GCE

French

Advanced GCE **A2 H475**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H075**

Report on the Units

June 2010

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Advanced GCE French (H475)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE French (H075)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Chief Examiner's Report

The first year of the full GCE award for this new specification produced a most encouraging outcome with 99.2% of candidates deserving to pass, 41.7 % achieving an A grade (9.5% of them at A*). All papers performed as expected and provided good differentiation.

Candidates were well prepared and able to cope with the demands of the various units. In the Speaking units, a good choice of titles for discussion helped by serious research produced pleasing performances throughout the ability range. In the multi-skill units, good candidates were stretched and all candidates responded very commendably. Timing was not an issue but handwriting occasionally was; examiners need to be able to read the responses to award marks.

F701 French Speaking

Introduction

There were many good performances this summer, and it is pleasing that there were very few candidates who were inappropriately entered for the exam. The role-plays produced some excellent performances from candidates who were well prepared by their teachers in using the stimulus texts. In the topic discussion, the best candidates provided interesting discussions with well-developed ideas and opinions.

Role-plays

Use of Stimulus

With half of the marks for the role-plays awarded for this grid, it is important that Centres impress on their candidates the necessity to give full answers to the questions they are asked in order to cover as much of the text as possible.

Role-play A

Candidates and teachers reacted well to this text, the story of Joseph Lancaster and his 330 pupils capturing the imagination of many. Some candidates did not understand the concept of elementary education, leading to misunderstandings, but most were able to explain what there was to see. Difficulties for candidates were: a 'talk', 'refreshments' and *de* and *à* for expressing opening times.

Role-play B

This role-play was generally well done by candidates. Difficulties were: an appropriate tense to explain family living conditions in 1913, a suitable word for 'staff' and 'drinks'. In some cases not enough detail was given about the 'fishing'.

Role-play C

The opening questions provided a surprising challenge for candidates, who were unable to change *son* into a different pronoun. Difficulties for candidates were: the word *fils*, some gave *fille* instead, a suitable word for 'staff', the number 250,000 caused difficulties for a minority of candidates, the words for 'France' and 'Spain' - *en français et en espagnol* being surprisingly common. It was pleasing that candidates who did not know the word for 'cleaning' were often able to provide a suitable alternative, and that most candidates were able to convey 'part-time' and 'full-time'. As with other role-plays, the telephone number was usually successful.

Role-play D

.Most candidates spoke enthusiastically and made good use of the vocabulary on the candidate's sheet. Difficulties for candidates were: the opening question and finding an appropriate pronoun, *'frais',* 'membership', and different tenses of *recevoir.* A pleasing number could successfully convey the benefits of membership, including the reductions, and there were some imaginative renderings of 'mail order' using ideas involving *la poste* and *livraison.*

Role-play E

This text produced some particularly enthusiastic responses from both candidates and examiners. The opening questions were done well by most candidates. Candidates made good

use of their sheet. Many candidates coped well with the idea of gangsters. Some teacher/examiners unfortunately lost marks for their candidates by moving onto the sample plot before candidates had finished speaking about what happens during the evening, missing out several key points. Website addresses seem to cause some difficulty and perhaps need more practice.

Role-play F

Most candidates could talk about the general sports facilities but, surprisingly, found the idea of lessons hard to convey. Opening hours and prices were done well. Difficulties for candidates were: talking about the theatre and the wide-ranging entertainment programme.

Response to Examiner

The majority of candidates completed the whole role-play, starting with the two questions and leading into the main transactional part.

Some candidates contented themselves to answer the question asked as briefly as possible, others often combined several points to give a more extended answer, showed imagination by introducing detail that was not in the stimulus text and expressed opinions, thus making the conversation sound rather more natural. It is important that candidates are encouraged to do this, as the mark scheme makes clear reference to initiative and imagination.

For the extension questions, candidate do well when they are able to respond to the questions, which are on more general matters arising from the text, rather than on the text itself. They do particularly well if they are able to express ideas or give imaginative replies.

Quality of Language

Candidates provided a full range of performances, and the better candidates used more complex language very naturally, which is always credited.

Some candidates would benefit from specific practice of the opening questions – particularly in changing pronouns and possessive adjectives to the appropriate one to suit the question. A focus on some structures that seem to cause difficulty could easily improve some candidates' performance: subject-verb agreements, infinitive following a modal verb, use of present, imperfect, and perfect tenses and *avoir besoin de.*

Examining

There were many examples of excellent examining from well-prepared teacher/examiners who had read through the materials thoroughly. Good techniques were:

- teacher/examiners very familiar with the role-play material
- prompting candidates to give details they had missed
- helping a hesitant candidate to move forward with a calm, friendly comment or question
- being familiar with the candidate's sheet as well as the examiner's sheet to see the vocabulary and information that they are given
- asking a question if the candidate has given incorrect information; it helps candidates to realise their mistake and correct it
- waiting until the end to ask the extension questions - the candidate then knows what to expect, the teacher/examiner knows how much time they have left for them, and can extend appropriately, or ensure that the role-play is completed within the limit
- using the same wording as on the teacher/examiner or candidate's sheet to introduce the extension questions
- keeping to the maximum allowed time of 6 minutes

A small number of teacher/examiners did not read the introduction, announced that the exam was starting and expected the candidates to begin. This was not a successful tactic; the introduction is important to settle candidates. It is also very important to have continuity between what the candidate says and the questions the teacher/examiner asks in response. Sometimes teacher/examiners started to ask candidates questions about the place, job or club without the candidate having mentioned it. It is also better to avoid a long silence - often with a prompt such as *vous avez une suggestion?*

Topic discussion

Choice of Topics

As well as meeting the requirement to choose topics from the list provided in the specification, many candidates presented their topic in an entirely personal way. Some candidates chose to talk about how a particular person is represented in the media, and these were often successful. The best came from Centres where the topics were individually chosen and researched by candidates.

