

Report on the Units

June 2008

1925/MS/R/08

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

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

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GCSE French 1925

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Chief Examiners Report

Examiners were again pleased to observe a wide range of excellent performances by candidates at all levels and in all components of the GCSE French examination. This reflects the continued commitment, professionalism and hard work of MFL teachers in preparing their students, assessing their coursework and conducting speaking tests, in spite of ever-increasing pressures within centres.

The level of difficulty of the papers was considered fair and appropriate and in line with those set in previous years, giving all candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skill and ability.

The detailed reports on the written papers comment on the performance of candidates. A recurring point in them all is the advice to candidates to pay attention to detail. Frequently a candidate loses marks, not because of ignorance of difficult grammar or vocabulary, but by failing to tackle basic language well, for example by not taking account of a negative or by misspelling common words. The time allowance for the papers is adequate to allow candidates the time to check their work but this is not being done consistently.

For the Speaking test this year some centres recorded their candidates using digital technology. This will become more widespread as cassette tapes become obsolete. Centres are reminded that if they are considering new ways to record the tests, digital audio technology guidance exists on the OCR website (please see the detailed report on the Speaking component for details).

The option of written coursework continues to be a very popular one with centres. To ensure maximum benefit to their candidates, centres must be aware of the requirements for this component. Centres are particularly reminded of the need to ensure correct coverage of topics and accurate administration. The detailed report on the coursework component contains valuable advice and information for all centres involved in or contemplating taking up this option.

The remainder of this report consists of more detailed feed-back to centres on the individual components, as well as a statement of statistical results. The commentary on the papers, the advice and information offered are intended to benefit teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations.

2351 Listening

General comments

Examiners reported generally good standards in this year's Foundation Tier French listening examination. The usual broad range of marks was produced, although very low marks are now rare. At the same time very high marks on the paper are equally rare – this can be explained by the fact that the better candidates should be entered for Higher Tier – although good numbers scored over 40 out of 50 marks.

The examination was successful at Higher Tier, with appropriate questions to test all targeted abilities. Section 2 was well within the capabilities of candidates correctly entered for this tier. The final exercise on Section 3 proved to be fairly demanding, but the exercises were generally appropriate for Higher Tier candidates, and a good proportion of high marks was produced.

Examiners were impressed with the high standards displayed by a large number of candidates, and Centres are to be congratulated for the thorough preparation of their students for this component.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION 1 (FOUNDATION TIER)

Ex. 1: This exercise, using multiple-choice based on visuals, was designed as a gentle introduction to the exam. As expected, candidates performed well here, though with occasional errors on Q.3 (*trois heures trente* taken to be 3:15) and on Q.5 (*10 euros* heard as *2 euros*).

Ex. 2: Candidates showed good familiarity with the French terms for school subjects. There were occasional errors on *dessin* (Q.7) and *informatique* (Q.8).

Ex. 3: This exercise, testing comprehension of the vocabulary of weather, was not so well answered. *Du vent* (Q.11) and *un temps nuageux* (Q.12) were often wrongly identified, but *soleil / ensoleillée* (Q.13) was usually correct.

Ex. 4: Candidates did not perform as well as might have been expected on this exercise. Although the food items *pain*, *jambon* and *lait* were usually correctly matched, candidates found it difficult to give the correct amounts, struggling with *une douzaine*, *cent* and *un demi-litre*. Revision and testing of the French for amounts other than simple numbers is recommended.

Ex. 5: This was a suitable final exercise for Section 1, incorporating a small step-up in difficulty and requiring candidates to listen to complete utterances rather than individual items of vocabulary. Some candidates failed to pick out the negative in Q.18 in *un village qui n'est pas grand du tout* and found it difficult to choose between the alternatives on Q.20 on hearing the phrase *il y a deux ou trois magasins*. On Q.22, candidates again had to pick out the negative in *il n'y a pas de terrain de golf* and make the connection between *piscine* and *on peut nager* but most gave correct answers to Q.21 and to Q.23, making the elementary connection between *le samedi et le dimanche* and *le week-end*.

It is suggested that candidates be given practice in the skills of detecting negatives and understanding gist in listening material.

SECTION 2 (FOUNDATION AND HIGHER TIERS)

Ex. 1: This exercise, requiring brief answers in English, proved fairly difficult for certain Foundation candidates, although most picked out the correct age on Q.1 and rendered *animaux* successfully on Q.4 b. The phrase *cheveux roux* was frequently rendered as “brown hair” and *travaille très dur* (Q. 3) was not well identified. Also, a number of candidates failed to give an acceptable rendering of *la lecture* (Q.4 a). It was encouraging to see that the numbers of candidates answering in French rather than English was very low this year (although it should be noted that use of the French word *animaux* at 4a was acceptable as it would be understood by the English reader).

Ex. 2: An exercise of this type, in which candidates are required to identify the gist of speakers’ responses to invitations by selecting Yes, No or ? (not certain) usually features at this stage of the examination and it is pleasing to see that candidates generally cope well with it. Some candidates however, had problems in selecting the correct answer for Q. 6 and 9, both of which employed the “uncertain” alternative.

Ex. 3: Here again, examiners were quite impressed with the performance of candidates. Most frequently correct were Q.11, 12 and 13. On Q. 10 there was occasional confusion between *équitation* and *natation*. Q.14, with its correct answer *bricolage* proved to be the most difficult item.

Ex. 4: It appeared that many candidates used their own experience of Spanish holidays to help them here, and in so doing made mistakes. So, for example, in Q.15 Cécile did not go to Spain for the sun but to practise Spanish. Careful listening to the utterances in full was necessary in Q.16 to appreciate the negatives in *mon père n’aime pas l’avion* and *nous n’avons pas de voiture* and to equate the heard opinion *pas mal* with *assez bon* on the paper. Similarly, on Q.18, too many candidates were drawn to the answer *à Barcelone* on hearing the phrase *à environ quarante kilomètres de Barcelone*. Most correctly selected *excellentes* on Q.19, though whether this was through comprehension of *nous avons vraiment apprécié ces vacances* or through the assumption that most people enjoy going on holiday in Spain is of course debatable. Many Foundation Tier candidates struggled on this exercise, often only scoring the one mark for Q.19. The questions mentioned above which commonly led to mistakes, however, were not traps but rewarded the skills of careful listening and the comprehension of complete utterances, which are part of listening skills at Grade C. Higher tier candidates performed much better here than their Foundation tier colleagues because of their ability to comprehend complete utterances rather than single words and their facility to recognise negatives.

SECTION 3 (HIGHER TIER)

Ex. 1: The opening exercise on this section, in which candidates were required to match the gist of speakers’ words with the appropriate adjective, was generally well answered, with fair numbers scoring full marks. However, the words *optimiste* (Q. 3 and option B) and *pessimiste* (option F), particularly given the negative in the phrase *il ne faut jamais être pessimiste* in Q.3 were often the source of error. Most candidates succeeded on Q.1, 6 and 7. Q.4 and 5 demanded a fair ability to interpret and to draw conclusions.

Ex. 2: This exercise, in which candidates were required to write in the word heard in place of the indicated incorrect word, has been used in a number of recent papers and candidates are now clearly aware of the requirements. It should be pointed out here that the standard of spelling of the French words given by candidates is not relevant; provided the word offered is deemed to be comprehensible to a French reader, it is accepted. However, some spellings are so poor that it is not clear whether the candidate has shown true comprehension. Most gave an acceptable rendering of *appartement* (Q.8). However, in Q.9 invalidation by mentioning an exact number (e.g. *deux heures*) for (*pendant*) *des heures* was common. Most succeeded on Q.10 with *enfant* and Q.11 with *police*. The spellings of *oiseau* or *perroquet* (Q.12) given by candidates were, as expected, variable; a rendering such as “*oisol*” was acceptable whereas one such as “*wazo*” was not. On Q.13, the adjective *amusant* was a common error – the past participle *amusée* or *rassurée* was required.

