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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

FRENCH

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8682/01

Speaking

General comments

There is yet again a pleasing increase in the number of Centres following the A and AS French syllabus.

The majority of Centres have selected their sample candidates well and included the correct paperwork, though it is always advisable to check the addition and transcription of marks, as every year there are a number of clerical errors to be corrected. A few Centres have failed to enclose the Moderator's copy of the MS1, or a copy of the Working Mark Sheet and in these cases it is difficult for Moderators to offer specific advice on assessment, as only the most general comments can be made on the marking pitch. It is helpful to Moderators if Examiners fill in a mark in each column of the WMS, rather than a global total for each section.

The quality of recording has generally been good, with candidates at only one or two Centres being difficult to hear clearly. Centres should remember to check the position of microphones before recording, and the final quality of the tape, before despatching it with all the required paperwork.

Comments on specific parts

Presentation

This is intended to last between 3 and 3½ minutes, uninterrupted by the Teacher/Examiner.

The presentations provided a varied and interesting range of topics, showing the diversity of candidates' interests.

Most candidates had researched and prepared a topic and were able to speak about it for the required time, though a minority of candidates misunderstood what was required, gave a list of 'headings' and spent the topic conversation section dealing with each in turn – the topic conversation is intended to be based on, and lead on from, the material presented in the candidate's sustained speech, and should be a conversation/discussion, with contributions from both candidate and Teacher/Examiner.

In a number of cases, candidates failed to make any reference to France or francophone culture or heritage. They should be warned that if they fail to do this, their mark for content/presentation will be *halved*.

Some candidates had over-rehearsed not only their presentation, but the whole examination, which leads to a lack of spontaneity and difficulties in assessment: where there are no unexpected questions, it is impossible to assess the true level of comprehension and responsiveness.

Topic conversation

This section is intended to last 7 – 8 minutes.

It was noticeable once again that very factual presentations often prove difficult to develop to a level appropriate to A/AS Level. Candidates need to consider the ways in which a topic might develop: for example, '*Football*' could be an uninspired plod through positions of play and rules, with a passing mention of one or two French players to pay lip service to the requirements of the syllabus. On the other hand, the candidate could touch on much wider issues, dealing with problems of violence and racism on the field, parallels with crowd behaviour, international sport and feelings of nationalism, overseas players in European leagues, fees and salaries and their appropriateness in the light of the world's financial problems. The latter version would give plenty of points for the Teacher/Examiner to take up, and should give rise to interesting discussion.

Where candidates do not ask questions naturally in the course of conversation, the Teacher/Examiner should prompt them to do so, both in this section and towards the end of the general conversation section.

General conversation

This section should last 8 – 9 minutes.

The section may begin with questions about the candidate's family, etc, but must move quickly away from questions more appropriate to IGCSE/O Level in order to allow the candidate to express ideas and opinions on any matters of current interest, from politics to sport, from religion to the environment.

The Teacher/Examiner should not necessarily be concerned with following his/her own agenda and extracting a "correct" answer from a candidate, but should rather aim to encourage the candidate to express him/herself. The responses of the Teacher/Examiner might need to be restricted in order to allow the candidate ample opportunity to express and develop ideas.

Once again, the Teacher/Examiner must remember to prompt for questions where none have been asked during the conversation. There is no penalty applied if candidates are prompted, but where no questions have been asked, no marks can be awarded for this element of the examination. Candidates should be reminded beforehand that there are 10 marks available for questions, and that they must be prepared to ask questions of the Examiner, preferably related to the topic under discussion.

Conclusion

Candidates have generally been well-prepared for the examination, and many have shown themselves capable of holding mature and interesting conversations on a range of topics.

<p>Paper 8682/02 Reading and Writing</p>
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General comments

There was a wide range of performance on this Paper. At the higher end, candidates responded well to questions and wrote fluently and accurately. But there were numbers of candidates for whom the Paper was just too difficult and where the quality of comprehension and written French was just not up to the standards of this exam. It is important for Teachers who prepare candidates for this Paper to know the approach of Examiners when assessing questions on this Paper. Although more specific comments are made later, it is worth repeating some points of a general nature.

With regards to **Questions 3** and **4**, where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time repeating the question as part of their answer. No marks can be gained in this way, and a good deal of time is lost.

Candidates should not copy extended sections verbatim from the texts as answers to these questions. The rubric asks candidates to answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. Although candidates may use material from the passage in their answers, they are required to answer in a way that demonstrates understanding of the text. Copying wholesale from the text does not show such comprehension. Therefore, the candidate must demonstrate:

- Either some ability to manipulate the linguistic material of the text. Even quite small changes will usually show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language;
- Or some explanation, by adding to or extending the quoted material.

