

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/11

Listening

Key messages

- Performance on this Listening paper was of a similar standard to last year and candidates showed very good levels of both specific and general understanding.
- Most candidates were aware of the need to write their answers clearly. Answers must be written in blue or black ink. New Centres should remind candidates not to first write their answers in pencil and then overwrite these in ink as this can make answers difficult to read.
- When deciding on the mark to award, Examiners will normally consider everything the candidate has written in an answer. It is therefore vital that candidates clearly cross out any material they do not wish Examiners to consider when they are marking.
- All candidates should be given the chance to attempt past papers before they take the Listening examination in order that they are familiar with the rubric requirements. Most candidates ticked the correct numbers of boxes on box ticking exercises, but some ticked too many or too few.
- Answers are marked on the basis of whether they communicate the message. Inaccuracies in the use of French are only taken into account if the message becomes ambiguous.
- Answers to questions requiring a response in French should be kept brief. New Centres should note that full sentences are not required. Furthermore, the inclusion of detail which is extra to the requirements of a question may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

General comments

This year's Listening paper made very similar demands to that of 2010. Examiners reported that the candidature performed well and at a similar standard to the 2010 candidature. Candidates had generally been well prepared for the Listening paper and seemed familiar with the structure of the examination and the required response types in all three sections. On some objective questions, candidates ticked more than the required number of boxes. The exercises discriminated appropriately and candidates from all parts of the globe found the topic areas tested to be accessible.

Candidates were instructed to attempt all three sections of the test and nearly all candidates managed to attempt at least some questions in the final and most demanding exercise. The French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, as well as opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations.

New Centres should note that where questions require written responses in French, these responses do not need to be written in the form of full sentences. Questions are set in such a way as to make brief answers possible. The listening paper aims to test comprehension and, therefore, inaccuracies in written French (e.g. incorrect spellings, verb endings) are tolerated provided the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted provided the message is unambiguous. However, where candidates add extra information, which distorts an otherwise valid answer, invalidates it or places the Examiner in the position of having to pick out the correct answer from amongst the information given, the mark cannot be awarded. So, for example, if a candidate offers two elements or details of which one only is correct, the mark cannot be awarded, as the Examiner is being required to make the choice which should have been made by the candidate. Centres should remind candidates to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully and not to add extra details to answers which might distort an otherwise correct response. Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

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Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an announcement for a stay in a Swiss language school and were mostly required to show their understanding of the extract by selecting one from three visual options. Centres should remind candidates to indicate their answer to such questions by ticking the box alongside the correct picture and not by writing their answer next to the question. Questions tested numbers, months, accommodation details, and tourist/leisure activities. Many candidates encountered few difficulties. **Question 9** required candidates to write the month of the year (*avril*) in which the stay took place. This was difficult for some candidates and a commonly seen incorrect response was *semaine*, perhaps indicating a need to read the question with more care. **Question 10** required a number (which could be provided in words or digits) and did not cause too many problems. A few candidates did not attempt an answer. **Question 12** required a day of the week (*lundi*) to be written in French and was usually well done. Where **Question 13** was answered incorrectly, candidates had often chosen option **B**, indicating that they did not recognise the word *balcon*. **Questions 14-16** were usually successfully attempted.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Each year, performance on this type of exercise improves as candidates become accustomed to the requirements. There are still some cases of candidates ticking too few or too many boxes. A very small number of candidates chose to use a system of both ticks and crosses to indicate which statements they believed to be true. Candidates should be reminded to use a consistent method: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but may cause confusion when used together. Candidates heard four young people talking about food and eating habits and clearly felt very much at ease with this topic area. A full range of marks was seen on this exercise, but most candidates scored good marks and totals of 5 and 6 were fairly common. The most common incorrect answer was when candidates selected option **I** as *vrai* instead of option **j**.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard a short interview with Laura about her life in New Caledonia. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they are familiar. The missing words were lexically frequent words that would be met by candidates at an early stage of their learning and all feature in the list of minimum core vocabulary for the syllabus. Some questions, e.g. **Questions 19 and 21**, were answered by most with ease. On **Question 18**, candidates did not always recognise *école*. Candidates who added in the word *privée* invalidated their answer. Answers to **Question 20** demonstrated that large numbers need to be revised with much greater care: common incorrect versions of 100,000 were 5,000 and 1,000,000. On the final question in the exercise, spellings of *rivière* were often incorrect, but provided that the answer began with *rivi*, endings such as *er/èr/aire* were accepted.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The second part of this exercise featured another interview, this time with Angèle who also talked about her life in New Caledonia. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. While the extract heard featured language in different time frames, candidates could answer correctly without having to manipulate tenses or write in full sentences. On **Question 23**, the correct spelling of the word *chaleur* proved elusive, but good numbers of candidates gave an acceptable rendering. On **Question 24**, *planche à voile* proved tricky for many to render correctly. If candidates joined the words together e.g.

plancheavoile, the mark was not awarded as this did not show comprehension. *Planche* was often rendered as *plonge* and the incorrectly split *planche avoile* was also common. **Question 25** was often successfully answered: only candidates giving the full concept of *professeur de sport* gained the mark. On **Question 26**, the most common incorrect answer was *la mère* which could not be rewarded as the word conveys a very different meaning. **Question 27** proved an excellent discriminator and a good test of listening skills at this level. A very frequent incorrect answer here was that there was no internet. Although the word internet did feature on the recording in the context of internet being available, it was the fact that people living on the island felt a long way away that was described by Angèle as a disadvantage. The word *loin* was enough to gain the mark here.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

This extract featured a longer interview with a Frenchman, Patrick, who talked about his humanitarian organisation. Candidates coped quite well with the multiple choice exercise which required candidates to be able to follow a narrative which relied on tenses and in which opinions and feelings were expressed. This was a slightly more demanding exercise than the previous one as it required careful listening to the whole extract rather than simply selecting individual words. **Questions 28, 30, 31** and **32** were all well answered. **Question 33** proved to be the most challenging with option **B** frequently being chosen instead of option **C**.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

Candidates heard an interview with a young French girl, Audrey, talking about the year she had spent in Iceland. The interview included two pauses and candidates clearly had enough time to respond to the questions, which required them to write short answers in French. It was also clear that many had been well trained to answer briefly and not to put the Examiner in the position of having to choose the correct answer from amongst a wealth of extra detail. A few candidates did write very long answers which included a rephrasing of the question. This must have affected their capacity to listen and reflect and made the whole process more complicated than necessary for them. Candidates should be reminded not to make their answers too long and also not to include extra details in their answers, or inferences that are not heard on the recording. The inclusion of such extra detail can sometimes invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

This final exercise was intended to be the most demanding on the paper and included questions that were suitably challenging for the more able candidates. However many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (**Question 40** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Deliberately, some very accessible questions were also included and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates.

The exercise began with a fairly accessible question which only required the answer *frère* to gain the mark. The next question aimed to elicit *charmante* or *accueillante*. Equally acceptable was the number of children in the family: if candidates chose to answer along these lines and included the ages of the children in their answer, these had to be correct for the mark to be awarded. On **Question 36**, candidates could gain the mark either by expressing the concept that young people 'were free' or that they 'went out freely'. Some invalidated their answer by producing *livres*. For **Question 37**, the single words *communiquer* or *langue* were sufficient to score the mark. Where candidates chose to offer *communiquer avec les gens*, but rendered it as *communiquer avec les jeunes* this was not rewarded. Candidates often found it difficult to spell *communiquer* in an acceptable way. **Question 38** proved to be an excellent test of listening skills. Candidates heard the word *téléphoner* in the extract and needed to understand that Audrey stayed in touch by email because the phone was too expensive. The many alternative spellings of email were accepted. Those candidates who answered briefly were the ones who tended to score on this question. Comparisons are often tested at this stage of the examination and, in order to help candidates, the stem of the answer was provided on **Question 39**, which was one of the most demanding questions on the paper. It was clearly only the best candidates who understood that in Iceland the school day was *moins longue* or finished earlier. Candidates need to revise comparisons and ensure that if they write *moins*, they do not render it as *mois*. The answer *commence à 8 heures* was incomplete and was not sufficient to score on its own. Candidates fared a little better on **Question 40**, though, as intended, this was still a demanding question. The answer could be expressed in one of three ways: either that Audrey was never with the same candidates **or** that Audrey worked in a different group for each subject **or**, finally, that Audrey worked in different groups. This was one of the few responses which required a verb to be used. On **Question 41**, *neige* was enough to score the mark or otherwise a reference to *paysage(s) blanc(s)* was acceptable. Some candidates misunderstood the recording (*J'ai vu la neige comme je ne l'ai jamais vue*) and answered *elle n'a jamais vu la neige*, which was not correct. Again, those candidates who gave brief answers were the most successful.

The notion of different holidays was enough to score the mark on **Question 42**. The final question was demanding. The best candidates correctly identified the concept of *nuit tôt*. There were also some very good answers stating that days were short and/or nights were long. Incorrect answers stating *il fait froid* were frequent.

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Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

Candidates heard an interview with a young French girl, Audrey, talking about the year she had spent in Iceland. The interview included two pauses and candidates clearly had enough time to respond to the questions, which required them to write short answers in French. It was also clear that many had been well trained to answer briefly and not to put the Examiner in the position of having to choose the correct answer from amongst a wealth of extra detail. A few candidates did write very long answers which included a rephrasing of the question. This must have affected their capacity to listen and reflect and made the whole process more complicated than necessary for them. Candidates should be reminded not to make their answers too long and also not to include extra details in their answers, or inferences that are not heard on the recording. The inclusion of such extra detail can sometimes invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

This final exercise was intended to be the most demanding on the paper and included questions that were suitably challenging for the more able candidates. However many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (**Question 40** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Deliberately, some very accessible questions were also included and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates.

