

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE French (1226)

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1226 1F Listening and Responding

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some good performances. Candidates were well prepared for the different test types although open-ended questions requiring candidates to answer in either English or French remain daunting for weaker candidates.

The questions which require the recognition of single lexical items (Q1-5, Q12-16) or short phrases (Q6-10, Q19-23) were well done although individual items of vocabulary caused problems. The vocabulary for activities in Q1-5 was well known but items of clothing in Q 12–16 were less well known, in Q12 *jupes*, and in Q13 *sweats* caused some candidates problems. Q6-10 were generally accessible , Q 8 *Je travaille à la caisse* however, proved difficult for many candidates. The vocabulary for jobs around the home in Q 19-23 was less well known , particularly Q 19 *Je fais la cuisine*, Q20 *Je sors les poubelles* and in Q22 *Je fais la vaisselle*.

The questions that were intended to discriminate did so and whereas better candidates scored well in the overlap questions targeted at grades D and C (Q11, Q17, Q18 and Q24), weaker candidates found these more daunting. Q17 proved to be the most accessible although weaker candidates tend to choose their answers on the basis of single words rather than listening to the whole, this leads them to incorrect answers. For example the mention of the word *école* in the phrase, *Je dois prendre le car pour aller à l'école* led many to incorrectly tick answer (ix) *ses matières préférées.*, the mention of the word *mère* i.e. family led them to tick answer (viii) *ses frères et soeurs*. Q24 proved harder as it required candidates to distinguish between tenses and to recognise negation, again weaker candidates tend not to listen to the whole but to tick answers based on single word recognition, often the first word they hear, for example upon hearing, *Avant je jouais au basket*, they immediately ticked (i) *basket* without listening to the end of the sentence which was, *mais maintenant je n'ai pas le temps*. Q18 required the recognition of opinions and proved difficult for all but the better candidates. It involved the use of paraphrasing e.g. in part (iv) matching *ce ne sont pas les vêtements que les jeunes aiment porter aujourd'hui* with *démodé* in the answers and the recognition of synonyms eg in part (v) *laid* for *moche*

Q11 required answers in French and was generally well done with the majority of candidates scoring some marks. Dates continue to prove difficult for some candidates and many failed to recognise *12 mai* in part (a), candidates continue to find it difficult to distinguish between the sounds of *deux* and *douze*, *2 mai* was the most common incorrect answer. Many weaker candidates gave random answers and answers such as *octobre*, *novembre*, *décembre* etc were not unusual. Candidates scored well on part (b) but incorrect answers included *2 semaines*, *12 nuits*, *3 lits*, *3 livres* (a missing hearing presumably of *nuits*) Part c was well done but incorrect answers would indicate that weaker candidates do not hear the correct sounds, with answers such as *balcome*, *valkon*, *ballcom*, *vacuum* for *balcon* , *saile de bain*, *sain de bain* for *salle de bain(s)*. Likewise in part (d) *parking* was heard as *packing*, *packaging* even though such answers made no sense. Whilst in these questions, marks are awarded for communication and candidates did score marks with incorrect spellings, it should be noted that poor spelling can lead to information not being communicated particularly where inaccurate spelling creates a new word in either English or French. Some candidates wrote answers based on what one would expect rather than what was heard eg *télévision*, *douche* and *mini-bar*.

Q25-26 and Q27-28 required answers in English. Performance on these questions was better than in previous years but they continue to be a good discriminator. Whilst better candidates are able to listen to the whole, the performance of weaker candidates is characterised by “snatched” listening i.e. the recognition of a single key words around which they build incorrect answers, based often upon imagination rather than what is heard. Q25-26 proved to be the most accessible with many scoring 2 marks on Q26(a). Unfortunately of those that didn’t score on this question, many wrote the answers in French, no marks are awarded for answers in the wrong language. In Q25 (a) numbers remain a problem for weaker candidates, whilst many recognised 12, *quatorze* was variously rendered as 21, 41, 40, 4, again many incorrect answers lacked logic such as *from 2 to 41*. Q26(b) was well done by many candidates but weaker candidates gave incorrect answers based on prior knowledge rather than on listening to the extract eg *they play for the national team, they are international players* or simply *they are French*. The most common incorrect answer was that *they teach at the school*.

Q27-28 proved more demanding. Many candidates did not pick up on (or ignored) the word *exactly* in Q27 (a) and simply wrote *France* as an answer instead of *the South of France*. Surprisingly some candidates failed to gain a mark for *camping* in Q27 (b). Better candidates scored well on Q28 (a) but weaker candidates again often gave answers based on the understanding of one word eg *historiques* which led to answers such as *historical museums* rather than *monuments* (the correct answer) or *parcs* in *parcs de loisirs* which led to the answer *parks* rather than *theme parks*. Q28 (b) proved the hardest for weaker candidates, the mention of 10 in *ça prend 10 heures* led to incorrect answers such as *it closes at 10 o'clock* (a reference to the theme parks in Q 28a) or *has to go to bed at 10 o'clock*. Some candidates invented answers such as *she is too young to go on the rides* (possibly thinking the 10 referred to her age).

There were few rubric infringements but unfortunately in Q11, Q25-26 Q27-28 there are still some candidates who answer in the wrong language for which no marks are awarded.

As always the performance of better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the questions
- sound knowledge of core vocabulary
- listening to the whole rather than homing in on individual words
- identifying cognates and familiar words in unfamiliar contexts
- attention to detail
- applying logic
- reading over their answers

1226 1H Listening and Responding

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some excellent performances. The questions that were intended to discriminate did so but the majority of candidates understood enough, and felt confident enough, to attempt the whole paper and there were very few blank answers. There was evidence of some good listening and exam skills. Many candidates had used the five minutes reading time well (underlining key words in the title, rubric and questions, annotating questions) generally using the time well to anticipate what they were about to hear. The performance of weaker candidates was characterised by lack of attention to detail, poor reading of the questions, "snatched" listening based on the identification of single words rather than listening to the extract as a whole, mishearing and imagination. There were still some candidates who were unable to cope with the demands of the Higher paper and for whom the experience must have been demoralising, these candidates would have possibly benefited from taking the Foundation rather than the Higher paper.

