
GCSE FRENCH

8658/SF: Speaking Foundation
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Teachers are to be commended on the fact that, despite school closures and various challenges during the pandemic, the level of performance in 2022 was generally in line with that of 2018 and 2019. This must, in large part, be due to the huge efforts made by teachers and the students themselves to compensate for the loss of learning experienced by so many.

The majority of the tests were well administered and the *Instructions for the conduct of the exams* observed appropriately.

Teacher-examiners are urged to remind themselves of good practice in the administration of Speaking tests prior to an exam series. Some points are highlighted in this report, along with comments on specific parts of the 2022 tests.

Digital recordings have improved the sound quality of speaking tests but extraneous noise, produced by moving items on the desk, shuffling papers and other students on corridors near the examination room, still prove a challenge. It must be understood that, if the examiner cannot hear the student's response, it cannot be credited.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2022 mark scheme.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. The feedback is provided on the basis of need only and will not be necessary for every centre.

A breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test for each student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

Role-plays

The biggest challenge for students in this section of the test was dealing with interrogatives. If their understanding of these was poor, students struggled to formulate a question when required and sometimes were unable to respond appropriately in other tasks, especially, but not only, in the unprepared task.

In the question task, less able students sometimes asked a question which was totally unrelated to the prompt or simply read the prompt aloud which, clearly, could not be credited.

Some students who were generally struggling produced their best, most appropriate and accurate response in the unprepared task of the role-play, thereby demonstrating knowledge and understanding which perhaps they themselves would not have anticipated.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that they should adhere to the script of the role-play because failure to do so may result in a student's response to a particular task being discounted.

Teachers are also reminded that, at Foundation tier, students only need to use the present tense in the role-plays. Where a reasonable interpretation of a cue leads a student to use an appropriate past or future tense verb form, this is also accepted.

Sometimes a lack of focus prevented marks from being gained, for example when students did not address the points raised in the cues.

Some students gave lengthy responses and developed answers well beyond what was required and cued. Teacher-examiners in centres where this happened did not tend to intervene, which would suggest that they had sanctioned such an approach. However, it is usually in the student's interest to address the cue but no more. Unnecessary elaboration often leads to a lack of focus as students attempt to introduce material with which they feel confident in the mistaken belief that it will be rewarded. It can also lead to the required detail being overlooked and increases the opportunity for errors to be introduced by the student.

Please see the published detailed mark scheme for suggested responses and the marks these would attract. Additional comments on individual role-plays are provided below.

Photo Cards

Centres are reminded that responses to the first question must be rooted in the photograph. On occasions, students mentioned items which were not in the photo and elaborated with detail which was clearly unrelated to the visual they had. This may have been an attempt to compensate for the recent lost learning, with students learning some set sentences in the hope that they could be applied to whatever photo appeared on the paper. Such irrelevant utterances were discounted.

Teachers should advise their students to avoid reference to colours which cannot be substantiated, e.g. a blue shirt. Reference to hair colour is best avoided or made by an expression of conjecture. In a similar way, where students referred to items of clothing which were clearly not shown in the visual, the remarks were discounted. It was pleasing to note that more students used *homme* and *femme* compared to previous years. Some cards obviously featured adult males rather than boys.

A greater degree of precision in their responses would help students to communicate their ideas. Frequently, in reference to the photo, they used *il* or *elle* without clarifying which featured individual they were speaking about

Students commonly tried to express their ideas in a present continuous tense, reflecting English usage, for example, *ils sont mangeant* or *ils sont manger* (sic). Practice in describing common actions featured in pictures or photos would be beneficial so that students become accustomed to generating sentences using common verbs such as: *il/ils* (etc) *parle/parlent; mange/mangent; regarde/regardent la télé; étudie/étudient*.

In the other four questions too, students' responses must be relevant to the question asked. Unrelated material is discounted; therefore, teachers are advised to discourage their students from introducing material which has a very loose, or no, connection to the information requested in the question.

Teacher-examiners are advised to read carefully the guidance on paraphrasing questions: some did this well whilst others, in their quest to assist students, did not convey the import of the original question or added to it in such a way that they gave additional assistance, often via interpretation or explanation of the question. This provides a clear advantage to these students and so, in

fairness to all the other students who have not received this additional help, any related response made by the student cannot be rewarded.

Furthermore, teachers are reminded that it is inappropriate for them to introduce their own, perhaps additional, questions in this part of the test. Such questions are immediately discounted and any response from the student is not credited.

As with the role-plays, teachers' attention is drawn to a section later in this report which highlights specific points relating to this year's photo cards.

General Conversation

Please note that a 'Presentation' is not an acceptable format for this part of the test. The emphasis is on dialogue not monologue.

