

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/11

Listening

Key messages

- Performance on this Listening paper was of a very similar standard to that seen in 2011. Candidates showed very good levels of both specific and general understanding.
- Most candidates were aware of the need to write clearly in blue or black ink and not to write answers first in pencil and then overwrite in pen. Centres should remind candidates to write clearly and to cross out any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates need to have the opportunity to attempt past papers before they take the Listening examination so that they are familiar with the rubric requirements and structure of the paper.
- Answers are marked on the basis of whether they communicate the message. Inaccuracies in the use of French are only taken into account if the message becomes ambiguous.
- Most candidates understood the need to keep answers brief. New Centres should note that full sentences are not required. Long answers often include detail which is extra to the requirements of a question. Such extra detail may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

General comments

As in previous years, a very full range of performance was seen on the Listening paper. Candidates had generally been well prepared and in all but a few Centres were familiar with the structure of the examination and the required response types in all three sections. The exercises discriminated appropriately and candidates found the topic areas tested to be accessible and within their cultural experience.

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

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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 did well on this opening exercise, particularly so on the first three questions. The extracts were straightforward and short and the multiple choice questions required candidates to identify specific vocabulary items relating to topics such as food, leisure activities, places and transport. Visuals were well understood by candidates. The question least well done was **Question 5** which tested simple household vocabulary and relevant prepositions. On **Question 8**, *jeux électroniques* was not always well known.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard a longer extract which advertised a cookery course in a holiday centre in Sète. Questions required the identification of key vocabulary such as dates, tourist activities and leisure interests. On **Question 9**, some found it difficult to write *treize*. Answers such as *tres* were not accepted. **Questions 10-12** were well attempted but some found the identification of *promenade en bateau* and *port* difficult on **Question 13**. Likewise *terrain de sport* on **Question 15** was not always well known.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates heard four young people talking about the role of sport in their lives. Questions tested specific facts and some opinions. Candidates clearly felt at ease with this topic area and good numbers did well on this exercise: a full range of marks was seen but most scored at least four or five. The most common incorrect answer was when candidates selected option **j** instead of option **i**.

Over the years, performance on this exercise has improved as candidates have become more accustomed to the requirements. Examiners did however report that there are still a few cases of candidates ticking too few or too many boxes. Candidates should be reminded to tick the number of boxes indicated (six) and to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard a short interview with Adrien about his life in *Guyane*. The extract heard was longer than what was heard for previous exercises and this exercise represented a step up in the incline of difficulty of the examination. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s), a question type with which they are familiar. The questions tested lexically frequent vocabulary (all to be found in the Minimum Core Vocabulary) that would be met by candidates at an early stage of their learning. Some questions were answered by most with ease such as **Question 18**. **Question 19**, however, was found to be difficult by many. The answer *pharmacie / pharmaciens* was frequently offered instead of the correct, *agriculteurs* or *fermiers*. This was perhaps due to them hearing *pour acheter une ferme ici* which occurred shortly after the vital information *ils sont tous agriculteurs*. On **Question 20**, candidates sometimes ran together the words *trop* and *chère*. This did not score the mark. **Question 21** was answered well and nearly all candidates did well on **Question 22**, offering acceptable spellings of *famille* or *cousins* to gain the mark.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

In the second part of this exercise, candidates heard another interview, this time with Ivo who also talked about his life in *Guyane*. Candidates were required to give short answers in French. Questions could be answered with as little as one or two words in French provided that the correct message was conveyed. On **Question 23**, the word *informaticien* was not well known. The word *informatique* was also acceptable as an answer. Instead, many candidates said where Ivo's father worked or that he was a *pharmacien*. **Question 24** was done a little better and correct answers stated that Ivo hated/did not like outdoor activities. On **Question 25**, many were successful in giving an acceptable spelling of *guitare* and a good number also could give *États-Unis* on **Question 26**. The last question proved to be more difficult. Candidates often rendered *gens* as *jeunes*, which invalidated their answer. Others sometimes did not see that it was not just the people but the **variety** of people which Ivo appreciated. Both concepts needed to be there to gain the mark.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

Candidates heard an interview with Chloë, who talked about how her use of a social networking site had affected the friendships she made before and during her holiday. The question type used was multiple choice with written options. The extract heard was longer than in the previous sections and questions tested candidates' ability to follow the gist of what they heard as well as identify specific factual information. Some questions required candidates to identify attitudes and emotions. A good number of candidates answered the first three questions correctly. Most understood that Chloë had been due to go on holiday with her parents (**Question 31**) and also answered **Question 32** quite well. On the last question, **Question 33**, many incorrectly identified Chloë's holidays as having been *tristes* rather than *réussies*. The word *tristes* did appear on the recording, and it seems likely that weaker candidates made their choice too quickly, rather than listening to the whole of Chloë's statement. On this exercise, candidates should be encouraged not to choose their answer too quickly and instead to listen carefully for all the relevant detail they need to answer correctly. Candidates also need to be reminded to make good use of the reading time on this exercise so as to be able to pinpoint more precisely the information for which they are listening.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-42

Candidates heard an interview with Danielle who talked about her life in a province of Canada. As intended, candidates found this final exercise to be the most challenging on the question paper. Generally, many candidates made commendable attempts to answer at least some of the questions and, on the last three questions, which were perhaps the hardest on the question paper, there were many good answers given by the most able candidates. As such, this was an appropriate and suitably demanding final exercise.

On this exercise, candidates are required to provide short responses in French. The best answers were clear and brief. Candidates should be reminded that they are not expected to write their answers in full sentences and that this exercise will always include questions that can be answered with one or two words or a short phrase. The essential requirement is that the candidate's answer conveys a clear message and that in trying to give one word in French, the candidate does not give another which has a different meaning. It is also worth stressing to candidates that the longer the response, the greater the risk that it will include incorrect material which may invalidate other material which would be rewarded.

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Paper 0520/12

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Paper 0520/21

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success, candidates need to:

- read instructions, texts and questions very carefully;
- keep their answers to comprehension questions clearly focused;
- make sure that they have answered every part of every question;
- make clear their intended answer when the original one has been crossed out, or alterations made;
- check through their work at the end of the examination.

General comments

Candidates seemed well-prepared for this paper and for the style of questions. Most attempted every question and seemed to have plenty of time to complete the paper. Those candidates who changed their mind about answers to questions usually managed to make it clear which was their final intended answer, although these changes were sometimes difficult to read – it is better to think carefully about an answer before rushing to write anything down. In general, presentation was clear and handwriting neat.

Candidates should try to make sure that they leave themselves enough time after completing the paper to read through their answers, in order to make sure that:

- their intended answers are clear;
- they have answered all the questions they can;
- words copied from the text are correct;
- subjects and verbs, and adjectives agree.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was generally very well done.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

In this exercise, many candidates were able to score the maximum 5 marks.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Candidates were generally able to score well on this exercise too. For **Question 14**, the answer C was sometimes given, instead of A. There is no mention in the text of Louise sunbathing. Instead she writes that she goes for long walks on the beach.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this exercise, candidates were required to write a short message to a French friend, conveying 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures provided.

The information needed was:

- (a) where they are going (picture of a supermarket);
- (b) what they buy (cheese);
- (c) what they will do afterwards (go to the cinema).

A maximum of 5 marks are available for this exercise. 1 mark is available for communicating each of the 3 elements, and 2 marks are available for language.

For (a), some leeway was allowed in where the candidates were going – in addition to *supermarché*, *magasin*, *centre commercial*, and *alimentation* were all accepted. *Ville/centre-ville* were not accepted. For (b), any reasonable attempt at spelling *fromage* was credited, or the names of any French cheeses. For (c), candidates needed to say that they were going to the cinema, or to see a film – some candidates added information about the sort of film they were going to see, but some, instead of using *aller au cinéma* tried some form of *faire du cinéma*, which could not be credited.

For language, candidates need to provide 2 correct verb forms in logical tenses – though the third task asked for a future idea, other tenses were also credited. There was much confusion between *j'ai/je vais*, *je vais allé/aller* and *je suis allé/aller*. Language marks can only be awarded where a mark has been scored for communication. *Je vais au supermarché pour acheter du fromage* scored 2 communication marks for tasks (a) and (b) and for language both *je vais* and *pour acheter* could be rewarded, provided that the candidate had made an attempt at the third task.

In this exercise, there is no need to write at length; candidates are able to score maximum marks for a very short, simple answer.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24

Candidates were asked to read a more extended piece of text in the form of an e-mail from Lucas about moving house, and answer, in French, the 10 questions asked about the text. For this exercise, the mark is awarded for **locating** the key piece of information required to answer the question, and provided that the candidate's answer contains that information, additional material copied from the text is usually tolerated. There is no need to write in complete sentences and, in fact, often only 1 or 2 words may be needed to score.

The majority of candidates managed this exercise very well, and scored the maximum available marks. For **Question 18**, some left out *partout* and did not score for this question. With **Question 20**, some who had understood that the house was 3 km from the town centre, offered for (ii) – *on est donc plus tranquille ici* or *il y a un assez grand jardin*, rather than picking the detail that the house was near the countryside (or a long way from school, which was also accepted). For **Question 24**, a very few candidates did not make it clear whose bedroom was smaller.

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 instructed:

- (a) describe your favourite hobbies;
- (b) say what you normally do on a Sunday;
- (c) say what **new** activity you would like to try, and why.