The performance on the overlap questions (Q1, Q2, Q4 and Q8) was generally better than at Foundation level. However, the performance of weaker candidates was similar to that of Foundation level candidates (see Foundation level report). In Q1 many candidates scored full marks giving them a confident start to the paper. Q4 proved slightly more demanding with candidates having to distinguish between tenses and recognise negation. Q2 proved the most difficult of the overlap questions, this question required candidates to identify opinions and involved the use of paraphrasing e.g. in part (iv) matching *ce ne sont pas les vêtements que les jeunes aiment porter aujourd'hui* with *démodé* in the answers and the recognition of synonyms eg in part (v) *laid* for *moche*. Q8 required short answers in French as was well done with the majority of candidates scoring well. Although answers are marked for communication and candidates did score marks with incorrectly spelt answers, the level of accuracy was generally better at Higher level. However, examiners did comment on poor spelling, lack of awareness of syntax and the inability of some candidates to record their answers unambiguously or even write what they mean.

This was also true of Q3. Many candidates successfully identified C as the correct answer and were able to express clearly reasons for the choice. The word *près* caused some problems, some candidates heard this as *après* and gave incorrect answers such as *après le collègue*, some heard it as *prenez* and wrote *prenez l'école*. Others gave inaccurate information such as *près du centre-ville* rather than *au centre -ville*. The word *magasin* was rendered as *magazine* by weaker candidates thus altering the meaning of their answer. Some candidates gave illogical, contradictory answers as *un grand jardin et assez petit*. As at Foundation level there was evidence that some candidates don't hear the correct sounds eg *parler au travail* instead of *aller au travail*, *j'adore ma chambre* for *quatre chambres*.

Q5 -6 were multiple choice questions in French and were generally better done than in previous years. However, poor performance on these questions is again characterised by candidates ticking the answer containing the first word they recognise in the extract eg upon hearing the word *agricole* in the sentence *dans le passé c'était une région agricole* they immediately incorrectly tick answer c (*agricole*) in Q4(i), even though the tense is past and the sentence continues *mais tout a changé et maintenant la région est connue pour ses attractions*. Q5 (ii) and Q6 (iii) were the most accessible.

Q7 and Q9 were targeted at A* and proved difficult for all but the best candidates. Q9 was the most accessible with many candidates scoring some marks. Again the recognition of individual words rather than listening to the whole leads candidates to incorrect choices. Q7 proved the most difficult. This question required candidates to match numbers to paraphrased answers. Part (iii) proved the most accessible with many candidates successfully matching 31% *disent lire pour le travail scolaire* with answer C *ils lisent pour l'école*. Part (iv) proved the most difficult with many candidates unable to match 46% *préfèrent écouter des conseils des copains* with answer H *ils lisent des livres recommandés par des amis*.

Performance on the questions requiring answers in English was better than in previous years with the majority of candidates scoring some marks. However, as always, open-ended questions requiring answers in English are a good discriminator. There were some excellent performances from the better candidates but only the better candidates were able to supply the detail and accuracy required at this level. Although candidates generally understood the gist of the extract, lack of attention to detail often cost candidates marks. The performance of weaker candidates was characterized by the following. Firstly mishearing the sounds eg in Q10d the word *blessures* gave rise to incorrect answers about *too much pressure*. In Q10c *origine* was heard as *régime* by some which gave rise to answers such as, *he liked the regime/he wanted to return to the regime*. In some cases candidates incorrectly match French sounds with sounds in English, the word *blessure* (in Q10d) was often rendered as *blister*. Secondly, latching on to key words and building answers around them eg in Q11d many candidates correctly identified *malades* in *dont les parents sont gravement malades* but wrote incorrect answers about *sick children*. Thirdly, confusing different elements of the transcript (also linked to the identification of single words rather than listening to the whole) and then putting them together in one answer. In Q10a and Q10b many candidates confused *son grand-père* with *son père* and wrote answers for Q10a such as *he was a famous French footballer*. Fourthly lack of attention to detail eg in Q10c (*son père voulait retourner dans son pays d'origine*) many ignored the reference to *son père* and gave incorrect answers such as *he (Yannick) wanted to return to his native country*. This lack of attention to detail also led candidates to give ambiguous answers eg in Q11a *sa première chanson a été numéro 1 au hit-parade* was expressed by many as *he became/was number one-* which has a totally different meaning in the general context of tennis and did not score. Likewise in Q11b many simply wrote *organises tennis for young people* without giving the full details ie *in large towns/cities*, this meant that many scored 1 mark and not the 2 available. Finally pure invention, many candidates fail to recognise familiar vocabulary in unfamiliar contexts and guess answers eg, in Q10b many candidates gave answers with dates *1990, 1987, 1977* probably based on a reading of Q11 rather than what they heard for Q10. In Q10d *he suffered from a bad back/legs/ankle/arms* was a very common incorrect answer. Likewise for Q11d *homeless children, orphans, abandoned children* were common incorrect answers.

There were few rubric infringements, but unfortunately for the questions requiring answers in French or English, there were a number of candidates who answered in the wrong language, for which no marks are awarded. There were also candidates who answered in pencil, candidates should be told to write in pen, preferably black.

As highlighted in previous years, the performance of the better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the rubric
- listening to the whole rather than honing in on individual items of vocabulary
- attention to detail, giving full rather than partial answers
- expressing themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in either English or French and relating their answers to facts in the extract
- applying logic
- reading over and correcting their answers.

1226 2F & 2H Speaking

Candidates built on previous years' strong performances in the oral test and clearly used classroom practice to perform well across most aspects of the examination. There was an even performance across the majority of rôle plays and the conversation section although examiners reported fewer candidates reaching the highest mark bands in the conversation.

Rôle play A

This generally provided a secure basis for marks and offered encouragement to most candidates to attempt the B rôle play. However there were significantly fewer candidates who scored full marks in this element of the examination and weaker candidates again found this element more demanding.