Mostly, examiners reported a balance of time given to the exploration of the nominated theme and that of the second theme. Where there was a great imbalance in the time spent on the two themes, a penalty of two marks may have been incurred. Please see the mark scheme for details of penalties examiners were instructed to apply.

In their questions, some teacher-examiners strayed beyond the theme which was being discussed and a small number flitted from one theme to another. While this may have been done with the intention of supporting students it is more likely to confuse them. Teacher-examiners are encouraged to check which sub-topics fall into each theme to avoid this.

In terms of Communication, teachers are reminded that marks are based on the amount of information successfully conveyed by the student. Marks also take into account any ambiguity introduced and reflect how much the student elaborated on their answers. More able students should be encouraged to develop their ideas and to produce longer strings of communication. At Foundation tier, students managed to give individual accounts and to elaborate on relatively straightforward responses on occasions.

It is beneficial for all students if questions are tailored to their level; individual accounts are more impressive than those that appear to have been generated by a 'template' approach. Similarly, a standard set of questions is unlikely to elicit the best performance from the whole ability range. Teacher-examiners-examiner are advised that there is no need to cover every topic within a theme. Indeed, such an approach can lead to a very disjointed exercise which in no way resembles a conversation and potentially puts students at a disadvantage as there is no flow to the questions put to them.

The attention of teacher-examiners is drawn to questioning techniques. Closed questions are of very limited use. They may be employed, for example, to re-focus a student who is struggling before the teacher reverts to open questions, but students cannot earn marks if they do not demonstrate use of the language themselves.

With regard to the Range and accuracy of language strand, high marks were achieved by students demonstrating a successful use of vocabulary and structures referring to least one time frame other than the present.

The quality of pronunciation varied greatly between centres. Where poor pronunciation seriously hinders comprehension, this could also have an impact on the Communication mark. Clear

pronunciation was frequently undermined where students attempted to present language items with which they were generally unfamiliar and, as such, resorted to reciting rather than delivering with any understanding. This may again be the effect of students having had fewer opportunities to practise oral work over the past two years.

Where students were allowed or encouraged to engage in long monologues, no spontaneity could be rewarded. In order to give the student an opportunity to demonstrate an ability to respond spontaneously, teacher-examiners need to interject; this was admirably displayed in some centres without the questions being too alarming for students. For Foundation tier students, simple queries or requests for further detail are appropriate and can work very well..

Teacher-examiners are advised that there is no need to announce the full title of themes in the Conversation. Indeed, this reduces the overall time available and limits the opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability. Correct timings were generally observed but the vast majority of teacher-examiners only invited the student to ask a question at the very end of the conversation. This is a rather risky approach as, frequently, the student's question was asked out of time and, therefore, could not be credited. Rarely, students were invited to ask a question in both conversation themes; this is a safer approach and one which teacher-examiners might wish to adopt. Teacher-examiners are reminded that the requirement for students to generate a question in this section means that an interrogative **must** be produced. Formats such as *Décris* or *Parle-moi de ...* do not meet the criteria and so will not be credited. *Et tu ?* is also not an accurate question.

Role-play 1

Task a

Nom was occasionally not recognised but there were many students who did not give an appropriate age. *Six* was a common error.

Task b

The unprepared question is always challenging but teacher-examiners who could persuade their students to listen carefully were more likely to be successful in eliciting an appropriate response.

Task c

Responses were usually rewarded but the common mistake of pronouncing *je préfère* as *je préféré* was commonly heard.

Task d

The cue was generally understood and attempts at formulating a suitable question produced.

Task e

This was well answered. Students who did not know *colonie de vacances* simply made reference to *vacances* in general and this usually fitted the context.

Role-play 2

Task a

Students frequently expressed themselves using *j'exerce*. Full marks were not awarded for such a response.

Task b

For some, *où* caused difficulty, despite teacher-examiners' best efforts to emphasise it.

Task c

The use of *je préféré* was often present but, apart from this, the task was well executed.

Tasks d and e

Generally well done.

Role-play 3

Task a

Some students gave information about their activities relating to the environment rather than focusing on a simple opinion. If an opinion was not given, no marks were scored here.

Task b

Either not understanding *quoi* in their cue, or a lack of focus, led some students to speak about recycling, often giving an opinion, but without mentioning the items they recycled. If their response was appropriate, *bouteilles* was a common item mentioned but with varying degrees of success in pronunciation.

Task c

Understanding *qui* and *famille* were required to set up the chance of generating an appropriate response; *le plus* was not a key factor.

Role-play 4

Task b

Students tended to find the unprepared item challenging.

