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# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Edexcel GCE  
in French (9FR0)  
paper 3: speaking

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## **Introduction**

Summer 2018 sees the first assessment for 9FR03, and the first sitting has proved very successful. Many candidates scored highly and there were quite a few examples where candidates scored full marks.

As this is the first Principal Examiner's report for the new specifications, it is perhaps an appropriate moment not only to assess the performance of candidates but also to review the specifications, mark scheme and instructions to teacher/examiners to ensure there is clarity about the objectives of the award and how these can best be achieved.

Accordingly, this report will begin by highlighting some features of the new examination, pointing up the implications of these for centres, candidates and teacher/examiners; review the structure of the exam, clarify elements of the mark scheme, drawing attention to the features it rewards; provide commentary and advice on the performance of candidates and teacher-examiners.

## **The specification**

On page 2 of Issue 2 of the specifications for the new qualification, it is written "[a qualification] ... that will enable your students to develop an advanced level knowledge of the French language, the culture of France and other Francophone countries, as well as practical and valuable language and transferable study skills." It also states "... our assessments place an emphasis on spontaneity and grammar ... Clear mark schemes encourage students to develop ideas, use language to persuade and analyse and give critical responses in their writing and speaking".

There are several major changes between this examination and the legacy examination. The most obvious is the emphasis placed on knowledge and understanding of French society and culture as found not just in France but also in other parts of the Francophone community. The implications of this are that students need to show greater detailed knowledge that must be focused on France or Francophone countries. Whilst comparisons with other societies are permissible for the purposes of supporting an argument, as for example when discussing the educational system, these should be strictly limited lest the discussion drifts into irrelevance in terms of the French or Francophone context.

As well as demonstrating knowledge, candidates must show understanding of that knowledge. It is not enough to produce facts and statistics alone. Candidates must also be able to say why they felt these things were important enough to raise in the first place and how their research has formed their current viewpoints. In doing so they will display an ability to analyse which, as will be seen, is rewarded at several points in the mark scheme.

Another very important feature is that the nature of the exchanges between candidates and examiners has changed. There is no debate in the new specification. Candidates and examiners are no longer required to defend positions. Thus the role of the examiner now becomes that of an enabler trying to assist candidates as they express what they know and understand of aspects of French society and culture by probing for more detail, analysis and opinion.

A common element between the old and the new specifications is the independent research candidates must undertake. This study skills component has been preserved. For 9FR03, they research a feature of French/ Francophone society with the intent mainly of showing how much they know about it and how well they have understood the effect it has on that country's way of life. This does not mean that candidates need eschew the controversial. For example, whereas the Vichy regime can be fruitfully presented in a dispassionate way, it may also be interesting to investigate the matter of Pétain's perceived treachery, which may well give rise to some provocative discussion. Nevertheless, in the main, the confrontational element of the old exam is no longer a feature.

## The Format of the examination

The detail of this is set out on page 8 of the Specification booklet.

In brief, candidates are examined on 4 themes, 3 of which focus on France only whilst the other – Theme 2 – requires students “to broaden their knowledge across **any** Francophone country/countries/ and/or community/communities”. Within the “any” is included France.

The 4 themes are:

- 1) Les changements dans la société française
- 2) La culture politique et artistique dans les pays francophones
- 3) L’immigration et la société multiculturelle française
- 4) L’Occupation et la Résistance

These 4 themes are each further divided into 3 sub-themes. This gives a total of 12 sub-themes on which candidates are to be examined.

The choice of theme is dictated by a candidate’s position in the running order provided by Pearson and from which there must be no deviation. So candidate 1 will be offered the choice between Card 1 (Changements dans la société française) and Card 12 (La Résistance). Candidate 5 will choose between Card 8 ( Les défis de l’immigration) or card 12 ( La Résistance) and so on. Candidates may not refuse this imposed choice.

Having chosen the sub-theme, candidates are faced with a choice between two statements – A and B – which refer to different aspects of the sub-theme. For example, having chosen Theme 1: Les changements dans la société française, candidates this year were faced with a further choice between:

A La famille traditionnelle en France décline à cause des changements dans la condition féminine

**or**

B Le mariage pour tous a établi une parité entre les couples homosexuels et hétérosexuels

Each statement is supported by 2 bullet points that direct candidates to areas of the topic that they will be required to speak about.

