

Report on the Units

June 2007

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this Report. ©

OCR 2007

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced Subsidiary GCE French (3861)

Advanced GCE French (7861)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
2651A/B/C	French: Speaking	1
2652	French: Listening, Reading and Writing 1	7
2653	French: Reading and Writing	12
2654A/C	French: Speaking and Reading	15
2655	French: Listening, Reading and Writing 2	20
2656	French: Culture and Society (Written Paper)	25
2657	French: Culture and Society (Coursework)	33
*	Grade Thresholds	37

Unit 2651: Speaking

Introduction

There were many good performances in this summer's examination. Candidates coped well on the whole with the role-plays and were able to convey information clearly and to express their opinions. In the topic discussion there were many interesting and well-researched subjects. The most successful were those where the candidates were following a personal interest.

1. Role-play

Response to Written Text

Task A

This was the most frequently used role-play, as it came first in the randomisation sequence. It was well handled by the majority of candidates. Most candidates were able to cover the key points well, although there were difficulties for some. These included windsurfing (sometimes translated as *le surf* or *le surfing*), sailing (omitted by some candidates), potter (translated as *le potter* or *le poterie*), bowls (in some cases rendered as *boules*, *tasses* or *assiettes*) and beverages (not infrequently translated by *beverages*, *boires* or *boits*. *Hectares* was frequently pronounced as in English. Many candidates showed initiative in the rendering of *dusk* (*quand le soleil tombe, la fin du jour, le soir*). The term *le coucher du soleil* was by no means infrequent.

In all role-plays, telephone numbers were generally split in a near French way, but there are still some candidates, who express them in single figures. Some candidates used *nombre* for *numéro* when referring to the telephone.

Task B

Most candidates coped well with this task and were able to convey much of the information without difficulty. Items, which caused problems for some candidates, included 'within 7 days' (within not made clear), 'gift-wrapped' and 'package' (sometimes translated as *package*). The points about the 50% extra blooms and the personal message card were not always clearly conveyed.

Task C

Many candidates attempted this task, as it was the second in the randomisation sequence. On the whole they handled the task well and were able to use their initiative to cover the key points. Items which caused difficulty for some candidates included 'fishmonger's', 'petrol station' (sometimes rendered as *station de pétrole*) and 'customers' (in some cases translated as *customers*). Some candidates had problems in expressing full and part-time work, and 'open 24 hours a day' was not always clearly conveyed with phrases such as *ouvert toutes les heures*. Some candidates had difficulty in expressing 'on the edge of town' and there was confusion between *libre* and *gratuit*.

Task D

This task did not cause problems for most candidates, although there were some words which were unknown to some, for example 'furniture' (translated as *founiture* or *furniture*), 'paintings' (sometimes translated as *dessins*), 'china' and 'stationery'. Some candidates still do not know *le siècle* and again this summer this led to anglicisms such as *century* and *centoire*. The other key points were generally clearly conveyed by most candidates.

Task E

This task was well handled by many candidates, but vocabulary caused problems for some. Points, which caused difficulty, included 'get a third off', (some candidates, however, converted this into a percentage), restrictions before 10 am, where some candidates did not make the period clear, 'form' (sometimes rendered by *forme d'application*), 'ticket office' (few candidates knew *guichet* and many used *station* instead of *gare*), 'birth certificate' (sometimes given simply as *certificat*) and paying by cash where *monnaie* was often used for *espèces* or *liquide*.

Task F

This task caused few problems for candidates, who were mostly able to cover the key points without difficulty. Some candidates did not make clear the history of the hotel, the fact that it overlooks a beach or the means of getting there.

Response to Examiner

The two preliminary questions were, on the whole, more successfully handled by candidates than in previous examinations. Nevertheless, there were some errors; for example, in Task A, the verb *faire* caused some problems with *fait-vous*, *vous faites* and *vous fait*. *Votres vacances*, *vos famille* and *votre famille préférez* occurred not infrequently. *Quel* and *qu'est-ce que* were sometimes confused, with expressions such as *quel faites-vous?* *quel voudriez-vous visiter?* In Task B, *dépenser* was not infrequently given as *dispenser* and sometimes the tense of the verbs made comprehension unclear where candidates asked *Quel type de cadeau avez-vous acheté?* instead of *voudriez-vous acheter?* In Task C, some candidates, as in previous examinations, did not change the possessive adjective to suit the question and some asked *Quel est le travail du père?* in question 2 instead of *Quel est votre travail?* In Task D, *est-ce que* was sometimes used in place of *qu'est-ce que*. In Task E, as in Task C, some candidates did not change the possessive adjective and there were some formulations such as *votre fille voudriez*. In Task F, there were instances of *qu'est-ce que l'endroit?* and *vous passé*. Candidates answered the examiner's questions well on the whole, although many could have responded at greater length in order to cover the key points fully. It is important during the giving of information to maintain a dialogue between examiner and candidate, but some spontaneous input by the candidate is welcome, as it moves the task from a mere question and answer exercise to a more realistic situation.

The extension questions did not cause many problems for candidates, although it should be pointed out that these questions are intended to draw out the candidates' ideas and opinions. The replies should not be based entirely on material found in the text, which by this time has already been conveyed. It is in this section that candidates should try above all to use their imagination and to respond at length. A basic reply cannot be credited with more than an adequate mark.

Language

As in previous examinations, the quality of language varied considerably between candidates. There were a number of errors, including:

vous préfère, *l'activités*, *peut voyage*, *Tesco a emploi*, *de le*, *de les*, *à le*, *à les*, *que* for *qui* and vice versa, *les employés est*, *doit été*, *parce que* for *à cause de*, *beaucoup des*, *on étude*, *per cent*, *votres fleurs*, *les gens aimer*, *trop* for *beaucoup*, *c'est ne cher pas*, *il ne travailler*, *ils vend*, *il est ouvr* ;

incorrect genders of words such as *pêche*, *parc*, *paysage*, *voiture*, *fleur*, *boisson*, *chose*, *société*, *lettre*, *plupart*, *centre*, *journée*, *poterie*, *boucherie*, *boulangerie*, *offre*, *nuit*, *service*, *carte*, *santé*, *route*, *saison*, *visite*, *jardin*, *famille* ;

anglicisms, including *benefits*, *professional*, *sailing*, *dusk*, *bowls*, *beverages*, *display*, *convenient*, *picturesque*, *delivery*, *place*, *customer*, *cycling*, *libre* for *gratuit*, *relationship*, *gesture*, *closé*, *personal*, *extra*, *stationery*, *refreshments*.

Examining

In most cases the role-plays were correctly examined by teacher-examiners. They were introduced clearly, using the paragraph in the examiner's booklet and the timing was usually within acceptable limits. However, some examiners did not give the candidates the opportunity to cover all the key points within the time limit, nor did they ask questions for clarification or amplification of these points. It is also important that the examiner does not give information, which the candidate is expected to supply. Questions should be devised in such a way as to make certain that the candidate can express the key points. Marks cannot be awarded for information supplied by the examiner. The questions in bold must be covered by the examiner or the candidate, as they relate to the bullet points on the candidate's sheet and enable the task to be completed.

The other questions are intended to elicit the remaining key points and should be used if time allows.

It is important that examiners do not ask for information which has already been given by the candidate, as this causes considerable confusion and, at times, anxiety.

In some cases, candidates could have been encouraged to develop further their answers to the two extension questions. Marks are awarded under Response to Examiner according to the way in which candidates cope with the two preliminary questions and the extension questions and the initiative they show in conveying information from the text.

The randomisation sequence in the examiner's booklet should be followed, however many candidates are taking the examination.

Topic Discussion

Choice of Topics

A great variety of topics was presented. Subjects included *le cinéma*, for example, *le festival de Cannes* and various films, such as *Amélie*, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, *Les choristes*. Fewer candidates chose to talk about impressionism this year, but there were more discussions about music (Chopin, Debussy, hip-hop, Céline Dion, Edith Piaf) and also *le ballet* and *la danse*.

Sports included *le football*, *la chasse*, *le Tour de France*, *le ski*, *le surf*, *Yannick Noah*, *Zinédine Zidane*, *Thierry Henry*.

Health related issues were discussed, as in previous examinations, for example, *l'obésité*, *l'anorexie*, *le tabagisme*, *l'alcool*, *les drogues*.

Social issues included *le mariage*, *le divorce*, *la famille*, *les PACS*, *les SDF*, *problèmes de logement*, *le racisme*, *l'immigration*, *la pauvreté*, *les émeutes de 2005*, *les problèmes des banlieues*, *L'Abbé Pierre*.

Environmental issues included the protection of endangered species, animal rights, transport, nuclear energy, national parks.

Under the heading of education, candidates focused on *la laïcité* or on the French education system in general.

Fashion included *Chanel*, *Yves St Laurent*, *la parfumerie*, *la haute couture*. Food and drink covered wine, *foie gras*, *le mal bouffe*, *la cuisine française*. Politics, including *le FN*, *Ségolène Royal* and *Nicolas Sarkozy*, the French elections.

Presentation

Relatively few candidates had done little or no research on their chosen topics and many of them had found plenty of facts and statistics. Nevertheless, a number of candidates sounded as if they were relying heavily on notes, some giving the impression of reading from a script, others reciting pre-learnt or rehearsed material. Although it is recognised that some learning of facts is necessary, candidates who present their topic with some spontaneity are more likely to achieve the higher mark bands. The most successful presentations are those which are limited to the three minutes available and contain an introduction and conclusion, so that it is clear where the presentation ends and the discussion begins. Some candidates had to be stopped by the examiner after three minutes, which resulted in a rather badly balanced presentation. Some candidates began by saying *je vaus parler de*, rather than using the three minutes to present as many facts as possible in an ordered way.

The presentation should contain a large amount of well-structured factual information, with statistics where appropriate. Facts and statistics should be placed in context if they are to be meaningful. Further factual information should be added during the discussion, either spontaneously or in response to the examiner's questions. In a number of cases, candidates could produce a detailed and polished presentation, but the headings on the oral topic form moved away from the presentation and occasionally from the French context. These candidates were unable to show evidence of further reading and additional knowledge during the discussion. However, in this examination there was on the whole more evidence of detailed planning and preparation than in previous series.

Spontaneity and Fluency

There were many fluent performances in this part of the examination and the most successful candidates were able to take charge of the conversation and to develop their ideas and opinions to an advanced stage. There were many interesting discussions, which were quite remarkable only one year beyond GCSE.

In some cases, the discussions remained on a mainly factual level and the candidates did not offer many ideas. Such performances are unlikely to score more than adequate. In order to be placed in the good band, candidates are expected not only to speak spontaneously and fluently, but also to display an increasing ability to develop ideas and opinions. Some of the discussions were limited to the headings on the oral topic form with no further extension. In extreme cases, the responses to the examiner's questions sounded rehearsed and there was little spontaneity or any real development of ideas.

Pronunciation and Intonation

In this examination there were fewer candidates with extremely anglicised intonation than previously. There were some errors of pronunciation, for example, the *im* and *in* sounds still cause problems in words such as *individualité*, *distingue*, *important*, *innovations*, *indique*.

Nasal sounds were not always correct in words such as *sang*, *augmenter*, *emplois*, *an*. There was also a tendency to sound silent endings, for example in *ils*, *dans*, *cas*, *Etats-Unis*. *temps*, *trop*, and the *-ent* of the third person plural was sometimes sounded, which may suggest that candidates were reading.

Anglicised pronunciation occurred also in words such as *parents*, *variés*, *prépare* (*a* incorrect), *gouvernement*, *alcool* (pronounced as *cool*), *aspect*, *respect* (*c* sounded), *excès* (*s* sounded), *idée* (pronounced as 'ee' in English), *society* (*i* incorrect) *danger* (*er* pronounced as in 'danger' in English), *qualité*, *quantité* (*qu* pronounced as in *English*).

