

FRENCH (FRN315114)

ORAL ASSESSMENT

One of the best aspects of being an oral examiner for French is the pride you feel when you reach the end of the examinations and realise just how well the students have performed. The standard gets better every year and the unsung heroes are most definitely the French teachers. There is no doubt that they are spending countless hours preparing their students and motivating them to aim for the sky. The vast majority of candidates really seem to enjoy the conversation and they are confident speakers of the language. The areas of challenge this year for students who struggled to maintain good flow in their conversation were the same as previous years: a lack of basic vocabulary, use of agreements, incorrect gender, the wrong preposition and some basic pronunciation errors e.g. rue VS roue or the wrong nasal sound. This said, the general standard was very high and this was reflected in the spread of grades.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION PAPER

LISTENING AND RESPONDING

The marking examiner for this section reported that the standard was very good this year and that students demonstrated a strong level of global understanding of the texts presented. Listening is one of the most challenging skills to assess as it involves students having a set time to process what they hear and to discern which information is or is not required to answer the questions without being able to hear the passages ad infinitum.

SPOKEN TEXT 1

QUESTION 1

Very few students recognised the word “cauchemar” and others had problems with “dévouée” and “robots”. The expression “elle nous prend pour...” was often missed and “faire l’idiot” had a few students talking about “audio” as they made an educated guess.

- (a) It is a nightmare – examiners accepted anything that suggested he was not happy (1 mark)
- (b) She adores her/ Mme L (1) She is devoted to her pupils (1) She has helped him many times outside of class(1) (3 marks)
- (c) He says it explains why Mme L is always late (1 mark)
- (d) She gives too much (½) stupid (½) and painful homework (½) She thinks we are robots (½) (2 marks)
- (e) Lessons do not always start on time (1). Homework is sometimes boring (1) (2 marks)
- (f) Everyone mucks around/ behaves like an idiot-anything that approximates this idea (1 mark)
- (g) Group work (½) helps students to have an open mind (½) exposing them to different (½) points of view (½) (2 marks)

Total: /12

SPOKEN TEXT 2

QUESTION 2

Some students mistranslated the following vocabulary items: trouver une petite place, enlever la robe, and dessous. The 24 clock proved problematic for some students.

- (a) The beach (½) in Nice (½) (1 mark)
- (b) 12 (½) pm (½) or 14:00 (1) (1 mark)
- (c) Summer/ long holidays (1 mark)
- (d) She finds a spot (½) She takes her beach towel (½) out of her bag (½) and puts it in on the warm sand (1) (2 marks)
- (e) She wants to be tanned (1), not get sunburnt (½) and become red (½) (2 marks)
- (f) Take off her dress (1) as she had put on her bathers underneath (1) (2marks)
- (g) She wants to lie down on her towel (1) and read her detective novel (1). She likes some shade as the sun is so strong (1) (3 marks)

Total: /12

SPOKEN TEXT 3

QUESTION 3

Only two students understood the idea of “host” mother as the term was directly referred to in the title and not in the body of the dialogue. Some students confused the French term “le métro” for the bus.

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|--|-----------|
| (a) She is going to be her host mum (1) | |
| He is phoning to tell her about his changed itinerary (1) | (2 marks) |
| (b) 13 th (½) June (½) Arriving in Strasbourg (1) | (2 marks) |
| (c) TGV or very fast train | (1 mark) |
| (d) Depart Strasbourg 9:10 AM (1) Arrive Paris 11:43 AM (1) | (2 mark) |
| (e) Plane | (1 mark) |
| (f) It’s more expensive(1) Security takes longer (1) | (2 marks) |
| (g) The Metro/ subway/ underground train | (1 mark) |
| (h) He’ll look on the internet | (1 marks) |

Total: /12

SPOKEN TEXT 4

QUESTION 4

Problem vocabulary included the following words: un bouton, la joue, emprunter, frère aîné, déprimé. Students also struggled with “the soup that was too hot” which surprised the markers.