10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks for language. In order to score the maximum 10 for communication, candidates need to make sure that they have attempted all parts of the task – if one element is omitted, the maximum communication mark is 9, and if candidates only deal with one of the tasks, they cannot score more than 8 for communication. Most candidates scored well here, with many getting the maximum marks available. Very few failed to make an attempt at the question.

Communication marks are only awarded for the tasks shown, so candidates need not spend time writing an introduction to their essays, for example name, age, school, etc. or *...dans cet article je vais parler de...* For task (a), some candidates dismissed their favourite hobbies very briefly, or just gave a long list, with no further details – more marks could have been scored here for information on where, when, or with whom they undertook these activities, and also for why they chose to do them. Most candidates scored quite well

for task **(b)**, though there was often some repetition, but for task **(c)**, a few either did not notice they should be talking about a **new** activity, or did not understand *nouvelle*. When candidates chose instead to talk about an activity they had already scored for in the first part of the essay, this could not be rewarded for a second time, but any previously unmentioned reason for undertaking it did score for the third task.

For language, the vast majority scored the maximum, writing fluently and often accurately. Some had problems with expressing the idea of the future in the third task, and there was often confusion over whether *jouer* or *faire* was the appropriate verb to use for the various activities discussed. There was also confusion over the use of *rester* and *se reposer*.

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension. It is important that candidates show that they have understood the texts clearly enough to identify the exact details needed for their answer, excluding any non-relevant material. It is better to keep answers simple and to the point, rather than adding extra material from the text which may invalidate an answer.

Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion. Candidates need to be able to manipulate some elements of language, for example changing first person verbs to third person, and using appropriate possessive pronouns and adjectives. They should remember the need for a subject, whether a name or a pronoun, before a finite verb, and take care with accents, particularly where this marks the tense distinction for *-er* verbs.

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in French, about the temporary provision of beaches alongside the Seine for those spending the summer in Paris. 6 statements about the passage are provided on the question paper, and candidates are told in the rubric that 2 of these statements are true and 4 of them are false. They are asked to decide which are true and which false and tick the appropriate boxes (6 marks awarded for this) and then correct the 4 false statements (4 marks for this). A simple negative version of the statements using *ne...pas* is not enough: corrections should be in the style of the example given, using the information found in the text. There is no need to write anything when *Vrai* has been ticked.

Generally, candidates were able to tell the true statements from the false, though the corrections were not always successful. **Question 26** was sometimes thought to be true, but those who correctly identified it as false, corrected it well.

The next question was usually well done, though a few omitted *les bords* from their answer, giving *la Mairie transforme la Seine*, which was judged to be incomplete and did not score.

For **Question 29**, very few thought that private companies financed everything and many managed a successful correction: *une moitié de cette somme est financée par des compagnies privées*.

The last statement was also false, and of the two possible corrections, that the only businesses open when Raoul finished work were the bars etc., or that by the time Raoul finished work all the organised activities were over, the second was by far the most popular option.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-40

This final exercise of the paper required candidates to read an extended text and to answer questions about it in French. It was an appropriately challenging yet fair test for this stage of the paper. On the whole, this exercise was very well done. Many candidates chose their answers very carefully, and avoided giving over-long answers, or including material which was not relevant to the question.

Question 32 was very well answered, with most candidates answering *les photos et les objets rapportés du monde entier qui décorent sa maison*, which covered both the possible options. Either answer (the photos/objects decorating Marguerite's home **or** the photos/objects brought back from all over the world) was enough to score the mark.

There were several possibilities for the next question, and most candidates scored with *quand ses parents divorcent*. Marguerite's age at the time (*18 ans*) was equally acceptable (as was *1937*, from candidates who did the correct calculation).

For **Question 34**, candidates understood that the reason for Marguerite not completing her studies was the outbreak of the 2nd World War, and answered with *la deuxième guerre mondiale la force à abandonner ses études...* A few chose to try for a construction using *pour...* rather than *à cause de...* and were less successful.

Answers to **Question 35** suggested that *où...?* is not well understood. The simplest answer was *en Italie*, or *en Italie dans son temps libre*. Many candidates answered just with *dans son temps libre* – supplying when, rather than where.

Question 36 was straightforward, and needed only *elle va écrire des reportages*. A selective lift from the text also scored: *elle va payer ses voyages en écrivant des reportages sur les pays arabes qu'elle visite*.

Some candidates chose the wrong piece of text to answer **Question 37**, ignoring the punctuation between *...de nombreuses photos. De plus, le soir...* and giving as their answer that in the evenings, Marguerite took photographs, rather than the correct answer which was that she wrote in her journal.

Question 38 and both parts of **Question 39** were all very well done, and candidates found few difficulties with the very last question of the paper. They had a choice of *elle/Marguerite relit ses carnets de voyage* or *elle/Marguerite passe son temps sur Internet (à découvrir les pays qu'elle n'a pas eu le temps de visiter)*.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/22

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success, candidates need to:

- read instructions, texts and questions very carefully;
- keep their answers to comprehension questions clearly focused;
- make sure that they have answered every part of every question;
- make clear their intended answer when the original one has been crossed out, or alterations made;
- check through their work at the end of the examination.

General comments

Candidates seemed well-prepared for this paper and for the style of questions. Most attempted every question and seemed to have plenty of time to complete the paper. Those candidates who changed their mind about answers to questions usually managed to make it clear which was their final intended answer, although these changes were sometimes difficult to read – it is better to think carefully about an answer before rushing to write anything down. In a few rare cases, 2 boxes were ticked for a multiple choice answer, so neither could be credited, as the final decision made by the candidate was in doubt. In general, presentation was clear and handwriting neat.

Candidates should try to make sure that they leave themselves enough time after completing the paper to read through their answers, in order to make sure that:

- their intended answers are clear;
- they have answered all the questions they can;
- words copied from the text are correct;
- subjects and verbs, and adjectives agree.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was generally answered well. For **Question 1**, D was sometimes offered, suggesting that *champignons* was not a well-known item of vocabulary.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

In this exercise, many candidates were able to score the maximum 5 marks. **Questions 7 and 10** sometimes caused problems. Candidates saw the word *chambre* in **Question 7** and automatically chose F as their answer, rather than focusing on *nettoyer*. For **Question 10**, candidates did not always connect *coiffer* with D, *la brosse à cheveux*.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

This exercise was generally done well – for **Question 15**, candidates sometimes overlooked the negative in the text and therefore chose C as their answer, rather than B.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this exercise, candidates were required to write a short message to a French friend, conveying 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures provided.

The information needed was:

- (a) where they are going (picture of a market);
- (b) what they buy (apples);
- (c) what they will do afterwards (walk in park/go to countryside, park or garden).

A maximum of 5 marks are available for this exercise. 1 mark is available for communicating each of the 3 elements, and 2 marks are available for language.

For (a), some leeway was allowed in where the candidates were going – in addition to *marché, supermarché, magasin, centre commercial, marchand de fruits* and *alimentation* were all accepted. *Ville/centre-ville* were not accepted. Similarly for (b), any reasonable interpretation of the picture was credited, so any candidate who offered *fruits* or *tomates*, for example, was also able to score. For (c), candidates needed to include some idea of 'walking' or going to a park, so those who just said that they were going home did not score for this part of the task. Many tried to use *randonnée* or *promenade* as verbs.

For language, candidates need to provide two correct verb forms in logical tenses – though the third task asked for a future idea, other tenses were also credited. Language marks can only be awarded where a mark has been scored for communication. *Je vais au marché pour acheter des pommes* scored 2 communication marks for tasks (a) and (b) and for language both *je vais* and *pour acheter* could be rewarded, provided that the candidate had made an attempt at the third task.

In this exercise, there is no need to write at length; candidates are able to score maximum marks for a very short, simple answer.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

Candidates were asked to read a more extended piece of text in the form of an e-mail from Morgane about her holidays, and answer, in French, the 10 questions asked about the text. For this exercise, the mark is awarded for **locating** the key piece of information required to answer the question, and provided that the candidate's answer contains that information, additional material copied from the text is usually tolerated. There is no need to write in complete sentences and, in fact, often only 1 or 2 words may be needed to score – for example **Question 19** could be answered just with *SMS* or *texto*.

Scores for this exercise were generally good. For **Question 17**, some candidates said that Morgane was visiting her aunt or her cousin Julie rather than that she liked the sea. **Question 18** was generally answered well – some candidates left out the required *par an*. In answer to **Question 21**, some candidates offered *on/il/elle a descendu le grand escalier* as one of their answers, omitting either that Morgane admired the view or that she took photographs, on arrival at the *château*.

For **Question 22**, some candidates seemed to have understood *où* rather than *qu'est-ce que*. For **Question 23**, instead of a walk on the beach, candidates looked to the end of the paragraph for the answer that Morgane and Julie took the bus home. Most understood what **Question 24** was asking and managed to convey that Morgane and Julie did not go swimming because they had not brought swimming costumes with them. For **Question 25**, some candidates failed to mention that the mobile phone was *perdu*, saying only that it had been dropped on the beach.

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 instructed:

- (a) describe one of your friends;
- (b) say what you do to be a good friend;
- (c) say what you plan to do with your friend next week and why.