Language

Many candidates displayed a good range of vocabulary and were able to express their ideas at length in mostly accurate French. There were, on the part of some candidates, instances of anglicised vocabulary, for example, *cultural, progress, traditional, personal, eternal, émotional, natural, réal, professional, matériel, escape, adventure, approach, prejudice, attractive, popular, Brazil, salaries, captain, phenomenon, photographe* for *photographie, graduellement, fortunate, un psychologue, médication, location* for *situation, familles, nombreuses, environment, change* for *changement, relationship, part* for *partie, place* for *endroit, disparation, significant, access, billion, patrimony, régulations*.

The most successful candidates were able to display an ability to handle complex structures, for example, the passive, the subjunctive, *après avoir/être, en + present participle, depuis* and a variety of tenses, including the conditional perfect. Other candidates were rather less adventurous and their language was limited to simple structures. Language which consists largely of main clauses without any complexity cannot score above adequate. The higher mark bands in this area are available to candidates whose language is mostly accurate and complex.

As in the role-plays, accuracy varied considerably between candidates. While some candidates were barely able to communicate beyond GCSE level, others displayed a confident use of vocabulary and idiom and an understanding of complex grammatical structures. Errors included, *il aider, a vu il, l'enfants, est 80m.haut, il y était, qui commencer, gens amicals, dans la Paris, elle attirer, à télévision, c'est belle, vous peut, beaucoup des, très beaucoup, je resté, est provient, les personnes parler, à le, à les, de le, de les, au pied, je parler, je préférer, c'est très soleil, qui se disputer, être change, a né, à 1949, les vêtements doit, est développe, boivent d'alcool, parce que* for *à cause de, c'est for il y a, plus argent, pour diminue, pour exemple, la famille ont, pouvez donne*.

Incorrect genders were common with words such as *façon, ville, collection, production, expérience, qualité, situation, plupart, quantité, viande, santé, culture, conséquence, problème, mode, connaissance, crise, semaine* (frequently rendered as *semain*), *amende, activité, idée, rue, sorte, sécurité, journée, chose, robe, maison, pauvreté, région, gamme, monde, guerre, ligue, moitié, loi, course*.

Examining

Candidates who performed well, even at the lower end, did so with the help of sympathetic examiners. These examiners asked a range of questions, both with reference to the headings on the oral topic forms and also further questions to allow the candidates to convey detailed factual information and to extend their ideas and opinions. As a result, there were some very interesting discussions, in which candidates expanded their information and developed their ideas to an advanced stage.

In some cases, candidates sounded as if they were reading from a script or reciting pre-learned material. Candidates should be discouraged from doing this, as it makes a spontaneous discussion impossible and frequently leads to difficulty of comprehension for the listener. Questions should be designed to prevent candidates from reading or reciting and to encourage spontaneity. It is also recommended that candidates be allowed to choose their own topics rather than all presenting the same subject and discussing the same material.

In some cases, insufficient questions were asked to give the candidates the opportunity to express their ideas. A number of the discussions were mainly factual with little development of ideas. Sometimes no questions were asked beyond the headings on the oral topic forms, which led to a very limited discussion.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Nevertheless, the overall standard this year was higher than last and it was most encouraging to hear candidates able to handle the role-plays confidently and to present and discuss topics which they had obviously enjoyed studying.

2652: Listening, Reading and Writing (1)

General Comments

The paper was accessible and differentiated very effectively, producing a very wide spread of marks. It was noticeable that in a number of cases performance was consistent across individual centres, with some where most candidates did very well indeed, and others where most struggled and found the paper demanding.

There was an improvement in the candidates' ability to cope with Listening tasks but Writing remains the most challenging skill for the majority of candidates. They need to increase their vocabulary, learn grammatical rules and apply them consistently.

Comments on Individual Questions

Task 1 For most candidates, this exercise proved to be a straightforward introductory task, as it was intended to be. Marks ranged from 2 to 10, but most managed to score at least 5. The layout of questions (c) to (e) seemed to catch out a few who wrote the full word in the gap, rather than the correct letter as instructed. Some even circled the correct letter at the start of each option. This did not affect the mark they were awarded. Candidates did better on the earlier questions, and only the better candidates managed to cope with the more demanding questions in the latter part of the task, especially (f) to (h).

- (a) This was correctly answered by nearly all candidates.
- (b) This question gave rise to a few problems, one of them being an inappropriate number of ticks. Candidates must read the rubric carefully and check the mark allocation. Most candidates scored at least 2 marks, with C the correct answer that they most frequently failed to identify, possibly because they did not make the link between *commerçants* in the question and *en rachetant un magasin* in the text. B and F were the most frequent incorrect answers, the latter being a likely possibility but unfortunately not mentioned in the text.
- (c) Many gave the correct answer and A (*la rapidité*) was the most frequent error, possibly because candidates linked this word with *rythme* in the passage, which they associated with speed.
- (d) C was quite a common incorrect answer here, perhaps because of candidates' familiarity with the British context, although A was the only possible match for *familiales*.
- (e) An inability to understand *les loyers qui montent* accounts for many not being able to answer this question correctly, as candidates did not realise that the reason was of a financial nature.
- (f) Incorrect guesswork was the most likely reason for choosing A or B. Candidates had to infer meaning here and those who understood the text had no problem in identifying C as the correct answer.
- (g) This was a demanding question. It required an understanding *bénéficiaire d'aides* and associating it with *subventions*. There was another clue in the text (*s'adresser ... pour voir si*) which pointed to *se renseigner* in A, but only candidates with a genuine understanding of the passage could pick this up. Of those who did not, the vast majority chose C, probably because of the similarity between *collectivités locales* in the text and *associations locales* in the question.
- (h) The word *endroit* appeared in each option and many went for A because they heard *vacances* in the text. In this instance, listening to the whole of the last two sentences of the passage was needed to reach the correct answer C.

Task 2 This task required a good level of concentration. It discriminated well and produced the full range of marks. Candidates tended to do better in Part 1 because they could easily distinguish between years (options A to D) and numbers (options E to H) to link them with the figure given in the question. The most frequent incorrect answer was B for Q.5, possibly because the negative *n'a pas dépassé* in the text was associated with *a diminué* in option B. Part 2 was generally less successfully answered and the most frequently ticked incorrect answers were d (probably because of lack of concentration), g (because either *un tiers* in the passage or *la plupart* in the question were not known) and j (because *prévoit* in the text was not recognised, candidates being more familiar with the noun *prévision* than with the verb; the past tense in j should have led them to rejecting it straightaway).

In Part 2, a few candidates did not tick the right number of boxes, in spite of 5 being mentioned twice in the rubric as well as in the mark allocation.

Task 3 Scores for this task also span the whole range of marks. This task too required a high level of concentration and it may be that some candidates found it too demanding and filled in the boxes at random. It was difficult to find a pattern but it would seem that questions 2, 3, 6, 10, and 11 were the most approachable, as candidates generally did well on these. However, with Q.2 and Q.3 both dealing with money, it was not unusual to find that candidates had inverted the two answers. Candidates tended to try to find a match for the summaries on page 7 without reading the whole of the descriptions on page 6. They would explain the frequent mis-match of Q.8 (*dire non*) and J (*ne rien faire*) regardless of the second half of the description (*la semaine prochaine sera chargée et très excitante*) which gave a specific slant, making Q.4 a much better match. Candidates should start from the longer version and match it to the summary, not the other way round. Some appeared not to have had much experience of this test type.

Task 4 The performance on this exercise was better than in previous years. With a few exceptions, candidates had a fair understanding of the passage and tried to answer the questions. There were fewer blanks than in earlier tests. As usual, weaker candidates attempted to transcribe what they heard on the tape rather than to answer the questions. On such occasions, the quality of language was notably worse than when genuine answers were attempted. Language was particularly poor in answer to Q.(c) - a sentence completion task requiring manipulation of language - and Q.(g) where a subjunctive construction was needed. The better candidates rose to the challenge and expressed both answers in accurate French. The weaker ones produced meaningless answers.

- (a) Of the three boxes to complete, the arrival time was by far the best answered, then came the reference; candidates identified the number in the code without problem but, when it came to the letter, many confused the French 'l' with the English 'E'. As for the number of adults, hardly any gave the correct answer (2). Even the better candidates who had clearly understood the nature of the problem and described it in full in answer to Q.(b) – where it was not needed – answered 4. Either they had not read the question sufficiently carefully or they answered before listening to the end of the sentence.
- (b) This was well answered, with many giving all three required elements and some explaining that the barge was too small for 4 adults and 2 children because of a mistake on Monique's documentation. It was gratifying that many had recognised *disponible* and could spell it correctly. Most candidates omitted *en* in *il n'y en a pas d'autre* and those who did not identify *demain* often rendered it in two words *deux mains*, even though that was meaningless.

- (c) This was poorly answered. Most candidates identified the right section of the passage but merely transcribed the nouns that they had heard on the tape. It has been mentioned in previous reports that this type of gap-fill question is designed to test candidates' syntactical awareness and ability to manipulate language as well as their understanding of the passage. Verbs were required and only the better candidates provided them.
- (d) There was confusion over similar sounding expressions here: *au bord*, *à bord*, *abord*. Only *à bord* was accepted. Of course, many moved away from the recorded text and showed they had understood by answering *dans la péniche*. A surprising number wrote *dans un hôtel*. Clearly, they had not read the question sufficiently carefully and had missed out the word *normalement*.
- (e) This question met with a mixed response - rather fewer than half managed to express both what she did and why. Some had understood what she did but not the reason why and a certain number gave information about *frais supplémentaires* and the fact that Monique was responsible, which was not relevant. In spite of the woman's voice on the tape and her name, some referred to Monique as *il*.
- (f) The majority of candidates managed one of the two marks but only good scripts gave two correct answers. Both (i) and (v) were quite popular but incorrect choices.
- (g) This question was the least well done. Some candidates made only one statement - unlikely to be sufficient to deserve the two marks allocated to this question. Weaker candidates sometimes gave up and did not attempt to answer this question. For those who did, *sommes-nous couverts* was a real stumbling block which they could neither understand nor transcribe. Many used the English word to render *assurance* and wrote meaningless answers. Even some of the stronger candidates could not manage a sound rendering of *ce qu'il faut que je fasse* which appeared in such forms as *quoi elle face* or *c'est qu'il faut qu'elle face* or even *que elle se passé*. Candidates frequently failed to produce the *passé composé*.

Task 5 Although some answers erred on the poor side, this exercise produced good scores for many candidates. The format of the French passage was more straightforward to render in meaningful English because sentences were shorter. Consequently, marks for quality of English were better, except when so little of the French was adequately rendered that a cap had to be applied. It is not possible to have a higher mark for Quality of English than for comprehension of the text. Poor spelling of common words was in evidence: comfort, equipment, accommodation, visits, practical, assistance, technical, available, bicycles, indispensable, complimentary, forfeit, and vehicles were frequently misspelt. There were also grammatical errors (verbs forms, prepositions) and occasional meaningless answers when the French text was translated word-for-word.

Paragraph 1

This section proved quite testing for some, and they consequently resorted to unsatisfactory word-for-word translations. For example, *dans l'ensemble* was not infrequently rendered literally ('in the group', 'in the assembly', or similar), *visant à* was taken to be part of the verb *voir*, which resulted in such renderings as 'seeing to / seen to improve'; *allant au-delà de leurs espérances* was translated as 'going over their hopes' or even 'going over their experiences'. In fact, only good candidates understood this phrase and highly fanciful versions abounded. Other items which proved problematic were: *mécontentement*, for which candidates frequently invented words, *plutôt* was either not rendered or was given as 'early'; *croisière* - thought to be derived from *croire* or *croître*, hence 'belief', 'thought',

'growth'- but also 'crossing'. Given the context of this Work situation, it was surprising that so many could not come up with an acceptable rendering. Finally, for *location* - a word which has appeared in earlier papers and also in a number of Role-Play tasks in Unit 1 - the majority contented themselves with the same word in English, even though they must have realised that it made very little sense in this context.

