

# A-level

# **FRENCH**

Unit 4 Speaking  
Report on the Examination

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FRE4T/V  
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## General

We hope teachers will find it useful to note some general reminders about different aspects of the conduct of the FRE4 speaking test, and indeed some pointers for the preparation of students for this test whether it is conducted by a visiting examiner or by a teacher-examiner. This is intended as a summary of key points to bear in mind in future examination series.

1. The vast majority of recordings are of excellent quality and most arrive with examiners appropriately labelled and well packaged. Many schools seem now to be using hand-held digital recorders which produce MP3 sound-files: if these are transferred to CD it is better to keep the MP3 file format and treat the CD as a USB device to be played back on a PC or laptop rather than convert the file for playback on a CD player.
2. Whatever recording device is used, it should be positioned so that the student's responses are clearly audible.
3. STMS forms should be correctly completed. It is important that those marking the tests have as much detailed information as necessary: schools should not simply write in *A period of French history* or *The work of a film director* but should specify which period of history or which director.
4. There were a significant number of discrepancies this year over candidate numbers: the one written on the STMS did not always correspond to the one recorded at the start of the test. This can lead to confusion and, potentially, the awarding of the wrong marks to students.
5. It is important that the teacher-examiner begins the test appropriately by establishing clearly (a) which card the student has chosen and (b) which opinion s/he is going to defend; the student should then be invited to outline the points that have been prepared with some introduction such as: *Tu as/vous avez maintenant une minute pour présenter ton/votre point de vue.*
6. During the preparation time the student must try and identify four or five key points about the chosen opinion on the card and provide some development of each point. In many cases this is happening but there are occasions where students simply talk very generally about the topic of the stimulus card and make little or no reference to either opinion. Outlines such as these will not access the higher marks available whereas, with prudent and thoughtful use of the preparation time, most should be able to score 4 or 5 marks for this one minute introduction.
7. In the discussion marks are awarded for the student's response in the face of challenges and it is therefore important that the examiner does challenge students to explain themselves further; to consider an opposite viewpoint; to justify points they are making; to develop their responses in this way.
8. In the discussion of cultural topics it comes over as very artificial if examiners feign ignorance of a topic they have obviously taught and this practice should be avoided. Likewise very open invitations such *parle(z)-moi de ...* are potentially quite hazardous with these topics as they can encourage students to provide many facts and plenty of information but little or no opinion. Most students need the steer of more specific questions to elicit the views and opinions required by the mark scheme.

All of that said, it is encouraging that so many schools where teachers are conducting their own tests are providing high-quality discussions with which the vast majority of students engage confidently.

### **Part 1: Discussion of the stimulus cards:**

#### **Card A**

Virtually all students chose Opinion 2 and these were generally more successful, stressing the unfair and damaging impact increased taxes and reduced flights would have on individuals and the economy and the need for a new generation of planes that are less damaging to the environment. Arguments for Opinion 1 were often less convincing, including suggestions that all journeys can be made using other forms of transport and the current number of flights being detrimental to those living near airports. A few students just talked in general terms about the need to limit the damaging effects of pollution, without defending either of the speech bubbles. Those opting for Opinion 2 sometimes contradicted themselves in the face of challenges from the examiner by stating that it was essential to cut down on the number of flights each day.

#### **Card B**

Opinion B was by far the more popular choice. However, many students just put forward familiar pro-immigration points rather than presenting convincing arguments as to why immigrants should not be considered *une main d'œuvre temporaire*. At times the point of the final sentence in the speech bubble was misinterpreted, as it was suggested they can help our country and bring it stability and security. Those favouring the first opinion were able to substantiate their ideas about the effects on infrastructure and the economy, but here again points tended to lack focus when students talked about a selective process for admitting immigrants into the country.

#### **Card C**

Very few students opted for Opinion 1, where they felt that everyone should take responsibility for themselves and did not feel any compunction to consider the needs of the poor in the current economic climate. Most balked against such egotistical attitudes and saw it as a moral duty to help the poor in a variety of ways, with some staunch criticism from a number of students of capitalist systems that penalise the poorest members of society disproportionately.

#### **Card D**

The majority of students again opted for Opinion 2, stressing the important role campaigns play in much-needed awareness raising and extolling the virtues of the familiar *petits gestes*. Many defended their points of view quite convincingly until faced with the fourth bullet point on the Notes for Examiners, particularly where this was given as printed, with, unfortunately, no link to any previous remarks or further explanation. In some cases those favouring this opinion spoke more about the role of organisations than of campaigns. Opinion 1 supporters saw the need for action on a much larger scale with laws and international agreements, but often repeated the same points made in the initial outline when challenged by the teacher-examiner, without the requisite development and exemplification of their ideas.

