



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In French (1FR0)

Paper 2H: Speaking

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Overview

The timings of the speaking examination are 7 – 9 minutes for the Foundation tier and 10 – 12 minutes for the Higher tier. Centres are reminded that these are approximate as candidates will take differing amounts of time to complete the role-play task and picture-based discussions. The timings for the role-play task and picture-based discussions are guidelines and many candidates were able to complete these tasks in a much shorter time than indicated in the specification. There is no need to extend these tasks to reach the maximum time suggested. However, it should be noted that the timings for the conversation tasks are prescribed. These are 3.5 – 4.5 minutes for the Foundation tier and 5 – 6 minutes for the Higher tier. If a candidate has used less time for the role-play and picture-based task, teacher-examiners should not extend conversation times to reach the total time of the complete examination.

Teacher-examiners should pay close attention to the sequencing grid for the examination, which ensures that each candidate is tested on four of the five themes within the specification. This is based on the candidate's choice of theme for the first part of the conversation. Teacher-examiners will then select an appropriate role-play task from those given, avoiding the theme of the conversation. Similarly, the choice of picture-based discussion and second conversation theme will follow the same format to avoid any theme being duplicated.

Teacher-examiners should be aware that it is necessary to keep to the scenario and the precise wording of the role-play and the picture-based discussions. Where this was not the case, marks could not be awarded for any response made by the student. Candidates may have the question repeated where the candidate has not answered, or has asked for a repetition, but may not be rephrased in any way. In addition, there were occasions where candidates were asked supplementary questions to elicit further information, and candidates could not be credited for responses to these questions. Often, this was to extend the performance to fulfil the time limit in the specification which is not required. The requirements of the conversation task were not always adhered to, and centres should be aware of the necessity to keep to the instructions and prescribed timings within the specification. Two themes are tested within the task, the first chosen by the candidate at least two weeks before the test and the other chosen from the two options, allocated by Pearson. Occasionally, candidates were given a second conversation theme that had already been tested in a previous task.

Role-plays

The role-play tasks do not need to have overly extended responses, and best practice is to keep to what is required in the bullet points.

Unfortunately, where candidates gave overlong responses, these sometimes-contained material which caused communication to be less clear. Therefore, candidates could not score full marks since there was some ambiguity.

It is important that candidates read the scenario carefully to understand where the role-play is situated in order to aid understanding before completing the task and providing answers that are in context. Marks were lost where candidates did not give an appropriate response.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that they should adhere to the wording of the role-play including where a candidate is required to ask a question. Teachers should keep to the register that is within the scenario and not change it to what they normally use during

their teaching. It is also important for the teachers to set the scene for the role play and to include the preamble, and female teachers should use the female versions of the nouns e.g. '*la directrice*'.

Occasionally candidates combined bullet points 1 and 2 within the role play and where this occurred, they were credited for both points. However, when the teacher-examiner then asked the question referring to the second bullet point, this often confused the candidate. The unpredictable question was well done by more successful candidates; however, less successful candidates often offered no response or one which had no relevance to the situation of the role-play.

Framing questions continues to be difficult for many candidates, and many candidates found it difficult to form questions. There were many instances of poor intonation and occasionally the bullet point was repeated rather than a question asked.

There were no issues with candidates not being able to access the role plays although some prompts on different role plays proved more of a challenge than others.

HR3

3. Less successful candidates struggled to say how they used technology yesterday. More successful candidates were able to use the form the past tense correctly.

HR5

2. Many candidates gave personal details rather than personality traits.

HR6

1. Some candidates struggled to give information about their hotel reservation.

Picture-based task

The most successful candidates were able to give a good description of the picture in this task. However, some candidates only provided a sentence or two when describing the picture and did not give fully developed answers for the other prompts either. Contrary to the role plays, where one sentence is sufficient to achieve the maximum two marks, the picture-based tasks require the most successful candidates to provide fuller answers in order to access the higher mark bands. For the picture description, it would be beneficial for candidates to be familiar with the phrase, '*sur la photo il y a...*'

Some more able candidates offered Some good examples of description . . . 'Ils ont l'air .+ adjective'; la femme semble être. . . 'je crois que c'est en été parce que . . .'" ' Je crois que c'est une famille car . . .'" Je peux voir un homme qui . . .+ verb A gauche, je vois . . (Instead of the constant repetition of il y a which was more commonly used.) Many centres appear to have trained candidates to use 'ils sont ten train de + inf', this was effective where correctly executed.