Paragraph 2

This seems to have been the most difficult section of Task 5, especially the second and third bullet points. Surprisingly, some did not recognise *péniche*, much in evidence earlier and even glossed in the previous question. Others ignored the word *virtuelles* implying there was a real site where the barges could be visited. The translation of *leur ont permis de se sentir tout de suite à l'aise* was challenging. Some thought a permit was issued and others referred to the en suite facilities on the barge. The expression *tout de suite* was not well known. The next problem came with the phrase *les fiches pratiques*. Many realised this was some sort of document, but failed to qualify it appropriately. In many cases *conseils* was not known and some candidates worked out implausible renderings involving counsellors and the captain of the boat. Other words or phrases leading to inappropriate renderings includes *cartes*, mostly translated as 'cards', *tout au long de*, understood as an adjectival phrase meaning 'lengthy', *le personnel chaleureux*, with the noun taken to be the adjective and the adjective to be the noun in such versions as 'personal chauffeur/heater/central heating' or even 'hot personal assistance'. Where *chaleureux* was correctly interpreted as an adjective, it was sometimes taken to mean 'cheerful'. Finally, and surprisingly, there was a fair incidence of 'every day' as a rendering of *tousjours*.

Paragraph 3

Most candidates more successfully attempted the third paragraph, although several did not render *auraient aimé* adequately. This led to a number of consequential errors in tenses throughout the paragraph. The word *gamme* was well known and there quite a few interesting translations of the three cruise themes (including skating, diving, sailing, shooting and other more unlikely activities), but many lost a mark because they translated only one or two of the examples. The reference to *animaux de compagnie* gave rise to a variety of interpretations, including 'animals for company', 'company animals' and 'animals of/in the countryside'. The last sentence also proved awkward for many candidates, leading to clumsy renderings e.g. 'the base of departure' and 'freely' instead of 'free of charge'. Problems with the prepositions *de* and *à* in relation to the 'transfer of vehicles', also led to some confusing translations.

Examiners never cease to wonder at the level of imagination some candidates manage to inject into this task, but candidates should be reminded to allow time to check that their English makes sense in the context of the situation and that it is accurate. They must not supply alternatives, because Examiners always take the first of the options supplied and they lose out on the Quality of English mark if their language is syntactically flawed.

Task 6

Although most candidates tried to communicate all the required points, the outcome of this task was disappointing, with only a sprinkling of excellent work combining ambitious language with a high level of accuracy. It was pleasing to read the fluent and competent versions these candidates produced. There were also many competent pieces that had been checked carefully but Examiners generally reported that the standard of French was not as good as previously and that a lot of the work submitted was of a distinctly poor standard. Many translated word-for-word from English with little regard for grammar or idiom.

Vocabulary was rather limited with staple items such as *être content de*, *en Grande-Bretagne*, *en été*, *nous avons besoin de*, *trois mois*, *assez de bateaux* and *l'année prochaine* frequently unknown or seriously mangled. However, sensible mining of earlier elements of the paper should have enabled everyone to cope with such vocabulary points as 'cruise' 'range of packages', 'boats available'. *Vacances* continues to be used in the singular and most think that *groupe* is a feminine word - perversely managing to make *grande* agree - although the adjective was frequently placed after the noun. Also worrying was the inability to make easy words like *bateau* (*bateaus*) and *prix* (*prixs!*) plural.

Many candidates demonstrated a shaky knowledge of basic verb forms, concordances, tense usage and the like and submitted heavily anglicised letters that were characterised by little grammatical awareness. Some could not manage *nous sommes* at the beginning of the letter; *vouloir* and *pouvoir* were frequently incorrectly conjugated or confused with the conditional (*nous organiserions* for *nous pourrions organiser*). A few used a conditional with *nous aurions besoin* but many tried to use *besoin* as a verb (*nous besoinons*). The last bullet point was intended to give candidates the opportunity to show that they could use the subjunctive. Some cleverly avoided it (*Voulez-vous / voudriez-vous recevoir*) but others said exactly the opposite of what was intended (*Voulez-vous nous envoyer*).

There were fewer opportunities to use set phrases, so this task presented more of a challenge for the average AS candidate. Centres spend much time developing writing skills, trying to improve their students' knowledge of the structures and vocabulary needed to cope adequately with this task, though at times it must seem a thankless task. Striving for consistent application of basic grammatical rules must remain a priority for all candidates. Once this is under control, widening the range of structures and aiming for more ambitious and complex language should set them well on the road to A2.

2653: French Reading and Writing

General comments

The overall performance on this paper varied considerably as usual, with a very wide gap between the excellent scripts at the top end and the extremely poor scripts at the lower end. There are two principal causes for concern: inability on the part of many candidates to read the questions carefully, and lack of attention to basic areas of grammar in written French.

Comments on individual questions

Tâche 1

This was quite well done; most candidates were able to achieve 5 or 6 marks out of 7, but a relatively small number gained full marks. The two questions that were most often incorrectly ticked were (b), where many were misled by *inaccessibles* in the text into believing that the whole island was usually impossible to reach, and (g), which was certainly difficult but was not correct in that particular context.

Tâche 2

This proved to be unexpectedly difficult, and it was impossible to escape the conclusion that some candidates had spent too little time reading the text and thinking about the meaning. A surprising number did not understand *bon marché* in (2); many chose B for (3) and C for (4). The second half proved to be easier, though C was a popular choice for (6), presumably because *histoires* was present in the passage. There is an increasing tendency to seize on a similar word from the text and assume that it must be the correct answer.

Tâche 3

Quality of Language

Some examiners noted that the quality of language in the written exercise had deteriorated sharply; others were impressed by a distinct improvement. This apparent inconsistency underlines once again the widely differing standards in this element of the paper.

On the negative side, examiners commented on the prevalence of basic errors:

- lack of adjectival agreement generally and an almost universal inability to deal correctly with *tout*
- incorrect verb endings (*elle mangeais*) and formation (particularly the present tense of *aller*, *faire* and all modal verbs)
- incorrect auxiliary and agreements with the passé composé (*ils ont visitées*, *elles ont allés*, *ils sont visité*)
- use of *de le* and *à le* for *du* and *au*
- *'* with a plural noun
- use of the apostrophe to indicate possession (*Marie-Éliane's école*, *leurs enfant's éducation*)
- word order with the negative (*c'est une école n'ennuyeux pas*)

Use of tenses was often poor; many seemed incapable of using the imperfect tense to describe Marie-Éliane's routine (present, conditional and passé composé were used in equal measure and often in the same script, and *devrait* was frequently used when *devait* was required.

Spelling was often wrong, even when copied from the paper (*Élaine* for *Éliane*, *martenelle*, *activities*, *prombleme*, *éclole*, *plusiers*, *advantages*, and even *poissons* for *boissons*. Accents were scattered indiscriminately.

There was, as ever, some confusion over vocabulary: *cour/cours/courses*, *jolie/gentille*,

place/endroit, internat/internal/internaute), maîtresse/maîtrise. Some words were invented, notably *obvieusement* and *involvé* (yet again!), and anglicisms were rife; 'a good time' was variously rendered as *un bon temps, une bonne fois, une bonne heure*, free periods were *périodes gratuites*, and 'issues' in its current sense of 'problems' was *issus*. Few candidates were aware of the difference between *élève* and *étudiant*. Some wrote phonetically (*une notre raison, beaucoup de choses affaires*).

Some centres had clearly taught specific phrases, and it was pleasing to note that these were mostly used relevantly this year. There were, however, some instances of candidates' determination to use them at all costs, resulting in an almost meaningless string of words (*personnellement je suis porté à croire que ce qu'il y a de certain c'est que selon moi l'ambiance de l'école me plaît*).

Of course there were many candidates who were able to write confidently in excellent, grammatically correct and idiomatic French and whose scripts were a joy to read. An impressive variety of structures was used, ranging from several uses of the subjunctive to *depuis, après avoir, en + present participle*, and the conditional perfect tense.

Comprehension of text

In section a (i) and (ii) particularly, candidates often ignored the rubric **Selon Marie-Éliane**, and listed things which they themselves thought were problems or advantages. This led, for example, to the wearing of uniform or getting up early appearing in either (or both) sections, although Marie-Éliane had simply recorded these facts as a part of her routine without clarifying what she felt about them. Examiners were looking for opinions that were overtly expressed (*je n'aimais pas ça, on y mangeait beaucoup mieux, ma maîtresse était gentille*), those which were obviously a problem (*on pouvait tomber à l'eau*), or which could clearly be inferred (if the boys annoyed her, it was an advantage that they were not in the same school).

There was some misunderstanding: *chemins* was thought to be *chemins de fer*, *beaucoup mieux* was read simply as *beaucoup*, *attendre* was thought to mean 'attend', and a few thought that she didn't enjoy the coach journey to school because there were no boys (from the text *car l'école n'était pas mixte*). Some were horrified by the length of the school day - nine hours (*on arrivait pour neuf heures*), and the incorrect use of the reflexive pronoun in many scripts read as though the boys were becoming furious instead of Marie-Éliane (*les garçons s'enrageaient*).

Most candidates were able to score freely in (b), though here too there was some misunderstanding: some thought *équipe enseignante* meant that there were team competitions, others understood *courts métrages* to mean that the pupils only had a short walk to the cinema, and others thought that *ferme* meant 'firm' and that the children were on work experience there. Incorrect French occasionally led to unintentional humour: *les étudiants vont à la ferme et puis ils sont mangés*.

Centres should remind their candidates that extensive 'lifting' is not allowed, either from the passage or from Tâche 4. In a few extreme cases, when the whole answer to 3(a) and (b) was copied word for word, a maximum mark of 4 was applied. (ref. grid 3B 'Poor' band).

Personal response

Here again some answers suffered because candidates did not read the rubric carefully and either answered only the first question or wrote about which of the two schools they preferred, without referring to their own *établissement scolaire*. Others merely listed their own routine in GCSE format, not tying it to the question in any way. These candidates could not score highly. There were a few answers which had obviously been lifted from work tackled elsewhere on the course and were only vaguely relevant to the question asked.

Misunderstanding of the text was also a factor; some thought that the two paragraphs referred to only one school, others that Marcel Cartier was a pupil at the second school (or that he was *très maternelle*). Poor French sometimes impeded communication.

Most, however, did very well; some answers were extremely imaginative and many were very competent, expressing a range of views clearly linked to the questions. These were often complimentary about their schools, their routine and their teachers. Comments worthy of note, which show how the text can be used as a starting-point for the personal response, included

- *j'aimerais essayer la nourriture dans la cantine de Marie-Éliane*
- *je pense que les enseignants préféreraient la première école parce que le comportement des enfants serait meilleur*
- *si je pouvais aller à l'école à pied ça réduirait l'effet de serre*
- *les deux écoles ne mentionnent pas le sport. Quelle horreur ! c'est décevant car j'adore le sport à mon collège*

Centres could encourage their candidates to appreciate the difference between the merely banal 'the schools are very different' and the more interesting development of this, 'in their methods of teaching' or 'because of the different eras with which the texts are concerned'.

