
GCSE FRENCH

8658/SH: Speaking Higher
Report on the Examination

8658
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General comments

Teachers are to be commended on the fact that, despite school closures and various difficulties 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 in your centre 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 to respond appropriately in the unprepared task.

Some students did not pay sufficient attention to the context laid out in both English and French on their card to assist them in interpreting the cues presented.

In the question task, less able students sometimes asked a question which was totally unrelated to the prompt.

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.

Some students gave lengthy responses and developed answers well beyond what was required and cued. Teachers in centres where this happened did not tend to intervene, which would suggest that they had sanctioned such an approach. However, it is in the student's interest to

address the cue but no more. Unnecessary elaboration 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 assist students to communicate their ideas. Frequently, in reference to the photo, they used *il* or *elle* without clarifying which individual featured 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 such 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.

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.

There were some impressive and spontaneous conversations from the highest-achieving students but many relied heavily on pre-learnt material. 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. Please 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.

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 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-examiner 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 capable students demonstrating their ability to incorporate more complex structures and a wider range of appropriate vocabulary. The higher ranges of the marking criteria are for successful use of more ambitious structures and a wider vocabulary at Higher tier.

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. More able students might be given the opportunity to show their interactive skills and thereby access the full range of marks for Spontaneity and Fluency by the introduction of questions which are designed to stretch them by seeking further detail, clarification and examples.

Teachers-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 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 advised 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 10

Students often ignored the context which would have helped them to understand what was required of them.

Task a

Students needed to produce a correct form of *chercher* and state who they were looking for. Students sometimes made reference to who, but did not mention that the person was being sought.

Task b

A joint activity was not always conveyed, thereby losing a mark.

Task c

Some students described the person, but not in terms of clothing.

Task d

Responses frequently referenced the missing person's age and nationality rather than those of the student. Where the student's age was given, the mark was on occasion lost as *seize* was pronounced as *six*.

Task e

Formulating an appropriate question proved challenging as some students lost sight of the location of the dialogue.

Role-play 11

Most items in this role-play were well executed.

Task d

Some students omitted to mention when they had last engaged in a sporting activity.

Task e

A few students could not generate a reason for going to a destination with friends.

Role-play 12

Task a

Excursion seemed to be unknown by some. Others omitted referring to *demain*.

Task b

Students often struggled to form a fully accurate question.

Task d

Opinions were often presented rather than an advantage and a disadvantage. However, some students began with an opinion and then explained it, which gave the opportunity for the examiner to identify an advantage or disadvantage.

Task e

This was well executed.

Role-play 13**Task a**

This task was well done.

Task b

Those who could think their way into the context produced an appropriate question but others struggled to form a question using only the words in the cue.

Task e

Some students did not take notice of the negative element in the cue and some did not focus on *demain*. Therefore, there were responses referring to attendance at a concert in the past or saying they would like to go to the concert.

Role-play 14

This role-play was generally well done with no obvious difficulties.

Role-play 15**Task a**

There were no problems here. Responses expressed in a future or past time frame were accepted in addition to those using the present tense. Some students demonstrated their knowledge by introducing of their own accord *la Saint-Sylvestre*.

Task b

Opinions were sometimes presented rather than an advantage and a disadvantage.

Task c, d and e

This was usually well answered.

Role-play 16**Task a**

Given the frequency with which travel details were mentioned, it is suspected that a number of students misunderstood *journée* and believed it to mean 'journey'. On this occasion, however, such responses were appropriate and so were rewarded.

Task c

Reference to both club and school was needed to score full marks. Some students omitted one element.

Role-play 17

Task a

This was well answered.

Task b

Reference to *où* was not always understood but the second part of the task was generally dealt with well.

Task d

The ideas students wanted to express in response to the cue fell into both the opinion and advantage/disadvantage categories so there were few problems. For example, they often said *Aller à l'université, c'est cher mais c'est bon pour ma carrière.*

Task e

Students had no problems with this question, often choosing to start with *Tu veux ...* or *Tu voudrais ...*

Role-play 18

Task b

Some students misinterpreted *collègues* as *collèges*. Others struggled to find appropriate responses but there were good replies too, for example, citing that it was important to have good colleagues because work was (then) *plus sympa / intéressant / amusant*.

Task c

There was a good variety of appropriate responses heard.

Task e

Some students found it difficult to formulate a question, perhaps because they did find *chômage* to be a challenging item of vocabulary.

Photo Card J

Item 1

Pleasingly, from a language point of view, students often used *SDF* or stated that the man in the photo was *sans domicile*.

Item 4

Reference was sometimes made to the greatest danger in the present time, rather than in the future.

Item 5

Students did not always recognise *eau* and often gave only brief responses with mention of one way of saving water.

Photo Card K

The questions tended to be well answered.

Item 5

At times, students were only able to articulate a limited number of ideas. Interestingly, responses often tended to be similar in a centre. For example, in one part of the country, a common complaint was of noise; elsewhere students mentioned unemployment or dirty streets.

Photo Card L

Item 1

Statements, regarding the scenery and the fact that they were eating were generally done successfully.

Items 2, 3 and 4

These were all well answered.

Item 5

Generally, the question was interpreted as referring to holidays taken as a school party whereas any break from school was intended such that students who do not go away from home during school holidays could state what they did at home or in their locality.

Photo Card M

The questions were well answered by most students.

Photo Card N

Item 1

Less able students, when attempting to say that the two people were taking photos, unfortunately often gave responses such as *Ils sont prendre des photos*.

Item 4

Occasionally, students stated that mobile phones were not allowed in their school. They needed also to express an opinion, for example, one of displeasure at this, if examiners were to be able to fully credit their response.

Photo Card O

Item 1

Reference to the number of people in the photo (13) was sometimes incorrectly rendered.

The other items were generally well answered. In item 4, reference to *films romantiques* was readily recognised and provoked a range of responses.

Photo Card P

Item 1

Students had a good command of appropriate vocabulary to describe the scene shown. The adult male featured was referred to as *un professeur / prof*.

Item 4

Although students readily gave their opinion of homework, they often expressed it in terms of *Les devoirs est ...* following the singularity of the English noun.

Photo Card Q

Item 3

Some students spoke well about the rules in their school but omitted to focus on the aspect highlighted in the question, that of which were necessary.

Item 4

Responses often referred to getting on well with teachers in general. This information would be useful as a development of the desired response, but, in isolation, did not meet the criteria of an appropriate answer.

Photo Card R

Item 1

Any reasonable interpretation of the scene was acceptable. Students believed it to be a street, town centre or shopping 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.

The demands of the other items were well understood and generally well answered.

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 asking about what they have just told you.
- 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 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks in the Communication section.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is seven minutes. Once the student has completed their answer to the last question asked before the seven-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.