To guide the choice of topic, there is useful information in the FAQs on the OCR website and here are some points to bear in mind:

- the topic must relate to France or a French-speaking country
- the subject chosen must <u>directly</u> relate to the list of AS topics
- if candidates choose to talk about a footballer, musician or artist they should not focus exclusively on biographical details – there has to be a link to the AS topics
- if candidates want to talk about a film or a book (and this is acceptable), the theme should relate to one of the AS topics. It is much better to discuss themes rather than technical aspects such as writing style.
- topics such as the internet or eating disorders are international, so candidates need to take particular care to ensure that they are well-linked to the target country.

Ideas, Opinions and Relevance

Many candidates had prepared their topic in sufficient depth to be able to talk coherently about it. They were able to use factual knowledge to support, justify and explain their ideas and opinions throughout the discussion, not just in response to a question from the teacher/examiner.

Fluency, Spontaneity, Responsiveness

Candidates were able to speak with reasonable fluency, and there were many enjoyable and natural conversations with candidates keen to show off the research that they had undertaken and the ideas they had formed.

Unfortunately, some candidates over-prepared to the extent that they recited answers to questions that they were clearly expecting; and could not get high marks on this grid.

Language

Many candidates were able to demonstrate an impressive knowledge of vocabulary, both topic-specific and general, and, unsurprisingly, a wider range of structures was used by most candidates in this section than in the role-play. Some candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of the AS structures.

Again, a focus on some areas that seem to cause difficulty could easily improve some candidates' performance: the gender of topic-specific vocabulary or high frequency words,

irregular past participles, verb endings, subject-verb agreements and *à* or *de* (or nothing) after a verb.

Pronunciation

It is reasonable to say that French pronunciation and intonation can present a challenge, and many candidates made a very real effort to sound authentic. There were very few candidates who made no attempt at a French accent. Certain sounds remain challenging, especially nasals and other sounds that are pronounced very differently from how they are spelt (to the English mind). One frequently mispronounced sound is '–*in*' found in words such as *principal* and *maintenant*, this was often anglicised.

Candidates who relied on pre-learnt answers were often at a disadvantage because it was difficult to understand their speech patterns. Candidates whose speech patterns were more normal generally managed better intonation.

Examining

Teacher/examiners were very sensitive to the different needs and abilities of their candidates and ensured that students were extended appropriately and others were encouraged to keep going. Many were able to provide a range of questions that sought both factual information and opinions, and the conversation flowed in a way that was clearly not pre-determined, so candidates could have to access the higher mark bands.

The best teacher/examiners prevented candidates from reciting answers through the discussion. They interrupted candidates and asked them to explain or justify. Unfortunately, a few teacher/examiners allowed candidates to deliver a series of monologues in response to triggers, resulting in a penalty to the candidate.

The timing for this section of the test is a maximum of ten minutes and only a very few were not able to adhere to this. Please note that examiners do not listen or assess beyond ten minutes.

Administrative matters

It was very pleasing that great care was taken over the administration of the exams and nearly all centres complied with every administrative requirement. Here are a few reminders:

- all recordings sent by post should now be on CD
- it's useful to keep a copy of the recordings as CDs can break in the post, or a faulty CD can make a recording inaccessible.
- all recordings must be received by the deadline, and a working mark sheet and topic form should be completed for each candidate
- it is very helpful if centres can supply examiners with the order in which candidates were examined.
- it is possible to upload recordings onto the OCR Repository, an option that more and more centres are taking – it is very straightforward.

F702 French: Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments

Candidates were from the full range of ability and overall coped well with this paper. All tasks discriminated well and it was very pleasing to note that candidates could manage their time well and complete the paper. Those who wrote little were hindered by their own limitations rather than lack of time.

Task 7 produced some outstanding work at this level because candidates were at liberty to select the type of language they used. With the other writing exercises, the level is set by the nature of the task but it was pleasing to see some attempt to use ambitious language even there. Careful reading of the questions and building in time to check accuracy would benefit all. It is disappointing to see errors, which could be avoided at this level, going uncorrected though lack of checking.

Comments on Individual Questions

Task 1

The first exercise dealt with a theme most candidates would have come across in the course of their studies: the "V*élib"*. It proved a good discriminator and produced the expected range of marks, with few getting less than 4 marks and only the very best getting all answers right.

(a) Some candidates had difficulty in linking "*inférieur"* and "*moins*".

(b) Nearly all could identify the numbers given in the text; spotting the prepositions to work out the correct answer was most challenging. Many managed it. When an incorrect answer was given, there was no discernable pattern.

(c) This was one of the more demanding questions, and was an effective discriminator. The tendency was to latch on to the word "*pleins*" (option C) without listening to the end of the sentence.

(d) All options were equally inviting, but only one was mentioned in the text in connection with the "*métro*".

(e) The text contained plenty of clues to guide candidates towards the correct answer (B) and the majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

(f) This question was targeted at detailed understanding. Although "*ivre*" clearly belongs to the "food and drink" area, some candidates had not come across it before. They resorted to guessing – but it did not work.

