

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/11

Listening

Key messages

- Candidates showed good levels of both specific and general understanding. Performance was strong on the first two sections of the paper. Although the last section was found to be more challenging, as intended, a good number of candidates still scored good marks on the final two exercises. Outcomes were very similar to last year on all sections.
- New Centres should remind candidates to write clearly in blue or black pen. Candidates should not write first in pencil and then overwrite answers in pen as this can be very difficult to read. Candidates must cross out any material they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is a danger that extra distorting details will be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.

General comments

The demand of this year's paper was found to be very similar to that of the 2012 paper. Overall, the candidature performed well, with even weaker candidates able to achieve marks on a few questions in the final section. The candidature was familiar with the demands and structure of the paper and rubrics were understood. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics were accessible to candidates.

As last year, 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. Longer extracts featured a variety of register and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary which is tested in the first two sections of the test is drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the defined content.

Centres should note that where questions require a written response in French, full sentences are not required in answers. Brief answers are preferable as the risk of adding extra distorting material which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer is reduced. Candidates should not answer or infer from general knowledge as they run the risk of including material in their answers which is not on the recording and which may distort and invalidate.

The listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous. Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

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Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple-choice questions with visual options. Candidates performed very well in this opening exercise which is intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. All candidates understood the rubric well and the visuals caused no problems of interpretation. The extracts were short and straightforward. The vocabulary areas tested were prices, accommodation details, time, shops, school equipment, food, and personal items. Some experienced difficulty on **Question 2** which tested *à gauche* (incorrect answers often indicated *à droite*). Although other questions were very well done, **Question 7** (*le rôti de bœuf*) sometimes proved challenging.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an announcement for the town of St Valéry and tourist possibilities in the area. Candidates were mostly required to show their understanding by selecting one from three visual options. As in previous years, candidates usually managed a strong performance on this exercise. On **Question 9**, most spellings were recognisable and acceptable for *juin* but, occasionally, candidates offered *juillet*, *janvier* or even *aout*, which were not accepted. **Questions 10, 11, 13, 14** and **15** were well done. Some did not recognise *planche à voile* on **Question 12**. On **Question 16**, some did not recognise *grillades de fruits de mer*.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates heard four young people talking about the way they normally spend their holidays. The vocabulary was taken from the defined content and extracts included some opinions as well as occasional uses of tenses other than the present. The topic area was very accessible to candidates and large numbers achieved high marks. No one particular option seemed to be more difficult than another and no pattern of incorrect answers was discernible.

Candidates now appear to be very familiar with the requirement to tick six boxes on this exercise and there were very few incidents of candidates ticking fewer or more than the required number. Teachers should advise candidates to indicate the six true statements with either a tick or a cross. Some candidates used a system of both ticks and crosses to indicate both true and false statements which often proved confusing for them and for Examiners.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Marion talking about her life in Montréal. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). On **Question 18**, the word *banlieue* was not well known and appeared in various forms in candidates' answers. The most common incorrect renderings were an inappropriate split such as *bon lieu(e)* or *ban lieu(e)* which did not gain the mark. Centres are reminded of the general marking principle which states that words which are combined or split inappropriately do not gain the mark. On **Question 19**, many spellings of *canoë* were acceptable (*canoer*, *kanoë*, *cannue*, and *canoue*), as was the answer *kayak*. A frequently seen incorrect answer featured a different sport such as *patinage*. On **Question 20**, nearly all candidates were successful in identifying *différentes*. **Question 21** proved more difficult for many and only a few were able to identify and spell *court* correctly. Usually, an answer which is expressed with a word which means something else in French does not gain the mark. On this particular occasion, an exception was made to the general rule and, in this instance, the word *cour(s)* was accepted as a 'sound alike'. On **Question 22**, candidates could gain the mark either by rendering *arbres* or *feuilles*. Most chose to try to identify the first concept and were successful in gaining the mark despite many inaccurate spellings of the word *arbre*, such as *abre/arbe*: these were judged to be recognisable attempts at the word and worthy of the mark. Candidates who attempted to render *feuilles* also found this word difficult to spell. Provided that either of the elements was present, attempts at the other concept were disregarded and did not invalidate the answer, e.g. *faillies des arbres* gained the mark for the rendering of *arbres*. Overall, there was a wide range of marks on this exercise and the performance was generally very similar to the equivalent exercise in previous years.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The second part of this exercise featured another interview, this time with Nathan who also talked about his life in Montréal. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. All of the questions, apart from **Question 26**, could be answered briefly without using a verb. On **Question 23**, a good number recognised *animé* and rendered it successfully. Incorrect answers often featured reference to *un appartement*, e.g. *un appartement animé*, which distorted and invalidated the answer. **Question 24** was answered very well with nearly all candidates being able to identify and give an acceptable spelling of *géographie*. To score the mark on **Question 25**, candidates needed either to identify *professeurs* or to identify *ambiance* and many were successful. Acceptable spellings of *ambiance* had to begin with *ambi* or *embi* and finish in *ence*, *ense*, *ance* or *anse*. Some candidates who identified one of these concepts correctly then went on to invalidate their answers by adding an extra distorting concept such as *bonne faculté*. **Question 26** was the only question on this exercise where candidates needed to produce a verb to score the mark. Candidates needed to convey that Nathan watches the sport, rather than plays it, and many were able to do this with an answer such as *regarde le match hockey*. The final question proved very challenging for many and there were relatively few candidates who could render *sous-sol* correctly. Attempts produced as one word or two words were deemed acceptable. To score, the answer had to begin with *sous*, *sou* or *soux* and end with *sol*, *solle* or *sole*. Again, overall, performance on this exercise was very similar to that seen last year.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

The extract featured a longer interview with Sophie talking about a trip she made to Laos. Candidates coped quite well with this multiple-choice exercise which required them to follow a narrative that featured different time frames and in which feelings and opinions were expressed. In this exercise candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section. Candidates understood the rubrics well. The vast majority attempted this exercise and managed to pick up at least two or three marks even if they went on to find the last exercise difficult. It is worth reminding candidates to use the longer reading time available at the beginning of this exercise and the pauses to read the question and options very carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give them an overall plan of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

Generally, candidates found the first three questions easier than the last three questions on this exercise. **Questions 31** and **32** were found to be the most challenging. On **Question 31**, it was necessary to listen to the whole of Sophie's observations about her first impressions and consider all the options. In order to answer correctly, (option C), candidates needed to recognise the importance of *surtout* in the sentence *je voyais surtout beaucoup de gens qui avaient seulement l'eau sale de la rivière pour se laver*. Weaker candidates opted for option A, (perhaps having heard the word *routes*) or option B (having heard *beaucoup de gens*). On **Question 32**, candidates needed to understand that the work had been done in the school library and not in classrooms. Candidates who answered incorrectly often opted for the answer which featured the word *décoré* perhaps because they had heard *peinture* on the recording.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

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. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates. The performance on this exercise was, again, very much in line with the standard of work seen last year. Candidates heard an interview with a DJ and questions tested both specific and general understanding. The extract featured more complex language with a range of tenses and also included opinions and explanations of opinions. There were two pauses in this exercise.

Candidates are required to write their answers in French. The language required in the answers featured vocabulary which was in the defined content. Many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (though **Questions 35**, **36** and **41** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Candidates did not have to write in full sentences. Most candidates had been well prepared and although there were some cases of overlong answers, Examiners reported that, on the whole, candidates seemed more aware of the need to answer as concisely as possible and were writing briefer answers. Some long answers featured many crossings out and were sometimes difficult to read. Weaker candidates sometimes tried to transcribe as much material as possible. If an Examiner is put in the position of having to try to locate the correct answer in the midst of extra irrelevant material (or several different answers which distort the

correct answer) the mark will not be awarded. Candidates should also not include inferences which are not heard on the recordings as this may invalidate their answer: answers are always to be found on the recording. Again, time spent reading the questions is never wasted as it gives candidates a framework to the recording and can help them to focus on the content of what they are about to hear.

On **Question 34**, a good number answered *argent de poche*. The word *argent* alone was not enough to gain the mark. Likewise *argent de poche* and *argent de porche* did not gain the mark. **Question 35** required candidates to convey the concept of going to bed. Candidates were awarded the mark for using any recognisable part of the verb *se coucher*, in any tense. The reflexive pronoun was not insisted upon. Acceptable alternatives such as *aller au lit* gained the mark. Consequently, a fair number of candidates scored the mark here. **Question 36** was phrased in such a way as to encourage candidates to respond with an infinitive rather than try to conjugate the verb. *Aller en discothèque* was enough to gain the mark. When candidates used other verbs such as *faire* or *voir*, this was likely to distort meaning. **Question 37** was found to be very accessible by candidates, with a good number responding briefly and adequately: *pas contente*. Answers which omitted the negative could not be rewarded. **Question 38** required the concept of taking the *bac* and this was found to be more difficult. Weaker candidates did not always render *passe* correctly and if *pas ton bac* was written, the mark was not awarded: such responses conveyed the opposite of what was required. Some attempted to offer alternatives such as *faire des études*, which was not precise enough to gain the mark. **Questions 39** and **40** required brief, one-word answers. Although spellings were often incorrect, many were successful in conveying the correct concepts: *nouvelle* for **Question 39** and *préférée* for **Question 40**. On **Question 41**, the idea of *manger équilibré* was successfully communicated by a good number. An alternative correct answer was *boire eau*. In the case of both these answers, attempts at any part of the verb were acceptable. **Question 42** proved to be one of the most challenging of the paper. Many candidates found it difficult to give an acceptable spelling of *oreille* and to combine this with *bonne* or *musicale* for the mark to be awarded. **Question 43** provided an appropriately difficult last question which was not beyond the more able candidates. Several concepts could gain the mark. Examiners looked for the idea of the job not being for/lasting a long time and if candidates could give the brief *pas longtemps* or *ce n'est pas long*, the mark was awarded. Of those that tried to say that the oldest DJs were 40, some invalidated their answers by saying that one could not work at 40 (which was not true according to the recording), rather than that one could not work after 40 (which was correct). Some wrote that one had to be young which was also accepted.

