
AS

FRENCH

Paper 3 Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General comments

There has been a generally very positive response from teachers and students to the challenges of the new specification: the shift in focus to target-language countries and cultures seems to have been welcomed and where students had prepared well for the speaking test and had been challenged to discuss sub-themes in an appropriate context, there was plenty of evidence that they had responded well to their studies. There were some meaningful discussions where a keen interest in the discovery of target-language specific knowledge and understanding was demonstrated, suggesting that this new specification is a departure in a new and exciting direction. It is hoped that this report will help teachers and students further build on this first year's performance.

Administration

Recordings were generally of a good quality with both teachers' questions and candidates' responses being clearly audible. Most tests were submitted in mp3 format, but some centres chose the CD player rather than a PC or laptop listening back option when copying tests on to a CD and this, it seems, creates files in something other than mp3 format.

Recording environments were generally suitable, although a number of centres experienced problems with extraneous noises during break and lesson change-over times. This can have an adverse effect on student performance because of the distraction such noises create; this should be taken into account when deciding where these tests should take place. Although this is Non-Examination Assessment (NEA) it is crucial that the same rules for silence in the vicinity of the test venue are respected by the school or college community.

The documentation was new to everyone and, inevitably, there were some errors. Candidate Authentication Forms are not required for the AS option, nor do notes made for the stimulus card discussions need to be sent to examiners. What is important is that centre staff remember to include the Attendance Form, duly completed, and that recordings are labelled in accordance with the instructions provided by AQA. The names of staff conducting tests should be legible so that if a Teacher Performance Report needs to be sent back to the centre, the staff member can be clearly identified and the TPR can be "personalised".

Timings

In the vast majority of cases the correct timings were adhered to and examiners were prudent in judging whether it was appropriate to ask a closing question to end the discussion or whether it was better not to run the risk of the student running over the 7 minutes. There is nothing to be gained from squeezing in an extra question: indeed, if this then means that the student is stopped mid-answer, this can be very unsettling.

Sequence of cards

It is crucially important that the centre keeps to the printed sequence of cards provided by AQA. Year on year this sequence will change and the sequence that applies will always be printed as part of the Examiner's booklet in the confidential materials pack.

Conduct of the tests

In terms both of how candidates were prepared for the tests conducted by visiting examiners and

how teacher-examiners had understood the requirements of this new component, there was a considerable degree of divergence across the entry. Best practice was underpinned by a clear understanding of how the four assessment objectives impacted on both student and teacher-examiner performance, and this led to tests that were well handled by candidates and well conducted by teachers. This best practice, unfortunately, was not always followed. In very many cases, the preparation of students and the conduct of the tests by teacher-examiners were characterised by established practices carried forward from the legacy AS speaking tests, ie the FRE2V/T option. The key difference between the legacy specification and the reformed specification is that the focus now and into the future of this specification is on a study of themes and sub-themes in the context of the target-language countries and/or communities. Students are expected to acquire knowledge and understanding of topics specific to France or the French-speaking world, and to score AO4 marks in the assessment of speaking skills they are expected to demonstrate this France or French-speaking world specific knowledge and understanding to support the development of their arguments, the justification of points of view and the drawing of conclusions. In many tests there was too little evidence of this and too much evidence of the sort of questions eliciting fairly general personal opinions that have been appropriate for the legacy test but are only now appropriate in the context of AO1 and AO3.

The main purpose of this report is to ensure that issues are addressed year on year so that the new specification quickly becomes familiar and teachers become more confident in fulfilling its demands and meeting its requirements. To this end there is set out below a clear indication of what aspects of the conduct of the test need to be addressed to ensure that maximum opportunities are provided for students to access the highest marks for each assessment objective other than AO3.

AO1 5 marks for each discussion

Marks are awarded for

- how easy (or otherwise) it is to follow what the student is saying in the responses given to questions
- how well (or otherwise) the student develops responses independent of prompts from the examiner
- how well (or otherwise) the student responds to unpredictable elements.

Opportunities to move students through the levels of response were often missed because teacher-examiners failed to question or further explore anything in a student's response. This meant there were very often no unpredictable elements for students to respond to. Opportunities for further questioning present themselves in responses given by students to the printed questions. In the new specification it is important to make the most of these opportunities rather than dealing with the printed questions in the same way as they have been for FRE2V/T.

AO2 5 marks for each discussion

Is the student's understanding of the material on the card very good or good? Or do they have some, limited, or very limited understanding of the material on the card?

The material on the card refers to all of the text, not just the printed questions. It is unlikely in their response to the first question that the student will cover all of the material and therefore the examiner's role is to steer them to address elements they may have overlooked. Again this strategy will generate unpredictable elements in terms of the questions asked and so will open up the potential to move up the levels in both AO1 and AO2.

The question asked by the student is also linked to AO2, so it is this mark that will be affected if the question is not asked or if the examiner does not prompt the student to ask a question.

AO4 10 marks for each discussion

This Assessment Objective is the new assessment objective in this speaking test and it is about knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of the themes and sub-themes. Many visiting examiners commented this year on how students coped better with AO4 questions on the sub-themes of cultural heritage, francophone music and cinema than on those of the changing nature of family, cyber-society and the role of voluntary work. This is understandable: if a student is asked if s/he has seen a French film and the discussion then focuses on views and opinions to do with this film, the opportunities to score AO4 marks are readily available. The same is true for francophone music and for cultural heritage. What students would be well advised to do in preparation for this part of the discussion is to put together, throughout the course, an AO4 portfolio where they can record and keep their knowledge and understanding of all sub-themes in the context of France and or a French-speaking community, especially those sub-themes of the changing nature of family, the cyber-society and the role of voluntary work. Text books here should be seen as a starting-point, laying out ideas for further study by students themselves.

AO3 Knowledge of Grammar

In addition to the above, there are 10 marks available for AO3 for each discussion. Communication was usually good, with most candidates showing a reasonable grasp of grammar and using some complex structures at times. The variety of vocabulary was dependent on the card chosen. Pronunciation and intonation were in general fairly good.

There were however some recurrent errors in the following areas:

- Conjugation of verbs in the present tense:
 - Students tend to use the infinitive, eg plus de gens parler anglais
 - Students have difficulty with the conjugation of pouvoir, vouloir and devoir in the present tense, eg ils peuvent (pronounced pouvant) or ils veulent (pronounced voulant)
- Possessive adjectives and their agreement need more practice, eg son musique or ils utilisent ses portables
- Personal pronouns leur/les, eg ils leur aident or ils leur écoutent

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.