Other questions may be asked by Teachers preparing candidates for the exam:

How is copying from the text penalised?

Examiners are, of course, concerned with a positive marking system and not looking for penalties. If an answer consists of an extended quotation with no indication of understanding as explained above, the marks may not be awarded.

What about irrelevant material?

It is, of course an old technique of exam candidates that they practice 'carpet-bombing', i.e. provide you with a complete paragraph from which the Examiner may hope to extract the point required for the answer. It is very likely that such an unselective answer will fail because of copying from the text. It is probably always the case that a candidate who follows this technique has not understood the specificity of the question or the relevance of the text and therefore is not demonstrating understanding.

What about the link between 'content' and 'quality of language'?

Quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers to questions. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If a candidate scored 0 for all content, it would be impossible to give any mark for language (if this were not true, any irrelevant or faulty set of answers could be rewarded). Therefore, if individual questions score 0 for content, the final mark for language should be adjusted accordingly. The mark scheme gives more details of the way in which the balance of credit for languages and content is achieved.

With regard to **Question 5**, candidates lose marks if they write a general essay rather than a summary of specific points in the original passage.

It is important that candidates observe the word limit for only limited latitude is allowed beyond that figure to complete a sentence. Candidates will not be awarded content marks if they make the points after 140 words. No introduction to the task is necessary. More will be said about this later in this report.

The same 5-point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4 and 5**. This means that candidates must maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the Paper if they are to score high marks overall. The categories for Quality of Language are as follows:

- 5** Very Good. Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order).
- 4** Good. Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures.
- 3** Sound. Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions.
- 2** Below average. Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions often incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives.
- 0-1** Poor. Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates had little problem relating the words given from the text to one of the definitions proposed. Plurals of the correct answers were tolerated. Some candidates found great difficulty with "*balise*" and there were some wild guesses for other items.

Question 2

Many candidates found the restructuring of the sentences difficult, even when their performance on the rest of the Paper was good. This type of task is a severe test of grammatical knowledge and often candidates omitted significant parts of the restructured sentence. **(d)** and **(e)** were the most difficult to handle.

- (a)** This was the most accessible. Candidates showed that they were able to use an infinitive after *avant de* and to restructure the sentence: “*Avant de s’attaquer au côté juridique des forêts, les stagiaires travaillent avec des spécialistes de l’Office national de la chasse*”.
- (b)** This was well answered.
- (c)** Candidates often missed out the infinitive “*aborder*” in reformulating the sentence.
- (d)** This required the use of the passive and though many were able to construct the verb form, they failed to find the correct agreements.
- (e)** Candidates were required to demonstrate their knowledge of the subjunctive after *on craint que* and few candidates were able to manage this.

Question 3

Candidates should be reminded that the rubric means what it says. Those who copy “*des phrases entières du texte*” are not demonstrating comprehension and cannot be given full marks. Candidates must seek to manipulate the language in some way even by making small changes or explaining the sense of the phrase using different vocabulary and structure. **(b)** and **(d)** were factual and required the candidate to find information from the text. There was a lot of copying in this question but the better candidates were able to manipulate the language and vocabulary.

- (a)** This illustrates the way in which small changes will suffice. The answer to “*Qu’est-ce qu’il a en commun avec ses collègues*” was “*il porte toujours képi et chemise bleu-ciel*” in the text. The candidate who copied this scored no marks but if it was rendered “*il s’habille en képi et en chemise bleu-ciel*” 1 mark was awarded.

The remaining two marks for differences related to his thinking and to his work in the environment. If candidates contrasted his work in protecting the environment and the more usual role of the police, then two marks were given.
- (b)** Many good alternatives for “*perfectionner les connaissances*” were found “*approfondir*” and “*améliorer*” being two.
- (c)** This was misunderstood by a number of candidates. What was required was an explanation of each of the three phrases and not as many candidates thought an essay about the policeman putting theory into practice. It was important that some explanation of “*étude*” was included to set the context for defining the terms.
- (e)** This required an example of “*délinquance écologique*” as well as an explanation of the phrase.

Section 2

Question 4

Candidates need to find ways of conveying information without copying whole sentences from the text. Explanations should be in the candidates’ own words. Despite this the questions were generally well answered and many excellent answers were given showing a deep level of understanding.

- (a)** Candidates realised that they needed to make the link between development and destruction of the environment but often failed to identify the need to find a solution.
- (b)** This was quite well answered though some candidates thought that “*mortelle*” meant deadly rather than dying. Only the best candidates were able to see that industrialisation was the cause.
- (c)** This was again well answered but many candidates had difficulty finding alternatives for “*dicter*” and “*un développement propre*”.

