



A-level
French

7652/3 Speaking

Report on the Examination

7652
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Administration

There was clearly greater familiarity this year with the process of uploading tests and documentation to the Media Submissions Portal. As well as the recorded tests, the attendance register with the names of teacher-examiners included should be uploaded to the Media Submissions Portal. This is so that any TTPRs sent to the centre can identify the teacher-examiner(s) to whom the report refers. A CRF (candidate record form) signed by both teacher and student must also be submitted for each student. Titles and headings on the CRF must be in English: the only French text on this form would be for sources that have been used in the research. Where the centre has submitted and has had back a Title Approval Form, this should also be uploaded with the CRFs. Recordings should be saved in .mp3 format. Filenames for individual student recordings should comply with the required format.

There were some issues around the timings of the test and so the following reminders are provided here. The Part 1 discussion of a sub-theme must last between 5 and 6 minutes, the IRP presentation should last 2 minutes, and the IRP discussion 9 to 10 minutes. It should be noted that marking will stop 18 minutes after the first printed question for the Part 1 discussion has been asked. In the marking of tests, timings were very closely monitored and issues to do with timings were reported back to centres on the Teacher-Tester Performance Report (TTPR).

The tests should be introduced according to the information provided in the Summary of procedures. Once the examiner has stated which stimulus card the student has chosen there is no point asking the student to identify this. The stimulus card should be identified by the letter of the card only and not by its theme and/or sub-theme. Nor should teacher-examiners read the heading at the top of the card as this is part of the material, the understanding of which is tested in Assessment Objective 2. In other words, teacher-examiners should keep to the script set out in the Summary of Procedures. There is no need for teacher-examiners to state at the beginning of the test the topic area or title of the student's Individual Research Project. The introduction should be delivered concisely and efficiently so that there are no delays while, for example, an examiner finds a student number: such delays only unsettle already anxious students.

Conduct of the speaking tests

Again, this year, for the most part, the tests were conducted in a way that was sympathetic to the students and, where teacher-examiners asked the right sorts of questions, students were able to achieve high scores. Unfortunately, some quite serious issues still remain around the approach needed to allow students to access the higher marks for Assessment Objective 2 and for Assessment Objective 4. It should be emphasised that the points below, for both AO2 and AO4, are included in this report because of the negative impact that not following this guidance can have on the marks awarded to students.

Part 1 : Assessment Objective 2

AO2 relates to the student's understanding of the material on the card. A significant number of teacher-examiners allowed students to under-achieve on this assessment objective by simply accepting the student's initial response, however brief, to the first printed question, and then moving on to the second printed question. Many students were very selective in the information from the card that they referred to; students also sometimes misinterpreted the information on the card; and some students did indeed give a very brief response to this first question. If, in any of these scenarios, the response went unchallenged, if there was no further exploration of the material on the card, the understanding of that material could not be judged to be any better than limited or very limited, and the mark for one of those

bands (1 mark or 2 marks out of 5) had to be awarded. Good practice was demonstrated by those teacher-examiners who asked supplementary questions after the first printed question, steering students to deal with information on the card that they had overlooked in their initial response. Prudent use of such questions enabled students to increase their mark for AO2. It should be noted also that this issue can be avoided if students are encouraged to spend their preparation time focusing on the material on the card so that they can give as full and detailed an answer as possible in response to the first printed question.

Students are reminded that the mark for AO2 is not linked to and will not be influenced by any explanation of, or information about, the visual material on the card. It is inappropriate for students to describe what they see in photographs. The material on the card refers to anything that is printed, and this includes the heading above the visual, which is why it is important that the teacher-examiner does not refer to this text in any introductory remarks.

It is also worth reminding teacher-examiners that the requirement of the student to ask two questions in this discussion is linked to AO2. In the A level speaking test, if the student asked only one question and was not prompted to ask a second question by the teacher-examiner, the mark for AO2 is capped at a maximum of 4 marks. If the student asked no questions, the mark for AO2 is capped at a maximum of 3 marks.