10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks for language. In order to score the maximum 10 for communication, candidates need to make sure that they have attempted all parts of the task – if one element is omitted, the maximum communication mark is 9, and if candidates only deal with one of the tasks, they cannot score more than 8 for communication. Most candidates scored well here, with many getting the maximum marks available. Very few failed to make an attempt at the question.

For task **(a)**, candidates needed to give some description of **1** of their friends – for example, appearance, personality, age, likes, dislikes – and usually scored well on this task. Candidates covered a wide range of material in their responses here, and these were often detailed and interesting, and remarkably varied. Candidates sometimes offered generalised descriptions of several friends – credit was given where the description was applied to one friend.

Task **(b)** sometimes presented problems and candidates wrote about what their friend did to make them a good friend, rather than what they did themselves.

For the third part, some misunderstood *la semaine prochaine* and instead wrote about what they had done **last** week, using the past tense. Even though no credit could be given for that part of the task (because the tense used made the meaning unclear), candidates could still score communication marks for saying why they wanted to do that particular activity.

A good number of candidates did cover all 3 tasks impressively, producing material which was comprehensive and highly accurate, paying close attention to verb forms and agreements. Few essays were overlong, and candidates generally tried to write within their own linguistic abilities, rather than attempting to write something very ambitious for which they lacked the structures and vocabulary. Many candidates were able to achieve the maximum language mark, expressing their ideas clearly, in a straightforward manner, yet often using a good variety of structures and vocabulary.

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension. It is important that candidates show that they have understood the texts clearly enough to identify the exact details needed for their answer, excluding any non-relevant material. It is better to keep answers simple and to the point, rather than adding extra material from the text which may invalidate an answer. This may mean perhaps selecting the first and last part of a sentence from the text, but excluding a phrase from the middle – the answers to **Questions 32** and **36** illustrating this point.

Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion. Candidates need to be able to manipulate some elements of language, for example changing first person verbs to third person, and using appropriate possessive pronouns and adjectives.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in French, about the construction of a children's hospital. 6 statements about the passage are provided on the question paper, and candidates are told in the rubric that 2 of these statements are true and 4 of them are false. They are asked to decide which are true and which false and tick the appropriate boxes (6 marks awarded for this), and then correct the 4 false statements (4 marks for this). A simple negative version of the statements using *ne...pas* is not enough: corrections should be in the style of the example given, using the information found in the text. There is no need to write anything when *Vrai* has been ticked.

Question 27 was generally correctly identified as false and corrected well, as was **Question 29**.

Question 30 was usually seen as false, but candidates were not always able to offer an acceptable correction – many lifted material from the text without making clear that the hospital mentioned was the one in which Almech had worked as a doctor before the war. It was enough, here, to say *Almech/il était médecin* or *Almech/il travaillait comme médecin avant la guerre*, without mentioning the hospital at all.

Candidates were usually able to understand that **Question 32** was false, but some had difficulties constructing a correction using *générosité* and many lifted material from the text referring to *les Afghans*. This invalidated their answer, which should have focused on the French population.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-42

This final exercise of the paper required candidates to read an extended text and to answer questions about it in French. It was an appropriately challenging yet fair test for this stage of the paper. Most candidates showed that they understood the theme of the text quite well, and were able to attempt the questions.

Question 33 was straightforward, and most candidates understood that Gaëlle's work was tiring because she worked at night. For the next question, many were distracted by the sentence *...elle finit quand la plupart des gens se lèvent: à 7 heures du matin* and ignored the punctuation, thereby missing the point that Gaëlle finished work when others got up, so slept till 4 in the afternoon.

Both parts of **Question 35** were quite well answered, though for **Question 35(a)** some did not mention *relations familiales* and for part **(b)** some candidates could not manage the move from *travaillons* to *travaillent*.

For **Question 36**, most candidates were able to identify the correct part of the text to use for their answer. All that was required was *ils aident les victimes d'accidents* – where candidates included *appelés par téléphone* with an otherwise correct answer, this could not be credited.

Many gave correct answers for **Question 37**, stating that Gaëlle needed training in order to become a fireman, but some invalidated their answers by the addition of the phrase *malgré ses qualifications d'infirmière...* In answering the next question, candidates needed to make it clear that Gaëlle looked after accident victims in the ambulance **while it was on the way to** the hospital.

Many candidates made very good attempts at **Questions 39** and **40**. A number gave as their answer to **Question 39**, *elle déteste rester chez moi à regarder la télévision* – they could not manage the necessary change from *chez moi* to *chez elle* – and some saw this sentence as the answer to both parts of the question. Some missed the point that Gaëlle *veut avant tout pouvoir s'occuper des autres* and for the second part of **Question 39** offered *elle travaille mieux dans des situations d'urgence* – which was, in fact, the answer to **Question 40**.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/23

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success, candidates need to:

- read instructions, texts and questions very carefully;
- keep their answers to comprehension questions clearly focused;
- make sure that they have answered every part of every question;
- make clear their intended answer when the original one has been crossed out, or alterations made;
- check through their work at the end of the examination.

General comments

In general, candidates handled this paper well and many showed a very good knowledge and understanding of the French tested at this level.

Candidates were clearly familiar with the various test types on the paper and answers were usually very well-presented and legible. Most answers were clearly written in the spaces provided. Candidates normally made their intentions clear if they changed an answer.

The majority of candidates offered answers to all questions and evidently had sufficient time to complete the paper. It is good practice for candidates to allocate sufficient time before the end of the examination to read through their answers, ensuring that their intended responses are unambiguously written and that no question has been unintentionally left unanswered.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

In general, these discrete items were answered with ease. **Question 4** (*Achète des timbres*) did present difficulty to some candidates.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This straightforward vocabulary exercise was generally well answered.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were presented with a short text in the form of an email from Anna, writing about a holiday in Nice. Scores of 4 or 5 out of a possible 5 were common.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this exercise, candidates were required to write a short message to a French friend, conveying 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures provided.

The information needed was:

- (a) where they are going (bakers'/cake shop);

- (b) what they buy (croissants);
- (c) what they will do afterwards (cycling).

A maximum of 5 marks are available for this exercise. 1 mark is available for communicating each of the 3 elements, and 2 marks are available for language.

For (a), a sentence such as *je vais à la pâtisserie* was the expected rendering but alternatives such as *je suis au centre commercial* were equally acceptable. For communication, the requirement was for an attempt to use an appropriate verb with a place where croissants could be bought. For (b), *j'achète des croissants* was expected. Croissants could have been replaced by reasonable interpretations of the picture such as *petits pains* and *gateaux*. The majority of candidates made a good attempt at *croissants*. Perfect spelling was not insisted upon for communication. For (c), something along the lines of *je fais du vélo* was required.

For language, candidates need to provide two correct verb forms in logical tenses. Language marks can only be awarded where a mark has been scored for communication. *Je vais à la pâtisserie pour acheter des croissants* scored 2 communication marks for tasks (a) and (b) and for language both *je vais* and *pour acheter* could be rewarded, provided that the candidate had made an attempt at the third task.

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

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended piece of text in the form of an email from Bastien describing an exchange visit to England, and answer, in French, the 10 questions asked about the text. In this exercise, the mark is awarded for locating the key piece of information required to answer the question, and provided that the candidate's answer contains that information, additional material copied from the text is usually tolerated. There is no need to write in complete sentences and, in fact, often only 1 or 2 words may be needed to score – for example **Question 17** could be answered just with *deux semaines*.

For the majority of candidates this exercise was accessible and scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 were common.

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 instructed:

- (a) describe your family;
- (b) describe the things you like to do with the family;
- (c) say what sort of family you would like in the future and why.

10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks for language. In order to score the maximum 10 for communication, candidates need to make sure that they have attempted all parts of the task – if one element is omitted, the maximum communication mark is 9, and if candidates only deal with one of the tasks, they cannot score more than 8 for communication.

High scores for communication were common. Candidates found this topic accessible and there were many positive descriptions of happy and supportive families. Many candidates were unhesitating in wanting their future family to be the same as their own. There were many excellent pieces of writing, showing sound control of the language and the ability to express a range of ideas in French. For the award of 5 marks for accuracy, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate French, in particular being careful with verb forms, genders and spelling of common nouns and the use of adjectives. The most successful pieces were written simply and clearly, with a coherent structure. Such candidates avoided the temptation to try to express complicated ideas which were beyond the scope of their vocabulary and skill.

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

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise understanding of longer French texts. Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension. It is important that candidates show that they have understood the texts clearly enough to identify the exact details needed for their answer, excluding any non-relevant material. It is better to keep answers simple and to the point, rather than adding extra material from the text which may invalidate an answer.

Answers are not expected to be in faultless French but the language does have to be sufficiently accurate to avoid ambiguity or distortion. Candidates need to be able to manipulate some elements of language, for example changing first person verbs to third person, and using appropriate possessive pronouns and adjectives.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in French, about a French couple, Marc and Geneviève. 6 statements about the passage are provided on the question paper, and candidates are told in the rubric that 2 of these statements are true and 4 of them are false. They are asked to decide which are true and which false and tick the appropriate boxes (6 marks awarded for this) and then correct the 4 false statements (4 marks for this). A simple negative version of the statements using *ne...pas* is not enough: corrections should be in the style of the example given, using the information found in the text. There is no need to write anything when *Vrai* has been ticked.

