

# **Report on the Units**

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**June 2008**

**3861/7861/MS/R/08**

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

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## 2651 French Speaking

### Introduction

There were, as in previous years, some very good performances in this summer's examination. Many candidates coped well with the role-plays, which proved to be of equal difficulty. They were able to convey information clearly and to express their ideas at length. Candidates who were less successful had some problems with vocabulary and were not always able to express themselves clearly. Some of them had not prepared the role-play task well. In the topic section there were some interesting discussions. The most successful candidates in this area conveyed a good amount of information, which they were then able to use creatively to express their ideas and opinions. It was pleasing to hear candidates discussing topics in which they had a personal interest.

### 1. Role-plays

#### Response to Written Text

##### Task A

Many candidates performed well on this task and were able to convey most of the information clearly. The points which caused the most difficulty were 'restored', 'engine' and 'stewards'. Some candidates were not able to explain that the stewards (or staff) 'see to your comfort and answer questions'. Many candidates were a little confused over the timetable, but were credited with a point if they expressed the times correctly. In this and the other tasks, some candidates are still giving telephone numbers in single figures rather than in the French way with pairs of digits. Some candidates did not say where the train goes to and from.

##### Task B

This task was well handled by many candidates. Some had difficulty in expressing 'old-fashioned image' and 'full and part-time'. 'Benefits' also frequently caused problems. Candidates who chose to explain that you could obtain an application form and send it by post in some cases used 'forme' for *formulaire* or *fiche* and also *application* for *candidature*. Nevertheless there were many good performances on this task and it was encouraging to hear candidates using *formation* correctly.

##### Task C

This task was also well done by many candidates, who were able to convey clearly the points about the advantages of cycling to work, the health benefits and the quiet roads in town. Some candidates became confused between the point about cycling saving money and the £2 million for improving the cycling facilities. Some candidates did not know *la gare* or *la bibliothèque*, rendered in a number of cases by *station de trains* and *librairie* respectively. The pronunciation of *gare* as *guerre* caused confusion at times. Some candidates had difficulty in expressing points 4 and 5 about being able to change clothes and shower at work and the need to wear comfortable clothes for cycling 'in all weathers'.

2.

**Task D**

Most candidates found this task accessible and there were many good performances. A surprising number of candidates did not mention the fridge in the accommodation equipment and some found difficulty in expressing 'indoor and outdoor' swimming pools. Sometimes candidates did not explain clearly the departure point for the boat trip as the central promenade. *La promenade* was accepted instead of *l'esplanade*.

**Task E**

Most candidates were able to convey clearly the information about the items in the museum, the things available in the shop, the opening times and prices and the telephone number. The first point about the history of Sandringham was also successfully covered by many candidates. The items of vocabulary which caused the most problems were 'figures', 'weapons', 'snacks' and 'plants'. Many candidates did not say that the restaurant was 'self-service'.

The fourth point about 'objects from the reign of William IV' tended to be omitted unless specifically targeted by a question.

**Task F**

Although dimensions have appeared in role-plays over the past few years, many candidates still do not know how to express them correctly, frequently using *par* for *sur*. Most candidates handled this task well and were able to convey the information without too much difficulty. Some candidates had problems in expressing 'clear picture' and 'no eye problems', but many of them coped admirably with these concepts.

In all the tasks, numbers caused fewer problems than in previous examinations, although numbers in the seventies and nineties still trip some candidates up.

**Response to Examiner**

Some candidates introduced the two preliminary questions with *Je voudrais savoir, Pourriez-vous me dire?* and in one case *Serait-il impoli de vous demander?* all of which are to be commended. Many candidates were able to ask these questions correctly, but in some cases there were errors, for example:

**Task A.** *vous faites, vous préféreriez* for *préféreriez* and confusion between *quel* and *qu'est-ce que*.

**Task B.** Failure to change the possessive adjective from *son* to *votre* to suit the question. The incorrect pronunciation of *fil*s (s not sounded) caused confusion between *fil*s and *fil*le.

**Task C.** As in Task A, *vous faites* and confusion between *quel* and *qu'est-ce que*. *Vous possède* was not an infrequent error.

**Task D.** The most frequent errors in the preliminary questions for this task were *votres vacances, vous préfère* and *préfère-vous*.

**Task E.** *vous fait*.

**Task F.** *votres enfants, enfants préférer*.

3.

After asking the two preliminary questions, most candidates introduced the text clearly. Some candidates, after saying that they had a leaflet, did not mention the name of the place or business, for example, in not referring to Little Chef in Task B or to Sandringham in Task E. In Task F, candidates did not always state that they were going to talk about a television. Further prompting from the examiner usually clarified this introduction.

Many candidates conveyed the necessary information fully and clearly and in some cases were able to extend their answers to the questions on the text, thus making the task into a real dialogue, rather than simply a question and answer exercise.

It was most encouraging to hear candidates' reaction to the extension questions. There were good answers in Task A on the advantages and disadvantages of travelling by train, in Task B on the advantages of work experience, in Task C about the responsibilities of cyclists, in Task D on the question of independence when on holiday with parents, in Task E on the arguments for and against a royal family and in Task F about how to entertain children during a long journey. In Task F, when asked to give their views about the advantages and disadvantages of television, candidates sometimes repeated material about the portable TV, rather than presenting an argument about television in general.

### Language

The accuracy of candidates' language varied considerably in all the role-play tasks. Errors included:

*vous s'intéressez*  
*peut utilise*  
*écouter à*  
*préfère-il*  
*cherchent pour*  
*vous besoin*  
*personnes qui fait*  
*gens qui est*  
*aime fait*  
*pour fait*  
*il y a for c'est and vice versa*  
*vous peut*  
*peut améliore*  
*sont aider*  
*il partit*  
*les trains départ*  
*a resté*  
*millions livres*  
*beaucoup des*  
*en, dans le Aylesbury*  
*les vêtements est*  
*téléphoner le numéro*

4.

nombre for numéro

l'enfants, l'adultes

de le, de les

à le, à les

à dimanche

à 8 heures de 20 heures

ça améliorer

vite for rapide

qui for que

gagner d'argent

dépend sur

dans Aylesbury gare

trop or plus for beaucoup

différent que

à 1870

votres yeux

Incorrect genders of words such as *mer, natation, promenade, bateau, vie, chose, télévision, salaire, qualité, numéro, gamme, santé, réduction, réservation, plupart, rue, culture, campagne, ville, voiture, chaîne, façon, visite, maison, image, histoire, brochure, nourriture.*

Anglicised vocabulary, for example, *industrial, natural, place for endroit, salary, magnificent, figures, area, range, improver, provider, construité, promoter, resort, abilité, les royals, chain, success, application, enjoyable. convénient, expérierer.*

### Examining

The role-plays were correctly conducted by most teacher-examiners and the time limit was usually observed. Some examiners did not give the candidates the opportunity to cover the key points, by failing to ask for clarification of points which were unclear or by not asking sufficient questions. For example, where a telephone number was incorrect, some candidates were not given a second chance to express it correctly (*Pourriez-vous répéter le numéro? Je ne l'ai pas bien compris*). However, if the second attempt is unsuccessful, examiners should not attempt to drag the information out as the time limit may well be exceeded. Sometimes examiners gave information or vocabulary which the candidate was expected to convey. Candidates cannot be credited for information supplied by the examiner. Care should also be taken not to ask for information which has already been given by the candidate. This is disconcerting for candidates, who are then left searching for additional information which is not in the text. Candidates should be encouraged to respond at length to the two extension questions. Where their answers are rather brief, if time allows, further questions may well be helpful in encouraging them to expand.

5.

## 2. Topic Discussion

### Choice of Topics

Candidates chose an interesting variety of topics for this summer's examination. The most successful discussions were those where the candidates were following their own interests and those of which they had personal experience. Candidates who had researched their topics thoroughly were usually able to use the facts as a basis for an extended discussion.

Topics included *La Politique, Nicolas Sarkozy, L'Occupation, le Cinéma Français, Marie-Antoinette, Edith Piaf, François 1er, Molière, la Sécurité Sociale, La France et le Vietnam, Descartes, Jeanne d'Arc, Madame de Pompadour, Marie Curie, Hergé et Tintin, Le Petit Prince, L'Immigration, Luc Besson, L'Académie Française, La Résistance, Les DOM, les Sans-abri, L'Education, L'Alcool, Le Tabagisme, La Cuisine, La Musique, La Mode, Coco Chanel, La Guerre d'Algérie, le Sport, Le Tour de France*, as well as various towns and regions. Care should be taken to avoid topics which are vague, where the candidate is unable to demonstrate evidence of detailed research, for example *La vie saine en France* or *Les nouveaux passe-temps des jeunes Français*.

### Presentation

Most candidates were able to keep their presentation to the three minutes allowed, although in a few cases the examiner had to intervene and stop the presentation when the time was up. The most successful presentations were those which gave evidence of detailed research with supporting statistics, where appropriate, presented in an interesting way. Candidates are encouraged to plan the presentation carefully with an introduction and conclusion. Many presentations ended abruptly with no conclusion, so that it was not always clear where the presentation ended and the discussion began.

The presentations of some candidates contained only basic and obvious material and did not justify a mark above 'adequate'. In order to score at least in the 'good' band, candidates are expected to convey some detailed factual information, with statistics where appropriate, to illustrate the main points. They need to give evidence of research and factual information that extends beyond the obvious, so that the listener learns something about the topic. Candidates scoring in the 'very good' band display ingenuity, style and flair in presenting their material with a detailed exposition of the topic.

Some candidates, as in previous examinations, sounded as if they were relying heavily on notes, certain of them even to the extent of reading from a script. In the most extreme cases, this extended into the discussion. This is very much to be discouraged, as it robs the topic discussion of spontaneity and usually results in material which is difficult to follow, with little extension either of the facts or of ideas and opinions. A number of candidates talked at breakneck speed, in order to cram in as much information as possible. These presentations were also difficult to follow and lacking in spontaneity.



6.

### Spontaneity and Fluency

The majority of candidates were able to speak reasonably fluently during the discussion and there were few cases in which candidates failed to talk at some length. The most successful discussions were those where the candidate had a lot of information to convey and especially those where there was some personal engagement, either owing to a special interest in a subject or as a result of a visit to a French-speaking country.

Some discussions remained mainly on a factual level and there was little extension into the area of ideas and opinions. Such discussions tended to be rather thin on factual content and there was not a firm basis for the expression of ideas.

Candidates who score at the top end of the 'good' band or in the 'very good' band are able to take charge of the conversation. They do not rely too heavily on the examiner's questions, but are able to explore ideas in fluent French and speak at considerable length. They are confident of their material and above all are interested in the topic.

### Pronunciation and Intonation

There were many instances of good pronunciation and intonation in this examination, although the number of errors of pronunciation varied considerably between candidates. Examples of errors are: *alcool* (*oo* pronounced as in 'cool' in English), *in* and *im* incorrect in words such as *principal(ement)*, *indication*, *intéressant*, *intellectuel*, *influence*, *industrie*, *intégration*, *inacceptable*, *immigration*, *impressionnant*, *immobile*, *immortalité*, *important*, *est* (*s* sounded), *parents*, *rarement*, *éducation*, *déclarer*, *préparer*, *favorable* (*a* pronounced as in English), *gouvernement* (pronounced as 'government' in English), *méthode*, *catholique* (*th* pronounced as in English), *tabac*, *ils*, *dans*, *sport*, *cas*, *gens*, *sujet*, *trop*, *finaleme*nt, *élèves*, *beaucoup*, *et*, *temps* (final letter sounded), *passent*, *travaillent*, *continuent*, *portent*, *étaient* (*-ent* sounded), *fin* (*in* incorrect), *qualité* (*qu* pronounced as in English), *guerre* (*u* sounded), *danger* (*er* pronounced as in English), *symbole* (pronounced as 'symbol' in English), *pays* (*ay* incorrect), *vignoble*, *signifier*, *ignorer* (*gn* incorrect), *identifier* (first *i* pronounced as 'identify' in English), *idée* (*ée* pronounced as 'ee' in English), *hiver* (*er* incorrect), *Etats-Unis* (second *t* sounded), *an*, *emploi*, *sang*, (incorrect nasal sound), *ville* (pronounced as *fille*), *famille* (*ll* pronounced as in *ville*), *société* (pronounced as 'society' in English), *aspect*, *respect* (*c* sounded).