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Candidates now appear to be very familiar with the requirement to tick six boxes on this exercise and there were very few incidents of candidates ticking fewer or more than the required number. Teachers should advise candidates to indicate the six true statements with either a tick or a cross. Some candidates used a system of both ticks and crosses to indicate both true and false statements which often proved confusing for them and for Examiners.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Marion talking about her life in Montréal. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). On **Question 18**, the word *banlieue* was not well known and appeared in various forms in candidates' answers. The most common incorrect renderings were an inappropriate split such as *bon lieu(e)* or *ban lieu(e)* which did not gain the mark. Centres are reminded of the general marking principle which states that words which are combined or split inappropriately do not gain the mark. On **Question 19**, many spellings of *canoë* were acceptable (*canoer*, *kanoë*, *cannue*, and *canoue*), as was the answer *kayak*. A frequently seen incorrect answer featured a different sport such as *patinage*. On **Question 20**, nearly all candidates were successful in identifying *différentes*. **Question 21** proved more difficult for many and only a few were able to identify and spell *court* correctly. Usually, an answer which is expressed with a word which means something else in French does not gain the mark. On this particular occasion, an exception was made to the general rule and, in this instance, the word *cour(s)* was accepted as a 'sound alike'. On **Question 22**, candidates could gain the mark either by rendering *arbres* or *feuilles*. Most chose to try to identify the first concept and were successful in gaining the mark despite many inaccurate spellings of the word *arbre*, such as *abre/arbe*: these were judged to be recognisable attempts at the word and worthy of the mark. Candidates who attempted to render *feuilles* also found this word difficult to spell. Provided that either of the elements was present, attempts at the other concept were disregarded and did not invalidate the answer, e.g. *faillies des arbres* gained the mark for the rendering of *arbres*. Overall, there was a wide range of marks on this exercise and the performance was generally very similar to the equivalent exercise in previous years.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The second part of this exercise featured another interview, this time with Nathan who also talked about his life in Montréal. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. All of the questions, apart from **Question 26**, could be answered briefly without using a verb. On **Question 23**, a good number recognised *animé* and rendered it successfully. Incorrect answers often featured reference to *un appartement*, e.g. *un appartement animé*, which distorted and invalidated the answer. **Question 24** was answered very well with nearly all candidates being able to identify and give an acceptable spelling of *géographie*. To score the mark on **Question 25**, candidates needed either to identify *professeurs* or to identify *ambiance* and many were successful. Acceptable spellings of *ambiance* had to begin with *ambi* or *embi* and finish in *ence*, *ense*, *ance* or *anse*. Some candidates who identified one of these concepts correctly then went on to invalidate their answers by adding an extra distorting concept such as *bonne faculté*. **Question 26** was the only question on this exercise where candidates needed to produce a verb to score the mark. Candidates needed to convey that Nathan watches the sport, rather than plays it, and many were able to do this with an answer such as *regarde le match hockey*. The final question proved very challenging for many and there were relatively few candidates who could render *sous-sol* correctly. Attempts produced as one word or two words were deemed acceptable. To score, the answer had to begin with *sous*, *sou* or *soux* and end with *sol*, *solle* or *sole*. Again, overall, performance on this exercise was very similar to that seen last year.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

The extract featured a longer interview with Sophie talking about a trip she made to Laos. Candidates coped quite well with this multiple-choice exercise which required them to follow a narrative that featured different time frames and in which feelings and opinions were expressed. In this exercise, candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section. Candidates understood the rubrics well. The vast majority attempted this exercise and managed to pick up at least two or three marks even if they went on to find the last exercise difficult. It is worth reminding candidates to use the longer reading time available at the beginning of this exercise, and the pauses, to read the question and options very carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give them an overall plan of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

Generally, candidates found the first three questions easier than the last three questions on this exercise. **Questions 31** and **32** were found to be the most challenging. On **Question 31**, it was necessary to listen to the whole of Sophie's observations about her first impressions and consider all the options. In order to answer correctly, (option C), candidates needed to recognise the importance of *surtout* in the sentence *je voyais surtout beaucoup de gens qui avaient seulement l'eau sale de la rivière pour se laver*. Weaker candidates opted for option A, (perhaps having heard the word *routes*) or option B (having heard *beaucoup de gens*). On **Question 32**, candidates needed to understand that the work had been done in the school library and not in classrooms. Candidates who answered incorrectly often opted for the answer which featured the word *décoré*, perhaps because they had heard *peinture* on the recording.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

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. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates. The performance on this exercise was, again, very much in line with the standard of work seen last year. Candidates heard an interview with a DJ and questions tested both specific and general understanding. The extract featured more complex language with a range of tenses and also included opinions and explanations of opinions. There were two pauses in this exercise.

Candidates are required to write their answers in French. The language required in the answers featured vocabulary which was in the defined content. Many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (though **Questions 35**, **36** and **41** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Candidates did not have to write in full sentences. Most candidates had been well prepared and although there were some cases of overlong answers, Examiners reported that, on the whole, candidates seemed more aware of the need to answer as concisely as possible and were writing briefer answers. Some long answers featured many crossings out and were sometimes difficult to read. Weaker candidates sometimes tried to transcribe as much material as possible. If an Examiner is put in the position of having to try to locate the correct answer in the midst of extra irrelevant material (or several different answers which distort the

correct answer) the mark will not be awarded. Candidates should also not include inferences which are not heard on the recordings as this may invalidate their answer: answers are always to be found on the recording. Again, time spent reading the questions is never wasted as it gives candidates a framework to the recording and can help them to focus on the content of what they are about to hear.

On **Question 34**, a good number answered *argent de poche*. The word *argent* alone was not enough to gain the mark. Likewise *argent de poche* and *argent de porche* did not gain the mark. **Question 35** required candidates to convey the concept of going to bed. Candidates were awarded the mark for using any recognisable part of the verb *se coucher*, in any tense. The reflexive pronoun was not insisted upon. Acceptable alternatives such as *aller au lit* gained the mark. Consequently, a fair number of candidates scored the mark here. **Question 36** was phrased in such a way as to encourage candidates to respond with an infinitive rather than try to conjugate the verb. *Aller en discothèque* was enough to gain the mark. When candidates used other verbs such as *faire* or *voir*, this was likely to distort meaning. **Question 37** was found to be very accessible by candidates, with a good number responding briefly and adequately: *pas contente*. Answers which omitted the negative could not be rewarded. **Question 38** required the concept of taking the *bac* and this was found to be more difficult. Weaker candidates did not always render *passe* correctly and if *pas ton bac* was written, the mark was not awarded: such responses conveyed the opposite of what was required. Some attempted to offer alternatives such as *faire des études*, which was not precise enough to gain the mark. **Questions 39** and **40** required brief, one-word answers. Although spellings were often incorrect, many were successful in conveying the correct concepts: *nouvelle* for **Question 39** and *préférée* for **Question 40**. On **Question 41**, the idea of *manger équilibré* was successfully communicated by a good number. An alternative correct answer was *boire eau*. In the case of both these answers, attempts at any part of the verb were acceptable. **Question 42** proved to be one of the most challenging of the paper. Many candidates found it difficult to give an acceptable spelling of *oreille* and to combine this with *bonne* or *musicale* for the mark to be awarded. **Question 43** provided an appropriately difficult last question which was not beyond the more able candidates. Several concepts could gain the mark. Examiners looked for the idea of the job not being for/lasting a long time and if candidates could give the brief *pas longtemps* or *ce n'est pas long*, the mark was awarded. Of those that tried to say that the oldest DJs were 40, some invalidated their answers by saying that one could not work at 40 (which was not true according to the recording), rather than that one could not work after 40 (which was correct). Some wrote that one had to be young which was also accepted.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/21
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

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

- keep their answers brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**.
- make sure that they read the essay question carefully and answer every part of it.
- allow time for checking their work to ensure that they have attempted every question (a blank space cannot be awarded any marks) and to make any corrections needed.
- ensure that when they change an answer they do so in such a way as to make it clear what is their final answer and what the Examiner is to mark.

General comments

Candidates seemed to be well-prepared for the style of the paper, and had no obvious difficulties in completing it within the time allowed. The vast majority attempted all sections and exercises on the paper. Levels of grammatical accuracy were variable, with verbs, genders, possessives and pronouns showing problems. Candidates should re-read what they have written once they have finished the paper, and correct simple errors such as words miscopied from the text, particularly in **Section 3** where such errors may mean that a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Candidates scored very well here, with most achieving the maximum mark. **Question 3** occasionally presented some difficulty, with a few confusing B (*chat*) with D (*chien*).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the vocabulary for various jobs: most candidates correctly identified at least four of the five. Candidates sometimes answered **Question 9** with F (*Facteur*) rather than connecting *Il vend de la viande* with C (*Boucher*).