Ex. 3: Examiners were impressed with how well candidates answered the multiple-choice questions on this exercise. Full marks here were not unusual for the better candidates. Predictably, many had problems correctly selecting *autant que* on Q.19 and on Q.17 *diminue* was quite often selected instead of *a disparu* but most candidates selected correct answers Q. 14, 15 and 18.

Ex. 4: The exercise produced a full range of marks, though it was clear that better candidates, who had understanding of French syntax, were able to perform very well. For this reason practice in this type of exercise (which also features on the Reading paper) is suggested as useful preparation for the examination. Some candidates clearly guessed in places giving *entendu* for Q.20, *vieille* instead of *jeune* on Q.22, *débuts* on Q. 23 and *jeune* on Q.24. Generally, however, correct answers were given for Q. 20 and 21.

Ex. 5: On this final exercise, with answers in English, precision is required. Thus “water” was not sufficient as a rendering of *l'eau de pluie* on Q. 29 and merely offering “9 metres” for *moins de neuf mètres* on Q. 28 was not acceptable. This is why, for example, Q.29 was worded “What exactly did they drink?” Fewer candidates than might have been expected gave a correct rendering of *une panne d'essence* on Q.27 and not surprisingly only a few gave an acceptable concept to express *ils n'avaient plus que la peau sur les os* on the final question (here, an answer such as “very thin” was acceptable, but the vast majority guessed answers such as “ill” or “tired”). It is accepted that this final exercise was demanding, but it should be borne in mind that it targets A/A* and that many candidates did indeed score full marks.

2352 Speaking (Externally Assessed)

General Comments

It is encouraging again, this year, to report that the external examiners have commented on the excellent levels of preparation in the Centres they have listened to. The candidates were prepared for the requirements of each and every part of the Speaking Test, and were given the opportunity to show what they could achieve.

It is also encouraging to report that the good practice of “nudging” candidates for elucidation (see page 10 of the Teachers/Examiner Booklet) has extended to more Centres. These candidates were able to achieve full marks and also continue the Speaking Test more confidently.

In Role Play 3, examiners have reported that very few candidates were allowed to exceed the suggested time limit for this section of the Speaking Test - a laudable practice. However, in some Centres teacher/examiners asked no questions at all and in some others, candidates faced a continual stream of interruptions. Neither is beneficial to the candidate because neither enable the candidate to meet the criteria satisfactorily. Teacher/examiners should aim at the mid-point between these two extremes.

In the vast majority of Centres, teachers adhered to the written prompts in the Teachers/Examiner Booklet. In some cases, where teachers re-phrased these prompts to make the task more accessible, the full two marks could not be awarded.

In the Presentation section, examiners also noted a tendency to allow the candidates to speak for more than one minute. It is extremely important that the candidate is allowed to speak for one minute (**uninterrupted**) to then allow time for the Discussion of the Presentation. The good practice of starting with closed questions and then following this with more open questions continues. However, in a minority of Centres, it was reported that candidates seemed to be aware of the questions they would be asked in the Discussion section of the Speaking Test and this is against the regulations.

The arrival of digital recordings has made a further improvement to the quality of the recordings received from Centres. The teacher/examiners had clearly checked recordings as they progressed through the exams.

Centres are reminded that if they are considering new ways to record, digital audio technology guidance exists on the OCR website at...

http://www.ocr.org.uk/Data/publications/key_documents/AEA_L_A_Level_GCSE_EL_VRC_MFL_Notice_Digital_audio_technology_guidance_Sep_2007.pdf

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION 1 ROLE PLAYS

External examiners thought that the cards were balanced, but each may have had its own area of difficulty. Centres are reminded that it is permissible to “**nudge for elucidation**” if the candidate’s pronunciation clouds the communication.

In **Card One**, the pronunciation of *limonade* / *eau* / *lait* caused problems for some candidates and obscured the communication. The concept of 200 grams was communicated well but in the final task, *Combien?* was not known by a small number of candidates.

In **Card Two**, the tasks of asking for a room and giving a number of people were well executed and produced few problems. Surprisingly, the pronunciation of *deux* was not accurate for a significant number of candidates. In the third task, the pronunciation of *nuît / jours /semaine* caused problems for a minority of candidates.

In **Card Three** there was again a problem with the pronunciation of *"billets / tickets"* for some candidates. While the "age" in task two was well executed by the vast majority of candidates, the concept of "what time?" in task three gave rise to some difficulty, although the majority coped well since the task did not require a full sentence.

The issue in **Card Four** was again one of pronunciation. While the majority of candidates were able to communicate the other concepts in this role play, there was a difficulty in the pronunciation of *chocolat* or *fraise* in the second task. The same was true for some candidates in task three, where there was poor pronunciation of *jus*.

In **Card Five**, candidates produced some excellent answers in the third task, with the majority of candidates asking for one of the suggestions provided. Some candidates did provide other acceptable answers and were duly awarded full marks for the task. There was a degree of anglicised pronunciation in the first task, and the notion of asking "if it's far" also proved to be beyond some candidates.

In **Card Six**, the notions of family members were well communicated and most were able to communicate the notion of "present" appropriately. There was also some confusion in the pronunciation of "animals" in task three.

In **Card Seven** the candidates found the pronunciation of *chaussures* a challenge but many were able to use *"baskets"* more accurately. Most candidates were able to express a size in task two, with only a minority not able to use a more complex number. In task three there was some anglicised pronunciation of *bleu*, but the majority of candidates coped well with this task.

In **Card Eight** candidates often expressed the request for postcards in English and could not therefore be awarded any marks. This gave the impression that this was a neglected area of vocabulary for some candidates. However, the same candidates were often able to express the other item (most commonly *stylo /timbres*) correctly.

SECTION 2 ROLE PLAYS

External examiners thought that the cards were balanced and were appropriate, although each had its own difficulty. They also reported some skilful "nudging" and patient examining, and an improvement in the knowledge of the *passé composé*.

In **Card One**, some candidates omitted the notion of "becoming" in the first task and said: *Je voudrais un docteur* which was not the correct message. The second and third tasks on this card were generally well executed but there was a mixture of fortunes with the final task. Some candidates were able to communicate the concept readily, some were encouraged to do so by some skilful nudging from the teacher/examiner and some were unable to convey the concept.

In **Card Two**, the first task was impressively handled by the majority of candidates, as was the unprepared question in task two. The third task was communicated with either the correct or incorrect auxiliary in the *passé composé* but it was the fourth task which caused problems for some candidates. The two notions of "have to" and "to see" were only achieved by the more confident candidates.

The first task in **Card Three** produced some problems with an anglicised pronunciation of *changer*. The second task was communicated extremely accurately by the majority and there was a clear improvement in the pronunciation of *euros*. In task three, there were some excellent renditions of the concept, but candidates often resorted to *J'ai perdu* which was not the required concept here. The final task was extremely well completed.

In **Card Four**, the first task again proved to be problematic with a significant number of candidates resorting to English *J'ai perdu mes keys* which could not be rewarded for communication. Some candidates were confident and inventive enough to substitute responses such as *l'objet pour ouvrir la voiture*. This was not the case in tasks two and three, however, which proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates. The final task was again a problem for some, with some excellent attempts at communicating the concept which just fell short of full communication.

The first task on **Card Five** was accessible for the majority of candidates, which was extremely pleasing. The second and third tasks also proved to be accessible to most candidates, but it was in task four that the majority of problems occurred. Many candidates were not able to communicate the concept of "glass" and resorted to the English word, which could not be rewarded.