### Language

A large number of candidates displayed an ability to use complex structures, including the passive, the subjunctive, *après avoir/être*, *depuis*, relative clauses, the perfect participle, *venir de*, *en* + present participle, *celui/celle qui/que* and a variety of tenses.

The vocabulary of most candidates was adequate to the task and some of them revealed an encouraging use of idiom. There were some anglicisms, for example, *phenomenon*, *professional*, *natural*, *traditional*, *financial*, *essential*, *material*, *personal*, *pressure*, *expr*esser, *édu*cater, *impro*ver, *physical*, *events*, *significant*, *environment*, *dimin*uation, *place*, *pro*vider, *sim*ilar, *pré*venir, *asthma*, *applic*ation for candidature, *crim*inals, *success*, *excess*, *change* for *chang*ement, *abili*té, *practi*quer, *pro*gress, *ami*cable, *expé*riencer.

As in the role-plays, candidates' accuracy varied considerably. Errors included:

7.

*il jouer*  
*a tombé*  
*qui choquant*  
*est devu*  
*pour donne*  
*ils écrit*  
*il pluie*  
*peut espoir*  
*il y était*  
*n'aiment pas parle*  
*ils a eu*  
*a demande*  
*ils construire*  
*veut montre*  
*a devenu*  
*j'ai li*  
*il décidé*  
*a offrir*  
*ils chanter*  
*vous porte*  
*beaucoup des*  
*à le, à les*  
*de le, de les*  
*pour exemple*  
*sa for leur*  
*per cent*  
*participer dans*  
*en Paris*  
*sont faim*  
*avant de Londres*  
*le même lieu comme*  
*à 1860*  
*pour for pendant*  
*a l'aidé*  
*ils ont sportifs*  
*si il*  
*hôpitals*  
*plus beaucoup*  
*aider France*  
*elle mort*  
*plus en plus*  
*plus et plus*  
*a mort*  
*quelque chose important*  
*ça région*

Incorrect genders of words such as *manière, loi, façon, présentation, problème, télévision, drogue, fin, guerre, révolution, période, boisson, bière, langue, femme, violence, publicité, mode, idée, rôle, plage, raison, système, moyen, France, décision, religion, nourriture, cause, plupart, école, société, cuisine, fois, photo, solution, thème, mort, musée, stade.*

**8.**

### **Examining**

The topic discussions were well examined in many centres, with a range of questions which encouraged candidates to convey detailed factual information and to extend into the area of ideas and opinions. Many examiners shared the enthusiasm of the candidates for their chosen topics and the discussions were lively and interesting. It was pleasing to note that these candidates had been given helpful guidance in the choice of appropriate topics.

In some centres, however, some of the discussions did not extend beyond a factual level and insufficiently searching questions were asked to give the candidates the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions at length. The 'spontaneity and fluency grid' includes the development of ideas and opinions, and candidates cannot have access to the 'good' band in this area unless they display an ability to discuss a reasonable number of ideas.

In some cases, candidates sounded as if they were reciting or reading from notes, not only in the presentation, but also in the discussion. Candidates should be encouraged to use headings on small cards, rather than whole pages of notes, and questions should be designed to encourage spontaneity rather than over-reliance on notes.

In most centres the quality of the recordings was good. In a minority of cases candidates were difficult to hear, owing to a badly positioned microphone or a machine which gave a poor recording.

### **Conclusion**

It was encouraging to hear many very good performances in which candidates were able to handle the role-plays enthusiastically and accurately and display evidence of detailed research into their topics. They showed an ability to take charge of the conversation and to develop their ideas at length. Many candidates handled complex language confidently and accurately. There were some candidates, however, whose performance was weak, with poor preparation of the role-play and many errors of language. In the topic discussion these candidates displayed little evidence of research and few ideas. As in previous examinations, there was a wide range of performance both in content and language.

## 2652 French Listening, Reading and Writing 1

### General Comments

The June paper was accessible and differentiated very effectively, producing a range of marks spreading from 80 to 0. Whereas some candidates could cope with the demands of the paper with ease, others really struggled and this was shown particularly in their response to Task 5.

There was an improvement in the way candidates coped with the Writing task, but this could have been because they had been trained in spotting areas of the “World of Work” section that could be adapted to suit their needs. Sadly, the same cannot be said about the quality of language in Task 5, where far too many showed limited awareness of even basic grammatical rules.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Task 1

For many candidates, this exercise was quite demanding, so it proved to be a good discriminator. Marks ranged from 0 to 6. Questions (a), (e) and (f) were answered best, (c) and (d) the least well. If candidates change their mind, they should cross out their initial response and write the new one next to it rather than over it. When the latter occurred, examiners could often not decide what the candidate had answered and could not award a mark.

- (a) Candidates who knew the word *bande* found this question quite straightforward.
- (b) Many of the weaker candidates chose option B because they heard *téléphone* in the passage. Unfortunately, the answer to this question came, quite logically, after *Qu'est-ce qui l'attire ?*
- (c) This was one of the more demanding questions. Only the better candidates understood that, if the *ados* knew what they wanted, it was because they were influenced by advertising.
- (d) The most frequent incorrect answer here was A.
- (e) This was generally well answered, but weaker candidates who linked *comparables* and *il compare* showed their lack of understanding of the situation.
- (f) This was often answered correctly, particularly by candidates with a good knowledge of the “World of Work” vocabulary, who therefore understood “*gestionnaires* and *épargner*.”

## Task 2

The outcome of this task was a little disappointing because some candidates seemed simply to ignore not only the recorded passage but also the grammatical markers offered in the questions. For example, they linked a sentence with a verb in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural and an adjective in the singular.

Questions were graded, with some more accessible than others. Best answered were (a) and (b), possibly because candidates were familiar with *grandes surfaces* or because they realised the answer had to be one of the only two nouns in the list. Then came (f) which required linking *presque disparus* and *rares* and (c) with *coûteux* in the passage and *chers* in the list. Quite a number of candidates answered C (*ennuyeux*), which may have reflected their own views, but not the sense of the passage. Questions (d) and (e) were found to be the most difficult: (d) was aimed at the best candidates, who understood *convivialité* and (e) required understanding a whole sentence, rather than a single word, so was more demanding.

## Task 3

This task produced a good range of marks. A few candidates put more than 8 ticks and lost one mark for each tick in excess of the number required. A small number placed fewer than 8 ticks in the grid.

- (a) One of the more demanding questions aimed at the better candidates, who understood the gist of the first two sentences uttered by Théo. Those who did not tended to go for Léa, although she clearly said the opposite in her first sentence.
- (b) Aimed at the weaker candidates, this question was correctly answered by nearly all.
- (c) The verb *freiner* should have been known but, when it was not, candidates often erroneously went for the *Ni l'un ni l'autre* option.
- (d) This also required understanding a sentence rather than a single word. The weaker candidates found it difficult.
- (e) Fines were mentioned in the passage by Théo, which made a number of candidates select him as the answer, but he did not express the view given in this question and neither did Léa.
- (f) Responses to this question were mixed because it tested a full sentence rather than a single word; the weaker candidates could not cope with it.
- (g) This question was aimed at the better candidates, who could understand *des machines à fric* and *rapportent de l'argent*.
- (h) The last question was aimed at the weaker candidates. The word *ville* was easy to identify and the statement closely paraphrased the passage.

#### Task 4A

This was meant to be a straightforward exercise, but not many candidates managed to score the full three marks. They often ticked two correct statements, with (d) and (f) the most regularly given of the three correct answers. The most frequently incorrect response was (b), followed by (a), probably because of the similarity between words in the statements and words in the text.

#### Task 4B

This produced the full range of marks. Some candidates left blanks, others wrote two letters inside the same box – so a mark of 0 had to be awarded. Some candidates changed their mind, as in Task 1, and wrote over their initial answer, making it impossible for the examiner to decide which the candidate's final choice was. There was evidence that candidates were just guessing, as in the extreme case where a candidate simply entered letters A to G in alphabetical order.

Some of the questions were more accessible than others: (k), (m) and (j) - in this order - were aimed at the weaker candidates, (g) and (c) at the middle range and (h) and (i) at the upper end of the candidature. In practice, it did not quite work out, although (k) was clearly the best answered question; candidates did not pick out the obvious clues to help them identify (m) and (j), whereas (g) and (i) were frequently given the wrong way round. It was pleasing to note that a good number of candidates coped with this quite difficult task with ease.

#### Task 5

This task discriminated well, but the performance at the lower end of the range was disappointing because some candidates made no attempt to answer the questions which required an answer in French. The weakest did not even attempt some of the non-verbal multiple-choice questions. Yet the text was of a similar standard to those used in previous years. It appears that, on this occasion, they just did not want to tackle this task – possibly because the need to answer in French was too daunting for them. Of the weaker candidates who did try to answer, many were content to transcribe what they heard, without checking whether it made any sense. Candidates should be encouraged to read the context of the situation, then to listen to the text in full to get an overall perspective of the passage before answering any question. Instead, many just latched onto isolated words and launched into a transcription exercise. This frequently resulted in meaningless phonetic renderings showing little understanding of the text and of the way the language works.

Candidates should also read questions carefully, listen to the text and try to understand it. Then they should express in their own words what they have understood. Admittedly, it is sometimes possible to get the right answer by transcribing what is said in the passage, but only occasionally. In this instance, this applied to (b)(ii), (f) and possibly (h). For the other questions language manipulation was required. A number of candidates showed the required linguistic awareness to deserve the highest mark in grid 2A: it was pleasing to see them use passive, subjunctive and personal pronouns with apparent ease.

One of the problems with this task is that candidates do not read the questions carefully enough. This was obvious in (b) where a large number could not write 'Tom Mills' in their answer, when it was clearly written in the question. Another question which was not read properly was (h): many candidates read it as *Qu'est-ce que Fabien Broux veut ?* and so gave the wrong answer. Candidates also paid little attention to the tenses used in the question and responded with all-purpose infinitives or with some invented tense of their own.

- (a) *courriel* a typical “World of Work” word was not as well-known as anticipated. The choice was really between A and B, so it was disappointing that so many opted for *télécopie* which bore no resemblance to the word used in the passage.
- (b) (i) This was quite well answered, but garbled renderings of Tom Mills invalidated the answer in some cases. There were lots of different attempts at spelling *félicite*, several sufficiently recognisable to allow the award of a mark; however, *facilite* obviously could not be accepted. The better candidates used the subjunctive appropriately.
- (ii) It was good to see that many candidates attempted to use the passive in their answers, albeit not always successfully. The weaker candidates struggled to render *qu'on* and ended up with *quand* or even *con*, which clearly made no sense and distorted their answers.
- (c) Most candidates correctly ticked option C; only a few went for A.
- (d) (i) Spelling of *collègues* proved problematic but many nevertheless managed to score a mark here. Not many candidates noticed the future tense in the question, so few made a genuine attempt to use the future tense in their answer; an all-purpose infinitive tended to be used instead.
- (ii) Detailed understanding of the passage and an ability to manipulate the language were required to do well in this part of the question. *méthode de travail* proved a stumbling block for many who tried to transcribe rather than work out the meaning of the text. Many could not make the distinction between *travail* and *travaille*.
- (e) As *Il* in the question could have referred to Fabien Broux as well as to Tom Mills, the ideas of *envoyer* and *recevoir* were both accepted for the first part of the question. A few candidates used a past tense, which clearly showed they had not understood the text. As for the second gap, those who understood gave an acceptable answer, but many just guessed and wrote *formation*, a word often associated with *stage* but which had nothing to do with this passage. Additionally, they had not read the question carefully enough and had not spotted *avant que*, which necessitated the use of a verb to complete the clause.
- (f) This question was aimed at the better candidates – and they coped well because they had understood that Tom Mills had to organise his own transport. The others were baffled and merely tried to transcribe *qu'il s'en occupe lui-même*, mostly without success. In the second part of the answers, the spelling of *rembourser* proved testing, as was that of *ses frais*, with the weaker candidates often offering *c'est frais* or *ses fraises* instead. Anyone actually understanding *rembourser* would have known that this part of the text was about expenses.
- (g) Both parts of this question were straightforward and aimed at average candidates. *prêt-à-porter* was mostly associated with the correct answer B, although some of the weaker candidates were tempted by *meubles*. Similarly *la deuxième moitié d'octobre* usually led them to C but many weaker candidates were drawn to B, possibly because of the similarity between *moitié* and *milieu*.
- (h) As mentioned earlier, numerous candidates did not read this question sufficiently carefully and did not realise that a verb was needed. This question also required understanding of a full sentence rather than isolated words, so it was one of the more demanding ones, aimed at the very top of the range. Confusion between *convenir* and *venir* was also in evidence. It is likely that the word *convenir* was not known, otherwise candidates would not have resorted to inventing the adjective ‘suitable’ in Task 7 to convey this idea.

