

GCSE

French

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J730**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J030 J130**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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 specification 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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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A701 Listening

This year's French Listening comprehension test proved demanding on both tiers, with marks generally lower than those scored last year. Although it was not felt that the candidature was any less able than last year, it would appear that the nature of some of the texts and the pace at which some of the material was delivered proved quite challenging. Candidates for the most part respected rubrics but there were fair numbers who did not attempt answers to the more difficult material.

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1.

Candidates generally performed well on this elementary opening exercise which tested understanding of individual items of French vocabulary. On Q.1 *un camping* was easily identified, as was the time *dix heures* on Q.2. Q.3 proved a little more demanding, the phrase *nous faisons des courses en ville* clearly not being well known by a number of candidates and the correct visual perhaps not being immediately identifiable. On Q.4 and 5 the two food items *frites* and *raisin* were well known, as was the location *la plage* in Q.6. On Q.7 *nous allons danser dans une boîte* was fairly easily identified and the correct visual corresponding to *des bonbons* on Q.8 was chosen with little difficulty.

Exercise 2.

On this exercise candidates were required to select from a list the correct description of the weekend activity which each young person mentioned. This exercise was well answered, with only occasional difficulties encountered. The opening three questions caused no problems at all, the vast majority of candidates generally matching correctly, *je regarde le sport à la télévision*, (Q.9) *j'adore jouer au tennis de table* (Q.10) and *j'aime beaucoup les films – je vais au cinéma* (Q.11). Q.12 was found a little more difficult, the word *amis* for friends not perhaps being as familiar to candidates as *copains*. It is possible that the required inclusion of some unfamiliar vocabulary (here *on se marre bien*) may have confused some. Candidates should be reminded that even in the elementary exercises unfamiliar vocabulary of this type will be included. Most made a correct selection on Q.13, understanding what Mohammed said about *mon ordinateur* and *je passe des heures à jouer à des jeux*. On Q.14 most identified that Noémie was talking about visiting her grand-parents but on Q.16 the words *bricolage* and *je repeints* were understandably found difficult and correct answers were less common. On the final question, however, good numbers equated *aller en montagne faire de l'alpinisme* with the idea of climbing.

Exercise 3.

This exercise, based on the town of Namur and in which candidates had to give brief answers in English, proved considerably more demanding. Marks were not very good because much of the vocabulary was unknown to candidates. Very few succeeded in rendering the population: *cent mille* correctly on Q.17 but some of the answers were unlikely, such as one hundred million. Candidates often seem to have trouble in rendering high numbers correctly and Centres could well be advised to give them more practice in this. In Q.18 *château* was reasonably well known, but *le musée* (Q.19) seemed to cause problems for a number, confusion with *musique* being a common source of error. On Q.20 the word *nul* was fairly well known, though guesses of a more favourable opinion of the football team were more common. Only the word *basket* (Q.21) seemed to be well known on this exercise. Certainly *chemins de fer* on Q.22 was demanding, but it should be noted that answers such as *trains* were accepted here. The month *juillet* on Q.23 was not well known (it should be pointed out here that poor English spelling such as *Julie*

is never penalised on this paper, as long as the desired word is evident). There was a fair degree of success in Q.24 in rendering: *c'est vivant...il y a beaucoup de choses à faire*.

Exercise 4/Higher Tier Ex.1

Candidates were required to select from lists the method of transport mentioned and the opinion of it given. This was generally well answered at both tiers. On Q.25/1 both *avion* and *pratique* were well identified, although *expensive* was sometimes selected for the latter. On Q.26/2 most identified the correct form of transport but the opinion was often given as *expensive* rather than *enjoyable*. On Q.27/3 the first part was not readily identified as it required candidates to surmise that *walking* was the form of transport referred to, but most seemed to understand *fatigant* in the second part. On Q.28/4, good numbers understood both parts – *vélo* and *bon pour la santé*.