It is evident that candidates are more aware of items of food and drink, clothes and classroom objects but many were unable to score well in familiar situations in this rôle play. All situations are well covered in textbooks and are taken from the minimum core vocabulary. Many found greater difficulty with items requested in A1, types of room were not widely known. A6, *serviette* and *savon* were unknown and *brosse* was badly pronounced or anglicised. A7, *chapeau* continues to cause problems, *écharpe* was so badly mispronounced as to make it unrecognisable and *ballon* often in English or a strange variation of the intended word. *Dépliant* was rarely attempted and mostly incorrect in A9. A10, *miroir* was rarely heard, although *glace* was. The objects in A12, other than *sac*, were the least successful and *tasse* and *assiette* were rarely heard. *Caisse* continues to be a problem for many candidates, most commonly pronounced as *casse* or *cassé*, neither of which could be credited.

Learning of the minimum core vocabulary is essential for these common items that are in everyday use in survival situations and Teacher-examiners should be aware that a variety of vocabulary are used over the twelve rôle plays, particularly in the new specification with the wider range of situations.

There remains confusion where a candidate combined two responses. It is not necessary for teacher examiners to ask again for a quantity, colour or size. Teacher examiners are reminded that responses may be combined without penalty. Where this occurred it had a negative effect on candidates who were confused that they were being asked to repeat an answer they had already given.

Rôle play B

The majority of candidates were able to experience some success in rôle-play B although there was an increase in the numbers of candidates scoring zero. The rôle plays challenged Foundation Level candidates and provided Higher level candidates with an accessible beginning to their speaking examination. Candidates should be advised that only rarely will one word utterances be possible to satisfy the demands of the B rôle-play.

Marks are lost if the required message is only partially completed. Candidates should check that they communicate the entire message indicated by the words and pictures on their card.

Many candidates successfully answered the unpredictable questions. However *Quand voulez-vous travailler ?*, *Quelle est ta matière préférée ?* and *Comment vas-tu au travail ?* were poorly answered, even by a significant number of more able candidates at both levels.

Candidates cannot be credited for their answer, however appropriate it may be when teacher-examiners rephrase the unpredictable question in any way.

A significant number of candidates offered items of vocabulary other than those indicated in the rôle plays and centres are reminded that where there is oblique candidates must offer one of items as part of the message required. This was particularly the case when candidates were saying where they would like to work, how they get to school or where they work at the weekend. Similarly, if more than one item is offered only the first will be marked, even if it is incorrect and the others correct.

Although many candidates score highly, particularly those at Higher Level, candidates should be aware that tense errors affect the communication of a task and that poor tense usage will reduce the marks gained. There was a considerable number of candidates at both levels who used infinitive or imperfect forms for the present tense of *er* verbs.

Most candidates were able to attempt the four tasks although for a significant number the framing of questions and common question words are difficult and such tasks are often not clearly communicated, particularly when attempting such tasks as 'Ask what your penfriend is going to wear', 'Ask how much your penfriend earns' and *Est-ce qu'il faut changer (des trains) ?* were particularly difficult for many candidates and few were able to master the use of obligation. However some more able candidates were able to get round this by alternative means. Task 4 continues to be a good discriminator within many of the rôle plays.

Vocabulary within *B1* was not widely known in and this situation proved to be the most difficult for candidates at both levels yet is included in most text books albeit in earlier years.

In *B2* *pièce* proved problematic and in *B11* *emplacement* was virtually unknown by candidates at both levels.

Rôle play C

This was much more successfully attempted again this year and many examiners reported that Teacher Examiners and candidates appeared at ease with the rôle play. Candidates were able to engage more although a significant number of centres do not encourage candidates to expand the rôle play and therefore prevent them from accessing the higher mark bands. There are opportunities within the bullet points, and one of the unpredictable questions is more open-ended, in order for candidates to expand and show what they are capable of. Centres must not though turn the rôle play into a mini conversation of up to five minutes.

It must be remembered however that any expansion must be relevant to the rôle play in order to be credited.

At the same time, simple reading of the bullet point or from the stimulus material will not score well. Expansion of a bullet point can be achieved quite simply by the use, for example, of a short phrase or by offering some extended description.

Centres are reminded that where there is a question mark within the tasks they are expected to ask a question. If a candidate produces a statement they are considered not to have conveyed the task successfully and often only the more able candidates were able to frame questions successfully.

A significant number of candidates failed to read the rubric at the top of the card rendering some of the responses irrelevant during the rôle play, so that although they seemed to say a lot they cannot score marks for these elements.

Teacher examiner's knowledge of the situation was less than adequate in a number of cases and consequently did not respond adequately to the candidate thus causing confusion. Candidates may at times produce responses that are unexpected and teacher examiners need to respond to these rather than just read out responses from the scenario. The time allowed for teacher examiners to read the rôle plays are an important aid to avoid problems with this.

The bullet points were on the whole accurately completed although *Repas? Achats*, and *Solution?* continue to cause problems for many candidates on all the occasions they are used.

The unpredictable questions continued to be a good discriminator and candidates were able on the whole to answer the more closed question.

Question words however are still a major problem for many candidates who either are not listening carefully or are unaware of the true meaning of them.

Vos details ... is still often very superficially dealt with, often producing just a forename. Details of a mobile telephone number and offering a passport were not seen as successfully completing the task nor were descriptions of the person or their family.

However there were many excellent rôle plays. Candidates responded well to teacher examiners who used the prompts thoughtfully and where encouragement and careful responding to their replies enabled them to expand effectively.

Conversation

In many cases the conversation of the test is well structured and interesting to hear.

Teacher examiners are reminded that the specimen questions in the Handbook are merely suggestions. There were a large number of centres where the teacher examiners only asked the candidates these questions. It is against the candidates' interests to follow them slavishly with no personalisation of the conversation. Teacher examiners should use the responses of the candidate to stimulate the next question. This penalised candidates who were unable to take the initiative and often only produced short responses. This is especially the case for candidates of a lower ability who were asked the same questions as a candidate taking the higher level conversation,

There was a more than thorough preparation of the first topic in many centres, where an increasing number asked an insufficient variety of questions and there was a significant minority of centres who asked the same questions to all candidates. Invariably candidates, where this happens, are unable to score highly during this element for the reasons mentioned above.