- (i) Many commendable attempts were made to produce the correct rendering of *accueillir* and congratulations are due to those who managed to get the vowels in the right order.
- (j) Many realised a verb was required to fill the gap in this question, but *avoir une bonne maîtrise* clearly goes beyond merely *parler*. Without a qualifier, this verb alone was not enough to award the mark. Inevitably *maîtrise* became *maîtresse* on occasions, but more frequently appeared as *métrise*.

### Task 6

This task also differentiated well. Candidates found the first paragraph much more difficult than the second one. Inevitably, quality of language suffered when they did not understand, because they tended to translate word-for-word, and somehow lost control of English syntax while trying to render the French.

#### Paragraph 1

The opening sentence proved difficult for many as they failed to understand the contextualisation of the letter from Bernard Espinet. From then on, the weaker ones allowed their imagination to carry them along. In this paragraph, the following words or phrases gave difficulties: *il y a*, *une dizaine*, *un dispositif d'accompagnement*, *société*, *s'efforce*, *sur mesure sérieux*, *coût*, *frais*, *se diversifie*, *pris en charge*, *retraités britanniques*, *petits-enfants* and *grandes vacances* - the most disappointing lacunae being the first two and the last two of this list.

Of course, not all of them presented problems to all the candidates, but hardly anyone managed to translate *Service sur mesure sérieux* adequately. When the level of understanding was poor, so tended to be the syntactical accuracy. A number of candidates only scored two marks out of the first paragraph (points 4 and 9) but this did not prevent them from coping well with the next paragraph.

#### Paragraph 2

Only the very weakest scored fewer than 3 marks in this section and many candidates managed to score full marks. The words or phrases candidates found difficult were: *embaucher*, *accompagneurs anglophones*, *nous nous adressons*, *entretien*, *en mesure de le faire* and *rémunération*. A small number did not understand *personnel répondant*, it could be because they were confused between 'personal' and 'personnel' in English. There was also some confusion at the very end, probably due to careless reading, when some rendered *nous vous enverrons* by 'can you send us'.

This time, there were fewer instances of candidates offering alternative renderings but the weakest left blanks whenever they came across a word they did not know. When this happened and so little of the French was adequately rendered a cap had to be applied for grid 2B. It is not possible to have a higher mark for Quality of English than for comprehension of the text.

Poor spelling of the following common words was in evidence: 'available', 'foreign', 'accommodation', 'airport', 'retired', 'Britons', 'receive', 'recruit'; use of capital letters for 'English', 'British', 'French' was rare. There were also grammatical errors ("it's" instead of "its"), incorrect prepositions and occasional gibberish, but less than in previous years, which was pleasing.



## Task 7

Most candidates tried to communicate all the required points and very few marks were lost because of omissions. Again this task discriminated very well, from the excellent to the barely understandable. From ambitious language (range of pronouns, subjunctive, passive etc.) with a high level of accuracy to lack of grammatical awareness (inability to form the present tense, to make adjectives agree etc.). However, all these answers had one thing in common: the lack of accents.

Areas of weakness included the choice of pronouns after a preposition, confusing *mieux* and *meilleur*, omission of *pour*, and phrasing a question, as in the last bullet point, was also problematic. Many made good use of items of vocabulary from Section 2 (mostly Task 6) and plenty of ingenuity was on display to get round unknown words, such as *ceux qui ont été sélectionnés* or *ceux qui ont réussi* for 'successful' – unfortunately *successifs* did not quite work. Generally, vocabulary was up to the task, except for the rendering of 'news' (*les actualités*, *les info*, *les neufs*), 'suitable', 'assignment' and 'accommodation', which many left unchanged, as if they were French words.

On the whole, this was one the better attempts at the Writing task. However, candidates should continue to strive for consistent application of basic grammatical rules, so that they can go from strength to strength at A2.

## 2653 French Reading and Writing

### General comments

The standard achieved by candidates in this series was very mixed. As usual, at the top end there were some excellent scripts which showed a real understanding of the French language and its mechanics. However, at the lower end a deterioration was evident in the level of written French; many candidates were unable to express themselves in a way which might be understood by a sympathetic native speaker who knew no English, and basic grammar was frequently ignored. In the first two non-verbal tasks, answers suffered because the passages and/or questions had not been carefully read. In many cases, illegibility of handwriting was a major problem.

### Tâche 1: Rendez-vous dix ans plus tard

Most scored between 3 and 5 (out of 7) for this question, which involved ticking seven correct statements. Few obtained full marks. The correct statements that were most often ignored were (a) – perhaps because it was in the introductory sentence – and (g). Those which were most frequently incorrectly ticked were (h), (j) and (m): in each of these, a word from the text was repeated in the statement, and it seems that candidates are too quick to seize on this similarity and think that the statement must be correct. They should be encouraged to read the text carefully in such cases.

It was pleasing to note that there were very few examples of candidates' ticking more than seven statements (this incurs a penalty of -1 for each additional tick), or of fewer than seven (which penalises itself).

### Tâche 2: UFOLEP, fédération multi-sports

The response to this question was mixed. A number of candidates obtained full marks, and there were very few poor performances. Many started well, then lost their way in the second half; some did the opposite. A favourite answer for (a) was B; presumably candidates were misled by the word *multisports* and did not read the first half of the sentence, where *tous les membres de l'organisation* was a key element. (c), (d), (e) and (g) were usually correct, but many chose C for (f) and B for (h).

A number of candidates left one or more questions blank. There is no point in doing this in a multiple-choice question; a sensible guess has a chance of being right.

### Tâche 3: Au secours, il veut sortir en boîte !

#### Comprehension

Candidates are required to identify ten points in answer to the questions; there are always considerably more than ten to be found, and there is no negative marking in this section (though an answer may be deemed not to be correct if it includes additional information which negates or distorts the sense). It was clear that many candidates had not read the questions carefully, as they had to repeat in (a) (ii) some of the information they had written in (a) (i). They should be advised to read the whole passage carefully, and to read all the questions, before attempting to answer.

In (a), many obviously thought that *au bout de deux mois* meant 'about two months'. Others thought that going clubbing would not turn the girls into *perverses*, instead of linking this point with the fact that they were growing up. The introduction of a hyphen (*petites-filles* instead of *petites filles*) changed the meaning. Most were able to identify the two restrictions imposed, though some added a third (that they should give priority to their school work) and some invented reasons, perhaps from their own experience (that they must wear sensible clothes and be back by midnight). Sometimes the meaning was not clear (*Elles doivent prendre un taxi à la maison*). Some thought that *Comment* in part (ii) meant 'why?', but in most cases their answer was still relevant.

In (b), the point most often misunderstood was *son comportement dans son travail scolaire*; many thought this referred to bad behaviour in school. Problems with pronouns led to two particular mistakes: *Ils veulent se protéger* and *Ils n'avaient pas confiance en soi*, which took the place of 'They want to protect him' and 'They had no confidence in him'.

The names of the people involved were often wrong; Sonia was referred to as Sophie or Sophia, Laurent and Catherine were thought to be the daughters, not the parents, Michel was Michael or Micheal, Annie was Anne, and Valentin was variously Valérie, Vincent, or most often Valentine and considered to be a girl despite the reference in the first line to *notre fils de 16 ans*. There is really no excuse for this carelessness.

Candidates should be advised that there is no need to repeat the words of the question, and that they must not lift their answers wholesale from the text; this is heavily penalised as there is no evidence that the passage has been understood.

### Personal response

This element was, on the whole, disappointing this year. Candidates performed rather better in answering the first question, though even here answers tended to be trite and very closely linked to the text ('I think Tanya and Sonia's parents were right'; 'Imposing restrictions is a good idea', 'Valentin's parents stopped him because they wanted to protect him'). In relating their own experiences, candidates seemed to find it hard to be imaginative; many wrote 'My parents reacted in the same way when I asked if I could go clubbing' or 'Like Tania and Sonia, I have to come home in a taxi'. If their experiences were so similar that they had nothing different to say, they should perhaps have delved further into the causes and/or effects of the restrictions placed on them. Some did this very well (*Mon frère aîné a plus de liberté; je crois qu'il y a ces restrictions parce que je suis la cadette; Je dois rentrer en taxi parce que mon père croit qu'il y a trop de dangers dans les rues, surtout pour les filles ; Je dois donner la priorité à mes études parce que si on réussit aux examens on pourra obtenir un meilleur poste à l'avenir*). There were some excellent points made, worthy of great credit: 'Dancing is good for the health, particularly now that there is a smoking ban in clubs', 'There is no point in trying to get into night clubs because I look much too young for the legal age in England' and many more.

Most responses were appropriate, though some candidates answered only one of the two questions and were therefore unable to score more than 8 marks out of 10, however good their response. Some understood *boîte de nuit* to mean 'drinking at night', but their answers were still fairly relevant. A few moved right away from the point in answering the second question ('I had a similar experience when I asked if I could go to France with my friends; while I was there I visited the Eiffel Tower and watched a football match at the Stade de France').

## Quality of language

This was a real problem in many cases; there were vast numbers of very basic errors. The possessive adjective is a particular area for concern; almost every script (and this is not an exaggeration) included at least one example of *leur parents*, *leurs enfant*, *ses* for *leurs* and vice versa. The formation of verbs in the present tense was poor, particularly *faire* (*ils font*), *devoir* (*ils doivent*) *savoir* (*ils savent*, *ils savaient*, *elles savent*), *croire* (*je crois*, *ils croient*, *ils croissent*), *pouvoir* and *vouloir*. *Falloir* was used personally (*il fausse*, *elles fallent*), and *être* and *avoir* were frequently confused, not just in idioms (*je suis dix-huit*, *les parents sont raison*) but elsewhere too (*les filles ont responsable*).

Tenses were used indiscriminately, and were often incorrectly formed ; the future tense was made to end in –ent (*ils permettront*), and the perfect tense was frequently wrong, chiefly because agreement was made with *avoir* verbs (*elles ont négociées*, *ils ont pensés*, *elles ont disent*).

*Permettre* was used in the passive, despite the clue of *lui* in qn 3(b). The concept of gender was largely ignored; Tanya and Sonia were usually referred to as *ils*. Minor points included a lack of elision, particularly after *que* and *de*.

On the positive side, many candidates were able to use the new AS structures well, particularly the subjunctive (though it is still being incorrectly used after *je pense que* and *je crois que*). In many scripts there was excellent use of linking words and phrases, though a few candidates persist in using bullet points.

Confusion of vocabulary led to incomprehension; there were problems with *monter/montrer*, *confiance/confidence*, *autrefois/autrement*, *lasser/laisser*, *mois/moins*, *le droit/le doigt/la droite*, *bois/boîte*, *boire/boiter*, *cas/caisse* (*Il ya des caisses où les jeunes sont négligés*), *jamais/j'aimais*. Spelling mistakes were rife ; it was rare to find *drogues* spelt correctly (usually *drouges*), and other problems were *meilleur*, *malheureusement*, *personnellement*, *alcool* (*alchool*, *achool* or *acool*), and *raisonnable* (often *résonable*, even though it was printed in the text). Poor handwriting made it difficult to differentiate between *pour* and *par*.