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates read an e-mail from Grégoire to his friend Jean, and then answered a series of five multiple choice questions. Here, again, candidates scored well, with few incorrect answers.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are three marks available for communication, and two for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked write an invitation to a party, providing three pieces of information based on the pictures given:

- (a) where the party is taking place (*restaurant, café, hôtel, chez moi, chez mon ami, à la maison, dans la salle à manger*);
- (b) the date of the party (*10 / le dix juillet*);
- (c) what they are going to do (*danser, aller danser, aller à la discothèque*).

Many candidates combined the first two tasks into one sentence, which was perfectly acceptable.

There were a number of possible choices for the party venue, so most candidates managed something appropriate for the first task. Supplying the date for the second task was very straightforward, though many alternative spellings for *juillet* were produced (the correct spelling of this word was given on the question paper). The third picture presented candidates with a number of possible activities and these were credited where the interpretation seemed reasonable. *Dancer* was seen on many occasions, and although this was credited for communication, it did not score a language mark.

In order to score the two marks available for language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Candidates who used a correct third person form of *être* in each of the first two tasks (*La fête est au restaurant, la date est le 10 juillet*) could score a language mark for each instance.

Credit is only given for the required tasks, so candidates have no need to write long answers, or add extra material. While communication marks can be scored with brief phrases, candidates should try to formulate sentences in order to score the marks available for language. A very few candidates did not base their answers on the drawings provided, perhaps seeing them as examples, and went on to offer different dates, places and activities – no marks could be awarded.

The majority of candidates attempted this exercise, and many scored at least four of the five marks available.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text and answer the questions in French. The majority of candidates coped well, and scored equally well. The focus of this exercise is to test candidates' ability to locate the correct answer to each question in the text provided. Therefore, although often a one or two word answer was sufficient, provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct information, answers lifted directly from the text were acceptable even if they contained a lot of extra material. This additional material was ignored except in the few instances where it contradicted the correct answer.

For **Question 17** there were two possible answers – either that Luc's parents were going to buy him a bike, or that Luc would be able to carry on playing football, though the second answer was much rarer. **Question 18** was sometimes incorrectly answered with *dans sa nouvelle maison...* rather than *loin (de sa nouvelle maison)*. In their answer to **Question 19**, candidates needed to explain that Luc had wanted a bike for a long time, and some only gave part of this answer. **Questions 20, 21** and **22** were all straightforward and were generally answered very well, with many candidates able to offer more than two reasons for **Question 22**. For **Question 23**, a number of candidates did not quite understand *...une nouvelle piste cyclable...* and tried to make something of *Il ne va pas devoir rouler sur la route*. **Question 24** was usually well answered, though some candidates did not make it clear that Luc was the person buying the bike and Arthur was the person helping to choose.

Exercise 2 Question 25

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were asked to:

- (a) describe the clothes they like to wear at weekends, together with their reasons;
- (b) describe the clothes they do not like, with their reasons;
- (c) say what clothes they would like to buy if they had a lot of money, again with reasons for their choices.

Ten marks were available for communication of the required elements and five marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available.

The vast majority of candidates attempted this question, dealing with all the tasks, and they were generally familiar with the vocabulary they needed. A very few seemed to be confused by the word *vêtements* – some thought it referred to food, and some just wrote about their activities at the weekend, rather than the clothes they liked to wear. Most candidates clearly spend their weekend wearing jeans or shorts and t-shirts, and there seems to be a universal dislike of school uniform. The reasons for their choices often involved comfort,

but many were unable to manage the correct spelling *confortable* / *inconfortable*. Trying to talk about 'formal' clothing also presented a few problems, as did the spelling of *couleur* and *chaussures*. For the third part of the task, candidates were able to express a range of opinions, many saying they would like to buy expensive and fashionable clothes by famous designers, because they were good quality, or because they loved fashion. Many others said that even if they had a lot of money, they would still buy the same sort of clothes as they do now.

Many essays were clearly written, in three paragraphs, as candidates concentrated on each section in turn, and many used elegant and fluent language. It is important that candidates take care to convey enough pieces of information to score the ten available marks for communication – where a candidate mentioned only one item of clothing and one reason for each task, this could only score six of the available communication marks.

The language used was very good, for the most part, although frequently lacking adjectival agreements and with some misspelling. Many candidates scored four or five marks for language, even if they did not score the maximum for communication.

Section 3

In **Section 3**, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for: candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. While it will be possible to lift some answers from the text, candidates need to be very discriminating in what they choose – additional material copied may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux* (they are told two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*). Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement. Where candidates decide that an answer is *Vrai*, the box **must be ticked** or no mark can be scored.

Question 26 was *Vrai*, which most candidates spotted, and the next four statements were false. Most candidates chose *Faux* for **Questions 27 to 29**, but a number incorrectly identified **Question 30** as *Vrai*, and **Question 31** as *Faux*.

The most common correction to **Question 27** was *On y mange des plats inspirés de toutes les grandes cuisines du monde*. The phrase from the text about *cuisine originale* was not enough on its own to correct the statement, but it was accepted as part of a longer answer. Some candidates offered just *Cuisine chinoise et indienne*, or made no reference to *...toutes/grandes...*, missing the point that the cooking at the restaurant was inspired by **all** the great styles of cookery, including French.

For **Question 28**, the correction looked for was that by the age of 32, Angèle was one of the best-known chefs in France. Some candidates tried for a correction using a different age, but it is never stated in the text at exactly what age she decided to start cooking. **Question 29** needed the idea that Angèle's father felt that she should go to university / finish her studies, or that he felt that she should cook in her spare time, which many candidates managed to express very well. Some were distracted by the beginning of the statement (*Son père...*) and chose as their correction the sentence from the text *Son père était à cette époque professeur...*, or invalidated an otherwise correct answer by including *donc* from the following part of the text.

For those candidates who realised that the statement in **Question 30** was false, the correction was very straightforward. Instead of going to university Angèle had entered a cookery competition, or had won a cookery competition – the mention of cookery was seen as essential, so a few candidates who just said that she had entered a competition did not score the mark.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-38

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and many candidates found it quite challenging. Even though they were able to locate the correct part of the text, they were often not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response to the question or they were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptable response. In this exercise, candidates need to be

able to make the necessary changes between direct and reported speech and to deal with the resulting pronoun / possessive adjective confusion. It was often the case that where candidates chose to copy a chunk of text with the correct answer buried within it, the extra details they included rendered their answer invalid. It is worth bearing in mind that if one line of space is provided for candidates to write in, the expected answer will not be three or four lines long.

It was clear that candidates had generally found the text accessible, and had understood it well, even though answers did not always score because of faulty French and/or invalidations.

For **Question 32(a)**, the most straightforward answer was *la chaleur*, so answers involving mention of 'one of the hottest summers of the last 50 years', or 'temperatures which rose as high as 35°' were credited, and many candidates answered this well. Those candidates who did not focus on exactly what the question asked, and lifted from the text *Tout le monde trouvait difficile de s'adapter à la chaleur* invalidated their answer by the extra material copied. **Question 32(b)** was also done quite well: almost all candidates understood that old people who lived alone were the ones most at risk. In some cases the 'living alone' element was omitted, and in others, the addition of *pourtant* was an invalidating factor. The next question was also well answered and candidates were able to say that some students abandoned their studies *À cause du manque de logements à prix réduit*. Answers which began with *Car...* or *Parce que...* (as a replacement for *À cause de*) were not accepted, nor were answers beginning *Du manque...*

A number of candidates lifted the sentence in direct speech, beginning *Pour moi, c'était évident...* as their answer to **Question 34**. In fact, what was needed was the next sentence, about arranging contact between the two generations. **Question 35(a)** was better answered than **35(b)**: the students wanted *logement / loyer à prix réduit*. Some candidates invalidated their answer to **35(b)** (*La présence d'une personne jeune*) by the addition of extra material.

Question 36 needed to be read carefully – the question asked *Quelle tâche ménagère...?* to which the answer was *Nettoyer*. The inclusion of additional material such as *...rendent de petits services...* or *...passer un peu de temps avec...* was treated as invalidation as it became unclear whether or not the candidate had understood the question. The next question was the one which candidates seemed to find the most difficult – the idea they needed to express was that the meeting between the two generations was essential so that each participant could **get to know the other** or could **find out whether they would get on**. **Question 38**, the last on the paper, asked in part **(a)** what the friendship had brought to Estelle – *conseils / l'expérience de Marie-Louise*; and in part **(b)** what it had brought to Marie-Louise – *l'informatique / elle est en contact e-mail avec ses enfants*. This second part was generally answered very well. Candidates had clearly understood the text, but some reversed their answers to parts **(a)** and **(b)**.