The exercise began with a fairly accessible question which only required the answer *frère* to gain the mark. The next question aimed to elicit *charmante* or *accueillante*. Equally acceptable was the number of children in the family: if candidates chose to answer along these lines and included the ages of the children in their answer, these had to be correct for the mark to be awarded. On **Question 36**, candidates could gain the mark either by expressing the concept that young people 'were free' or that they 'went out freely'. Some invalidated their answer by producing *livres*. For **Question 37**, the single words *communiquer* or *langue* were sufficient to score the mark. Where candidates chose to offer *communiquer avec les gens*, but rendered it as *communiquer avec les jeunes* this was not rewarded. Candidates often found it difficult to spell *communiquer* in an acceptable way. **Question 38** proved to be an excellent test of listening skills. Candidates heard the word *téléphoner* in the extract and needed to understand that Audrey stayed in touch by email because the phone was too expensive. The many alternative spellings of email were accepted. Those candidates who answered briefly were the ones who tended to score on this question. Comparisons are often tested at this stage of the examination and, in order to help candidates, the stem of the answer was provided on **Question 39**, which was one of the most demanding questions on the paper. It was clearly only the best candidates who understood that in Iceland the school day was *moins longue* or finished earlier. Candidates need to revise comparisons and ensure that if they write *moins*, they do not render it as *mois*. The answer *commence à 8 heures* was incomplete and was not sufficient to score on its own. Candidates fared a little better on **Question 40**, though, as intended, this was still a demanding question. The answer could be expressed in one of three ways: either that Audrey was never with the same pupils **or** that Audrey worked in a different group for each subject **or**, finally, that Audrey worked in different groups. This was one of the few responses which required a verb to be used. On **Question 41**, *neige* was enough to score the mark or otherwise a reference to *paysage(s) blanc(s)* was acceptable. Some candidates misunderstood the recording (*J'ai vu la neige comme je ne l'ai jamais vue*) and answered *elle n'a jamais vu la neige*, which was not correct. Again, those candidates who gave brief answers were the most successful. The notion of

different holidays was enough to score the mark on **Question 42**. The final question was demanding. The best candidates correctly identified the concept of *nuit tôt*. There were also some very good answers stating that days were short and/or nights were long. Incorrect answers stating *il fait froid* were frequent.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/21

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- read all instructions, questions and texts very carefully;
- be familiar with question words (*qui, pourquoi, quand, où, comment* etc.) ;
- keep to the required length for writing tasks;
- answer comprehension questions with brief but focused answers;
- allocate time to check their work;
- ensure that all questions have been answered;
- make any alterations to answers clear, leaving the Examiner in no doubt as to what is the final answer.

General comments

Candidates seemed well prepared for the paper. They knew how to approach the various exercises and appeared to have no problems completing them in the time allowed: very few candidates left questions unanswered.

Where questions require written answers in French, once they have read the text carefully, candidates need to look closely at what each question is asking them, and also at how much space has been allowed for their answer. Usually a single line will be provided for their answer, indicating that the expected response will be brief – it is unlikely that they will need to copy out several lines of text to answer a single question. Where candidates change their mind over an answer to a question, and cross out an original answer to write something else, it must be clear which of the two is intended as the final answer – it is difficult for a mark to be awarded where this is unclear.

There is no advantage to writing at great length for the writing task in **Section 1** – candidates should take note that 3 simple statements can score full marks here. For the writing task in **Section 2**, candidates usually have no difficulty scoring the maximum communication marks within the word limit of 80 to 90 words given in the rubric.

Once candidates have finished the examination, it is good practice for them to read through their work once again. This is the moment to fill in any blanks, check that all the questions have been answered, and make any corrections, particularly to answers to the writing exercises, for example:

- subject and verb agreements;
- possessive adjectives, particularly in **Section 3**, and adjective agreements in general;
- spelling of words copied from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

In general, these discrete items were answered with ease. For **Question 1**, some candidates offered A (the picture of the bakery window) rather than B, perhaps indicating that *chaussures* was not well known.



Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise was generally well done. Candidates sometimes reversed their answers to **Questions 9** and **10**, giving D (*au jardin public*) as the place to buy a train ticket and A (*au guichet*) as the place to go to with a car breakdown. **Question 8** was often answered with B (*à la boucherie*) instead of F (*au jardin public*).

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a short piece of text (in this case, an email from Marc about his trip to the Alps) and choose the correct answer, each time from 3 options. Candidates scored very well in this exercise, with most gaining at least 4 marks. For **Question 14**, they sometimes chose B (*il pleut beaucoup*) though there was no mention of rain in the text.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked here to write a short email to a French friend and provide 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures given:

- (a) where they are on holiday (countryside / campsite);
- (b) what the weather is like (stormy);
- (c) what they do in the evening (club / discotheque / party).

Many candidates scored very well here. Some chose *montagne* for (a), and others opted for either *camping* or *campagne* – the spelling of these proved challenging, but was generally close enough to be credited for communication. Mis-spellings are accepted for communication, provided that the intended word is clear, and that the spelling given does not have another meaning. For (b), the most common choice was *il pleut* – the word *orages* did not seem to be widely known. Some candidates referred to *torments* (which did not score a communication mark). Candidates were confident in the use of the words *discothèque* or *fête* for task (c). For the communication marks, attempts at any tense were accepted.

In order to score the 2 marks available for language, candidates had to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Present tense was accepted for all three parts, together with the past for (b) or the future for (c). The prompts given were all in the present tense, so candidates who wrote in the past throughout did not always score the maximum mark for language. Those parts of an answer not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Some candidates chose to embellish their answers with additional details, sometimes extending their answers outside the answer space. There is no need to do this. No additional marks are available and time spent writing more than is necessary for this exercise could be better spent on other questions. Full marks can be scored with very short answers, for example: *Je suis à la campagne. Il y a des orages. Le soir je vais à la discothèque.*

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates are given a longer piece of text to read (in this instance, an e-mail from Lucie discussing her friendship with Sara). Understanding of the text is tested by questions in French requiring answers in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. Lengthy answers are not needed and answers do not need to be in the form of complete sentences – candidates should be reminded that they will not need to exceed the answer space allocated to each question when writing their answer. Often a 1 or 2 word answer was sufficient, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the test was usually tolerated. The quality of written French was considered only for the purposes of communication.

The questions were well answered, on the whole, with many candidates achieving good scores. Confusion over the three names, Lucie, Sara and Céline, lead to occasional ambiguity. **Questions 17** and **18** were generally answered very successfully. For **Question 19**, which asked candidates to say when Lucie began to worry, the concept looked for was *il y a un mois* – a number of candidates omitted the *il y a* and could not be rewarded. Both parts of **Question 20** were generally well answered: in some cases, candidates omitted *à la sortie du collège* and the answer *elle ne m'attendait pas* was not enough on its own to score the mark. **Questions 21** to **23** were very well answered. For **Question 24** some candidates chose *parce que Sara*

«*était toujours ma copine mais qu'elle voulait aussi sortir avec d'autres amis*», rather than the correct answer which was *c'est plus amusant d'être en groupe*. **Question 25** was generally well done.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task was well within the experience of all candidates. They were asked to write about their school, describing:

- (a) the school itself;
- (b) what they do at school during a typical day there;
- (c) what they would like to change at their school, and why.

10 marks were available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available and very few failed to attempt the question.

Candidates were generally able to write about all the tasks, though they sometimes failed to add enough information to score the maximum communication marks. In task (a), the name and location of the school were taken as part of the description and rewarded accordingly. For task (c), reasons for not changing anything about the school were also credited. There were some problems with *je voudrais changer...* but many managed to make it clear that they would like to change certain teachers, or the canteen, or the uniform, and some did not want to change anything as it was all perfect! Task (b) specified *ce que vous faites pendant une journée typique à l'école* and therefore candidates were not rewarded for a description of events that took place before they arrived at school in the morning or after they left the school in the evening.

Some candidates relied on language that was limited and repetitive, with overuse of *j'ai...* Others showed that they were able to use a range of different verbs and vary their structures. There were many excellent pieces of writing showing sound control of the language and the ability to express a range of points in French. For the award of 5 marks for accuracy, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate French, in particular being careful with verb forms, genders and spelling of common nouns and the use of adjectives. The most successful pieces were written simply and clearly, with a coherent structure. Those candidates avoided the temptation to try to express complicated ideas which were beyond the scope of their vocabulary and skill.

Most answers respected the word-count. There is no benefit from writing an over-long essay when time could be better spent checking the accuracy of the answer and/or on **Section 3** of the paper.

Section 3

In this section candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer. Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are asked to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given.

Candidates are told that 2 of the sentences are *Vrai* and 4 are *Faux*. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true.

To gain a mark for the correction, candidates need to do more than merely write a negative version of the statement, for example using *ne... pas*. While it is still sometimes possible in this section to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is important to train candidates to answer briefly and clearly as, the longer the answer, the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

Question 27 was often thought to be *Vrai*, but those who saw it as false usually managed the correction, e.g. *elles voulaient faire une action utile*. Some candidates mistakenly thought the correction was *pour sortir de la routine*. **Question 28** was also sometimes seen as *Vrai*: the candidates who chose *Faux* were able to supply the appropriate correction, that *elles transportent les médicaments*. The answer that the 3 friends were actually intending to do vaccinations themselves did not score as this was not the case. **Question 29** was usually correctly identified as *Vrai*. For **Question 30**, very few mentioned the sand in their correction. Most candidates chose *la camionnette a des difficultés à avancer et parfois même s'arrête*, which scored the mark. **Question 31** was generally well done, with the idea of nights spent in the desert scoring a mark – *le ciel plein d'étoiles* was not enough without mention of the desert. **Question 32** was generally correctly identified as *Vrai*.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

For this last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. In **Section 3**, it is no longer enough for candidates merely to locate the right area of the text, it is important that they show that they can choose exactly the details needed for their answer. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' indiscriminately from the text may contain additional material or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates may need to show that they can turn direct speech into reported speech, and cope with the change from first to third person, not only with verbs, but also with pronouns and possessive adjectives.

The questions always appear in sequence, following the text order. The space allowed for the answer is a good indicator of the length of answer required – if there is only one line allowed, candidates should not be expecting to write more than will fit into this space. In this exercise candidates tended to write much more than required – it is important that they think carefully before putting pen to paper and focus their answer on the required element or elements.