Tâche 4

Examiners in the January series noted a drop in the standard of the multiple-choice grammar question, and unfortunately this trend appears to have continued; fewer candidates obtained full marks. Greater attention to detail would have helped; the gender of *routine* was clearly shown in the rubric to Tâche 3(c) and should have made the answer to (a) straightforward; similarly for (g), the text included *l'heure du repas*. (b) was usually wrong, most candidates apparently being unaware of the construction of a reflexive verb in the infinitive and choosing *se*, and a surprisingly large percentage chose either *s'institutrice* or *sa institutrice* for (e). Few knew that the indirect object pronoun is required with *plaire*, and in (h) *des* was a popular choice after the negative. (i) to (n) were answered rather more successfully, but it was disappointing to see how many candidates chose one of the two past tenses after *à l'avenir* in (o). Some candidates left sections unanswered; there is no point in doing this in a multiple-choice question.

2654: Speaking and Reading

General Comments

Candidates in general found the themes of the texts familiar and the language accessible; for the most part, they seized the opportunity to develop their ideas on the potential dangers of mobile phones, the reputation of the French baccalaureate and its equivalents across Europe, dietary good practice, attitudes said to be prevalent amongst the French police, air quality in the workplace and French companies' relationships with their employees. The ability to grasp the essential points, to paraphrase successfully and expansively develop ideas marked out very clearly the better candidates from those who depended too much on reading directly from the passage. Weaker candidates also showed a high degree of dependence on the Examiner's questions.

Topics were often carefully chosen and well researched, with many conscientious and capable candidates learning an impressive amount of material, as well as demonstrating an ability to manipulate it flexibly. Most worryingly, however, the proportion of interviews in which material is rote-learned continues to increase - even if in a small minority of Centres overall. In these cases, the discrepancy in performance between Discussion and General Conversation often becomes even greater. It has been pointed out many times that there is a significant penalty for rote-learning.

I often remind Centres that high marks on this paper are as much a reflection of the research candidates have done, their willingness to get involved in discussion and their ability to take the initiative as they are an indication of their level of language acquisition: Assessment Criteria 4B (Response to Examiner), 4C (Spontaneity and Fluency) and 4E (Knowledge and Opinions) carry a far higher proportion of the marks than IF (Pronunciation and Intonation) and 4D (Accuracy and Range of Language).

Discussion of Text

On the positive side, there was a marked improvement in adherence to the recommended timings in this test: a balance was usually struck between questions testing comprehension and those of a more general nature. However, many teachers appear to regard the suggested questions as compulsory and read them from the page as though divergence from the wording in front of them would constitute a gross infringement of the rubrics. This makes for very stilted examining, especially when no attention is paid to the thrust of the candidate's previous answer and when interesting ideas and lines of enquiry are not pursued. An allied irritation, that was by no means uncommon, was asking a question from the list provided when the candidate had already given the answer in his or her initial summary of the passage. This invariably had the effect of 'throwing' the poor candidate who was clearly at a loss as to what he or she had omitted. Occasionally, teachers waste valuable time labouring a question when the candidate has clearly not understood: it is far better to move on and focus on a different part of the text, giving the candidate the chance to demonstrate what he or she has understood rather than flogging dead horses into further insensitivity!

Several Assistant Examiners (including some experienced, well established native speakers) reported particular concern this year with the increasing number of native speaker teacher-examiners who, lacking both experience of the UK system and also training, demonstrated unacceptably poor examination technique. Attempts to force candidates to deliver an *explication de texte* were again in evidence.

Texte A (Les téléphones portables)

This proved to be a popular text and many candidates got a lot of mileage out of it, responding in detail to the questions about the research already conducted on the possible harmful effects of mobile phones, on the findings of the recent study, on the research that still needs to be

done and on the breakthrough achieved by a German company. A sizeable number went on to talk with commendable fluency and, in some cases, a refreshing passion about the pros and cons of mobile phones, about the responsibilities of manufacturers in ensuring that their products were safe, about whether they would be prepared to act as a volunteer in the research still to be carried out and about other recent technological developments. Weaker candidates identified themselves, as in the case of the other articles, by providing partial answers that omitted important details (e.g. the fact that research needs to be carried out using human volunteers rather than in laboratory conditions), by expressing ideas which rarely, if ever, rose above the naïve or commonplace and by failing to develop what few thoughts they did manage to muster.

Texte B (Le bac à l'examen)

Better candidates fared well on this text but it was often not clearly understood by middle of the road and less good candidates, many of whom were unable to explain the paradox referred to in the first paragraph and were confused about the results of the international enquiry described in the final paragraph. Only the very best candidates demonstrated comprehension of the phrase *contrôle continu* and, though many read out the phrase *depuis que l'objectif des "80% d'une generation au niveau du bac" est atteint*, they were unable to explain it. When it came to more general issues, good candidates had plenty of ideas about the pros and cons of various educational and examination systems that they were able to develop and justify with commendable fluency. A surprising number of candidates agreed that A Levels were too narrow and thought the French system had merits. Whilst having the grace to acknowledge the point, they often said that they personally preferred the A Level system, because they objected to doing subjects they did not like or were bad at! Again, not all agreed that languages should be compulsory. Regrettably, in far too many discussions, little attempt was made to provide development or justification.

Texte C (Les bases d'une bonne alimentation)

This was the most popular choice of text, but though a lot of candidates were familiar with the general issues raised, they fell at the hurdle of detail and were often found wanting when it came to providing explanations of such items as *ces régimes miracles, la restauration hors domicile, un effet favorable...sur le moral, faire des listes positives and bien gérer ses placards et son réfrigérateur*. Some examiners were quite happy to let candidates simply read such phrases from the text unchallenged but more experienced exponents of the art realised that in order for their candidates to access high marks for their response to the text, clarifications needed to be asked for and provided. Some very interesting conversations developed from the details contained in the article about such issues as diet, obesity, the woes of fast food and the curbs needed to keep in check the sort of marketing that is likely to lead to widespread health problems. It was surprising to note the number of candidates who were not aware of the distinction between dark and milk chocolate or the benefits of drinking wine, both of which have been discussed in the media for some time. Again, good candidates were very forthcoming and the best among them were easily able to take the initiative and guide the conversation as they saw fit. However, at the other end of the spectrum, there were candidates who, imagining the text to be a 'soft option', demonstrated little desire to communicate anything beyond the banal, thus consigning themselves to a low mark in this section of the test.

Texte D (La police française ...)

This text was tackled well by a substantial proportion of the candidates who were given it. Even weaker candidates were usually able to demonstrate a reasonable understanding of Amnesty International's stance and the modifications proposed to allay the problem of police violence. The distinguishing mark of good candidates was their ability to provide full answers that singled out, for example, all 3 of Amnesty's recommendations rather than just 2 of them. Perhaps

rather surprisingly, the relatively simple detail that did find quite a number of candidates wanting was the circumstances in which most of the violations take place, notably *à la suite de contrôles d'identité*. Again, the article was the springboard for many very interesting discussions. Opinions about the British police were very mixed; a number of apparently complacent candidates were sure that such things could never happen in the UK, whereas others suggested they happened everywhere; good and even less good candidates showed themselves well-informed about recent controversies surrounding the police, such as the mistaken identity shooting of the young Brazilian by the London police in July 2005. Most seemed to think that human rights were always the over-riding priority but a few had slightly more sophisticated views and talked about terrorism etc. The level of debate and discourse was often of a pleasingly high standard though, as in the case of all the other articles, problems of expression did sometimes prove to be an impediment to the clear communication of ideas and justifications.

Texte E (L'air respiré au bureau)

Although teachers appeared somewhat unwilling to offer this text to their students, it was in fact quite well understood by candidates who were given it. Where weaker candidates tended to fall down was in their readiness to read substantial chunks from the text without making any attempt to paraphrase and thereby demonstrate comprehension. Even when they were specifically asked to explain *in their own terms* the dangers posed by the toxic gases in the air, they persisted in simply reading; once again, good examiners intervened, asking them to explain such items as *nausées* and *états de somnolence*, but all too frequently no explanation was requested. In their discussions of more general issues arising out of the text, a significant proportion of candidates steered the conversation towards their own personal experience which often resulted in some quite fluent discourse; some had strong views on the air quality in their own schools.

Texte F (L'entreprise responsable)

For whatever reason - and a significant contributory factor was very probably that Centres with smaller entries probably did not look beyond the first 2 or 3 texts - this passage was the least used. Those candidates who were given this text often fared quite well in paraphrasing the information contained in it and usually had very definite views about the issues that the poll focused on, especially the serious nature of *faire travailler les enfants du tiers-monde*. A number had weekend and holiday jobs with such giants of industry as Tesco and Sainsbury, both of which had their detractors as well as their supporters, and this resulted in some lively and, on occasions, quite fascinating dialogue: one young lady argued with fierce conviction that *le propriétaire - Monsieur Tesco - est très responsable et emploie les enfants seulement parce qu'il sait qu'ils ont besoin d'argent!* Perhaps those cited in the opinion poll who use child labour in the Third World could seek defence behind the same shield of would-be philanthropy as the good 'Mr Tesco'.

General Conversation

The best conversations were those in which the candidate had clearly done a lot of research and was sufficiently in control of both his/her material and also of the vocabulary and structures needed to take part in a spontaneous discussion in which both predictable and less predictable questions were tackled with equal confidence. Unfortunately, however, a significant number of Centres persist in treating this part of the test as an exercise in rote-learning; it becomes painfully obvious that these so-called 'general conversations' are totally devoid of spontaneity. The new-found fluency, so conspicuously absent in the Discussion of the Article, is quite spurious. Also, sometimes, it is quite apparent from the style of their questioning and from the fact that candidates clearly know what is coming that some teacher-examiners condone this approach which goes completely against the spirit of the examination and means that candidates cannot be highly rewarded under Assessment Grid 4C - the assessment criterion

that carries the highest number of marks. It is also true to say that candidates who do rely too heavily on rote-learned material tend to penalise themselves when it comes to the assessment of intonation.

A popular topic this year was the French elections and many candidates who chose it were very well informed and were able to express their views with both fluency and conviction. The level of research was generally high and one was struck again and again by the obvious enjoyment and satisfaction that candidates had derived from amassing their material and forming their own views based on what they had found. Just a few were guilty - or rather their teachers were guilty for not having briefed them correctly - of choosing topics that fell foul of the prescription that is clearly set out in the MFL Specification: topics such as *Toulouse-Lautrec / L'histoire du cinéma français / Jeanne d'Arc / La Guerre d'Algérie* fall well outside the bounds of 'currency'. Our prize for the most original topic goes to the candidate who chose *Le problème des crottes de chien sur les trottoirs de Paris*; she was armed with an impressive battery of statistics and pertinent information and had some very definite views, all of which made for a very entertaining - and rewarding - 10 minutes.

Other more individual choices included: *les centrales nucléaires sont-elles bien protégées contre le terrorisme? / la réintroduction des ours et des loups / l'utilisation des tasers en France est-elle justifiable? / la crise du mariage / le vieillissement de la population et ses conséquences / le problème des retraités / les mariages forcés / l'enseignement de la religion dans les écoles / l'ENA / la résistance aux antibiotiques et l'utilisation des cellules souches / l'augmentation de l'obésité chez les enfants en France / le piratage informatique.*

Elsewhere, long descriptions of candidates' own environmental initiatives (recycling, use of low-energy light bulbs etc.) demonstrated little relevance to France and could not be highly rewarded.

One large Centre with over 30 candidates offered only three different topics, making it extremely difficult to vary the questions asked; it is always preferable to encourage students to research their own material.

A number of native or near native speaker candidates seem to expect to score high marks for being French: they appeared to have done virtually no preparation. Whilst these candidates invariably score maximum marks for quality of language they cannot expect to do well under Assessment Grid 4E if their topic proves flimsy and unresearched. It is not sufficient to spend 10 minutes complaining at great length that it is impossible to buy a house in one's parents' village in the Alps because prices have now risen out of the reach of the locals. Teachers need to convey to them the need to prepare properly. The language used is often very limited, excessively colloquial, with a very narrow range of vocabulary and structure. *Ben, oui, je pense ... euh, euh ...* or similar repeated over and over again cannot score very highly for anything!