(g) To answer this question correctly, candidates had to infer meaning: none of the words in the options occurred in the text. The key phrase was "*prendre … le Volant*".

(h) This was a good discriminator. It is possible some had not met "*zigzaguer*" before, but it is a recognisable cognate. Most opted for the safe option (C), rather than the correct one (A). It is possible some mistook "*droit*" for "*droite*" or did not know the meaning of the word.

(i) This question was designed to be accessible to all candidates and was quite successfully answered; most candidates could relate "*imprévisible"* and *"…on ne peut pas … anticiper".*

(j)   Another question aimed at all candidates. It was quite successfully answered because many were able to make the leap from *"renverser un vélo"* to option A.

Task 2

Candidates normally find this test type difficult but this year they coped well, which resulted in the full range of marks being awarded. There were errors with: (a) "*minorité"* instead of "*majorité*", (d) *"dépenses", "allégés", "programmes"* given instead of "*activités"*, (e) "*augmente*r" instead of "*diminuer*" and (g) "*perte*" or "*augmenter*" instead of "*prise*".

Task 3

This task produced a wide range of marks. It was pleasing that this year, no candidate answered in the wrong language. There was some confusion in questions Q3 (b) and Q3 (e); some did not give enough information and/or repeated the same thing in a different way

(a)   This question was generally answered correctly, although some candidates did not give the correct age range.

(b)   Most stated correctly that the course was 'free' and got at least one mark. Some answers lacked detail (eg 'each week' – omitting this summer; 'places are limited' without adding 'to 15 per week')

(c)   An effective discriminating question. There were four distinct possible answers to this question, only the really good candidates got more than one mark.

(d)   This question was aimed at candidates in the middle of the range, who coped well with it., The key point was to give 'qualities'.

(e)   This was a very good discriminator. Errors included mixing up "attitude" and "aptitude", that the school was offering a range of dates, implying they had to apply first and giving the same answer twice (ie 'don't waste time' on one line, and 'contact the school quickly' on another).

(f)   This was generally well answered.

(g)   This last question was difficult, as it relied on knowledge of "*bourse*", a concept well within the topic of education, but unknown to some candidates. Some used common sense and guessed – often accurately. For the other part of the answer some did not express a superlative.

Task 4

Grid H1 - Communication

This task was accessible to all candidates for marks for 'communication'. Most were able to devise strategies to communicate at least half the message. There were gaps in vocabulary and some candidates resorted to using barely disguised English words when they did not know the French - this is not a good technique. There is an intentional link between the two tasks and candidates can use the vocabulary from Task 3 in Task 4.

Part 1: Some used "*stages*" or "*mini-stages*" from Task 3 text to good effect. The rest was generally done well.

Part 2:   Strategies came into play to put across "theoretical"; using a negative form *("pas pratique")* was a good idea.

Part 3:   It was good to see "*je m'intéresserais*"/ "*je serais intéressé*". In the second half of this part, 'available' proved to be a challenge, but many used "*disponible"* or "*libre*".

Part 4:   Asking questions can be difficult, so it was encouraging to note how many made a real effort to express this part of the message – or to avoid asking a question. Good candidates avoided difficulties by going for a word for word translation and re-organising the sentence (eg *Si on m'accepte, quand...).*

Part 5:   Some candidates did not know the word for 'accommodation' but made a good attempt at paraphrasing, which is perfectly acceptable in this test type. Many used "*hébergement".* Difficulties were 'themselves', and 'have to'. Some used "*il faut*", which gave them a chance to use the subjunctive and many used "*devoir".*

Grid C2 – Quality of language (accuracy)

The mark scheme highlights language structures that examiners expected candidates to use in this task. In practice, not all are necessary but they give teachers an idea of the language that candidates should be producing at this level. The only complexity that is expected is that required by the task.

Some candidates tended to write sentences in isolation, but most were able to show a reasonable command of syntax, and used pronouns, tenses and verb forms accurately.

Few marks below the 3/4 band were awarded, which is encouraging. Some candidates used simple link words to make the text flow in a more natural way. A few attempted more elaborate language, introducing their own complex structures into the message.

Task 5

The first reading text was about sport, with which candidates were familiar.

Part A

Most candidates answered at least two of the four questions correctly. Q5 (f) seemed easier to identify as correct than the others. The least frequently correct answer ticked was Q5 (c).

Part B

Many candidates got full marks. The most common error was in the first question where C or E rather than D were given. Errors also occurred in 3 and 5 where answers were inverted.

Task 6

The second reading text was about tensions caused within families by the use of modern technologies.

This is a demanding task because candidates not only have to understand the text and the questions, but they also have to express themselves in French without ambiguity. This task proved very good at differentiating both for comprehension and linguistic ability.

(a)   This was straightforward, with unambiguous clues in the title of the article and its opening sentence.

(b)   Candidates who read the question realised that the answer had to include characteristics rather than statistics.

(c)   Most candidates gave an acceptable answer to the first part (*quand*). For the second part the key idea required was "*cumuler*" – ie performing all these activities simultaneously.

(d)   & (e)

       Q6 (d) was misunderstood by candidates who thought that "*concernant*" meant 'showing concern' rather than 'about'. Examiners felt that penalising this anglicism would be harsh, so answers to Q6 (e) were allowed here – but were not credited again in Q6 (e).

(f)   This was a demanding question, and it required real understanding and a complete rephrasing of the text.