Exercise 5/Higher Tier Ex. 2

As expected, Foundation Tier candidates found this exercise fairly difficult but even so there were some good marks at both tiers. Candidates had to identify the different aspects of school life being talked about. This was an exercise in which conclusions had to be drawn, rather than simple understanding shown of individual items of vocabulary. Q.29/5, focusing on travelling to school, was well answered at both tiers. Q.30/6 (the head teacher) was found very difficult at Foundation Tier and also difficult at Higher Tier. Q.31/7 (homework) required conclusions to be drawn and was found difficult at Foundation Tier. Q.32/8 (language lessons) was also fairly demanding, the inclusion of *cours de science* perhaps confusing some. Q.33/9 (food in the canteen) was well understood on both tiers, no doubt helped by the inclusion of clues such as *frites*, *haricots* and *viande*. Q.34/10 (PE lessons) was also well answered at both tiers, candidates readily identifying the key words *sportif* and *gymnase*. Q.35/11 (maths lessons) was difficult because of the inclusion of the words *calcul* and *chiffres*. On the final question 36/12 candidates were quite successful in picking out the references to *pupils* in understanding *ils sont gentils* and *j'ai trouvé de bons amis ici* despite the inclusion of less familiar vocabulary such as *voyous* and *désagréables*.

Higher Tier

Exercises 1 and 2 – see above Exercises 4 and 5 at Foundation Tier.

Exercise 3

This exercise, based on a girl's visit to Mali and her impressions of the country, was well answered except for two items of vocabulary which caused problems. On Q.13 the month *au mois d'août* was generally well rendered, but on Q.14 the length of time *un an et demi* was not so well answered, many candidates being distracted by the inclusion of the phrase *il y a trois ans*. Careful listening to both playings of the item was necessary here. On Q.15 the vast majority easily picked out *une tante* but on the following question many failed to answer correctly with "nurse", having been confused by the interviewer's question as to whether she had worked in a school. Again, careful listening was necessary. On Q.17 very good numbers gave a satisfactory rendering of *Ça m'a apporté énormément de plaisir*. Q.18 was a stumbling block for many, relying on understanding of *de l'or*. All candidates guessed possible answers here but few knew the word. A fair number knew *bruyant* on Q.19 (the word *noisy* had to be included here, even though inclusion of references to the traffic were tolerated). Q.20 was the other question which few succeeded on, the word *chaleur* not being known by most

Exercise 4

This exercise was targeted at Grade A level and was a multiple-choice exercise based on a monologue by a singer-actress talking about her career. Again, certain vocabulary items caused problems, though all candidates managed to score a few marks. On Q.21, *institutrice* was not well-known. Q.22 was based on the unfamiliar *renfermée* which candidates had to equate to shy – not an easy question. On Q.23 the concept of gaining confidence was well understood and in the following question fair numbers understood the concept contained in the phrase *j'ai beaucoup appris sur moi-même*. The concept in Q.25, however, was difficult to grasp. On Q.26 good numbers understood the idea of *mon premier album sortira le mois prochain*. Only the most able were able to pick out *la chose la plus importante dans ma vie*. On Q.27 the final question was generally well-answered, many candidates managing to pick out the correct summary of Mathilda's outlook on life in the word committed .

Exercise 5

This talk by a doctor giving advice about a healthy lifestyle (a Grade A* exercise) was surprisingly not found difficult by many. Very careful listening was required to both playings of the material and candidates had to realise that correct answers could not be given simply by guessing, even though the material might have seemed fairly familiar. Q.29 was difficult, being based on understanding of the unfamiliar phrase *trous de mémoire* but many candidates gave correct answers such as bad memory , poor memory etc., simply from understanding the word *mémoire*. The concept of helping sleep on Q.30 was not easily perceived, a contrary answer such as preventing sleep often being guessed. On Q.31 fair numbers managed to pick out *du riz* and good numbers rendered correctly *les plats épicés* on Q.32. Q.33 was the most difficult question on the paper, a correct rendering of *du lait tiède* being required, but rarely given, for the mark. On Q.34 good numbers of candidates successfully rendered *ne pas faire trop d'activités physiques*. On Q.35 only the best candidates gave a correct rendering of *couchez-vous toujours à la même heure* (the concept of the same time was usually overlooked), but there was a fair degree of success on the final question (Q.36) in rendering the idea of turning off the TV set before sleeping.

A702 Speaking

It is encouraging to see that in the vast majority of Centres, the tasks of recording, storing and marking these tasks is conducted in a conscientious and professional manner. It is essential that the marks are checked so that arithmetical errors do not delay the moderation process, which in turn could delay the issue of results.

It is also vital that internal moderation takes place within each Centre. Otherwise, if there is an inconsistency in the marking between Teacher/Examiners in a Centre, it is possible that all the candidates in that Centre would need re-marking. The Moderators were encouraged to see that Centres followed the OCR's guidelines and there was usually clear evidence of Internal Moderation among the Teacher/Examiners who had conducted the Controlled Assessments.