Pronunciation problems were similar to, though less marked than, last year: consistent difficulty with the *-ement* in *récemment* and still a lot of *ils peut, ils veut, ils vient*. In some Centres, final consonants are still routinely being sounded: *droit, ils, elles, état, les, et, dans, beaucoup, tout*.

The use of prepositions was perhaps slightly improved on last year, but far too many candidates seem to be unable to distinguish between *de* and *pour* etc. We heard *c'est difficile pour faire* instead of *il est difficile de faire* with depressing regularity.

Tenses were again well handled. Few candidates made more than an occasional significant tense error. There were plenty of correct subjunctives and it really does seem that teachers have discovered a way of getting candidates to use these with relative spontaneity. On the other hand there were some generally good candidates who made no attempt to use such sophisticated language at all, which was a pity. We heard fewer instances of confusion of *il ya eu / il y avait* this year, but it remains a problem for some candidates.

There are still far too many candidates who do not prepare key vocabulary for their topics; nor do they always take advantage of key terms provided in the text itself. For example, we heard many instances of candidates who kept using *les mobiles*, instead of the correct term provided in the title of text A!

Examining was again very variable in quality. Thank you to all those experienced practitioners who take much of the strain out of the examination by conducting the entire thing impeccably. Yet, in a number of cases, the teacher-examiner failed to set an appropriate pace and was far too slow to react to what candidates said. Some teacher-examiners seem to feel that this slow pace is helpful to candidates, but in most instances the opposite is true. Others, however, did not wait more than a fraction of a second for an answer before leaping in and asking another question, which the candidate again struggled to answer. Some interrupted candidates if they offered more than two sentences in succession. Perhaps they have been criticised for allowing their charges to deliver a monologue? It is all about responding to the candidate's last utterance: very often, a request for explanation or elaboration is sufficient to relaunch the flow; similarly, a stimulating comment from the teacher-examiner is enough to correct a deteriorating situation.

Other matters

A few Centres have been warned repeatedly about the management of the examination. I quote an example of a Centre with multiple failings this year: firstly, the recordings were arranged one on each side of the cassette (contrary to instructions); cassette boxes were wrongly labelled and were stuck together so securely that it was virtually impossible to open them without breaking them; in the Discussion, candidates were just left to 'explain the text' with virtually no questions (while many of them could cope, this raises serious issues of comparability with other candidates and Centres; in particular, high marks cannot be awarded for 'responsiveness' if there is none!)

Some examiners still spend too long on the Discussion, taking time away from the General Conversation.

Excessive insistence on the comprehension of a single word is usually unhelpful. In one instance this year a candidate was 'destroyed' by a verbally aggressive examiner.

Some examiners seem genuinely unable to pick up the growing stress level of their candidates.

Social conversation which does not focus on the chosen topic and elaborate details of the teacher's personal experiences are unwelcome, taking valuable time away from the candidate.

Assistant Examiners continue to report instances of the following inappropriate performance:

- candidates who read out answers
- candidates who deliver a monologue
- candidates who reel off masses of statistical data at an unreal speed
- candidates in whose performance there is a huge discrepancy between the Discussion and the General Conversation (e.g. where an inability to respond spontaneously to unprepared questions suddenly turns into accurate, sophisticated and fluent discourse)

2655: French Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments

The level was appropriate and the paper discriminated well between candidates of different abilities. Most candidates were entered appropriately and had been well prepared for the different skills expected as they tailored their answers to the questions and made the effort to use their own words and not copy the text; marks spanned the whole range. However, as in the past, the level of performance of some candidates indicated that they were not ready to sit the paper.

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the texts they heard and read and in the listening exercises there were not as many transcription errors as last year. Generally, they found the first listening passage easier than the second. Most candidates tackled all sections of the paper and there were very few unanswered questions. However, some gave a very short answer to question 7f or failed to see that there was a question on the last page and did not answer the question at all.

There was a plenty of evidence of good and appropriate preparation, with many candidates performing relatively evenly over the different skills demanded in this paper. Many candidates showed a sound knowledge of topical vocabulary and complex structures, especially the subjunctive, which was well used in the last task, but accuracy of language was a problem for quite a few. Adjectival agreement seems to be a more common weakness than basic verb errors at this level, while the passive mood and object pronouns caused notable difficulties. Accents also seemed to be suffering from some neglect.

This year most candidates followed the instructions and did not write excessively long essays for question 7f and, as a consequence, scored better marks. A few, however, still wrote far too much for each question, often repeating the same information and consequently spilling out of the space allocated into margins, headers, footers etc., in a manner which was difficult to follow and may consequently have cost them marks. It is thus important that candidates read the questions carefully and respond in a concise manner.

In a number of cases, the handwriting was hard to decipher, making it a challenge to assess linguistic accuracy to the best advantage of the candidate. Candidates should be encouraged to write legibly and present their work neatly; those with specific learning difficulties affecting their handwriting (e.g. dysgraphia, dyslexia, dyspraxia etc..) should be identified and assessed, so as to be given the option to either use a computer or a scribe in their examinations.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A Task 2 was usually better done than Task 1.

Task 1

- (a) Candidates usually understood the question and responded well though often not accurately. *travaillent* was seldom spelt correctly and *constante* in *en constante augmentation* often did not have an -e at the end. *inégalités* was sometimes transcribed as *illégalités*. Some candidates did not understand *reculent* and failed to transcribe it correctly, thus losing a mark.
- (b) Candidates had no problems identifying *au chômage* but often lost a mark in the second part of the answer by omitting *qu'elles n'ont pas choisi*. Others had difficulties with *à temps partiel*, which they mistranscribed *attend partielle / temparciel / impartiel*
- (c) i Candidates often lost a mark because they failed to mention *à qualifications égales*. Some wrote *les femmes ont 20% moins de qualifications que les hommes* or *[les*

femmes gagnent moins d'hommes and in some cases *qualifications égales*] became [*qualifications légales*].

- (c) ii Many candidates lost a mark as they misunderstood the text. They thought that 15% of all women were managing directors. Some candidates had problems with *chefs d'entreprise* and wrote *chèvres d'entreprise*, and *entreprise* was often misspelt *enterprise*.
- (d) Those not familiar with *la fonction publique* had difficulties transcribing it.
- (e) Candidates must remember to go straight to the point, answer the question concisely and not start by giving a lot of information unrelated to the question. Many wrote *les bacs* or used capital letters, *LE BAC*. Some contradicted themselves by saying that *après le bac elles font les classes préparatoires*. The second part of the answer was usually answered correctly except for the candidates who were too vague and answered *quand elles ont un enfant*.
- (f) This was usually answered correctly but not accurately, as many candidates failed to pick up on the preposition in the question and answered *les travaux domestiques* instead of *aux travaux domestiques*. There were a few mistranscriptions, e.g. *le traveau de mystique / les bravos domestiques*, and a few distortions such as the addition of *s'occuper des enfants*.

Task 2

This year candidates performed much better in this type of task than in previous years.

- (1) Usually correctly answered but occasionally distorted by the addition of [*premières*].
- (2) Usually answered correctly apart from those who went for a variation of [*chute / diminution*].
- (3) Candidate understood the question but very few gave the accurate form of the verb [*mourir*].
- (4) Many failed to see that a verb was required there and used a noun [*traitement*].
- (5) [*moins*] was the targeted word but a noun indicating the same idea was accepted for comprehension.
- (6) Usually well understood but those who lifted straight from the text [*alcoolisme et tabagisme*] did not gain any mark. There were some distortion, ex: when candidates added [*la drogue*].
- (7) Answered correctly by the majority of the candidates.
- (8) Answered correctly by the majority of the candidates.
- (9) The correct idea was generally conveyed but often not accurately [ex: *plus longues*] and there was the occasional mistranscription [*vivront santente / saintener*].
- (10) Mostly correct except for those who wrote [*Allemagne/France/US*] or wrote [*Japan*].

Section B

Task 3

Overall candidates did quite well and very few gained fewer than 10 marks

- (a) Candidates usually scored 2 marks out of 3, as they had difficulties rendering *prêt à disparaître*, which they often rendered as 'ready to disappear'.
- (b) Candidates had problems rendering *en pleine campagne* and *suit une option très rare*. Some, in answer to the question 'When?', answered 'Monday to Friday'.
- (c) Quite a few candidates got (c) and (b) mixed up. Those who understood the question generally only scored 2 marks out of 3, as they did not understand *l'encadrement* and failed to identify the last point about staff and living in a group.
- (d) Usually well answered, except for those who were so out of synchronisation that they gave the answer to the previous question.
- (e) Candidates often referred to what the day pupils did, instead of the boarders. *cour* was often misunderstood as 'lesson' and *banc* was often understood as 'bank', hence answers like 'on the banks', 'on the edge', 'on the verge', 'at the side'. The idea of loitering was not always conveyed, as candidates did not know the meaning of *s'attarder*.
- (f) Candidates often only scored 2 out of 3, as *accrocs* was not often known.
- (g) Candidates usually got one part correct, 'she was too tired to work', but some implied that 1h30 was the time for the journey to and back from school.
- (h) The first part often correct unless translated literally. Candidates had no problem with the second part but some distorted the answer to the third part by saying that he felt obliged to do his homework' rather than being forced to do it.

Task 4

Candidates who had been trained well did this question well. Those who had not often failed to follow the rubric and to give the exact equivalent, e.g. *les feux* instead of *feux* or the addition of *les bavards* in (c). Candidates found (b) difficult and many answered *étroitement surveillés*.

Task 5 Most candidates showed good understanding but poor language skills as they treated the exercise as a question and answer task rather than a sentence-completion task

- (a) Many mangled versions of "beneficial" were used. Some thought the boarders had learned how to keep clean.
- (b) Some omitted the idea of distance/separation.
- (c) They coped quite well with this if they understood it. Misunderstandings included parents rowing between themselves, parents separating/going away in the week and children being happy to see the parents. Some guesswork including general remarks about happiness and getting along with each other. This was one of the questions which showed up poor grammar, particularly in the area of pronouns. *conflits* often became *confits*.
- (d) Few answered from Julien's point of view and, instead of saying what Julien did not

like to do, they answered what he did not like. Many used *demandent* with questions. Some thought Julien was a girl. Some saw *ils m'ennuient* in the text and manipulated it wrongly in their answers, e.g. *ses parents s'ennuient avec leurs questions*.

- (e) There were many instances of *casser* but some good language as well.
- (f) They found the answer hard to express correctly and the syntax was usually poor but most managed to communicate the right idea.

Task 6 This was the section where the candidates scored fewest marks, because either they did not know the meaning of the words or they did not know how to explain them. Very often attention was not paid to using the correct parts of verbs, or even the correct part of speech, e.g. *rester / pour rester* for *s'attarder*, *faire diversion* explained by a noun.

Very few understood *emploi du temps*, at best giving vague answers to do with activities in the pupils' daily schedule, sometimes the way they used their time and, at worst, understanding *emploi* to be a job; *l'étude* was understood as *les études*. *se confie* was fairly often explained reasonably, but sometimes understood to mean 'confined' (e.g. in their dormitories).

Task 7 On the whole candidates responded well to the task and most of them expressed interesting views on the topic of illegal immigration. Most gave more than 5 content points but few candidates gave 10 or more and thus they could not score more than 3 out of 5 for Range.