Generally, candidates seemed to have understood the events of the text, which is about a young boy who dreams of becoming a violinist and who realises his dreams. For **Question 33**, the answer was that Antoine had seen a young Chinese violinist on television. (*De la*) *télévision* was also an acceptable answer. **Question 34** was generally answered very successfully. Examiners were looking for something that conveyed the concept that Antoine's parents could not afford to pay for violin lessons.

Question 35 proved more problematic. What was looked for was that *sa mère fait le ménage dans le magasin et Antoine y fait ses devoirs*: a number of candidates did not make the connection between his mother's employment and Antoine's presence in the shop. **Question 36** was generally very well done. For **Question 37**, there were 2 possibilities: *il explique à Antoine comment tenir le violon...* or *il lui donne son premier cours*. Most candidates provided both alternatives in their answer. Some invalidated an otherwise correct answer by stopping short with *...et lui donne*.

The answers to **Question 38** were less convincing. There were many long answers lifted from the text along the lines of *touché par l'enthousiasme d'Antoine, Monsieur Bernard lui propose de revenir quand il veut (pour s'entraîner à jouer du violon dans son magasin)*: these were not accepted. The simplest answer was that *il est touché par l'enthousiasme d'Antoine* or *il aimait l'enthousiasme d'Antoine*. **Question 39** was generally well answered along the lines that Monsieur Bernard entered his candidate for an international competition. Some gave as their answer that *Il n'avait jamais eu un élève aussi brillant et passionné* which was not judged to answer the question

For **Question 40** the answer looked for was that *Antoine jouait avec plus de passion que les autres candidats* – many candidates understood that he played with passion, but some did not realise that the comparison with the other competitors was an essential part of the answer and it was not enough simply to say *qu'il travaille très dur*. The last question of the exercise, **Question 41**, was generally well answered. There was occasionally confusion over *joie* and *jolie* but many candidates understood the two ideas required in the answer – *il pleurait de joie* and *il serrait Antoine dans ses bras*. Some candidates rendered their answer ambiguous by the incorrect use of a reflexive pronoun in the second part of the answer, or by not making it clear that Antoine was the one being hugged.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/22
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- read all instructions, questions and texts very carefully;
- be familiar with question words (*qui, pourquoi, quand, où, comment* etc.);
- keep to the required length for writing tasks;
- answer comprehension questions with brief but focused answers;
- allocate time to check their work;
- ensure that all questions have been answered;
- make any alterations to answers clear, leaving the Examiner in no doubt as to what is the final answer.

General comments

Candidates seemed well prepared for the paper. They knew how to approach the various exercises and appeared to have no problems completing them in the time allowed: very few candidates left questions unanswered.

Where questions require written answers in French, once they have read the text carefully, candidates need to look closely at what each question is asking them, and also at how much space has been allowed for their answer. Usually a single line will be provided for their answer, indicating that the expected response will be brief – it is unlikely that they will need to copy out several lines of text to answer a single question. Where candidates change their mind over an answer to a question, and cross out an original answer to write something else, it must be clear which of the two is intended as the final answer – it is difficult for a mark to be awarded where this is unclear.

There is no advantage to writing at great length for the writing task in **Section 1** – candidates should take note that 3 simple statements can score full marks here. For the writing task in **Section 2**, candidates usually have no difficulty scoring the maximum communication marks within the word limit of 80 to 90 words given in the rubric.

Once candidates have finished the examination, it is good practice for them to read through their work once again. This is the moment to fill in any blanks, check that all the questions have been answered, and make any corrections, particularly to answers to the writing exercises, for example:

- subject and verb agreements;
- possessive adjectives, particularly in **Section 3**, and adjective agreements in general;
- spelling of words copied from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

In general, these discrete items were answered with ease. For **Question 1**, some candidates offered B (the picture of a chemist's window) rather than A (the bakery window). For **Question 4**, *vents* did not appear to be a well known item of vocabulary, and candidates often chose A (the picture of 2 cars bumping into each other) or C (the toll barrier) rather than D.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise was generally well done. Candidates sometimes reversed their answers to **Questions 6** and **10** giving C (*au bureau des objets trouvés*) as the place to catch a coach and B (*à la gare routière*) as the place to enquire about a lost umbrella.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a short piece of text (in this case an email from Sami about his school) and choose the correct answer, each time from 3 options. Candidates scored very well in this exercise, with most gaining at least 4 marks. For **Question 14**, they sometimes chose either A (*très cher*) or C (*mauvais*).

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked to write a short email to a French friend and provide 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures given:

- (a) where they are on holiday (picture of a beach);
- (b) what the weather is like (sunny, or hot);
- (c) what they do in the afternoon (play or watch football).

Many candidates scored well here. Some gave the name of a place for (a) and made no actual mention of a beach, so did not score the communication mark for this element, and some suggested that the weather was cold for (b). Mis-spellings are accepted for communication, provided that the intended word is clear, and that the spelling given does not have another meaning – for example for (c), some candidates wrote *jour* instead of *joue/jouer* and this could not be credited because of ambiguity. For the communication marks, attempts at any tense were accepted.

In order to score the 2 marks available for language, candidates had to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Present tense was accepted for all three parts, together with the past for (b) or the future for (c). The prompts given were all in the present tense, so candidates who wrote in the past throughout did not always score the maximum mark for language. Those parts of an answer not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Some candidates chose to embellish their answers with additional details, sometimes extending their answers outside the answer space. There is no need to do this. No additional marks are available and time spent writing more than is necessary for this exercise could be better spent on other questions. Full marks can be scored with very short answers, for example: *Je suis à la plage. Il fait beau. L'après-midi je joue au foot.*

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates are asked to read a longer piece of text (in this instance, an email from Pierre describing his sister's wedding). Understanding of the text is tested by questions in French requiring answers in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. Lengthy answers are not needed and answers do not need to be in the form of complete sentences – candidates should be reminded that they will not need to exceed the answer space allocated to each question when writing their answer. Often a 1 or 2 word answer was sufficient, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was usually tolerated. The quality of written French was considered only for the purposes of communication.

The questions were well answered, on the whole, with many candidates achieving good scores. For **Question 17**, most candidates managed the answer *beaucoup de travail. Quand...* at the beginning of **Question 18** confused some candidates who answered with *un grand événement* rather than *vers la fin des grandes vacances*. For **Question 19**, some opted for an answer of *un mariage traditionnel*, rather than providing the necessary detail that Christine wore *une robe blanche*. Some, for **Question 20**, looked beyond the correct answer of *pour le mariage civil* and offered either that they went to church for the religious ceremony, or that the couple had two weddings. **Questions 21 to 25** were generally answered very

successfully. For the last question, some candidates gave *comment ça se passe*, but made no reference to weddings, and therefore the answer did not score.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task was well within the experience of all candidates. They were asked to write about how they keep fit (*ce que vous faites pour rester en forme*), mentioning:

- (a) the activities they take part in to keep fit;
- (b) what they eat and/or do not eat;
- (c) what new sport they would like to try, and why.

10 marks were available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available and very few failed to attempt the question.

This proved to be a topic of great interest to many candidates, although some misinterpreted *rester* and listed the sort of things they did in order to rest and relax, but these candidates were nevertheless able to score communication marks for the sort of food they ate and for later discussion of sporting activities. Candidates enjoyed a varied range of activities, from the types of sport available at school, to *VTT*, long walks and horse-riding, and were clear about the importance of activity for a healthy life style. Many gave further details about where and when they were able to practise these sports and with whom, and communication marks were also given for these extra relevant details. For the second task, many had a good range of vocabulary at their fingertips which allowed them to talk at some length about what elements are necessary for a good diet, and what sort of food should be avoided and why. The third task was perhaps less familiar – candidates needed to think of a sport not previously mentioned and say why they would like to try it. Additional credit could not be given where a candidate who had talked about football as one of his/her preferred activities for keeping fit for task (a) then chose football as a ‘new’ sport they would like to try, but some candidates had perhaps missed the *nouveau* given in the rubric.

Most candidates managed to write something on each of the tasks and the vocabulary needed for talking about sporting activities and food had clearly been well practised. Some candidates limited their use of verbs to *jouer*, and *manger*, and gave lists of their activities and the food they ate. Others used a range of different verbs and varied their structures. There were many excellent pieces of writing showing sound control of the language and the ability to express a range of points in French. For the award of 5 marks for accuracy, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate French, in particular being careful with verb forms, genders and spelling of common nouns and the use of adjectives. The most successful pieces were written simply and clearly, with a coherent structure. Those candidates avoided the temptation to try to express complicated ideas which were beyond the scope of their vocabulary and skill.

Most answers respected the word-count. There is no benefit from writing an over-long essay when time could be better spent checking the accuracy of the answer and/or on **Section 3** of the paper.

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer. Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are asked to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given.

Candidates are told that 2 of the sentences are *Vrai* and 4 are *Faux*. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true.

To gain a mark for the correction, candidates need to do more than merely write a negative version of the statement, for example using *ne... pas*. While it is still sometimes possible in this section to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material

copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is important to train candidates to answer briefly and clearly as, the longer the answer, the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

The majority of candidates were able to identify which statements were true and which were false, but manipulating the language of the text to correct the false statements sometimes proved more challenging. **Question 27** was correctly identified as *Faux* and there were 2 possible corrections of the statement: firstly that *Jean-François devient pilote* and secondly, the more popular answer, that *son père est mécanicien*. *Il pilote* and/or *son père mécanicien* were considered too ambiguous to score a mark in this section of the paper. **Question 28** was correctly identified as *Faux* and candidates were very successful with their correction, with most spotting that the reason Jean-François liked flying helicopters was *il adore monter à la verticale / directement*. It was not enough just to say *il adore la sensation*.