The accessibility of the text was shown by the fact that almost all candidates, at a range of linguistic levels, attempted some, if not all the questions of this last exercise, and achieved a range of scores.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/22
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

- keep their answers brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**.
- make sure that they read the essay question carefully and answer every part of it.
- allow time for checking their work to ensure that they have attempted every question (a blank space cannot be awarded any marks) and to make any corrections needed.
- ensure that when they change an answer they do so in such a way as to make it clear what is their final answer and what the Examiner is to mark.

General comments

Candidates seemed to be well-prepared for the style of the paper, and had no obvious difficulties in completing it within the time allowed. The vast majority attempted all sections and exercises on the paper. Levels of grammatical accuracy were variable, with verbs, genders, possessives and pronouns showing problems. Candidates should re-read what they have written once they have finished the paper, and correct simple errors such as words miscopied from the text, particularly in **Section 3** where such errors may mean that a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates scored very well in this exercise and seemed very familiar with all the items of vocabulary tested.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the vocabulary for various jobs: most candidates scored the five marks available. Candidates sometimes answered **Question 7** with C (*Facteur*) rather than connecting *Il conduit un taxi* with F (*Chauffeur*).

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates read an e-mail from Aurélie to her friend Nathalie, and then answered a series of five multiple choice questions. The vast majority of candidates scored full marks.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are three marks available for communication and two marks for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked to write an invitation to a party, providing three pieces of information, based on the pictures given:

- (a) where the party is taking place (*chez moi, dans le jardin*);
- (b) the date of the party (*20 / le vingt juillet*);
- (c) what they are going to do (*faire un barbecue*).

Many candidates combined the first two tasks into one sentence, which was perfectly acceptable.

There were a number of possible choices for the party venue, so most candidates managed something appropriate for the first task. Supplying the date for the second part was very straightforward, though many alternative spellings for *juillet* were produced (the correct spelling of this word was given on the question paper). For the third task, the spelling of *barbecue* was not widely known but *On va faire un BBQ / barbeque* were accepted as well as alternatives which conveyed a similar concept.

In order to score the two marks available for language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Candidates who used a correct third person form of *être* in each of the first two parts (*La fête est dans mon jardin, la date est le 20 juillet*) could score a language mark for each instance.

Credit is only given for the required tasks, so candidates have no need to write long answers, or add extra material. While communication marks can be scored with brief phrases, candidates should try to formulate sentences in order to score the marks available for language. A very few candidates did not base their answers on the drawings provided, perhaps seeing them as examples, and went on to offer different dates, places and activities – no marks could be awarded.

The majority of candidates wrote concisely and achieved the five marks available.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text and answer the questions in French. The majority of candidates coped well, and scored equally well. The focus of this exercise is to test candidates' ability to locate the correct answer to each question in the text provided. Therefore, although often a one or two word answer was sufficient, provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct information, answers lifted directly from the text were acceptable even if they contained a lot of extra material. This additional material was ignored except in the few instances where it contradicted the correct answer.

For **Question 17**, the expected answer was *Son anniversaire*, for **Question 18**, *Ses parents* and for **Question 19**, *Ravie*. Candidates were very successful at locating the correct answers. Some candidates had not read **Question 20** carefully enough and answered *Il s'est réveillé* instead of the expected *Elle a pris le chien (dans ses bras)*. The next four questions were usually well answered. For **Question 25**, *Viens vite le voir* was a very common answer and was accepted. However, some candidates lost the mark as they answered *Il est vraiment gentil*.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were asked to:

- (a) describe the means of transport they use and where they go;
- (b) say what means of transport they like / dislike and why;
- (c) say where they would like to travel in the future and why.

Ten marks were available for communication of the required elements and five marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available.

The vast majority of candidates attempted this question, dealing with all the tasks, and they were generally familiar with the vocabulary they needed. For (a), candidates suggested a wide variety of means of transport available to them as well as stating the different places to which they go. In (b), the same means of transport could be rewarded as in (a). The most common reasons for liking or disliking a means of transport were speed, price and overcrowding. For (c), any recognisable place (town, country, location) was rewarded. The most popular destinations seemed to be Paris, England or America as candidates wanted to see famous buildings, visit family members or do some shopping. To score the ten marks available for communication, candidates need to write about all three of the tasks set. Unfortunately, some candidates misunderstood the last task and wrote about how they would like to travel in the future rather than where they would like to go and why.

The language used was very good, for the most part, although frequently lacking adjectival agreements and with some misspelling. There was some confusion as to whether to use a preposition or a definite article

before the means of transport. The spelling of *avion*, *à pied* and *bateau* was not always accurate enough to be recognisable. The vast majority of candidates scored four of five marks for language.

Section 3

In **Section 3**, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for: candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. While it will be possible to lift some answers from the text, candidates need to be very discriminating in what they choose – the inclusion of unnecessary connectives often resulted in the invalidation of an otherwise correct answer.

Exercice 1 Questions 27-32

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux* (they are told two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*). Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement. Where candidates decide that an answer is *Vrai*, the box **must be ticked** or no mark can be scored.

Questions 27, 28 and 32 were the three most often incorrectly identified as true or false.

For **Question 27**, which was *Faux*, candidates could select from the text that *Pour Catherine, aller en pension a été son propre choix*. The addition of *par contre* or the omission of *pour* invalidated the answer. **Question 28** was *Vrai* and required no correction. The justification for **Question 29**, *Ses parents ont trouvé un pensionnat*, was usually well done. For **Question 30**, candidates easily identified the correct detail, *Elle mangeait seule*. For **Question 31**, many candidates invalidated the correct answer, *Catherine a décidé de rester*, by including *donc*. **Question 32** was the second *Vrai* statement.

Exercice 2 Questions 33-40

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and many candidates found it quite challenging. Even though they were able to locate the correct part of the text, they were often not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response to the question or they were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptable response. In this exercise, candidates need to be able to make the necessary changes between direct and reported speech and to deal with the resulting pronoun / possessive adjective confusion. It was often the case that where candidates chose to copy a chunk of text with the correct answer buried within it, the extra details they included rendered their answer invalid. It is worth bearing in mind that if one line of space is provided for candidates to write in, the expected answer will not be three or four lines long.

It was clear that candidates had generally found the text accessible, and had understood it well, even though answers did not always score because of faulty French and/or invalidations.

Question 33 was in two parts as candidates had to state what **(i)** Sam and Olivier, and **(ii)** Damien thought of biology. The answer for **(i)** was very straightforward and many candidates correctly answered *...étaient passionnés (par la biologie)*. There were two possible answers for **(ii)**: either *...trouvait la biologie difficile* or *...ce n'était pas le bon choix*. For **Question 34** the information looked for was either *Il jouait de la guitare* or *Il composait des chansons* (or both). Many were not selective enough and answered *Il préférait passer son temps à jouer de la guitare et à composer des chansons* or simply answered *Jouer de la guitare*. It should be noted that if the question requires a finite verb, a subject is also expected, in this case *Damien* or *il*. *Des concours* was sufficient to gain the mark for **Question 35**. Unfortunately, this item of vocabulary was not always known. For **Question 36**, three elements were required to score the mark – *il gagne + un concours + pour de jeunes musiciens*. Whilst many answered *Il se présente à un concours pour de jeunes musiciens*, they could not score the mark as they omitted the key element of the answer which was that he **won** the competition.

Question 37 presented many candidates with some problems. This could have been answered quite straightforwardly by *Que Damien chante dans son restaurant / hôtel*. *Il a besoin d'un chanteur* did not score as it was too vague. For **Question 38**, many candidates answered *Pour l'encourager*: this was not the reason so many people came to dine at the hotel. The required answer was either *Pour entendre / écouter Damien* or *Pour les chansons de Damien*. For **Question 39**, candidates had to provide two from a possible three responses: *Il est en vacances dans la région*, *Il entend parler de Damien* or *Il vient l'écouter*. For

Question 40, candidates could either answer *On faisait la fête tous les jours* (without the inclusion of *après ça*) or say that they had money to spend. Those who decided to use the final sentence of the text for their answer had to adapt the second half of the reported speech to ...*que Damien gagnait à l'hôtel* to ensure that they conveyed a clear message.

The accessibility of the text was shown by the fact that almost all candidates, at a range of linguistic levels, attempted some, if not all the questions of this last exercise, and achieved a range of scores.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/23

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

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

- keep their answers brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**.
- make sure that they read the essay question carefully and answer every part of it.
- allow time for checking their work to ensure that they have attempted every question (a blank space cannot be awarded any marks) and to make any corrections needed.
- ensure that when they change an answer they do so in such a way as to make it clear what is their final answer and what the Examiner is to mark.

General comments

Candidates seemed to be well-prepared for the style of the paper, and had no obvious difficulties in completing it within the time allowed. The vast majority attempted all sections and exercises on the paper. Levels of grammatical accuracy were variable, with verbs, genders, possessives and pronouns showing problems. Candidates should re-read what they have written once they have finished the paper, and correct simple errors such as words miscopied from the text, particularly in **Section 3** where such errors may mean that a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was generally well done, although **Question 2** was sometimes answered with C (*Jambon*) rather than B (*Poulet*).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the vocabulary for various jobs: the vast majority of candidates correctly identified them all and scored the maximum five marks.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates read an e-mail from Adam to his friend Christophe, and then answered a series of five multiple-choice questions. For **Question 12**, not all candidates seemed to understand *tôt* and some opted for C rather than B. For **Question 13**, *bavarder* was not always understood and some candidates opted for A instead of C.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are three marks available for communication, and two for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked write an invitation to a party, providing three pieces of information based on the pictures given:

- (a) where the party is taking place (*chez moi, chez mon ami, à la maison*);
- (b) the date of the party (*30 / le trente juillet*);
- (c) what they are going to do (*regarder la télévision / un film / un vidéo*).