Most candidates scored well (5 or 6) for the identification of *Vrai/Faux*. For the correction of the false statements, candidates found **Questions 28** and **29** more straightforward, while **Questions 30** and **31** proved more difficult. For **Question 30**, the answer *chaque matin Marc faisait les courses* or *chaque matin Marc achetait la nourriture nécessaire pour une journée* was acceptable. For **Question 31**, *ils ont fait des économies* was sufficient.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-39

This final exercise of the paper required candidates to read an extended text and to answer questions about it in French. It was an appropriately challenging yet fair test for this stage of the paper.

As is normal with exercises of this type, candidates can expect the questions to follow the order of the text. The subject of the text seemed to be well understood and most candidates could locate the appropriate piece of text to answer the question. Candidates should beware of being unselective in their choice of language from the text and ensure that their answers clearly convey what they intend. For example, for **Question 33**, the selective 'lift' of either *tous les employés se connaissaient* or *beaucoup étaient devenus amis* was perfectly acceptable as an answer. For **Question 34**, *l'usine avait des problèmes financiers* was acceptable but the indiscriminating lifting of the whole sentence starting *mais un jour* was not rewarded. Candidates tended to offer answers which were too long in answer to **Question 35**: *plaisir* and *tristesse* were sufficient to answer the question. **Questions 36** and **37** were generally well answered.

For **Question 38(a)**, some candidates chose *il va aider ses collègues d'usine* from the text, which was not sufficiently precise as an answer. Many correctly conveyed the idea of giving money. For **Question 38(b)**, many candidates could locate the appropriate section of the text but did not adapt *mes collègues* to *ses collègues* in their answer, thus invalidating it. For **Question 39**, *il raconte enfin l'histoire à ses amis* was not accepted since it did not answer the question. The shortest acceptable answer was *son secret*.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

Key messages

- To score well in the Role plays, candidates need to stick closely to the cues on their Role play cards and to be concise in their responses. Examiners must stick closely to the script in the Teacher's Notes booklet so that tasks are not missed out or distorted.
- Centres need to ensure that the correct timings are observed for each candidate taking the Speaking test. Each candidate must be allocated five minutes for the Topic presentation/conversation **and** another five minutes for the General conversation. If conversation sections are short this will affect the marks awarded. If a section of the examination is omitted, it cannot be awarded marks.
- In each of the conversation sections **all** candidates must be given adequate opportunities to show that they can use **both** past and future tenses accurately.
- Good performances in the conversation sections resulted when candidates were given the opportunity to respond naturally to both straightforward and unexpected questions, and where they were encouraged to expand upon their answers, giving and explaining their opinions.
- In the General conversation section, the objective should be to cover two or three of the Examination topics listed in the Defined Content with each candidate, and to explore each of these in some depth by asking a series of linked questions. Candidates should not be asked a series of unrelated questions on many different topics.
- The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where there had not been over preparation of work and where the spontaneity of the performance could be heard.

General comments

The standard of work heard was generally good and was very similar to that heard last year. Examiners had familiarised themselves well with the requirements of the Speaking test, including their part in the Role plays, and with the mark scheme. Most Examiners were very sympathetic to their candidates. Most understood how best to give their candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do.

In the Role plays, candidates usually seemed to have made good use of the 15 minutes they are allowed to prepare the card assigned to them. Moderators reported that the most successful Role plays were those where Examiners moved the transactions along at a fairly brisk pace **by keeping to the script provided** and by not inserting different or extra tasks. Centres are reminded that **teacher/Examiners** may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' Notes booklet and Role Play cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order to prepare the Role plays. **The contents of these materials are confidential and must not be shared with candidates.** The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, they must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area.

In the conversation sections, it is vital that Examiners understand the requirements of the mark scheme so that they can ask the right kinds of questions which will stretch candidates. The best examining offered candidates the opportunity to answer spontaneous questions in a natural way. It enabled candidates to use a variety of tenses and to develop their answers. Consequently, such candidates had the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands of the mark scheme. Straightforward questioning of a 'closed' type does not give candidates the opportunity to reach these higher mark bands. Centres should note that to score a mark beyond six on scale (b) (linguistic content), candidates need to be able to show that they can use past and future tenses accurately. **It is therefore essential to include several questions to elicit past and future tenses in both the Topic conversation and the General conversation sections.** The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out on pages 8-13 of the Teachers' Notes booklet and all Centres are

strongly advised to read through these well in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties. A French language version of these requirements also exists and is available on the Cambridge website.

- **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate, but there were still cases of Centres where clerical errors had been made. Centres are reminded of the need to check all work carefully as it remains the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the correct mark is entered for each candidate. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate must be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked. On the MS1 mark sheet, the Centre must enter the total mark for each candidate in figures as well as shading the lozenges, (some Centres forgot to shade in the lozenge or to write in the correct mark in figures).

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

This year, there were fewer cases of Centres forgetting to enclose the cover sheet. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample and paperwork are correct before they despatch material to Cambridge for external moderation and avoids problems at a later date. Please ensure that it is always completed and despatched with the sample.

- **Centres using more than one Examiner/Internal moderation**

Any Centre wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for its candidates must apply to Cambridge for permission to do so well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal moderation procedures are put into place to ensure that marks are awarded consistently for **all** candidates in the Centre. There were many cases of extremely thorough internal moderation where the various teacher/Examiners conducting and assessing the Speaking tests at the Centre had worked together to ensure a common approach to the conduct of the Speaking test and the application of the mark scheme. In some Centres there was evidence of inadequate internal moderation.

The most common approach to internal moderation is for one Examiner to be designated the Co-ordinating Examiner and to check the marking of sample candidates for each of the other Examiners at the Centre. If the Co-ordinating Examiner decides that an Examiner's marking is not in line with the Centre standard, **s/he will need to adjust the final total mark for all candidates examined by that Examiner accordingly and not just the marks for the candidates sampled.** Centres are reminded that guidelines on internal standardisation/moderation of Cambridge IGCSE Speaking tests are available from Cambridge and are also available on the website.

- **Sample size and recording quality**

Centres usually complied with the sampling procedures. One or two Centres did submit very large numbers of recordings in their samples: Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size very carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed. **Where Centres have entered more than 16 candidates, they are not required to submit the recordings of all candidates.** However, recordings for the first ten candidates according to candidate number order must be sent. Should a Centre have permission to use more than one Examiner, the maximum sample size is still 16. The recordings of the first ten candidates should be sent and the remaining six recordings should cover the mark range in the Centre and also be representative of the different Examiners.

A high proportion of the recordings received by Cambridge were of a high quality and Centres are thanked for this. The use of digital recording has resulted in a great improvement in sound quality. Where digital recordings are made, **each candidate's file must be saved individually** and named correctly on the CD. Some Centres still use cassettes and this is also acceptable. Whatever the method of recording, if an external microphone is used, this must be positioned to favour the candidate. This is especially important in rooms with tiled floors which may echo.

- **Labelling and packaging of sample**

It is essential that all CDs/cassettes are clearly labelled. Only CD-friendly marker pens should be used for writing on CDs. Sticky labels must not be placed on CDs as this will usually mean that the CD cannot be

played by the Moderator. If the recorded sample is submitted on CD, a list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. On the CD, the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named according to the following convention, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. If the recorded sample is submitted on cassette, each cassette must be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings in order of play.

Each CD/cassette must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette/CD number, Centre number, Centre name, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction need only be made once, and can be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction') if Centres are submitting recordings on CD. Whether Centres are submitting recordings on cassette or CD, it is the Examiner who must introduce each recording by announcing the candidate number, candidate name and role play card number. **This announcement must not be made by the candidate.**

CDs are much more fragile than cassettes and must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a bar-code) should then be placed **on the envelope**. Labels must not be placed on CDs. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge. Centres are reminded to send their sample to Cambridge once the Speaking tests have been completed and not to wait until the very end of the examination period.

• Duration of tests / missing elements

The timings of the test were usually correct. Some Centres persist in going under or over the five minutes prescribed for the Topic conversation **and/or** the General conversation test. Each of these sections must last for approximately five minutes. Where conversations are short, this is likely to disadvantage candidates as they will not have enough time to 'warm up' and/or to show what they can do. Marks must not be awarded to sections of the tests that are missed out.

• Application of the mark scheme

This year, Moderators reported that many Centres marked close to the agreed standard. In some Centres, marks were awarded leniently or severely and had to be adjusted to bring them in line with the agreed standard. Where downward adjustments were necessary this was usually due to one of the following:

- Role plays: Centres sometimes awarded a mark of three when pronunciation was poor or if a verb was inaccurate. Often, tasks can be completed successfully without using a verb. If a verb is used, it must be accurate and appropriate for a mark of three to be awarded. In a two-part task, if one part is omitted then a maximum of one mark should be awarded.
- Topic conversation and General conversation
 - Scale (a) (comprehension/responsiveness): marks were sometimes awarded in the higher bands when there was little evidence that candidates could respond to unexpected questions and develop their responses beyond a straightforward level in a natural way.
 - Scale (b) (linguistic content): certain Centres frequently awarded marks in the higher mark bands on scale (b) even though there was no evidence of tenses and/or a range of linguistic structures. A mark of more than six cannot be awarded if candidates cannot use past and future tenses accurately. For French, the construction *depuis* + present tense, e.g. *je fais du vélo depuis deux ans* does count as a past tense. The constructions *j'ai l'intention de...*, *j'espère...*, *je veux (aller)...* and *je rêve de...* do count as future tenses. The construction *demain je vais (en ville)* does not count as a future tense (but, of course, *demain je vais aller en ville* does).