Question 29 was *Vrai* and **Question 30** was generally correctly chosen as *Faux*. For this question, however, many candidates were attracted by the use of *difficile* in the text and gave answers referring to the access or the terrain, rather than *piloter un hélicoptère demande plus de concentration que piloter un avion*. **Question 31** was generally correctly identified as *Vrai* and **Question 32** as *Faux*. For this last question, the correction looked for was either that a helicopter pilot needs to be able to offer a variety of skills (*il faut de la variété / il faut savoir faire plusieurs choses*) or that he needs to be able to do both rescue **and** transport (*il faut faire du transport et du secours / il faut aussi faire du transport*).

Exercise 2 Questions 33-42

For this last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. In **Section 3**, it is no longer enough for candidates merely to locate the right area of the text, it is important that they show that they can choose exactly the details needed for their answer. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' indiscriminately from the text may contain additional material or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates may need to show that they can turn direct speech into reported speech, and cope with the change from first to third person, not only with verbs, but also with pronouns and possessive adjectives.

The questions always appear in sequence, following the text order. The space allowed for the answer is a good indicator of the length of answer required – if there is only one line allowed, candidates should not be expecting to write more than will fit into this space. In this exercise candidates tended to write much more than required – it is important that they think carefully before putting pen to paper and focus their answer on the required element or elements.

Generally, candidates seemed to have understood the events of the text, which is about a student who is inspired by one of her teachers to become a successful writer. A number of candidates seem to have misread **Question 33**, and gave as their answer Elisa's views about school, (*pas de bons souvenirs*) rather than how others viewed her (*Quelle opinion avait-on d'Elisa...?*). For **Question 34**, the answer needed was quite straightforward: (*parce qu'*) *elle s'ennuyait en classe*. Many candidates seemed to have understood this point, but some invalidated their answer by including *et c'est vrai qu'...* at the beginning, or *...et qu'alors, souvent...* at the end. The addition of this extra material rendered answers imprecise. Candidates understood **Question 35**, which asked what Elisa's parents thought she ought to do, but they were not always able to express the idea of 'ought' or 'should' and gave the impression that Elisa had already left school (*elle a quitté l'école à 16 ans pour travailler comme vendeuse*), or talked about her parents' situation.

Question 36 was generally well answered: that Elisa liked to read was sufficient on its own as an answer. For **Question 37**, it was clear that candidates were easily able to locate the correct part of the text for their answer, but some did not understand the difference between the idea that Elisa had nothing to say, or that the teacher thought or was sure that she had nothing to say, which was the answer looked for.

Many candidates answered **Question 38** successfully: Mademoiselle Hémart both loved her subject and was also interested in her students – either of the ideas was enough to score. Some invalidated an otherwise correct answer by the addition of *qui* from the text. Answers to **Question 39** were also frequently successful, provided that it was clear who was asking the questions and who was being praised.

Questions 40 and **41** were straightforward and candidates generally answered them well, giving for **Question 40** «*vous devez continuer vos études*» or *Elisa / elle doit continuer ses études* and for **Question 41** *c'est très bien écrit* or *elle a du / un vrai talent*.

The last question, **Question 42**, was more demanding, but quite well answered on the whole. Candidates had to understand that Elisa wrote a dedication in her last book, saying that it was thanks to Mademoiselle Hémart that she had become a writer – the last sentence of the text was a complete answer, but some candidates included parts of the previous sentence unsuccessfully. Some struggled to express the ideas in their own words, and unfortunately added some ambiguity with misused reflexive pronouns, or else their answer was incomplete.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/23

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- read all instructions, questions and texts very carefully;
- be familiar with question words (*qui, pourquoi, quand, où, comment* etc.);
- keep to the required length for writing tasks;
- answer comprehension questions with brief but focused answers;
- allocate time to check their work;
- ensure that all questions have been answered;
- make any alterations to answers clear, leaving the Examiner in no doubt as to what is the final answer.

General comments

Candidates seemed well prepared for the paper. They knew how to approach the various exercises and appeared to have no problems completing them in the time allowed: very few candidates left questions unanswered.

Where questions require written answers in French, once they have read the text carefully, candidates need to look closely at what each question is asking them, and also at how much space has been allowed for their answer. Usually a single line will be provided for their answer, indicating that the expected response will be brief – it is unlikely that they will need to copy out several lines of text to answer a single question. Where candidates change their mind over an answer to a question, and cross out an original answer to write something else, it must be clear which of the two is intended as the final answer – it is difficult for a mark to be awarded where this is unclear.

There is no advantage to writing at great length for the writing task in **Section 1** – candidates should take note that 3 simple statements can score full marks here. For the writing task in **Section 2**, candidates usually have no difficulty scoring the maximum communication points within the word limit of 80 to 90 words given in the rubric.

Once candidates have finished the examination, it is good practice for them to read through their work once again. This is the moment to fill in any blanks, check that all the questions have been answered, and make any corrections, particularly to answers to the writing exercises, for example:

- subject and verb agreements;
- possessive adjectives, particularly in **Section 3**, and adjective agreements in general;
- spelling of words copied from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5.

In general these discrete items were answered with ease. In **Question 5**, *péage* was not always well known.



Exercise 2 Questions 6-16

This exercise was handled very well by the majority of candidates.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a short piece of text (in this case, an email from Alain about a visit to Paris) and choose the correct answer, each time from 3 options. Candidates scored very well in this exercise, with many gaining at least 4 marks. For **Question 11**, they sometimes chose B (*en Normandie*) whereas the correct answer was C (*chez son frère*). **Question 14** was almost universally correctly answered.

Candidates should be aware that in an exercise of this sort the questions follow the order of the information in the text. Both the text and the questions need to be read with care. The questions often contain synonyms or a paraphrase of language in the text, e.g. in **Question 13**, *découvrir Paris* in the question links to *voir tous les monuments* in the text.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked here to write a short email to a French friend and provide 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures given:

- (a) where they are on holiday (in the mountains)
- (b) what the weather is like (snow)
- (c) what they do in the afternoon (skiing)

Many candidates scored well here. The key vocabulary (*montagne, neige, faire du ski*) was widely known. For (a) a sentence such as *je suis dans les montagnes* was the expected rendering but alternatives such as *je passe les vacances dans les Alpes* would have been equally acceptable. Mis-spellings of *montagne* were tolerated – mis-spellings are accepted for communication, provided that the intended word is clear, and that the spelling given does not have another meaning. For (b) *il neige, il fait froid, il gèle* were all valid responses. For (c) *je fais du ski / nous faisons du ski* was what was required. For the communication marks, attempts at any tense were accepted.

In order to score the 2 marks available for language, candidates had to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Present tense was accepted for all three parts, together with the past for (b) or the future for (c). The prompts given here were all in the present tense, so candidates who wrote in the past throughout did not always score the maximum mark for language. Those parts of an answer not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Some candidates chose to embellish their answers with additional details, sometimes extending their answers outside the answer space. There is no need to do this. No additional marks are available and time spent writing more than is necessary for this exercise could be better spent on other questions.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24

For this exercise, candidates are asked to read a longer piece of text (in this instance, an email from Philippe describing the events of the previous weekend). Understanding of the text is tested by questions in French requiring answers in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. Lengthy answers are not needed and answers do not need to be in the form of complete sentences – candidates should be reminded that they will not need to exceed the answer space allocated to each question when writing their answer. Often a 1 or 2 word answer was sufficient, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the test was usually tolerated. The quality of written French was considered only for the purposes of communication.

For the majority of candidates this exercise was accessible and scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 were common. For **Question 21** some candidates did not read the question carefully and took *où était-il?* and *qu'est-ce qu'il a fait?* to refer to the two bank robbers rather than the singular Philippe. Clearly each question needs to be read with care to avoid such misunderstandings. **Questions 18, 19** and **20** were almost always correctly answered, and there was a high rate of success on the other questions.

Exercise 2 Question 25

This writing task was well within the experience of all candidates. They were asked to write about their house, describing:

- (a) the house itself.
- (b) the things they do to help in the house.
- (c) what they would like to change about their house and why.

10 marks were available to reward the communication of relevant information and 5 marks were available for language.

High scores for communication were common. Candidates need to ensure that all the required elements of each task are covered. Some answers did not take note of *pour aider* in (b) and offered information such as *je regarde la télévision* or *je nage dans la piscine*, statements which could not be rewarded as they did not fulfil any of the tasks. It appears that the majority of candidates do a multiplicity of household tasks. The few that communicated that they did nothing to help at home and gave reasons gained appropriate communication marks too.

There were many excellent pieces of writing, showing sound control of the language and the ability to express a range of points in French. For the award of 5 marks for accuracy, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate French, in particular being careful with verb forms, genders and spelling of common nouns and the use of adjectives. The most successful pieces were written simply and clearly, with a coherent structure. Those candidates avoided the temptation to try to express complicated ideas which were beyond the scope of their vocabulary and skill.

Most answers respected the word-count. There is no benefit from writing an over-long essay when time could be better spent checking the accuracy of the answer and/or on **Section 3** of the paper.

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer. Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion.

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are asked to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given.

Candidates are told that 2 of the sentences are *Vrai* and 4 are *Faux*. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true.

To gain the mark for the correction, candidates need to do more than merely write a negative version of the statement, for example using *ne... pas*. While it is still sometimes possible in this section to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is important to train candidates to answer briefly and clearly as, the longer the answer, the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

Many candidates showed sound comprehension of this text, with most scoring 5 or 6 marks for the identification of the statements as *Vrai* or *Faux*. In order to correct the false statements it is legitimate for candidates to 'lift' material from the text, provided that this is not done indiscriminately. For example, for **Question 27** an answer such as *Anaïs a des doutes* was rewarded whereas *Anaïs, qui a alors dix-sept ans, a des doutes* was not. For **Question 28** a simple correction such as *Anaïs aimait les maths* was a sufficient answer. An indiscriminate 'lift' such as *alors que mes amis étudiaient les maths et la physique, les deux matières que j'aimais le plus au lycée, moi, je passe ma vie à nager* did not show clear understanding and was not rewarded. For **Question 29**, *c'était uniquement mental* was sufficient to score the mark for the

justification and for **Question 31**, answers along the lines of *elle se félicite d'avoir préféré les études* were rewarded.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-40

For this last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. In **Section 3**, it is no longer enough for candidates merely to locate the right area of the text, it is important that they show that they can choose exactly the details needed for their answer. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' indiscriminately from the text may contain additional material or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates may need to show that they can turn direct speech into reported speech, and cope with the change from first to third person, not only with verbs, but also with pronouns and possessive adjectives.

