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FOREIGN LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

The paper was of a very similar standard to last year's paper and the overall standard of response, as last year, was most encouraging. There was a full spread of marks and a good proportion of the candidates scored over half marks, displaying very competent levels in both specific and general comprehension tasks. Examiners found the paper to be accessible to candidates of all abilities, with weaker candidates understandably, and as intended, scoring the majority of their marks on the opening exercises. The final exercises proved sufficiently demanding for the more able candidates and there were some extremely good performances from such candidates reported by all Examiners.

Most candidates were familiar with the requirements of the paper in terms of rubrics, and they had been well prepared in Centres. A small number, however, sometimes ticked more than one box in **Section 1 Exercise 1** and/or ticked more than the required six boxes on **Section 2 Exercise 1**. Candidates should be reminded to cross out incorrect answers which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.

On questions requiring answers in French, the accuracy of the French was not taken into account unless the meaning was obscured. Answers in any language other than French were ignored.

Most candidates attempted all three sections and there was evidence of inappropriate entry for some candidates for whom the final section must have seemed somewhat daunting. Candidates who score very low marks in the first two sections may be best advised not to attempt **Section 3**, which is intended to test candidates aiming for the highest grades.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations. The question type used was multiple choice. Overall, candidates made relatively few errors in this straightforward opening exercise. Directions in **Question 2** caused some problems and many heard only *gare* in **Question 8** and consequently answered B instead of A. Other questions were answered well.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-15

Candidates generally performed competently on this exercise. They were required to complete notes and tick boxes on the topic of activity based holidays in youth hostels. Candidates may write numbers in figures, they do not have to write them out in full.

Question 9 There was some confusion between *10 and 17*, (candidates heard *le dix septembre*).

Question 10 Most correctly identified *cuisine*.

Question 11 A surprising number of weaker candidates identified *seize* as 16.

Question 12 Video games in this question caused problems to some.

Question 13 Some candidates ticked just one box on this question.

Question 14 This was well done.

Question 15 Some candidates did not identify the fact that all meals were included in the stay.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Candidates heard four people talking about the environment and their efforts to look after it. This exercise was well done this year: the requirements were understood and very few failed to respect the instruction to tick only the required number of statements. Candidates had clearly understood the passage and showed a pleasing level of vocabulary recognition on a topic which has not featured greatly on previous Listening tests. It was pleasing to see high marks on this exercise from the majority of candidates. Even very weak candidates managed to score some marks.

Exercise 2 Questions 17-23

This exercise was based on the topic of films being shown to young hospital patients. The exercise required candidates to give short answers in French. True Core candidates who did not proceed to **Section 3** clearly found this to be the most demanding of the exercises. They should be reminded that long sentences are not required in order to gain the mark, sometimes one word will suffice. **Question 17** required the concept of bringing the cinema to sick children. On **Question 18**, *hôpital* was, pleasingly, well spelt. **Question 19** required candidates to understand that the children needed to forget that they were ill and in hospital. Candidates generally answered well, but some could not spell *oublier*. Reference to *la joie* was needed in **Question 20**. On **Question 21**, many did not gain the mark as they wrote *bonne heure* instead of *bonheur* and consequently conveyed an incorrect message. **Questions 22** and **23** were well answered, but some found the concept of sleeping hard to convey and weaker candidates understood, mistakenly, that the children went to the cinema with friends.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 24-29

Candidates heard an interview with a young girl talking about gaining her pilot's licence. The last three questions of this exercise were answered better than the first three, but generally this exercise was better attempted than in previous years and many Extended candidates scored 5 or 6 marks.

Exercise 2 Questions 30-38

This exercise was deemed fair and accessible for the last part of the paper. There were some difficulties, but good candidates scored well. Candidates heard an interview with Ina Daussy, a French TV presenter living in Korea who talked about her work and family. In **Questions 30** and **31**, *stage and commerce* were well identified by most candidates, but **Question 32** caused more difficulties. There needed to be some reference to the welcoming nature of the Koreans. **Question 33** was problematic for some as they wrote that Ina studied at university rather than gave lessons or worked there. On **Question 34**, the concept of unhappiness was required and in the second part of the answer there needed to be a comparative form expressed such as *plus malheureux/moins heureux* to gain the mark. **Question 35** required the concept that Ina's parents had met Cheung-Sau. For **Question 36**, candidates needed to mention either that Cheung-Sau took the son to school or that he did not consider women to be inferior to men. In **Question 37**, reference needed to be made to the couple's daily life together. Some misheard *vie* as *ville*, but many were able to identify the correct concept. On **Question 38**, some invalidated their answers by saying that Ina wanted to be with her family in France, failing to recognise that her future lay in Korea with her family.