Task d

Acheter was sometimes not mentioned in the student's utterance. Instead, reference was perhaps made to other activities on line, for example, playing games. Responses which did refer to shopping were sometimes expressed in a past tense, for example, *Hier, j'ai acheté ...* which was of course accepted as it fitted the context.

Task e

Well done, with the most frequent question being *Tu aimes ton portable ?*

Role-play 5

Task a

Successful responses needed to include reference to both a booking and a name. The reference to the booking was sometimes omitted

Task b

The teacher's script for this item was, *(Student name,) comment ça s'écrit ?* but many teachers did not mention the student's name when delivering the question. This often led to confusion for students when they clearly did not recognise the request for a spelling. Disappointingly, students knowledge of the letters of the alphabet was generally poor.

Task c

Some students produced *A quelle heure est le concert ?* whilst others asked *Le concert finit à quelle heure ?*

Tasks d and e

Well-practised formulae and therefore well done.

Role-play 6

Task a

Understanding *quoi* was not as pivotal as it would normally be since, if students had read the context carefully, they were aware that the setting was in a department store and recognition of *acheter* set them off in the right direction.

Task b

Students often said it was their birthday.

Task c

Dates proved challenging for some and were sometimes not conveyed sufficiently clearly. Numbers do not seem to be a strength in a good proportion of students.

Tasks d and e

Well done. Playing football was a common choice for an *activité spéciale*!

Role-play 7

A well-practised context so this was generally successful.

Task b

Some students struggled to understand *Combien d'élèves ...* in the unprepared question but, if they concentrated on the teacher's repetition of the question, they often arrived at a valid answer.

Task e

A lack of understanding of *où* again proved challenging (see comments on Role-play 2). Students often gave their opinion of homework, which could not be rewarded.

Role-play 8

Most tasks in this role-play were well done.

Task d

Some students failed to make reference in their question to the 'club' element, which was essential if both marks were to be awarded.

Task e

As in Role-play 3, a lack of understanding of *quoi* led some students to offer an opinion (and sometimes a very detailed, long opinion) of their school uniform rather than mention an item or two which they wore. Teacher-examiners needed to intervene promptly to avoid the student completing an incorrect response. If early intervention was achieved, the question could be offered again, in the hope that the student might refocus and go on to deliver an appropriate response.

Role-play 9

Task a

A number of students struggled to form an understandable question.

Task b

Numbers again proved challenging and particularly the enunciation of *seize* which was often delivered as *six* and, therefore, did not score (see detailed mark scheme).

Task c

Some students did not gain two marks as, unfortunately, the details they offered did not always relate to *personnalité*. It was common for a student to offer one relevant adjective and then state their liking of something.

Task d

Problems were rare with the majority of students being capable of generating a relevant opinion, e.g. *C'est intéressant*.

Photo Card A**Item 1**

More-able students used *SDF* in their response.

Item 2

Unfortunately it would appear that some students did not know *donner* as a response including *de l'argent* (or *des vêtements* etc) would have been effective. Others responded well, mentioning *nourriture* amongst other items. Some developed their responses further by also giving details of voluntary work they had undertaken or currently do.

Item 4

In contrast to what often happened in students' responses in Role-play 3, task b (see above), students here sometimes failed to offer an opinion but, instead, listed items which they recycle.

Item 5

Perhaps a failure to understand *choses* or Oxfam led to challenges for students in this item, although Oxfam was deliberately included in an attempt to make the (unprepared) question more accessible than might have been the case if reference to charity shops in general had been made in French.

Photo Card B

Most items were well handled with students confidently developing their responses.

Photo Card C**Item 1**

Statements regarding the scenery were generally well delivered.

Item 2

Some students gave opinions of going on family holidays, which were not rewarded as advantages had been requested. However, if their explanations of positive opinions could be interpreted as explanations of advantages of family holidays, these were credited under the category of development of their response.

Item 5

The mention of *pique-niques* and *restaurant* were clearly identified by students and responses were appropriate.

Photo Card D**Item 1**

Successful descriptions of the photograph often included mention of chairs and the guitar but occasionally reference to the *boîte(s)* was rendered as *bois* and, therefore, was not rewarded.

Item 5

Students often personalised their responses, describing a specific friend, and this was accepted.

Photo Card E

Item 3

Students could state that the internet could be dangerous but some struggled to be more specific.

Item 4

For those who listened carefully to the question, a springboard was provided for a possible answer including a verb; students could use part of the question structure in their response.

Item 5

In order to maximise the marks available in the photo card section, students needed to state more than a simple *oui* or *non*.

Photo Card F

Item 1

Reference to the number of people in the photo (13) was often incorrect. For those students who had prepared phrases such as *il/ils* (etc) *mange/mangent*; *regarde/regardent*, a description of the activities featured was within their grasp.