However, some students gave elaborate responses after a suitable answer had been given, and the extra information did not add anything to what had already been said. Examiners are looking for the quality of the response rather than the length. There is no need for the teacher-examiner to go through the supplementary prompts (*Pourquoi (pas)? / Autre chose?*) when a perfectly good response has been given. Indeed, the ensuing silence as the candidate is unable to give further information does not help the student and adds an element of hesitation. Some of the tasks were thus overlong, there is nothing to be gained by this and some candidate's performances deteriorated towards the end of the task and appeared to also have an impact on the performance as they tired. Within both tiers there was a wide variation in the pronunciation and intonation of

candidates. Successful candidates had, it seemed, made notes for their responses to the set questions rather than reading out sentences that they had written during the preparation period. The latter led to answers that, at times, were difficult to understand immediately due to poor pronunciation and a lack of appropriate intonation. Furthermore, a number of candidates found it difficult to differentiate between tenses in answering questions relating to the past or the future.

Centres are reminded that the questions within the picture-based discussion are set, and they should not be altered in any way. Unfortunately, there were instances where teacher-examiners reworded or reframed questions which did not allow candidates to be credited for responses to these questions. There were also occasions where supplementary questions were added in the middle of the task. No credit could be given for these responses and the practice caused confusion for these candidates who had prepared responses to the five bullet points.

Conversation

Centres should be aware of the timings given within the specification. The Higher tier conversation should last between 5 and 6 minutes. Some centres elongated the conversation to make up the total time of the whole examination when the role-play and picture-based task took less time than suggested in the specification. This should not be done; the conversation has discrete timings.

Examiners reported that there was a far greater proportion of time spent on the first chosen theme and insufficient time spent on the Pearson- chosen theme in some centres. Examiners stop marking at the end of the candidate's response after 4.5 and 6 minutes of the Foundation and Higher conversations respectively. Any material beyond that was not considered for assessment.

Centres are reminded that in the conversation task, there are two themes tested, the first chosen by the candidate and the second by Pearson according to the sequencing grid. Candidates may give a presentation of up to one minute on their chosen theme and each theme should be of roughly equal length. Examiners reported that there was a far greater proportion of time spent on the first chosen theme and insufficient time spent on the Pearson- chosen theme in some centres. This may affect marks awarded as the conversation is marked globally and examiners take into consideration performances across both themes.

The presentation allows candidates to be confident with presenting some information and the follow-up discussion then allows them to explore this with the teacher-examiner in more detail before moving to a second theme. It is therefore crucial to ensure that both themes are well represented and accomplished. In more than a few centres a carefully learnt topic within a theme was used for the presentation, but when it came to delivering answers in the rest of the conversation, some answers were not always understandable due to the errors made or questions were not understood, particularly with less successful students.

Where this was successful, centres used the presentation as a starting point, and the remaining time to follow-up on ideas given by the student, to probe further about the subject, and allow the student to take part in a spontaneous and more individual exchange.

The task was often less successful where the presentation was followed by a sequence of well-rehearsed questions and answers. This did not allow candidates to access the higher

mark bands as there is a need for spontaneity, interaction and an ability to deal with unpredictable questions within both themes. In these cases, teacher-examiners did not take the opportunities offered by the candidate to explore in more detail what the candidate had said. In some cases, teacher-examiners had ignored what the candidate had said in the presentation and asked a question that had already been referred to and consequently led to confusion. Best practice is to respond to the answers of the candidates rather than having a pre-set list of questions which do not allow candidates the chance to take part in a truly spontaneous interaction, thus preventing them accessing the higher mark bands for Interaction and Spontaneity, particularly at the Higher tier. Where candidates were successful, teacher examiners asked questions appropriate to the level of the candidate being examined, challenging candidates by asking for further explanation of a points made and tailoring their questions to the responses of candidates thus promoting more spontaneous conversations.