In general candidates had appropriate vocabulary to express themselves but some topic specific vocabulary, together with more general vocabulary, caused problems, in particular:

- *amnistie*.
- *tenir compte de* (which became *rendre compte de*)
- *résoudre* (which usually became *resolver*)
- *manifestations* (which usually became *protests extremes*)
- *grève de la faim*
- *reconnaître les mariages* (which became *reconniser les mariages*)
- *l'étrange* for *à l'étranger*
- *visas biométriques* was rarely known, so candidates tried to explain what they were : *un visa avec les prints / les emprunts / les imprimés des doigts*) and even *les nouveaux visas vont contenir les doigts des immigrés*.

There were problems with tenses e.g. in (c) they answered a question in the present tense with a mixture of imperfect, conditional and perfect tenses. Conditional and imperfect were regularly confused, the subjunctive was often used after *'je pense'* etc. There were also recurrent errors with verb structures: *permettre les immigrés reste la France / entrer la France / encourager les gens faire*. Candidates often failed to render the passive: *pour ne pas renvoyer leur pays / si les mesures introduiront / les immigrés sont permis rester*.

Very few could make either *clandestin* or *illégal* agree with *immigrants* or *immigration*. Candidates often switched, particularly in section (c), from *'ils'* to *'on'* to *'il'* to *'vous'* with gay abandon, rarely using the appropriate verb form.

Language usually went to pieces when trying to describe the consequences of marrying a foreigner abroad.

Here are some examples of common language errors:

Immigrants illégal/illégal ; *immigration illégal* (or often without accent)

Encourager quelqu'un de + inf.

Permettre quelqu'un without *à*, + *inf.* without *de*

Des nouveaux mesures

Savoir > ils ne saisent pas

Croire > ils ne croient/croivent pas

Wrong articles - ils ont les problèmes, ils n'ont pas les papiers, il y aura les manifestations

Manipulation of personal pronouns - ils n'ont pas ses papiers, ils ne connaissent pas sa (or most often son) nationalité (or often nationalités)

Les français; les citoyens Français

Ils ne quittent pas (no object)

Marriages; indépendante

*Many candidates could not spell *doigt* properly.*

Many anglicisms -prennent place (take place), prendre en compte (take into account), over-use of gens - les gens français, les gens étrangers, use of avoir besoin - il n'y aurait pas besoin pour beaucoup de gens d'immigrer.

However, there was some good use of ne pas before an infinitive, even by some otherwise weak candidates.

Some candidates used a variety of complex structures, particularly in the personal response; others had learnt set phrases, which they were determined to include come what may. There were some quite pleasing answers on the whole. Part (f) was often much better than parts (a) to (e) as candidates tend to pay more attention to the language accuracy in this section.

2656: French: Culture and Society (Written Examination)

General Comments

The overall level of difficulty of the June 2007 examination appears to have been similar to that of previous series. Equally, the general level of candidates' performances was comparable with past examinations, although it was thought that there were slightly fewer very weak candidates who had been inappropriately entered, and a significant percentage of very high quality candidates.

On this occasion, candidates favoured questions on prescribed literary texts over non-literary topics in a ratio of about 5 : 3, while only about 5% of candidates at most attempted a question on literary themes. The knowledge of prescribed texts displayed by candidates was generally very good indeed. The equivalent factual data used for non-literary questions could not be guaranteed, although there were plenty of candidates who had a plethora of relevant information on non-literary topics to impart. There was again evidence - if perhaps slightly reduced this year - of candidates who, having specialised in two or three topics following receipt of the pre-release material, produced clearly pre-learned essays with a greater or lesser effort to make these conform to the actual question. This practice is not a recipe for success. The art of answering the questions on the non-literary topics is the ability to select from and adapt the mass of knowledge they have acquired to the demands of the specific question.

Of those candidates attempting questions on the set texts, about two thirds preferred the context question to the essay, although this trend was reversed in the case of *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle*. Some good answers on literary themes were received, but often candidates struggled to make the text fit the question without quite severe contortion. The instruction which precedes the literary themes questions that reads: *Choisissez celle qui convient le mieux au texte que vous avez étudié* was treated in a rather cavalier fashion at times! It should be borne in mind that context questions have two requirements: an ability to answer specific questions on the extract, and an ability to relate the extract to themes and issues in the text as a whole. Most candidates did have a first rate overview of the text they had studied but frequently failed to make sufficient direct reference to the actual passage.

There were only a very small number of rubric offences this year. These mostly comprised answering both parts (a) and (b) of the same question, although a couple of examples of candidates writing on a prescribed text in Section A and on the same text in Section B were received.

Candidates' language was generally appropriate to the task with respect to grammatical accuracy, range and complexity of structures and variety of vocabulary. Unfortunately there are still a significant number of candidates who are unable to form the present tense of simple regular verbs, and whose application of gender is akin to Russian roulette. These are, however, a minority, and many candidates are proving able to write coherently and with a commendable degree of sophistication.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Textes littéraires prescrits

- 1(a) *La Peste* again proved a fairly popular text. There were considerably more answers to the context than to the essay question. Candidates generally demonstrated a good working knowledge of the text, which they used effectively in parts (i) and (ii), although many answers to part (i) were unnecessarily long. Awareness of Rambert's plan and unique situation was good, as was the analysis in part (ii) of the reasons for his abandoning his plans. There was regular reference to Rieux's own situation, but weaker candidates often overlooked this, which was considered a serious omission. The more philosophical causes, i.e. putting the collective good before individual

considerations, were also often cited. Part (iii) produced some pleasingly incisive responses on the nature of the 'honesty' mentioned by Rieux, which involved an expansion of the idea *elle consiste à faire mon métier* into notions of the battle between good and evil, and being true to oneself. However, many candidates tended to over-complicate the issue and missed out key but simple points such as the civic authorities' refusal to tell the truth.

- 1(b) Although this question was less popular than 1(a), it produced some very competent analyses of Camus' narrative and descriptive techniques and of their importance for the novel's style and emotional impact. The nature of Rieux as the 'hidden' narrator was well defined by many candidates, who also referred to aspects such as documentary objectivity and symbolism, but a surprisingly high number of candidates failed to make any reference to the allegorical nature of the text.
- 2(a) *Regain* enjoyed a slightly increased level of popularity this year, if still not as widespread as some other texts. Candidates who had studied this novel both knew and understood it very well in general. Thus, part (i) posed little problem, but part (ii) produced some unexpected interpretations of the phrase *aspects de la nature*, this being seen as reference to the different natural elements at play in the text and therefore causing candidates to write about the role of water. These were often interesting and by no means irrelevant, but there was a danger that such candidates might overlook the hostile and vindictive aspect of nature that tends to dominate the first half of the novel before man and nature start working in closer harmony. Part (iii) did get some very vague responses, but better candidates were able to suggest that the death of Mamèche's husband when building the well, while purely negative in the short term, could be seen as having occurred during an earlier attempt by man to impose some sort of order on his natural surroundings, such is achieved successfully by Panturle and Arsule in the second half of the novel.
- 2(b) Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Most essays were competent and displayed a very solid knowledge of the text, although structurally it was felt that candidates might have compared the two halves of the novel more effectively, and there was a degree of superficiality in some answers which failed to consider the relationship between man and nature from a more philosophical angle, and made no reference to the capacity of the forces of nature to reclaim the land if man loses respect for his natural environment.
3. No answers were received on *Tueur sans gages*.
- 4(a) *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* proved to be an extremely popular text, with significantly more candidates opting for the context question than the essay. Looking at parts (i) and (ii) together, candidates were generally better on the attitude of the Maître Tailleur than on the character of Monsieur Jourdain, in that they wrote rather generally on the second and made insufficient use of the evidence actually in the extract. The idea that 'a fool and his money are soon parted' was often not demonstrated specifically, although candidates did understand that the tailor was flattering Monsieur Jourdain insincerely, and that the latter's characteristics of vanity, naivety and, it can be argued, stupidity are easy targets for such flattery, the latter trait being exploited by the tailor who is well aware that M. Jourdain knows nothing whatsoever about elegant tailoring! Part (iii) was answered well by stronger candidates but was definitely a weak point for others, many of whom missed the point about the theme of masks, disguise and confusion of the truth which the ceremonies embody and which runs as a leitmotif through the play. The musical interludes and ballets were clearly an aspect of the play which many students had not given much serious thought to, although the better candidates did display some useful background knowledge about Molière's use of these *divertissements*.

- 4(b) Fewer candidates attempted the essay question on *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* than the context question. Most answers received were solid and showed a good knowledge of the text. They interpreted the question generally as referring to Monsieur Jourdain's actual social status and the one he aspired to: a valid interpretation, but one needing a very carefully argued response, given that by the end of the play, following the *Mamamouchi* scene, M. Jourdain firmly believes that he has been elevated to noble rank. Other candidates took a different line - seeing the quotation as referring to Molière's use of main characters who are basically caricatures depicting an obsession with a single character trait: this argument worked very successfully for those who employed it.
5. No answers were received on *Un Amour de Swann*.
- 6(a) *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle* proved a very popular text this year. More candidates attempted the essay question than the context, but this question nevertheless received a number of good responses. It was very clear that the great majority of candidates who had studied this text had acquired an excellent knowledge not only of the text itself but also of its socio-historical relevance. However, part (i) of the context was possibly the least well answered, in particular in relation to the inflated and unmerited prestige enjoyed by Patrick. The use of the capital letters in *Fils Aîné* and *Celui-Ci* escaped most candidates' attention. They did however realise that the role of the female characters, especially the female children, was a subservient one. Part (ii) on the other hand was mostly very well answered, candidates' knowledge of the text allowing them to demonstrate that Josyane was seeking to hide her 'illicit' liaisons with Guido in order to avoid a more serious interrogation about a part of her life whose secrecy is fundamental to her even limited happiness. Patrick's latent racism was commented on by the more perceptive candidates. Part (iii) produced quite a variety of standards: many saw the *gros mots* as the principal source of humour, or possibly the parents' failure to control the children, but only the best candidates understood the subtle humour in the interplay of the father and Patrick with the TV quiz show, mocking the contestant who was struggling to come up with the distance in kilometres between Sparta and Lacedemon! Better candidates were also able to show how this passage in many ways exemplified the humorous ironic style of Josyane's narration throughout the novel.
- 6(b) This was a popular choice and appeared to cover an area which many had considered and prepared for in advance. Candidates took stances for and against the appropriateness of the alternative suggested title, but the best answers came from those candidates who weighed up both sides of the argument and were therefore able to offer a suitably analytical response which took into account the phrase *jusqu'à quel point* from the title. The better candidates demonstrated Josyane's maternal side by referring to her acting as a (much better) mother substitute for her siblings, and especially the closeness of her relationship with Nicolas. At the same time, they were aware of the 'unmotherly' nature of her increasingly promiscuous behaviour. Good candidates also considered the end of the novel and discussed whether Josyane would actually end up going down exactly the same path as her own mother.
- 7(a) *Les Mains Sales* appears to have declined in popularity slightly this year. Candidates who did answer on the Sartre text generally displayed a competent knowledge of the play, but struggled to communicate any kind of in-depth understanding of the central philosophical issues or of the way in which the characters are used to embody particular political and ethical stances. More candidates attempted the context than the essay question. Answers to part (i) often contained omissions and only a superficial grasp of the key facts: the importance of the Party having changed its political stance so that the killing of Hoederer would be a major embarrassment if it were carried out for political reasons was frequently overlooked. Candidates did refer to the poisoned chocolates Hugo had received in prison, but a surprising number took

the question as referring purely to the possibility of Hugo's life being in danger from Olga. Most candidates were however able to answer part (ii) competently, all agreeing that Olga was a complex character divided between party loyalty and deep-seated feelings for Hugo. Answers to part (iii), which required an extended analysis of Hugo's last section of dialogue in the extract, were often superficial, and it must be said that the concept of the existentialist man' being the sum of his actions was one that candidates found very hard to express coherently.