Many candidates combined the first two tasks into one sentence, which was perfectly acceptable.

Most candidates found this exercise relatively straightforward and had no trouble gaining the three communication marks. There was some variation in the activities chosen for the third task and these were credited where the interpretation seemed reasonable.

In order to score the two marks available for language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Candidates who used a correct third person form of *être* in each of the first two parts (*La fête est chez moi, la date est le 30 juillet*) could score a language mark for each instance.

Credit is only given for the required tasks, so candidates have no need to write long answers, or add extra material. While communication marks can be scored with brief phrases, candidates should try to formulate sentences in order to score the maximum marks available for language.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text and answer the questions in French. The majority of candidates coped well, and scored equally well. The focus of this exercise is to test candidates' ability to locate the correct answer to each question in the text provided. Therefore, although often a one or two word answer was sufficient, provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct information, answers lifted directly from the text were acceptable even if they contained a lot of extra material. This additional material was ignored except in the few instances where it contradicted the correct answer.

For **Question 17**, there were three possible answers: the idea that Tania is now able to rest, or that she has moved house, or that she is now settled in the new house – the first of these was the most common. The majority of candidates had no difficulty with the next two questions. Some answers to **Question 20** fell into the category where extra material contradicted the correct answer. While the single word *Forêt* was sufficient to score, a few candidates answered *Très loin d'une grande forêt* – the complete opposite of what was stated. *Nous ne sommes pas très loin d'une grande forêt où nous faisons quelquefois des promenades* was acceptable. **Question 21**, a two part question, was generally very well done. *Loin* on its own was incomplete for one of the answers, and *Loin d'Isabelle*, though possibly true, had nothing to do with Tania's desire for her own means of transport. For **Question 22**, the reason why Tania's parents were reluctant to buy the *vélomoteur* was that they were afraid of accidents. For **Question 23**, either *septembre* or *Quand elle va au lycée* were acceptable. Answers to **Question 24** needed to include the information that the neighbours' daughter lived at the *lycée* during the week. **Question 25** was straightforward – *impossible de s'ennuyer...* – and most candidates scored this mark. The great majority of candidates achieved nine or ten marks on this exercise.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were asked to:

- (a) describe how they receive money (when? why? from whom?);
- (b) talk about what they buy with this money, together with their reasons;
- (c) say what they would like to buy as a present for their family, with reasons.

Ten marks were available for communication of the required elements and five marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available.

Candidates found this essay well within their capabilities, and were able to write at some length about who gives them pocket money, and whether they help out round the house in return for this, or look after brothers and sisters, or whether they earn money in official employment. They could also talk about how they spend their money and why, so were able to score plenty of communication points for the first two tasks. For the third task, some said that they would buy a present for their family, without specifying what they would buy.

Many essays were clearly written, and very readable, structured to deal with each section in turn. The language used was very good, for the most part, although frequently lacking adjectival agreements and with some misspelling. Many candidates scored four or five marks for language.

Section 3

In **Section 3**, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for: candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. While it will be possible to lift some answers from the text, candidates need to be very discriminating in what they choose – additional material copied may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux* (they are told two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*). Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement. Where candidates decide that an answer is *Vrai*, the box **must be ticked** or no mark can be scored.

Candidates had very little difficulty identifying the true/false statements, and most were correct with all six choices. The statements in **Questions 29** and **31** were both *Vrai*. The corrections to the *Faux* statements were generally quite well done. **Question 27** proved the most problematic: a number of candidates suggested *Elle est devenue la première nageuse française de cet âge à participer aux compétitions* but failed to make clear that by *elle*, they meant Mathilde. Some were distracted by the sentence in the text beginning *À 90 ans, Mathilde a battu le record de France...* and offered this instead, but this cannot be seen as a correction of the original statement.

For **Question 28** almost all candidates managed to say that Mathilde had learnt to swim in her childhood, and for **Question 30** that she credited her trainer Nicolas with her success. **Question 32** was corrected very well by the vast majority of candidates, saying either that Mathilde could not live without swimming, or that swimming eased her aches and pains. One or two candidates were side-tracked by the idea of Mathilde rarely taking holidays, and some gave their answers in Mathilde's own words, rather than in reported speech, and thus did not score.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and many candidates found it quite challenging. Even though they were able to locate the correct part of the text, they were often not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response to the question or they were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptable response. In this exercise, candidates need to be able to make the necessary changes between direct and reported speech and to deal with the resulting pronoun / possessive adjective confusion. It was often the case that where candidates chose to copy a chunk of text with the correct answer buried within it, the extra details they included rendered their answer invalid. It is worth bearing in mind that if one line of space is provided for candidates to write in, the expected answer will not be three or four lines long.

It was clear that candidates had generally found the text accessible, and had understood it well, even though answers did not always score because of faulty French and/or invalidations.

The first question of this exercise proved challenging. Candidates generally understood clearly enough that Louis injured his eye playing with a knife, but many found it difficult to change the present participle in the text (*en jouant*) into the necessary finite verb: *Il jouait avec un couteau*.

For **Questions 34(i)** and **(ii)**, the answers looked for were that *Les médecins (à cette époque) ne comprenaient pas bien les problèmes d'infection*, or even more simply that *Louis avait une infection*, and, for the second part, that *Les médecins n'ont pas bien soigné le petit Louis*. Most candidates scored at least one of the marks here. Some invalidated their first answer by the inclusion of *qui (à cette époque)*, which they copied from the text without thinking enough about the structure of the sentence.

Question 35 was generally well done and most understood for **Question 36** that it was his teacher who encouraged Louis. **Question 37** was also clearly understood and well answered, either with the idea of the quality of the education offered in the special school, or blind children receiving a better education there.

The majority of candidates had no difficulty answering **Question 38**. **Question 39**, which asked why Louis had stayed 24 years in the same educational establishment, proved difficult for some who thought it was because he was developing his writing system. Most understood that he had been both student and teacher in the same establishment. Many candidates lifted from the text ...*d'abord comme élève, puis comme enseignant...* without trying for a verbal construction (e.g. *Il était là d'abord comme élève... etc.* or *Il est devenu / devient enseignant* or *Il est revenu comme professeur*) and so did not score.

Questions 40 and **41** were almost universally correctly answered.

The accessibility of the text was shown by the fact that almost all candidates, at a range of linguistic levels, attempted some, if not all the questions of this last exercise, and achieved a range of scores.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/41
Continuous Writing

Key messages

The more successful candidates' scripts were characterised by the following features:

- The rubric was followed closely.
- The answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- The length of each answer was between 130 and 140 words, as directed.
- The candidate wrote mainly French which s/he knew to be correct and avoided language with which s/he was unfamiliar.
- There was a variety of lexicon and structures with little repetition.
- Answers were presented with minimal incidence of basic errors.
- Handwriting was clearly legible.

General comments

The entry for this paper continues to expand and the overall quality of the candidature remains high. The questions were tackled with enthusiasm by the majority and the knowledge of the French language displayed on many scripts was impressive. Answers to **Question 1**, where candidates are given specific tasks to fulfil, were particularly well handled. The narrative in **Question 2** was not always of the same standard and this issue is addressed in a later section of this report. Where candidates were not able to do themselves justice, this was often because they did not follow the directions given in the rubric and omitted certain tasks, because they wrote to excessive length to the detriment of their answers, or because of other shortcomings in examination technique. It is to these candidates in particular that the following advice is addressed.

To score well for communication it is very important, especially in **Question 1**, to observe the detail of the directions given in the rubric. A number of candidates overlooked certain tasks which automatically restricted their ability to gain marks. Each task must be addressed and should be answered in a tense appropriate to the task. If the task is phrased in a present tense, a reply should be made in the same tense. In **Question 2**, past tenses are required as indicated in the instructions. Some candidates wrote in a mixture of different time frames which was inappropriate. Some did not include *réactions* as directed in **Question 2**, and marks for communication were affected. More successful candidates kept closely to the requirements of the questions set and avoided verbiage or irrelevance. Material which was introduced which did not pertain to the subject was not credited for language or content.

The more successful candidates used their time effectively, preparing a brief plan under certain headings or paragraphs. To an extent, the detailed directions in **Question 1** provided such a framework. In **Question 2**, the narrative, the candidates are left to their own initiative to devise an anecdote, and some did not give sufficient thought to planning their answer. The result was that they sometimes said all they had to say in 100 words or so and resorted to verbiage or marginally relevant material to reach the target of 140 words. Others attempted so much that they wrote far in excess of the word limit, to the detriment of their answer, and increasing the likelihood of linguistic errors. No credit can be given for content or language that occurs after the 140th word.

