



General Certificate of Secondary Education

French 3651 Full Course *Specification A*

3651/S Speaking

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2007 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Speaking

General Comments

Much of what is contained in this report has been included in previous reports, but examiners have said that these points need to be reiterated.

Overall teacher-examiners coped well with the test and were generally well prepared, with many instances of good question techniques, bringing out the best in candidates. Problems were again evident over the question of timing, however, in particular in the Presentation/Discussion, in many cases to the detriment of the candidates.

Centres generally entered candidates at the appropriate tier.

Although there were again fewer instances of problem recordings this year, centres are again reminded to check that equipment is working properly and to listen to the last few seconds of each candidate's test, as this will reduce the risk of producing inaudible recordings. It is advisable, too, to pause for a few moments - without pausing the tape - if the school bell rings. Candidates can only gain marks if they can be heard, and often candidates' responses are lost as their voices are drowned out by such loud interference.

Where centres use tape recorders with internal microphones it is also advisable to check for 'motor hum' as this can often interfere with the clarity of recordings and give serious problems in assessment.

It is essential that teacher-examiners make the break between the Presentation/Discussion and Conversation clear e.g. by announcing: *Et maintenant la conversation*. Again this can affect the mark given to the candidates if an examiner cannot tell when the Discussion finishes and the Conversation begins.

Centres are reminded that Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of GCSE Speaking Tests are held annually in March and centres are advised to send representatives where possible. The support packs are available free of charge to those centres unable to attend. Please contact the Modern Foreign Languages Department at AQA's Harrogate Office.

Role Plays

Foundation Tier

Candidates generally coped well with the Foundation Tier role plays and no role play proved to be more problematic than others. There is still a general inability on the part of candidates to formulate questions at any level, but particularly at Foundation Tier. If candidates use a statement form to formulate questions they need the correct intonation for a question. It is surprising how many candidates did not know the phrase *c'est combien*.

Although pronunciation is not specifically targeted in the role plays, candidates cannot gain maximum marks for pronunciations which are too 'mangled'. Nor can marks be gained for pronouncing cognates/near cognates as English. The *er/é* pronunciation of *er* verbs in the present tense is still evident and a common cause of mark loss in the Speaking Test at both Foundation and Higher Tier. Examiners did, however, notice some improvement this year.

It again needs to be emphasised that role plays are imaginary situations – that candidates are 'playing a role' and not necessarily producing responses based on their own experience. **The purpose of these role plays is not to test a candidate's individual experience but to test different elements of the specification.** This should be stressed to candidates when

practising role plays in class. The best answer is the one which fulfils the task in the simplest way possible. This advice applies equally, indeed more so, at Higher Tier.

Many candidates had problems with *divorcée*, *c'est tout* and *boum*. Confusion of *être/avoir*, particularly with age – *je suis 16 ans*, continues to be a problem, but extends to other situations e.g. *je suis un chien* in Role Play 1. Many candidates also had no concept of weight and in Role Play 2 would have needed a van and even a lorry to take away the amount of meat they were buying.

Higher Tier

The teacher-examiner's role in this part of the test is paramount and in spite of the given script, preparation is needed to think of ways of eliciting the required information when the script fails. The majority of teacher-examiners tackled the role plays confidently, drawing candidates into giving the required information without giving away key vocabulary. There were instances of teacher-examiners making tasks simpler by changing the vocabulary and candidates could then not be credited with full marks. If a teacher-examiner changes *Que penses-tu de ...* to *Est-ce que tu aimes...?* the number of marks available will be limited. The first of these questions requires an answer containing a verb, whereas the second could be answered by *oui/non*.

Candidates fared better when teacher-examiners were skilled at offering alternative questions and, where split responses were required, asked for only one element at a time. Teacher-examiners should remember that once a candidate has given a complete and incorrect response, they should not repeat/rephrase the question to obtain a different response. **Candidates are marked on their first completed response.** When a teacher-examiner recognises that a candidate has embarked on an incorrect response, he/she should intervene, asking the question again, before the candidate finishes the response.

Neither teacher-examiners nor candidates should extend role play utterances into mini conversations. There are no additional marks for such utterances and the risk of error is greater. Candidates should not be encouraged to 'develop' their responses to role-play utterances. This not the place for developing answers. It must be remembered that everything the candidate produces is assessed. **Candidates should be encouraged to keep their responses as simple and as short as possible here while covering the required content.** Once the required information has been imparted, the teacher-examiner should intervene to stop candidates extending answers and risking mark loss.

The need for reading and using the English scene setting at the beginning of each role-play should be stressed to candidates.