(g)   An accessible question. To gain the mark candidates had to go beyond general knowledge (ie one would use / go to / log on etc. Facebook / MSN) and paraphrase correctly one of the two verbs ("*alimenter*" and "*communiquer*") used in the text.

(h)   This was a demanding question; many candidates used "*elle*" indiscriminately when they needed to refer to two different people and some answers were too ambiguous to be awarded marks.

(i)   This question was very demanding. Some missed the negative "*Cela ne veut pas dire*". Those who recognised the conditional perfect ("*aurait aimé avoir*") and understood its implications showed a level of comprehension only the best AS candidates could achieve.

Grid C2 – Quality of language (accuracy)
This task was designed to encourage manipulation of language, It was intentional that some questions could be answered with single words [Q6 (a), Q6 (c)] and others with simple sentences [Q6 (d), Q6 (f), Q6 (i), Q6 (g)], that still required some manipulation of verbs (infinitive to 3rd person present, 1st person to 3rd), so that the task was accessible to all candidates. To gain access to the higher mark bands, an ability to use more complex structures was needed. There were plenty of opportunities to do so - use of pronouns Q6 (e), changing adjectives into adverbs Q6 (c) use of subjunctive Q6 (i). Writing full sentences is not required, but it can enhance performance, so better candidates should be encouraged to write longer sentences.

Task 7

Smoking and driving was a theme that fitted well within the AS topics and all candidates had plenty to say in response to the text. It was good to see scribbled ideas and mini-plans, as many tried to organise their thoughts before producing an answer. There were few excessively long answers. Generally, those who wrote too much repeated points and drifted away from the subject; this could not earn them any credit. Some candidates were unable to differentiate between Q7 (a) and Q7 (b); in the former, answers had to be based on the text and its ideas; in the latter, candidates were expected to move beyond the text to express their own views.

(a)   To gain marks candidates needed to mention Wolfville, give the arguments against the law, mentioning relevant facts from the passage.

       This section of the task is a comprehension exercise, and, it differentiated well.

> The key is to identify relevant points from the text. It is a straightforward technique to acquire and can improve performance.

(b)   The second part of the task required candidates to express their views on smoking and driving and whether one should go further than the example set in Wolfville. All candidates had something to say on this matter and this question provided good differentiation. Those who did best had planned what they wanted to say; it helped them produce structured answers, covering all necessary areas without repetition. Points of view were clearly stated and systematically developed. The best answers were morally responsible and very well thought out.

Grid C2 – Quality of language (accuracy)

Quality of language varied greatly but very inaccurate language was rare. It was very pleasing to see that many candidates were at ease using the passive, *si* clauses with correct sequence of tenses, conditional perfect, rhetorical devices, link words, personal pronouns – and of course subjunctive constructions.

Areas of grammar that seem to cause difficulty are:

- the use of the infinitive in sentences – mistakes in use were - with an article *"le fumer en conduisant...";* or within negative sentences *"ne fumer pas"* or as a present continuous *"ils sont fumer"*
- the use of the present participle: *"en conduisant"*, became *"pendant conduisant / au conduisant / lorsque conduisant / sont conduisant"*
- over the use of *"qui"* and *"ce qui"*
- possessive adjectives and personal pronouns (*ses / les / eux - sa /son /il / elle")* mixing them as if they were interchangeable
- the formation of the future and conditional -candidates frequently followed English patterns *("il serait réduire"* instead of *"il réduirait"; "la radio sera devenir interdit"* etc.).

Grid F2 – Quality of language (range)

Most candidates tried to extend the range of vocabulary and structures they used. Some had the good idea of writing a checklist of ambitious structures they were aiming to use in 7b, and had crossed them out as they went along. Others tried to include language they had prepared for this exercise but these were not relevant to the task and did not gain credit. To be rewarded with a mark in the higher band, variety and ambition should not interfere with communication. It was pleasing to note all the attempts to go beyond the linguistically obvious.

F703 French Speaking

General Comments

As far as the stimulus texts were concerned, the majority of candidates found the themes familiar and, encouragingly, seized the opportunity to develop their ideas on: Legislation against mistreatment of the elderly (Society sub-topic: age / exclusion); Change of Rwandan official language (Culture sub-topic: colonial heritage / impact on contemporary society); Wave Power (Environment sub-topic: alternative energy source); Erosion of privacy (Science and Technology sub-topic: technological developments and their impact on lifestyles); Decline of hospital services (Culture sub-topic: political / medical changes and their impact on the individual); Perceived failings in state education (Education sub-topic: local and national concerns). 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 or on the teacher/examiner's questions.

Topics were carefully chosen and well researched, with many conscientious and capable candidates absorbing an impressive amount of material with a view to justifying and exemplifying their ideas and opinions, while demonstrating an ability to respond to the teacher/examiner's line of questioning spontaneously and flexibly. However, it was clear that, in some cases, material had been rote-learned and the discrepancy in performance between Article and Topic Conversation became even greater.

Discussion of Article

Candidates were rewarded when they had the vocabulary and structures that enabled them to express their understanding and ideas with some fluency.
Teacher/examiners often used the question *De quoi s'agit-il dans ce texte*?, inviting candidates to say what the passage is about, and the candidate produced material that was the answer to one or more of the suggested questions that followed in the examiner's booklet. These questions were often asked anyway (without following the candidate's lead) so the same material was covered twice with the result that there was no time to test comprehension of a substantial section of the text. Here, as elsewhere, teacher/examiners should be aware that their performance can have a substantive effect on the overall performance of their candidates.
In the majority of cases, timings were respected; however some candidates were sometimes limited to 4 minutes, whilst others took up to 9 minutes. The recommendation is between 5 and 6 minutes. In the interests of fairness to all, examiners are instructed not to mark beyond 6 minutes.