Paper 0520/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Overall, the standard of the paper seemed similar to last year. The general performance of the candidates was very good, especially in **Sections 1** and **2** where many candidates scored full or almost full marks. However in **Section 3**, the performance was much more varied with a complete spread of marks.

Most candidates attempted **Section 3** and gained marks in this section. However, Examiners commented that in some Centres, candidates who scored very highly in **Sections 1** and **2**, and could have gone on to gain many more marks on **Section 3**, did not attempt the final section.

Candidates were, on the whole, well prepared for the examination.

Comments on specific questions**Section 1****Exercise 1 Questions 1-5**

Most candidates scored between 3 and 5 marks. **Question 1** caused the most problems and many candidates ticked A, indicating that they did not know the word *charcuterie*.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

In the vast majority of cases, candidates scored 5 marks.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Candidates found this exercise very accessible and nearly all scored the 5 marks available. No question caused particular problems.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Most candidates scored highly here too, demonstrating their ability to write accurately while describing the pictures. However, a few lost marks by describing something quite different from the pictures (e.g.: *je suis en Espagne* (although the map of France was very clear) or *il fait du soleil ici* (when the picture was clearly of rain). Marks cannot be awarded when candidates do not follow the rubric.

(c) proved to be the most difficult element to convey as most candidates were not sure about the present tense of *pleuvoir* and wrote *il pleur, il plui, il y a pleut*.

Some candidates made the task unnecessarily difficult by trying to use perfect, imperfect or future tenses. The present tense was all that was required.

Section 2**Exercise 1 Questions 17-25**

On the whole a very successful exercise. The large majority of candidates understood the questions and the text and selected the relevant part for their answers. The following were the only questions to cause any particular problems:

Question 20: instead of providing a length of time, e.g. *plusieurs mois*, candidates often provided a distance, e.g. *à des milliers de kilomètres*.

Question 25: quite a few candidates did not understand the question and answered *il veut savoir ce qu'en pensent les lecteurs*.

Exercise 2 Question 26

Candidates had a lot to say on this topic. The vast majority had no problems understanding the rubric and tackled the required elements in a systematic fashion, ensuring high marks for content. Most candidates also scored high marks for accuracy.

However, there were some candidates, usually very weak ones, who either did not understand the rubric or did not read it clearly enough:

- A few candidates thought they had to write a letter.
- A few thought they were being asked to arrange a trip somewhere with friends and issued an invitation accordingly.
- A few wrote about a birthday party or a trip they would love to make with friends.

In addition, many candidates did not seem to understand *toujours* and wrote *Mes parents me donnent toujours la permission de sortir mais quelquefois ils disent non*. Examiners were instructed to tolerate this misunderstanding and marks were not lost.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

Performance on this exercise was a lot more varied and it proved to be a good discriminator. Although candidates were often able to score the marks available for correctly identifying whether statements were *Vrai* or *Faux*, they sometimes had problems providing the correction. Candidates should be reminded that a negation of the statement is not sufficient to obtain the mark.

The following questions proved to be the most difficult:

Question 31: many candidates did not understand *fréquents* in the question, ticked *Faux* and wrote *Le nombre de personnes tuées par les requins a augmenté*. In fact the statement was *Vrai*.

Question 32: candidates often lifted the second part of the last sentence of the text, *Patrick fait aujourd'hui partie d'une équipe d'experts qui essaient de comprendre les raisons de ces attaques et trouver les moyens de les éviter*. They missed or did not understand the relevant first part of the sentence.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-39

Here too, performance was varied. While some questions, e.g. **Questions 33, 34** and **35**, were often answered correctly, candidates found others, e.g. **Questions 36** and **38**, quite challenging.

Question 36: candidates usually had no problem gaining the first mark for *ils ne savent pas lire*. However, for the second mark something that conveyed the sense of *ce moyen leur donne la chance d'apprendre en s'amusant* was required. Often candidates wrote *c'est amusant* with no mention of *apprendre* and Examiners judged this insufficient to gain the mark.

Question 38: candidates often answered *elle fixe les dates du spectacle selon le programme de télévision*, but did not provide the precise detail that was required, namely that when there was a film on the television, nobody would come to the show.