The first task on **Card Six** required the use of a past tense and this was again a pleasure to mark, as candidates were able to access the concept. Candidates also completed the second task well, with a variety of details requested, not just the suggestions given. In task three some candidates struggled with the pronunciation of *carte de credit* but the majority coped well. In the final task, the verb form was the sticking point for a large number of candidates, with *ouvert* being the most popular rendition of the present tense.

The first task on **Card Seven** produced some surprisingly incorrect verbs for expressing the candidate's age. Again, there was some skilful nudging from teacher/examiners to ensure that the candidate had the opportunity of scoring full marks. The second and third tasks were well completed by the majority of candidates, but in the final task there was either a much anglicised pronunciation of *salair* or a resort to the English word. Neither of these could be rewarded with full marks.

On **Card Eight**, the first task proved to be challenging, with some candidates unable to communicate the idea of "*sac/ valise*" and therefore unable to score full marks for communication. The description in task two was well done, as was the response to the unprepared question. In the final task, completed accurately by many, some candidates responded with *je suis retourné* which was clearly the incorrect time frame.

SECTION 3 ROLE PLAYS

There were many excellent accounts given by candidates this year, and it was pleasing to note that candidates were made to adhere to the times suggested by OCR. It was also extremely pleasing to hear a degree of genuine interaction between the teacher/examiner and the candidate which has been missing in the past. Candidates also gave reasons and justifications without having to be prompted by the teacher/examiner in a large number of cases.

Card One proved to be extremely accessible to the majority of candidates. The situation was a familiar one and some candidates were able to add imaginative detail to their account from the very outset. Some candidates were not able to communicate the notion of *s'installer sur la plage* in the penultimate section or with *sans incident* in the final section.

Card Two again proved to be accessible, with candidates adding some imaginative detail in their accounts. The middle section caused some confusion for a number of candidates who mixed-up *journée* and *voyage*. The final two sections resulted in some very good accounts of the end of the day, and also allowed candidates to freely give opinions and justifications.

In **Card Three** candidates who read the rubric closely were able to give some flowing accounts. Where candidates did not read the rubric with due attention, there were hesitant performances which did not clearly communicate the story-line. In the middle section, some candidates struggled with *s'amuser/s'ennuyer* but the majority coped well. In the penultimate section, there was an amazing divergence in the amount the candidates had earned, but the majority were able to buy their ticket and spend the holiday in France.

Candidates using **Card Four** produced some excellent accounts of the early part of the day and the walk into town. Candidates were able to add some imaginative detail into this section of this card, but some struggled with the more challenging concept of the accident. In the fourth section candidates communicated the help they gave very well and also gave good accounts of the end of the day. It was again very pleasing to hear candidates, well prepared for the Speaking Test, give opinions and justifications without being prompted.

The first section of **Card Five** provided some excellent accounts, which continued into the second. Candidates did not add much imaginative detail in the middle section of the card, but embellished their accounts in the fourth and the final sections. These accounts were both detailed and engaging, as the candidates clearly enjoyed recounting the trip into town and the ten-pin bowling match (which they usually won!).

Candidates produced some very good accounts of the winter's day in **Card Six**, although some candidates resorted to reading the prompts in the second section of this card. The middle section was extremely well completed, and in the penultimate section, the idea of the man falling over was clearly communicated by the majority. The setting of the final section was unclear to some, as was *nettoyer*, but again impressions of the day were present in the accounts of the majority.

The beginning of the family holiday on **Card Seven** was handled extremely well, with some imaginative detail added at the beginning by a large number of candidates. The middle section proved to be the least accessible with confusion over *débarquer / conduire à droite / prendre l'autoroute*. The final two sections allowed candidates to use some familiar vocabulary and produced some excellent endings to this setting.

Card Eight produced some good accounts of the day during a family holiday, with some excellent accounts in the first two sections. The first three sections allowed candidates to develop their ideas, and also to give opinions and justifications at the end of the middle section. In the penultimate section, some candidates struggled with the notion of the *petit zoo*, but in general, the ending was also handled competently.

PRESENTATION

Yet again this year it was pleasing to hear some excellent accounts which had been chosen by the candidates themselves and on a topic in which they were clearly interested. In Centres where the same topic is chosen for every candidate, great care must be taken not to fall into the trap of using the same questions in the Discussion phase of the Test. Topics such as "Self, Family and Friends" do not lend themselves easily to this section of the Speaking Test.

There was again clear evidence of the correct use of the cue card which proved to be a valuable tool for all levels of ability in this section of the Speaking Test. There were few presentations which were longer than a minute, and there was clear evidence that the teacher/examiners were

keeping a close eye on the time during this section. The candidates should be encouraged in this section to give opinions and then to justify those opinions to gain the higher marks. It was pleasing to hear more high-scoring Presentations this year, but it was still rare to hear Presentations which attracted the highest mark.

DISCUSSION AND GENERAL CONVERSATION

In a minority of Centres, the topics for the Presentation and General Conversation had not been written in by the teacher/examiners. It is a requirement that these are completed before submission to the external OCR examiner.

The discussion of the candidate's presentation should last for approximately two minutes (Teachers' Booklet page 5). This year, the discussions were of an appropriate length and allowed the candidates to develop ideas they had suggested in the Presentation section

There was clear evidence of a mixture of question types, based on the teacher/examiner's knowledge of the candidate taking the Test. The questioning in the vast majority of cases was appropriate and this section of the exam showed how well candidates had been prepared for this component. They were aware of the need for three tenses and for opinions and justifications and while the Foundation Tier candidates struggled with appropriate verb forms, the Higher Tier candidates produced some excellent complex language, including, in some cases, the use of the subjunctive!

2353 Reading

General comments

The papers proved to be an appropriately challenging test for candidates at both tiers, similar in demand to papers of previous years. There were few examples of very weak scripts and there were many excellent ones. The papers contained a familiar range of topics, text styles and test types that are by now regular features, together with some new features which were generally handled competently. The language candidates are expected to know is determined by the defined content lists of words and structures published as part of the specification.

Centres should be aware that Sections One and Two test the minimum core vocabulary and Section Three tests the extension vocabulary in addition.

Candidates at both tiers seemed to have had ample time to complete the paper but it is clear that many candidates do not use the available time to check their answers carefully. Perhaps some candidates could be trained to work through the paper more slowly, checking as they go. The paper setters never set “trick” questions, but attempting to complete the paper at speed is a sure way for a candidate to miss important details. Marks are lost more often by a failure to spot such details as negatives and conjunctions than by a lack of understanding of a particular word.

Many candidates could gain valuable marks by simply re-reading the papers and their answers in the time available.

Examiners were pleased to note that the majority of candidates followed the instructions on the paper indicating that answers should only be written in the spaces provided. The majority of scripts were also generally clearly and legibly presented.

Some candidates, however, penalised themselves by filling in boxes carelessly or by over-writing one letter with another. A candidate who changes an answer should be sure that the intended answer is clearly indicated. Some candidates confusingly write in a mixture of upper and lower case.

Examiners make every effort to decipher poor handwriting and to judge correctly a candidate’s intentions but ambiguous responses cannot be credited.

A minority of candidates left some questions unanswered. An attempt should always be made to offer an answer since it gives the chance of a mark being awarded. In the case of a matching or multiple choice task there is no reason to leave a blank.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION ONE (FOUNDATION TIER)

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

As in 2007, this exercise required candidates to give brief answers in English, rather than tick boxes. For the majority of candidates it was a straightforward task to supply one word in English to convey the sense of the sign, notice or message. Q1, Q2, and Q4 were correctly answered by a high proportion of the candidates. In Q3 *Stationnement* was something of a stumbling block, though it is a sign that has appeared on previous papers. It is clearly a less familiar item of vocabulary. In Q5 *Marché* gave rise to answers such as “match”, “march”.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–11

This was generally quite well done, since these were generally common items to identify. Mistakes, if any, were on *dentifrice* and *montre*.