- (d) This proved to be more difficult because of the need for conditional sentences and misconceptions such as the North was not bothered about climatic changes. Most candidates, however, concentrated on the correct information and scored well.
- (e) This was well answered. Most candidates scored two marks and the best managed all four points though only three marks were available.

Question 5

It is important that candidates stick to the word limit in this question. Part of the exercise is to get the candidate to focus on a summary of the main issues. It would be unfair to candidates who do find ways of summarising succinctly, if lengthy essays in excess of 200 words were given full marks. Similarly, if candidates write significantly less than 140 words, they cannot be expected to be awarded the full language mark. No introduction to the answer is required and, given the amount of information to be summarised, they should not waste words on general reflections.

It is vital to recognise the importance of the rubric defining the task. There are two clear questions to answer: 1. A summary of the two texts and 2. a personal response to the subject. 140 words is the aim for the two sections and only limited latitude is allowed beyond that figure - the completion of the sentence. Clearly candidates should consider writing a summary consisting of 90/100 words which can gain 10 content marks and a personal response of 40/50 words which can gain 5 marks.

There were two clear areas indicated for the summary; *les différentes priorités*: 1. *pour un pays développé...* and 2. *pour les pays pauvres du Sud*. The mark scheme is constructed to take account of this dual task. The question also states "*telles que vous les trouvez dans ces deux textes*" so candidates can only gain marks by making reference to specific details in the passages which are concerned with these issues. No marks can be gained by writing a general essay. The remaining 5 marks for content require candidates to write a brief personal response to the topic, which is marked as a mini-essay, taking account of ideas, personal point of view and interest of the response. To be able to score 5 marks for the personal response, candidates must have enough words left. Language is marked on a global assessment out of 5 (see the language grid earlier in this report). The detailed mark scheme gives more information about the ways in which Examiners reward achievement on this question and on the Paper as a whole.

Paper 8682/03

Essay

General comments

Candidates were given a choice of six titles. Essays were marked out of 40, with 24 marks being given for Language and 16 for Content. The best candidates demonstrated excellent grammatical awareness, confident use of idioms and the ability to handle complex syntax, together with a capacity to marshal arguments clearly and succinctly and to provide cogent, well chosen supporting evidence and examples. At the bottom end of the scale, the work submitted was characterised by an almost complete lack of grammatical awareness and content that was, at best, sketchy and unspecific and, at worst, more or less totally devoid of structure and coherence. A certain proportion of candidates were clearly heavily reliant on prepared general essays based on the prescribed topic areas and made little attempt to target the question set. There was also a certain incidence of scripts that were marred by seemingly careless errors and even, in some cases, by the inability to reproduce correctly vocabulary used in the essay title.

Common linguistic problems encountered included:-

- confusion between single and double letters in the spelling of such words as *bagarrer*, *bagage*, *incontrôlable*, *ressources*, *inné*, *ennemi*, *décennie*, *cloné*, *criminel*, *dommage*,
- repeated misspellings, e.g. *le reigne*, *dangeureux*, *malgrés*, *vraiment*, *l'impacte*, *la monté*, *le stresse*,
- repeated accent errors, e.g. *dûr*, *clônage*, *blâmer*,
- misuse of capitals when using adjectives of nationality,

- confusion between homonyms, e.g. *ces/ses, leur/leurs, on/ont, ce qui/ceux qui*,
- lack of awareness of correct forms, e.g. *car même* for *quand même*, *quelque part* for *quelquefois*, *autant bien* for *aussi bien*, *le bon et le mauvais* for *le bien et le mal*, *tel comme* for *tel que*,
- mixed constructions, e.g. *cela est dû car*, *la cause est parce que*, *dans l'esprit d'un jeune il sait*,
- anglicisms, e.g. *scientistes, définitivement*(definitely), *failli*(failed),
- the omission of *ne* in negative constructions and with *ne...que*,
- indiscriminate use of *on/se* and *nous*, often within the same sentence,
- inability to conjugate irregular verbs, e.g. *résoudre, acquérir, régner*,
- redundant use of the pronouns *y* and *en*, e.g. *un monde où y règne la joie, il y en a beaucoup de gens, le monde s'en rend compte que*,
- use of *des* rather than *de* after a negative,
- use of hanging participles, i.e. *en* + present participle not linked to the rest of the sentence
- confusion in the use of verb forms after pronoun objects, e.g. *le danger ne nous quitterons pas*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This proved to be the least popular question. Of those who attempted it, few demonstrated knowledge of countries other than Mauritius, and many chose examples that were more than a little superficial, e.g. the popularity of specific French television programmes such as *Questions pour un champion*, and failed to consider French influence in the political, socio-economic and intellectual spheres. Some candidates limited their essays to a discussion of how English has almost superseded French in Mauritius and how it enjoys a much higher social status.