So, in this case, if candidates choose statement A, they find that they are advised to consider

- la condition féminine en France
- les changements dans la famille traditionnelle en France

They then have 5 minutes to reflect on these points before going into the examination room where the examiner will check their identity, the theme they have chosen and the statement they will be responding to.

## **Advice to candidates**

The 5 minute period should be spent preparing an answer to the 2 questions to be asked of the candidates. Together, the statement and the bullet points should allow candidates to predict with a degree of accuracy what questions they will encounter. In the present example, statement A talks about changes in the feminine condition in France and their impact on the traditional French family and the bullet points re-enforce that. It should not be difficult for candidates to make an informed guess as to what questions might appear.

As a rule, the first question requires some factual information and the second some interpretation of this information in the form of an opinion.

In this instance they were:

- 1) Comment est-ce que la vie des femmes a changé pendant ces dernières années en France ?
- 2) Est-ce que ces changements sont responsables du déclin de la famille traditionnelle française ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?

Candidates need to bear in mind that the questions require a focused answer. They are not just a general invitation for candidates to reproduce what they have learnt about the sub-theme, regardless of how relevant it is to the question.

Many candidates neglect to answer the question as put and produce answers that, whilst being articulate and accurate, do not conform to the requirements and thereby fall into the category of “irrelevance”.

## **Advice to centres/examiners**

Candidates for this paper are accompanied by 3 documents; a CS3 form on which they give consent for their examination to be used possibly for training and standardising purposes; an OR3 form for the use of markers and on which should be included the centre's name and number and the candidate's name and number together with the stimulus card number and the statement choice of the candidate; and the RP3 form showing the title of the research project and the sources used by the candidates to complete this task.

These documents were not always submitted. Most commonly the OR3 form was missing or was not filled out correctly with the candidate's card number and choice of statement missing. This has implications for the marking process. This is compounded if, as occasionally happens, centres fail to announce these details.

## **Task 1 - 30 marks**

This is in 2 sections.

The first section lasts between 6 – 7 minutes.

- It begins with the 2 compulsory questions which should be asked as written only responses to the set questions can be credited;
- There should be no prompting to encourage the candidate to expand the response to these two questions;
- There should be no development of answers between questions and candidates should be told not to ask examiners for their opinions on the question.

In the main however, this aspect of the test was well conducted.

Once candidates have answered the 2 compulsory questions, the examiner should, as stated in the specifications on page 21 “ ... develop the discussion by asking appropriate questions relating to the statement on the stimulus card”, as a way of briefly exploring the sub-theme further. They may also wish to take up points made by candidates in their answers. At an appropriate moment, examiners should move on to an investigation of at least one other sub-theme in the overall theme. So, remaining with the example of Theme 1, at about 4 minutes after the candidate begins the first answer, the examiner should move to “l'éducation” or “le monde du travail” (or both depending on candidate response) and seek information and opinion on them.

## **Task 2 - Independent Research Presentation - possible 12 marks**

There are 2 parts to this task. The first is a presentation by the candidate of the research conducted into their chosen topic, concentrating on the written sources. There then follows a 7 – 9 minute discussion focusing on the 6 – 10 bullet points provided by the candidate indicating in more detail the areas studied.

### **Advice to centres**

There may have been some initial confusion over the role of the teacher in respect of preparing candidates for this task. The presentation and the bullet points must be the work of the candidates alone. However, teachers are allowed to advise. As this is a study skill, teachers are allowed to give instruction on how a summary and a presentation should best be approached. Therefore, whilst they may advise on the candidates' plan for the presentation, they must not exercise any influence on what they will say nor be aware of its content prior to the examination.

The themes and sub-themes will clearly be dealt with in the classroom but candidates' individual topics should not. In the first instance, they can discuss with candidates which type of topics are likely to be more productive and give some assistance to candidates in their initial choice and overall approach to research areas. However, once

this has been decided upon, they may have no further involvement. It is the intention of the examining body that the first time the teacher/examiner and the candidate discuss the IRP is in the examination room. This is to ensure that “scripted” tests where candidates and examiners rehearse to such an extent that all spontaneity is absent from the exchanges, should not occur.

The bullet points exist to assist the examiner in moving around the IRP topic. The examiner’s role is to exploit these in a way that allows candidates to demonstrate the extent of their research. Therefore, “pourquoi /comment/ dans quel but/ quelles ont été les conséquences” type questions are to be preferred over “parle-moi de .../qu’est-ce tu sais sur...” ones.

The bullet points should be short indicators of sub-topics candidates want to discuss and not, as often occurred, whole paragraphs.