Text A (*Le traitement des personnes âgées*)

This text was generally well understood. Sometimes candidates did not respond to the precise question asked and in such instances, teacher/examiners can and should challenge the candidate. Sometimes also candidates simply read sections of the text and did not attempt to paraphrase or to explain the content. This was particularly apparent when candidates were asked to explain the different sorts of abuse mentioned in the third paragraph, where some candidates often read the items that were readily comprehensible but omitted the two items that really did require clarification, notably *abus médicamenteux* and *escroqueries financières.* Good teacher/examiners intervened and invited them to demonstrate what they had understood by at least one of these two items and, in many cases, the intervention proved beneficial. In the broader discussion, good candidates were very forthcoming with ideas about such issues as the reasons why old people are not always respected, whether it is better for an old person to be

looked after at home or in a specialist institution, whether action such as that taken by the journalist described is entirely ethical and whether the provision for old people in today's society is entirely adequate.

Text B (*L'enseignement au Rwanda sera désormais en anglais*)

When asked what will be required of teachers in Rwanda in the light of the change announced by the Minister of Education, some candidates missed the obvious point given in the first paragraph to which they were usually directed, notably that they will have to learn English. Most were able to outline the change in relations between Rwanda and France occasioned by the accusations of the Rwandan President. Good candidates provided full details of the thinking underlying the proposed change and were able to make links between that thinking and the concrete developments outlined in the final paragraph. Areas that generated interesting ideas in the extended discussion included the reasons for the dominance of English in the world, the decline in numbers of those electing to study languages in UK schools and the importance of protecting minority languages.

Text C (*Les hydroliennes : une technologie prometteuse*)

Candidates impressed by the comprehensiveness of the details they provided about the three initiatives outlined in the text. The broader discussion was wide-ranging, encompassing issues such as the advantages and disadvantages of renewable forms of energy, the nuclear question, visual pollution, the demands on world resources posed by emerging nations and the question of whether the latter can be expected to live up to the same ecological standards as developed countries. Examiners commented on the impressive range of specialised vocabulary that many candidates were able to bring to this subject.

However, it was noted by examiners that, in a small number of centres, this text was given to candidates who had listed as one of their prepared topics either pollution or nuclear energy. Centres are reminded that candidates should NOT be given an article whose subject matter overlaps with a prepared topic.

Text D (*Nous sommes tous sous haute surveillance*)

This passage made for some good discussions. When asked what we learn in the first paragraph about *la haute surveillance,* many candidates picked up on the 730% mentioned in line 4.In the second paragraph, when asked about what we are told about the place of technology in daily life, some ignored the general points made in the first two lines and gave two or three examples from the list at the end of the paragraph. Many understood the information contained in paragraph 3, but some seemed to think that the phenomena described are already commonplace, clearly missing the *dans dix ans* and *probablement*. Finally, when asked, as many were, what the three *déclarations typiques* at the end of the text show us (*nous montrent*), some were able to evaluate, but some simply went through the examples given. The extended discussion ranged over subjects as diverse as the effectiveness of the surveillance in place, the question of human rights in our Big Brother society, crime prevention, international terrorism, identity fraud and the pros and cons of social networking sites such as Facebook.

Text E (*L'hôpital public peut-il encore nous soigner?*)

This was a popular text and was well understood by many candidates. When discussing the first paragraph some teacher/examiners wisely replaced *paradoxe* with *contradiction.* Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least reasonable comprehension of the problems

encountered by both nurses and patients. When asked about the three accusations made in the final paragraph, some candidates gave information about the cost of a day's hospitalisation, which was not really relevant and good teacher/examiners appropriately gave a nudge in the right direction. Areas covered in the general discussion included the pros and cons of private medicine, government provision for health care, hospital management, the problem of superbugs and *les 35 heures*.

Text F (*Des parents disent 'non' à l'Education nationale*)

This text was also popular, probably because teachers thought that it was on a subject that was near to both their own hearts and that of their students. The evidence of failing support for the state system given in the first paragraph was generally well understood. When it came to the differences between *l'école Saint-Jean-Bosco* and *l'Education nationale,* some candidates got things the wrong way round. The word *bénévoles* seemed to cause some difficulty. Some candidates gave very comprehensive explanations of the final paragraph, some focussed on just one of the four failings highlighted; candidates should be told that in order to access the higher marks, their answers need to provide full detail. Areas that generated some lively discussion in the extended discussion included the pros and cons of private education, the problems encountered in some inner-city schools and how to deal with them, the relative merits of the various pedagogical approaches referred to in the text, government spending on education, declining standards and parental involvement in matters educational.

Topic Conversation

The vast majority of candidates had been very diligent in researching their chosen topics.

Facts (which must relate to a French-speaking country) are important but only in so far as they enable candidates to exemplify / justify the ideas and opinions that they are seeking to develop.

Candidates who achieve high marks are able to show a personal critical reaction to the, briefly, outlined factual knowledge in terms of opinion, attitude, agreement or otherwise, and hypothesis. Candidates do not need to put together strings of dates, proper names, memorised statistics, descriptions of historical events etc.

It is important to note that some topics lend themselves more easily to demonstrating *development of ideas* than others and those that encourage a largely descriptive approach should be avoided.

