to AQA and the other two go to the centre's moderator, who will then select a sample.
Recorded Task	The recording of this task is sent to the moderator. Only one task is sent for moderation.
Unrecorded Task	This is the second task (which may in fact have been recorded) but only the marks for this task are sent to the moderator, not the recording.
Candidate Record Form	This form is available on the AQA website and must be filled in for all students. It includes the breakdown of marks for the recorded and unrecorded tasks.
Centre Declaration Sheet	This is also available on the AQA website and is a declaration by the centre that the work is that of the students and has been carried out in line with the regulations.

## The moderation process – a quick guide

1. Before 7 May, complete the Centre Mark Forms (SR for recorded task and SU for unrecorded task) and send the appropriate copies of both forms to AQA (top copy) and to your moderator (pink and yellow copies).
2. Receive the Centre Mark Form from your moderator highlighting the students whose recorded tasks are needed for the moderation sample, indicated by the letter S alongside the candidate name.

If your centre has 20 students or fewer, you should send the recorded tasks of all students to the moderator with the pink and yellow copies of the Centre Mark Forms.

**The top copy should be sent to AQA.**

3. Send to the moderator the following:
  - Centre Mark Form (pink and yellow copies)
  - A recording of the Recorded Task for all students in the sample
  - A completed and signed Candidate Record Form for all students in the sample
  - The Centre Declaration Sheet (signed)

- The Task Sheet for all tasks used by any candidate in the sample
- A copy of the unpredictable questions for all tasks used in the sample
- The Task Planning Form for each student (if used)

Please ensure that the recordings are clearly labelled (see Instructions for the June 2011 AQA Examinations – New GCSE Specification)

## Extract from the published mark scheme

### Marking Issues

#### 1. Task Planning Forms (TPF)

If more than 40 words are used on the TPF, ignore when awarding a mark the parts of the student's response (i.e. the utterances) which use words noted on the TPF beyond the first 40.

If conjugated verbs appear on the TPF, ignore utterances where that verb is used when awarding a mark. The same applies to the use of codes, for example a drawing of a bell to represent the French word, *belle*. It is recommended that teachers check the TPF before the student is tested so that all conjugated verbs and/or codes can be deleted.

Visuals on TPFs are permitted for the last time in June 2011 and must not appear on TPFs in June 2012 and beyond.

#### 2. Timings

Timing begins as soon as the teacher asks the first question relating to the first bullet point. From that point, the task should last between 4 and 6 minutes.

If the task lasts for less than 4 minutes (even 3' 59"), a student cannot get full marks for Communication. It would still be possible for this type of performance to achieve a mark of 9 for Communication. There is no impact on the other assessment criteria.

If the task lasts for over 6 minutes, marking stops at 6 minutes. If, at that point, the student is speaking, allow him/her to complete that sentence and then stop marking.

#### 3. Coverage of main bullet points

In order to be able to score full marks for Communication, students must be able to give information on all main bullet points on the task sheet. If there are any sub-divisions within the main bullet points, these are **not** compulsory.

If one or more main bullet points are not covered by the student, for any reason\*, this will affect the **maximum** mark available for Communication, as follows:

Total number of main bullet points in task	Number of main bullet points <u>not</u> covered	Maximum mark for Communication
2-3 + ! task	1	7
2-3 + ! task	2	5
4 + ! task	1	8
4 + ! task	2	7
4 + ! task	3	5
5 or more + ! task	1	9
5 or more + ! task	2	8
5 or more + ! task	3	7
5 or more + ! task	4+	5

\*The reasons for a main bullet point not being covered are:

- i) The teacher fails to ask anything about that main bullet point within the allotted 6 minutes.

- ii) The main bullet point is mentioned by the teacher, but the student cannot answer.
- iii) The student gives an answer, but it is unintelligible or not relevant to the main bullet point.

#### **4. The unpredictable question/bullet point**

In order to accomplish the unpredictable bullet point, the student must answer by using a verb. If that is not the case, then the bullet point is not covered and the table above must be used in order to arrive at a mark for Communication.

It is unlikely that the answer given in response to the unpredictable bullet point will be as well developed as the main bullet points. If a student has developed fully answers to the main bullet points and gives a short answer, including any part of a verb (eg present participle, infinitive) to the unpredictable bullet point, he/she will still have access to full marks for Communication provided the response is complete.

If a teacher asks more than one unpredictable question, the first one that is asked is the one that should be considered when deciding whether it has been answered appropriately, using a verb. Two-part questions for the same unpredictable bullet point are acceptable practice, for example, 'Do you like...? Why (not)?' or 'Do you prefer x or y? Why?' Credit should be given for the language produced in both parts. If a teacher goes on to ask other unpredictable questions, probably to make the task last at least 4 minutes, these should be taken into account when awarding an overall mark.