## **Advice to candidates**

### **Choice of topic**

When choosing a topic, the ones to favour are those that enable knowledge and understanding of Francophone societies to be shown.

The following is a selection of topics presented at this year’s examination session:-

*La famille Curie - la rafle du Vél d'Hiv - Immigration - les effets positifs - La musique arabe - Les émeutes 2005 - Vichy - Jeanne d'Arc - Emmanuel Macron - Coco Chanel - Amélie Poulain - Didier Drogba - Tintin au Congo - Euthanasie - Front National - SDF à Paris - Mariage pour tous - Interdiction de voitures essence et diesel - Mai '68 - Le rap - les banlieues - Le Petit Prince - La langue inclusive - le Sexisme - la Loi Veil - Gastronomie - quel avenir? - le festival de Cannes - Louis Pasteur - Madame Bovary - Edith Piaf - Laïcité - Neymar et le PSG - L'Etranger - Meursault aimable? - le rap français - Yves St. Laurent.*

If candidates do what is required for this section, that is explain which sources they have used and how they were affected by them, there is no topic that is intrinsically better than another since this is an exercise that assesses their presentational skills and not their knowledge or language mastery. Nevertheless, in the subsequent discussion the choice of topic will have a bearing on the outcome because the knowledge candidates have acquired in conducting their research and the opinions they have formed as a consequence will be explored in the discussion of the bullet points.

So, from the list above the following would seem to offer better opportunities for demonstrating wider knowledge of French/Francophone society :

- *La famille Curie - la rafle du Vél d'Hiv - Immigration - les effets positifs - La musique arabe - Les émeutes 2005 - Vichy - Jeanne d'Arc - Emmanuel Macron*



However, any subject approached in the correct manner can be productive if it illustrates knowledge and understanding of French or Francophone culture and society.

## **The Presentation**

It is important to understand that the Presentation is a formal exercise in reporting on at least 2 of the sources used during the research undertaken by candidates and their comparative usefulness in arriving at a judgment on the topic. It is not about the topic itself. That will be discussed subsequently with the aid of the bullet points.

A common misunderstanding is that candidates must give their opinion on the topic. In so doing they ignore the written sources, with severe consequences for the overall mark for this section of the exam.

A model presentation could look like this:

- confirming the title;
- giving very brief reasons for choosing the topic;
- identifying both sources – which must be written -precisely:- what they were – book, article, website; who wrote them; when; where they were found;
- giving the main points of each;
- providing personal assessment of the relative impact of each;
- brief concluding summation.

Examiners have remarked this year that bibliographies are often poorly written and thus difficult to decipher for the purposes of checking; and that no indication of which of the sources will form the basis of the presentation is provided. It is therefore requested that candidates identify in some way, possibly numerically, the 2 written sources they will be referring to during their presentation.

## **Bullet points**

There should be 6 – 10 of these. They should be used as pointers to areas for further spontaneous discussion to take place. They should be short and not be full paragraphs. They should not be used as triggers allowing rehearsed material to be recalled. It is the responsibility of the examiner to ensure that candidates show understanding of the information they have acquired by seeking their opinions.

## **The Mark Scheme**

Paper 3 of 9FRO is assessed in a positive way. Candidates are rewarded for the amount of complex, accurate and articulate language they produce as well as the range of their language resources.

## **The 4 Assessment Objectives**

### **AO1 – Interaction – 6 marks**

This grid is applied for each task except Task 2 Part 1. This provides a picture of how much the candidate participated in the discussions. It assesses their ability to sustain, initiate and ultimately direct the conversation; their fluency; their ability to use communication strategies, such as checking to see whether they are being understood, to overcome temporary inadequacies. It allows a judgment to be made on how independent they are as speakers of the language or how much they rely on the examiner to stimulate the exchanges.

#### **Advice to candidates**

When asked to respond to a question, prompt or remark, candidates should seek to provide an initial response that shows they have understood the question but then they should develop this and expand into related areas of the same topic opening up further areas for discussion. They should ensure that at all times they remain relevant to the point being discussed. Wandering into unrelated areas will attract no rewards.

### **AO4 – Knowledge and Understanding of society and culture – 12 marks**

This is applied twice. Once in Task 1 where it assesses the candidates' knowledge and understanding of French / Francophone society and culture and again in Task 2 Part 2 where it assesses the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the research topic. **It does not apply in Task 2 Part 1.**

Candidates score for the degree of knowledge they display; the illustrative examples they supply; their ability to remain focused on the subject under discussion; their analytical powers; their opinions and the underpinning arguments; and their ability to draw pertinent conclusions.