Unfortunately, examiners came across a number of cases where candidates had been trained to rote-learn substantial chunks of material and many of these had clearly been rehearsed. If candidates seem fluent and their fluency is confined to pre-learnt material, then they will only have access to a maximum of 2 marks in Grid E.2, because they are unable to demonstrate true spontaneity. A spontaneous discussion on well-prepared material gains higher marks than an over-rehearsed or memorized performance.

There was a pleasingly wide range of topics and it was particularly impressive to see centres encouraging candidates to research topics individually. Whilst L'environnement / L'énergie nucléaire / L'immigration / La laïcité / La criminalité and La délinquance remain popular themes, it was refreshing to hear about L'identité nationale en France / La France est-elle vraiment républicaine dans son coeur? / La décolonisation du Vietnam / La France et le génocide rwandais / Haiti etc.

Many candidates had been well trained to produce A2 structures and complex language.

Grammar and pronunciation were generally accurate; difficulties seem to be: étai(en)t and a/ont été (particularly when using the passive)   avai(en)t and a/ont eu, il sera/il y aura, beaucoup des. Intonation was often adversely affected by pre-learning.

F704 French Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General comments

Candidates appeared to have been correctly entered for A2 French and gained some credit in all questions. Very few did not finish and time seems not to have been a problem. Rubric infringements were rare, a few candidates answered Task 1 in French and some candidates lost marks by giving two possible – and incompatible – answers to some sub-questions. Illegible handwriting was costly for a few candidates.

SECTION A

Task 1

This question discriminated well at all levels. In a few instances it was a lack of clarity in candidates' English, rather than any obvious misunderstanding of the recorded French, that prevented them from gaining marks.

a   Many correct answers, but a misconception was that Luc Besson 'didn't have access to comics in his language'.

b   A good discriminator. Only the very good candidates were able to convey the sense of the phrase *c'est avec elles que mon père me récompensait d'une bonne note*. Some candidates misunderstood the phrase *mon père en lisait beaucoup lui-même* and thought that this referred to books rather than comics, while others thought that *lui-même* meant 'to him'.

c   This question discriminated well. The key words *émeutes* and *désespoir* were not always known. In the third marking point some candidates did not realise that the phrase *l'utilisation médiatique* referred to what the media did, rather than how people used the media.

d   Most candidates homed in correctly on the phrase *un monde virtuel*, but not all showed comprehension of that section of the recording as a whole, namely that 'people live in a virtual world' or 'people are distanced from (real) life'.

e   The first marking point was accessible, but the second was less so because *leur histoire was misunderstood* as 'story-telling' rather than the correct 'telling your (personal) story'.

Task 2

Candidates' performance in this task was often consistent with their performance in the paper as a whole. Very good candidates answered the questions successfully without lifting whole sentences from the recording.

a   Well answered.

b   Most candidates gained at least one of the two marks available. Some candidates misspelt *droit* as *doit* or *doigt*, for which no credit could be given.

c   Generally well answered, although not all candidates understood *l'affirmation*.

d   Many candidates gave a correct answer. Some candidates wrote *surpression*, while others used an invented verb *supresser*, in both these instances no mark was awarded.

e i   The first marking point was generally gained, but for the second candidates need to show comprehension of the sentence *Si cela avait été le cas, les gouvernements … auraient ensuite rétabli la peine de mort.*

e ii   A good discriminator. Only some were able to convey the distinction between the suspension of the death penalty and its eventual abolition. A recognisable past tense was required.

f   A very effective discriminator. Some candidates managed to convey six out of the seven possible points and others only 1 or 2. One particular difficulty seemed to be understanding the distinction between the three groups of people – jury, lawyers and accused, some gave answers such as *si les gens sont sympathiques* for which no credit could be given.

g   A good discriminator, particularly the second marking point as only very good candidates realised the significance of *l'enlèvement d'un petit garçon*, ie they were not reporting on Ranucci but on a different case.

h i   Generally well answered. A few candidates thought wrongly that the people concerned had already been killed, perhaps because they did not understand the phrase *dans les couloirs de la mort.*

h ii   A good discriminator. The numeral *122* was sometimes given wrongly as *120 (de)*. A few candidates did not get credit because they wrote a longer answer, which included a factual error, such as *en cinq ans* instead of *en quinze ans.*

Language, Section A

The quality of candidates' written French varied widely. Sometimes candidates had difficulty with verb formation such as *suspendé* and *n'augmenté pas.* The 5 marks available for quality of language in this question are equally important as the 5 marks available for quality of language in the reading section.

SECTION B

Task 3

Many candidates were able to get full marks in this task. Items (a) and (b) seemed to be difficult for some candidates.

Task 4

Marks for content tended to be high in this task, marks for linguistic accuracy were variable.

a   Many candidates used a correct form of *devoir* or *avoir besoin de.* The answer *aurons* (without *besoin*) was rejected because it did not reflect the overall sense of the text.

b   Generally well answered, but no credit was given for invented words such as *benefiter*.

c   Well answered.

d   This sentence looked at the issue from the viewpoint of the medical profession and required an appropriate verb for the first gap such as *choisira*. The intended answer for the second gap was *dépendre*, but credit was given for answers, which conveyed the meaning even if they did not fit the grammatical context, eg *correspondre*. An answer such as *personnaliser*, which would only have made sense in the passive form, was not accepted.

e   Well answered.

f   Most candidates gave a recognisable form of the verb *être* or *devenir* and got the mark for this item. Grammatically correct answers here were often indicative of performance in quality of language for Section B as a whole.