Once the student gives an incorrect answer (either in French, in English or in any other language) then no further rephrases are possible.

If the student gives a partially correct answer in French, then the teacher can ask more questions to elicit further information so that the bullet point is fully covered.

If a student says, in French, 'I don't understand' or 'Please repeat' (or equivalents) then this counts as a request for clarification and the teacher is allowed to repeat or rephrase. This does not count as an answer. (If this were said by the student in English or in any language other than the one being tested, then it would be an incorrect answer and no more rephrasing would be allowed).

If the student says, either in French, in English or in any other language, 'I don't know' (or equivalents) then this counts as an incorrect answer and no more rephrasing would be allowed.

If the student says nothing in response to a question then the teacher can repeat or rephrase until the student does respond (or until the 6 minutes are up).

If the teacher asks as the unpredictable question a question which has already been asked as one of the student's main bullet points, then the student has not been asked an unpredictable bullet point and the table in Section 2 (coverage of bullet points) applies.

If, however, the unpredictable question is different from a main bullet point, but elicits some repeat of information that has already been given in answer to one of the main bullet points, then any additional information can be credited. For example, the main bullet is 'Tell me about your family'. In a long answer, the student says that he/she doesn't get on well with his/her brother. The unpredictable question is 'Do you normally get on well with your family?' and the student says 'I get on well with my parents (new info) but not my brother (repeat)'. Although the unpredictable is connected to one of the main bullets, it is not the same question.



A student is not necessarily required to manipulate language in order to accomplish the unpredictable bullet point.

## **5. The criteria for assessment**

### **(a) Communication**

All of the criteria should be considered when deciding on a mark, but the following guidelines may prove particularly useful.

#### **Must the teacher ask extra questions for the student to gain the highest marks for Communication?**

No. If the student develops fully his/her answers to each main bullet point there will be no need for extra questions to allow the student access to the highest marks for Communication.

#### **Can students get a high mark even if there is little interaction with the teacher?**

Yes. Interaction and fluency are a global concept. Students can have access to full marks with minimal teacher input as long as they have provided full and developed responses. This is still true even if there is little interaction with the teacher.

#### **If a student answers a main bullet point eliciting reference to future events by using a present tense verb, will he/she be penalised under Communication?**

No, not if the response successfully communicates what the main bullet point required. However if aiming for a high mark for Range and Accuracy, the student must make sure he/she uses at least two different tenses over the task as a whole.

#### **Must a student give some information relevant to the actual question the teacher asks in order for the bullet point to be accomplished?**

Yes. If a student gives an answer that provides information in relation to another bullet in his/her task but does not contain information relevant to the question the teacher has actually asked (eg because the teacher and student get out of sequence), the bullet cannot count as being accomplished. The teacher may ask the bullet again to give the student the chance to offer relevant information.

#### **Can the answer still be considered to give some relevant information even if the tense is wrong?**

Yes.

*Examples:*

What did you do last weekend?

The following answers would be regarded as having some relevant information and would be acceptable:

'Football'

'I play football'.

The following answer would be regarded as unacceptable on the basis that it was clearly not answering the question being asked: it is not only the tense formation that is wrong. There are other indications that the student is not answering the question being asked:

'Next week I will play football' (using a future tense verb).

**If the student gives exactly the same response to more than one bullet point and that answer gives relevant information in each case, will the response count as having accomplished the bullet in each case?**

Yes.

*Example:*

Bullet 3 – What did you do last weekend?

'I play football'

Bullet 5 – What do you normally do at weekends?

'I play football'

Both bullets will be judged to have been accomplished.

9-10 marks

- Students can speak with confidence and narrate events where appropriate. In order to do this, they will have to develop their answers well.
- They will have to offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and be able to explain them.

7-8 marks

- The answers will be regularly developed, even though some of them may not be. However, for the award of a mark in this band, most answers will show some development.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

5-6 marks

- There will still be evidence of an ability to develop some answers.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

3-4 marks

- Few responses are developed, but for some questions you can expect replies to go beyond the minimal, even if this is in the form of lists or very simple sentences.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

1-2 marks

- Very few appropriate responses are developed, but therefore there has to be evidence of development, however basic, in at least one reply.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated, but a student could still give some very minimal replies and still score zero if there was no development at all.

## **(b) Range and Accuracy of Language**

- For performances with a large amount of complex language but lots of errors the following should be noted: the Accuracy strand in Range and Accuracy has a bearing on communication of intended messages. If communication is not taking place the marks awarded have to reflect this and a mark of 8 could not be awarded. If for, example, the Range strand warrants 10 marks and the Accuracy strand warrants 4 marks, then a maximum mark of 7 would be appropriate.