Administration

Unfortunately in some centres the marks for Task 2 were entered on the Task 1 mark sheet, and vice versa. While the total for the candidate remained the same, it is essential that the mark for both tasks is accurate, as Task 1 is the moderated piece of work. This is clearly more difficult in a centre with several Teacher/Examiners, and therefore great care must be taken in the transfer of marks onto the correct MS1 sheets and when passing MS1 sheets on to colleagues.

Unfortunately the Moderation of a Centre cannot begin until all the documentation has been received or uploaded onto the OCR Repository. This year only a handful of Centres sent all recordings, preferring to wait the request for the sample to be generated by OCR. There still seems to be some confusion however, over what documentation needs to be sent to the Moderator. This can be summarised as:

- Recording of Task 1 for each candidate in the sample requested (either on CD or via the Repository)
- Candidates' Notes Forms for both Task 1 and Task 2 for candidates in the sample requested
- Cover sheet for each candidate in the sample requested
- CCS160 – Centre Authentication Form
- Moderator's copy of the MS1 (mark sheets)

In the vast majority of centres, the working mark sheets had been correctly filled in and showed the marks for both the recording submitted to OCR and for the second recording (which was not required). The Speaking Notes Forms for the candidates were also correctly submitted and showed that the candidates had only used the correct number of prompts. Some candidates had made no notes to work from, and whilst candidates may exercise their individual choice to do so, it is in fact good practice for them to have some notes to refer to in case they freeze when under pressure in the exam room.

Where the mark sheets were incorrect or not provided by the centre, the problem was quickly resolved by contact between the Moderator and the Exams Officer at the centre.

Style of Tasks and Timing

In the majority of cases, candidates were encouraged to use familiar vehicles for the Controlled Assessment and the most common were:

- A Presentation on a theme followed by a discussion
- An Interview (usually with the candidate playing the part of somebody famous which enabled the candidate to draw on different topic areas of the specification)
- A General Conversation with the candidate
- A Role-play – either an extended role-play, for example buying clothes or requesting tourist information about an area
- A Narrative Role-play, similar to those in the legacy specification, using the visual cues and adapted for the new specification

The most successful of the Presentation and Discussion style tasks were those which limited the Presentation to a maximum of three minutes (the majority spoke for between two and two and a half minutes). This allowed ample time for the Teacher/Examiner to draw the candidate out sufficiently to give them access to the higher marks in the assessment criteria. The candidates were then able to demonstrate their ability to understand unexpected questions and respond to them.

Presentations which lasted longer disadvantaged the candidates in two ways. Firstly, the strain on their memory when trying to finish a 3-4 minute presentation was such that in most cases their pronunciation and intonation suffered accordingly. Secondly, there was little or no time left for the T?E to ask questions, and certainly not enough time to draw the candidate out sufficiently to give them access to the higher marks in the assessment criteria.

There were some excellent Interviews, such as job interviews/and or interviews with famous people. These gave lots of scope for candidates to use a variety of tenses, structures and vocabulary. Good sequences of language were even heard in response to unexpected questions, the candidates expressing themselves well and showing their ability to link and develop ideas. Language was accurate, well pronounced and showed good control of relevant tenses.

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of Teacher/Examiners adhered to the recommended timing of the Controlled Assessment (4-6 minutes). Where Assessments were considerably longer than the six minute maximum, Moderators noted that candidates could not sustain the level of input, and the quality of their response deteriorated the longer the test continued. Moderators do not listen to more than six minutes of candidate task (the Teacher/Examiner's introductory comments are not included in that timing).

Recording Quality

The recording quality was usually superb and there were no problems with CDs sent in the post as they were adequately wrapped to prevent damage. It is still worth pointing out that the position of candidates relative to the microphone is important, as if they are too far away from the recording equipment, however excellent the equipment may be, the recording will still be faint. The recordings on the Repository were clearly identifiable and were also of excellent quality. Once recordings have been uploaded to the Repository, centres checked that the recording had saved correctly – a worthwhile precaution, saving much time and effort later.

Most Centres made recordings in MP3 format but Moderators were able to access the recordings, whatever the chosen format by the Centre. Where a technical problem occurred with a recording, it was swiftly resolved as a result of a conversation between the Moderator and the Centre.