Invented words included the long-time favourite *involver*, but also new ones such as *reminer*, *occurer*, *recongniser* and *raisonnablement*. *Faux amis* (*place*, *location*, *sensible* and *éventuellement*) were frequently wrongly used.

Some mistakes were hard to believe at this level : *ils ditons*, *elles etaitent*, *c'est ne un problem pas*, *les reactions de les parents*, *elle parents*, *Valentin's parents*, *leur est responsable pour il*, *elle sont plus knolegable du le monde*, indicated that some candidates were perhaps not ready to take the examination.

## Tâche 4

Until recently, the grammar-based question has been very well done. This has certainly been less true in the last two series, where the standard has declined sharply, particularly in the most basic points. One wonders whether the whole sentence is actually read; it is difficult to imagine candidates at AS level writing *se sont bons entendus avec leurs filles*, *elles ont dit aux leurs parents* or *les parents n'ont pas veulent accepter la situation*. Many also missed *il faut* + infinitive, and ignored the spelling of *amis* in (g). GCSE idioms such as *depuis*, and *en* + present participle were often forgotten; and many had difficulty with the direct object pronoun. It was disappointing to note that the gender of *expérience* was unfamiliar; the *-ance/-ence* ending is one of the basic gender rules.

*Report on the Units taken in June 2008*

The need for the subjunctive in (i) was recognised; it seems that new grammar points for AS level have been learned, but at the expense of the basics which candidates must have known for many years. On a positive note, there were very few mistakes in (n); the use of *à cause de* seems to be better understood now.

Some candidates nevertheless performed very well in this exercise, but there were fewer examples of full marks overall, and the average for this question was about two marks lower than in recent years.

Candidates should be reminded that 'lifting' from Tâche 4 is penalised in the same way as lifting from the text in Tâche 3.

## 2654 French Speaking and Reading

### General Comments

Whilst it is not particularly helpful to generalise, I should record that the majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Most were able to discuss their article, showing at least a reasonable level of understanding. Topics were often carefully chosen and well researched, and discussion was invariably enthusiastic, though sometimes focusing excessively upon factual detail, with a relative paucity of ideas and opinions. Unfortunately, candidates did not always have the grammatical knowledge to express their ideas convincingly; however, good grades will reflect not only the candidates' level of language acquisition, but also the research they have done, their ability to speak with a degree of spontaneity, their willingness to get involved in discussion and to take the initiative. In spite of repeated reminders in recent Subject Reports that candidates must demonstrate their ability to manipulate prepared material flexibly, a proportion of interviews continue to consist solely of rote-learned and rehearsed units; these are sometimes delivered uninterrupted for several minutes. Such conduct, visibly condoned by teacher-examiners, amounts to cheating and is penalised.

### Discussion of Text

An unacceptably high number of teacher-examiners this year simply worked through the questions printed in the booklet, seemingly oblivious of the fact that they are, as is clearly stated at the top of the page, intended simply as examples of the sort of questions which might be asked. Such an inflexible approach was certainly not in the best interests of candidates, whether they were weak or strong. Weak candidates often floundered because the examiner failed to follow up the few aspects of the text which they had understood and/or had expressed some interest in, whereas stronger candidates were deprived of the opportunity to take the initiative that would have given them access to the highest marks: whenever they did start to develop an interesting line of argument, they were immediately brought back to the next sample question. Examiners need to be aware of the effect of the questions they ask and do not ask. In a significant minority of cases, half the text was untouched, and candidates were thus unable to demonstrate a full understanding.

### Texte A (Le tourisme médical)

This was a popular text. Good candidates recognised that the tourism in question embraced not only plastic surgery but also the life-saving operations (e.g. organ transplants) referred to in the third paragraph; they were also able, in their discussion of the desirability of this relatively new phenomenon of *le tourisme médical*, to make a clear distinction between the two. Other points were not always brought out as clearly as they might have been: firstly, the fact that the Tunisian authorities claim that their doctors are just as competent as their French counterparts, since it was the latter who had trained them to perform such operations; secondly, the fact that the mercenary attitude of the doctors referred to in the final paragraph reveals scant concern for the health of their patients. Good candidates got a lot of mileage out of the ethical issue of whether Third World countries should be seen to encourage such tourism when large swathes of their own native populations have only very limited access to even the most basic medical care. Sometimes the discussion broadened to focus on the issue of the illegal trade in human body parts in certain countries, often fuelled by the desperation of people who have no other way of making money, while other candidates waxed lyrical on the subject of health care provision in the National Health Service, sometimes citing specific cases from their own experience or about which they had read in the press.

### **Texte B (Le déclin du catholicisme)**

This text made for some very interesting discourse. It has to be said that it was sometimes given to candidates whose oral topic forms listed a closely related topic such as *L'Islam en France* or *La laïcité*. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that this does not happen, since it makes for unfairness. Better candidates demonstrated excellent understanding of the issues under the spotlight here and had no problems in explaining, in their own words, such items from the text as *la religion se conjugue au pluriel, un humanisme confortable* and *le bien-être sur terre*. Those candidates who were fortunate enough to have a teacher-examiner who had taken on board the importance of a flexible approach moved the conversation in various directions: some were clearly very religious and stressed the importance of the church in a multi-cultural society; others criticised the Roman Catholic church for what they saw as its outmoded attitude to such issues as contraception, abortion and homosexuality; others still were more interested in the matter of fundamentalist-inspired terrorism and the way in which it distorts Western perceptions of the true Islam.

### **Texte C (Les OGM)**

Candidates who were given this text often demonstrated an excellent understanding of both the details it contained and of the broader issues involved. The mark of distinction of the very best among them was the comprehensiveness of their explanations of such items as the *commerce OGM franco-espagnol* described in the second paragraph and the security measures adopted by the Spaniards delineated in the third paragraph. Less good candidates contented themselves with just one or two of the details given or were happy simply to read from the text, having failed to take on board the importance of using their own words to demonstrate comprehension of what they had read. Some clearly had very strong views on the issue of GMOs and allied themselves very persuasively either with the *équipes de volontaires* referred to at the beginning of the article or with the pro-GMO camp referred to at the end. Others trod a more cautious path, acknowledging the advantages of genetically modified crops but stressing the need for extensive further research before they could be pronounced safe. One candidate went as far as to equate the sort of people who resort to vandalism to express their opposition to GMOs with those most likely to smoke cannabis and speculated whether they had ever considered that the source of their drug-induced pleasure might well have been genetically modified in order to boost production.

### **Texte D (Le défi pour la Terre)**

This text elicited some excellent responses from candidates clearly very concerned about green issues. As far as comprehension was concerned, quite a number had not grasped the point made in the first paragraph about the beneficial role played by the *gaz à effet de serre*. When asked about the possible consequences of climate change listed in the fourth paragraph, again, too many simply read from the card that they had in front of them: skilled examiners, of course, challenged them to explain such items as *fonte du sol gelé en permanence* and *sécheresses*, which gave them a second opportunity to demonstrate the true extent of their understanding. In developing the material contained in the text, better candidates showed themselves to be well informed and talked with conviction about government failings in such areas as flood protection and public transport. Though suggestions were forthcoming about how the situation could be improved, the prevailing mood was one of marked despondency.

### **Texte E (La 'santé' de la langue française)**

This text proved to be the one that was used least often. Notwithstanding, many of the candidates who were given it got substantial mileage out of the statistics provided in the first paragraph and out of the points of view voiced by the Secretary General of the *OIF* and by the *Alliance Française*. Many shared the views put forward and expressed concern about the linguistic ramifications of the phenomenon of globalisation, in particular the serious threat posed to minority languages but also to more established languages such as French and Italian. One particularly well informed candidate talked very engagingly about the encroachments of *franglais* and quite a few took their position in the debate about the choice of the singer of this year's French entry in the Eurovision Song Contest to sing in English.

### **Texte F (L'école mérite-t-elle sa mauvaise presse?)**

Generally speaking, with the notable exception of the third paragraph, this text – another popular one – was well understood and it was attention to the detail of the changes mentioned in the second paragraph and the ability to paraphrase such items as *rédaction* and *orthographe* in the final paragraph which distinguished good from less good candidates. Many had no hesitation in agreeing that standards in some areas had certainly declined but offered the observation that the world for which schools now have to prepare pupils is very different from the one facing their parents and grandparents and that this fact is undoubtedly reflected both in the subject matter and in the goals of syllabuses taught. There was widespread support for the educational system as a whole and a gratifyingly high level of loyalty to the particular institution in which candidates had been schooled: the existence of specific problems was acknowledged but they certainly did not exist within the hallowed walls of the centre in question!

### **General Conversation**

It is good to report that candidates and examiners alike seem finally to have taken on board the importance of ensuring that the subject matter of the topic chosen for discussion is specific to the culture of a target-language country: far fewer candidates fell or were led by their examiners into the trap of talking about such issues as pollution, euthanasia and animal rights at too general a level. Rather, they had usually been at considerable pains to gather information and examples pertinent to France or to other French-speaking countries.

The majority of candidates had clearly put a lot of effort into their research and were able to put forward interesting and well-informed ideas. However, there remain a few – often candidates with considerable linguistic ability – who labour under the misconception that it is sufficient to have a layman's knowledge of a topic and a few superficial and largely unsubstantiated ideas. Presumably their teachers have tried to impress upon them that this is definitely not the case but have met with no success.

Some teacher-examiners also persist in encouraging their candidates to cover two or even three topic areas in the course of the 10-12 minute discussion: this again often makes for a degree of superficiality in terms of both coverage and ideas, which means that it is impossible for their candidates to access high marks for Grid 4E.



Not least, there remains the problem of discussions which are highly or even wholly scripted: examiners report that it has been glaringly obvious to them that candidates in some centres have been allowed, and even encouraged, to recite lengthy rote-learned responses to questions that have clearly been rehearsed and that the candidate knows that he/she will be asked. It has to be emphasised that, in the interests of fairness, such candidates cannot be rewarded highly for responsiveness, fluency and spontaneity, which collectively carry a higher proportion of the marks available than any other assessment criterion. Rehearsed 'pauses' followed by epic monologues do not fool the examiners, especially when these phenomena embellish the work of a whole centre! It is most often when a sequence of prepared questions and answers breaks down that evidence of complicity is most noticeable: when the examiner forgets the plot and asks a genuine question, a candidate wholly reliant on pre-learned responses tends to be completely thrown, both linguistically and emotionally!

It is always disappointing – and potentially dangerous – when a centre's 13 candidates offer *L'immigration* 13 times; all too often, candidates will trot out identical answers to identical questions ... and marks will be lost for the ensuing, almost inevitable lack of spontaneity. If one centre with 47 candidates can insist – successfully – that each candidate prepare an individually researched topic, then surely most of us can! Candidates using identical material for the topic tend to make unfavourable comparisons more apparent, and it is hard to credit candidates with high marks for wider reading when they clearly share the same sources.

Overall, topic choices remain admirably varied and some of the more unusual, well researched, superbly presented performances were described by examiners as "stunning." If *Le Voile*, *L'Euthanasie* and *Le Nucléaire* had receded a little in popularity, this year it seemed that every Sixth Former in Britain had been walking the streets of Paris stumbling over *SDF*. Happily, *La peine de mort*, so widespread last year, was replaced by *Sarko*, though some may not regard that as an improvement!

Few this year stepped outside the '7 year limit', although *L'histoire de Versailles* and *Les Frères Lumière* might be seen as stretching the definition of currency.