Exercise 3 Questions 12–19

This exercise was well done by most. Mistakes, if any, concerned *envoyer un paquet* (Q12), *viande/Boucherie*(Q13).

Exercise 4 Questions 20–25

Again this exercise was well done. More difficult items proved to be *voile* (Q22) and *patinoire* (Q24)

Exercise 5 Questions 26–30

This exercise marked a progression in the paper, requiring the reading of a continuous text and the understanding of specific information. Candidates should appreciate that at this stage they are expected to read and understand whole sentences or to select information from sentences. For example, for questions 27 and 28 the whole sentence *Je ne m'amuse pas aujourd'hui parce qu'il pleut* needs to be read and understood in order to answer both questions correctly.

Q26 Most, though not all, got *camping*.

Q27 All answers were offered, perhaps because *malheureuse* was unfamiliar.

Q28 Few correct answers. A surprising number chose C (snowy weather).

Q29 Again C proved to be an attractive wrong answer, surprisingly.

Q30 Many correct answers but the fruit in B tempted many who misread *frites*.

SECTION TWO (FOUNDATION AND HIGHER TIERS)

Exercise 1 Questions 1–7

Foundation Tier candidates did quite well on this exercise and Higher Tier candidates usually scored full marks.

Q5 was the most frequently wrong. No doubt the important information in the question (*sans marcher*) was either ignored or not understood. The majority of Foundation Tier candidates and a proportion of Higher Tier candidates were tempted by A here, matching *Découvrez* with *découvrir*.

Exercise 2 Questions 8–15

This text, an account by a French schoolboy of his visit to an English boarding school, was generally well handled by candidates who read the text and the questions carefully. Many Higher Tier candidates scored full marks.

It was not uncommon (and of course perfectly acceptable) for candidates to write the selected word in the space on the dots rather than circling it underneath. Examiners do not penalise such rubric infringements but would prefer to mark the exercise as it is set.

Q8 A discriminating question. Few Foundation Tier candidates and not many Higher Tier candidates matched *inquiet* with *j'avais un peu peur*. The popular guess was *curieux*.

Q9 Successfully answered by candidates at all levels.

Q10 Only the more able candidates understood *essayé*.

Q11 Perhaps the lack of appreciation of the negative led many unwary candidates to *chère* rather than *gratuite*.

Q12 In spite of the clues of *dortoir* and *internat*, a proportion went for *dans un hôtel*.

QQ 13, 14, 15 were generally successfully answered.

Exercise 3 Questions 16–19

This was quite demanding for Foundation Tier candidates and many seemed to draw on what they already knew or assumed they knew about owning a pet. Misunderstanding of the vocabulary item *propriétaires* may well have compounded the difficulties for some.

In Q.16, FT candidates frequently referred to the phrase *plus de 50%* or answered with “more cats than dogs”. On Q.17 guessing was frequent (“cats are nicer/cleaner”) and Q.18 was rarely answered correctly, the opposite concept often being offered and assumptions made about old people gaining comfort from the company of cats. Very few Foundation candidates scored both marks on Q.19, though a good number were successful with B. Most followed the instruction to select two letters, though a substantial minority ticked only one, in spite of the instruction in bold.

There were a few cases where candidates ticked more than two boxes. In such cases the mark is reduced by one for each additional box ticked.

SECTION THREE (HIGHER TIER)

Exercise 1 Questions 1–9

This potentially difficult exercise was answered generally well, with good numbers scoring the full 9 marks. The last three questions were particularly well answered. Virtually all candidates had at least 4 correct answers.

Questions 1 and 9 were the most frequently wrong.

Exercise 2 Questions 10–19

This test type is a discriminating exercise and it was pleasing to see so many candidates responding to the challenge and scoring well. Examiners could clearly distinguish between those who were attempting to answer sensibly and those who were merely guessing.

This is a demanding task which those candidates who have good understanding of French syntax can handle with ease. Candidates should realise that there is always more than one way each sentence can be completed but only one way which shows comprehension of the text. For example in Q14 O (*ne mangent pas beaucoup*) was a not uncommon choice. It did “fit” grammatically but the correct answer H (*n’aiment pas attendre*) linked with *les clients sont pressés* in the text. Candidates should also be aware that the order of questions follows the order of the text.

Exercise 3 Questions 20–25

Each paper must contain a number of questions to be answered in French. In past papers this has been done by using open-ended questions in French and by completing sentences in French, using words selected from a list.

This year the exercise combined these two test types by requiring candidates to complete sentences in French, using their own choice of words. Centres should be aware that this is not a test of the candidate’s writing. Consequently the mark scheme tolerated a wide range of written “French” provided that it communicated a satisfactory relevant response. Markers were instructed to credit any comprehensible answer which showed understanding of the text. Correct spelling and grammar were not required.

Some candidates seemed determined to use words and phrases from the text instead of thinking of something simple (e.g. *pour* for Q23 and *aller* for Q25) which would have demonstrated comprehension.

Only the very best gave an acceptable answer to Q.20, where answers such as *parachute* and *les dangers* were common. Questions 21 and 22 were usually answered correctly. Q.23 was found difficult. *Mardi soir* was very common and again only the better candidates realised that the simple *avant* or even *pour* were all that was required. Q.24 was quite well answered, but a correct answer on Q.25 was very rare indeed. Most candidates selected *emmener* or *éviter* here rather than a simple *aller* or *partir*.

Exercise 4 Questions 26–30

Most scored at least one mark on this suitably demanding final exercise. Some candidates tried to answer from their own experience rather than an understanding of the text (c.f. exercise 3 Section 2). Some of the vocabulary was found difficult and there was frequent guessing of answers.

Only perhaps half of the candidature gave the full concept required in Q.26. Q.27 was for some the only successfully answered question, though *mécaniques* was very often understood as a noun and this led to frequent errors referring to the inefficiencies or intrusions of bicycle repair men. Although fair numbers gave an acceptable rendering of *terrains plats* on Q.28, very few managed to follow it up with a correct answer to Q.29, for the reason that the verb *grimper* was almost universally unknown. It was often rendered as “to grip”. A fair number of acceptable renderings were given for Q.30, but invalidation was quite common.

2354 Writing

General Comments

The opinion of the core of experienced examiners was that the paper both at Foundation and Higher Tier was fair and that it provided candidates with an opportunity to show what they knew and could do.

Generally centres made entries at the appropriate level, though there were again a small number attempting Foundation Tier who appeared to have the ability to tackle the Higher Tier paper. The policy persists in some centres to enter candidates only at Higher Tier. As in previous years, there was a small percentage of candidates who struggled to achieve a standard worthy of a grade at this level; had they attempted the Foundation Tier, they would very likely have gained far more UMS points.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION 1 (FOUNDATION TIER)

Candidates who focus and respond appropriately to the detail of the individual questions can give themselves a solid platform for success. This was just as important this year as it has been in previous sessions.

Question 1

Candidates have in recent years tended to restrict their answers to the items in the pictures, this year was no exception and as a consequence there were far fewer full marks. Any item which might be reasonably taken on an activity holiday would have been accepted; on this occasion, candidates who kept to the illustrations often proposed non-French words e.g. *football, torch, trainers*. As the Mark Scheme indicates, words must have currency in French.

Question 2

This question was well answered by a high proportion of candidates. The essential skill here is to use a word which reflects the activity / place in the illustration; the mark scheme gives a comprehensive list of the acceptable responses. Some needed to remember that the examples should not be used in their own answers. Most candidates were able to spell correctly at least one word and thus gained a bonus mark.

Question 3

The holiday postcard proved to be an accessible topic and examiners reported some excellent answers. Fewer Candidates relied on notes to convey the required messages; many could use appropriate verb forms and it was quite common to find additional details. The one task which proved marginally more challenging was the last; candidates still find weather phrases hard and misspellings of *soleil, beau, froid, pluie / pleut* were frequent.