Naturally, the best conversations occurred when teacher-examiners listened to candidates' answers and progressed in a natural way rather than working through the questions in the handbook

The conversation is marked globally over the two topics and in an increasing number of cases candidates who were able to speak well, in a variety of tenses during the pre-learned, prepared section, were unable to offer responses to simple questions during the second topic. These candidates could not be awarded high marks.

The higher levels of the assessment criteria require a wide range of structure and vocabulary both in terms of the questions and responses.

There were many centres who were able to help candidates fulfil their potential through skilful questioning, enabling the candidate to expand and use more complex language, eliciting a range of structures, tenses, opinions and descriptions. It should be noted that a series of closed questions whilst helping some candidates to offer a response will not score other than in the lower mark bands.

Timing was less of a concern this year but centres are reminded that candidates cannot gain credit for responses outside the time limits given in the rubric. Candidates should be given the opportunity to use appropriate structures and language within the time allotted for this part of the examination.

- 4-5 minutes Foundation Level conversation
- 6-7 minutes Higher Level conversation

These limits are for the whole conversation and not per topic.

Similarly short conversations will prevent the candidates from demonstrating their ability.

The two topics should be given equal time. Candidates are disadvantaged if they are not allowed to show what they can do within the unprepared topic.

Examiners commented on an increasing number of packages and /or contents that were damaged upon receipt. It is important that the polybags provided by Edexcel are used to avoid the contents from being lost but, more importantly, that the cassettes are securely wrapped in bubble wrap, or similar, to avoid breakage in the post.

Marking

Where centres opted to mark their own candidates there were a minority whose marks were out of tolerance and needed adjustment.

Many centres awarded full marks when there was ambiguity in a candidate's response particularly in rôle play A. The pronunciation of *caisse* was an example of this and *casse* / *cassé* / *casser* was often credited.

In rôle play B an incorrect tense often affected communication. Responses of a single word or verb did not convey the message or an unpredictable question was rephrased meant that the performance was often overvalued.

Some centres failed to appreciate that there are significant differences in the Assessment Criteria for rôle plays A and B and candidates who were unable to successfully convey the necessary tasks in rôle play B were often over marked.

In rôle play C there was often insufficient expansion for higher marks to be awarded. Tense errors, responses without a verb, or the failure to ask questions when required, meant that marks were overvalued as communication needed to access the higher mark bands was not achieved.

In the conversation section centres have a tendency to overvalue the performance of Foundation level candidates who appear to say quite a lot, but have mostly repeated much of what the teacher-examiner has said through a series of closed questions and total reliance on the teacher examiner. Accuracy and Application of Language are dependent on the amount of French conveyed by the candidate and it is unusual for a candidate who scores in the lower ranges in communication to score highly for in these sections as there is not the breadth of language required.

Standardisation

There is evidence of insufficient internal standardisation within a number of centres. There were a number of cases where one or more teacher examiners in a centre have been over generous or inconsistent in their marking. Centres are encouraged to use previous year's examinations to help standardise their marking in preparation for the next series. Centres where internal standardisation has not taken place may affect the results of individual candidates.

However many centres standardise excellently and are to be congratulated on their efforts.

Administration

Many centres continue to provide an excellent service in this area. However some points to note are summarised below:

- Cassette boxes and tapes should be labelled meticulously. It is helpful to use the inlay in the Instructions for Conduct booklet. Each should be labelled with Specification Name and Number, Centre name and number, candidate name and number, level of entry, order of recording and name of teacher examiner.
- Cassettes should be numbered sequentially across the centre, not by individual teacher examiners.
- Cassettes should be rewound to the start of side A.
- Cassettes should be dispatched with the Optems or Attendance Register. The L3s should be in a different package.
- Candidates' performance should not be split between sides of the cassette or on two different cassettes.
- Foundation and Higher-level candidates should be recorded on different cassettes.
- L3 mark sheets for each candidate should be arranged in candidate number order across the whole centre.
- The top (white copy) of the Optems for 2A centres should be sent to Edexcel. The second copy (yellow) should be sent to the Moderator and the third copy (green) should be retained by the centre.

- Centres should adhere to the time limits for sending materials to examiners and moderators.
- The conversation section has time limits to be observed.
- Introductions on tape of candidates should be effected as briskly as possible in the interests of allowing the candidate to begin speaking.
- The microphone should favour the candidate rather than the teacher- examiner. Centre should be aware that where automatic recording levels are achieved by some tape recorders candidate details are at times inaudible.
- Parcels should be securely packaged for posting using protective bubble wrap or similar for the protection of the tapes.

Conclusion

Although reports on examinations invariably highlight difficulties, it must be stressed that the majority of teacher examiners prepare and carry out this element of the examination successfully.

Many candidates were well prepared for the examination and there was evidence of excellent examining technique.

Examiners and moderators would like to thank teacher examiners for their efforts this year.

1226 3F Reading and Responding

Candidates proved on the whole that they had prepared well for the paper and the majority were entered at the appropriate level. There were no apparent indications that individuals had run out of time and answers were almost always clearly indicated in the spaces provided on the paper; and where this was not the case candidates had made it clear what they wished to be considered as their answers. There were few offerings illegible through poor handwriting or a failure to use black ink or black ballpoint pen.

Question 1

This was designed to enable candidates to show their knowledge of basic vocabulary.

Parts (i), (ii) and (v) were correctly identified by the vast majority, but there was obviously some confusion between the meaning of *chaussures* and *chaussettes* for items (iii) and (iv) and insufficient care by some to differentiate between the shoes shown in picture C and the trainers in G.

Question 2

This involved the comprehension of short phrases and identifying the places these related to. A pleasing number of candidates scored 9 or 10 out of 10.