The other items were generally well answered. Even if students did not always formulate the perfect tense accurately (e.g. *j'ai allé*) they could express some ideas regarding a recent visit to the cinema and provide some opinions with *c'était*

Photo Card G

Students found something to say in response to all questions.

Item 3

Often, reference was not made to a specific day but instead to the subject(s) students preferred. If they stated that they preferred a certain day as this was when they had X and Y (their favourite subjects), their response could be credited.

Item 4

Some teachers were rewarded with a glowing endorsement which was really pleasing to see. It is to be hoped that those students have made their opinions known to the relevant teachers.

Photo Card H

Item 1

The two individuals in the foreground received most attention, as did the items they were eating. In this photo, reference to *filles* and *garçons* were appropriate. However, some students referred to the location as that of *un restaurant* rather than *une cantine* and described the two people as *un homme* and *une femme*, commonly delivered as *un homme et une femme*. Given the ages, this interpretation was also accepted.

Item 2

Responses sometimes addressed changes students would like to make to their school in general, rather than the menu. Other students spoke highly of the food on offer at their school although some did criticise it.

Item 3

Homework and exams were often cited as the greatest problems.

Item 4

Pause-déjeuner was not always immediately recognised but repetition of the question by the teacher usually resulted in a valid response.

Item 5

Once again, some teachers were rewarded with a positive endorsement.

Photo Card I

Item 1

Any reasonable interpretation of the scene was acceptable. Students often believed it to be a street or town centre but some students did identify it as a station. Successful reference was often made to the restaurant or café on the left and the bicycles on the right. It was often stated that the people were going to work. Unfortunately, some students described *une chemise blanc/blanche*. Reference to *une chemise* was accepted but any reference to colours must be expressed in terms of conjecture. Such responses were ranked as only partially correct.

Item 3

Some students found it challenging to explain their opinion. A developed response is crucial to gaining higher marks in the photo card section of the test.

Item 5

Incorrect responses were sometimes received when students made reference to free-time activities rather than work in the evenings or at weekends.

Advice to teacher-examiners

General

- Carry out a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity, preferably with a second participant who should sit in the seat students will use.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly but remember that teachers tend to be accustomed to projecting their voices, so position the microphone closer to the student, who is likely to be more softly spoken.
- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is available via the AQA website. It is **essential** that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the document mentioned above, there are instructions on how to introduce each student in English. You must include these details at the start of the recording for every student:

GCSE French examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, student number ____, student name ____. Role-play number ____, photo card letter ____, general conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by both the teacher-examiner and student must be clearly audible. Examiners are required to refer instances of whispering to AQA for further investigation.
- Once you have introduced the student and the specific details of the elements to be covered in his/her test, use French throughout the exam itself. Not only is this good practice, it will deter students from reverting to English in any exchanges with you.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not accurate or effective French. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. Mispronunciation of basic sounds can lead to a failure to communicate ideas.

Role-play

- Do not vary the script set out in the Teacher's Role. Adapting this to your own version will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you believe that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop them and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in a task, it is advisable to ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. It is acceptable to ask both questions together but, by splitting them, a possible overload on the student can be avoided.

Photo card

- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any other questions of your own.
- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be certain that this is the case and that you have not given any additional assistance to the student or the student's reply will not be credited.
- If there is a two-part question, it is advisable to ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. It is acceptable to ask both questions together but, by splitting them, a possible overload on the student can be avoided.
- Monitor timing. If a student's replies are very long and it appears that you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, it may be better to interrupt an answer and move to the next one.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions and adjectives are the most obvious areas to focus on.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe their town is unlikely to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Do not ask all students identical questions as this is unlikely to bring out the best in all of the students.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by enquiring about an aspect of what they have just told you.

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- Announce the change of theme in French: *On va changer de thème et on va parler au sujet du thème numéro ...* etc.
 - Monitor the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks in the Communication section.
 - The maximum length of the general conversation is five minutes. Once the student has completed their answer to the last question asked before the five-minute point, nothing else will be credited.
 - Remember to prompt students to ask you a question if they do not do this of their own accord. It is perhaps advisable for them to ask you a question in their nominated theme. It is not a good idea to leave this until late in the conversation as time may run out before this point.
 - Ensure that the student's question **is** a question and not an instruction or an invitation, such as *Décris-moi ... / Parle-moi de*
 - If the first question the student asks you does not make sense, ask for another.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three prepared questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- In the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card sections, listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you. Do this for all of the questions in the general conversation too.
- Make sure you know common question words.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but ask in French if you possibly can.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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