SECTION 2 (FOUNDATION & HIGHER TIER)

The assessment of this Section is the same for Foundation Tier candidates as it is for Higher Tier candidates. The former, although operating at the limits of their knowledge and ability, are quite able to achieve a high standard, whereas the latter, forgetting that this part of the paper only offers access to Grade C, invest much time and linguistic knowledge in producing work which is off the scale and cannot be awarded a mark which fully reflects the language used. This was particularly evident this session.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, it is vital to advise Higher Tier candidates to restrict their answers to simple responses which include the required opinion and three tenses, past, present and future. The future tense is by tradition expected in the answer to the final task; this year examiners reported that most were able to give an acceptable verb in a form of the future tense. Sadly, some candidates again lost marks because they chose not to use such a verb.

Question 1

This question was the less popular, although it did attract a fair proportion of responses, particularly amongst Higher Tier candidates. Perhaps one of the reasons why it did not appeal was that candidates did not know the word *examens*, a fact that was all too evident in the work of a significant number who offered a response.

Task 1 invited details of how candidates prepared before the exams; some offered information about revision, others relaxation techniques and others their morning routine before an exam. A past tense verb was expected and in this respect it is disappointing to record the frequency of failure especially in such instances: *j'ai travaille ...*, *j'ai revise ...*, *j'ai joue ...*. A lot of candidates still seem to think that the accent is an optional decoration.

In Task 2 candidates were free to give any detail relevant to their experience. Some gave the number of exams they had in the present tense, others said when they started in the past tense and others used the future tense to say when they would finish. All were acceptable responses. It was pleasing to see that, as with the first task, candidates were able to give some extra details.

Task 3 customarily invites an opinion. To ensure that candidates showed competence using the present tense, a general comment about exams was expected. Too many gave an opinion about this particular exam session and used the past tense; such candidates therefore forfeited marks for Communication. A frequent error noted by examiners was the confusion between *fatigant*, often *fatigant*, and *fatigué*, often *fatigue*. It is a pity that many candidates were not able to go beyond the adjective *ennuyeux* and its various misspellings.

Task 4 expects a future and examiners felt that there was some improvement in this respect. A good proportion of candidates used either one of the acceptable forms of the future or the equally acceptable *je voudrais* followed by a correct infinitive. Most responses naturally looked forward to some form of relaxation during the holiday.

Question 2

This question clearly appealed: responses were often full of detail and communicated candidates' enthusiasm for travel. As with question 1, however, some items of vocabulary of significance for a successful account were not well known. Examiners reported frequent use of *travailler* for *voyager*, *journée* for *trajet* / *voyage*; in some instances candidates used English or invented words *trip* / *tripe*. *Le journée est très longue et ennuyeux parce que je travaille en car* illustrates the difficulties some encountered. As far as destinations were concerned *français*, *allemand*, *espagnol* were commonly used for *France*, *Allemagne*, *Espagne*. Despite these issues, there were very many highly successful answers which earned full marks.

Task 1 invited a simple reference in the past tense to a school visit or trip; the majority chose a full scale holiday, whereas others, a day trip in this country. It was important to mention that it was a school event, even if it was in incorrect French, *collège vacances / vacances scolaire*, and some lost marks for Communication, either because they omitted this information or because they made reference to a family holiday. As with the first question, the inaccuracy of the verb in the perfect tense caused some to lose marks.

Aided by the illustrations, candidates were well able to mention at least one activity for task 2. Some chose to mention details not illustrated; any relevant details were rewarded. Again the accuracy of the verb was important; many used *faire* but the past participle was not always correct: *j'ai fais / j'ai faire*.

Task 3 mirrored the task 3 of question 1 and the same issues occurred. Comments were about the specific visit described rather than about school trips in general. Many expressed their pleasure, sometimes using non-existent adjectives: *amusement, excitement*; others had complaints: *c'est trop cher ... , les profs sont trop strictes ...*

Task 4 provided the opportunity to show knowledge of the future tense and in this respect there was a high measure of success. It was interesting to note however that some candidates gave an incorrect expression of time: *la semaine dernière ... ; les vacances dernières...*

SECTION 3 (HIGHER TIER)

This part of the paper is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to use language in an accurate and fluent way and to express and justify opinions. In recent years there has been much evidence of these skills. However, examiners reported in this session that there were fewer candidates who appeared to be confident in their use of tense and structure. Too many appeared to rely on pre-learnt structures which at times were used out of context and were in stark contrast to the rest of the answer. When candidates use *bien que je sois très fatigué ... , si j'avais su, j'aurais téléphoné ...* it seems strange that they cannot then use the perfect tense, which they often conjugated with the wrong auxiliary or with an incorrect past participle. Candidates who correctly formulated structures such as the perfect infinitive or the present participle frequently used them with the wrong subject e.g. *après être arrivé à Paris, il faisait beau...*, *en mangeant au café, un voleur a pris mon sac* On a positive note, examiners recorded some frequent use of object pronouns.

Question 1

This question was the more popular of the two. As has been reported elsewhere, there were again problems with particular items of vocabulary which were essential to the narrative and which were not well known. Why did candidates choose to fly if they did not know *aéroport*? It is hardly satisfactory at this level to use 'airport'. Other linguistic barriers to success included the following confusions in usage and meaning: *perdre / chercher / trouver, laisser / partir / oublier, parler / dire / expliquer, regarder / voir / surveiller*. Another area of grammar which was poorly handled and which occasionally compromised the communication of the essential messages was the absence of prepositions after verbs such as *arriver, entrer, sortir, monter, descendre, décider*.

Task 1 invited details of the arrival in France. Some chose to go to a different country. There was much variety in the responses; many gave unnecessary information about preparations prior to departure, some were rather cursory in describing the arrival. Some fewer candidates ignored the rubric and referred to a loss at some later point in the holiday. Bags left behind at home, bags stolen, bags forgotten in planes, boats and trains were all accepted provided the tenses were clear.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

Task 2 produced some simple descriptions of the bag and its contents; however the security of language was occasionally rather loose and was similar to the poor descriptions in task 1 of question 2. Disappointingly few could really express the importance of the lost mobile, money, clothes. Some omitted their feelings, others skilfully expressed their reactions using a phrase such as: *quelle catastrophe!*, *quelle horreur!*, *quell désastre!*, whereas others were a little less forceful: *j'étais triste*.

Task 3 gave candidates the opportunity to use language appropriate to this part of the examination. Details of contact with various representatives of officialdom were attempted but there were numerous grammatical errors involving choice of tense and prepositions which compromised the message. Appeals for help seemed frequently to be fruitless. Much pleasure was derived from the shopping trip to replace the lost items.

Task 4 was found a little challenging. *Regarder* was used where the less well known *surveiller* would have been correct. However a good proportion were able to say something relevant in accurate language: *je vais écrire mon nom sur / dans mon sac*.

Question 2

There were two types of answers in response to this question both of which were acceptable. Candidates either took as their focus a famous person, describing her / him and her / his achievements, or they imagined themselves as famous. A very small number wrote about why they would like to be famous and they lost some marks for Communication as a consequence. A high proportion did not realise that *célèbre* is an adjective and not a noun. Sadly, some seemed to think that this was an easy option and responded in facile manner using language which rarely rose above that expected for Section 2. Few chose a person from history, just as few chose a famous engineer, scientist, artist, writer; the overwhelming preferences were for those whose success derived from sport or pop culture.

For task 1, candidates were expected to give a description of the person chosen. It was disappointing to read the numerous inaccuracies of grammar: *j'ai grand*, *je suis 35 ans*, *j'ai bleu yeux*, and the inevitable misspelling of *cheveux*. In fact what might seem on paper to be a straightforward introduction was not handled especially well; even the 'job' was often inaccurately written: *je suis chanter / danser* and few who chose a female celebrity could consistently use adjectives in the feminine form. There were however some who rose to the challenge and incorporated good structures in the process: *je suis acteur depuis dix ans; j'ai toujours voulu être chanteur*.