It was encouraging to see in many Centres that each recording was labelled with either the candidate's name and candidate number, or with the Centre and candidate numbers. This made clear identification quick and easy. Where this was not the case, Moderators had to spend time identifying the correct recording, as some were only labelled as Track 1 or Track 2. It would be helpful if centres could label the recordings with at least the candidate name and/or number. In a few centres, the Teacher/Examiners had included the title of the Controlled Assessment in the file name. This was extremely useful, as the Moderator to see the information on screen as well as in the paperwork.

Now that this is a Moderated Unit, the majority of the Centres were able to provide OCR with their marks before the deadline. In a minority of cases marks were not made available to OCR by the May 15th deadline. This causes problems for OCR, the Moderator and for the Centre. It is extremely important, if candidates' results are not to be delayed, that centres respect the deadline of May 15th for the submission of marks to OCR.

A703 Reading

General Comments:

Candidates generally coped well with the reading examination, and for the most part had been entered for the correct tier.

Most Candidates supplied an answer to all questions, often showing a sensible use of context, and also attempting to provide intelligent renderings of unfamiliar words which were near cognates. In a few cases responses to multiple choice and relatively simple written answers were left blank, even by able candidates, possibly suggesting a lack of checking at the end of the test. This was especially noticeable on task 5 of the Higher Tier paper. Candidates should be reminded to consider all pages of the examination booklet.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1: Questions 1 – 8

Examiners were pleased to see that the majority of candidates scored well on this task. Nevertheless, days of the week still cause some confusion and *ouvert* was often not known. This led to some guessing and responses such as 'out of order/service' and 'over there'. The final item, *fraises*, was usually recognised as a food item, but 'raspberries' and 'chips' were frequent answers

Exercise 2: Questions 9 – 16

In this multiple choice exercise most candidates again performed well. On Q.12 'younger' and 'older' were sometimes mixed up, while in Q.13 grandfather was sometimes not understood. Questions 9 and 10 were mostly answered correctly, although some Candidates opted for A on Q.9. The remaining items were usually very well answered.

Exercise 3: Questions 17 – 22.

A high degree of success was seen in this task. The major issues concerned Q17, where both 'summer' and 'holidays' were required for the mark, and Q.19, where *plongée* was unfamiliar to many. On Q.22 most were able to give one correct answer, but it was comparatively rare to find both given correctly.

Foundation/Higher Tier

Exercise 4: Questions 23 – 30/ Exercise 1: Questions 1 – 8

This task proved to be a good discriminator. At Foundation Tier Q. 25 – 28/Q. 3 - 6 were often incorrect. Higher Tier Candidates were more able to identify the required information in order to choose the correct option. Examiners requested that Candidates be reminded to ensure that ticks are accurately placed within one box.

Exercise 5: Questions 31 – 37 / Exercise 2: Questions 9 – 15

This exercise discriminated well, producing a wide range of marks. Examiners were pleased to note that blank responses to these tasks were rare. For Q.31/Q.9 the vast majority of candidates recognised *vingt* in *vingtaine*, but a significant number did not get the correct answer: 21, 80, and 200 appeared frequently. For Q. 32/Q.10 *meilleure* and *sera* in the text led to some thinking these were names. Similarly for Q.37/Q.15 *Loin* appeared often at Foundation Tier, presumably as the name of a town. Q.33/Q.11 returned 1 mark out of 2 most frequently, the idea of *choice* of shops being the major sticking point, while in Q.34/Q.12 *fruits de mer* and in Q.35/Q.13 *voisin* were only known by the higher scoring Candidates.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3: Questions 16 – 23.

There was a mixed profile to answers on this exercise, as the longer text meant that candidates had to read carefully to locate the answers. Questions 16, 20 and 23 proved to be the most difficult, *chasser*, *escalade* and *sensible* being the unknown vocabulary items. Incorrect answers to the remaining questions were seldom seen.

Exercise 4: Questions 24 – 31

This task, in which candidates had to write in English, gave able candidates a full opportunity to show what they knew, and also allowed most candidates to feel that they could supply a sensible response, even if they failed to give sufficient detail to earn the marks.

Close reading is important at this level, because relying on a single word in the text in order to extrapolate an answer is very unlikely to be sufficiently accurate. Q.24 was usually correct, although some rendered *journée* as 'journey'. Q.25 required an understanding of *trop chargée* as 'too busy' or 'full' and Q.26 required a rendering of *bien-être* rather than simply *bien*. In Q.28, whilst the majority recognised that stress was involved, a significant number failed to provide a satisfactory idea for *oublier*. The remaining tasks were often accurately completed, although some missed the concept of extra homework on Q.31.