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|---|-----------|
| (a) 15 th (½) August (½) | (1 mark) |
| (b) No hot (½) for the shower (½) | (1 mark) |
| (c) He had an enormous (½) pimple (½) on his right (½) cheek (½) | (2 marks) |
| (d) He borrowed (½) his older (½) brother’s (½) mobylette/scooter (½) | (2 marks) |
| (e) The English teacher (½) handed back the homework (½). He got 5/20 (1) | (2 marks) |
| (f) His girlfriend broke up with him | (1 mark) |
| (g) He burnt himself, as the soup (½) was too hot (½) | (1 mark) |
| (h) He went to bed (½) without eating (½) as he was too (½) depressed (½) | (2 marks) |

Total /12

SPOKEN TEXT 5

QUESTION 5

Students struggled with the following vocabulary items: une autre culture, le ballet, la Croix Rouge, Les Nations Unies, un CV, la moyenne salariale

- (a) Learning French helps understand menus in restaurants (1 mark)
- (b) Learning another language helps us to get to know and understand (1/2) *another* culture (1/2). French terms are used for fashion (1/2) and ballet (1/2) (2 marks)
- (c) Red Cross (1) Olympic Games (1) United Nations (1) (3 marks)
- (d) 33 (1 mark)
- (e) It is the most widely taught (1/2) language after English (1/2). It's the only language (1/2) apart from English (1/2) to be taught in all countries (1/2) and on all continents (1/2) – any combination acceptable (2 marks)
- (f) It looks good on your CV (1).
The average wage for a bilingual person is higher (1) (2 marks)
- (g) Women feel French is the language of love (1 mark)

Total: /12

READING AND RESPONDING

In this section, most students responded well to the three reading passages, demonstrating their understanding of the written word in French. It should be noted that occasionally, students just jotted down single words, which did not really make sense to the markers. While it is not necessary to write in full sentences, the words do need to be coherently strung together. Teachers should take note and prepare students accordingly. A couple of students wrote in pencil, which made answers difficult to read in a certain light. It is recommended students write in pen only.

QUESTION 6

This passage on chocolate was well understood by the majority of students, as it is advisable to begin exams with a passage that inspires confidence.

Question (e) was the least well done, as many students failed to spell out the link between chocolate, wine and cheese (which is what the questions asked).

An interesting interpretation of *“un art en soi”* i.e. “an art in itself” was “an art of silk”.

QUESTION 7

This passage was also well done by most students, with marks being lost over the failure to give as much detail as possible.

In question (c) many students did not know that *“Écosse”* was Scotland and simply wrote the French word-unacceptable when one has to answer in English.

In question (h) several students said Tintin never disguised himself, when actually he was at ease in any disguise.

QUESTION 8

This was the hardest passage and students sometimes misunderstood the question.

No marks were lost for incorrect spelling or grammar, as long as the answer was understandable.

Three students wrote some answers in English, so they could not receive any marks for those responses. A pity, as they had answered most questions in French, then suddenly switched to English.

One student in the multiple-choice section marked two answers on a couple of the questions. There is only ever one right answer and the instructions clearly stated “choose the correct answer” and not “answers”.

The markers felt that answers to (b) and (d) were interchangeable; as long as information was not repeated, (no marks are given for saying the same thing twice).

Question (c) was surprisingly not answered well with many saying “*Le Bon Coin* was founded in 2016 instead of 2006. The question specifically asked “In what year” was *le Bon Coin* founded. No mark was given to students who simply copied out “*ce site internet a fêté ses dix ans en 2016*”. This did not give the year.

Question (e) was widely misunderstood. Students did get half a mark if they answered “*oui*” or “*non*” but many explanations were way off course.

In Question (g) quite a few students gave multiple reasons why French people like “*Le Bon Coin*” but the question asked them to state the “LAST” reasons, which were really very simple i.e. “*il offre une approche plus écologique, responsable et solidaire.*”

The multiple-choice questions were fairly well done, but (j) proved the hardest, with 15 giving the wrong answer, as it is quite possible to lose money staying at home and buying Online, which is the whole idea of “*Le Bon Coin*”. One must think before acting i.e. “*il faut réfléchir avant d’agir*” was the correct answer.

Seven students got (h) incorrect, only three gave an incorrect answer for (i) and nine for (k).

WRITING IN FRENCH

	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
Number of candidates attempting the question	5	4	26	10	0

This year question 11 was the preferred essay topic of over 50 % of all candidates.

Students obviously felt that this was a reassuring topic for which they possessed sufficient grammatical and vocabulary knowledge in order to do a good job. The majority of essays were indeed very well written and students were clearly able to showcase the hard work they had done all year. Markers were impressed by the number of candidates who used reported speech correctly and displayed a solid control of some rather advanced French grammar.

Questions 12 was the second most popular topic and some essays were very entertaining. The stand out grammar issue this year was the passé composé with students using the incorrect auxiliary verb at times and missing past participle agreements with reflexive verbs.

Overall, the standard was once again very high with a only a very small group of students struggling with making the word limit.