Task 2 was often misinterpreted. Some understood and offered information such as *je suis allé à Hollywood et j'a fait beaucoup de films...*, *j'ai joué au foot pour Arsenal et j'ai gagné la coupe* Of these, many were able to introduce appropriate complex structures: *quand j'avais vingt ans, j'ai chanté dans un groupe* Those who merely described their normal daily routine were not considered to have completed the task.

Task 3 provided two important vocabulary items: *avantages* and *inconvenient*. There was a very high incidence of the miscopying of these words which as a consequence compromised the successful completion of the task. Not unexpectedly, candidates saw money, holidays, fast cars and large homes as the advantages of their success and could usually convey these ideas in simple language; the disadvantages, the lack of privacy, the intrusiveness of the media, the pushy public, though discernable to the 'sympathetic reader' were less well expressed.

Task 4 was often quite well handled with many using future / conditional verb forms. Inevitably some yearned for more of the same pampered lifestyle, some wanted a simple, private life, and some wished to further their careers. What was reassuring was that so many had altruistic ambitions of using their fame and wealth to help others particularly in poorer parts of the world.

Conclusions

- A large number of candidates who scored well on Section 2 were not able to show that they could write at a higher level in Section 3.
- Some examiners reported untidy scripts, full of crossing out. Whereas it is expected that candidates will find mistakes and correct them, excessive crossing out suggests poor planning.
- Good practice in preparing continues to be in evidence. Candidates who planned carefully and wrote a paragraph on each task, often leaving a line between each paragraph, tended to score highly.
- Over-preparation, encouraging the use of set phrases should be avoided.

2355 Speaking (Internally Assessed)

General Comments

As in 2007, Moderators were very positive about the quality of the work heard in Centres and the way the test had been administered. Candidates had generally been well prepared for the tests and Examiners had usually prepared their own roles well. Examiners were confident about how to elicit the best responses from their candidates, especially in the conversation sections and candidates were usually given many opportunities to show what they knew and could do.

The general conduct of the tests was efficient, timings were good and there were very few cases of overlong examining. Examiners were generally very familiar with the marking scheme and this helped them to pitch their questioning appropriately. The marking scheme was usually applied well but sometimes a little too generously (see below) on role plays when dubious pronunciation and or anglicisms were not always queried. There were hardly any cases this year of Examiners not asking questions which would elicit tenses in the General Conversation section. It is acknowledged that the organisation and conduct of the Speaking examination can be very demanding for teachers, and Moderators were impressed by the efficient conduct of the tests and the sympathetic examining heard in nearly all Centres.

It is pleasing to report again, as last year, that the number of clerical errors in Centres was small. Centres are reminded that it remains their responsibility to check that all marks are correctly transferred from working mark sheets to MS1 forms. Please ensure that the teaching groups are also entered onto the MS1 form. Another important thing to remember is to enter all topic titles onto individual mark sheets together with the date of the test and the name of the Examiner.

The compilation of samples in Centres was good, with samples well chosen to represent the stipulated mark range and a sample of different Examiners. Moderators commented that it was helpful to receive samples in an edited rank order together with the sample mark sheets already separated. Centres are also thanked for submitting covering letters listing sample candidates. The quality of recordings this year was very good, with many Centres choosing to submit samples on CDs. Centres are reminded that if they are considering new ways to record, digital audio technology guidance exists on the OCR website at http://www.ocr.org.uk/Data/publications/key_documents/AEA_L_A_Level_GCSE_EL_VRC_MFL_Notice_Digital_audio_technology_guidance_Sep_2007.pdf.

Please ensure all tape and CD boxes are clearly labelled and that all recordings are checked prior to despatch.

As in 2007, the standard of internal moderation was satisfactory and in many cases excellent. There were however a few Centres where marking across different Examiners was not completely in line and consistent. Differences were usually minor but Centres are reminded that it is absolutely crucial that all Examiners in a Centre have a common understanding and application of the marking scheme. New Centres are reminded that they may standardise prior to marking by using the teacher booklet and agreeing acceptable responses using the guidance in the booklet. Alternatively, Centres may choose, after the tests, to moderate a sample from each Examiner and then adjust marks, if necessary, across the marks of the different Examiners prior to submission. It is helpful in such cases if a brief explanatory note to the Moderator is included. Centres are reminded of the need to submit a reliable and representative sample in the interests of all the candidates whose work is not heard.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

The marking scheme was usually well understood and Centres clearly found the guidance in the Teachers' booklet useful. There was however a tendency in Centres to accept poor pronunciation. Examiners are reminded that in role play tasks a mark of 1 should be awarded, not 2 if pronunciation is poor. Likewise, in tasks requiring a verb or where a verb is used the time frame must be correct for a mark of 2 to be awarded.

Candidates usually coped well with the unpredictable element on the role play cards.

Some Centres also remain generous in the marking of the Presentation. Centres are reminded that a factual and very accurate account may not gain full marks if a range of opinions and justifications is not present. Quality of Language marks were usually awarded well in Centres.

As in 2007, a full range of performance was heard by Moderators this year. Moderators remain impressed by the standard of work heard in many Centres. Candidates were entered for the appropriate tier. Some of the most able candidates produced some highly fluent performances as in 2007. Generally, standards heard were very comparable to those heard last year. Most Centres assessed their candidates very fairly and only had small adjustments (if any) made to their marks to bring them in line with the agreed standard for both this component and the externally assessed component.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION 1 ROLE PLAYS

The cards were, as last year, found to be accessible to candidates and were perceived to be equally balanced in terms of the areas of difficulty on each card.

On **Card One**, some candidates did not know 200 and the pronunciation of *lait /l'eau* was not good.

On **Card Two**, most could ask for a room but *deux* was often pronounced poorly on the second task and some could not say how long they wanted to stay.

On **Card Three**, the pronunciation of *ticket/billet* was often much anglicised and many gave *six* instead of *seize*. Some candidates found it difficult to formulate a question well on Task 3.

On **Card Four**, most knew *glace* but were less confident about giving a flavour. *Chocolat* was often anglicised.

On **Card Five**, *campsite* was not always well known and when known, it was not well pronounced. Likewise, some candidates did not know how to ask if it was far.

On **Card Six**, *cadeau* was not well known.

On **Card Seven**, shoes were, predictably, confused with socks. Pronunciation of *bleu* was often not good.

On **Card Eight**, on the first task, 'postcards' was not well known.

Other tasks on the cards were usually approached well by candidates and nearly all candidates knew how to ask the cost in the task which was common to all cards.

SECTION 2 ROLE PLAYS

Again, the cards were found to be very similar in terms of difficulty with each card presenting some more challenging tasks and some easier ones.

On **Card One**, candidates often said they wanted a doctor rather than they wanted to become a doctor. The word *aider* was not always well known by candidates on Task 2.

On **Card Two**, only the better candidates were able to say with confidence what was wrong with them. A number of candidates used an incorrect time frame on Task 3. The most difficult task was the last task where only the most able were able to convey the notion of having to see a doctor.

On **Card Three**, many did not know *argent*. On Task Three many candidates confused the notion of 'forgetting' with that of 'losing' and said they had lost their passport.

On **Card Four**, candidates again confused 'forgotten' with 'lost' and said they had forgotten their keys. On the last task, many found it hard to convey the notion of having to wait.

On **Card Five**, most approached the first two tasks quite well. Many however found it very difficult to say they did not have a glass.

On **Card Six**, many communicated the wrong idea that they would like to make a reservation rather than the fact that they had already made a reservation. Tasks 2 and 3 were approached well but there were many verb/tense errors on the last task which required the formulation of a question.