Task 5

This task discriminated well. Some candidates did not get credit because they manipulated a verb, eg *confronter* in part (c), instead of copying its exact form from the stimulus text as directed by the rubric.

Task 6

This was a challenging text and there were questions that required inference as well as detailed comprehension. It was an effective discriminator and some candidates managed to get full, or nearly full, marks. It was pleasing to see many candidates following the rubric *utilisez vos propres mots autant que possible* without taking it to extremes. It was, for example, perfectly acceptable for candidates to use short phrases such as *maladies infectieuses* from the text rather than attempt an explanation of the word *infectieuses*.

a i   The addition of *à la prevention* to answers such as *la prescription de médicaments* only made sense if combined with the verb *préférer*.

a ii   This question focused on patients rather than medical conditions, so answers such as *les maladies infectieuses* could not be rewarded. That said, many candidates got the mark.

b i   Good candidates realised that *le diabète* was not enough in itself and gave the correct answer *les maladies chroniques* or *les maladies dont on ne guérit pas*.

b ii   Many candidates conveyed the idea of an ageing population. Some did not respond to the *pourquoi* part of the question.

c i   This was a difficult item, as – even though the word *cotisations* was glossed –some candidates were unfamiliar with the concept of contributions to social security. Nevertheless, a good number of correct answers were seen, conveying the key idea of contributions and expenditure changing in proportion to each other.

c ii   Again, this item proved to be a good discriminator. The third marking point, referring to the large increase in expenditure by 2040, was more accessible than the other two. An important element of the answer was the voters' unwillingness to pay larger contributions. Some candidates had difficulty with conjunctions and some who attempted to express *doubler* in percentage terms sometimes gave the wrong figure.

d   Some good responses here, but a few candidates homed in on the wrong ideas, eg they referred to general medicine.

Task 7

This transfer of meaning task proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few getting less than half marks. Although it is not a formal translation exercise, it is important for candidates to convey all relevant details and those who paraphrase run the risk of omitting significant points. Unfortunately a few candidates translated the whole of the first paragraph but this did not affect the marks that they were awarded. Some candidates lost marks because of grammatical or spelling errors in their English.

The items that caused difficulty were:
- *sondage*
- *bien sûr* – surprisingly this phrase was not universally understood
- the over-literal translation of *à 92%* as 'at 92%'
- *concrètement* – candidates seemed to understand the word but an acceptable English term seemed to be difficult to find
- *sauver la planète* – a number of candidates drifted too far from the original in giving answers such as 'to protect the environment'
- *assurés* –mis-translated as 'assuring'.

Most candidates coped well with the different verb tenses, including the conditional perfect.

Task 8

This question discriminated effectively. In general, briefer answers were more successful; those who wrote longer explanations tended to introduce unnecessary material and confuse the issue. OCR apologises that the phrases were not underlined in the stimulus text as they should have been. Examiners made allowances for this by crediting responses that showed comprehension of the target phrase but did not take full account of the context.

a   It was pleasing to see some correct explanations including the adjective *important*.

b   The emphasis here was on buying rather than using, which only a few candidates managed to convey.

c   It was acceptable here to refer either to age or to the idea of 'no longer working'. Many candidates got the mark. Some candidates did not realise that *retraité(s)* denotes a person.

d   The verb *trier* seemed to be unfamiliar. Nevertheless, there were some good explanations, often using the verb *séparer* and perhaps referring to *différentes poubelles*.

e   Well answered, even by those who may have found this task difficult as a whole. Examiners accepted both *Il n' y a pas* and *Il n' y a pas assez*.

Task 9

This question proved to be accessible, with a good number of candidates achieving full marks.

a   Generally well answered, the essential idea was necessity.

b   Some candidates often gave a very concise answer here, such as *ils sont paresseux*. Some candidates misunderstood the text and thought that car-sharing and organic produce were popular options for everyone.

c   Very well answered, and almost always in the candidate's own words.

d   Examiners accepted a range of different French words that might convey the idea of 'pupils'. Most answers merited at least one out of the two available marks. A key point was that the *éco-délégués* were elected by their classmates. No credit could be given for the invented verb *électer*. A recognisable passive was required - *Ils ont élu* was not accepted. In the second part of the sub-question, it was important to specify that the initiative was operating at school level.

e   This was an effective discriminator. Only a few candidates managed to convey adequately the idea of the head teacher's reluctance.

Task 10

This task tested global as well as detailed comprehension of the stimulus text and discriminated well.

a   Some candidates were unable to fill the first gap but wrote a recognisable form of the word *Européens* in the second gap.

b   Those who really understood the text thoroughly got both marks here. A wide variety of answers was accepted, including *persuadent* and *enseignent* for the first gap and *respectueux* and *concernés* for the second.

c   The key here was to realise that *à l'échelle du pays* referred to the whole of France rather than in other countries.

Language, Section B

In awarding the quality of language mark for Section B, examiners were looking for the accurate use of simple sentence structures including adjectival agreements and common verb endings, as well as the extent to which candidates used complex structures that were not lifted directly from the stimulus texts. Perfection was not expected even for a mark of 5.The best way to impress was not to use obscure imperfect subjunctives, but to use a variety of French structures and vocabulary in a natural way, perhaps using *ceux qui…* in Task 6(a)(ii) or *il (leur) a fallu…* in Task 9(e).