- 7(b) Only a few candidates attempted the essay question on *Les Mains Sales*. Answers tended to be rather vague, although some better candidates identified the central premise that while the reader or audience knows from the very start of the play that Hugo does kill Hoederer, the how, when and why of the act are what provides uncertainty and tension. To answer this question more effectively, candidates really needed to move away from the political aspects of the play and consider it in terms of a thriller, with Hugo holding a loaded gun ready to go off at any moment. In this respect, candidates' analysis of the action of the play often had shortcomings in terms of knowledge, although many did refer to the tension inherent in the conclusion of wondering what Hugo's ultimate decision and fate would be. In general, questions on this text - while there were certainly a number of good responses - tended not to compare favourably with the quality of answers received on the majority of the other set texts.
- 8(a) *Candide* was a very popular text this year, receiving a large number of answers, especially for the context question. Candidates did on the whole make quite good use of the extract to answer parts (i) and (ii), referring specifically to the absurd concept of the auto-da-fé as a means of preventing further earthquakes. As one candidate aptly summed it up, *il est évidemment absurde de croire qu'on peut prévenir une ruine totale' en tuant quelques personnes innocentes*. The ridiculous nature of the charges against the victims was also analysed, and most important - though this key point was missed by a number of candidates - was the fact that, after all the absurd pomp and ceremony of the auto-da-fé, the earth shakes again that very day. In part (ii), better candidates were able to distinguish between absurdity and irony by referring to linguistic as opposed to situational irony: those who took the latter route tended rather to repeat what they had said in part (i). Good candidates seized on the adjective in *un bel auto-da-fé*, the use of the noun *sages*, and the description of the dungeon being blessed with an *extrême fraîcheur*, among other points. Part (iii) was generally very well answered by candidates who identified this as a step in the evolution in *Candide*'s character from blind acceptance of Pangloss' doctrine to a more questioning attitude, and they demonstrated this very ably using quotes from the final paragraph of the extract, although only the best also showed how *Candide* still at this point clearly retains some of his original naivety and innocence, despite all the horrors that have befallen him.
- 8(b) Generally the essay question on *Candide* was answered effectively by most candidates, who displayed a good knowledge of the text by selecting a number of different episodes and examples to demonstrate the contrast between content and style. A few candidates who tried to argue that the quotation was inappropriate for the text struggled to maintain their argument. The best candidates were also able to explain why Voltaire had chosen this style for his *conte*, understanding that the ironic distance in the narration was an effective tool for demonstrating the absurdity of the philosophy of Optimism.

Section B: Sujets littéraires

- 9 -14 Relatively few candidates attempted one of the literary themes essays. Some excellent answers were received but, on a fair number of occasions, it was felt that the choice of question did not fit the studied text all that well. The fact that a lot of

candidates who chose these questions did so using one of the prescribed texts suggests that they may have done so as something of a last resort, as they were often used as an excuse to write overly general essays about the texts, with only passing specific reference to the key elements of the question. Those candidates who used texts which were not prescribed texts often fared better, although even then, there were some odd matches.

An exception to the above trend was *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle*, which was used very effectively to answer the questions on children (Q.9), women (Q.10) and especially the environment (Q.14), where a few candidates gave an excellent analysis of the dehumanising nature of the urban landscape of the *grands ensembles* of the Parisian suburbs. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was used quite imaginatively to answer the question on the exploitation of/by children (young people being an acceptable variant) (Q.9), but much less successfully in answer to the question on stereotypical female characters (Q.10) – mainly because the play is dominated to such an extent by male characters! The use of *Candide* for Q.12, on the battle between the individual and society, proved somewhat ill-advised.

The most popular texts outside the prescribed texts were Azouz Bégag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Vercors' *Le Silence de la Mer*, Maupassant's *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre* and, for Q.12, the ever popular *L'Étranger* (for which some candidates are still obsessed with the importance of Meursault not crying at his mother's funeral to the exclusion of almost all other points), while Pagnol was well represented, with both *Le Château de mon Père* and *Manon des Sources* being used. Of the six questions, that on love (Q.13) was least popular, though some reasonable answers drawing on *Le Grand Meaulnes* were received. The question on war (Q.11) was without doubt the least well answered. Candidates using *Le Silence de la Mer* did not really prove capable of applying this text to the question, while those who had studied Maupassant also lapsed into irrelevance quite frequently, depending on which of the *Contes* they selected to illustrate their answers: *Boule de Suif* itself was not a good choice. The Pagnol texts were both known in detail by the candidates who had studied them: they were used with varying degrees of success in answer to Questions 9 (children), 12 (society) and 14 (environment), but often these essays lacked both precision and concision and became exercises in story-telling.

Section C: Sujets non-littéraires

- 15(a) This question was answered by relatively few candidates, and produced a range of answers, some of which gave clear evidence of the topic having been studied in detail, as opposed to answers in previous examinations which have contained very little reference to actual French television programmes. In many cases, however, specific examples failed to extend beyond *Loft Story*. It was felt that the question was attempted by a number of candidates who had studied the broad topic of French TV but not this particular aspect - and that they might have fared better on another question. Nevertheless, there were some thoughtful arguments presented. While some candidates were able to refer to sufficient examples of current 'quality' French programmes to back up an argument that in fact there had been no discernible decline in standards in recent years, the majority agreed that reality TV was a factor in a lowering of quality, but only as an example of *américanisation* or, as one candidate put it, the insidious *influence anglo-saxonne*.
- 15(b) This question was generally not well answered, with the social aspects of the question being very frequently ignored or at best given short shrift. The result tended to be very general essays about the increase in advertising with a few random examples. Some candidates resorted to what seemed a pre-prepared essay about techniques used in advertising, which was largely irrelevant to the question, although it did show some evidence of knowledge of the broader topic.

- 16(a) Candidates tended to overlook the key idea of *les besoins contemporains des adolescents*, and more particularly often failed to make any specific reference to French teenagers. The relatively few answers that were received tended to be lacking in factual knowledge about either family issues or teenage problems in France.
- 16(b) Candidates tended to have a sound knowledge of statistics regarding youth unemployment in France, and most were able to put forward effective arguments against the statement in the title, listing and, in the case of better candidates, developing other reasons for the problems, such as the difficulties caused by the recent employment laws and the unsuitability of many higher education diplomas for the labour market. Fewer, however, were able to give details of the efforts of the young themselves to overcome their obstacles or the initiatives which exist to tackle the problem through training schemes etc. Many candidates choosing this question did nevertheless produce a coherent argument, often supported with relevant factual information. There was clear evidence that most candidates had read thoroughly on the topic, and consequently marks on this question tended to be on average considerably higher than those for Q.16(a).
- 17(a) Truffaut was a popular choice for candidates attempting this question, which received a high number of answers. Chabrol and Jeunet were also used as bases for discussion, while *La Haine* was a popular choice as an individual film. The question differentiated well. There were a number of very good answers which showed real knowledge not only of the films but also of the techniques used by the directors - references to *travellings* and *plongées* were made most effectively. The best essays took the techniques as their starting point, then compared the use of these across the different films. Weaker candidates tended to ignore the notion of comparison required in the question and took a more narrative and thematic approach to the films they had studied, which was less successful as an answer to the question. Often specific techniques were not identified or only with considerable vagueness (*il utilise les techniques de Hitchcock*, without further development), and candidates were content merely to summarise the plots.
- 17(b) This question was answered by far fewer candidates than answered 17(a), and answers on the whole were not very effective, demonstrating only a cursory appreciation of current trends and even less of the possible implications of the rise in popularity of American-style blockbusters for the future of the French film industry. Candidates tended rather to refer to popular French films of recent years, thereby displaying some knowledge of the broad topic but with little relevance to the question.
- 18(a) Only a small number of candidates attempted this question, but those who did demonstrated a solid knowledge of the overall purpose of National Parks in France and a reasonably detailed insight into the workings of individual parks. An effective argument was that because of their diverse natures, it was difficult to judge which actually made the most valuable contribution to preservation, and this was an entirely acceptable conclusion to draw.
- 18(b) This question produced quite a range of answers in terms of quality, but it did seem to attract a number of weaker candidates who offered very little in the way of specific examples, and used rather banal and general facts about air pollution and the increase in exhaust fumes caused by tourists' cars, tourists dropping litter, etc. However, some very good answers were received which gave a balanced and well-illustrated response, including the potentially positive aspects offered by *tourisme vert*.
- 19(a) Some very good answers were received to this question from candidates who had acquired an excellent knowledge of the cultural heritage of the town or region they had

studied. References to art, literature and cultural folklore were effectively used, as well as mention of the area's contribution to France's culinary and architectural traditions. However, the latter point was in some cases the sum total of candidates' answers, the weakest of which were of the 'travel brochure' type, which drifted in and out of relevance and tended to be purely descriptive. Reference, for example, to the number of hotel rooms available was not regarded as making a very meritorious contribution to answers to this question.

- 19(b) This question mostly received competent answers which outlined the major environmental issues affecting the region, and indeed some excellent ones on the problems faced by Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Weaker candidates were, however, also attracted to this question, and tended to produce generalisations which could have applied to almost anywhere. The second half of the question discriminated effectively, as weaker candidates possessed less knowledge about measures taken to combat problems, while better candidates were also able to propose solutions that local authorities might consider in the future.
- 20(a) This was a very popular question. Candidates were generally able to demonstrate a very sound awareness of the current problems facing immigrants in France, with details of educational, work-related and housing problems fully discussed, as well as general problems of integration, but only better candidates were able to analyse the racist nature of some of these: good examples were used particularly regarding the favouring of candidates with French as opposed to North African sounding names when applying for jobs. There was ample evidence of reading on the subject, with many statistics and examples effectively used. The second half of the question, regarding whether enough was being done to combat these issues, was often less well covered, especially by weaker candidates. It is important for the balance of an argument in an essay that both parts of a question such as this one are given approximately equal attention.
- 20 (b) This question was generally well answered. Candidates mostly had a clear grasp of the historical background, assessed the current situation effectively and were able to express personal opinions coherently. The concept of a *pays d'accueil* was well understood (if not well spelt, despite being in the question!). Some candidates did however perhaps take the word *encore* in the question a little too literally, implying that all in the French immigrational garden was rosy until Monsieur Sarkozy acceded to power.
- 21(a) This proved quite a popular question but only better candidates did it justice by giving sufficient attention to the idea of *le coût*. Although candidates had almost always clearly studied the topic of smoking very thoroughly and were well advised on recent legislative measures, few were able to produce statistics directly relevant to cost, although good candidates realised that the notion of cost could be taken as going well beyond purely monetary issues as long as they did not lose sight of the key issue in the question. Thus, effective use was made of facts and statistics about medical care, lost working days, premature death, the effects of passive smoking, and the implementation and advertising of the new legislation. Good candidates were able to counter-balance the argument by also referring to the loss of tax income suffered by the government in the case of a decline in the number of smokers. Even if the candidates did not have actual monetary figures to quote, able candidates could actually turn that to their advantage in an essay which referred to the impossibility of calculating the true cost.
- 22(b) Only a very small number of candidates attempted the question on vegetarianism, and in most cases this seemed to be an aspect of healthy diet which they had overlooked in their studies, as extremely little relevant knowledge was displayed. While it can obviously be argued that such candidates really ought to have chosen a

different question, some more flexible candidates showed that a very respectable essay on this question could be produced even without in-depth knowledge of French vegetarianism by citing the strong carnivorous traditions in French culinary culture as an explanation for the relative unpopularity of a meat-free diet in France compared with some other western societies.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that centres are generally preparing candidates very well for this paper. Prescribed texts are clearly being taught thoroughly and intelligently, and candidates on the whole are ready for a wide variety of possible questions that might crop up. Context questions are proving popular and mostly successful, but candidates do often need to make fuller use of the extracts themselves, and to be more concise in answers to avoid lapsing into irrelevance. Candidates answering on non-literary topics are also demonstrating a very full range of relevant knowledge on many occasions, but in some cases these questions do give rise to use of quasi-pre-learned essays which often only fit the question with considerable difficulty.