The better candidates composed each sentence carefully and paid particular attention to verb forms. Grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. Correct genders and agreement of adjectives and past participles, where necessary, are conditions for obtaining marks for language. Verbs must be in the correct tense and the correct person to gain credit. The better candidates did not put too much reliance on repeated phrases, such as *il y a* or possessives. They did not 'force in' certain set phrases or idioms, regardless of the context. The latter practice had a detrimental effect on the quality of some answers, which was reflected in a reduced mark for 'general impression'. A minority tried to

make use of as many adjectives as possible. This should be discouraged as it is unnecessary and spoils the effect of the response.

Some candidates wrote freely in French and included a rich variety of vocabulary and more complex linguistic structures. Others of more modest capacity should try not to be over-ambitious and should aim to write within their limitations. In free composition, such as is examined in this paper, it is a wise maxim to 'write what you know is correct and avoid what you do not know or are unsure of. If you cannot say it, say something else. Show the Examiner what you can do, not what you cannot'. For example, if candidates do not know the verb 'to rain', they might use the verb 'to snow' instead.

When they have finished answers, candidates are advised to make full use of the time left to check their work for errors. The time available for this component is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look at the spelling of common words in particular and ensure that the gender of the writer or of the persons in a narrative is consistent throughout. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French they cannot read. This year showed a deterioration in the standards of presentation with much crossing out and alteration. Some answers were made in such minuscule writing that Examiners could barely decipher what was meant. Some employed a style of writing which rendered certain letters indistinguishable from others. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can, but there are limits and marks may be sacrificed if handwriting is illegible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) A house exchange

This was the more popular option and some interesting responses were received. Comprehension of the bullet points was generally good and most candidates were able to find plenty to say. Some made the mistake of writing too much in answer to the earlier tasks, which resulted in an over-long piece. In such cases, the last task could sometimes not be credited, as it fell outside the word count.

Success in handling letter etiquette was varied. Some addressed Madame Gant alternately as *tu* (informal) and *vous* (formal) and mixed formal register with familiar expressions. Examiners were tolerant of the use of the familiar, as Madame Gant may have been a friend of the writer, but inconsistency, such as the juxtaposition of *tu* and *votre*, could not get full credit for language.

Most began their letter by saying that they wished to make a house exchange with Madame Gant's family. Usually, candidates relied on the rubric's phrasing and said *Ma famille voudrait faire un échange de maisons avec votre famille*, while others had difficulty in saying *Ma famille et moi voudrions...* Candidates usually followed this opening with a simple statement such as *Nous avons déjà fait un échange de maisons*, which was enough to secure the first mark for communication. Some had visited distant lands such as Japan, Australia or USA. Some remained in their own country. Some unfortunately omitted the task or did not use the past tense.

Positive opinions of the experience were often thoughtfully expressed. Some simply said the exchange was excellent for all parties, which was enough to secure the communication mark for the task. Others went further, saying how much they enjoyed discovering the culture and language of a new country. On a practical level, some said how affordable the experience was and referred to the advantages of house dwelling against expensive hotels. Attempts at past tenses were not always successful and weaker candidates tended to mix past and present tenses in answer to this task.

Reasons for choosing Paris for a house exchange were varied. Some said they wished to practise their French. Others had family or friends who lived there. Candidates wrote of fine food, boat trips on the Seine and friendly people. Some were drawn to the hustle and bustle of living in a capital city. Others were attracted to the charms of a 'quiet, small town'. Many made reference to the beauty and culture of Paris and wished to visit the sights. These regularly included the Eiffel Tower or the Champs Élysées. No penalty was incurred for misspelling such proper nouns. It was appropriate to use present tenses to describe the attractions of Paris, but some made correct use of the conditional tense to say what they would do during their stay. This topic was treated with enthusiasm.

The task of describing their own house was relatively straightforward, requiring present tenses and everyday vocabulary. Some houses were extremely lavish, containing multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, and with

indoor and outdoor pools and extensive gardens. The Gants would be impressed by the modern facilities, the IT equipment, the large TV's and the well equipped kitchen. Those who described flats stressed how roomy they were, occupying several floors and being ideally situated. Finding the appropriate vocabulary was not usually a problem but precision of spelling and the accuracy of adjectival agreements were not always in evidence.

Nearby attractions were many and varied. They included smart shops, historic buildings, sports centres and beautiful countryside. Ideas were successfully expressed by using present tenses to describe the attractions, and conditional or future tenses to say what the Gants would or will be able to enjoy or admire during their stay.

Question 1(b) A bad camping experience

Although less popular than **Question 1(a)**, this question inspired some excellent responses. Letter etiquette was usually well observed as candidates, being on familiar ground writing to a friend, were able to keep to an informal register. They began with a friendly *Bonjour* or *Ça va* and closed with a well known *formule* such as *amicalement* or *bisous*. *Tutoiement* was the norm, although Examiners were tolerant of the use of the formal *vous*, provided there was no inconsistency.

Misunderstanding of the topic was rare, and candidates generally tackled the question with enthusiasm. Most began by saying they had had a bad experience on a camping trip. The first task (say when you returned from your holiday) was not always addressed. Some seemed to overlook it in their eagerness to write about the calamities of the trip. The task could be fulfilled by using the verb *rentrer* from the rubric in the perfect tense and a time, as in *Je suis rentré(e) hier / samedi dernier / il y a deux jours*. Some said when they went on the camping trip, but did not complete the task set, which was to say when they returned.

Problems at the camp site were related with relish, although not all could use past tenses consistently. Weaker candidates tended to alternate between present and past tenses. On the campsite everything went wrong. Parents forgot to bring food, sleeping bags or even the tent. Facilities, especially the toilets and the cafés, were appalling and there was no hot water. Neighbours kept them awake at night with loud music. Other family members were annoying. There were mosquitoes, illness and accidents. Above all the weather was unkind. Many were unable to use weather expressions correctly. The simple *Il faisait froid* was rendered incorrectly with the verb *être*, even on above average scripts. There were storms and strong winds and rain, which caused particular havoc, wetting the campers and their equipment. Many attempted the irregular verb *pleuvoir* but only the better candidates used it correctly. Some confused it with the verb *pleurer*. Those who were unsure of this verb could easily have avoided it by saying something else.

The next bullet point was 'do you like camping and why (not)?'. Many gave reasons for liking camping. It was affordable. They loved nature and the open air. Camping offered peace and quiet and a change from the stress of city/school life. It was a chance to spend time with friends and family. They enjoyed the activities, swimming, games, hiking and the beach. Others disliked camping, especially in view of their recent experience. Too often it was cold and wet. They hated the small tents, having to do so much work, the flies and the absence of friends. They were tired of family holidays. They missed their PC and other IT items. They missed a warm bed and the comforts of home. One felt many were drawing on personal experience.

Next year, some would choose to go back to camping, as they liked it so much. The majority would go somewhere completely different. The future context was conveyed by various means. Some put a simple future, as in *Nous irons au bord de la mer*. Others used the verb *aller* with an infinitive as in *Je vais passer les vacances chez mon oncle*, while many used the construction in the stimulus and put *je voudrais...* with an infinitive, as in *Je voudrais passer mes vacances en France*. All these strategies were acceptable. Most offered a good reason for their choice. They would go to X to visit the sites. They would enjoy the comforts of a big hotel. They would go somewhere with a good climate and no summer rains. They would go to X because family members lived there. They would go to France to improve their French. There was a wide variety of destinations and reasons to go there.

Question 2 Lost during a walk

The narrative question required candidates to continue a story: 'On a long country walk with friends, you suddenly realised you were completely lost. What happened next?'. Many candidates attempted a dramatic adventure involving frightening walks through dense forests, encounters with wild animals such as bears and wild boar, more storms and bad weather. (Some made the same linguistic errors they made in **1(b)**). At last they found a road or a house and a friendly person to save the day. Some stories were told with a touch of

humour and self-deprecation. Candidates lost or forgot to bring a compass or a map (surprisingly few knew *la carte*). They argued fiercely over which way to go. Some climbed trees or hills to get a better view of their surroundings. Nearly all, it seemed, resorted to their mobile phones but there were usually problems. These did not work. There was no signal. Parents were not at home. (Candidates should be reminded that the verb *téléphoner* requires an indirect object.) Candidates were reduced to wandering about in the countryside. Some walked for hours and even days before they were found. They ran out of food or water. It was dark. They made camp for the night. Some fell ill or had serious accidents. Some candidates attempted the construction *se casser la jambe* but were unable to use it properly. Again they are advised to avoid such difficulties by saying something else of which they are more confident. Stories ended happily. They finally got through on the phone and parents and friends came to their rescue. Some summoned the police or the fire service. Others finally remembered how to get back to the starting place. They were reunited with the rest of the group or their parents. With hindsight, the adventure seemed like fun, but they had been afraid at the time. They decided never again to wander off without adult supervision or never to go out without the right equipment. Some did not grasp that they were lost at all and wrote about an item of lost property during a walk. Others ignored the direction to 'continue the story' and began with a long introduction, 'setting the scene'. No communication marks could be awarded to such material.

Some excellent accounts were achieved by the better candidates, who 'showed off their French' to good effect. They were able to relate a series of events in a variety of verbs and persons, using mainly perfect and imperfect tenses appropriately. Communication marks were awarded for three separate incidents, each expressed in a successful past tense. They handled *réactions* well. They expressed surprise and shock, joy and relief. The situation was curious, extraordinary or frightening. Two marks were awarded for two separate reactions, each expressed in a past tense. The narrative of the best scripts was conveyed with a minimal incidence of error and there was a wide range of vocabulary and structure.