### Other matters

It was disappointing to hear – not for the first time – ignorance of basic grammar in a small proportion of the candidature: common verb forms were not known; pronouns, especially reflexives, were confused and scattered with reckless abandon; *meilleur* and *mieux* were constantly confused; *pire* was used accurately by no more than a handful. We normally refrain from commenting on the errors made by teachers, because this has no value whatsoever, but examiners do begin to get worried when they hear: *Vous dites que ... / Est-ce que les femmes françaises gagnera éventuellement?*

It is difficult accurately to measure overall improvements year on year, especially when an ill-informed press appears inclined perennially to sprinkle our students' achievements with verbal abuse. However, one experienced examiner reported that, in his view, "The standard of both examining and candidates was higher than in previous years: many candidates, and indeed whole centres, were outstanding and a pleasure to listen to." That is certainly nice to hear. A few exceptions to the rule are highlighted here – if only to try to reduce still further the gap between a strong professional performance by teacher-examiners and those few who appear not to have studied the instructions / conventions, thereby irresponsibly damaging the prospects of their charges.

One teacher-examiner had clearly not read the texts in advance and had not taken the trouble to brief himself on his candidates' chosen topics: every question was prefaced by a long silence while he presumably worked out what to say next. This performance was matched by the teacher-examiner who appeared not to listen to any answers – she kept on asking questions that the candidate had just answered. Elsewhere, questions were generally kept to a reasonable length, though (when timed) one question did drag on for 1 minute and 21 seconds; it is not the examiner's voice that we wish to hear! Some teachers still comment too much throughout the 18 minutes, offering their own views and using up valuable time, thus denying the candidate the opportunity to speak and filling the test with recorded material that cannot be assessed. This year one was heard, having provided the answer to her own question, lengthily referring back to the lesson where the material in question had been covered: *Tu te rappelles ... ?*

A few examiners still spend too long interrogating candidates on the detail of the passage; they become obsessed with extracting some ideal answer that they have in mind and persist, terrier-like, even when the candidate is manifestly baffled or has offered a reasonable (but presumably not ideal) answer. It is not within the spirit of this examination to push a candidate unreasonably to give the meaning of a single word. The result of this approach is that they never get round to the more general questions, or start so late that the cut off point (6 minutes) is reached before the candidate has had time to develop an answer. Having said this, most teacher-examiners were spot on with their timings, as indicated in bold at the top of each sample questions page in the Examiner's Booklet.

## 2655 French Listening, Reading and Writing 2 (Written Examination)

### General comments

The paper was at the appropriate level with a few difficult questions which differentiated well and it produced a wide spread of marks. Most marks ranged from the low 60s to below 20, with a small number over 70 and a handful below 20. Most were bunched in the 40s and 50s.

In the reading section, candidates seemed to find the material quite difficult. Tasks 4, 6 and 8 produced some fairly poor answers. Many candidates seemed to have knowledge and understanding but to lack consistency even within skills and individual tasks.

There were many examples of invented French e.g. *restriecte, abilite, couvrance, effective, publiciser, principe*. Less excusable were aberrations of spellings and genders which were given e.g. *délinquant, pile, langue*. Frequently the errors were not even consistent within a question sub-section.

The language errors in tasks 1 and 2 were often a result of trying to transcribe unnecessary information. In task 4, imperfect understanding of the subject matter often led to poor manipulation of language, and there was quite a lot of lifting from the text.

As ever, the best candidates were fully in control of their material, keeping themselves out of linguistic difficulty by consciously deploying set phrases. This often enabled them to retain a measure of simplicity in their language and thus to score the maximum number of points with the minimum of words; for example, in Task 7, a simple statement listing *plus de confiance, plus d'indépendance, and plus de liberté* was all that was required, but it was necessary to have the courage to move away from the original text, the other extreme being typified by the candidate who simply lifted the appropriate sentence without adapting it to the demands of the question.

Once again, the subjunctive found frequent employment in places where it was not necessary. Many middle-ranking candidates also tended not to have a solid knowledge of their verbs and adjective agreements. There was often confusion between *a* and *à*, and also between *ou* and *où*.

While the focused candidates tended to write fairly brief answers, some spilled over from the space allocated and, as their responses grew in length, their accuracy declined.

Time management did not appear to be an issue, though some seem to have rushed either question 8 or question 9. Candidates should remember to cross out rough working to eliminate any ambiguity as to what they are offering for assessment.

There were very few rubric infringements, mainly involving responses in French appearing on Task 8 where English is anticipated. Sometimes the quality of English spelling, although not assessed, was surprising. Some scripts were also untidy and difficult to read.

**Responses by candidates to individual questions:**

**Section A**

**Task 1**

A good range of marks was produced here, allowing effective differentiation. Indeed, this was the question on which many candidates performed best, perhaps because of the fact that the content was close to that of many other environmental articles they had previously encountered.

<b>1</b>	<b>(a)</b>	<i>les poubelles</i> often got in the way as a destination, rather than as an intermediate stage. The incorrect transcription of <i>décharge</i> and <i>incinérateur</i> regularly caused some difficulty, while the gender of <i>les piles</i> was often missed, although there were clues provided in the title and agreements in questions (d) and (e).
	<b>(b)</b>	Although two marks were on offer here, some candidates provided only one reason, but generally the performance here was good. <i>aire</i> instead of <i>air</i> figured in a certain number of scripts.
	<b>(c)</b>	The reflexive pronoun of <i>se décomposer</i> was often missed, which led to some flawed versions, e.g. <i>les piles décomposent l'eau</i> , and <i>le sol</i> was frequently rendered inaccurately, but otherwise this question was generally successful. The gratuitous addition of <i>écrasées ou cassées</i> was ignored, but would otherwise have tripped up all but the very best students.
	<b>(d)</b>	Here candidates either understood what they heard and wrote accordingly, or failed to comprehend and merged the two words e.g. <i>metotoxiques</i> . Some candidates went for 'meat' and 'sand'.
	<b>(e)</b>	Candidates invariably listed two problems, but sometimes did not realise that <i>des tremblements</i> and <i>des difficultés à se concentrer</i> were examples of <i>des troubles neurologique</i> ; thus they gave two of the above, and omitted the entirely separate cancer item, thereby losing a mark.
	<b>(f)</b>	There was a tendency just to offer <i>rapporter toutes les piles usagées</i> and to omit the vital recycling issue. Alternatively, the idea of <i>informer le public</i> was given on its own. Some candidates could not spell <i>recycler</i> , e.g. <i>recicler</i> .

**Task 2**

This task discriminated well, and was generally found to be far more taxing than the previous one, although it was on quite familiar ground.

2	(a)	The similarity of <i>le vol</i> and <i>le volant</i> caused confusion for some weaker students e.g. <i>il volandé une voiture volée</i> or <i>il a volé une voiture volée</i> . Nevertheless, the theft point was usually handled effectively, with the idea of having injured someone being less clear. If the candidate chose to transcribe exactly what had been heard, the preceding direct object agreement on <i>qu'il a blessés</i> tended to be missed. Other versions suggested that the four friends wounded the thief <i>qui l'a blessé</i> .
	(b)	The mark scheme's requirement for the additional detail of the age of the offenders in order to score the first point was a stumbling point, but most clearly understood here, although <i>commettre</i> suffered badly. The location item, in that what was heard contained a negative in the form of <i>ne ... plus</i> , brought some confusion, as some candidates suggested that the violence had moved wholesale out of the urban context and into rural areas, rather than that it had simply spread into the latter. <i>les zones rurales</i> brought some amusing mistranscriptions, most notably <i>les hommes rurales</i> .
	(c)	The filming point was well-handled, but those who stuck closely to writing down what they had heard often omitted the <i>en faire</i> reference, or merged the latter with <i>pour</i> to create <i>pourront faire</i> . Here is a classic illustration of where the courage to move away from what they had heard and simply to write <i>pour montrer à leurs copains</i> would have been of benefit, provided of course that the dative marker <i>à</i> was not left out.
	(d)	This was the most difficult point to score in the whole listening section, and many did not understand the underlying issue. Once again, a negative was present in what they heard and this led to confusion. There were some instances of <i>il</i> being deployed as a subject, but it was unclear what this pronoun referred to.
	(e)	The family allowance issue was usually dealt with clearly, but <i>le dépistage</i> caused many difficulties, usually related to <i>pistache</i> ; candidates then had to negotiate <i>précoce</i> , but often recovered by supplying some expression of the extreme youth of the children as an alternative.
	(f)	This was usually correct, the errors being confined to erroneous spellings such as <i>statue</i> or <i>stature</i> along with confusion over <i>l'âge de la majorité</i> . Some went down the route of <i>l'abaissement de l'âge</i> as they were induced into error by failure to understand the information given about the position of <i>le ministre de l'intérieur</i> .

### Language in Section A (Grid 5A):

Errors were mainly transcription errors e.g. *Le soil* was not infrequent for *le sol*.

*Pour enfer profiter les copains, la suppression* occurred fairly frequently. There was also quite a lot of repeated wrong use of infinitives/past participles *elles vont pollués; l'eau sera contaminer; afin qu'elles soient recycler. Ses/ces* was also fairly often confused *ces camarades; ces salariés*.

### Section B

The text for the reading section caused an unusual degree of difficulty, in that there was much confusion between *un lycée, une école, une grande école, l'École Normale Supérieure, les classes préparatoires, concours d'entrée* and *une filière d'élite*.

### Task 3

This was a most accessible question, with the most competent and average candidates usually achieving full marks. There were also fewer copying errors than in previous years, which was most pleasing.

Those who were defeated by this exercise had often failed to note the grammatical clues in the words to be located, for example, the masculine plural agreements of *surveillés* and *guidés*. Candidates must remember that they are dealing with a 'cut and paste' issue, in that the words they write in must provide an exact alternative those in the question.

3	(a)	Sometimes <i>peu</i> was gratuitously included with <i>suivis</i> , or <i>laissés</i> was offered, which is understandable given its agreement, but not in terms of its meaning.
	(b)	The answers for items (a) and (b) were sometimes reversed, so <i>suivis</i> could appear here.
	(c)	<i>exclusivement</i> was offered by some candidates, but how could an adverb replace a noun?
	(d)	An added accent on <i>détourne</i> was the most frequent copying mistake.
	(e)	This answer caused the most difficulty, and <i>pauvres</i> was occasionally preceded by <i>issus de milieux</i> .

#### Task 4

This exercise was usually not very well done as a number of candidates failed to manipulate the language of the text and resorted to straight lifts.

Common language errors included the gender of *le manque*, and the spelling of *les ressources*.

Many lost marks by confusing the issues of background *milieux* and location *quartiers* in sections (a), (b) and (d)). This error however was penalised only once.

There was also some doubt as to which piece of information was required for which question, particularly between items (c) and (d). As a result, some candidates found themselves repeating details in maybe two or three places.

<b>4</b>	<b>(a)</b>	While <i>enfants talentueux</i> was handled well, the concept of their proportion being similar in the different locations of their birth was not understood; hence there were a number of answers such as <i>qui naissent</i> which omitted either the pronoun <i>y</i> or a mention of both types of place.
	<b>(b)</b>	Some candidates thought that <i>les filières d'élite</i> were people, and many started their answers with <i>réservées</i> that they had found in the text, which resulted in answers which were more or less diametrically opposite in meaning to the true answer. Many answers referred to issues of location, rather than background.
	<b>(c)</b>	This was the best-answered item in this section, although a number forgot to change <i>efficacement</i> from an adverb to an adjective as required by the statement which formed the question. The large amount of space allowed for the three words required misled some into including a great deal of unnecessary material.
	<b>(d)</b>	This was a clear set-up for a subjunctive, but this opportunity was often missed. Even capable candidates quite often omitted any reference to intelligent/talented, presumably assuming that it went without saying and simply referred to the pupils' background. The second point here proved to be one of the more accessible ones in the exercise taken as a whole.
	<b>(e)</b>	This stimulus was taken in two ways by candidates: either as <i>à la rentrée prochaine, des volontaires de l'ENS iront ...</i> , or as <i>à la rentrée prochaine des volontaires de l'ENS, une cinquantaine de volontaires iront ...</i> . A lot of detail about the destination schools was given, including the first erroneous mention of their location in Provence. Some use of past tenses mistakenly appeared here and indeed in the next item as well. Others who had understood what was happening were guilty of supplying a statement that simply did not fit with the beginning of the sentence, eg: <i>enverra une cinquantaine de ses élèves dans 10 lycées....</i>
	<b>(f)</b>	Many provided good answers here, but answers in the past tense were quite common, as were flawed suggestions of the sort that an agreement would be concluded between five Parisian <i>lycées</i> and five provincial or even five rural <i>lycées</i> . Another regular error was the omission of a verb, whereas the whole task was aimed at generating a passive. Alternatively, some sought to define <i>un accord de partenariat</i> or to explain what it would achieve.