Exercise 5: Questions 32 – 39.

At this level candidates should be able to read a text for both gist and detail, and interpret longer sequences of complex language. More able candidates could do this, and gained a pleasing number of marks. Questions 38 and 39 were especially well answered, although there were also blank responses, where Candidates appeared not to have looked at the final page.

A704 Writing

General Comments:

Examiners reported some slight reduction in the overall standard of work presented.

The examining team have reported seeing fewer topics being explored. Overwhelmingly Centres are narrowing the writing experience to two or three topics which are used across the whole centre: 'School', 'Holidays', 'Local Area', 'Leisure', 'Friends and Family'.

There was some disappointment in the rather poor presentation of work; given the extensive preparation time, it is to be expected that candidates can produce orderly, paragraphed work in reasonably legible handwriting.

Some centres offer candidates the chance to word-process their work. Centres are reminded of the guidance which is available on such work. It would be helpful if word-processed pieces were in a reasonable font size and also double spaced. It is vital that candidates use their proof-reading skills when using this method. Examiners must base their marks on what they see, so candidates need to ensure that relevant accents are actually in place, also that the computer has not automatically adjusted the spelling of words.

A significant factor which has had an impact on performance again this year is the lack of differentiation. Centres are making the task harder for weaker candidates by inviting them to write on themes which are too challenging: the environment, film reviews. Candidates faced with too great a challenge are not able to use what language they know and so their coping strategy is then to rely on the dictionary. Regular recourse to this often results in the choice of inappropriate vocabulary and structures. The other strategy, which is increasingly common across all ability ranges, is to learn a prepared text by heart; when this happens, the final pieces of writing reveal numerous phonetic errors and omissions.

Centres are advised to guide their candidates to write pieces of an appropriate length. For some candidates the outcome was compromised, as in previous years, by the excessive length of their responses. In a single one hour session it is questionable whether candidates - producing in excess of 500 words per piece - can accurately and relevantly expound on their chosen topic. It would be far better if candidates restricted themselves to the recommended length and devoted any spare time to checking their work. As is frequently found, long answers regularly reveal various weaknesses which depress the level of marks scored: irrelevance, repetition, lists of nouns and lists of verbal structures. Examples are 'school rules': *il faut arriver à l'heure, il faut avoir son équipement, il faut faire ses devoirs, il ne faut pas mâcher du chewing gum*, lists of sentences of activities available e.g. to tourists: *on peut visiter le musée, on peut jouer au tennis, on peut aller au marché*. Other extended lists involved long sequences of similar sentences, commonly seen either on film/TV preferences or schools subjects: *j'aime le ... parce que ..., je déteste ... car ...*. All of these strategies may well add up to significant amounts of French, sometimes in quite accurate language, however they do not display interest and certainly not the variety of tense and structure likely to produce higher marks..

Too frequently candidates appear not to think carefully about what they are writing; non-sequiturs are common: describing the local area, for example, one candidate evinced: *il y a l'église et un cinéma parce que j'adore la piscine*

The impression was that there was an ever greater reliance either on writing frames or on commonly prepared material, with the result that the work from many candidates lacked both linguistic variety and a personal dimension. Centres should consider the impact of using such strategies and ask themselves how candidates will be able to build on this to expand their

understanding and use of language in the future. When every candidate writing on a particular theme produces the same ideas in the same language, examiners inevitably reach the conclusion that there is a lack of originality. At one Centre, writing on the theme of 'Health', many candidates wrote: *j'ai horreur de manger les fruits donc je n'en mange plus depuis deux ans ... , avec l'aide de mes proches je pourrais le faire ... , les raisons principales pour l'augmentation de l'obésité ... , les repas faciles à préparer ...*. On the theme of 'Leisure', numerous candidates recorded: *un coca à la main allongé dans un fauteuil confortable ... , je ne peux pas sortir d'un magasin les mains vides ...*, or on 'Holidays': *si je gagnais à la lotterie, après m'être évanoui ... , je laisserais libre cours à mon imagination* Seen on an individual basis, structures such as these would be impressive; observed in the work of every candidate, they lack impact and arouse concerns.