SECTION C

The quality of candidates' responses varied widely. While it was possible to get maximum marks in 250 words, many candidates chose to write at a greater length, not necessarily to their advantage as they sometimes lost focus and included irrelevant material. The discursive titles were more popular than the imaginative titles, but similar levels of attainment were reached for the two types of question.

Relevance and points of view

It was pleasing to see essays with specific references to French-speaking society. However, sometimes such references were too vague despite the clear guidance in the OCR specification that 'preparation for [Section C] should include extensive study of authentic materials on the sub-topics studied'.

When candidates wrote relevant essays, it was clear that they had:

- adapted their knowledge to the question set

- spent a few minutes planning how to incorporate their factual knowledge into their response whichever title they chose
- wrote a suitable introductory paragraph and included specific references to the title at suitable points in the response
- drew on relevant information from Sections A and B of the paper by appropriately applying it to the question set.

Structure and analysis

Features of a well-structured, evaluative essay were:

- an introductory paragraph of some kind linked closely to the title
- writing divided into coherent sections
- logical sequences of ideas within a paragraph
- analysis and evaluation rather than narration
- an impressively concise and punchy conclusion

Quality of language (accuracy and range)

The quality of candidates' French in Section C varied widely. It was often better in Section C than in Sections A and B, reflecting the fact that here they had greater control over what they wrote. Some candidates made appropriate use of set phrases such as *il serait naïf de croire* … and *on ne peut pas nier* … , while others used such phrases more or less randomly. A few candidates made excessive use of the subjunctive, even to the extent of combining *il faut que* with the verb *devoir*, ie *il faut qu'on doive* … . Examiners do not have a checklist of structures for Section C but are likely to be impressed by features such as the correct use of a range of verb tenses, verb constructions with *à* and *de*, and the correct use of *celui*, *laquelle*, *dont*, etc. Many candidates used the passive correctly. A useful guideline in awarding a high mark for range of language is 'idiom not idioms', ie the French should read naturally rather than relying on set phrases.

Question 11

This question was a popular choice. Candidates listed the negative effects of unemployment, not only for the individual – lack of money, possible homelessness, possible impact on family problems, lack of self-respect, depression, drugs, crime and so on – but also for society in terms of lower tax revenues and the effects of an increase in crime. Some candidates accepted the premise of the question and mentioned points such as people spending more time with their family, people investing time in their education, and people being motivated to help each other, such as the *Restos du Cœur* initiative. It was acceptable to argue against the premise of the question and to acknowledge that there might be, in the eyes of some people, some benefits. In this question the good candidates were able to base their ideas on facts and figures relating to French-speaking society.

Question 12

This question was tackled by a good number of candidates, who were able to put themselves in the shoes of someone belonging to an ethnic minority and respond to the task in a convincing and imaginative way. Many candidates rooted their answer firmly in French-speaking culture, referring perhaps to the history of immigration in France, to the principle of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, and to the recent controversy over *le port du voile*. Some candidates went on to explain why tolerance is so important, perhaps mentioning the benefits to both sides of sharing

cultural diversity, whereas others only stated that tolerance was important with little reasoning or evaluation. Some good responses were presented as discursive essays and lacked the kind of persuasive language that was appropriate to this particular task.

Question 13

This question was the most popular choice in Section C, presumably because the topic of energy sources was one that many candidates had studied. There were some good responses and candidates were able to use topic-specific vocabulary and include factual evidence from the French-speaking world.

However, some candidates did not answer the question set. They wrote mainly about the need to reduce emissions from power stations, or focused on the positive and negative aspects of nuclear power. References to nuclear energy were accepted, but clearly its status as renewable is dubious and this needed to be acknowledged before discussing its characteristics. Good responses included references to those energy sources usually regarded as renewable such as wind, sun and tides. Many produced evidence from France such as the fact that the sun doesn't shine much in the north and that people in certain parts of the country have objected to wind turbines on aesthetic grounds. Another valid approach to the task was to suggest that it is really our 'needs' that must change, ie that instead of maintaining or increasing our energy production to match demand we should concentrate on adapting our lifestyle to reduce our energy usage.

Question 14

The key to a good response to this question was to relate the letter to the specific effects of pollution in a French town. Mention could be made of initiatives such as *Vélib'*, car-sharing, specific recycling schemes and so on, perhaps pointing out to the recipient of the letter that such initiatives were already in place elsewhere and ought to be in the chosen town also. There instances of good persuasive language with one or more *si* clauses.

Question 15

This question required specific knowledge. Those who wrote in general terms about European or UK education sometimes got good marks for structure and analysis but not for relevance and points of view. The focus usually adopted, and sensibly so, was the role of information technology in teaching and learning. Candidates usually pointed out that the benefits for pupils and teachers are very closely linked, eg interactive whiteboards are a tool for use by the teacher that bring benefits to pupils' learning.

Question 16

Candidates who chose this question usually found a good example of a scientific advancement relating to France, such as the facial transplants carried out by Professor Lantieri. Some candidates wrote about scientific advancements in general, rather than concentrating on one advancement as was required by the question.

Question 17

Among the issues raised and evaluated were the government's response to the current economic crisis, the 35-hour week and its consequences, and measures to control immigration. Sometimes candidates did not make sufficient reference to French politics (or the politics of

another French-speaking country) and therefore did not get a high mark for relevance and points of view.

Question 18

Candidates who answered this question usually did so with confidence and produced an excellent account of the changing relationship between France and one of its former colonies. Issues of language and religion often featured prominently, as did the more subtle matter of national identity.

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