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core Curriculum and an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in 2003, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Generally, the candidature displayed high levels of Speaking skills and communicated well. It was pleasing to note the enthusiasm of candidates, many of whom, as a result of good examining and careful preparation in Centres, were able to show how well they could communicate. The ability of candidates to communicate via the spoken word is central to the IGCSE Foreign Language examination and, indeed, this Speaking test carries equal weighting to the other components of the syllabus.

Overall, the pleasing standard heard by Moderators was similar to that heard in 2003.

Administration

The administration in some Centres continues to cause problems. A few Centres did not submit the Moderator copies of the MS1 forms, thus delaying the moderating process. Some Centres sent MS1 forms, but had failed to complete them. Clerical errors were, pleasingly, fewer than last year, but some Centres persist in failing to check additions and transcriptions. It is important to remember that it is the Centre's responsibility to check that all clerical work is correct. Candidates can be greatly disadvantaged by incorrect clerical work. Centres should also ensure that all tapes are clearly labelled.

Quality of recording

Most Centres sent audible and clearly recorded tapes. Moderators, however, reported, several cases of poor, muffled recordings and incorrect positioning of microphones. All equipment must be checked prior to the test in the room where the test will take place. It is the duty of the Examiner to introduce and identify candidates. Candidates should *not* do this themselves. Recording of each candidate, once started, should be continuous: the tape should not be paused between the different sections of the test.

Preparation

Most Examiners are to be commended for their careful preparation of the role plays. Some, however, had not familiarised themselves adequately with the role plays and either miscued or missed out certain tasks. In such cases, candidates cannot be awarded marks for tasks they have not attempted. Examiners should also ensure that all three sections of the test are completed. Marks cannot be awarded for a section of the test that is not attempted and Examiners who combined the Topic Conversation with the General Conversation, or completely missed out the General Conversation, disadvantaged their candidates.

Timing

As last year, most Centres' timings were as stipulated (circa 15 minutes), but there were several instances of very short/long Speaking Tests. Examiners are reminded that the Speaking Test should *not* go beyond 15 minutes.

Application of the mark scheme

Generally, marking in Centres was close to the agreed standard and if adjustments were necessary, these tended to be small. Where Centres required larger adjustments, this was usually due to one of the following:

- Short Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections.
- Failure to give candidates the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames in both the Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections. Candidates who do not show they can do this cannot score more than 6 marks in Category b (linguistic quality).
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the role plays.

Most Examiners marked consistently across the range and this is important as inconsistent/erratic marking poses problems to Moderators. It is to this end that one Examiner only should be used per Centre. If more than one Examiner is used in larger Centres, internal moderation between Examiners must take place and a common standard of marking must be applied across all candidates. The sample submitted should cover the work of all Examiners.

Sampling

Samples were usually representative and covered a good mark range.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Section A

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each set task. The set tasks must not be changed. If only one part of a task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded.

As last year, 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. Generally, candidates found them accessible and even the weakest candidates were often able to score at least 1 mark per task. Candidates should be reminded to greet and thank as appropriate, as these are often part tasks.

At the grocer's

Candidates generally coped well with these tasks. There were some rather dubious pronunciations on Tasks 1 and 3 (fruit and drinks). Examiners should always feel free to query dubious pronunciation. The weakest candidates also had difficulty with *j'ai seulement un billet de 50 euros*. For the last task, weaker candidates found it difficult to formulate an appropriate question.

At the hotel

This role play was well done. The most frequent error was on Task 4 where some candidates forgot to ask the price of the rooms. All other tasks were well done and accessible to all candidates. Pleasingly, candidates coped well with asking a question about the hotel in the last task.

At the tourist office

Candidates generally performed well on these tasks, but some forgot to ask the price in Task 3. On Task 5 the most common error was the misuse of the verb *partir*. Many confused the noun *départ* with the verb and weaker candidates produced a form such as *départir*.

Section B

The **Section B** role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary.

The cards were seen to be equally balanced in terms of difficulty, each having its easier and more challenging tasks. Many Examiners split longer tasks, which is appropriate, and there were some good natural performances.

Candidates should be reminded to read the settings for these role plays as they provide a contextualising framework.

At the museum

Some candidates did not introduce themselves and Examiners did not always prompt appropriately. In Task 3, a number of Examiners also pressed for all three details of the group, despite the clear requirement for two only. The weakest candidates failed to comprehend *comment?* in the final cue and consequently suggested a time or *avec le groupe*.

At the airport

Examiners frequently, and sensibly, treated nationality as a separate question. Similarly, they preferred to ask about the flight in three separate questions. This was helpful to candidates and is a perfectly acceptable technique. A number of Examiners pushed for two descriptive details for the wallet as well as for two details regarding contents, which was more than was required. On Task 5, only the more able could produce appropriate questions when asking permission to phone the family.