### Task 5

This exercise was a success for nearly all candidates, with the vast majority scoring full marks, and hardly any achieving fewer than 2.

### Task 6

This exercise was poorly done, scores of 0 and 1 being very common.

(a)	Few alighted on the correct concept - the most frequent suggestion was <i>ne font pas attention</i> .
(b)	This proved to be the most accessible question. A number of candidates hedged their bets by giving 2 answers, one of which was right, one wrong. In such instances only the first answer was considered.
(c)	Some better candidates had understood and provided the correct answer. Others, however, had possibly understood supplied items that failed to demonstrate full comprehension, e.g. <i>s'arrête de</i> .
(d)	There were very few correct answers; most of the suggestions bearing no resemblance to the meaning of <i>accrue</i> .

### Task 7

A certain number of candidates did manage full marks here but, equally, scores of 0 were quite frequent. It was not uncommon to find that this question had not been attempted. Where it was attempted, indiscriminate copying of phrases and words from the text resulted too often in answers that made little, if any, sense. Candidates also often failed to notice the future tense in the question.

### Language in Section B (5B):

Language in task 4 was often not well manipulated in relation to the beginnings of the sentences provided. The questions offered good opportunities to use structures (subjunctive, passive, tenses, *aider à*), and some candidates did use these well. Some indiscriminately copied chunks from the text. In task 6, many ignored the form of the stimulus, or answered at too great length. There were some pleasing transcriptions of *si on les a cassées ou écrasées*, but some bad versions also. Poor spelling of *commises* (*commisent, commis, comise*). Spelling of *rurales* not manipulated when masculine nouns were substituted for *zones*.



**Task 8**

Presumably because English was the language required, there was an unfortunate tendency for candidates to write as much as they could think of in response to each answer, perhaps hoping that the examiner would select the appropriate information and ignore the rest. This task caused huge loss of marks for an English-language task, with a disappointing number failing to break into double figures on the mark scale. While items (a) and (b) brought success to those with an eye for detail, the remaining questions caused considerable difficulty. A few candidates scored no marks, as they answered all the questions in French instead of in English.

<b>8</b>	<b>(a)</b>	This proved to be one of the more accessible questions, but quite a lot suggested that the ENS was responsible for organising/running the Festival.
	<b>(b) (i)</b>	A reasonable percentage of correct answers but misunderstandings of <i>séances</i> caused many to stumble. Some missed the one-to-one nature of the tutoring, or thought the latter and 'tuition' to be synonyms.
	<b>(b) (ii)</b>	There were five marks awarded for a basic comprehension of detail, yet many missed one of the marks. The mention of the partner schools was sometimes omitted, and <i>Toussaint</i> also caused problems. <i>Provence</i> cropped up again, and the whole-year basis of the tutorials for the remaining student was sometimes corrupted to suggest 'the rest of the year'.
	<b>(c)</b>	The verb <i>épauler</i> deterred virtually all candidates from scoring the mark for general support from a tutor, so this item merged into the next one of more focused help. The <i>classes préparatoires</i> were misunderstood in their role as a transitional stage into the ENS, and it was not made clear that the management which would be in constant touch with the staff in partner schools would be that of the ENS; the conditional perfect at the end of the appropriate portion of text further confused matters. Weaker candidates sometimes confused <i>s'inscrire</i> with <i>écrire</i> and suggested that the pupils are given 'help with writing'; quite a lot laboured under the misconception that the <u>tutors</u> are given money to help the students buy books and/or that the reason for helping the students to go abroad is to enable them to attend a linguistic(s) course or to do an exchange or work experience.
	<b>(d)</b>	Most conveyed correctly the point about getting into the ENS, but the second item was very rarely appreciated, in that the link between 'career' and 'talent' was not grasped.
	<b>(e)</b>	While most appreciated that the ENS was the most open establishment, the concept of a <i>grande école</i> caused huge difficulty; the majority of candidates rendered <i>des grandes écoles</i> as 'the big schools', thereby failing to show that they had understood that what is being talked about is an institution of higher education
	<b>(f)</b>	Most candidates had no idea here, and usually interpreted the tone of the passage by condemning the system in some way. Answers that could be credited were very much the exception – some of the wrong answers that figured quite a lot were that 'the world of education is doomed' and that 'the world of education is cloistered'.

**Task 9**

- It was pleasing to see that most candidates in question (f) did not write extensively and produced a quite condensed and concise answer. Most candidates had been well-prepared for this task, in terms of both language and argument.
- Although the stimulus material was not on a subject particularly familiar to the candidates, they evidently found it interesting and responded accordingly.
- Unfortunately, there were a large number of candidates who did not include a minimum of ten content points from the original text and thus had their range mark capped, although they had a large number of points to choose from. The best candidates had met this requirement by the middle of section (d).
- Items that caused particular difficulty included the following:
  - the names of languages received a capital letter;
  - a plural verb was often paired with a singular subject, and vice versa;
  - adjectival agreements were missed, e.g. *la langue occitane, les conventions européennes*;
  - *des* often appeared before a plural preceding adjective;
  - common television vocabulary was unknown, such as *la chaîne, une émission, à la télévision, la télé*;
  - the use of *ce qui* in contrast to *qui* was not appreciated;
  - there were problems with numbers in the rendering of 'a million';
  - the tense implications of *depuis* were often missed.

<b>9</b>	<b>(a)</b>	This was usually handled effectively.
	<b>(b)</b>	<i>le dessin</i> for 'art' and <i>les livres</i> or <i>la lecture</i> or <i>les romans</i> for 'literature' appeared a number of times. The fact that information is a plural concept in French was not noted by most. The majority were able to score at least two content points here.
	<b>(c)</b>	There was often pleasingly good use of <i>ceux</i> in such phrases as <i>ceux qui parlent cette langue</i> .
	<b>(d)</b>	<i>promouvoir</i> was not generally known, although the more enterprising candidates tried to get around the problem by using <i>la promotion</i> . The three linked points involving <i>la présence</i> were found to be the most accessible of all.
	<b>(e)</b>	While most had a go at the number of speakers of Occitan and the existence elsewhere of minority language television programmes, few attempted the remaining issues.
	<b>(f)</b>	The quality of candidates' writing tended to improve markedly at this point, at which they could start to play to their own strengths and avoid their areas of weakness. However, many were to be found cramming the answer full of flashy phrases which were frequently inappropriate; the subjunctive in particular suffered at this point.

## 2656 French: Culture and Society (Written Examination)

### General Comments

The general standard of answers presented by candidates sitting this examination appears to be steadily improving. 2008 saw a significant number of answers which bore evidence of thorough study of literary texts and, in some cases, non-literary topics, and it is clear that centres have coached their students well overall in the techniques of writing coherent and relevant essays using a broad range of language structures.

The trend towards the greater percentage of answers being on literary texts continues to grow, with roughly 75% of all answers being on either set texts or literary themes, which this year received a noticeably increased number of responses. The great majority of candidates had at least a solid knowledge of the text(s) they had studied; many had a most impressive knowledge and understanding not only of the content of the books and plays but of literary themes and techniques also, and in general centres are to be congratulated on the way they are preparing their candidates.

It is vital to remember that answers on non-literary topics require an equivalent amount of factual knowledge and evidence of serious study. This was certainly achieved by many candidates, but others tended to write rather general essays around the topic, or essays which attempted a relevant answer to the specific question but were largely unsupported by the necessary weight of pertinent factual information.

Rubric offences were few and far between, although again there were one or two cases of candidates answering two questions on the same text. At opposite extremes of the spectrum were a very small number of candidates who thought that only one question needed to be answered, and one who attempted almost every question, the answers diminishing in length down to a single sentence as time inexorably ebbed away! Such candidates tend to come from centres with very small entries and it must be assumed that they are not being given any real coaching in how to approach the examination.

Quality of language, as one would expect, continues to be variable but there were many examples of excellent practice and a lot of appropriate and often erudite vocabulary is being used (alongside plenty of grating Anglicisms, it must be said). The correct application of accents is however an area that few master consistently, and while these often are of only minor significance to successfully conveying meaning, the failure to distinguish between *ou* and *où*, or, especially, *a* and *à* are major shortcomings which frequently occur – *et* and *est* are also confused with surprising regularity. One area that candidates continue to find difficult to use correctly is the passive, the main faults being the use of indirect objects of active sentences as subjects of passive expressions, incorrect tenses (imperfect frequently used incorrectly) and failure to make past participles agree with subjects (or more seriously, use of infinitives instead of past participles).

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A: Textes littéraires prescrits

#### 1 (a) *La Peste*.

The number of candidates answering on *La Peste* had declined slightly since last year. Of those who did, the great majority chose the context question. It was mostly well answered. Candidates demonstrated a very thorough knowledge of this long text, and were able to point out the irony inherent in Tarrou's death, in that it comes after the battle against the plague has been largely won, a battle he has done much to help win as a founder member of the sanitary and health services, putting himself in contact on a regular basis with the dead and dying despite the obvious risk of infection: and surviving until the last moment. Candidates also proved able to analyse the passage well in order to demonstrate how Camus's use of language evokes compassion by the use of contrast between Tarrou as he was and as he now is, while better candidates were also able to comment on the reader's feelings of compassion for Rieux as well as Tarrou being evoked, and on the contrast between this passage and the otherwise largely neutral, non-emotional tone of the novel. The third element was least well done by all but the better candidates, as definitions of what constituted a *martyr moderne* were often very vague, or repeated much of what had been said in parts (i) and (ii). Some did however usefully develop the idea of Tarrou's somehow wishing to become a saint but without the intervention of God. None looked at this question from a more philosophical point of view regarding Camus's belief that the writer should be '*engagé*', or used Tarrou's key quotation: *J'ai décidé de me mettre du côté des victimes*,

1 (b) Only a few candidates chose this question. Some answered well, demonstrating how Cottard's importance was as a representative of the exact opposite attitude to the selfless, 'common good' attitude shown by Rieux, Tarrou & Rambert. Those candidates who explored the allegorical side of the novel showed that Cottard represents the collaborators. There were several unsuccessful answers, however, with a number of candidates not addressing the notion of importance and especially that of whether Cottard was a tragic character. (As he cannot see that true rewards come from putting your interests behind those of the wider community, he misses out on the moral and spiritual sense of identity that the fight against the plague brings). There were also cases of mistaken identity, with one candidate confusing Cottard with Joseph Grand.

2 Virtually no answers were received on *Regain*.

#### 3 (a) *Tueur sans gages*.

While only a very few answers were received on this text, at least some of these demonstrated that it is a text that can be studied very effectively at this level, with excellent analysis of the extract and a clear understanding of how the elements of the play exemplify the absurdity of existence that Ionesco is looking to convey.

(b) No answers to this question were received.

**4 (a) *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.**

This proved a very popular text, with plenty of takers for both the context and the essay question. Most candidates were easily able to set this passage in its context and most referred well to the aunt who didn't like men as the cause of the female characters' apparent off-handedness towards their respective paramours, and were able to use this as a basis for deciding whether the young lovers' complaints were justified. Most were able to demonstrate clearly that the relationship between master and servant here is certainly not the same as that which exists between M. Jourdain and Nicole, although few candidates expanded on the Cléonte-Covielle relationship by mentioning that it is Covielle who helps out Cléonte by coming up with the idea of the *Turquerie*. Better candidates, however, were able to see the difference in the actual passage between the nature of the examples of *sacrifices* chosen by the master and the earthier tasks performed by Covielle. The comic potential of this was effectively demonstrated and related to comic devices throughout the play, but hardly any picked up the fairly blatant innuendo in Covielle's *services*: we obviously have a candidature of great purity of mind!