For candidates to reach the higher mark bands they must also be given the opportunities to interact and to deal with unpredictable elements. Less successful candidates should have the opportunity to respond to more modest questions using language which they are able to manipulate rather than attempt questions that they do not understand or have the capacity to answer. Less successful candidates were at times asked some very difficult questions, often in a range of tenses, whereas a simpler line of questioning would have instead enabled them to access higher marks for Communication and Content, particularly at the Foundation tier.

There were occasions where teacher-examiners asked too many closed questions. Where a candidate was capable and clearly able to produce extended answers, this was extremely disappointing as the candidate, in a stressful situation, sometimes opted for a *oui / non* response rather than produce responses that would allow them to reach their full potential. Similarly, on occasions candidates were not given enough thinking time before teacher-examiners rephrased questions or moved on to another question. Within the mark schemes there is a need for candidates to be able to produce developed responses and extended sequences of speech to reach the higher mark bands for Communication and Content. There should be evidence of using the language creatively to express thoughts, ideas and opinions and these appropriately justified with a range of vocabulary.

More successful candidates at each tier took opportunities to express a range of ideas and points of view and to demonstrate a range of more complex structures and vocabulary to reach the higher mark bands for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy. These are in the Foundation and Higher tier grammar and structures and vocabulary sections in Appendices 2 and 3 of the specification.

There may only be a limited manipulation of variety of straightforward structures and minimal use of complex structures at Foundation tier. This may include some accurate structures, some successful references to past, present and future timeframes and also errors that sometimes hinder clarity of communication and prevent meaning being conveyed. There were pleasing performances where students attempted to use more complex language and a range of tenses to offer information in responses to skillful questioning by the teacher-examiner. However, there were missed opportunities where a pre-set list of questions did not allow the candidate to expand upon the initial question to show what they are capable of.

Some teacher-examiners asked repetitive questions such as: *Que fais-tu cette semaine ? Qu'est-ce que tu as fait la semaine dernière? Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire la semaine prochaine ?* This limits the outcomes for candidates.

To reach the higher mark bands at Higher tier, it is necessary for candidates to have the opportunity to use and manipulate a variety of grammatical and complex structures. These should be predominantly accurate with a mostly successful reference to past, present and future events. To reach the 10–12-mark band these should be consistently accurate, and errors should not hinder the clarity of communication. There were instances of this, and teacher-examiners are to be congratulated in the way that they challenged students with sufficiently complex questioning often responding to the initial responses of the student to elicit further information. However, perhaps due to the impact of the pandemic, there were regular occasions where students, entered for the Higher tier were unable to manipulate the language successfully, often using straightforward grammatical structures, and who had limited success in referring to past, present and future events. This consequently led to only attaining the lower mark bands.

Administration

Most schools dealt with the administration of the specification well for uploading the speaking assessments on to the Learner Work Transfer. However, some Centres had to be contacted either to submit the missing CS2 form or to re-submit the form in the correct format. There was some confusion about which format to submit the CS2 form which made it difficult for examiners to enter the marks and at times caused delays.

It is very useful if teachers can announce the Role Play card number and the Picture Card number at the start of the tasks, as well as the Theme for each of the Conversations at the beginning of each one. Most centres applied the sequence correctly. At times following the grid caused some confusion and several centres failed to do so correctly resulting in themes being repeated. Some tasks were used less frequently than others, maybe due to sequence and the choice of the topic for the first conversation.

It is important that centres check their recordings before sending off the samples. There were cases where the students could not be heard clearly. There is a need for minimal background noise so that the student being examined can be clearly heard. It is also important that the recording favours the student rather than the examiner although both must be able to be heard.

The Administrative support guide give details of all requirements for the successful administration of the examination and centres are encouraged to read this well in advance of the examination.