Other, less gifted candidates, who may have achieved some success in **Question 1** where the tasks were more specific, performed markedly less well in **Question 2**, when they had to devise their own content. Linguistic demands were more stringent too, with the emphasis on past tenses. The narrative requires more thought and preparation than **Question 1** and above all it requires a thorough and methodical revision at the end to correct inaccuracies. The time allowed for this component should be sufficient to do this. Certain basic errors recurred on even above average scripts and many of these might have been eliminated. Typical of these errors was the failure to use the correct forms of verbs in the perfect tense, especially in the case of *être* verbs and reflexives. Common sources of error were weather expressions and expressions with *avoir* such as *avoir froid* and *avoir peur*. There was confusion of everyday words. *Entendre* was expressed as *écouter*, *voir* as *regarder*, and *crier* was used for *pleurer*. Common words were regularly misspelled, such as *beaucoup*, *malheureusement* and *rencontrer*. The agreement of adjectives and past participles was a regular source of error and the gender of the narrator alternated between masculine and feminine.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, the performance of large numbers of candidates was most creditable and the enthusiasm many have for the language was evident throughout.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/42
Continuous Writing

Key messages

The more successful candidates' scripts were characterised by the following features:

- The rubric was followed closely.
- The answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- The length of each answer was between 130 and 140 words, as directed.
- The candidate wrote mainly French which s/he knew to be correct and avoided language with which s/he was unfamiliar.
- There was a variety of lexicon and structures with little repetition.
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Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French they cannot read. This year showed a deterioration in the standards of presentation with much crossing out and alteration. Some answers were made in such minuscule writing that Examiners could barely decipher what was meant. Some employed a style of writing which rendered certain letters indistinguishable from others. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can, but there are limits and marks may be sacrificed if handwriting is illegible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) *Ma ville favorite*

This was the more popular option. Many candidates chose exotic cities such as New York or Paris, while others described their own home town. Some interesting answers were received. All understood the topic, although particular bullet points proved to be challenging for weaker candidates.

The first task required a simple present tense to describe the town. To obtain a communication mark it was sufficient to say, for instance, *Paris est...* followed by a suitable adjective or to say *Londres est une belle ville*. Some referred to features of the town, for example *Rome est célèbre pour ses monuments anciens* or *Les maisons à X sont pittoresques / modernes / vieilles*. Some produced very long descriptions and then wrote beyond the 140 word limit in order to complete later tasks.

Next, candidates were directed to cite positive and negative aspects of the town. Positive aspects often included the facilities. Candidates said *Les transports en commun sont excellents*, *Les écoles sont bonnes* or *Il y a beaucoup de parcs et de magasins*. Some referred to attractions such as *parcs d'attractions*, *musées* and *stades*. Those who wrote of Paris often mentioned la Tour Eiffel or les Champs Élysées. Few could avoid spelling errors here, but ticks were not lost for misspelling proper nouns. Negative aspects included pollution, overcrowding, noise and traffic problems, mostly expressed in accurate French. The benefits of thorough preparation of this topic were in evidence.

'What you did on the occasion of your last visit' required past tenses. The task was not successfully fulfilled unless a correct verb form in the past was achieved. Marks could be obtained for almost any activity. Some spent time with family or friends. Some played games or went swimming. Others saw a film or attended a sporting event. Better candidates gave a number of activities which were well expressed in a series of perfect tenses.

'What I shall do on my next visit to the town' required a future context and communication marks were achieved by using simple future tenses (*J'irai à la piscine*, *Je ferai du shopping*) or *je vais* with an infinitive (*Je vais visiter la cathédrale*). Others satisfied the requirement by using *je voudrais* or *j'espère* with infinitives. Again, a wide variety of activities were mentioned and most candidates found plenty to say.

Generally, candidates found the subject matter accessible and only a minority did not present 140 words. It was a pity some wrote overlong pieces and did not cover all the bullet points within the word count.

Question 1(b) *La fin des examens*

This was the less popular option, which was perhaps surprising as the topic concerned the candidate's personal experience and could be treated using everyday language. Understanding of the tasks was generally good and some interesting responses were received.

The first task concerned a present from parents given to the writer at the end of the exams. This was sometimes expressed by using the verb *recevoir* in the perfect tense (*j'ai reçu*) while others attempted to use the verb *donner*, which involved using an indirect object pronoun as in *Mes parents m'ont donné...* Many did not handle the latter expression successfully. Some 'got round' the problem by avoiding the irregular *recevoir* and the object pronoun, saying *J'ai trouvé un cadeau dans ma chambre. C'était une montre*. A high number received a dog or a cat as a gift. This was a good choice as they could exploit the 'new pet' by including it in later tasks and it was easy to describe. Others received the latest IT gadgets (hard to describe) or a bicycle. Some lucky candidates received a car (but only a small one). Nearly all expressed delight with their present, though some were disappointed to get a pile of school text books for the following school year which was not what they hoped for.

In response to the next task, most were able to express an opinion of their last exam. Some chose to say they thought they did well or badly, but this was not easy to express. A communication mark was obtained by simply saying *Mon dernier examen était difficile* (or *facile*). Some went on to say which subjects they liked or disliked and gave reasons. Others said why exams were important in view of their future ambitions.

In spite of the difficulty some candidates had in saying *Je me relaxe* or *Je peux me relaxer*, most were able to say how they are spending their time now the exams are over. The task invited the use of present tenses. Some said *Je passe mon temps avec mon nouveau chien* or *...avec mon jeu vidéo*. Others took it easy in the garden or at the pool, played sport or enjoyed shopping. Some stayed in bed until late. Others stayed up late watching TV. They relished the thought of rest and relaxation after the stress of exams.

Après les résultats was interpreted in a number of ways by candidates. Some would begin studies for next year's academic programme. Others would take a holiday, perhaps in a foreign country with family or friends. Candidates were usually able to handle the future context successfully, using the same methods already mentioned under **Question 1(a)**. A number had already used 140 words before they did the task so the communication mark could not be awarded.

A fifth communication mark was given for extra detail in response to bullet points (iii) or (iv).

Better candidates regularly achieved full marks for communication on either **Question 1(a)** or **1(b)**. This was thanks to careful reading of the rubric and by paying particular attention to the tense required in each task.

Question 2 *Une fête française*

The majority understood correctly that they were to write in the past about a celebration of things French, organised by their town or village. A minority thought they should write about Bastille Day or some other national day and this interpretation received full credit too.

While preparation for the *fête* (sandwiches, invitations etc.) was rewarded for language in the spirit of the question, the rubric directed candidates to say what happened during the *fête* (*pendant la fête*) and communication marks were confined to these events. Many wrote about the 'gallic' nature of the festivities, but there was no loss of marks for describing a *fête* which was not specifically related to French culture. There were songs (sometimes French, performed by French singers). There were plays, dancing, films and games, some with a French flavour, some not. There were visits from French VIP's. Above all there was French food and lots of it. Candidates revealed a good knowledge of French specialities. Some tried frogs or snails for the first time and expressed delight or disgust. Croissants went down well. So did patisseries of all kinds. A number chose to interpret *événements* at the *fête* very freely, and wrote of accidents and other misadventures which occurred. Full credit for language and communication was given in such cases, providing the setting was at the *fête*. Reactions were almost invariably positive and marks were given for the reactions of the narrator and the local people who were in attendance.

The key to a good **Question 2** answer, as always, was to present a series of events and reactions in correct verbs in past tenses, especially perfect tenses. Candidates who did so, invariably did well in this question. Normally, when candidates strayed into other tenses, the number of marks for language and communication was affected. Care should be taken in regard to the gender of the narrator, which must be consistent throughout. Even on the better scripts, some writers declared themselves to be feminine when saying *Je*

suis arrivée... and followed it later with masculine agreements, as in *J'étais heureux*. More successful candidates accrued numerous language marks for statements in perfect tenses in a variety of persons, as in: *Nous avons chanté, Les habitants ont applaudi, J'ai mangé, J'ai bu, Mon père a dansé, On a joué*. When candidates kept to familiar verbs, errors were minimised. Reflexives and *être* verbs presented more problems, but better candidates negotiated these verbs successfully too. The verb *s'amuser (bien)* gave difficulty as usual, and not all knew to use a singular verb form with *tout le monde*. *Mes amis et moi* was not always followed by the *nous* form of the verb. Candidates who are unsure of certain irregular verbs should try to avoid them. Some attempted to say that the *fête* was ruined by rain but did not know the verb *pleuvoir*, sometimes confusing it with *pleurer*. As stated earlier in this report, they should heed the advice: 'if you do not know it, say something else'.

Marks for reactions could be obtained at any point during the account. More confident candidates expressed these by using reported speech as in: *Papa a dit que le spectacle était superbe* or *Je pensais que la nourriture était délicieuse*, but the marks were also awarded for the straightforward *C'était amusant, J'étais content(e)* or *Les enfants ont ri*. Credit was given both for the reactions of the narrator and those of the local population.

It was evident that a number of candidates who scored well on **Question 1**, where the tasks were clearly indicated in the rubric, performed markedly less well in **Question 2** when they were required to devise their own content. The demands on language were different too with the emphasis on past tenses. The narrative question needed a little more thought and preparation. Basic errors appeared more frequently, indicating a need for a thorough and methodical revision of one's work at the end. The time allowed for the paper should be sufficient for candidates to do this.