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Examiners usually encouraged candidates to complete all parts of the tasks. The splitting up of two-part tasks into (i) and (ii) seemed to have helped candidates make effective use of their preparation time. Candidates should be reminded to keep their answers as brief as possible, especially on the A Role plays. Overlong answers are not to be encouraged: marks can only be awarded for the set tasks and where candidates respond at length the extra material they include in their utterance may contain an error which affects the clarity of the message and therefore their mark for that task. Candidates should also be reminded to listen carefully to the Examiner, especially where they are required to choose from options provided by the

Examiner (A Role plays) and before the 'respond to the question' cue (B Role plays). Examiners are reminded that while as a general rule they should aim to keep to the cues provided in the Teachers' Notes booklet throughout the Role plays, it is absolutely crucial that they do so on these particular tasks.

A Role plays

As in 2012, the A Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All cards featured one task which required a question to be asked and one task which required candidates to choose an option from the two provided by the Examiner. Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of three can be awarded. Moderators reported that poor or unclear pronunciation was sometimes not queried by Examiners. Please remember that if poor or unclear pronunciation affects the clarity of the message it is appropriate to offer the candidates the opportunity to self-correct, hopefully allowing them to access a higher mark for the task.

Buying tickets to tour a château

Candidates generally performed well on this Role play. They greeted as appropriate. Sometimes they mixed up the noun *visite* with the past participle *visité*. Nearly all candidates listened carefully to the options on the second task and chose a time as required. Some mispronounced the number of tickets they required which affected the clarity of the message. All could offer an age but many used *je suis...* instead of *j'ai...*. In such cases a mark of three was not appropriate. Centres are reminded that if a verb is used by the candidate, it should be accurate and appropriate for the award of three marks. Nearly all candidates remembered to include their thanks. Some asked the price by saying *Combien le prix?* which meant that a mark of three could not be awarded.

Reserving a hotel room

This Role play was approached well by candidates. Nearly all could state their wish to book a room. Those who stated *j'ai réservé une chambre* did not score marks for that part of the task as this communicated the wrong message. On the second task, a date was required to score full marks. Candidates who offered just a day scored one mark for partial completion of the task. Most communicated the number of people well on the third task, and on the fourth task listened well to the options and chose accordingly. On the last task, thanks were usually included. Weaker candidates sometimes found it difficult to formulate a question correctly even if their message was clear.

Buying perfume for a friend

Performance on this Role play was very similar to that heard on the other two A Role plays. Moderators commented that many candidates pronounced *parfum* poorly. On the second task some used the verb *être* instead of *avoir* when expressing their friend's age. For the third task most candidates were able to give the date of their friend's birthday and on the fourth task they listened well to the options and chose accordingly. On the last task some again found it difficult to formulate a correct question to ask the price.

B Role plays

The B Role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, give an opinion, or express pleasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the B Role plays. They differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score marks on most tasks – thanks, often, to sympathetic examining. It was crucial for Examiners to know their own role and to stick to the set tasks. Candidates should be reminded that on the B Role plays there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to think about the setting of the Role play in their 15 minutes of preparation time, and consider likely questions they might be asked in that context. Candidates should also be reminded to listen carefully in the examination room.

Organising a meal

Most coped well with this Role play and were able to say that they wanted to organise a meal in January. On the second task most opted for one of the suggestions offered as the reason for the meal. Some candidates

then forgot to say with whom they would be having the meal. In such cases, this second detail should have been prompted by Examiners. On the third task candidates did not always express their pleasure very convincingly – *super/fantastique/excellent* were all acceptable ways of fulfilling this part of the task. It is worth reminding candidates that the ability to express notions of apology, pleasure and displeasure is often expected in these Role plays and that an appropriate expression of such notions, rather than one relying on intonation, is required for the award of three marks. On this task some candidates also did not explain why they liked the idea of music. Again, a simple explanation of an opinion held is often one of the features of a B Role play. On the fourth task there was some hesitation and error on the formulation of an appropriate question. Simple questions such as *Pouvez-vous préparer un gâteau?* were adequate for three marks. Most coped well on the last task.

A lost suitcase

The pronunciation of *valise* frequently caused ambiguity on the first task. Examiners are reminded that in such cases they are free to query for communication. Many accepted dubious pronunciation too readily. Nearly all candidates could say from which country they had travelled. Again, a good attempt at the pronunciation of the candidate's country was required for a mark of three to be appropriate. The description of the suitcase was well done. Many candidates experienced some difficulty in framing a question in an appropriate tense on the fourth task. On the final task the notion of displeasure was sometimes omitted: *je ne suis pas content(e) / ça (ne) va pas / c'est intolérable / c'est inacceptable* were all acceptable ways of fulfilling this part of the task. All were able, with prompting, to say where they were going to stay.

Applying for a job in a restaurant

Most candidates attempted the first task well but on the second and third tasks sometimes omitted part of the task. On task 2 most were able to communicate that they had worked in a restaurant but some mistakenly said they had worked elsewhere. Some forgot to add an extra detail as required in the second part of the task which limited their mark to one. With good examining, many were successful in expressing not just what they thought about the job but also why. On the fourth task some used a perfect tense instead of a future tense. Those who listened and thought were able to respond briefly without a verb, which was sufficient to score three marks. The formulation of a relevant question on the last task was done quite well. Again, weaker candidates found it difficult to use the interrogative form accurately.

Topic presentation and conversation

As last year, Moderators commented on the wide range of candidate performance heard in this section.

The whole of this section, which consists of the Topic presentation and Topic conversation, should last about five minutes. In some Centres, candidates were allowed to carry on presenting their topic for up to three minutes. This is not good practice as it restricts not only the time available for the follow-up conversation, but also the material available for discussion. **Candidates must not be allowed to carry on presenting their topic for more than two minutes.**

An interesting range of topics was heard this year. Candidates spoke about their country, life in another country, their pets (including snakes and chickens!), health and a healthy lifestyle, holidays, school and sport. Some of the most interesting topic presentations were on candidates' future plans. Teachers should guide candidates in their choice of topic to ensure that sensible choices are made. As observed last year, where candidates choose *ma famille/mon amie* it can be difficult for Examiners to offer them sufficient opportunities to develop responses in different tenses, which can in turn affect marks for language. This should be pointed out to candidates when they choose their topic. There were, pleasingly, very few instances of candidates choosing *moi-même* as their topic: new Centres are reminded to tell candidates not to present this very broad topic as it leaves little material to develop in the General conversation. Most importantly, Centres are reminded that it is not in the spirit of the test for all candidates in a teaching group to offer the same topic. In order to ensure variety and spontaneity, both in terms of the content of the material at the candidate's disposal and the questions the Examiner asks, a range of topics should be covered by candidates in a Centre.

Once the candidate has presented his/her topic for one to two minutes (Topic presentation) the Examiner must intervene and ask the candidate questions about their chosen topic (Topic conversation). In those Centres where there was no follow-up discussion of the Topic presentation, candidates' capacity to score marks in the higher bands for this section of the test was restricted. While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the Topic conversation, if candidates are to score highly, **this follow-up conversation must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers** in which both Examiner

and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Rather, questions should arise spontaneously as the conversation develops. Examiners were usually aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses.

Candidates had usually prepared their topics well and were aware of the need to present at an appropriate pace – not too fast. Some Topic presentations were delivered at a very fast pace and in such cases poor pronunciation often meant the message was lost. Candidates can best prepare for this part of the test by learning to present their material at an understandable and appropriate speed up to an absolute maximum of two minutes (one-and-a-half minutes is a very good target to aim for). There were some very confident performances in the Topic conversation. In the best of these, candidates were able to respond spontaneously to questions and continued communicating at a level which did not dramatically differ from the level heard in the presentation. **Such performances featured accurate use of a good range of tenses, structures and appropriate topic-specific lexis.** Candidates who went beyond the factual and straightforward, who developed their responses and explained their opinions scored high marks. Where the style of examining in the Topic conversation encourages candidates to produce a set of mini-presentations in response to over-practised questions, marks in the higher bands of the mark scheme will not be appropriate.

It is helpful to both candidates and Moderators to indicate when the Topic conversation has come to an end and when the General conversation is going to start. Such links should be made in French.

General conversation

There were many examples of good examining which enabled candidates to impress. In such cases, the Examiner asked questions on two or three topics only and these followed a logical order – the Examiner listened to what the candidate said and adapted their next question to follow on from that. As a result, a genuine conversation developed in which the candidate had the opportunity to provide explanations and use different tenses. In other cases, the style of examining made it difficult for candidates to show what they could do: Examiners asked long strings of random and unrelated questions on a very wide range of topics. Candidates became confused when trying to follow the thread of such conversations, and because questions were closed (eliciting brief answers) and on too many topics, they were not encouraged to develop their answers and go into depth (and therefore could not access the higher bands of the mark scheme).