#### **Advice to candidates**

Candidates should listen carefully to the questions or comments from the examiner and make sure that they have fully understood what is required of them before embarking on an answer. This may entail requesting a repeat. This should not deter candidates as no penalties are incurred in this process. They should then formulate their answers so that the point raised is addressed directly in an initial response and exemplified through further, more detailed information. They should not be content just to provide an answer to the question but should try to expand into related areas that can provide further avenues for discussion. An easy way of doing this is to pass judgment on the facts under discussion and also give opinions that can be justified.

It is worth stating that the speaking test is not a "right or wrong" type of examination. Giving the correct answer is only part of the story. What is perhaps even more

important is how this answer is provided and for how long. Candidates should seek to show the fullest range possible of the language resources they have acquired over their years of study. However, they should do this whilst being aware of the need not to lose focus and stray into areas that are not relevant as these carry no reward.

### **AO3 – Accuracy and Range of Language – possible 12 marks**

This grid is applied twice. Once in Task 1 and again in Task 2 Part 2. **It does not apply in Task 2 Part 1.**

This grid provides a profile of candidates' grasp and mastery of the language showing how able they are at conveying a message without its meaning being compromised in some way. So, it assesses the extent of their linguistic resources – vocabulary, structures and idiom; their ability to marshal these into coherent utterances; the level of accuracy achieved when doing this; and the authenticity of their pronunciation and intonation. The emphasis is on their competence in making themselves understood rather than on perfection of form. Thus a candidate will be judged to have given an adequate performance if they have enough resources at their disposal to express the thoughts they may have and can do this in a way that is coherent and accurate enough for there to be only the occasional moment of incomprehensibility.

### **AO2 – The Presentation – 12 marks**

It should be clear from what has preceded that this grid rewards the ability to summarise the experience of conducting individual research and nothing else.

Candidates are rewarded for properly identifying 2 written resources; summarising the main points of these; stating which of the two they found particularly note-worthy and why. Done correctly, this exercise can be very productive in terms of marks. Failure to observe the requirements can be catastrophic even on occasions resulting in no marks being awarded at all, for this section.

### **Advice to candidates**

Candidates are advised to adhere closely to the prescriptions above. They should control the delivery of their presentation so that it is easy to understand, presenting their findings in a measured manner, preserving the regular intonation and stress patterns of French.

## **Review of candidate performance**

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

Candidates have shown that they have good knowledge of French society and culture with many examples of outstanding work.

Because of the entry sizes in centres, the same sub-themes kept appearing and this should be borne in mind during the following remarks. For example, card 12 appears twice in the first 6 candidates, whereas cards 2 and 5 appear for the first time with candidate 6 and card 2 does not re-appear until candidate 12.

### **Theme 1**

#### **Changing family structures**

Candidates showed good knowledge of the changes in the place and role of women in French society. They were also very well informed of the types of family to be found in France and the changing patterns of family life.

There was good general knowledge of the position of homosexuals in France in respect of their rights compared to those of heterosexuals. The loi Taubira was generally well-known and understood.

Q2 in this section was often poorly done because candidates did not listen carefully enough to the question and instead of giving their personal opinion on the views of those who opposed gay marriage said who they were instead.

#### **Education**

Redoublement was by far the more popular of the choices on offer for Education and it was generally well understood and appreciated, with most candidates coming down against it. The changes in the school day attracted too few takers for any comments to be worthwhile.

#### **The world of work**

Sex equality at work proved a little more problematical. Few candidates mentioned sexual harassment which is surprising although one or two did know about #balancetonporc.

All referred to discrimination and poor wages for women, putting it down to machismo, child-bearing and menial jobs.

Knowledge and understanding of the 35 hour week was widespread and generally well understood. Candidates were perhaps somewhat surprisingly also favorably disposed to unions as defenders of the rights of workers. They were aware of Macron's proposed reforms but naturally had nothing concrete to report on.

## **Theme 2**

### **Music**

This was generally rather less well done. Statement A was invariably chosen over B. Very few candidates knew anything much about traditional music, claiming that some of its better known exponents were Johnny Halliday and Edith Piaf. Rock en Seine / FrancoFolies and la Fête de la musique were well known. Candidates were generally aware of 'le rap' and knew some of its stars (mostly one and one song). The connection with immigration and deprivation in les banlieues was always made. The notion that "rap" might not actually be music seemed to mystify more than a few.