On **Card Seven**, many made an error of tense on Task 2 and the last task was found to be the most challenging. Many mispronounced *salair* and did not find it easy to formulate a correct question.

On **Card Eight**, again, the notion of 'to lose' was confused with 'to forget'. Other tasks were approached well.

SECTION 3 ROLE PLAYS

The cards were judged to be accessible and at an appropriate and equally balanced level of difficulty. Each card had its own more difficult and easier tasks. As last year, Examiners generally conducted this section well and were aware that it was a role play and there were few cases of monologues or intrusive examining. Centres are reminded of the need to keep the flow of the examination and not, for example, to query incorrect auxiliaries. This still occurs in a handful of Centres and can be very off-putting to candidates who often lose the flow of the story as a consequence. As in 2007, the sections featuring daily routine, eating, drinking, free time and travel were well done. Moderators heard some extremely competent and impressive performances across the cards. The hallmarks of such performances were full accounts of the events together with the ability to expand upon detail when queried and add in opinions and justifications. The best performances were delivered at a good pace and frequently featured an impressive range of structures and different tenses which could count in the Quality of Language section.

Areas of difficulty were as below:

On **Card One**, the fourth section of the story caused the most problems. Few were familiar with *s'installer* and some found it hard to use *passer par le tunnel* in the last section.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

On **Card Two**, the middle section of the card on the excursion to Spain was not well done. Few were able to expand on the detail and the many did not know *paysage*. Some candidates found it difficult to conjugate *faire* correctly.

On **Card Three**, few candidates, surprisingly, knew *la caisse* and often pronounced it as *la casse*. Only a few could describe the children on the second section and relate all the jobs done and the money earned as being enough to pay for the holiday.

On **Card Four**, the most challenging areas were those dealing with the accident. Generally, *voir* was not well conjugated and only the better candidates gave a good outline of what happened. When queried, only the best candidates could say which injuries had occurred.

On **Card Five**, some did not link the bad weather to the decision to visit the caves. The word *grottes* had been glossed and was understood but few rendered well the idea of going down into the caves and taking photos. Weaker candidates again made errors in conjugating *faire* in the last two sections.

On **Card Six**, irregular past participles were not well known and on the fourth section, only the best candidates described the dangerous conditions on the second section and the fact that the man fell on the pavement. *Le trottoir* was not well known.

On **Card Seven**, the middle section of the card about the arrival in Belgium was the most challenging to candidates. Few knew *débarquer* and the past participle of *conduire*.

On **Card Eight**, the section *Dans le parc* was the most challenging. The past participles of *faire* and *voir* caused problems to the weaker candidates. In the fourth section, only the more able were able to refer to a range of animals.

PRESENTATIONS

There were only a few cases of whole teaching groups preparing the same topic. This is only an issue should the material and the follow up material be the same! It is however not within the spirit of the specification that candidates should prepare the same topic.

Candidates had generally prepared well but in some cases they had not concentrated on presentation skills and as a consequence the delivery was very rushed and lost some of its meaning.

GENERAL CONVERSATION

This was usually well handled in Centres. It was pleasing to see virtually all Centres giving candidates the opportunity to use a variety of tenses. It was also pleasing to hear candidates conversing on a variety of topics in a spontaneous way. There were some very good performances which included facts and ideas expressed with ease in a variety of tenses and using a good range of structures and lexis. The best performances were heard in Centres where Examiners were clearly aware of the need to make the candidates work for the marks and avoid excessive use of closed questions. As ever, candidates need to be given the opportunity to develop answers wherever possible. It is important that candidates are not encouraged to deliver monologues but listen carefully and respond to the question.

It was felt that standards heard this year were very similar to those heard in 2007 and it was encouraging to hear many candidates engaged in genuine interaction with their teachers. This examination remains a good indicator of the hard work and sound learning that goes on in the MFL classroom on a daily basis.

2356 Written Coursework

Introduction

The full details and conditions applying to Writing Coursework are set out in the Coursework Guidance section (*Appendix E*) of the current Specification, and all teachers should naturally expect to make themselves fully conversant with these regulations and with all aspects of the criteria. Furthermore, it is recommended that the requirements and marking criteria are also made clear to candidates. A good understanding of what is required of them and how to interpret their own progress may help towards increased motivation.

Assessment

The following points are a reminder of the mandatory requirements of the current Specification:

- A candidate's submission must be drawn from 3 different Contexts (and therefore not sub-Contexts). The five *Contexts* offered in total, with their *sub-Contexts*, are listed in *Appendix A* of the Specification (p.27) and are subsequently glossed in considerable detail (pp.42 - 48). This differentiation of *Contexts* is designed to lead candidates to explore different fields of vocabulary and phrasing and to offer greater potential for different task related structures. Implicit here is therefore also the prompt to sample more widely from within the *Defined Content* for the language.
- Each candidate's submission must include a minimum of **one** item completed under *Controlled Conditions*. Teachers are urged to 'over-insure' doing more than three pieces where candidate attendance is known to be poor.
- When writing under *Controlled Conditions*, a candidate may have recourse to **a dictionary only**. *Controlled* items may under no circumstances be word-processed.
- A candidate must cover successfully all 3 principal tenses or time frames - present, past and future - within the overall submission in order to merit consideration for a *Communication* mark of **7** and above in *any* of the three pieces submitted. This reflects the notional requirement stated as signal grade descriptor for Grade C and above.

Length

The directives here are generous, but teachers are reminded that particularly short items within a short overall word count may not be entitled to the full range of **Communication** marks. This reflects the standard length recommendations for the different grade levels. (*Ref: Appendix E, para. 5.2, and the Notes following the Communication mark-scheme, para. 6.*). Thus: -

- Where the overall word count is less than 400 words an item of **less than 140 words** may not score more than **7** marks for Communication.
- **fewer** Where the overall word count is less than 250 words an item of **fewer than 90 words** may not score more than **5** for Communication.
- Where the overall word count is less than 100 words an item of **fewer than 40 words** may not score more than **3** for Communication.

Quality of Language marks are not reduced in the same way, but the result of work being too short is likely to be self-penalising within both mark-schemes.

Administration

Centres are required to submit a 'Centre Authentication Statement' (form CCS160) **signed by all teachers** involved in the assessments. *Candidate* Authentication Statements need not be submitted, *but* they should be retained at Centres until the publication of results, in case of a query. However, candidates are required to verify for the Moderator the authenticity of their own work by signing the individual Coursework Coversheet as indicated.

The Moderator must be in receipt of the coursework marks no later than 15 May. Teachers are urged to submit their marks earlier, if at all possible.

Centres with fewer than 11 candidates should send all their candidates' work, with the authorised list of marks as soon as possible, and without waiting for a request.

Addition of marks and their transcription should be very carefully checked, to reduce the time-consuming administrative procedures that will need to be followed if an error is found.

Work held together by treasury tags is greatly preferred by Moderators, this being much easier to work with. However, each candidate's work should be properly collated.

Task details, with clear assigning to different teachers where appropriate, should be included with the samples. Without these it is not possible for the Moderator to consider to what extent the *Communication* mark has been fulfilled.

Candidates' work should show accurate word counts and all relevant sources should be listed.

Centres are reminded that candidates' work should not be annotated in any way.

Internal moderation is a crucial part of the process. Centres must ensure that it is carried out rigorously and regularly as discrepancies within teaching groups may result in the centre being asked to re-assess the work of all their candidates.

Whilst it is understood that candidates may perform less well under pressure and their mark for their controlled piece may be inferior to their independent pieces, a discrepancy of 10 marks or more should always be investigated and an explanation given on the candidate's coversheet.

General Comments

Coursework remains a popular option with Centres and the standard of the work submitted this year was very similar to that of previous years.

A good proportion of Centres showed a sound understanding of the marking criteria and assessed their candidates' work efficiently and accurately.