Q2a (i), (iii), (v) and Q2b (i), (iii), (iv) and (v) were particularly well answered. In Q2a (iv) *viande* and in 2b (ii) *patinage* were less well identified.

Question 3

This was a more demanding question which required candidates to read a short text and to select what Camille found positive and negative in her family life. Very few candidates failed to recognise the fact that answers in French were required. This was a crossover question and so also appeared in the Higher Level paper. Few candidates failed to score at all.

Candidates who gave single word answers e.g. *sympathique*, *devoirs*, *difficile*, *malheureusement* clearly did not appreciate the nature of the task being demanded of them, and those who copied large sections of text similarly did not score well, as they failed to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant material.

It was not necessary to change the text into the third person in order to gain marks and occasionally an attempt at manipulation of language of this kind led candidates to give inaccurate information such as *son frère s'énerve* instead of *son frère l'énerve*.

Ma mère est sympathique was given as both a positive and a negative point, as were comments about Camille's homework where the help offered by her sister would obviously be positive and the fact that Camille at times finds it difficult would be negative. Some candidates offered *mon père n'habite pas* as a disadvantage, and this without further information is obviously insufficient to gain a mark.

Question 4

In parts (i), (iii) and (iv) candidates scored well but parts (ii) and (v) were generally poorly done. A failure to recognise *même* and *à l'étranger* is the probable cause.

Question 5

This was a much simpler question requiring recognition of school equipment vocabulary items. The majority of candidates scored well with very few failing to recognise *règle*. *Cahier* was the least accurately identified item.

Question 6

Very few candidates were tempted to give answers in English. Most managed a mark for part (b) though some only gave the starting or end time. In part (a) *pourquoi* in the question was often not understood, with a large number giving *dans un restaurant* as the answer. In (c) common answers were *à la caisse*, *servir des clients*, *travailler avec enfants* and the ambiguous and incomplete *cuisine*. In (d) many candidates copied quite large sections of text, though this was often correctly answered. In (e) many candidates omitted the word *travailler* in their answer or distorted *enfants* into *infants*. There were several examples of an inability to copy words accurately from the text.

Question 7

Few failed to score at least one mark with parts (iii) and (v) generally being the best answered. There was some evidence of candidates being aware of the general sense of the passage, but selecting a noun or finite verb inappropriately e.g. *la nourriture* for (iii) instead of *mange*; and vice versa for (iv).

Question 8

Very few failed to recognise the fact that answers in English were required, though some included a vital word in French which caused them to lose a mark.

Part (a) received some strange answers such as the fact that Norma played professional football. Most commonly, candidates stated that her father was a professional football player. Few understood *est mort*.

Parts (b) to (e) were generally well answered with marks usually being lost only for inappropriate responses in French. Some interpreted *voyager* as *holidays* in (e).

Question 9

Again there were very few candidates who answered in the wrong language, though some included the odd word of French in their answers. Marks were often lost because answers did not give sufficient information. Very few failed to score at all on this question.

In (a) there were some poor spellings of *terrace* and the use of the French *vue* in an answer often lost a mark where it was likely that the text had been understood.

In (b) *baby* was often thought to be sufficient as an answer, where the mention of *a cot* or *bed* was needed in addition. *Chien* was often interpreted to mean *animals* or *cat*.

In (c) candidates often gave *village* instead of *town* for *ville*, a mistake that has been pointed out before. Many omitted the *guided* element of the tour or implied that a guide book could be purchased. *Location* was mainly felt to mean *siting* rather than *hire* and therefore led to incorrect responses.

In (d) some candidates felt it appropriate to invent a personal opinion about the hotel rather than basing their reply on the material provided in the brochure.

1226 3H Reading and Responding

There were few candidates who did not complete the paper, and those that did not sometimes left a question blank in the middle. Therefore it was unlikely that the cause was an insufficient time allocation. Some candidates left Section B of the last Question, Question 8, blank. This was printed on the back cover and they may have believed that they had already completed the paper. They need to be aware of the fact that the end of an examination paper is always indicated by the word “END” and the total mark being given.

The comments on handwriting and the use of black ink made in the report on 1226 Paper 3F also apply to Paper 3H.

The vast majority of the candidates were appropriately entered for this, the Higher paper, though there were a few who would have been better advised to have taken Paper 3F.

Question 1

This was a crossover question and therefore also a part of the Foundation level paper: see 1226 3F Question 6 for main comments. Candidates at Higher Level generally scored better in all of the crossover questions.

They were often inclined to give the number of hours worked in part (b) rather than merely copying out the start and end times. This led some to make arithmetical errors.

In (d) good candidates were able to offer synonyms such as *amusante* and *marrant* for the word *drôle* given in the text.

Question 2

A crossover question: see 1226 3F Question 4 for main comments. Candidates scored well in parts (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv), but found part (v) difficult.

Question 3

This was targeted at Grade B and few failed to score. Part (e) was answered best.

Question 4

This was a difficult question, but very few failed to score at least one mark.

In Section B copying *mal payés et donc limités* from the text was sufficient to gain a mark, but several omitted the *mal* or the accents which distorted the meaning. Some referred to pupils missing classes, but copying *ça c'était agaçant* on its own, as many did, was of course not sufficient to gain a mark. Answers referring to the fact that teachers did not talk to Lora were accepted, but only if it was explicit that this was the case. Candidates often did not make it clear that they were referring to the teachers, or implied that the teachers did not talk to each other.

Question 5

Most candidates managed to choose at least one of the correct answers in Section A. Section B was correctly answered by the majority.

Question 6

This is a crossover question: see report on 1226 3F Question 3 for main comments. Candidates in this, the Higher level paper, rarely gave one word answers, as they obviously realised that these were insufficient to convey the needed information. They were often tempted, however, to copy quite lengthy sections of the text, though these mainly did incorporate the required details. There was more evidence in 3H than in 3F of candidates manipulating the text by changing first person references to the third person. This often led to muddled answers such as *elle petit frère elle énerve*.

Question 7

Again this is a crossover question: see report on 1226 Question 7 for comments.