### **Media**

Knowledge of freedom of expression in the media was generally good and accurate; no doubt because of the Charlie Hebdo incident which was invariably mentioned in this connection. Comments on the impact of social media on everyday life could have been ones that would apply in every advanced society but as such were nonetheless pertinent and valid. Reasons for people seeking to censure this section of the media were not forthcoming, suggesting that there had been little discussion of this in their studies.

### **Festivals and traditions**

Of all the sub-themes this was possibly the one that was the least well done. Candidates were not always sure what they were meant to be talking about and things such as le 14 juillet / l'armistice / Toussaint / les ponts / le 15 août were not often raised, with answers tending to concentrate on the decline of Christmas and Easter. Avignon, Montreux, Aix-en Provence and even Cannes rarely featured. Given that France is a country where it sometimes seems that every commune has some sort of international event, this is somewhat surprising and a little disappointing.

### **The positive impact of immigration**

It was somewhat puzzling to hear that the main benefits of immigration were to be found in the agricultural world with fruit pickers from Portugal; the literary world with Zola, Camus; the world of music with Aznavour and Gainsbourg; the world of art with Picasso; the world of gastronomy with pizzas, cous-cous and tagine and sport. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, the question was directed more to the impact of North-African immigration in the building, cleaning and domestic help sectors, which is what is generally meant by "l'immigration". Candidates rightly pointed out that not all

immigrants were poorly qualified, citing their presence in the medical profession and the IT industry. Very few chose question B for this sub-theme and of those who did, even fewer were able to suggest why it was easier for immigrants to succeed in this area – part of the answer being that natural talent and a desire to succeed could compensate for a lack of qualifications and opportunity.

### **The challenges of immigration**

This card was not often selected. When it appeared, candidates seemed unaware of what actions various governments had taken over the years to promote integration and multiculturalism. They were also not well informed on the ways immigrants are discriminated against and what has been done to combat this. Too often laïcité was blamed for France's ills in this area and in doing so many revealed a poor understanding of the true nature of this basic republican tenet, characterizing it as the right to wear what one wanted.

### **The Far Right**

This topic had been extensively and capably covered with candidates showing good knowledge of the FN's policies, its leader and her attempts to sanitise the party; who its supporters were and why their numbers had increased. The only small criticism that might be made in this respect is that too many candidates defined the FN almost uniquely as a racist, anti-immigrant party, overlooking its populist, nationalistic, anti-European positions.

### **Occupied France**

Once again there was ample evidence of good coverage of this topic. The treatment of Jews, the acquiescence of much of the French population in this, the different reasons for people collaborating and the ways this manifested itself were all very well understood and appreciated.

### **The Vichy government**

Again in the main this was well done but there was a tendency to concentrate on the treatment of the Jews to the detriment of the political objectives of the regime which were apparently less well known. La Révolution nationale was almost never selected as a statement option.

### **The Resistance**

This proved another popular choice, possibly because it was on offer twice in the first 6 candidates. It was clearly something that candidates had enjoyed doing as shown by the quality and extent of their answers. The questions relating to the contribution of women to the Resistance were particularly well done.

The overall conclusion regarding the Themes and sub-themes is that numbers 1, 2 and 4 worked well. They caught candidates' imaginations and inspired them to work productively. As regards Theme 2, from the examining body's point of view as well as that of the centres, more thought needs to be given as to how this element should be tackled.

### **Language mastery**

Whilst grammatical accuracy is something that could be improved in many cases, it is rare for candidates' misuse of the language to interfere with the ideas they are trying to convey. This did happen though. In these cases it is usually because candidates do not have the vocabulary to express themselves adequately. Often when the conversation moves on to more familiar territory they show an improved ability to communicate - however imperfectly.

### **The noun group**

All candidates, apart from those at the very top marking bands, make mistakes of gender. Many fail to make noun and adjective agree - in both gender and number. Perhaps the most egregious example is when they use the word "femmes" and then construct the verb with the masculine pronoun as in - - *les femmes, ils doit reste à la maison*. Agreement between noun and adjective often appears optional for too many candidates but perhaps more disappointingly the placement of the adjective is also problematic.

Most candidates are able to produce comparatives but few attempt the superlative. However, this might simply be a reflection of the fact that the nature of the conversations pursued does not call for it. In general, this is a point worth re-enforcing. When reviewing candidates' performance, the absence of certain structures or tenses is probably explained more easily by the nature of the exchanges being conducted - i.e. seeking opinion and explanation - than by a lack of knowledge on the candidates' part.