Phoning a friend to change holiday dates

The first two tasks were done well by candidates, but on Task 3, weaker candidates found it difficult to conjugate *tomber* and *descendre* when talking about the mother's accident. Likewise, Task 4 produced many faulty structures such as *elle a cassé son bras*, *elle a cassé sa jambe*. In the last task, most communicated the message and asked the friend to change the ticket, but did not always propose alternative dates.

Topic (prepared) Conversation

As in 2003, an interesting and lively range of topics was heard. Most Examiners correctly stopped candidates after a minute or so, and then asked questions. The best examining elicited spontaneous responses and a natural conversation ensued. Although candidates generally chose topics appropriate to their ability, some chose topics of a very ambitious nature which then proved difficult to discuss. There were, pleasingly, very few examples of candidates choosing *Moi-même*. This topic choice is to be discouraged as it can pre-empt General Conversation material. Given the nature of the candidature there were some fascinating accounts which produced a good range of tenses and accurate structures. There were some very fluent expositions of topics and, generally, Examiners were well aware of the need to ask questions which could elicit past and future tenses.

General (unprepared) Conversation

As in the Topic Conversation, a very pleasing level of performance was heard from candidates. Examiners correctly covered at least two or three topics and often managed to guide candidates beyond factual information, seeking opinions and exploring the topic where possible. Moderators were impressed by the conversations and enjoyed hearing about life in so many different countries.

Candidates had, generally, been well prepared for this section of the test. There were, however, some very short General Conversations which did not allow candidates to demonstrate the full range of their ability. Examiners should also remember that it is helpful if they indicate when the Topic Conversation section is over by telling candidates that they are now moving on to the General Conversation. Regrettably, a few Centres did not present this final section and thus seriously disadvantaged their candidates.

It remains a pleasure to hear the candidature for this paper and it is encouraging to hear them enjoying the opportunity to speak French whatever their level of achievement. The high levels of fluency bear the hallmark of good classroom practice and the commitment of many Foreign Language teachers.

<p>Paper 0520/04 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

The performance by candidates for this component was well up to the high standards of recent years and the number of high scoring scripts was impressive. There were few inappropriate entries and, in general, Centres prepared their candidates well for Continuous Writing.

Understanding of the rubric in French was usually sound, but a number of candidates failed to maximise their chances because they omitted certain elements. Those who scored highly for communication did exactly what the questions asked, answering individual points in logical sequence and giving precisely the information required. Candidates should be reminded never to lose sight of the questions set and to beware of drifting into verbiage and unnecessary detail in marginal areas. As in every year, a number of marks were lost for communication by candidates who did not include all required elements within the word limit.

The quality of French used on the very best scripts was a pleasure to read. There was a formidable range of vocabulary and structures, employed with only minimal incidence of error, which was richly rewarded by the mark scheme. At the other extreme, the weakest scripts contained much repetition and a multitude of errors, many of which were apparently due to carelessness. Candidates should be made aware that the time allowed for this paper is normally ample and that there is no need to rush. There is time for the thoughtful planning of each sentence and careful, methodical revision will always pay dividends.

Standards of presentation were generally acceptable, but a minority of scripts were very poorly presented and contained much crossing out and barely legible handwriting. Examiners cannot reward what they cannot read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) inspired the more interesting answers. Candidates who stuck closely to the tasks set usually scored well for content. Attempts to debate the *nécessité ou plaisir* issue in general fared less well. Most were able to say what kind of shops were to be found near home, although some lost a mark for the vague *il y a beaucoup de magasins* with no further details given. *Centre commercial* was accepted as these are common in most large towns. Most said where they did their shopping and with whom (mother for necessities, friends for fun items such as clothes). Not all managed to give a reason. The phenomenon of Internet shopping was familiar to all, although most said they did not use it and gave sensible reasons. They were not old enough to have a credit card or they were worldly enough to recognise the dangers of revealing credit details on the Internet. Others sensibly insisted on seeing the product before buying. Even more did not have access to a computer. The question did however invite an interesting response. The last question, what do you like to buy and why?, was often answered loosely. Some just said they liked fashion without mentioning shopping. Others omitted to give a reason. In the case of some answers well in excess of 140 words, the last element did not score as it fell outside the word count.

While the present tense was the natural time frame for **(a)**, the best candidates were still able to display quite sophisticated language skills. The simple, 'safe' structures such as *il y a, j'aime* and *je fais* were credited, of course, but the more ambitious candidates found ways of conveying the information in more varied and polished language.