- The immediate future (eg *je vais aller*) counts as future tense. A present tense verb with a future time marker (eg *demain je vais..*) does not.
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative. A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (eg *je joue du piano depuis 2 ans; je viens d'avoir 15 ans*) counts as the present tense.

#### 9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used. This means two or more. The tenses could come from the same time frame (for example the preterite and the imperfect) but a greater range of tenses will add to the complexity of the language used and most students getting marks in this band will probably use three or more tenses, unless the nature of the task does not allow it.
- There will be complex structures (e.g. *après avoir/être + past participle, avant de + the infinitive, en + present participle*), but remember that this is GCSE level and not higher. We will not necessarily be looking for the use of the subjunctive or similar grammatical structures. Complexity will often be achieved by variety of expression, for instance *j'ai décidé d'aller* or *j'ai commencé à faire* instead of *je suis allé*, or *j'ai fait* or *ça me plaît* instead of *j'aime*.
- There needs to be a wide range of vocabulary. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use (e.g. using a variety of words which might express a similar or same idea- *car/parce que/puisque* or *cependant/pourtant*)
- Errors usually appear in complex structures, or they may be minor errors, for instance of gender, which do not appear too often.

#### 7-8 marks

- Two or more tenses must be used.
- Some complex structures will be used, but the note about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will apply here.
- There must be a range of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.
- Errors occur, but the message is clear, so that the type of mistake made will not prevent communication.

#### 5-6 marks

- There is no need for students to use more than one tense to be awarded a mark in this band.
- Sentences are generally simple but occasionally more complex. There will be more repetition of simple constructions here, but sometimes a more unusual structure will be used.
- Errors are quite frequent, but the language used is **more accurate than inaccurate**. This should be apparent from the annotation used for marking.

#### 3-4 marks

- The sentences are short and simple and probably there will be quite a lot of repetition of the more common verbs, such as *aimer, être, avoir*.
- The vocabulary is very limited, so there will probably be quite a lot of repetition of the same words.
- Errors are very frequent and it will be more inaccurate than accurate, or there will be relatively little said, so the lack of evidence means we cannot go into a higher band.

1-2 marks

- There are only isolated words of vocabulary with the occasional short phrase. It may well be that there is quite a lot of silence.
- Errors often impede communication, or there is very little evidence to enable us to form an opinion.

**(c) Pronunciation and Intonation**

5 marks

- Consistently good accent and intonation are required. 'Accent' means 'pronunciation'.

4 marks

- Generally good. It may be that problems arise mainly with the sounds that students traditionally find more difficult, such as vowel sounds in words such as *mince*, *novembre* etc, and the letter *r* in words such as *feutre*.

3 marks

- Generally accurate, but there is some inconsistency. As well as the more common mispronunciations such as the pronunciation of the final *s* of words, there may be problems with some vowel sounds and anglicised words.

2 marks

- What is said is understandable, although comprehension is sometimes delayed. In other words there will be occasions where we have to listen very carefully to what is being said in order to get the intended meaning.

1 mark

- What is said is barely understandable and comprehension is difficult. There may well be very little to go on, because not much is said by the student.

**(d) Interaction and Fluency**

5 marks

- The student responds readily, without significant pause before answering the questions.
- There is initiative, as the student is able to fully develop answers to the questions.
- The conversation is sustained at a reasonable speed, but clearly not at native speaker pace.

4 marks

- The student will again have to answer without hesitation.
- The replies will go beyond the minimum, although there will not be as much development as in the top band.
- There is some flow of language, even if from time to time there is some pausing for thought.

3 marks

- There are ready responses, where the student can answer reasonably promptly most of the time.
- There is little if any initiative, so the student may not develop answers to any great extent.

- There is an ability to sustain a conversation, so that any hesitation does not break up the interchange of information too much.

2 marks

- There is some reaction to the teacher's questions, but the student is sometimes hesitant. In practice, there will be more sections of the test where the student is thinking what to say or cannot answer.
- There is little natural flow.

1 mark

- There is little reaction to what the teacher asks and the student is so hesitant that the conversation becomes disjointed. There will in all probability be lots of silence during the task.

**(e) Limiting marks**

- It is not possible to go more than one **band** higher than the band in which the Communication mark was given when awarding marks in the other categories. For instance, if 5 are awarded for Communication, the highest mark that can be awarded Range and Accuracy is 8, and for Pronunciation and Intonation and Interaction and Fluency the maximum mark would be 4.
- It is possible to give marks in lower bands for Range and Accuracy, Pronunciation and Intonation and Interaction and Fluency than the band in which the mark for Communication was given.
- If one mark or more is awarded for Communication, at least one mark must be given in all other categories.
- If 0 is awarded for Communication, 0 must be given for all other categories.

**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).