#### **Card E**

Opinion 2 was virtually the unanimous choice here. Students successfully examined a variety of ways in which different ethnic groups enrich society, but did not always clarify why or how integration did not equate with a loss of one's culture and intrinsic identity. Challenges about faith schools from a number of examiners met with widely varying levels of success.

**Card F**

Opinion 2 was the more popular and better defended choice. Those students advocating prison and harsher sentences, including the death penalty, generally gave very pertinent summaries, but then failed to defend all of their opinions convincingly, sometimes virtually agreeing with the examiner that life in prison is an easy option. Those seeing prison as an unsatisfactory solution often had statistics to back up their arguments about the rate of re-offending, and gave carefully considered views on sanctions befitting different crimes, as well as the need for rehabilitation and suitable measures to prevent young delinquents from becoming hardened criminals.

**Part 2: Discussion of Cultural Topics**

There was a wide variety of topics chosen, covering all 5 areas: the vast majority of students opted for either a text/author/dramatist/painter, or a film/director, or WW2/Occupation. There were fewer opting for a French-speaking region/country. Particularly if an area was studied (e.g. this year PACA, Mauritius, l'Île de France), it was important to reach beyond facts and statistics (e.g. about tourist attractions and gastronomical delights), to discuss problems (e.g. unemployment or immigrants), possible future developments and potential opportunities, and perhaps offer hypothetical scenarios. Biographical details and narratives (of a film or text) should be touched on only briefly. Students' familiarity with their topics was impressive: the best performances came from those who were asked often probing questions on their views and opinions, thus giving access to the higher bands of marks for Interaction.

Only in rare instances was less than the minimum 4 minutes spent on each of the cultural topics, but the penalty on Interaction did have to be applied, particularly when Part 1 had overrun by a minute or more. Some examiners came very close to incurring the penalty. It is good practice for examiners to vary the line of questioning, when several students have studied the same topic(s). Otherwise, there is clear evidence of predictability and pre-learnt responses, although it is not always easy separating these from spontaneous answers based on conscientious preparation. Examiners should beware of asking questions that are too complex and take the initiative away from the students. Some examiners who had shown skill in challenging points of view in Part 1 became less forceful or less probing in Part 2, but they should be wary of pursuing a line of argument that students can't cope with or have already exhausted.

**AO3 Knowledge of Grammar**

The majority of students had a good command of the language and many were able to demonstrate the ability to use a wide range of complex structures and quite sophisticated vocabulary with a high level of accuracy. However, there were many recurring errors in a number of areas ranging from basic verb conjugations to passive usage and sequence of tenses. Such examples are given below:

- Verbs – *ils a nous construire vous doivez elle est devient il choise ils nous enrichent ils peignent ils obtiendront vous mourirez il a vivre son oeuvre devenue il a retourné*
- Confusion between *avoir & être* – *si j'avais au chômage ce serait moins de racisme ils sont tort*
- Verb + infinitive – *nous devons les aidons il peut affect il n'a pas voulu de voir*
- Negatives – *ils n'ont pas rien il ne jamais fait elles n'ont pas aucune opportunité*
- Subjunctive – missed (incorrect constructions) – *je pense qu'elle soit il semble que la Haine être jusqu'à il aura réparé il veut que Cécile être pour elle être en sécurité*
- Passive – *la terre doit sauver tout le monde devrait être donné la chance*
- Pronouns – *le film fait on penser sans il pour leur ça m'aide à s'identifier*

- Confusion over *qui/que/dont* - *le livre qui j'ai étudié les emplois qui les immigrés font ce que se passe les choses qu'il avait un manque de*
- Adjectives and adverbs – *il ami les thèmes principales ils ... ses une bien chose les conditions mal le moyen mieux*
- Comparisons – *comme efficace que plus mieux il est différent que les autres*
- Confusion with – *parce que/à cause de penser à/de caractère/personage faire/rendre humeur/humour peintre/peinture matière/métier droit/droite un livre/une livre*
- Participles used incorrectly or not used when needed – *sans faisant par donner*
- Faux amis – *sentence éventuellement issue préjudices la ligne de fond*
- Invented words – *exerter expecter addicter reflecter attracter restricter acter protéger expéiercer*

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

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).