Substitution of nouns by pronouns, other than in the verb group is rare. Celui etc / Lequel etc are rare even among the better candidates.

### **The Verb group**

A disappointing number fail to make subject and verb agree as in the example above and too many still have not understood that when using a verb with a subject, it must reflect both time and number and cannot be used in its infinitive form: 'avant je regarder la télévision, je faire mes devoirs' and similar offerings are not uncommon.

## Subordination

Whilst it is common for “qui / que” to be used – although more interchangeably than one might like – “ce qui / ce que; lequel etc. / dont” feature in only the better candidates’ register and even then the last two are very rare.

Too many candidates still have not grasped the fact that the major difference between French and English is that one is a concatenated language whilst the other is a linked one. For example ‘mes parents n’aiment pas je regarder trop les réseaux sociaux’ and other such phrases are all too common. The absence of the preposition before most infinitives is even more flagrant.

It is reasonable to expect that candidates at this level will have learnt that when one clause is followed by another in French there has to be some linking device. The ability to do this often enables candidates to be categorized as someone who uses complex and idiomatic language and qualifies them to be placed in the 7 – 9 box.

In conclusion, subordination is a feature that needs to attract more attention. Perhaps with the advent of a translation question, greater weight will be attached to grammar and this blemish will be removed.

In conjunction with a greater awareness of the need to use the relative pronoun, should come an improvement in the form of the subordinate verb: ‘les hommes ont peur (que) les femmes prendre trop pouvoir’ is an example of the type of phrase encountered all too often and when there is a second dependent verb, even if the first one is conjugated it will not be: ‘les hommes pensent que les femmes prennent trop de pouvoir et avoir trop d’influence au travail’.

Candidates’ language use is judged on the basis of language complexity, coherence and clarity of expression and accuracy of execution. Attention to this feature will pay off in several ways.

Candidates will be judged to be using complex and idiomatic language. The perceived level of articulacy will rise as will that of accuracy, with the result that candidates will be placed in a box for AO3 at least one level above where they are now.

Whilst on the subject of verbs, it is worth noting that all candidates are familiar with the Present; the Passé Composé. In addition, most of them are acquainted with the Conditional; the Imperfect; the Future, and more able candidates will also use the Pluperfect. The Past Conditional and the Future Anterior are understood only by those at the A boundary and beyond.

The familiar errors of construction with the compound tenses occur frequently when used with negatives, object pronouns and reflexive verbs in the majority of candidates.



In general, reflexive verbs are not well understood in that the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun is the default position whatever the subject may be.

Remaining with the verb group, negatives are generally correctly used although there is a tendency to drop the second part. "Ne ... pas" is the extent of many candidates' knowledge of this feature. Only the better candidates will use "ne ... plus" / "ne ... que". "Ne ... personne" and "ne ... jamais" are encountered but rarely and when used emphatically the "ne" disappears.

Direct and indirect object pronouns are largely avoided if it can be helped. There is confusion over where they should appear in the verb group, especially if a negative is involved, and also in which order they should come. The pronouns of place – "y" and "en" feature hardly ever.

There is also confusion over disjunctive pronouns – the most common being "eux" and "leur" as in 'c'est difficile pour leur or ... pour ils'.

The use of the Passive voice is a significant area upon which candidates must improve.

Finally, the more subjective aspects of language use – expressing supposition, hypothesis, doubt etc. - are features that help to improve candidates' marks as they show knowledge of the finer points of the language.

Most candidates are aware of the Subjunctive and many use it correctly but almost exclusively in stock phrases: 'je ne crois pas que ce soit une bonne idée – il faut que je fasse attention à ce que je dis'. They are largely unable to select it in spontaneous dialogue.

The ability to use "si" clauses correctly is a discrimination feature and would benefit from greater attention. Because it involves combining tenses, when done correctly, it is evidence of a greater awareness, knowledge and mastery of the language and consequently, is rewarded accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

As earlier remarks regarding pass-rates and grade levels indicated, this first session of the new specifications can fairly be considered a success. Colleagues are to be congratulated on having produced a cohort of students who have acquired much useful knowledge of France and Francophone countries which they are able to express in language that rarely fails to communicate their understanding and feelings on a variety of matters. At the same time they have acquired useful study and presentational skills that will be appreciated both in the workplace and institutions of further study.

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