If questions were asked beyond the 6 minutes cut-off point, this did not fulfil the requirement and so the capping rule was applied. For this reason, teacher-examiners are advised to prompt the student to ask their questions earlier rather than later in the discussion. Teacher-examiners are also reminded that their response to questions asked by the student should be kept short: there were frequent examples of teacher-examiners ‘holding forth’ in their response to these questions, thereby limiting the time and the opportunities for their students to speak.

Part 1 : Assessment Objective 4

As set out in the specification, AO4 is about showing knowledge and understanding of, and responding critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

Most teacher-examiners have understood the importance of tailoring their questions to provide opportunities for their students to achieve the higher marks for AO4. They have likewise realised the need to avoid asking questions inviting students to give a personal opinion about general issues linked to themes and sub-themes (for example, Do you think the Internet is something positive or negative? What are the disadvantages, in your opinion, of single-parent families? Do you do voluntary work?) Asking the right sorts of questions needs detailed and thoughtful preparation: teacher-examiners are required to conduct a discussion around the sub-theme on the stimulus-card in the context of France and/or the French-speaking world. This should be a sustained feature of the 5-to-6-minute discussion: again, this year, some teacher-examiners appeared not to be aware of this and relied solely on the student’s response to the third printed question for AO4 content. In such a case, however, the AO4 content was very limited.

In many tests, teacher-examiners did not make full use of opportunities provided by a student’s response to a question to explore further the reference that had been given. For example, references to laws affecting families and partnerships, to a French or francophone singer, musician or film actor or director, or to political parties in favour of or against the vote at 16, remained unchallenged and would have been

a very effective way of encouraging greater spontaneity as well as demonstrating more detailed AO4 knowledge and understanding. This practice limited the mark that could be awarded. Simply ‘name-dropping’ with little or no development did not enable students to achieve high marks for this Assessment Objective.

In those performances where the critical response was either good or very good, it was encouraging to see that more students were now drawing on their knowledge and understanding of themes and sub-themes from beyond the material in course-books, although this tended to be on sub-themes such as voluntary work, cultural heritage, cinema, and francophone music. Examining technique can help students with the discussion of sub-themes in that there is no requirement to keep to the focus of the stimulus card throughout the entire discussion. It would be unrealistic to expect a discussion about grand-parents, for example, or cyber-bullying – in the context of France and/or the French-speaking world – to be sustained for 5 to 6 minutes. Teacher-examiners should therefore note that the sub-theme on the card sets the scope for the discussion.

Stimulus cards in the 2024 series

Card A: *La famille en voie de changement*

The material on this card was accurately interpreted and summarised for the most part, with students showing an understanding of two reasons for the increase in the number of people living alone ie the increased number of divorces and young people settling down with a partner later in life. Only a small number of students understood the reference to widows and most either overlooked or misunderstood the reference to differences in life-expectancy between men and women. In the discussion, many students demonstrated a good grasp of the changing trends specifically in the composition of families in France and the French-speaking world.

Card B: *La « cyber-société »*

Most students here referred only to the first two reasons for the increase in online shopping and this is where supplementary questioning would have helped them gain a higher mark. Some students also overlooked the obvious drawback mentioned in the final statement. The discussion of this topic is one where students tend to make very general and generic statements and claims about the cyber-society in France and the French-speaking world, the content of which is no different from anywhere else in the world. If students had visited and could talk knowledgeably about one or two French or francophone websites, they could increase their AO4 mark significantly.

Card C: *Le rôle du bénévolat*

There was a good understanding of most of the points on this card, but confusion was in evidence again about the difference between *bénévoles* and *bénévolat*, and this quite seriously impaired communication. Some good knowledge and understanding of the sub-theme in the context of France and/or the French-speaking world was demonstrated by those students who had researched specific aspects of this sub-theme or who had detailed knowledge of specific voluntary organisations. It was encouraging to see evidence of this beyond those featuring in coursebooks.