Choice of tasks

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of Centres are now routinely including a detailed breakdown of the sub-tasks set, making the moderator's task of assessing the Communication mark much easier. It is also a great help for candidates, as they can focus on what they need to include in their essays.

The three items of coursework submitted should be drawn from three different contexts and whilst sub-contexts may be very different, submitting two pieces from the same context is not permitted. Teachers may find it useful to enter the context number, sub-context letter as well as the task title when recording their marks. Such practice should prevent any possibility of context infringements. (eg: Ma ville - 3a)

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

It is best to avoid tasks which cover several contexts. "*Une lettre d'introduction*" often requires candidates to describe their family, school, leisure time, town, etc, resulting in an overlap if one of the topics is later chosen as a task.

"*Lettre de demande d'emploi*" or "*Lettre de plainte*" should also be avoided as candidates often reproduce, with very few alterations, model answers found in most text books. Substituting words and phrases is a low skill and cannot achieve high marks.

Tasks and sub-tasks should be carefully chosen so that they offer an appropriate challenge to **all** the candidates, regardless of their ability. Setting the same tasks and sub-tasks to the whole cohort should be avoided, as they often cater for C-D range candidates, penalising more able and less able alike.

Many Centres chose "*Mon collègue*", "*ma ville*", "*mon stage*" and "*mes vacances*", putting too much emphasis on descriptive language rather than discursive style. Tasks such as "*ma famille*", "*ma ville*" are rather limiting, as the language used tends to be rather repetitive, with the use of "*il/elle est, il/elle a, il y a, on peut*" + infinitive.

High ability candidates would benefit from more challenging and motivating open tasks. They should be encouraged to compare, contrast and offer feelings and reactions more routinely. Centres need to be more adventurous when selecting tasks so that candidates can respond much more imaginatively and creatively. Candidates would enjoy coursework more if they were asked to narrate events which were of more interest to them, e.g. meeting their favourite celebrity, attending a concert or a festival, taking part in a sporting/musical/charity event, etc. The choices are endless and it is unfortunate that the less mundane areas of the specification are not better explored.

On the other hand, weaker candidates would perform much better if they were set more structured and straightforward tasks, in the form of e-mails, post-cards or interviews. Expecting them to describe a film they have seen recently or a book they have just read is not appropriate as they do not have the required language to carry out the task successfully. They usually tend to rely far too heavily on the use of a dictionary with the unavoidable feeble results.

Length

Very lengthy essays were, once again, a major problem in many Centres. Whilst more able candidates may find the recommended word count rather restricting, writing excessively also has its own drawbacks. Many long essays tend to become increasingly repetitive in ideas and language and often contain irrelevant material. Candidates need to be trained to express themselves succinctly but effectively. The practice of including long lists of subjects, places and adjectives does not necessarily result in a higher mark for either Communication or Quality of Language. In fact there is nothing to be gained from writing extremely long essays, as it is the style and complexity of the piece which will determine the final marks, not its length.

Candidates should be reminded that an accurate word count should be included for every piece of work submitted. Noting a length of '*150+ words*' is not acceptable, because it is the overall word-count that needs to be taken into account. If candidates fail to state the number of words they have used then this should be done by the teachers themselves.

As mentioned earlier, quantity does not necessarily mean quality and candidates would fare much better if they concentrated their efforts on checking the accuracy and variety of opinions and structures they used.

It must also be remembered that the amount of opinions, justifications, structures and clause types should be commensurate with the length of the piece. The repetition of "*je pense/crois/trouve que*" fails to qualify for either range or variety.

Resources

A list of resources should be stated at the end of each piece of work. For the controlled piece there is no need to include the materials which were used during the teaching of the module, only an indication whether a dictionary was used or not.

However, it should be noted that listing the resources used for the independent pieces does not give candidates carte blanche for plagiarism. Teachers should take into consideration the amount of ideas, phrases and sentences which have been "lifted" from course books or exercise books when assessing the piece. Rewarding language which the candidates cannot claim their own is against the spirit of coursework and candidates should be reminded that such a practice will not improve their marks, but will most probably have the opposite effect.

It is essential that candidates are instructed about the difference between adapting and copying. Moderators soon develop a sense of déjà vu when moderating candidates' work. What may have been impressive in the first candidate's work soon starts raising red flags when it is repeated across the work of the whole centre. To avoid plagiarism, centres should refrain from setting sub-tasks which are too close to the ones which have been done for homework or speaking practice.

Marking Criteria

It was pleasing to see that many Centres fell comfortably within the accepted tolerance margin when awarding marks for Communication and Quality of Language. Whilst all the points of the task need to be communicated to score 7, details, ideas and points of view, descriptions and justifications should also be in evidence for a piece to score 8 or more. Consequently, the amount of (detailed) descriptions, expression and justification of ideas and points of view should be determining factors when selecting a mark band.

The repetition of "J'ai aimé/détesté ... parce que c'était + adjective" fails to qualify for "in some detail" or "ideas and points of view freely expressed and justified". An essay, which is repetitive in its ideas, opinions and justifications, fails to qualify for "pleasant to read" or "creative and imaginative writing".

For Quality of Language the key words are *range* and *variety* and their accompanying quantifiers. The repetition of the same structure or clause type does not fulfil the criteria for range or variety. To achieve this, candidates need to demonstrate that they can use different tenses, structures and subordinate conjunctions successfully. Many candidates could often use the perfect infinitive or an infinitive after a preposition but fell short in providing alternative grammatical structures to achieve range and variety.

It should also be noted that the use of the subjunctive is **not** a requirement for GCSE and does not automatically place a piece in the top mark bands, especially if the rest of the essay is rather basic or inaccurate. The use of set phrases in the subjunctive was often intrusive and, at times, erroneous. It was often used when an infinitive would have been much more appropriate.

It was disappointing to see that the use of the pluperfect, imperfect and present participle was not widely known. Many candidates used the perfect tense extensively with the occasional "il y avait", "c'était" or "il faisait" but did not show confidence with other past tenses.

For the overall impression to be one of accuracy, it is imperative that the spelling of the piece be checked carefully. Wrong gender, lack of agreements or missed acute accents on past participles affect the overall impression.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

Candidates who choose to word-process their work should be reminded of the importance of using the French keys for accents. Similarly, they should check the accuracy of the adjectives they use, their position as well as their agreements. This thorough checking should also be in evidence in the tasks set to candidates.

Regretfully, some Centres had to be asked to re-assess the work of some or all their Candidates, as the marks they had awarded did not provide a reliable order of merit. It is essential that internal moderation be carried out rigorously to avoid this stressful situation. Moderators are not allowed to alter the order of merit in any way and scaling would lead to some Candidates' marks being unfairly adjusted. It is therefore essential that all the teachers in the Centre compare each other's marking on a regular basis.

It was also noted that a significant number of Centres were very generous when awarding marks in the top two bands. Even though the essays which were submitted were often very accurate, they failed to display the level of complex language and ideas expected for the top mark bands.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
 French (Specification Code 1925)
 June 2008 Assessment Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2351/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	32	26	21	16	11	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2351/02	Raw	50	40	34	25	17	12	9	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2352/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	21	15	9	3	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2352/02	Raw	50	40	34	29	25	17	13	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2353/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	34	27	20	14	8	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2353/02	Raw	50	39	33	26	19	13	10	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2354/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	31	25	19	13	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2354/02	Raw	50	41	34	25	16	10	7	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2355/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	21	15	9	3	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2355/02	Raw	50	40	34	29	25	17	13	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2356/01	Raw	90	82	76	67	59	48	37	26	15	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0

Syllabus Aggregation Results

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

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1925	360	320	280	240	200	160	120	80	40	0

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

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total Number of Candidates
1925	12.4	28.1	47.6	73.0	89.9	96.9	99.2	99.8	100	32,410

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

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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