(b), being an apparently more straightforward option, tended to attract the weaker candidates, but there were some high scoring answers too.

The formal letter format seemed to have been well rehearsed and some authentic looking letters were presented with appropriate beginnings and endings. The use of the familiar register is disallowed and no credit was given for *Bonjour, Ca va?* or informal endings such as *Au revoir* or *Amicalement*. The dates for the stay at the hotel were surprisingly hard to convey and the simple prepositions in *du 6 au 8 avril* were quite elusive. Some lost out for using a present tense in *ma chambre est numero 5*. All kinds of things were left at the hotel, most commonly rucksacks, wallets, passports and precious items such as jewellery and watches. It was a pity that, given a completely free hand in the choice of item, so many chose something for which they did not know the French, such as a laptop computer or an item for which they did not know the gender or even the spelling. Some candidates managed to leave behind their luggage or their car and in one case an aged relative was forgotten. Descriptions of the lost property usually mentioned size, design or colour, all of which were acceptable. Some candidates lost marks for making the description so complicated as to go beyond their capacities in French. The value of the item was sometimes practical (cash, passport, credit cards or tickets), sometimes sentimental (a gift from a loved one, often deceased). The latter point proved to be quite hard to express, with weaker candidates struggling with *la montre que grand-père m'a donnée* and similar concepts. Methods by which the letter writer could be contacted were usually clearly indicated, either by phone, letter or e-mail. Marks were lost for *tutoiement* here as *tu peux me contacter* was deemed to be inappropriate in a formal letter. The idea of 'When you find my property, please will you send it to me' proved to be beyond all but the very able, as many floundered in faulty tenses and misplaced pronouns. Those with limited knowledge of French should not embark on such complications. Wise candidates recognised their limitations and avoided the problem: the rubric only required them to say how they could be contacted.

Better candidates were aware that writing as close as possible to 140 words would maximize their marks for language. Some, however, wrote curt, businesslike letters with no frills and found they were reduced to padding out their answers as an afterthought to reach the word count.

Question 2

Some excellent answers were received about the *dispute* although weaker candidates struggled without the more precise guidelines of **Question 1**. Most recognised the need to write an account of a quarrel using past tenses and to come to a friendly conclusion.

The quarrel with a best friend was popular with girls. Many fell out over boyfriends or misunderstandings, usually trivial in nature. Others found it hard to forgive friends for forgetting appointments, losing or damaging their property or being rude or thoughtless. The narrator was, of course, invariably in the right. Boys tended to fall out with younger brothers who disturbed their studies, invaded their privacy or took their property without permission. Monopolising the computer or the choice of TV viewing were regular causes for grievances with siblings. Such accounts seemed to be drawn from personal experience and were often related with humour and imagination. Solutions were found through each party swallowing his/her pride and mutual apologies, frequently presided over by wise parents. Many tended to make the reconciliation too complicated and their French suffered as a result.

The main source of difficulty was inevitably with verbs and tense usage. Some embarked on a stream of reported speech and they were unable to find the imperfect in 'he said he was', the pluperfect in 'she said she had' or the conditional in 'we said we would'. The emotional turmoil that the quarrel incurred was beyond the linguistic capacity of the weaker candidates who struggled to say 'we did not talk to each other for ten days' or the like. Such candidates should seek ways to simplify their accounts. The most successful candidates are usually those who strike a balance between ambitious and adventurous use of language and recognising and working within their limitations.

On weak and average scripts the perennial grammatical problems were encountered, including the agreement of adjectives and past participles. The gender of the narrator appeared to fluctuate through the piece as *je suis allée* was followed by *j'étais fâché*. Girls fell out with girls, but the verbs appeared with masculine agreements as in *nous nous sommes disputés*. Adjectives were routinely misplaced and failed to agree in either number or gender on many scripts. Common nouns were misspelled or presented with incorrect genders, verb forms were faulty, wrong auxiliaries were used with the perfect tense and negatives were misplaced. Particular difficulty occurred with object pronouns, *je lui ai dit* being rendered as *j'ai lui dit* or *je l'ai dit* and *il m'a dit* as *il a me dit*. As stated earlier, many of these errors might have been eliminated if candidates had taken more time to revise their work when the piece was complete or if more care had been taken during the writing of it.

Despite the difficulties mentioned, the question produced a lively and imaginative response from many candidates and, as has been said before, the best answers were often those which were clearly drawn from personal experience.