Card D: *Une culture fière de son patrimoine*

In many cases, in response to the first question, reference to the two measures taken to safeguard the site of the Pont du Gard were simply overlooked, and there were rarely any follow-up questions to elicit a reference to these. There were some well-informed discussions about the potentially harmful effects of excessive tourism on sites and monuments.

Card E: *La musique francophone contemporaine*

This card was quite a popular choice, although not as much information from the card was extracted as for some other cards. Most students, when invited to do so, could talk knowledgeably about French musicians and quotas, but some knowledge here was restricted to ‘name-dropping’. There were also quite a lot of unfounded claims that Edith Piaf and Celine Dion remain even today the most popular artists across the French-speaking world. Where students had listened to and researched other musicians, there were some very impressive AO4 performances.

Card F: *Cinéma – le septième art*

Some of the topic-specific vocabulary in this text posed problems when it came to summarising the content, and so the two bullet-points of information were rarely mentioned. Most thought this was a good initiative, and most could deal well with the third printed question. This is a topic area where teacher-examiners tended to fall back on questions such as *Aimez-vous aller au cinéma ?* Or *Comment regardez-vous des films ?* Responses to such questions cannot be credited with marks for AO4 and they should be avoided.

Card G: *Les aspects positifs d'une société diverse*

This was not a popular choice of card, but those who opted to do it dealt well with both the content of the card and the discussion of the sub-theme. Most found the *Journée internationale de la tolérance* to be a good initiative in creating a fairer society. Some very impressive discussions explored the usefulness (or otherwise) of the more general concept of days devoted to particular causes and whether such events had a longer-term benefit than just the one day.

Card H: *Quelle vie pour les marginalisés ?*

This proved to be a popular choice of card and, while the material on it was not always dealt with as comprehensively as it could have been, the more general discussions were interesting, with some detailed knowledge and understanding shown of the fate of different marginalised sections of French society and what help is available for them. There was sometimes a slight topic-drift into voluntary work in this context but that was understandable.

Card I: *Comment on traite les criminels*

Students opting for this card generally did so because of a solid knowledge of aspects of the prison system in France and, in some cases, across the French-speaking world. They were very knowledgeable about not only the alternatives to prison sentences but also about the frequency with which these alternatives have been and are being used. This is a sub-theme where some prudent individual research can really pay dividends in increasing marks for AO4.

Card J: *Les ados, le droit de vote et l'engagement politique*

There was some confusion in understanding the fate of the young *Maliens* and their political commitment. Quite a number of students missed the point completely that unemployment was motivating the youth to get involved actively in politics. Those who did understand the material dealt with the card very well and there was some prudent questioning as a follow-up to the card, asking if the content of the text would also apply to young French people, for example.

Card K: *Manifestations, grèves – à qui le pouvoir ?*

In a similar way, the follow up to this card invited comparisons between the event outlined in Belgium and the situation in France. This is a topic, again, where students who had gone beyond May 68, and even beyond the *gilets jaunes*, in their research or preparation of the sub-theme, could really impress in the general discussion with their detailed knowledge and understanding. There were many references to the protests against Macron's planned changes to the retirement age as well as to the anger of French farmers.

Card L: *La politique et l'immigration*

The material on the card was generally well understood and there were some very impressive discussions here that showed a sound understanding across the political spectrum of immigration policies in France and within French-speaking countries. It was encouraging to see evidence that political issues such as this were something that students engaged with in a genuinely concerned way.

Individual Research Projects

The topics chosen by students covered a very wide and diverse range and there was ample evidence that research had been very effectively carried out and students had gained a lot of knowledge and understanding. Most projects were very well focused and clearly linked to a French and/or francophone context. Again, this year, examiners, whether for the V or the T option, commented favourably on the enjoyment they derived in very many cases from conducting or listening to IRP presentations and discussions.