Each year the report on this unit has provided guidance on the use of idioms. Some candidates freely use colloquialisms, but often inappropriately, in the mistaken belief that these are what is required: *jeter l'argent par la fenêtre ... , se porter comme un charme ... , l'appétit vient en mangeant ... , c'est en forgeant qu'on devient forgeron ... , l'habit ne fait pas le moine ... , à Rome fais comme les Romains ... , unis comme les doigts de la main ... , il faut le voir pour croire ... aux calendes grecques ... , manger sur la pouce*

For assessment purposes idioms are defined as the idiomatic use of grammar, as in structures using *depuis, venir de ... , il y a (ago) ...*, expressions using *avoir ...* e.g. *avoir soif / faim / raison/ besoin de ...*, impersonal structures e.g. *il s'agit de ... , il faut ... , il vaut mieux ...*

Control of tenses remains a significant basis for success. Good candidates maintain a narrative thread, using a series of correctly formed verbs. Despite the fact that candidates have a Notes Form designed to serve as prompt and aide-memoire, Perfect tense verbs and Future tense verbs are often incorrect. It is in the spirit of the specification for candidates to put a correct verb form on the form to serve as an example and a model. So often much is lost because for example the auxiliary verb is missing, or the accent on the past participle is absent, or the infinitive after *je vais* is written as a past participle.

In terms of tense usage, the simple patterns of sequence of tense appear to be unfamiliar e.g. **si + present + future ... si + imperfect + conditional ...**. Another grammatical pattern which is often misused is the Perfect Infinitive. This must refer to the subject of the following main verb; it is incorrect in an example such as: *après avoir visité la ville, il a commencé à pleuvoir*

Some centres continue to believe that by encouraging candidates to learn and include expressions requiring the subjunctive, they will enhance their performance. As with other expressions seen in the work of all candidates, this has little impact, especially when the candidates cannot sustain the narrative flow using correct indicative verb forms which are required for the piece to make basic sense. These subjunctive patterns are put in to impress but in many instances do not ring true. As modern French usage demonstrates the subjunctive is in fact often avoided.

On a related topic, convoluted sentence patterns such as *il est indispensable que j'ai l'intention d'étudier vu que je voudrais aller à l'université* do not reveal much about the language skills of an individual student. Especially when this is contrasted with their inability to use a vital structure such as the possessive, e.g. *mon amis anniversaire ...* Errors such as this were again common this year. A number of examiners reported an increase in the use of *avoir l'habitude de ...* as in *il avait l'habitude de fumer...* where the simple use of a verb in the imperfect would be more appropriate.

One message from previous reports has had some bearing on work produced and that is about the use of comparative adjectives and adverbs. Properly used these can enhance opinions and justifications. However, many examiners reported that on the other hand basic adjectival forms often were misplaced and/or lacked appropriate agreements.

The assessment criteria encourage variety of structure and vocabulary. Sadly repetition of certain patterns was frequently observed e.g. *parce que* used fifteen times in a single piece or *vraiment* used every time to qualify an adjective. In preparation, teachers could usefully explore ways of avoiding repetition; again judicious use of the Notes Form would assist candidates. It is very easy in a piece on 'Healthy Eating' for candidates to make constant use of the verb *manger*. What about encouraging *prendre / consommer*? In fact it is more correct in French to use the expression *prendre un repas / le déjeuner ...* and *consommer* is as easy to use as *manger*. On the related theme of 'Health and Sport', candidates would do well to remember that *pratiquer* can be as useful as *jouer* and *faire*. Of course it should be *pratiquer* and not *practiquer*. Another common error - *jouer du sport* - could also be avoided by careful use of the Notes Form.

Candidates are expected to express opinions and to justify them. There were some pleasing examples of work where individual candidates expressed some heartfelt opinions, giving personal insights, backed up with evidence and couched in language which was varied and convincing. Too frequently, however, as with aspects of language use, all candidates from a given centre produce the same opinion expressed in identical language.

One thing which is worrying to examiners is that candidates are not appearing to think about what they write: *j'aime l'histoire parce que c'est amusant et ennuyeux* Such contradictions were not uncommon.

There is a body of learners who demonstrate a solid understanding of basic grammar, who can construct varied and interesting sentence patterns, using tenses, connectives and grammatically idiomatic language to produce coherent and stimulating pieces of writing. Such candidates can use what they know flexibly and relevantly to engage the reader. With skills such as these, they can look forward to progressing successfully with their language learning.

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