The best answers displayed a good variety of perfect and imperfect tenses, used appropriately. There was a wealth of vocabulary, idiom and a range of structures, including subordinate clauses and infinitives. However on many scripts, mistakes of basic grammar and spelling were numerous and common words were confused such as *entendre* and *écouter*, *voir* and *regarder*, *attendre* and *assister* and *joli* and *content*. *Avoir* and *être* were used indiscriminately on weaker scripts, especially when used as auxiliaries. As stated earlier, many of these errors could, perhaps, have been eliminated if candidates had taken more care over detail and checked more thoroughly for errors.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/43
Continuous Writing

Key messages

The more successful candidates' scripts were characterised by the following features:

- The rubric was followed closely.
- The answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- The length of each answer was between 130 and 140 words, as directed.
- The candidate wrote mainly French which s/he knew to be correct and avoided language with which s/he was unfamiliar.
- There was a variety of lexicon and structures with little repetition.
- Answers were presented with minimal incidence of basic errors.
- Handwriting was clearly legible.

General comments

The entry for this paper continues to expand and the overall quality of the candidature remains high. The questions were tackled with enthusiasm by the majority and the knowledge of the French language displayed on many scripts was impressive. Answers to **Question 1**, where candidates are given specific tasks to fulfil, were particularly well handled. The narrative in **Question 2** was not always of the same standard and this issue is addressed in a later section of this report. Where candidates were not able to do themselves justice, this was often because they did not follow the directions given in the rubric and omitted certain tasks, because they wrote to excessive length to the detriment of their answers, or because of other shortcomings in examination technique. It is to these candidates in particular that the following advice is addressed.

To score well for communication it is very important, especially in **Question 1**, to observe the detail of the directions given in the rubric. A number of candidates overlooked certain tasks which automatically restricted their ability to gain marks. Each task must be addressed and should be answered in a tense appropriate to the task. If the task is phrased in a present tense, a reply should be made in the same tense. In **Question 2**, past tenses are required as indicated in the instructions. Some candidates wrote in a mixture of different time frames which was inappropriate. Some did not include *réactions* as directed in **Question 2**, and marks for communication were affected. More successful candidates kept closely to the requirements of the questions set and avoided verbiage or irrelevance. Material which was introduced which did not pertain to the subject was not credited for language or content.

The more successful candidates used their time effectively, preparing a brief plan under certain headings or paragraphs. To an extent, the detailed directions in **Question 1** provided such a framework. In **Question 2**, the narrative, the candidates are left to their own initiative to devise an anecdote, and some did not give sufficient thought to planning their answer. The result was that they sometimes said all they had to say in 100 words or so and resorted to verbiage or marginally relevant material to reach the target of 140 words. Others attempted so much that they wrote far in excess of the word limit, to the detriment of their answer, and increasing the likelihood of linguistic errors. No credit can be given for content or language that occurs after the 140th word.

The better candidates composed each sentence carefully and paid particular attention to verb forms. Grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. Correct genders and agreement of adjectives and past participles, where necessary, are conditions for obtaining marks for language. Verbs must be in the correct tense and the correct person to gain credit. The better candidates did not put too much reliance on repeated phrases, such as *il y a* or possessives. They did not 'force in' certain set phrases or idioms, regardless of the context. The latter practice had a detrimental effect on the quality of some answers, which was reflected in a reduced mark for 'general impression'. A minority tried to

make use of as many adjectives as possible. This should be discouraged as it is unnecessary and spoils the effect of the response.

Some candidates wrote freely in French and included a rich variety of vocabulary and more complex linguistic structures. Others of more modest capacity should try not to be over-ambitious and should aim to write within their limitations. In free composition, such as is examined in this paper, it is a wise maxim to 'write what you know is correct and avoid what you do not know or are unsure of. If you cannot say it, say something else. Show the Examiner what you can do, not what you cannot'. For example, if candidates do not know the verb 'to rain', they might use the verb 'to snow' instead.

When they have finished answers, candidates are advised to make full use of the time left to check their work for errors. The time available for this component is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look at the spelling of common words in particular and ensure that the gender of the writer or of the persons in a narrative is consistent throughout. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French they cannot read. This year showed a deterioration in the standards of presentation with much crossing out and alteration. Some answers were made in such minuscule writing that Examiners could barely decipher what was meant. Some employed a style of writing which rendered certain letters indistinguishable from others. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can, but there are limits and marks may be sacrificed if handwriting is illegible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) *Une fête traditionnelle*

This was the more popular question and comprehension of the task (a traditional festival such as New Year or Christmas) was universal. Most showed enthusiasm for festivals which they described in detail, but a significant number did not score many marks for communication due to a failure to address the specific points required by the rubric.

Some began by describing the festival at some length (costumes, fireworks, parades, ceremony) but did not fulfil task (i), which directed them to say with whom and where they usually spend the festival. *Je passe la fête avec/chez mes grands-parents* was sufficient. It was regrettable that so many copied *traditionnelle* wrongly from the question paper.

Next, candidates were required to say how they celebrated the festival last year, which involved the use of a perfect tense. A number omitted this task or employed a present tense. Some candidates said they had a special meal with the whole family in attendance or they exchanged presents (especially at Christmas), played with small children or listened while *papa/grand-père* entertained with songs or stories. Meanwhile, mother or grandmother produced a superb meal. There were parties, dances and more singing. The candidates who chose to write about Christmas found plenty to say. Everyone had a good time, although many were unable to use the verb *s'amuser* in the perfect tense. Successful candidates were able to score heavily for use of language by using simple French structures and everyday vocabulary.

Many candidates said they particularly liked the festival because it unites families. This is valued because it brings together relatives who are seldom seen the rest of the year. Old friends get together. The shared celebration was particularly appreciated. Some enthused about the food. Others liked going out and about and having fun with friends. The majority were able to say what they like most about the festival and why.

Those who wrote significantly more than 140 words often did not score the last communication mark, as their answer to the final bullet point (how do you wish to spend the festival next time?) fell outside the word count. Most candidates are used to the expression *je voudrais...* with an infinitive and the task was competently handled in this manner.

Question 1(b) *Living at home or at school*

This question was not as popular as 1(a) but answers were usually apposite and well expressed. Understanding of the tasks was almost universal and this time candidates attempted most if not all of the bullet points. The vocabulary required related to school and daily routine which was familiar ground for most candidates.

The first task (where do you live during the school year?) was quite straightforward and the majority could say *J'habite à la maison/à l'école*.

The debate over the pros and cons of being a 'boarder' was expressed in an interesting manner by the better candidates. *Aspects positifs* included being with your friends all day, having teachers on hand to help with school matters, regular meals of good quality and not having to travel to school every day. *Aspects négatifs* included the lack of freedom and the lack of family contact on a daily basis. While most of the candidates were not themselves boarders, all seemed to understand the concept and were able to argue the case sensibly.

The third point (what you did after lessons yesterday) was usually well handled and there was a wide variety of response. Candidates played games indoors or outdoors, went to spend time at a friend's house, played with the dog, watched TV or even did homework. A communication mark was awarded for the correct use of a past tense and a suitable expression. A minority replied using the present tense which was inappropriate.

The last task asked candidates whether they would prefer to be a 'boarder' or not and why? Most said *Je voudrais habiter à la maison* and gave reasons. They cited freedom to do what they want when they want, the attraction of computer games and TV which were assumed to be absent in boarding schools, daily contact with family and friends and a general dislike of school.

Question 2 A weekend without parents

Understanding of the question seemed to be total and candidates set about their stories with enthusiasm.

They were happy to be alone for the weekend as they were free to do whatever they liked. The more ambitious said how they turned the house into the venue of a huge party (*une boum énorme*) for all their friends. Music and food were arranged and a multitude turned up, including some undesirables who had not been invited. There was singing and loud music. There were breakages everywhere. It was a typical teenage party in fact. Parents returned home early. Punishment was given. Cleaning up took ages. Great regrets were expressed. In the hands of the more able this was enjoyable to read and was related with good and imaginative use of language. However, this kind of complex anecdote was often attempted by those who did not have the linguistic scope to handle it.

In such cases, candidates would have been wise to keep to a simpler story line, as some more conservative candidates did to good effect. They stayed in bed until late and stayed up very late. They watched all their favourite films without interruption. They played games with friends. They played loud music. They even did homework in peace. Less ambitious stories of this kind could be related in simpler, more 'everyday' French and marks for the correct use of language were more accessible.

Apart from the 'over stretching' described above, marks were often sacrificed through carelessness. Common words were misspelt, agreements of adjectives and past participles were missed and the genders of nouns varied. The gender of the narrator was alternately masculine or feminine. Regular and common irregular verbs were mishandled. Everyday words were misused such as *écouter* for *entendre*, *regarder* for *voir*, *retourner* for *rentrer* and *joli* for *heureux*. If candidates could be persuaded to spend more time checking their work methodically for errors, many more marks for language would be awarded.

On a positive note, some well-prepared candidates seized the opportunity to display a wide knowledge of the French language, including an impressive range of idioms, and succeeded in answering both **Question 1** and **Question 2** with only a minor incidence of error.