Part 2: The IRP Presentation

Timings were adhered to by the vast majority of students, and the content of many presentations demonstrated good or very good preparation. There remain two areas where the quality of the presentation was adversely affected. The first was the pace of delivery: some students rushed through the presentation and attempted to say too much in the time available. While delivery *per se* was not marked, if what was being communicated was unclear because of the speed of delivery, this affected the mark awarded. Students must remember that what, for them, is a well-rehearsed, often repeated and so absolutely familiar text of a presentation is, for an examiner, something heard for the first time and listened to only once. As with any scripted performance, the speaker must bear the audience in mind and not just the content of the script.

The second area was again to do with the content of the presentation: too many students chose to devote time in their presentation either to outlining what they intended to discuss later (*je voudrais expliquer, je vais discuter, j'ai l'intention de parler de...*) or to giving a very detailed account of the sources

they had consulted in their research and how they assessed their usefulness or otherwise, or indeed to both of these. Such content was not relevant and did not attract marks. The mark scheme for the presentation rewarded the quality of knowledge about the chosen IRP topic demonstrated in the time available, which could be judged to be thorough, good, reasonable, limited or very limited. There is amplification for each of these judgements set out on page 33 of the A level French specification.

Part 2: The IRP discussion

Questions asked of students were, for the most part, clearly targeted at allowing AO4 knowledge and understanding to be demonstrated. Where there was an issue with the IRP discussion was in the case of teacher-examiners working from a pre-determined set of questions, each of which was seen as an opportunity to allow the student to hold forth and give what amounted to a mini-presentation in response. Such exchanges did not in any way constitute a discussion and, while the performance for AO4 might have warranted a mark in either of the top two bands of the mark scheme, the same could not be said for AO1. The level and quality of engagement in the discussion were adversely affected by stage-managed question and answer exchanges that had little or no spontaneity about them, and this approach prevented many students from achieving any mark higher than 6 out of 10 for AO1.

For those centres who had a Visiting Examiner, there were some cases where the Candidate Record Form had no information other than the title of the project and the two sources. The purpose of including headings outlining areas that the student's research has covered is to provide a steer for the Visiting Examiner in formulating starter questions for the discussion. This also provides some guidance to the student as to what areas the discussion will deal with. Teachers in the V option centres are therefore asked to encourage their students to use the spaces for headings in English on the CRF.

Assessment Objective 3

As in previous series, most students showed a reasonable grasp of grammar and, in some cases, demonstrated an impressively wide range of vocabulary and complex language. However, the application of grammar was sometimes quite inaccurate, with familiar common and sometimes serious errors being much in evidence.

The handling of numbers was often inaccurate with confusion between *cent*, *mille* and *million*.

Conjugation of verbs – *ils promouvoir ils sont écouter je appris ils a devenu ils vont reçoit*

Verb + infinitive – *ils voulaient de voir il peut devient j'aime peuve je préfère de parle*

Confusion over passive verb forms – *elle est transmettre ils ont développés je n'ai surpris pas*

Confusion with – *parce que/à cause de choquant/choqué surprenant/surpris bénévole/bénévolat penser*

à/de connaître/savoir jeunes/gens temps/fois/heure chose/choix assez/aussi très/trop/plus/beaucoup

Negatives – *je ne vois pas rien c'est ne intéressant pas*

Pronouns – *vous s'amusez ils...ses chez leur les films qui ils regardent quelque chose qu'on doit être fier de*

Subjunctive (or not) – *bien qu'ils sont il faut que je dis il pense que la musique soit*

Adjectives and adverbs – *les mals acteurs la seulement option c'est vite*

Comparisons – *si important comme plus bien les plus bons films*

Faux amis – *effectif éventuellement sensible assister*

Invented words – *protector provider promoter admitter restricter recogniser expéiercer especialement*

Anglicisms – *ils ont un bon temps le texte est autour si ils ne pensent pas sur comment sérieux c'est.*

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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