2657: French Culture and Society - Coursework

General Comments

This year again, many Moderators noted that a great variety of topics and titles had been covered, reflecting not only breadth and depth of study but also commitment and enthusiasm. Some pieces were a pleasure to read for their content and also for the quality of the French. There was little sub-standard work, and as the work was well presented, it made moderating easier and more enjoyable. Much use was made of the Internet but it would seem that an ever larger number of candidates rely almost exclusively on Wikipedia. To reach informed conclusions, sources should be as wide and varied as possible. On the practical side, authentication by candidates and Centres was not an issue this year, but plans - because of their absence, length or format - were the most frequent problem that Moderators reported. Centres must be thanked for their promptness and willingness to respond to the Moderator's requests when anything was amiss.

Topics

Centres submitted a wide range of suitable topics, but in spite of Section 3.3 of the Coursework Guidance booklet, there was some incidence of topics not clearly linked to the French-speaking world, such as eating disorders and the influence of the fashion industry, renewable energies, climate change or euthanasia.

Sadly, it was also noticeable that some Centres are preparing candidates for the coursework essay as a class exercise and encouraging them to write on the same topic, or even on variations of the same title. This is not in the spirit of Coursework (see Coursework Guidance, Section 4.3). Typically, in such cases, all candidates from the Centre wrote on the same literary text or on the same film(s). Such an approach does not encourage individual research or originality; it must therefore be avoided. Centres wishing to prepare candidates in such a way should be entering them for the essay paper rather than for the Coursework option.

Literary texts formed the basis of at least 30% of the work that was submitted this year. The old favourites (*L'Étranger*, *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Le Tartuffe*, *Un Sac de Billes*, *La Gloire de mon Père*, *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle*, *Les Mains Sales*, *Huis Clos*, *Boule de Suif*, *le Petit Prince* etc.) were once again well represented, as were past and present set texts from Unit 2656 - but not *Un Amour de Swann*. Although such texts provide suitable material to display knowledge and analytical skills, Centres must leave candidates free to select their own angle and encourage an independent approach rather than a mere regurgitation of aspects studied in class. Otherwise, all candidates are likely to make the same points and use the same examples or quotations to support them. To a certain extent, this is also true of topics such as *le racism*e, *l'immigration* or *la laïcité*.

Amongst the non-literary topics, politics was particularly popular this year (probably because of the presidential elections) as was social unrest (*les émeutes*) and the cinema (particularly the films of Truffaut, Besson and Jeunet). Environmental issues seemed less popular than in previous years.

Many candidates followed their own interest to study aspects of sports, history, science, language, arts, poetry, music etc. Their essays were often well researched, highly individual and interesting to read. This approach should be encouraged at all times; it is the very "raison d'être" of the Coursework essay.

Titles

Improvement was noticeable in this area. A higher proportion than previously had a clear goal with a good angle for genuine analysis; there was a corresponding drop in titles inviting a purely descriptive approach. This was also reflected in the lower number of imaginative /

creative pieces. Political interviews or debates worked better than diaries of immigrant girls concerned about *le voile* or the life of Gustave Eiffel, as a fairy tale. A good title does not invite a mere exposé; it encourages candidates to engage in some kind of analysis and to make a case. Some titles can be phrased as questions and still invite (and get) narration or description. Others are clearly inappropriate: *La Belgique*, *L'éducation*, *Le nucléaire* or *Les films de Truffaut*. Lengthy multi-strand titles are also to be avoided because candidates tend to concentrate on one aspect and neglect the others. It should be possible to deal with the task set thoroughly and precisely within the word limit.

Please note that teachers are allowed to help candidates formulate their titles. They may also correct language errors in the title and it was disappointing to note that in quite a number of cases this had not been done.

Manner of submission

This is clearly set out in the Coursework Guidance booklet (Section 7) yet plan, bibliography and length are areas that still give cause for concern. It should also be noted that essays should be double-spaced and, if word-processed, font size 10 to 12 should be used.

Planning is an essential part of successful essay writing, yet some seem satisfied with a list of bullet points, possibly because the plan was produced after the essay had been written up. Plans should consist of a series of expanded headings and sub-headings (see Coursework Guidance Section 6.3). They should not exceed one side of A4 (Font size 10 to 12) and they should not contain full sentences, let alone paragraphs which candidates use unchanged in their essay. A plan must not be a draft in disguise. Because plans are regarded as corrected work (see Coursework Guidance Section 6.3), **any direct copying of more than six words must be acknowledged with quotation marks** (see Coursework Guidance Section 5.6) and must therefore be disregarded from the word count and from the assessment of language. It can only be used as an example to illustrate a point expressed in another way, just as for any other quotation. Extensive and excessively detailed plans must not be accepted.

The bibliography shows evidence of the research that was undertaken prior to writing up the essay and all source material should be listed, as indicated in Coursework Guidance (section 7.7). This includes full address for websites. Using class textbooks, thematic items from *Authentik*, *Les Clés de l'Actualité* or similar is fine but only as a starting point. At this level, evidence of further reading and independent research is required. Some candidates seemed to rely exclusively on the Internet, and more specifically on Wikipedia, not necessarily an authoritative source. This led to similarities - especially for topics such as fashion, eating disorders, *les émeutes*, and historical titles (*la Révolution*, *Napoléon*, *Marie-Antoinette* etc). Centres must be vigilant and ensure that candidates' reliance on such sources does not constitute malpractice. Asking candidates to print off main source articles may be a way of drawing their attention to this issue. The use of footnotes is improving but they should remain brief and factual. Footnotes should not be used as a way of making comments, expressing views on points made in the essay itself. Finally sources in English may be used, but sparingly, because they invite candidates to translate rather than to produce language.

Centres have taken heed of comments made in previous reports about "short" essays, an option better suited to the weaker candidates. However the number of short essays - that is to say essays falling short of the lower word limit stipulated in the specification - was on the increase. Some totally unrealistic claims about length were made either on the cover sheets or at the end of essays. Centres need to be more vigilant because, when essays are too short, the language marks must be reduced (see Coursework guidance, Section 7. 8). Many marks had to be amended because Centres had failed to apply the correct scaling, even if they had noticed the brevity of the piece, as occasionally stated on the cover sheet. Centres are also reminded that in the case of over-long essays - of which there were many - only the first 1450 words can be assessed, with the obvious implication for the number of content marks that can be awarded.

Administrative matters

As in previous years, clerical errors occurred (incorrect additions on the individual mark sheets or transcription from the mark sheet to MS) and most Centres were very prompt in responding to Moderator's requests for an amendment, which is gratifying, as any delay hinders the moderation process. However, a tiny minority of Centres did not follow instructions relating to authentication of work.

A few cover sheets were either missing or incomplete (missing candidate number, word count or bibliography mostly). Word counts should be accurate - many proved to be unreliable. Quotations are to be excluded from the work count. Teacher's comments on the cover sheets, though not essential, are welcome and appreciated by Moderators, particularly when they provide an analysis on how the Centre's marks were reached.

Content

When time and effort have been put into researching a topic, it is difficult to leave anything out. Yet candidates must select and include only what is relevant to their title, not to the broad topic area. The strength and purpose of the argument, supported by judiciously selected examples should be the driving force of the essay, not the sheer accumulation of factual evidence. It should also be noted that out-of-date material and statistics have no place in a coursework essay when up-to-date information can so readily be accessed on the Internet. This was a problem in essays on environmental issues or topics such as *le SIDA* in particular.

Candidates are still inclined to narrate or describe rather than to analyse or evaluate. The best essays were those that had been carefully planned. Of course, teachers are allowed to give advice on structure at the planning stage, but few plans showed the balance on which a forceful and logical argument could be hung. Yet it was pleasing to see that, in spite of unprepossessing plans, some candidates managed to submit convincing and well thought-out argument.

Some titles produced outstanding essays: *Les émeutes de 2005 étaient-elles prévisibles?*; *L'éducation, solution à la délinquance ?*; *Dans quelle mesure le système judiciaire français est-il responsable des erreurs judiciaires qui prennent place ?*; *L'initiative des enfants de Don Quichotte sera-t-elle une réussite ?* There were also some excellent pieces on literary texts and on current affairs, which showed understanding and awareness, occasionally beyond what would be expected from an A level candidate. At the other end of the scale, defective language skills had an impact on content, but there were fewer such pieces than in previous years.

Language

Many candidates had a good command of vocabulary and structures and made a genuine effort to introduce variety and complexity in their language. Researching the topic through documents written in French rather than through sources in English should help develop topic specific vocabulary and a greater awareness of how the language works. The best candidates wrote with flair and could maintain the same high standard throughout the essay. Average and weaker candidates struggled with language in their introduction and conclusion where they had to rely on their own resources, but in the middle part of the essay they mostly managed to manipulate topic material to good effect.

For the vast majority of candidates, language could be qualified as "Adequate" or better. There were inconsistencies, such as occasional mis-match between verb and subject, gender of noun and adjectives, fluctuating genders and confusion over infinitive and past participle. Careful checking should have picked them up. However, a number of problem areas could be

identified, often connected with verbs: incorrect use of tenses or sequence of tenses, wrong use of preposition, especially with the infinitive of verbs (*ils veulent d'être entendus, il semble d'avoir peur*), overuse or incorrect use of the subjunctive, conditional use of *devoir* and *pouvoir* and inability to form the passive and to apply agreement rules. The difference between *ce qui/ce que* or *ce qui/ceux qui* still seems to elude most candidates, as does the use of *des* and *les*. Word order is also a problem (position of negative, adverbs and pronouns). Some common words were also frequently misused (*concerner, manquer, adresser, aider, regarder, une issue*). At the other end of the range, idiomatic expressions were correctly used, as were *si* constructions and rhetorical phrases.

Some candidates seemed to be able to produce sophisticated language with an extremely high level of accuracy on a consistent basis and for this they and their teachers must be congratulated.

Assessment

Assessment was mostly consistent and accurate, although some smaller Centres tended to over-rate the quality (content and language) of their candidates' work. Only a very small number of centres assess the coursework harshly. There seemed to be a trend for placing the two content marks in the same band when often information and relevance were better than analysis and evaluation. Generally, language was assessed at the correct level, albeit slightly generously with the better candidates.

In a few cases, Moderators had to ask Centres to review the marks they had awarded and Centres responded promptly and willingly to such requests. Some Centres seemed grateful for the Moderator's input and Moderators appreciated Centres' co-operation.

The coursework option continues to prosper. Candidates can be proud of the work they produce and so can teachers for motivating and generating enthusiasm in their candidates.

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE French 3861
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

<i>Unit</i>		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2651/01	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2651/02	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2651/03	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2652	Raw	80	63	56	49	42	35	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2653	Raw	60	49	44	40	36	32	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3861 (Agg Code)	300	240	210	180	150	120	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3861 (Agg Code)	27.97	49.05	66.47	80.96	91.29	100.0	3272

3272 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

**Advanced GCE French 7861
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2654/01	Raw	60	48	43	38	33	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2655	Raw	80	59	52	46	40	34	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2656	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2657	Raw	60	50	45	40	35	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
7861 (Agg Code)	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
7861 (Agg Code)	35.18	64.99	82.82	94.26	98.77	100.0	2351

2351 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU**

OCR Customer Contact Centre

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

**Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity**



**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553**