The space allowed for the answer is a good indicator of the length of answer required – if there is only one line allowed, candidates should not be expecting to write more than will fit into this space. In this exercise candidates tended to write much more than required – it is important that they think carefully before putting pen to paper and focus their answer on the required element or elements.

As is normal with exercises of this type candidates can expect the questions to follow the order of the text. The subject of the text (a school outing to a farm) seemed to be well understood and most candidates could locate the appropriate piece of text to answer the question. Candidates should beware of being unselective in their choice of language from the text and ensure that their answers clearly convey what they intend. For **Question 32**, the selective 'lifting' of *c'est la première fois qu'ils quittent leurs parents* was perfectly acceptable as an answer. To preface this with *pour la plupart des élèves c'est une aventure* invalidated the answer. For **Question 36**, *ils doivent se lever très tôt* was sufficient to score the mark. Some candidates invalidated their answer by retaining the *donc* from the text.

Candidates should not automatically try to use similar constructions in their answer to those read in the text. Often a simple answer, formulated in the candidate's own words, will prove more straightforward than an attempt to select or manipulate language from the text when trying to convey key information. For example in **Question 40**, candidates often tried to rephrase *ça me plairait bien d'être agriculteur plus tard* and produced ambiguous answers such as *ça se plairait d'être agriculteur. Il voudrait être agriculteur* was an easier way of conveying the information and scored the mark. Similarly for **Question 39**, *ils étaient très fatigués* was a complete and satisfactory answer.

Questions 33, 34, 35 and **37** were generally well answered by careful readers. In **Question 38**, some did not score because they mentioned 'apples' but omitted the key information (*gâteau*) required to answer the question.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03
Speaking

Key messages

- In the Role plays, Examiners should, wherever possible, keep to the “script” provided in order to ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to attempt all tasks. Advice to candidates should encourage them to be as concise as possible in their utterances and to stick closely to the cues on their cards.
- Examiners in Centres can help their candidates by observing the time limit of 5 minutes for **each** of the conversation sections, and by remembering to ask **each** candidate questions to elicit past **and** future tenses in **each** of the two conversation sections.
- Good performances in the conversation sections were typically those where candidates were given the opportunity to respond naturally not just to straightforward questions, but also to unexpected ones, and where they were encouraged to expand upon their answers, giving and explaining their opinions.
- In the General conversation, a series of linked questions which explore a maximum 2 or 3 topic areas will allow candidates to be extended as far as possible, thus offering them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands
- The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where there had not been over preparation of work and where the spontaneity of the examining could be heard.

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed a Core Curriculum or an Extended Curriculum course.

The general standard of work heard by Moderators was good. Many Examiners had clearly familiarised themselves with the requirements of the Speaking test and with the mark scheme. Centres are reminded that **Teacher/examiners** may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers’ Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order to prepare the Role plays. In some Centres, Examiners seemed unfamiliar with their roles suggesting that insufficient preparation had taken place. Centres/Examiners are reminded that **the Role play situations are confidential and must not be shared with candidates** in advance of the examination. The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after any preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, they must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area.

Most Examiners conducted the tests sympathetically. They understood how best to give their candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do. In the Role plays, candidates usually seemed to have made good use of the 15 minutes they are allowed to prepare the card assigned to them. Moderators reported that the most successful Role plays were those where Examiners moved the transactions along at a fairly brisk pace by keeping to the script provided. Centres are reminded that the Role plays must not be changed, e.g. existing tasks must not be replaced with different tasks and extra tasks must not be added.

In the conversation sections, it is essential that Examiners understand the requirements of the mark scheme in order that they ask the right sort of questions which will stretch candidates and give them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, if Examiners include unexpected questions and go beyond the straightforward then candidates will have the possibility of scoring in the Good band or above on scale (a), Comprehension/responsiveness. Likewise, to score a mark beyond 6 on scale (b), Linguistic content, candidates need to be able to answer questions which require them to use past and future tenses accurately. This means it is essential to include several questions in past and future tenses in both conversation sections. The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out on pages 8-13 of the Teachers’ Notes booklet and all Centres are strongly advised to read through these well in advance of the test so that

they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties. A French language version of these requirements also exists and is available on the Cambridge website.

- **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate. It was disappointing to note that this year all Moderators reported finding more clerical errors than last year. In some Centres, several clerical errors were found and corrected. It remains the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the correct total mark for the Speaking test is submitted to Cambridge for each candidate. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked. On the MS1 mark sheet, the Centre must enter the total mark for each candidate in figures as well as shading the lozenges, (many Centres forgot to shade the lozenge or did not fill in the total mark in figures). Please note, half marks are never used in this examination.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Centres usually remembered to submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample, duly completed. Several Centres did not submit this cover sheet. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct before they despatch it to Cambridge. Centres should ensure that it is always completed and despatched with the sample.

- **Sample size and recording quality**

Centres usually complied well with the new sampling procedures. The increased sample size for larger Centres was particularly useful in the case of Centres with a wide range of marks. One or two Centres sent in very large samples: Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size very carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed. Centres with more than 16 candidates should not submit the recordings of all candidates for external moderation by Cambridge.

A high proportion of the recordings received by Cambridge were of a high quality and Centres are thanked for this. The use of digital recording has resulted in a great improvement in sound quality. Some Centres still use cassettes and this is also acceptable. Whatever the method chosen for recording, if an external microphone is used, this should be positioned to favour the candidate. This is especially important in rooms with tiled floors which may echo.

- **Labelling and packaging of sample**

It is essential that all CDs/cassettes are clearly labelled. If the recorded sample is submitted on cassette, each cassette must be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings in order of play. If the recorded sample is submitted on CD, a list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. On the CD, the recording for each candidate must be saved individually, as an .mp3 file, and named as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. Each CD/cassette must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette/CD number, Centre number, Centre name, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. (This introduction need only be made once, and should be saved as a separate file (named "recorded introduction") if Centres are submitting recordings on CD.) Whether Centres are submitting recordings on cassette or CD, it is the Examiner who must introduce each recording by announcing the candidate number, candidate name and role play card number. **This announcement must not be made by the candidate.**

CDs are more fragile than cassettes and must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a bar-code) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge. Centres are requested to submit moderation samples and paperwork to Cambridge as soon as Speaking tests have been conducted and not retain these in the Centre until the end of the examination period.

- **Internal moderation in Centres**

Centres which had been given permission to use more than one Examiner had usually adopted a thorough approach to internal moderation and had carefully documented their procedures for achieving consistency between Examiners.

Where more than one Examiner is used in a Centre, it is crucial that Moderators are able to check that all Examiners have adopted a uniform approach to the test and applied the mark scheme consistently. All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre **before** a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation. These guidelines explain the need for the marking of all Examiners in the Centre to be checked for consistency before a representative sample of recordings is chosen. **Centres new to internal moderation are reminded that if after checking the sample for a particular Examiner the decision is taken to adjust that Examiner's marks, that adjustment must then be applied to the marks of all the candidates who were examined by that Examiner, and not just to those candidates who happened to be in the sample checked.** Where such adjustments are necessary it is particularly important that all clerical work is checked carefully by the Centre.

- **Duration of tests / missing elements**

Most Centres adhered to the stipulated timings, but a few Centres persist in going under or over the five minutes prescribed for the Topic conversation **and/or** the General conversation test. Each of these sections must last for approximately five minutes. Where conversations are short, this is likely to disadvantage candidates as they will not have enough time to “warm up” and/or to show what they can do. Centres are reminded that marks must not be awarded to sections of the test that have not been conducted. In some cases, although the nature of the questions suggested that the Topic conversation was still underway, the eventual length of this section, and the subsequent absence of a General conversation, suggested that in the Examiner's mind the General conversation had in fact taken place. For this reason, and many others, it is essential that Examiners announce the point at which the Topic conversation has come to an end and the General conversation is about to start.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

As last year, some Examiners did not realise that a short response in the role plays, if appropriate, can earn a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task then Examiners are free to split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be awarded is 1. If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and not 3 is appropriate.

In the Conversation sections, marking tended to be generous in some Centres, as marks were awarded in the higher bands when there was no evidence that candidates could respond in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions or that they could communicate accurately in past and future tenses. Where this was the case, marks required adjustment to bring them into line with the agreed standard.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Centres should encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task, as presented on the Role play cards: if only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. In 2012, two-part tasks will be split into (i) and (ii) on the Role play cards. Overlong answers are not to be encouraged as marks are only awarded for the stipulated tasks and any extra information given by the candidate may affect the clarity of the message. Candidates should be reminded to listen carefully to the Examiner, especially where they are required to choose from options provided by the Examiner (A Role plays) and before they “respond to the question appropriately” type of cue (B Role plays). **Examiners are reminded not to change the cues as by doing so, they are likely to increase the difficulty of the Role play for their candidates.**

A Role plays

As in 2010, the A Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All cards featured one task which required a question to be asked and one task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner. Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded

that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded.

Buying tickets for a circus

Candidates generally performed well on this role play. Candidates remembered to greet as appropriate and provided they listened carefully to the two options provided on Task 3 were able to choose and repeat their preferred time. Pronunciation proved difficult for some on *cirque*. All did well on giving the number of tickets/places required. On the last task, most remembered to thank as required but were not always able to formulate a correct question.

Renting a bike

Again, candidates approached this well. Some weaker candidates struggled to pronounce *louer*. Most were able to say how many bikes they needed and provided that the Examiner gave the correct prompt could say whether it was for adults or children. Thanks were usually offered on the last task and candidates were nearly all able to produce a good question.

Inviting a friend out

Task 1 was well done. On Task 2, any activity was accepted and most communicated the message quite well. Of those candidates who chose to use an infinitive in their answer, not all were able to do so accurately. Candidates had no problems (if cued correctly) in choosing a day to go out and were nearly all able to produce a time for meeting. Thanks were usually given on the last task. The formulation of an appropriate and accurate question was difficult for weaker candidates.