As at Foundation Tier, role plays were found to have been equally well tackled throughout. Problems highlighted by examiners were the following:

- Although candidates generally coped well with Role Play 7, they were at times confused by being asked '*pourquoi*' after they had already given an acceptable response.
- In Role Play 9 candidates sometimes tried to create a complex response to Task 2 – *ils pensent que...* and lost marks. Surprisingly, Task 3 caused problems. When this question was asked in Conversation – *Tu t'entends bien avec tes parents? Pourquoi/pourquoi pas?* – candidates could give good well prepared answers, but here in the role play, they were often at a loss as to what the question meant.
- Candidates coped well with the first two tasks in Role Play 11, but Task 3 about pocket money was at times badly done with instances of teacher-examiners seeking more

information after an adequate response had been given. There was some misunderstanding of what was required in Task 4 and this task tended to be badly done.

Presentation/Discussion

Three minutes are allowed for the Presentation/Discussion. Many examiners commented on the poor timings in this element of the test, although some examiners commented on an improvement in timings this year.

Examiners are instructed to stop marking this element when the allotted 3 minutes has been completed. If the Presentation is allowed to take up the whole or most of the 3 minutes, candidates' marks suffer. The mark for Spontaneity and Fluency is for the Discussion **only** and a candidate will gain no marks for this if the 3 minutes are taken up by the Presentation alone.

Short discussions will also disadvantage candidates who need to develop responses to gain the highest marks for Communication. **Many candidates were disadvantaged by the timings allowed in the Presentation/Discussion.**

On a more positive note only a few candidates had no Presentation at all. Approaches from centres again varied greatly from whole classes doing the same Presentation to a great variety of topics. The whole class approach followed by the same Discussion questions for all again seemed to be on the increase, and this was not always to the advantage of candidates. This approach led to some candidates delivering something they clearly did not understand.

Teacher-examiners need to be aware of what candidates are going to say or listen carefully during the Presentation so that they do not ask questions requiring information that the candidate has already given. Nor does it help candidates if all are asked the same questions with no regard to individual candidate responses. It was not uncommon to find a good Presentation followed by a poor Discussion.

Presentations continue to create problems of delivery and pronunciation. As candidates have generally pre-learnt the material, they need to do it with the help of their teachers so that pronunciation as well as content can be monitored. Teachers need to stress to their candidates that they should not deliver their Presentations at top speed. Many Presentations gave the impression that candidates did not understand what they were delivering and the information became garbled and incomprehensible and at times sounded as if it was being read. It is often the case that pronunciation is poor in the Presentation and improves in the Conversation.

Examiners commented this year that there were more incidents of Discussions, which had nothing whatsoever to do with Presentations. In these cases, candidates can gain no marks for the Discussion.

It is essential to know the ability level of candidates and ask questions at the appropriate level. For candidates who can cope with a variety of tenses and who may well obtain grade C there must be the opportunity to use past and future tenses in this element and then to use them again in the Conversation.

Conversation

Teacher-examiners need to begin this section with a clear break from the Presentation/Discussion, e.g. *Et maintenant la Conversation*.

Teacher-examiners need to use questions aimed at the ability level of their candidates. Timings of the Conversation did not produce any real problems. However, at times, Higher Tier candidates were given well under the minimum requirement of 6 minutes. This can happen

when teacher-examiners mix the Foundation and Higher Tier candidates and do not adjust to the required time limits.

Many candidates, even very able candidates, can tire as the test progresses and find it difficult to sustain a consistent performance. Teacher-examiners need to be sensitive to the performance of their candidates and to realise that **they do not need the full time limit to show their capabilities**. However, teacher-examiners should not cut short Conversations to such an extent that candidates do not have the time to show the range of their language ability. Candidates cannot be awarded the highest marks for Communication if the Conversation falls well short of the minimum requirement, i.e. well under 6 minutes for Higher Tier and 4 minutes for Foundation Tier.

Speaking tests should never be used as 'lessons' with teacher-examiners correcting candidates' French, nor should an English translation of questions be given.

Teacher-examiners are well aware now of the need for reference to past, present and future events, but it does not help if teacher-examiners insist on 'chasing tenses' with candidates who will clearly not gain higher grades and who clearly do not understand which time frames are required by the questions. Candidates at both tiers, however, need to be encouraged to link their sentences, even with such simple conjunctions as *et, mais, parce que*. This can help increase marks awarded for Range/Complexity and many Foundation Tier candidates can cope with this strategy when given practice in linking sentences. Some examiners did comment that they found a better manipulation of verbs this year.

This element of the Test is very dependent on the skill of the teacher-examiner who needs to be well prepared with a range of questions suited to the ability level of the candidates. Higher Tier candidates need to be allowed to 'show considerable independence of the stimulus' whereas Foundation Tier candidates may not be able to cope with more open-ended types of question but need something more structured. Teacher-examiners should not intervene when a candidate is giving a long relevant answer. Again the best approach is not to use the same set of questions per topic to every candidate, regardless of their ability or their responses.

The best performances at both levels are produced when teacher-examiners recognise the abilities of their candidates and adapt questions accordingly and when they respond to candidates' answers with questions which may stimulate development and independence.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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