- (b)** This question was quite often answered slightly superficially, being limited to observations about M. Jourdain dressing up and pretending to be what he is not and making a fool of himself. Many candidates were content with this level, also bringing in the scenes involving the Tailleur and the Mamamouchi. Very few gave good examples of how M. Jourdain is lied to and deceived through flattery throughout the play. Better candidates were able to offer a more profound analysis, referring to Dorante being a fake and the Maîtres in Acte 1 being two-faced., balancing their argument with the point that the three people who tell the truth (Cléonte/Nicole/Mme Jourdain.) are the ones that are ignored.

**5 No answers were received on *Un Amour de Swann*.**

**6 (a) *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle***

Candidates generally demonstrated a solid knowledge of the text and were able to set this passage in context with little difficulty – although a couple of candidates believed the quotation in part (i) referred to the imminent demise of the television set. Most however answered well, both in general terms about the attitude of parents towards children as bringers of tangible rewards, and more specifically about the possible unease the family felt at having agreed to consign Catherine to the scrap heap. The animosity, and causes thereof, between Josyane and Chantal were not always given quite enough attention, but candidates were generally very good at explaining Josyane's disappointment at gaining her certificate, referring to her love of doing homework after everyone else had gone to bed as it was the only peaceful time ever afforded her. Good candidates pointed out that having to leave school was the first step on Josyane's journey of assimilation into the stereotypical female lifestyles of her social background.

- 6 (b) Many candidates chose this question and answered it using a wealth of knowledge about the *politique nataliste* and the *allocations*, the growth of the HLM-dominated *banlieues*, etc. Others made interesting observations on the rise of consumerism. Fewer made very much reference to feminist issues. Where many candidates fell down – although most still scored quite highly because of their background knowledge – was by failing to point out that this is a novel and therefore must have some invention and artistic licence, as well as being seen from a particular and individual point of view. Weaker candidates did tend to lapse into storytelling quite frequently. Use of quotation from the text, however, was pleasingly frequent, accurate and apposite.

7 (a) **Les Mains Sales**

While still fairly popular, fewer candidates are answering on Sartre than two or three years ago. Overall, this is probably no bad thing, as the majority of candidates find the philosophical premises which underpin the play difficult to assimilate. Some do, nevertheless, clearly respond well to this level of complexity. The evidence is that the play is mostly well-known by candidates but with not infrequent exceptions where precise knowledge is rather insecure. While many candidates mastered this context well, pointing out the importance of *agir* and therefore of Hugo wanting to prove himself, fewer were those who remarked effectively on the reasons for Louis's lack of confidence in Hugo. Equally, while most (but not all) had little difficulty in relating the successful blowing up of the bridge by Ivan with Hugo's closing comment, only the better candidates connected it to Hugo's desire to carry out the assassination of Hoederer himself.

- (b) While fewer candidates attempted this question than 7(a), those who did generally found the title to their liking. Candidates pointed out that Hugo was clearly the pivotal character. Some inferred, but usually without stating specifically, that the other characters tended to be like puppets; others saw them much more as characters in their own right, especially Olga. Both views were on the whole reasonably well justified by candidates. Quotations from the text were often well used.

8 (a) **Candide**

Candidates were generally able to demonstrate successfully how Pangloss's philosophy that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds contrasts dramatically with the story of the awful, brutal events he recounts in this extract. Answers on the creation of humour in the passage concentrated on the dichotomy between Pangloss's brisk, matter-of-fact, rather unemotional tone (as candidates interpreted it) and the horror of what he is saying. They also referred often to the end of the passage where Pangloss seems to think that, because an enemy barony suffered the same fate, this made everything OK. Overall, however, analysis of the author's technique in creating humour lacked clarity. Candidates often omitted ideas such as the accumulation of the horrific details of the slaughter of the Thunder-ten-Tronckhs and the morbid humour it produces, especially through the contrast with Candide's naivety and positive outlook (at this point). The use of Candide's hyperbolic language and its total inappropriateness in the circumstances was also seldom mentioned. In part (iii) candidates were generally able to demonstrate a good knowledge of the text to explain how Candide comes to question Pangloss's teachings, although too often this took the form of largely uncommented narration of events.

- (b) This question was generally not very well answered, as most candidates failed to appreciate the difference between sentimental love and carnal lust, and the impact of these on different characters at different points in the *conte*. Nor did they really appreciate the idea of Candide being dragged along from mishap to mishap because of love, maintaining somewhat sketchily that issues such as war and religion were equally powerful motors for the unfolding of events. It was felt that many candidates who answered this question failed to demonstrate any depth of understanding of the workings of the *conte*.

## Section B: Sujets littéraires

### 9 – 14

These questions attracted more responses than in recent previous examinations, but still far fewer than the questions set on the prescribed texts. A significant number of candidates did actually use one of the prescribed texts to answer the literary themes questions: *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle* was used to answer questions 9 (Children) and 10 (Women). Those using it to answer Q.9 often wrote competent answers but really failed to tackle the question of the importance attached to children; although the sociological angle taken by many (children born purely as a means of bringing in income through the *Prime*) was a relevant aspect, not many candidates were able to exploit the stylistic effectiveness of having the events seen and the commentary narrated through the eyes and words of a child (however 'unchildlike' in certain ways she might be.). Candidates who answered using *Vipère au Poing* were often more successful, quoting from the text and seeing exactly from a child's eye the difficulties of such a family existence.

The Rochefort text was used more convincingly in answer to Q.10, where candidates showed effectively how the male-dominated hierarchy of the society described did indeed put barriers in the way of any goals that women might have, using the conclusion of the text where Josyane appears to be starting off down the same road as her own mother, almost despite herself, as a clear demonstration of the very difficulty in overcoming such impediments.

Q.11 (War) attracted a number of answers using *Candide* as the chosen text. This needed great skill to produce an effective answer of sustained relevance, as the role of war in this text is on the whole peripheral, despite the protagonist's early experiences of the horrors of warfare. Just to say that Candide's opinion of Optimism is affected by his being subjected to war tended to provide insufficient material for a fully-developed argument. Other texts used in answer to Q.11 were *Le Silence de la Mer* and *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre*. The former has been used regularly and tends to produce answers which narrate the plot and lack analytical qualities; this was sometimes the case again this year, although at least one very accomplished essay demonstrating the evolution in the personality of the German officer during the course of the war was received. Maupassant's contes often proved a successful medium for tackling this question. Candidates who had studied them had a very good knowledge of the different stories and used examples from a number of different contes such as *Boule de Suif* itself, *Un Duel*, *Deux Amis* and *La Mère Sauvage* to produce well-structured and coherently developed essays, although again a number of candidates tended to narrate the plots rather than go in for any form of analysis,

Q.12 (Individual and Society) once again brought *L'Étranger* into play. In many cases, this produced essays which very soon lost sight of the essay title and lapsed into predictable and often not very profound analyses of the personality of Meursault. Some candidates did however use this text extremely well to answer this question, exploring the theme of how Meursault's refusal to comply with social expectations caused society in general to feel anger (caused by lack of understanding) towards him. *Le Gone du Chaâba* was also used to answer this question but such responses often seemed forced and fitted the essay title with difficulty. This text was also used for Q.14 (Environment), showing good powers of description of the settings of the novel but not really exploring in depth the importance of the changing spatial dynamic. It was a pleasant surprise to see *Madame Bovary* being used for this question also, often with an impressive degree of understanding of how the spatial settings affect Emma's behaviour in that complex novel.

Finally, Q.13 (Love) produced probably the weakest collection of answers within this section. *Candide* was not used very successfully (whether Candide's relationship with the theories of Optimism was one of love or hate was an angle which really had little hope of success!) A number of candidates had studied *Bonjour Tristesse*, but while their knowledge of the story was sound, answers on this text tended to lack any real direct relevance to the question or powers of analysis and relied heavily on plot summary.

### Section C: Sujets non-littéraires

- 15 (a)** This question received only a small number of responses, and these varied in quality. Better candidates demonstrated awareness of legislation that favours the playing of music of French origin on French radio stations and associated policies governing French radio, but very few were able to analyse how successful this has been as a means of promoting new French artists in recent years, or indeed actually mention any *artistes francophones* who had gained from this.
- (b)** Answers to this question were often much too general, lacked any form of facts and figures and displayed little if any evidence of having studied the amount of internet usage prevalent in France today. Consequently, few were able to explore any potential social or personal problems that this might cause, or produce any evidence that France suffers from 'internet addiction', and just how dangerous and widespread a phenomenon it is.
- 16 (a)** This was a popular question. Most answers received provided competent responses, demonstrating reasonable evidence of study with knowledge of the extent of the youth unemployment problem in France, the existence of training schemes to help young people find jobs and (to a lesser extent) how successful these were proving. A great deal was known about the *Baccalauréat* and its failings, but candidates were less confident on the fall-out at university level. They certainly had been taught about the government's initiatives but very few understood the *CPE*. There were nevertheless some interesting ideas put forward in coherent terms about what more might be done at different levels to get more young people into employment.
- (b)** Quite a number of candidates attempted this question but very few were armed with the necessary factual data to answer it really effectively. Too often, candidates produced a general essay on leisure opportunities in France which very quickly strayed away from specific relevance to the question.



- 17 (a) This was quite a popular question, and produced some interesting answers well-supported by evidence of study, although this often was a little one-dimensional, as candidates concentrated on the financial support lent to French cinema by French television channels and therefore concluded in many cases that the influence of TV on cinema had been anything but *néfaste*. It should be said that while the majority of such essays were by no means without merit, the best candidates provided a balanced analysis which also brought into play the argument that the quality of films being produced had, in many cases, declined through an (arguably) television-driven search for more instant and less challenging gratification. In general terms, it was felt that candidates made insufficient reference to specific films.
- 17 (b) This question was on the whole very well answered by candidates. While not all were certain of the exact significance of 'Golden Age', in many ways this did not prevent them from producing sharp, well-balanced essays comparing recent French films with those from bygone eras. This allowed a coherent essay structure and the clear expression of opinion and judgment, all of which contributed to the success of many candidates on this question. In particular, a number of candidates used the advent of technological wizardry to demonstrate one area in which film-making had evolved (for the better, according to most of our young cinephiles).
- 18 (a) Very few candidates attempted this question. Extremely thin knowledge of the topic was demonstrated with some candidates unable even to mention by name a single threatened species!
- (b) This was a much more popular question on the Environment topic. While candidates' actual knowledge of environmental disasters caused by the transportation of oil was limited, generally candidates compensated for this by showing very good knowledge of the situation in France regarding the usage of alternative types of energy. Thus the better candidates were able to adapt their knowledge and remain relevant to the question while still demonstrating a wide range of detailed study of the subject, i.e. by arguing that if France continued to pursue the development of renewable sources of energy then such ecological catastrophes were less likely to occur in the future. Weaker candidates allowed themselves to trot out mostly pre-learned essays about France's nuclear energy programme, which failed to tackle the question head on.
- 19 (a) This question was attempted by only a small number of candidates. The effects of EU membership were not something which many seemed to have considered in their studies and content was often very thin and general.
- (b) This was a more popular and successfully answered question than 19(a). Candidates had plenty of information available about the extent and impact of urbanisation on the lives of local people. Those centres who had studied the Côte d'Azur often fared very well. However, one prevalent tendency was to write far too much in answer to this question, with the result that relevant information became lost in a sea of unnecessary data, often about general tourism issues, and essays tended to lose logical progression in their structure.