A few Centres asked the same questions on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: this approach must be avoided. While it is good practice to help candidates in class by using banks of questions, over-reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test tends to produce stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and which, at worst, do not seem to develop beyond a series of mini-presentations. Once in the examination room, it is far better if the Examiner listens to what the candidate is saying and responds as spontaneously as possible. **The descriptors in the Mark scheme make it very clear that in order to score marks in the higher bands, candidates must have the opportunity to respond to both straightforward and unexpected questions in both conversation sections.**

As last year, a full range of performance was heard by Moderators. The best candidates were able to respond to open questions which required them to express their ideas wherever possible and to develop their answers in a spontaneous way. Their use of register was appropriate and the language used by candidates in such performances was often very impressive, displaying good control of tenses and the use of subordination, as well as a wide range of accurate structures and appropriate vocabulary. In many large Centres, patient, sympathetic examining meant that candidates across the whole ability spectrum were encouraged to communicate a range of messages. Questions were not too hard for weaker candidates and were asked in a logical sequence and rephrased when necessary.

Despite the different everyday cultural experiences and local contexts of this very international candidature, it remains apparent to Moderators that candidates still have much in common. It is also clear that the skill of communicating in the foreign language is central to IGCSE classrooms and that the Speaking test is the culmination of much hard work.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/41
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should follow the rubric closely.
- Candidates should plan their answers.
- Candidates should make full use of the time allowed.
- Candidates should aim to write between 130 and 140 words.
- Candidates should write what they know to be French and avoid attempting to use language with which they are not familiar.
- Candidates should check their work for errors.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

The performance of many candidates was very creditable, and the best produced work of a high quality. Their answers were characterised by a secure grasp of the basics of French grammar and a variety and depth of knowledge, both of vocabulary and structure. Others, while not in the top bracket, did justice to their ability by presenting answers which were relevant and communicated the requirements of the tasks effectively, using less complex language.

A number of candidates did not make the most of the opportunity to show their knowledge of French to good advantage. This was often due to a flawed examination technique. Insufficient attention was paid to the detail of the rubric. Some answers were over long and communication marks were lost. Work was not checked properly at the end, to correct elementary errors. It is with these matters in mind that Examiners offer the above Key Messages, aimed at improving performance.

The rubric is not a list of suggestions to be interpreted freely. Instead, it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. Candidates should keep closely to these stated tasks and avoid irrelevance. Material which is introduced which does not pertain to the subject is not credited for content or language. Normally, a statement is required using a finite verb for each task, expressed in the tense contained in the question.

Candidates are advised to prepare a brief plan of their answers under certain headings or paragraphs. They should spread their answer fairly evenly over the 'bullet points' in the rubric. In **Question 1** in particular, if they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two tasks they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks and remain within the 140 word limit. If they cover all the points in 100 words or less they may be reduced to 'padding out' their answer to reach 140 words, so they should look for areas where they can expand their answer with relevant examples. No credit is given for any material which falls outside the 140 word limit. Short answers limit their own chances of accessing the maximum marks for language.

Once the plan is decided, candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay particular attention to the selection of tense and verb forms. They should remember that grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. They should avoid too much reliance on repeated items of language, such as possessive adjectives and the verb *être*. This tends to impair the overall quality of the piece and may reduce the mark given for General impression. Candidates are urged to stay within their limitations and to avoid over complicated sentences which may expose weaknesses. Some candidates try to 'force in' certain phrases or idioms, regardless of the context, while others cram in as many adjectives as they can, often gratuitously. These approaches should be discouraged as they are unnecessary and will detract from the effect of the response.

When they have finished, candidates should make full use of the time left to check their work for errors. The time allowed for this paper is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look at

genders in particular, and the agreements of adjectives and past participles in the perfect tense of *être* and reflexive verbs. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French which they cannot read. This year saw no improvement in the standards of presentation and some answers were written in minuscule handwriting that could hardly be deciphered. Some employed a style of writing which made certain letters ambiguous. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can but there are limits and where writing is illegible, marks may be lost. Centres should ask candidates not to lay out their work in columns in the style of a newspaper article: Examiners are required to use both margins on the question paper when they mark, so if work is set out in columns, annotation of the candidate's answer is made difficult.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) A letter to an old schoolfriend

The majority of candidates chose this option and understanding of the tasks was rarely a problem. The question invited candidates to write about familiar topics such as their personal life and their plans at a time in the future when they would be 25 years old. A number of very interesting letters was received from the more able, and average candidates usually presented a competent response. Weaker candidates were able to score marks for simple statements in the present tense about family and work.

Nearly all were able to begin the informal letter appropriately, addressing the friend and explaining the reason for the letter. Some mistakenly addressed the friend alternately as *tu* or *vous*. The very best began with *ça fait si longtemps que je ne t'ai pas vu* or the equivalent.

The first task was normally fulfilled by *quand j'ai quitté l'école* and a statement in the perfect tense, as indicated by the tense of the question (*ce que vous avez fait*). Many said that they continued their studies (some had difficulty with *étudier* and *études* although the latter was in the rubric). Others took a year out, travelling abroad. Many used *voyager en Europe* or *aux États-Unis*. A small number began full-time employment on leaving school.

In the second task, a communication mark was given for simply saying that they liked or disliked their current job. *J'aime mon travail* was sufficient, so it was a pity some neglected to answer the question. Most imagined they were doing very well in their chosen careers (medicine, law and business were the most popular). Others were still studying. The reason for enjoying their work (not one candidate said he/she did not enjoy it) could be very basic to fulfil the task (e.g. *parce que c'est intéressant*), but more extended answers were also offered. Candidates were happy to receive a good salary (*c'est bien payé*), which enabled them to travel or buy a car or go shopping regularly. Others enjoyed the company of their colleagues.

The next task was to describe their family life. The present tense was appropriate and most managed to make at least one comment about their family. The family in question was sometimes their parents and other relatives with whom they were still living, sometimes the new family they had with their husband/wife. Many attempted to say they had married but few knew *épouser* or *se marier avec*.

Future plans were often well expressed and it was apparent that many candidates were thoroughly prepared to write about this subject. Most stated an intended profession and said *je voudrais être avocat/homme d'affaires/professeur*. A number confused *médecin* and *médecine*. The reason for the choice often involved money and a good life, but some wanted to devote their future to helping others. The communication mark for the last task was lost by those who had already used up their 140 words by putting too much detail in the earlier sections. It is essential to complete all the tasks within the word count to score the maximum five marks for communication.

Question 1(b) Young people and their mobile phones

While this was a minority choice, those who tackled it usually did so with enthusiasm and not a little knowledge, the mobile phone being such a necessary part of a teenager's life.

Successful answers began by stating when the candidate first used a mobile. The norm was something along the lines of *j'ai commencé à utiliser un premier téléphone portable quand j'avais 13 ans* or *j'ai reçu mon premier téléphone portable à l'âge de 13 ans*. Weaker candidates had difficulty using the perfect tense.

The majority were able to express a preference for sending text messages or talking on the mobile, although weaker candidates put *je préfèrez* instead of *je préfère*. Reasons given included the idea that texts could be sent to a number of different people at the same time. This proved to be difficult to express. Other reasons were that direct conversations were more satisfactory as they were more personal or immediate. The communication mark was gained for simple statements such as *les textos sont plus rapides/plus faciles/moins chers*. Handling of the comparative *plus... que* was generally good but the agreement of adjectives was less so.

The positive aspects of mobile phones were numerous. Children could keep in touch with parents to ensure their safety. It was easy to talk to family and friends at any time of day. They could be used to take photos, use social networks, send text messages or listen to music. Negative aspects were less obvious. Some said they were impersonal. Others attempted to say they were over reliant on their phones, but this was difficult to express. The communication mark was awarded for simple statements such as *les téléphones mobiles sont (trop) chers*, but few said so. Some could not think of any negative aspects.

The final task required candidates to say how their lives would change if they lost their phones. All those who attempted the question had their own phone apparently and some interesting answers were given. A minority said nothing would change as they seldom used their phone. Most said that life would be impossible and they would be unable to contact anyone. Only the better candidates could say *si je perdais mon téléphone portable* and follow that with a correct conditional tense.

Question 2 A family argument

The question was set in familiar territory (the family and daily routine) but as always with **Question 2** it involved manipulating tenses and this proved to be challenging. The narrative question requires the use of past tenses as the rubric clearly indicates, but some wrote throughout in present tenses. This resulted in no language marks being given for finite verbs and the loss of communication marks in certain tasks. Other candidates mixed past and present tenses throughout and thus sacrificed a significant number of marks. That said, some lively and imaginative work was presented and the most able seized their opportunity to shine and 'show off their French'. The best answers contained a rich variety of vocabulary and complex structures which did the candidates great credit.

The 'dispute' had many causes. Some narrators forgot to do homework or did badly at school. Others stayed out late or failed to tell parents where they were. Others defied parents and went to parties without their permission. Others forgot domestic duties or argued fiercely over the choice of television viewing. Some even crashed father's car!

Only the best candidates showed awareness of the need for the pluperfect tense. Few managed the sequence of tenses in statements such as *je me suis disputé avec mes parents parce que j'avais oublié de faire...* or *maman a dit que j'avais fait...* and *j'ai répondu que j'avais fait...* Similarly, the conditional was missed in *Papa a dit que je ne pourrais pas aller au cinéma* etc. While marks for language were not awarded to verbs in inappropriate tenses, candidates scored communication marks for using any past tense, provided the context was in the past.

'What happened during and after the dispute' usually involved what was said by all parties, erratic behaviour, slamming doors by the narrator, and punishment meted out by parents. There was much anger on the part of the antagonists. Not many used *se fâcher* or *se mettre en colère* correctly however. Parents accused and threatened. Narrators protested innocence and made excuses. After the row, some parents forbade the narrator to go out or to use the computer/phone for a week. Some narrators wept. The verb *pleurer* was rendered as *pleuvoir* or *crier* by some. Finally, apologies were made by all parties (or not!).