Question 8

Very few failed to answer the question in English or to score at least one mark.

In Section A (a) *elle a battu* was not well known. Most managed to gain one mark but not to incorporate sufficient information to qualify for the second. The idea of *sales* or *worldwide* was often missing.

In (b) some gave the facts the wrong way round despite references being in the correct order in the text. *Voyage* was often taken to mean *holiday*. *Se faire prendre en photo* was found to be a difficult concept, with most referring to her taking photos rather than being photographed.

In (c) many correctly identified the fact that Emilia was recognised, but invented additional ideas. *People notice her* was often given as an answer, but is not accurate.

In (d) many gave the idea that she was more chatty, but there was much invention. Many thought that she saw her family less often and based their reply on this idea, despite there being no justification for this in the text. Some gave both answers for (i) and then invented inaccurate material for (ii).

In (e) the vast majority based their response on *concert* or *projet de concert* and ignored the *pas de* in front of it, thereby giving exactly the opposite of the correct answer. *Being in a film* and *having a baby* were other common responses.

In Section B the majority correctly gave the answer that she was modest, but, as already indicated, several failed to answer this part at all. There was much invention as to the reason that could be given for Emilia's modesty, but many summarised the reason accurately from their reading of the whole text.

1226 4F & 4H Writing

As in past years, centres are to be congratulated on preparing their candidates for the requirements of this examination. Examiners noted how well candidates responded to stimulus material, and how resourceful they were. There were a few areas of concern, but on the whole most candidates had the opportunity to achieve their potential on this paper.

Paper 4F Question 1

Candidates were asked to write ten items of vocabulary. Most were able to write five items of clothing, but five places of entertainment turned out to be more of a problem, with a few candidates giving activities rather than places - *natation* rather than *piscine*. The pictures were given as suggestions, and many candidates found them useful. It was quite in order to choose items which were not illustrated, as long as they were plausible in the context. No marks were awarded for copying the stimulus. Candidates were expected to write just one response in each box. Common errors included misspelling a word in such a way that the meaning changed to something inappropriate: *chasseur* for *chaussure*, and *chemie* for *chemise*, for example. English words were sometimes used by weaker candidates, especially *cap* and *jacket*. It was disappointing that many candidates left blank spaces in their responses to this question.

Paper 4F Question 2

This question required candidates to supply five nouns and five correct present tense verbs. Examiners noted a further slight deterioration in performance since last year, and few candidates scored full marks for this question. Some centres had however prepared this question very well. The nouns were very accessible, and there were hardly any misinterpretations of the graphics. Candidates were not penalised for such misinterpretations. The verbs were much more variable. Many candidates had trouble with the irregular verbs *apprendre* and *faire*; others wrote past participles; a few simply copied the infinitives. Centres are once again recommended to give attention to this question in preparing for next year's paper.

Paper 4F Question 3

Candidates benefited from having the stimulus in English, and most attempted all four bullet points. Point 2 'whether it is big or small' could refer to the candidate's house or town. The task was intended to be completed using the present tense only, but many candidates successfully used other tenses, for example, to write about the weather. Many candidates' knowledge of tenses was such that a good deal of ambiguity was expressed. As in past years, description of the weather proved to be a good discriminator. Most candidates were able to give a good deal of relevant information about where they lived. In the description, some candidates had problems remembering *il y a*, and *c'était* was often used instead of *c'est*.

Paper 4F Question 4(a)/Paper 4H Question 1(a)

For Foundation candidates, this question was less popular than the alternative; for Higher candidates, the reverse was true. Candidates generally responded fully and relevantly to the stimulus, although for some tenses were an issue. It was pleasing to see that candidates were expecting to express opinions, and most did so successfully, with many giving coherent reasons as well. Those who think that teenagers do little to help around the house would have been heartened by the response to this question. A large number of Higher Tier candidates scored seventeen or more out of twenty, and more kept to the word limit this year. Exceeding it often led to boring, inaccurate or irrelevant writing, thereby excluding candidates from the 'pleasant to read' marking category. The best candidates expressed a cohesive and logical argument very successfully, using more complex language fluently.

As in past years, weaker candidates showed much confusion between *hier* and *demain*, and failed to address the third bullet point properly. Many scripts showed an insecure understanding of the formation of the Perfect tense, with either the auxiliary missing or the past participle written as an infinitive. In spite of *argent de poche* being in the stimulus, many candidates misspelt that word. Although much vocabulary about household tasks was generally known, most attempts to express the idea of cooking were unsuccessful.

Unfortunately, some candidates produced very pedestrian and repetitive pieces of work because so many of the expressions they chose to use involved *faire* (*faire le ménage/la vaisselle/le repassage/les lits* etc.). Common problems involved *walking the dog* (*promener le chien*) and *washing the car* (*je me suis lavé la voiture*). Many candidates produced good logical argument for why they should or should not have to do chores. Although tenses were reasonably well handled, there tended to be a lack of ambition with regard to higher structures.

Paper 4F Question 4(b)/Paper 4H Question 1(b)

There were some very good responses to this question, and many achieved excellent marks while keeping to the word limit. Use of the bullet points ensured that most attempts were well-ordered and logically constructed. The third bullet point could refer to New Year Resolutions or equally to more general plans for the coming year. The best answers responded in roughly equal measure to all the bullet points, using three tenses, adjectives and more complex structures such as object pronouns, subordination and linking. Weaker candidates included irrelevant material, or else omitted points altogether. Candidates' linguistic resources were generally satisfactory, although misuse of tenses sometimes led to ambiguity. Other problems included (as last year) expressions of time, such as *l'année dernière* and *l'année prochaine*; and copying parts of the stimulus without manipulating the language at all. Sometimes, a desire to write down long paragraphs of pre-learned material about future plans led to an imbalance in the material.