- 20 (a)** This question was popular amongst candidates and generally answered competently. Better candidates focused on the question in order to evaluate whether contemporary France was basically racist or not. While comparison with past attitudes was relevant, some candidates tended to spend too long recounting the history of the Algerian War and its consequences for the French population. Knowledge of government attitudes and legislation was inconsistent, but candidates were generally able to use examples and statistics to outline the attitudes of the native French population towards the immigrant community, and to evaluate how successfully the immigrants were integrated into the country. The recent riots were incorporated effectively, but weaker candidates did tend to limit their argument to the fact that it was more difficult to get a job if you had an Arab name than a French one: worth mentioning, but not worth endless detailed examples, one felt.
- (b)** Candidates generally demonstrated the knowledge expected, showing awareness of the FN's programme and also, in the case of better candidates especially, giving coherent explanations of how Le Pen's personal charisma had gained votes for his party – some candidates were clearly admirers of the man, and saw nothing racist in his policies at all! More commonly, candidates were able to balance what they saw as positive and negative aspects of Right Wing politics quite successfully.
- 21 (a)** Very few candidates attempted this question. Answers lacked detail and evidence of having studied the issue seriously. There was little in the way of solid statistical awareness of the number of French people actively involved in sport on a regular basis.
- (b)** This was a very popular question. Candidates were able to cite an abundance of facts and figures, but their approach to the question of the modernity of the disease was often rather superficial, relying on the increase of immigration from high-risk countries and, in some cases, the apparently inexorable increase in the general promiscuity of the French! Few mentioned the modern nature of the campaigns to combat AIDS - the use of technology in raising awareness, the use of cartoons and advertising, and of the internet, or the fact that there has been a vast increase in the number of French people willing to be screened - in short, that attitudes are changing.

## **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. The question of how much candidates are writing in answer to questions is starting to become an issue. Essays of well over 1000 words are becoming increasingly common, and this tends – though not exclusively – to reflect a desire to get down ‘everything I know’ about a subject rather than concentrate on remaining relevant to the question and writing an essay which develops logically. Additionally, essays of this length are more likely to lead to increased incidence of linguistic error (or alternatively may be accurate but have all the signs of being pre-learned), and certainly cause a decline in standards of handwriting, which can lead to problems of legibility. Candidates should be encouraged to try to restrict the length of their answers in cases where an excessive number of words can cause irrelevance to intrude. In many cases, less is more!

## 2657: French Culture and Society - Coursework

### General Comments

This year it was the much wider range of suitable topics that featured most frequently in moderators' reports. This showed that coursework continues to be a great motivator that can inspire candidates into carrying out independent research with commitment and enthusiasm. Of course, much of this research is done through the Internet, a double-edged weapon which can lure some candidates into using, as if they were their own, language and ideas that are not. The quality of work was good or very good - some pieces were a pleasure to read for their content but also for the quality of the French - with fewer sub-standard pieces than in the past.

On the practical side, the major problems were related to plans, short essays not identified by centres and clerical errors which all had to be reported and corrected. In such events, most centres were very prompt in responding to the moderator's request, for which they are thanked.

### Topics

Centres submitted a wide range of suitable topics, nearly all clearly linked to the French-speaking world. Although they still feature, it was good to see less emphasis on immigration and racism (Le Pen certainly has lost his attraction, at least on this side of the Channel) and, although they were still much in evidence, the *émeutes de 2005* seem to have lost in popularity. Many topics were drawn from current affairs, with the new President and his wives, past and present, a firm favourite. The cinema also attracted many; it was good to see that new films such as *La Môme* or *Les Choristes* are taking over from *La Haine* and the various Pagnol films. Of course, social and environmental and ethical issues continue to motivate candidates, as do topics dealing with history, literature and the arts – all very appropriate. When candidates are allowed to follow their own interests, the level of research and the originality displayed often make their essays very interesting to read.

There are still some centres, fewer than in the past it must be said, where candidates all write on the same topic – generally a literary one. Such an approach is not in the spirit of coursework; as it does not encourage individual research or originality. It must be avoided.

Literary texts formed the basis of approximately 20% of the work that was submitted this year. They all provided suitable material to display knowledge and analytical skills, although texts with more substance – even if slightly more demanding – do offer more scope. The most successful pieces came from centres that left the candidates free to select their own angle because the writing that ensued had a genuine freshness.

### Titles

Titles were better chosen this year. Many candidates seem to have realised that a well thought-out title, often phrased as a question, can give focus to an essay. There were still a few vague titles (*Le Moulin Rouge*, *L'obésité en France*, *Les causes de la violence juvénile*) which did not allow candidates to develop an argument and to make a case but instead encouraged them to describe or narrate.

Long and unwieldy titles should also be avoided because, when candidates try to answer them, they almost inevitably end up skimming or omitting certain aspects and cannot do themselves justice in achieving a balance by addressing all parts of their question within the word limit.

As teachers are allowed to help candidates formulate their titles, it was surprising to note how many contained language errors. Teachers are reminded that they are allowed – indeed encouraged – to correct language errors in titles and plans and it was disappointing to see that this had not been done in quite a number of cases.

### **Manner of submission**

#### **Plan**

A number of plans were missing this year. Moderators had to write to centres to request the missing items. If plans written in English were rare this time, many did not conform to the instructions in section 6.3 of the Coursework Guidance booklet. Some exceeded one side of A4 or would have done, had the same font been used as for the essay. Plans that are extensive and excessively detailed must not be accepted. Full sentences are not acceptable, let alone full paragraphs. In some cases, candidates reproduced verbatim paragraphs from the plan in the essay. If this happens, centres should insist on the use of quotation marks and exclude such paragraphs from the word count. This may lead to the essay being too short and in turn to a scaling down of the language marks. As plans may be corrected, allowing such practice is akin to allowing plagiarism and should be treated as such.

It is rather disappointing that so few candidates seem to understand the true value of making a plan: it gives the essay its structure. Far too many plans seem to be mere summaries, at times devised after the essay as been written.

#### **Bibliography**

A high percentage of research material came from Internet sources and these are not always acknowledged as they should be (see Coursework Guidance booklet, section 7.7). All the same, moderators reported an improvement in the way sources were acknowledged, as in the use of footnotes.

Quotations from sources that candidates have used must be clearly shown as such in the essay: quotation marks must be used - mentioning the source in the bibliography does not suffice. Using a different font or italicising quotations is a good idea. Moderators detected more cases of plagiarism this year than in the past. Centres are reminded that it is their duty to detect plagiarism. They should not accept work which is not the candidate's own. This is why both teacher and candidates are required to sign to authenticate the work.

#### **Length**

Fewer and fewer candidates seem to be opting to write two short essays. Those who do tend to be the weaker candidates, for whom this is better suited. To gain high marks with two short essays, candidates have to show skill in formulating a concise argument, and this is not an easy option.

This year a greatly increased number of short essays (i.e. shorter than the minimum stated in the Coursework Guidance booklet, section 7.8) were not detected by centres and were assessed as if they had the required number of words. Many marks had to be amended for this reason. Greater care over the reliability of word counts is needed. If a scaling of the language marks has been applied, it should be clearly shown on the candidate's individual mark sheet, so that the moderator is in no doubt as to what has taken place. Quotations are not part of the word count. If the number of words submitted falls below the lowest figures stated in section 7.8 of the Coursework Guidance booklet, such a single essay must be assessed as if it were one of two 'short' essays, with 0 awarded for the missing second piece. In other words, the total needs to be halved.

## Administrative matters

Most centres follow administrative procedures scrupulously but clerical errors were not uncommon (incorrect additions on the individual mark sheets or in transcription from the mark sheet to MS1 especially). When a request for amendment is made, forms should be returned to the moderator within the prescribed time span; if not, another request has to be sent, which is wasteful and time-consuming for all parties.

A few cover sheets were either missing or incomplete (missing candidate's number, word count or bibliography mostly). Word counts should be accurate – some proved to be unreliable. Teacher's comments on the cover sheets, though not essential, are welcome and appreciated by moderators, particularly when they provided an analysis on how the centre's marks were reached.

## Content

Few were those who had not researched their topic well. Extensive and detailed knowledge of the subject matter is expected in essays at this level. If this knowledge is not used to answer the title, to illustrate and strengthen the case the candidate is trying to make, then it alone will not be enough to reach the higher marks. Evidence of selection is also required. Factual evidence should not be used as an end in itself, but should be selected and pointed to answering the title.

Candidates are still inclined to narrate or describe rather than analyse or evaluate. Structuring an essay remains a problem for many. Sometimes they answer the title question in the first paragraph, if not the first sentence, and the rest is description or narration until the conclusion when they refer again to the title. The best essays were those that had been carefully planned and fully geared towards answering the title, taking the reader along as the case was being made. Another frequent fault was to leave personal opinions to the conclusion. The whole essay is meant to be an expression of the candidate's theories and views.

Fewer non-discursive pieces were produced this year, possibly because teachers have realised it is harder to score highly on grid 6A2 when one relies on narrative and/or empathy.

## Language

The quality of language continues to improve. Rare are those whose language is considered 'Poor' and most made genuine efforts to introduce variety in their language. Some candidates had highly developed language skills, with extensive vocabulary and an excellent command of the A2 structures; they applied their knowledge of grammar consistently and with flair. Many had more modest, but nonetheless appreciable, qualities and often showed good variety but lost control of accuracy.

Areas of weakness include range and use of tenses (present, imperfect, pluperfect), position and formation of verbs in questions, use of future after *quand*, gratuitous overuse of the subjunctive whenever *que* appears in a sentence, use of *lequel / laquelle*, absence of possessive pronouns or of possessive adjectives, use of prepositions (particularly after verbs) and articles. The use of the passive, however, seems to have been mastered.

Although it is pleasing to see candidates using a range of complex structures and ambitious vocabulary, it is of little value when the meaning becomes obscure because of mis-use or anglicisms. This tends to happen when candidates have used sources in English which they try to translate into French. Some expressions were frequently misused (*c'est/il est; il s'agit de; quant à moi* (instead of *à mon avis*); so were individual words (*les Françaises* – regardless of their sex – *manquer, une issue, concerner; regarder*).

Finally, candidates must remember to check their essays thoroughly to avoid basic errors (agreements, endings, genders). These are 'expensive' mistakes which can easily be avoided. That being said, some managed to produce virtually error-free sophisticated language, for which candidates 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, especially for the better candidates.

Grid 6A(1) rewards the amount and quality of relevant information displayed by the candidate in supporting his/her case. To gain access to the higher bands, the whole essay has to be focused on answering the title, not merely refer to it in the introduction and the conclusion. Centres tend to award marks in the 'Very Good' band to essays which show a great deal of knowledge about the topic but which are only related, as opposed to relevant, to the titles. This year, there were a number of 'Excellent' essays, but not as many as teachers thought. At the other end of the scale, hardly any candidates knew very little about their subject, although some did not go much beyond general knowledge. As for grid 6A(2), it rewards the quality of the argument that is developed in the essay. This includes the structure, the linkage and development of ideas and the general progression of the piece as a whole. Moderators tend not to rate the sense of purpose of essays as highly as teachers; the latter have inside knowledge and know what candidates are trying to prove, following discussions at the planning stage. Outsiders take the essays at face value. Finally, introduction and conclusion are not add-ons: they must be an integral part of the argument. Language marks are generally placed in the correct bands but teachers more frequently go for the higher of the two marks.

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 moderators' input and moderators appreciated centres' co-operation.

One must praise the teachers for the hard work and enthusiasm they engender in their students and their insistence on high standards.

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced Subsidiary GCE French 3861  
June 2008 Assessment Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		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	59	51	43	36	29	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2653	Raw	60	45	40	36	32	28	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
<b>3861 (Agg Code)</b>	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
<b>3861 (Agg Code)</b>	26.55	47.07	64.64	79.58	91.25	100.0	2904

2904 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam\\_system/understand\\_ums.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

**Advanced GCE French 7861  
June 2008 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
<b>2654/01 &amp; 03</b>	Raw	60	48	43	38	33	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
<b>2655</b>	Raw	80	54	47	41	35	29	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
<b>2656</b>	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
<b>2657</b>	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
<b>7861 (Agg Code)</b>	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
<b>7861 (Agg Code)</b>	35.20	65.43	83.29	94.42	98.58	100.0	2256

2256 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam\\_system/understand\\_ums.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication



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