Communication marks for reactions were often obtained for saying the narrator was sad or cross about the row, or happy that a solution was found in the end. Marks were given for good resolutions, such as the resolve to be more studious or serious by the narrator or to be more tolerant by the parents. The narrator often forgave everything, as parents did everything in the best interest of their child. Others remained angry and decided not to speak to their parents for a week, at least!

Although the question was challenging, some very good answers were received. Many candidates of moderate ability were able to score quite well by keeping to simple statements in basic language. Others, however, made many errors in their attempts to express complex ideas in a language which exceeded their compass. Many careless mistakes were made by even able candidates, due perhaps to unnecessary haste or to a reluctance to revise their work diligently. Everyday words and expressions were misspelled. Common verb forms were mishandled. Genders and spelling varied throughout the piece, including the

gender of the candidate. Common words were confused such as *entendre* and *écouter*, *parler* and *dire*, *avoir* and *être* (particularly as auxiliaries) and *joli* and *heureux*. A thorough check at the end of the examination would have eliminated many of these errors.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/42
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should follow the rubric closely.
- Candidates should plan their answers.
- Candidates should make full use of the time allowed.
- Candidates should aim to write between 130 and 140 words.
- Candidates should write what they know to be French and avoid attempting to use language with which they are not familiar.
- Candidates should check their work for errors.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

The performance of many candidates was very creditable, and the best produced work of a high quality. Their answers were characterised by a secure grasp of the basics of French grammar and a variety and depth of knowledge, both of vocabulary and structure. Others, while not in the top bracket, did justice to their ability by presenting answers which were relevant and communicated the requirements of the tasks effectively, using less complex language.

A number of candidates did not make the most of the opportunity to show their knowledge of French to good advantage. This was often due to a flawed examination technique. Insufficient attention was paid to the detail of the rubric. Some answers were over long and communication marks were lost. Work was not checked properly at the end, to correct elementary errors. It is with these matters in mind that Examiners offer the above Key Messages, aimed at improving performance.

The rubric is not a list of suggestions to be interpreted freely. Instead, it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. Candidates should keep closely to these stated tasks and avoid irrelevance. Material which is introduced which does not pertain to the subject is not credited for content or language. Normally, a statement is required using a finite verb for each task, expressed in the tense contained in the question.

Candidates are advised to prepare a brief plan of their answers under certain headings or paragraphs. They should spread their answer fairly evenly over the 'bullet points' in the rubric. In **Question 1** in particular, if they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two tasks they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks and remain within the 140 word limit. If they cover all the points in 100 words or less they may be reduced to 'padding out' their answer to reach 140 words, so they should look for areas where they can expand their answer with relevant examples. No credit is given for any material which falls outside the 140 word limit. Short answers limit their own chances of accessing the maximum marks for language.

Once the plan is decided, candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay particular attention to the selection of tense and verb forms. They should remember that grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. They should avoid too much reliance on repeated items of language, such as possessive adjectives and the verb *être*. This tends to impair the overall quality of the piece and may reduce the mark given for General impression. Candidates are urged to stay within their limitations and to avoid over complicated sentences which may expose weaknesses. Some candidates try to 'force in' certain phrases or idioms, regardless of the context, while others cram in as many adjectives as they can, often gratuitously. These approaches should be discouraged as they are unnecessary and will detract from the effect of the response.

When they have finished, candidates should make full use of the time left to check their work for errors. The time allowed for this paper is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look at

genders in particular, and the agreements of adjectives and past participles in the perfect tense of *être* and reflexive verbs. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French which they cannot read. This year saw no improvement in the standards of presentation and some answers were written in minuscule handwriting that could hardly be deciphered. Some employed a style of writing which made certain letters ambiguous. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can but there are limits and where writing is illegible, marks may be lost. Centres should ask candidates not to lay out their work in columns in the style of a newspaper article: Examiners are required to use both margins on the question paper when they mark, so if work is set out in columns, annotation of the candidate's answer is made difficult.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) *Votre famille et vous*

This was overwhelmingly the more popular option, the topic area being widely known. Most began with a general description of their family, starting with the number of its members. Most said *nous sommes quatre* or *il y a quatre personnes dans ma famille*. This was usually followed by portraits of family members, their names, ages and professions. The majority could say: *Mon père s'appelle... Il a 45 ans. Il est docteur*, although not all knew to omit the article with professions. Some used *être* instead of *avoir* with ages. Where portraits regularly included many possessive adjectives (*mon, ma, mes*) and identical phrases repeated several times, this spoiled the impression. Some went into unnecessary detail, including personal hobbies and character traits, the colour of eyes and hair and the stature of each member of the family. These descriptions sometimes took up so many words that the answer exceeded 140 words in total and later tasks could not be credited, being outside the word count.

A small minority neglected to say *ma famille est importante dans ma vie*, which was a pity as it was a required task and carried a communication mark. Most said the family was very important and gave several reasons. They were loved by their families and loved them in return. Some admired their parents and mentioned the help they gave, especially with schoolwork and personal problems. Object pronouns were a source of difficulty and a number put *ils aident moi* instead of *ils m'aident*. Some said they liked to play with brothers and sisters, though little brothers were often *méchants* (rendered as *merchants* on some scripts). Girls shared secrets with sisters. Boys played games with brothers. Many said that parents were not only kind and understanding but also generous. They provided their children with money!

The next task required a past tense to say what they did recently with their family (*ce que vous avez fait avec votre famille*). A communication mark was lost by those who responded in present tenses (*nous allons en ville ensemble* etc.), which suggested a lack of care in reading the rubric. Some said they went for a picnic together, or played games. Others went shopping or went to the cinema or a restaurant. Some went on a foreign holiday. The value of these family occasions was much appreciated. The perfect tense was not well handled by a number of candidates.

As stated earlier, the final task frequently fell outside the word count in over long responses, and did not score for communication. Most were able to say *je voudrais avoir* with a number of children or to state that they would like a large/small family. Their reasons were varied. Some simply said they loved children. Others said they wanted a large family to mirror their own current situation, but this proved hard to express. Some wanted no more than one or two children, as large families were very expensive to provide for. A minority did not want any children at all, as they preferred to pursue a career and they disliked children. They were too much work and were difficult and noisy!

Question 1(b) *Le climat de votre pays*

This option was chosen by a minority. A number of excellent responses were received. Some of the candidates who chose this question might have fared better had they chosen **1(a)**.

Many began with a brief description of the climate in their country. *Il fait beau en été et il fait froid en hiver* was standard, although some put *le temps fait beau* or *il est froid*. The first task was to describe last week's weather. Although *le temps qu'il a fait* was given in the question, some answered in present tenses (*il pleut/il fait froid* etc.) and missed marks for communication and language. Candidates are reminded to look carefully at the tense in the rubric and to use that tense in their reply. Those who did not know the verb forms of the irregular *pleuvoir* should have chosen to say something else.

Next, candidates were asked which time of the year they preferred and why? Most were able to say *j'aime* or *je préfère* with a season or a month and to give a reason, but some copied *je préférez* from the question paper. Some referred to the weather as a reason for their preference (*parce qu'il fait chaud* etc.) while others said they could enjoy their favourite activity at that time of year. They could do more sports in winter, when the weather was not too hot. Some could enjoy skiing. Others liked summer because they could spend time on the beach or have barbecues. Most could say *je peux* or *on peut* with an infinitive. Some said they liked summer/winter fashions.

Understanding of the final task was good. Some would choose to live in a warmer climate in order to spend more time sea bathing etc. Some would choose a colder climate because they liked snow. The majority said that they enjoyed the climate of their own country, and would not wish to emigrate.

Question 2 Babysitting

Understanding of the task was generally good and the vast majority attempted to write an account of a difficult evening spent looking after young children. There were some excellent responses from the most able, who wrote fluently with only a minor incidence of error. However, for many the challenge of writing a continuous piece of French in past tenses proved too much. Since the requirement to use past tenses was evident in the rubric (*Décrivez les problèmes que vous avez eus* etc.) no communication marks were given for relating the events in tenses other than the past. Verbs written in present tenses to say what happened did not score marks for language. Some candidates wrote entirely in the present, while others used past and present randomly. A minority wrote about babysitting in general, and not about a specific occasion. Candidates should remember to follow the instructions set out in the rubric.

Accounts often began with the arrangement being made to 'babysit' for younger siblings or the children of neighbours or relatives. Better candidates were able to say *ma voisine m'a demandé de faire du babysitting*. This was quite acceptable but in some cases this 'introduction' was very long and the actual events of the evening were referred to only briefly.

To say that the narrator arrived at the house and that the parents left, required the verbs *arriver* and either *partir* or *sortir*. Candidates needed the auxiliary *être* and the correct agreement, of past participles. Only better candidates achieved this. The *problèmes* usually began at once. Babies awoke and would not go back to sleep. They began to weep (*pleurer* was often confused with *crier* or *pleuvoir*). They refused food. The narrator was often powerless! *Je ne savais pas quoi faire* was a feature of the better scripts. Sometimes calamities were narrowly avoided, as when babies disappeared and turned up, unharmed, in the street, in next door's garden or even in the fridge. In some accounts, the child was ill and needed medication. Many could not remember *malade* and used *être mal* instead. Those 'sitting' for older children met different problems. Little boys played football in the house and broke plates, furniture or even the television. They drew on the walls. They howled. They were noisy and uncooperative. Little girls wanted *maman* and cried unceasingly. The vocabulary needed to relate these events was that of everyday and was not a problem for average candidates, but verbs and linguistic structures were not generally well handled. A minority of candidates described a pleasant evening babysitting with no problems at all. No credit could be given for communication of difficulties and attempts to solve them in such cases.