Paper 4H Question 2(a)

Fewer candidates attempted this question than the alternative. Understanding the stimulus for this question caused very few problems. Many candidates produced highly successful, coherent, well-linked pieces, developing them with opinions and reasons. Many candidates clearly liked the question, producing creative and imaginative responses. The best candidates focused on a single film, describing the plot, the characters and their opinions. Some weaker candidates took the opportunity to include pre-learned material, not all of which was entirely relevant. They described a number of different films, or else they included descriptions of when they went to the cinema, with whom, and what they did there. It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of candidates kept to the word limit. Those few who did exceed it often penalised themselves by including irrelevant material or by increasing the incidence of error in their work. As in past years, some candidates had difficulty with the perfect tense and its agreements. Modal verbs such as *vouloir*, *pouvoir* and *devoir* were poorly manipulated. The past imperfect tense was used appropriately by the better candidates, which was encouraging. Past infinitives and object pronouns were seldom encountered, although candidates in certain centres produced phrases using *après avoir/après être*; *ayant* with a past participle; *avant de* with an infinitive; *en* with a present participle; and the present subjunctive.

This was an open-ended task which allowed candidates more choice in the way they dealt with the question but some candidates took this too literally and only just touched upon the topic about the description of the film and went on to describe anything but the film they had seen. Candidates cannot score high marks if they do not address the question.

A few candidates got confused with the meaning of *extraordinaire* in the stimulus and thought they had to describe some odd kind of film they had seen, rendering their essays quite incoherent and difficult to understand.

Interestingly, some Higher candidates produced answers that seemed to mirror the normal structure of the shorter question 1, as if the stimulus had been: 'say how often you go to the cinema; say what type of films you like and dislike; describe your last visit to the cinema; say when you will be going again and what you want to see'. However, the essays of many candidates were so good that they almost made one want to go to the cinema to see the film.

Paper 4H Question 2(b)

This task seemed to produce the best scripts, some of them exceptionally good and lively.

Examiners were looking for either one specific awful incident, or a generally negative experience at work. The best answers were coherent, well-linked pieces, with opinions and reasons. Weaker candidates misinterpreted the stimulus and did not realise that the experience described was meant to be a bad one. Their language was frequently over-ambitious and they did not really have the resources to tackle this question. Some candidates used pre-learned material, such as an account of an accident. This worked only when it was made relevant to the title; weaker candidates did not relate it to an

experience at work. The linguistic strengths and weaknesses described above were also evident in this question.

The more prescriptive and tighter structure of this question was perhaps better suited to the average candidate and certainly, the answers to this question tended to be generally more coherent. Many candidates used the Present Tense for their introductory paragraph and found the distinction between Imperfect and Perfect a difficult one. A few candidates failed to read the rubric and then in their head translated *travillais* as *travelled*, going on to produce an account of a holiday. There were however many excellent submissions with a wide range of higher structures and idiomatic vocabulary.

General points

- It was pleasing to see that most candidates observed the rubric for these papers. They kept to the word count recommendations and did not answer all the optional questions. Candidates who failed to observe the rubrics were given no advantage, and they may even have penalised themselves.
- If candidates want to write out a draft version of their work, they should do so on the blank pages of the answer booklet, and then write the best version in the correct place. The rough version should then be crossed out.
- The use of supplementary answer sheets should be avoided. It delays the marking process, and suggests to candidates that it is acceptable to write more than the word limits require.
- Some candidates answered both the options (a) and (b), thinking that the placing of a cross in the box at the top was sufficient to indicate which was their selected answer. They should always cross out the discarded response, so that examiners have no doubt as to what they intend.
- Candidates should always write in ink (preferably black), and not pencil.
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of neat handwriting and good presentation in their answers.
- Candidates should not write in the margins or in the 'Leave blank' column.
- This year, significantly fewer candidates were inappropriately entered for the Higher Tier of the examination.

1226 4C Written Coursework

This year coursework was again much more popular than the examination. As in the past, it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of centres benefited from this choice, with candidates producing good work according to their potential, and teachers administering and assessing the work very successfully. There were some splendid submissions, especially where candidates were writing creatively about their own experiences. Different entry patterns in the last few years have meant that there were very few low-scoring candidates. There were very few examples of poor or incomplete work and illegible or incomprehensible units.

Tasks

The best tasks allowed candidates to use a variety of tenses, structures and vocabulary in each unit of work. They demonstrated linking, opinion and logical argument. Weaker candidates were able to write simple sentences and paragraphs without too much adherence to stimulus material.

Examples of successful topics and tasks this year included:

- Use of minimal stimulus, such as bullet points
- Differentiated tasks for candidates of different abilities
- Holidays, particularly ones where things went wrong
- A disastrous day
- Work and leisure
- School and future plans – but only when some variety was added, e.g. a description of a teacher or of a special day at school or of an ideal school
- A restaurant visit – again, especially when things went wrong
- Home town – description, history, opinions – or from an outsider's point of view. However, for this topic candidates need to be aware of the need to give personal opinions and to use a wide range of tenses. Repetition of *on peut* and *il y a* should be avoided.
- A review of a film, a TV programme or a book (but only the best candidates were successful here)
- Creative and imaginative pieces of work
- Current affairs and social issues
- The importance of friendship
- Agony aunt letters/replies

Poorer tasks did not encourage candidates to use more than one tense. Language was consequently repetitive, with excessive reliance on the stimulus, and there was little standardisation of task choice within the centre.

Examples of less successful tasks included:

- Lists; labelling of pictures – for candidates who could do more than this
- Tasks which relied too much on the use of writing frames
- Tasks where the outcome was practically identical across a class or year group
- Tasks which did not specify that opinions and reasons had to be expressed
- School life and routine
- Work experience
- Biography of a famous person or member of the family
- Descriptions of house or family – although these areas are suitable for the weakest candidates

- The environment - for candidates without the resources to deal with this. Too much material which had apparently been borrowed from course books was in evidence here.
- Interviews - these did not allow candidates to use linking
- Titles covering two or more topic areas
- Hotel booking letters - especially if just copied from a stimulus
- Hotel complaint letters - likewise
- CV and letter of application
- Health issues - for candidates without the resources to deal with this
- Je me présente - often very dull writing was produced here
- A traffic accident

Successful stimulus material was brief, often in the form of title plus bullet points, or even just a title by itself. Some centres used past exam papers (Specification 1226 Paper 4) to good effect. Most stimulus material was in French, although moderators noted some in English. Often, centres chose safe and predictable topics, and only the better candidates were able to develop these quite unpromising titles into good pieces of work that fulfilled the criteria for higher marks. Some centres appeared unsure of the difference between stimulus and reference materials. The latter might include textbook pages or grammar worksheets which help candidates with a particular piece of vocabulary or with a more complex structure. They only became a problem when candidates copied whole chunks of language from them - and sometimes the same copied work was seen across a whole centre. Moderators are looking to see how individual candidates manipulate the language to make it their own.