B Role plays

The B Role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, give an opinion, or express pleasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the Role plays. They differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score marks on most tasks thanks, often, to skilful examining. It was crucial for Examiners to know their own role and to stick to the set tasks. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. Candidates should be advised to consider the context of the Role play in their preparation time and to consider likely questions that might be asked in that situation. They should also be reminded to listen carefully in the examination room.

Contacting a friend after an accident

Task 1 was quite well done: some of those candidates who could convey the message successfully found it difficult to form the perfect tense with the correct auxiliary and *tomber*. On Task 2, candidates who used *j'ai mal à* were more successful than those who attempted to use *se faire mal* in the perfect tense. On Task 3, many encountered problems and found it difficult to make the request for Dominique to come and fetch them. Only the best candidates were able to formulate the request correctly. On Task 4, some candidates forgot they were *en ville* and said they were at home. (Candidates should be reminded to read the "setting" carefully.) On the last task, some attempt at expressing pleasure was required. This did not need to be a long utterance and *Super!*, *Cool!* or *C'est bien!* plus a description of what the candidate would do during the wait were sufficient for 3 marks to be awarded.

Reporting a lost wallet

On the first task, a number of candidates could not pronounce *portefeuille* and found it difficult to produce the past participle *perdu*. On the second task, the "where" and "when" were usually correctly provided by candidates. Task 3 was very well done. In Task 4, although some candidates did not understand the Examiner's cue at first, they managed to say they liked the region and were usually able to supply a good reason, such as that the locals were pleasant or by giving the activity or place they liked. In Task 5, although a lot of candidates were able to communicate that they wanted to know the opening times, the language used was often inaccurate. If *ouverture* was used, it was often mispronounced.

Changing the dates of a stay in France

The first task of greeting and reformulation of the rubric was usually well done. In Task 2, not all candidates produced two reasons for needing to change the date and in those instances where a second reason was

omitted by the candidate, Examiners did not always prompt him/her to provide it. On Task 3, any reference to a time in the future was acceptable. On Task 4, most made a reasonable attempt to give an opinion and say what they would like to do. Finally, on Task 5, some candidates merely reread the rubric which gave entirely the wrong message. Again, although most could gain some of the marks available for this task, only the better candidates were able to ask an appropriate question with confidence.

Topic presentation & conversation

Moderators commented on the wide range of performance heard in this section. The whole section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last about five minutes. Although timings were often good, in some Centres, candidates were allowed to carry on presenting their topic for up to three minutes. This is not good practice as it restricts not only the time available for the follow-up conversation, but also the material available for discussion. Candidates must not be allowed to carry on presenting their topic for more than one to two minutes.

While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, **this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers** in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Rather, questions should arise spontaneously as the conversation develops. During the follow-up conversation, it is part of the Examiner's role to ensure that the candidate does not continue "presenting" their material in response to over practised questions. Examiners were usually aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses. In a few Centres there was no discussion of the presentation, which restricted the marks candidates could score in this section.

A good range of topics was heard this year, e.g. *mon pays, mes vacances, mon week-end, mes projets d'avenir, mon école, le sport, mes loisirs*. Certain topic choices, e.g. *ma famille/mon ami(e)* did not seem to give Examiners sufficient scope to ask questions in different tenses: this is worth bearing in mind when candidates choose their topic. There were very few instances of candidates choosing to talk about themselves (*moi-même*). New Centres are reminded that if they allow candidates to choose this as their topic, it can leave little material to explore in the General conversation section.

Candidates had usually prepared their topics well and presented them at a good pace, though not too fast. There were some very good performances in which candidates discussed their topic with the Examiner in a natural and spontaneous way, using language similar in quality to that heard in the presentation. In such cases, candidates showed that they could communicate accurately making use of a good range of tenses, structures and lexis. Candidates who went beyond the factual and straightforward, who developed their responses and explained their opinions scored high marks.

Examiners are reminded that they should announce very clearly when this section of the test has finished and indicate that they are moving on to the final section of the test.

General conversation

Most Centres had clearly understood the need to cover two or three topics from the syllabus in the General conversation section. Questions on these topics should then follow a logical order (e.g. the Examiner should listen to what the candidate says and adapt their next question to follow on from that) in order that a genuine conversation can develop in which the candidate has the opportunity to provide explanations and use different tenses. In some Centres, Examiners asked random questions on a large number of different (and unrelated) topic areas. This style of questioning proved very demanding for candidates who were sometimes unsure of the topic under discussion and rarely had an opportunity to develop their answers. A few Centres made use of the same questions on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: this approach must be avoided. While it is good practice to help candidates in class by using banks of questions, over reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test often produces stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and which, at worst, do not seem to develop beyond a series of mini presentations. Once in the examination room, it is far better if the Examiner listens to what the candidate is saying and responds as spontaneously as possible. **The descriptors in the Mark scheme make it very clear that there should be the opportunity for candidates to respond to both straightforward and unexpected questions in both conversation sections.**

As usual, a very wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. The best candidates were clearly used to responding to open questions which required them to express their ideas wherever possible and to develop their answers in a spontaneous way. The language used by candidates in such performances was

often very impressive, displaying very good control of tenses and use of subordination, as well as a wide range of structures and appropriate vocabulary. In many large Centres, patient examining meant that candidates across the whole range of ability were encouraged to communicate a range of messages. Sympathetic examining ensured that questions were not too hard for weaker candidates and that they were asked in a logical sequence and rephrased when necessary.

The nature of this candidature is truly international. It remains fascinating to hear candidates from all over the world relating their everyday experiences, their hopes and their aspirations, and to hear how much they all have in common with each other! The quality of the performances produced in this examination clearly demonstrates the importance accorded to the skill of communicating via the spoken word in many IGCSE classrooms.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/41
Continuous Writing

Key messages

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- Candidates should avoid excessive reliance on certain words and phrases.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

There was much to admire in the performance of many candidates. The best displayed a range of language skills, with minimal incidence of error. They showed a wide knowledge of French structures and vocabulary. Others presented answers which were relevant and communicated effectively, giving a true reflection of their capabilities.

Some candidates did not make the most of the opportunity this paper offers to show their command of the French language to its best advantage. This was often not due to a lack of knowledge, but to a flawed examination technique and, in some cases, to very poor presentation. It is to these candidates, who perhaps do not do justice to their potential, that Examiners offer the following pointers, aimed at improving examination performance:

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- Candidates should remember that the rubric is not a rough guide but that it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. They should read the rubric carefully and keep to these tasks, avoiding irrelevance. If the tasks require a certain tense, they should stick to that tense and not drift off into inappropriate tenses.
- Candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay special attention to verb forms. They should try to avoid too much repetition of certain words and structures. Good spelling gains marks, incorrect spelling does not. Adjectives should agree, as should past participles when appropriate. Accents should be clear and unambiguous. Candidates should take their time. The time allowed for this paper is normally more than sufficient. When they have finished, they should make full use of the time left to revise and check their work for errors.
- The paper is an exercise in free composition, so candidates should aim to write that which they know to be correct French and avoid what they do not know. They should try to present their best French to the Examiner (while keeping to the specified tasks).

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- Lists of adjectives should also be avoided, e.g. *ce petit hôpital bleu, blanc, vert, important et magnifique*. Again, where the general impression is impaired, the final mark for the question is likely to be affected.
- Presentation is also important. If the Examiner cannot read what the candidate has written, no marks can be awarded. Handwriting must be legible. Crossing out should be done neatly and amended versions must be clear.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Un sac oublié

This was the more popular option and some very good responses were received. High marks were gained by the stronger candidates, and those of more modest ability were often able to score quite well. Three different time frames were involved, but most coped with communicating the information intelligibly.

The letter format seemed to be familiar to most. A letter addressed to the owner of a holiday home would normally be couched in formal language and require the use of *vous* and not *tu*. Examiners took a tolerant view that the writer might have been well known to the owner and allowed *tutoiement*, provided the candidate was consistent in its use. Inappropriate expressions, such as *bises* or *je t'embrasse* at the end, were not rewarded when the letter was a formal one. A number of candidates began with *Monsieur* and then addressed the recipient as *tu*. Others kept to *tu* with verbs but used *votre* as a possessive adjective.

The first two tasks referred to an earlier visit to the house. The stimulus *dites que vous avez aimé la maison* invited a past tense response, but in the context a present was deemed acceptable. There were a wide range of reasons. Some expressed admiration for the building. It was *belle*, *magnifique* or *pittoresque*. There were many rooms and plenty of space. Others liked it because of its situation. It was by the sea or near the mountains. Others enjoyed the facilities such as a large garden, a games room or a pool. Some wrote as if the house was a hotel and praised the service or the quality of the meals. This interpretation was allowed. Again, either the present or a past tense (this time the imperfect tense) was accepted according to the context.

Next, candidates were required to state that they had left a bag at the property and ask if the owner had found it. *Avez-vous trouvé mon sac?* was within the scope of the majority. Some avoided the interrogative and gave an equally good response such as *si vous trouvez le sac, téléphonez-moi*. Better candidates were able to use the object pronoun *le* as in: *j'ai laissé mon sac. Est-ce que vous l'avez trouvé?* Describing the contents of the bag was usually well handled. Either the present *il y a* or the imperfect *il y avait* was employed, followed by a list of items. This included all kinds of things, from passports and identity cards to money, keys, mobile phones and train tickets. Some said it contained clothes and shoes. An explanation of why the contents were important was relevant and a natural way to extend the letter to the required 140 words. The need of the passport was indeed urgent for some, who were on the way back to their home country. Most then gave details of how they might be contacted, usually by phone or letter.

The reasons for booking for next year were many and varied. They would bring friends or relatives because it was such an excellent base for a holiday. The weather was sunny. It was near attractions, such as Paris. There were lots of things to do. Most managed the conditional in *je voudrais louer* but attempts to say *nous nous sommes bien amusés* were not often successful.