Question 2

This was a popular question. However, candidates who chose it had not always understood the title. A sizeable proportion failed to make the distinction between *apprendre* and *penser*, and there was a tendency to equate *oblige* with *l'éducation obligatoire*, which resulted in discussions as to whether education should be compulsory. Many candidates complained of an over-competitive system of education, bemoaning its unrelenting pressure on students. The same quotation from Aristotle appeared in one form or another (and from time to time peculiarly truncated) in many answers. Unfortunately, it sometimes misled candidates into devoting the greater part of their essays to a discussion of the advantages of being properly educated in the modern world. The better candidates did not limit themselves to purely academic education: they took a broader view of education as an on-going process that extends far beyond the confines of the classroom. They tended to come to the conclusion that learning is not possible without understanding and that the ability to think is hardwired into our brains but needs to be 'fed' by sound inputs in terms of knowledge, morality and social know-how.

Question 3

A sizeable minority of candidates who chose this question ignored or misinterpreted the adjective *dangereuses*, which led them to write essays on the pros and cons of such technological developments as the motor car, television, mobile phones and even microwave ovens. Others looked at technological research that might be dangerous only to the research workers involved. There were however, many well-balanced essays that encompassed a good range of aspects of the topic ranging from nuclear power and chemical and biological weapons to research into GM food and the moral issues raised by cloning and other aspects of genetic engineering. The better answers looked at both the advantages and the disadvantages involved, demonstrating that many potentially dangerous technologies do benefit mankind overall. The consensus was that research itself should not be stopped but that there should be much stricter control over the use of its findings and much stricter safeguards to prevent such technology from falling into the hands of malefactors such as terrorists.

From the linguistic point of view, a lot of candidates did not know how to use *empêcher* correctly, which resulted in many sentences of the sort *On doit empêcher la technologie*.

Question 4

This was another very popular question. A notable feature of the work submitted was the high proportion of very generalised essays on the evils and suffering caused by war which failed to target the title set and which one felt would have been written whatever the question had been. The better essays did focus on the features of politics and human nature that make it inevitable that there will always be a war somewhere in the world, albeit justifiably when people are fighting against despotism or for their human rights. A certain number of more optimistic candidates asserted that if we decided to love one another and become less selfish, we would eventually learn to resolve our differences of opinion by negotiation rather than war, as we have already put into place international bodies like the UN with a mission to prevent war if at all possible. Another prominent feature of many of the essays was frequently quite wide-ranging reference to historical and current events. However, there was something of a tendency to distort the facts, witness such items as *“les Japonais furieux de l’attaque nucléaire d’Hiroshima et de Nagasaki ont riposté en bombardant Pearl Harbour”* or *“La revanche de Pearl Harbour a entraîné la seconde guerre mondiale”* or *“Pendant la guerre d’Hiroshima, les armes bactériologiques ont été utilisées”* or *“le conflit entre Israël et le Pakistan”*.

Question 5

The closeness of this question to many candidates’ hearts made this another popular choice. There were very few irrelevant essays but some writers got rather carried away by their own rhetoric and digressed at length about the lack of understanding shown by the older generations to young adults. Moreover, one often had a rather depressing picture of a generation who feel that merely because most young people have access to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, pornography, under-age sex and the like, that alone qualifies them to consider themselves as adults. This rather pessimistic, not to say superficial view was, fortunately, counterbalanced by essays which turned their attention to such concepts as taking responsibilities, making moral choices and going out to work before the age of eighteen to help with family finances. Candidates who cast their net more widely examined the plight of young people in Third World countries or in countries at war, for example, who are forced into another concept of adulthood by circumstances beyond their control. Some linguistic confusion in the minds of some candidates who elected to write about this topic resulted in such statements as *“L’âge de dix-huit ans est le passage de l’adolescence à l’adultère”*, *“les jeunes ont la maturité et ça c’est l’adultère”* and *“des jeunes sont poussés par leurs pulsions à commettre l’adultère avant d’atteindre l’âge convenable”*.

Question 6

Many answers to this question were rather pedestrian in content, typically consisting of an outline of the need to get away from the stress of a long working week, a review of a few popular forms of leisure activity and a conclusion to the effect that people would work better. Relatively few candidates explained clearly what they meant by “better” and how the positive spin-offs would translate into an improvement in the performance at work.