'How the narrator attempted to resolve these problems' was expressed well by better candidates. Crying indicated hunger and some narrators offered milk. When baby refused to cooperate, s/he tried offering a variety of food or drinks instead. Some tried sweets or chocolate. Refusal to sleep was a problem sometimes solved by reading stories, playing games or watching television. On finding the child was unwell, they gave medicine. Many children had bad falls, and our narrators had to telephone the parents or even call for an ambulance. The story sometimes ended in the hospital, where the child had medical treatment. Parents came home (often late) and responded in a variety of ways to the babysitter's efforts. Some were pleased that he/she coped so well. Others were dismayed by events and refused to pay for his/her services.

The narrator's reactions to events were rewarded in the body of the account (*ça m'a énervé, j'étais choqué/étonné, j'avais peur, c'était horrible*) and at the end, when the narrator reflects on the experience. Some concluded that it was an ordeal from which valuable lessons could be learned. More often, candidates said it was a terrible way to spend an evening, and they decided never to be a babysitter again.

The best answers showed a good variety of perfect and imperfect tenses and in some cases the pluperfect. A wide depth of knowledge of vocabulary and structures was in evidence. Many, however, used perfect and imperfect indiscriminately and made errors in the formation of common verbs. Basic errors of usage and grammar were found on many scripts, spelling was weak and genders were inconsistent. Common words were confused, such as *entendre* and *écouter*, *dire* and *parler*, *avoir* and *être*, particularly when used as

auxiliaries and *heureux* and *joli*. It was noticeable that a number who had written a mostly accurate piece for **Question 1**, made multiple errors in **Question 2**. Reasonable marks for accounts written in the past may be accessible for candidates of only moderate ability, if they follow the guidelines set out in the General Comments section of this report. Candidates should revise the perfect and imperfect tenses thoroughly in their preparation for this paper, as these tenses will always be tested in the narrative question. Above all, they should check their work carefully at the end of the examination to eliminate simple errors.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/43
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should follow the rubric closely.
- Candidates should plan their answers.
- Candidates should make full use of the time allowed.
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- Candidates should check their work for errors.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

The performance of many candidates was very creditable, and the best produced work of a high quality. Their answers were characterised by a secure grasp of the basics of French grammar and a variety and depth of knowledge, both of vocabulary and structure. Others, while not in the top bracket, did justice to their ability by presenting answers which were relevant and communicated the requirements of the tasks effectively, using less complex language.

A number of candidates did not make the most of the opportunity to show their knowledge of French to good advantage. This was often due to a flawed examination technique. Insufficient attention was paid to the detail of the rubric. Some answers were over long and communication marks were lost. Work was not checked properly at the end, to correct elementary errors. It is with these matters in mind that Examiners offer the above Key Messages, aimed at improving performance.

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genders in particular, and the agreements of adjectives and past participles in the perfect tense of *être* and reflexive verbs. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French which they cannot read. This year saw no improvement in the standards of presentation and some answers were written in minuscule handwriting that could hardly be deciphered. Some employed a style of writing which made certain letters ambiguous. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can but there are limits and where writing is illegible, marks may be lost. Centres should ask candidates not to lay out their work in columns in the style of a newspaper article: Examiners are required to use both margins on the question paper when they mark, so if work is set out in columns, annotation of the candidate's answer is made difficult.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Sport

This was easily the more popular option, as candidates embraced a topic which held much personal interest for them. The use of three time-frames (present, past and future) was required and this was a source of difficulty in a number of answers. Some tended to ignore the specific tasks contained in the rubric and wrote about sport in general. While some marks for language were awarded in such cases, no marks for communication could be given for work unrelated to the tasks.

Firstly, candidates were directed to name a sport they practise regularly. The most popular activities were team games enjoyed at school, such as football and netball, but some preferred more individual sports, such as golf, tennis or swimming. *Je fais beaucoup de sports* or *je fais régulièrement du sport* with no expansion did not receive a communication mark. A present tense was needed (*quel sport pratiquez-vous?*) but some responded in past tenses. The choice of verbs with sporting activities proved to be difficult. The safest was perhaps to employ the verb *pratiquer*, as found in the question (i.e. *je pratique la natation*) but *je joue au foot* or *je fais du ski* were equally acceptable. There was confusion over the use of prepositions, as in *je joue du foot* and *je fais au cyclisme*.

The next task required a past tense, as candidates were invited to describe a sporting event which they had attended or in which they took part. Communication marks were awarded for saying that they participated in a match. (It was noticeable how few used *participer* with *à*, which was given in the rubric.) Others saw major sporting events. A number used the verb *attendre* (to wait) in an attempt to say that they attended the event. Accounts of the games/competitions were sometimes long and over-complicated, as candidates struggled with technical sporting terms or wasted words by using many proper nouns, such as the names of teams or players. More successful candidates kept mainly to simple language here and relied on common verbs, such as *jouer*, *gagner* and *perdre* and everyday vocabulary. A minority used such words as *championnat* and *tournoi*, but such specialised items were uncommon. Inevitably, marks for communication were not gained when tenses other than the past were used.

Explaining the importance of sport in the lives of young people involved the physical and occasionally the social benefits of practising a sport. *C'est bon pour la santé* was almost standard and some said it was a good way of making new friends. Some met with varied success in their attempts to express more complex ideas, writing about life-style and the need for a balanced curriculum in schools.

Finally, candidates were directed to state whether they would continue with sport in future. Most said that they would, and coped quite well with the future tense or *je vais/voudrais* with an infinitive. They enjoyed their sport and above all it would help them to keep fit. A minority would be glad to give up compulsory games at school as they were lazy or not interested. They would perhaps watch sport on TV. Some did not score the last two communication marks as they had already written 140 words before they addressed the final tasks.

Question 1(b) The environment

This was a minority choice. Several very good individual answers were presented, which showed signs that this important topic had been thoroughly covered in preparation for the paper. Other candidates were less well prepared and struggled to produce a response. As in **Question 1(a)**, three different time-frames were covered by the tasks.

The first task required candidates to say what they do personally to be *écologique*. Some cycle or walk to school. Others remember to switch off lights and to put all litter in the bins. Some try to save water.

Next, what did they do recently to help to protect the environment? Some said they planted trees. They went to other schools to give talks on the need to conserve energy and avoid waste. They encouraged car sharing and the use of public transport to save on fuel. Better candidates showed an impressive knowledge of fairly specialised vocabulary. Past tenses were properly used in most cases.

The main cause of urban pollution was, according to candidates, the over-use of private cars in cities, although some made mention of industrial pollution caused by factories. The solutions were more recycling, improved public transport and the use of alternative energy sources. In this section better candidates were able to make good use of such phrases as: *il faut*, *on devrait* or *on pourrait* with appropriate infinitives.

Question 2 The teachers' party

The topic was a party organised by the narrator's class to thank their teachers. Candidates entered into the spirit of the question and some imaginative responses were received. Understanding of the rubric was good, generally, although a number wrote in a mixture of past and present tenses and thus denied themselves access to a number of marks both for language and for communication.

The first task was to say how the class set about organising the party for the teachers. Cards were obtained and signed by all the candidates. Food was purchased, specifically chocolate cakes and other delicacies. Some even decked the classroom with balloons. There was music and DJ's were engaged. The affair was often kept secret from the staff. Many coped well with describing these preparations, using common verbs in perfect tenses (*j'ai acheté...* / *nous avons arrange...* etc.) although there were difficulties with verb forms after *la classe et moi*. Transcription of words given in the rubric was frequently faulty as candidates miscopied *professeurs* and other words. The teachers were usually delighted by the gesture. As it was the end of term, they cancelled homework and abandoned lessons. Not all could produce *les profs étaient* and an adjective with a plural agreement.

The next section illustrated how this school day differed from the normal routine. This was usually quite well expressed. Instead of lessons the class entertained their teachers with sports, sometimes including the staff themselves. There were games and music. In some cases, the whole class spent the day on the beach. Some went home early. Everyone enjoyed the experience, although *nous nous sommes bien amusés* was seldom rendered correctly. The teachers were *sympa* and *gais*. Obviously this was very different from the norm!

The narrator's reactions were uniformly positive. *J'étais très heureux/ravi* qualified as a suitable reaction to justify a mark for communication, as did *c'était génial* or *c'était extraordinaire*. Narrators promised to repeat the gesture next year

Most candidates found enough ideas to fill 140 words, indeed a number wrote much more than the limit and could not be awarded communication marks for their *réactions* as these fell outside the word count. The quality of written French from the better candidates was impressive, but many answers were spoilt by errors in rendering simple, basic structures and the misspelling of common words. Genders and spelling were inconsistent. Verb forms were frequently incorrect and wrong tenses were employed. The verbs *avoir* and *être* were confused, especially when used as auxiliaries. A thorough check at the end of the examination would have eliminated many of these failings and ensured higher marks.