There was some misspelling of everyday words such as *beaucoup*, and words given in the rubric such as *trouver*, *propriétaire* and *louer*.

Question 1(b) Les moyens de transport

The best answers seemed to be based on personal experiences of travel, which frequently enhanced the quality of ideas and language.

Many made opening comments about transport in general. They referred to the necessity for transport in the modern world and the choices which were available. After a brief introduction, the better candidates got straight on with the tasks set.

The first communication mark could be gained by saying how the candidate travelled the last time they went on holiday. Some seemed not to recognise the past tense of the verbs (*vous avez voyagé, vous êtes parti*) and wrote in the future. Although the verbs *voyager* and *partir* were given, some chose to use other verbs and made difficulties for themselves. Most were able to use an appropriate prepositional phrase, such as *en avion* or *par le train*.

The pros and cons of car travel were expressed in an interesting way by many. Some candidates commended cars for being cheap and comfortable, while others said they were expensive and uncomfortable and cited these factors as disadvantages. Travel by road seemed fast and convenient to some, slow and dangerous to others. One could travel with friends and relations; passengers could listen to music in cars or play games; one was free to stop when one chose and make visits. On the other hand, cars were less suitable for longer journeys which required air transportation. Driving long distances was tiring for all concerned. Cars broke down and traffic jams were a problem. Petrol was expensive (many did not know *essence*) and cars created pollution and noise. A number of candidates wrote well about environmental issues at this point, although many were unable to spell *environnement*. There was some miscopying of *avantages* and *inconvenients* from the question paper and such errors as *les inconvenients est...* (*sic*) could perhaps be eliminated with more careful checking. This section enabled better candidates to display a wide range of vocabulary.

The next two tasks, 'how you would like to travel in future and why?' inspired some interesting responses. Most would opt for air travel. It was fast and one could enjoy films and video games en route. It was comfortable and they thought the meals were good. Many tried to say it was safe, but few could express this in French. A number legitimately returned to the car, and found new advantages for car travel. Those with strong social consciences opted for the bicycle, as it was environmentally friendly and kept one fit. Others liked rail travel: it was convenient, relatively cheap and mainly safe. All three concepts were quite difficult to express. Some candidates, perhaps in their haste to write about the topic, did not use *je voudrais*, but instead copied the rubric: *je voudriez*.

Question 2 Votre classe a gagné une grosse somme d'argent

It was anticipated that candidates would say their class had won a prize and write about how they spent the money. This proved to be the case in the majority of answers, however some took *gagner* to mean 'to earn' and wrote, sometimes at length, about the work that went into amassing this large sum (fêtes, charity events etc.). This alternative interpretation was accepted and accrued marks for language, as did accounts of music prizes, sporting triumphs etc. As the rubric directed candidates to say how they **spent** the money and their reactions, any preamble about how the money was acquired was rewarded for language only.

Most made brief reference to the award or the fund raising, and then set about recounting how the money was spent by the class. A minority did not recognise the past tense in the stimulus (*ce que vous avez fait de cet argent*) and wrote about future intentions. This was credited for language but not for communication.

The first thing many did was to celebrate with a party, an extravagant affair in some cases. Parents and teachers were invited, and all had a good time. Again, *s'amuser* was not well handled. Then the class made some joint decisions, the sum running to a large fortune in many accounts. Some divided the money equally and the candidates spent the lot on luxuries, presents and holidays. They sometimes invented a word 'divider', which unfortunately does not exist. This tactic is rarely successful and is discouraged. Candidates should be urged to use words they know to be French.

In many cases, the feeling of the group was to put the money towards a good cause. Sometimes this was their own school. They funded new buildings, a swimming pool or a library. They paid for improvements to school toilets. They bought new computers. Some graciously gave the whole sum to outside charities. These included the poor and the sick and other schools which did not enjoy the same privileges they did. They paid for new books and classrooms. They helped poor children to have access to medicine and a proper education. They supported environmental groups. While this worthy altruism was admirable, some candidates tended to get carried away and strayed into areas outside their linguistic competence.

The narrator's reactions were rewarded in the body of the answer, as events unfolded, and at the end when candidates looked back on the events and came to conclusions. They began with feelings of surprise and elation. An imperfect of the verb *être* with an adjective was the norm. *J'étais/nous étions étonné(s)/heureux*

was typical. Later, candidates wrote of their satisfaction at perhaps having 'made a difference' to improving conditions for others.

Great enthusiasm went into the content of many responses. Candidates should be reminded to devote equal attention to the detail of the French they use. Many marks were lost through careless errors. Common words were misspelled. Agreement of adjectives and participles was treated casually. Everyday words were misused. *Regarder* was used to mean 'to see' or 'to look for'. *Connaître* was confused with *savoir*, *écouter* with *entendre*, and *joli* with *heureux*. A more studied approach when composing the piece and a considered revision at the end would pay great dividends in terms of the accuracy this paper seeks to assess.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/42
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Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) L'échange scolaire

Although less popular than **Question 1(b)**, this question inspired some interesting responses.

Some candidates (but certainly not all) seemed to draw on personal experience of a school exchange. A minority misunderstood the stimulus and wrote about changing schools.

The first two tasks required the use of a perfect tense to say where they went for the exchange and what they did. A communication mark could be gained by putting *je suis allé(e)* or *j'ai fait mon échange* with an appropriate destination. This was a school in France in many cases, but some did an exchange with a school in their own country, which was acceptable. There was a wide variety of activities. Many said they went to lessons in the twin school and studied the local language, often French. Some enthused about the leisure time activities, usually excursions or sport and games. Others wrote about family life with their new friend. Some wrote wholly in the first person singular (*je*), while others wrote mainly about group activities and used mainly *nous*. Both were acceptable, provided that past tenses were used.

Next, candidates were required to state the positive aspects of doing an exchange. Present tenses were the norm, but full credit was given to those who wrote in the past, relating the benefits they derived from their own experience. These included the chance to learn or practise a foreign language. Not all were able to use the verbs *apprendre* or *étudier*. Many said it was a good opportunity to make new friends, though only the best knew *faire la connaissance de* or *se faire des amis*. Others wrote of the experience of a different culture and the chance to travel to interesting places. The best answers included a range of benefits, although the communication mark could be gained by citing one clear positive aspect.

The majority understood task (iv) (which country you would like to visit on a future exchange) and were competent enough to say *je voudrais faire un échange* and to supply a country. Credit was also given to *j'aimerais* and *je veux* with infinitives. Some gave detailed reasons, but a simple response often secured the mark, as in *je voudrais faire un échange en Suisse parce que j'aime faire du ski* or *...en France parce que c'est un pays intéressant*.

Question 1(b) Letter to a friend about a holiday job

The best candidates were able to write an interesting letter to their French friend about a job they undertook during the holidays. This seemed to fall within the personal experience of some candidates, but those who may not have had a job in reality were still able to compose a valid piece of work.

The letter format was well known and most began with suitable *politesses*. Most addressed the friend as *tu* but some then lapsed into *vous* or *votre*. When the addressee was *vous* throughout the letter this was accepted, although it is normal French practice to use the informal *tu* in a letter to a friend or a relative. There is only limited reward for letter etiquette, so little was gained by a lengthy introduction giving the state of health of the family etc.

Most promptly addressed the set tasks and said what job they did. A past tense was required by the rubric. Communication marks were awarded for stating the job (*j'étais serveur* or *j'ai travaillé comme serveuse*) or the place where he/she worked (*j'ai travaillé dans un magasin/dans le garage de mon oncle*). Candidates then wrote details of the work. Better candidates were able to show good language skills and a commendable range of vocabulary. They helped *Monsieur* to do this or that (*aider à faire*). They prepared

food. They served the public. They helped customers to choose clothes. They gave classes to little children. Particularly popular was hospital work.

The benefits of having a part time job were varied. As with **Question 1(a)**, a present tense was appropriate for making generalities but a past tense was needed if candidates wrote about their own experience. Either was acceptable, but a number of candidates mixed up the tenses and could not score for certain verbs. Nearly all were glad to earn some pocket money and said how much it was and how they spent it. They liked being entrusted with important tasks. They met new people and made new friends. Again, *se faire des amis* and *faire la connaissance de* were elusive. Candidates also enjoyed being part of a team. Disadvantages included long hours, low pay, early rising (very unpopular!), arduous work, tiring and boring routines. Candidates were unable to go out with friends. They keenly missed social contact in general. The best candidates discussed the pros and cons sensibly, and some excellent French was in evidence. Those of more modest ability were able to score quite well for communication and for language in this section. Both *avantages* and *inconvénients* were frequently miscopied from the question paper. *Les avantages est...* was also common and *inconvéniént* was sometimes taken to be an adjective.

Future aspirations were generally well expressed. Examiners had the impression that this was a topic with which many were familiar. Candidates expressed future career intentions in a number of ways. Some put *je voudrais travailler comme infirmière*. Others said *je voudrais travailler à la banque* or *je vais être/devenir gendarme*. (Not all knew to omit the indefinite article with this idiom.) Others said *c'est mon rêve d'être dentiste*. All of these were acceptable. By far the most popular aspiration was to be a doctor – many were unable to spell *médecin*. The reason given for their choice of career was most commonly *parce que c'est bien payé*. Other motives were more worthy. Candidates liked working with people. They wanted to be useful, particularly in helping the sick and underprivileged. To score communication marks it was enough to say *je voudrais être footballeur parce que je suis très sportif*, but many gave a number of valid reasons and scored well for language too. A number forfeited communication marks for the last two tasks, as they fell outside the word count.

Some candidates thought *travail* meant travel and wrote an inappropriate answer. While some credit was given for language, no communication marks could be awarded in such cases.

Question 2 Mon frère a eu un accident

As usual the challenges of **Question 2** proved to be more exacting than those of **Question 1**. Many had trouble putting together a sequence of events in a coherent narrative. Some found the perfect tense of even common verbs difficult, and knowledge of the imperfect and pluperfect tenses was sketchy. Only the best achieved all five marks for communication and a good total of language ticks.