Candidates in a few centres were penalised because they had not been asked to fulfil the specification requirement of writing three units of work from three different topic areas. Where candidates had written two units from one topic area, only the better of the two marks was taken into consideration, and the other mark was discounted. Clearly this had a serious effect on the overall marks of such centres. As in previous years, the most common problem was setting both school and work experience (Education, training and employment) and holidays and home town (At home and abroad). Centres are reminded to check the specification carefully before setting tasks.

The excessive length of submissions was an issue in some centres. It is quite possible to obtain good marks for work which meets the specification demands: 250-350 words overall for grades G-D, and 500-600 words overall for grades C-A*. The three units of work should be of roughly equal length, including the one done under controlled conditions.

A few centres did not meet the requirements for controlled conditions, and they too were penalised by having the marks of one unit discounted. Controlled conditions work must be done in the classroom and under the supervision of a teacher. Stimulus material and a dictionary are allowed; reference materials, notes or first drafts of the work are not permitted. Candidates may prepare the work in advance and may wish to memorise parts of it; it is not however in the spirit of the examination to invite candidates to learn by heart pieces of French which they have not composed themselves, such as textbook pages.

Very few centres had arranged for candidates to draft their work. If candidates do make drafts of their work, these must not be corrected by the teacher. Feedback should only be given in the form of general comments; the use of form CFS1 is designed for this purpose. Drafts should be clearly identified and should be included with the sample.

Moderators are instructed to ignore final drafts in those cases where first drafts have been marked with specific corrections.

Candidates are encouraged to use ICT when composing their coursework. They are however urged to check spellings carefully, especially accents. The use of Internet translation devices is not permitted, and centres are asked not to authenticate work produced in this way. Centres should make candidates aware of the dangers of using online translation resources such as dictionaries. Very common mistakes involved looking up *I got* and receiving *j'ai obtenu*; this then led to phrases such as *j'ai obtenu s'habiller* and *j'ai obtenu montrer autour de*. In general, moderators were somewhat concerned this year by the standards of word-processed work. When not using ICT, candidates must ensure that their handwriting is legible.

Assessment

On the whole, this was very well done by centres. Some were slightly generous but consistently so. Internal standardisation was usually successful. The three marking grids provided in the specification were well used, although sometimes too much credit was given to work copied from a stimulus, to pedestrian or formulaic work, and to work which was too short to meet the criteria. It is necessary to take into consideration both the length and type of task when awarding a mark for Communication and Content. Here too use of linking needs to be considered, and the extent to which the candidate expresses a logical argument. Under the heading of Knowledge and Application of Language, consideration must be given to the amount of ambiguity produced by poorly formed verbs. Tenses used as an afterthought, rather than being integral to the piece, are unlikely to help the candidate gain high marks here. In the Accuracy grid, it should be noted that the majority of verb forms have to be correct in order to achieve three or more marks. Correct use of accents, for example on past participles, is crucial. To gain four marks or more for Accuracy implies use of more complex language, not simply the absence of error.

Administration

Most centres were extremely helpful in following the requirements of the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (the ICE booklet), which are issued well in advance of coursework deadlines. When centres failed to do this, it held up the moderation process and in some cases penalised candidates. As in past years, there were various specific problems, and centres are again asked to note the following:

- The sample should arrive on or before the deadline.
- The latest version of form CF1 (coursework front sheet) should be used.
- It should include the candidate number and be signed by the teacher and the candidate. Centres should note that unsigned work is rejected.
- It should contain an accurate word count and an indication of topic areas chosen.
- Addition of marks should be carefully checked and double-checked.
- Transfer of marks from CF1 to OPTEMS should also be carefully checked and double-checked.
- The OPTEMS form should be completed in full, without error, and should be signed on every page.
- The top copy of the OPTEMS should be sent to Edexcel, not to the moderator.
- If separated, OPTEMS pages should be placed in their correct order.

- Absent candidates should be marked X not zero.
- It is unhelpful to moderators if work is covered in ticks and other marks.
- The sample should be arranged in candidate number order.
- If a sample candidate is absent, then the work of the next candidate on the list should be included.
- The work of the candidates with the highest and lowest marks in the centre should be included.
- The work of a candidate awarded zero should always be included.
- Work in the folder should be in the same order as on the front sheet.
- There should be no loose pages - especially ones with no name on.
- Stimulus material should be submitted - not references to pages in a textbook, or the textbook itself.
- When moderators request additional information or folders, these should be provided promptly.
- When sending coursework through the post, centres should ensure that the full amount of postage is paid.
- The use of Recorded Delivery is not always helpful, as many moderators are working teachers who are not at home to sign for packages
- When moderators point out anomalies and inaccuracies on CF1 and OPTEMS forms, it is the responsibility of centres to inform Edexcel about any changed marks.

2008 Statistics

Paper 1F - Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	36	31	26	21	16	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 1H - Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	39	32	25	19	14	11	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 2F - Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	27	22	18	14	10	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 2H - Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	40	34	28	23	17	14	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 3F - Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	32	27	22	18	14	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 3H - Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	41	33	25	17	10	6	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 4F - Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	31	27	23	20	17	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 4H - Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	39	33	27	21	15	12	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 4C - Written Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	60	51	45	39	33	27	21	15	9	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0

Overall Subject Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Total Uniform Mark	360	320	280	240	200	160	120	80	40	0

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