Many unnecessarily copied out the stimulus (*Le week-end dernier...* etc.). This was not included in the word count and was ignored by Examiners.

As expected, most wrote about an episode which took place during a walk in the country. Nearly all recognised the need for past tenses at the start, but weaker candidates tended to use a mixture of past and present tenses as the story progressed. The little brother's accident often involved a fall, from a tree, into water or a hole. Some had him bitten by a snake or a dog. Others said he fell off his bicycle or a horse, which was accepted. A number of candidates could not say *il est tombé* (*il a tombé* was allowed for communication only). Although it was not directly pertinent to an event during *une randonnée*, Examiners accepted an accident in a street involving a car or a lorry (and there were very many of these), allowing that the accident could have happened en route to the countryside. Neither *heurter* (to hit) nor *renverser* (to knock down) was well known.

What happened next usually related to the extent of the little brother's injuries. These were often major and there was much blood. Only the best could manage the constructions *il s'est fait mal* or *il s'est cassé la jambe*. There was no directive to say these things and errors could have been avoided by the use of a simpler construction such as *il avait mal à...* The boy often wept with pain, but many did not know *pleurer* and confused it with *pleuvoir*. The narrators' reactions were often expressed at this point. They were surprised or shocked. Some attempted to say they were afraid, but could not say *j'avais peur*, offering the verb *être* instead.

The narrator took the initiative at this point and sought to help, usually by using his/her mobile phone. He/she phoned mother or the hospital. Only the better candidates knew that *téléphoner* required *à* before a noun. Others said they had forgotten to bring a mobile and wandered off into the country in search of assistance. The better candidates related a series of events as a result of which the brother ended up in a

hospital bed, where he was obliged to stay for several days. There was much coming and going, involving ambulances, doctors, police and parents. Weaker candidates struggled to convey this part of the narrative. They had difficulty with verbs conjugated with *être*, particularly *aller*, *venir*, *arriver* and *partir*. Even above average scripts regularly had *prendre* instead of the correct verb *emmener* when candidates attempted to say they took the brother to hospital. The more able showed good control of complex language. They handled subordinate clauses and infinitives well. Structures such as the following characterised the best answers, and they scored highly for language: *j'ai dit au docteur ce qui s'était passé, il nous a expliqué que...* and *je lui ai dit de venir tout de suite*.

Usually, the brother made a good recovery. Many candidates were unable to say *il allait bien/mieux* and used *être* instead. Narrators often ended with their personal reactions to the drama and secured the two communication marks here, although some had already included reactions in the body of the story. They were happy (*heureux*, but not *joli*) that all was well in the end. They were sorry for the little brother. They were proud to have acted heroically. They were cross with their brother for being so silly. The said brother was either sad not to be able to play football for a while, or glad to avoid school. Some had written so much already that the marks for communication allocated to 'reactions' were forfeited as they fell outside the word count.

The quality of French varied widely. The best wrote fluently with only minor incidence of error. They had good awareness of tenses and had the ambition to use object pronouns as appropriate. Weaker candidates confused and misspelled common words such as *beaucoup* and especially (*mal*)*heureusement*. *Écouter* was mistakenly used for *entendre*, *regarder* for *voir* or *chercher*, *quitter* for *partir*, *connaître* for *savoir*, and *parler* for *dire*.

Much of the inaccurate language seen in answers to **Question 2** seemed to be the result of haste or carelessness. Higher marks would have ensued if candidates had checked their work more carefully.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Le centre commercial

Many unnecessarily copied out the stimulus: *Cher Dominique... etc.* This was not included in the word count and was ignored by Examiners.

A description of the park was a straightforward task and the majority were able to use a present tense (usually featuring the verb *être*) with an appropriate adjective to secure a communication mark. Also credited was the use of *il y a* with various features of an attractive park such as flowers, trees and playing fields. The task offered the opportunity to write in some detail about the park, its beauty and its tranquillity. Candidates should beware writing so much on one task that they exceed the word limit and sacrifice other communication marks later in the piece.

The next task required a past tense to say what they did recently at the park. Many scored for a simple statement such as *j'ai joué au foot/tennis avec mes amis*. Others attempted to say such things as that they walked the dog, thus complicating the task. Some candidates said what they do regularly (rather than what they did recently), for which a communication mark was not awarded. More careful reading of the question paper might have avoided this.

The third task, how life will change for people if the shopping centre is built near the park, was more challenging. Successful candidates kept to a fairly simple response such as *il sera plus facile/pratique de faire ses courses*. A number were more ambitious but did not have the linguistic range to express more complex ideas. Others misread the question paper and wrote in present tenses as if the shopping centre were already in place. Such statements were credited for language, but not for appropriate communication.

Nearly all could say that they were for or against the new shopping centre, although some overlooked this simple bullet point. Reasons were harder to express. Some were able to say that the park would suffer as a result of the increased traffic and noise. Some expressed strong opinions about urban pollution. Some said young people would have nowhere to play. Others welcomed the shopping centre. There would be many advantages for the town. There would be a large new shopping facility which would be good for the local economy and for shoppers. Teenagers would be glad to have new facilities such as cafés and cinemas. There was confusion of tenses here as candidates mixed the future and the conditional.

Question 1(b) Les ordinateurs

This was a popular option. Clearly I.T. holds a great interest for many and one felt candidates based their responses on genuine personal views and experiences, a factor which nearly always enhances an answer. Some very individual and interesting work was presented.

Many began with a brief statement saying that they agreed or disagreed with the premise that young people spend too much time on-line. Most, if not all, seemed to refute the notion.

In task (i), 'how long did you spend on the computer last week?', a perfect tense was required and the majority had no difficulty in responding appropriately. Two hours per day seemed to be the norm, which few considered to be excessive. Some implied that they spent too long and that it was a habit or even an addiction. A minority forfeited a communication mark by responding in the present tense, in spite of *la semaine dernière*.

For task (ii), a simple *j'aime passer mon temps en ligne* was enough to secure the communication mark. Almost none denied that they enjoyed it. Some copied *votre temps* from the rubric or put *mes temps*. Finding a reason (task (iii)) inspired an interesting range of responses. Some said they liked social websites, such as Facebook or Twitter. Many enjoyed chatting to friends, playing games, watching films or listening to music. This was within the range of most candidates. It seemed evident that all candidates who opted for this question had regular access to a computer.

In task (iv), candidates were required to present the advantages and disadvantages of computers. The positive aspects outnumbered the negative ones. Easy access to information was cited, especially as an aid to doing homework. It is important to keep in touch with friends. They can do their shopping. It is so quick and convenient. Drawbacks were less numerous. Some said the computer led them to neglect friends and family. Some said they should spend more time doing sport. Others said their eyes were affected or they had headaches as a result of spending too long on-line.

A mass of detail devoted to the first four tasks meant that the 140 word limit was sometimes exceeded, and the last task did not qualify for communication marks. In many cases, the task 'what different leisure activities could you do in the interests of variety?' was mistakenly understood to mean 'what do you do now?' and the communication mark was forfeited. Candidates are reminded that the tense of the question, in this case the conditional, is the key to an appropriate answer. That said, Examiners also rewarded the future or the present tense in a statement of an intention to undertake a more varied lifestyle. Successful responses included *je pourrais/je voudrais/je veux* with an infinitive, as in *pour varier mes loisirs je pourrais pratiquer un nouveau sport, comme le tennis* or *je pourrais passer plus de temps à la piscine*. It seemed that many were aware that they needed a more physical lifestyle to avoid getting unfit and overweight, and that their computers were at least partly to blame. However, they seemed to lack the resolution to do anything to remedy this.

Question 2 Un petit accident

As usual, the challenges of **Question 2** proved to be more exacting than those of **Question 1**. Many had trouble putting together a sequence of events in a coherent narrative. Some found the past tense of even regular verbs difficult and knowledge of the imperfect and pluperfect tenses was sketchy. Only the best achieved all five marks for communication and a good total of language ticks.

Careless reading of the rubric was costly in a number of cases. The candidate is told he/she was a witness to an accident (*vous avez vu...*). Some candidates assumed they were victims of an accident. Others read *accident* as *incident* and wrote a piece completely unrelated to an accident. Some seemed unaware that past tenses were required and wrote in a variety of tenses. A minority dealt with the accident in a few lines and resorted to verbiage to reach their target of 140 words. A little more planning at the outset might have avoided such problems.

The majority told a story about a road accident involving two vehicles or a car and a pedestrian or a cyclist. Few were able to say that one car ran into another or that a bus knocked someone down (*renverser*) or hit (*heurter*) a tree. Candidates are reminded that they are free to relate the accident in their own words and that if they cannot say these things they should say something else. *Il y a eu une collision entre...* would have served. Alternatively the accident could have been unrelated to traffic. Some said a person fell out of a tree or off a horse. The traditional advice to write only what you know still holds good. Problems occurred when trying to describe injuries, broken legs and arms. The expressions *se faire mal*, *avoir mal à* and *se casser la jambe* were not well known. Instead of relating *un petit accident*, many chose instead to tell a drama involving hospital emergencies and even fatalities. This approach was accepted.

'How you helped' was rather more accessible. Candidates said they called their parents to bring a car for the injured, or phoned for a doctor or an ambulance. The *téléphone portable* came into its own (few were aware that the verb *téléphoner* requires *à* before a noun). Candidates gave accounts to the police. More complex structures such as *je leur ai expliqué ce qui s'était passé* received many ticks for language. Others offered practical help on the spot. They gave water and comfort to the wounded or helped them to get to safety (which was not easy to say).

The narrator's reactions to these events sometimes occurred in the body of the story, sometimes as reflections at the end. Many could express shock, surprise and anxiety but *avoir peur* (fear) was not well handled. Often candidates were happy to have helped or relieved that the accident was not so serious after all.

Words which were mishandled frequently included *prendre* for *emmener* (as in to take to hospital), *joli* for *heureux*, *connaître* for *savoir*, *écouter* for *entendre* and *il est bien* for *il va bien*. Verbs conjugated with *être* and the necessary agreements were often handled incorrectly, as were reflexive verbs.