

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0520/01

Listening

## General comments

The paper was of a similar standard to last year's paper and the standard of candidate response was, as last year, very encouraging. The majority of candidates scored well over half marks and displayed high levels of competence in their understanding of both specific and general comprehension tasks. Candidates were, generally, well prepared for the examination and experienced very few difficulties in understanding the rubrics. Questions requiring written answers in French were marked for communication of message and accuracy was only considered if the clarity of message was in doubt. Answers written in languages other than French were ignored, but these were indeed rare. The extracts heard featured formal and informal language in a variety of topics and settings. The paper featured a gradient of difficulty across the three sections and Examiners found it to be a fair and appropriate test for candidates of all abilities. As last year, the majority of candidates chose to answer questions on all 3 sections of the paper. Some scored low marks on the last section but candidates are not penalised if they choose to attempt the final section and do not do well.

Finally, candidates must be instructed **not** to write their answers in pencil – they must write in dark blue or black ink.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### *Exercise 1*

#### **Questions 1 - 8**

This exercise tested the comprehension of short extracts or conversations. The question type used was multiple choice. The exercise was generally well answered, the most difficult questions being **Questions 6** and **8**.

#### *Exercise 2*

#### **Questions 9 - 16**

This exercise tested the comprehension of specific detail and factual information concerning tourist activities. The question types used were note completion and box ticking.

This exercise was fairly well attempted by candidates. Weaker candidates found **Questions 13** to **16** easier than **Questions 9** to **12**. This was partly due to the visual nature of the last four questions, which candidates found accessible. The numbers in **Questions 9** and **10** often caused problems. In **Question 9**, *juillet* was often spelt incorrectly. In **Question 11**, *dessins animés* was written as one word by weaker candidates, *desanimés*, and did not gain the mark. *Animés* was sometimes interpreted as *animaux*. On **Question 12**, 53 and 42 were often guessed incorrectly by candidates.

### **Section 2**

#### *Exercise 1*

#### **Question 17**

Candidates heard 4 young people talking about what they had done whilst on holiday and they had to match these accounts to a list of 12 statements of which 6 had to be ticked. This type of exercise is now well understood in Centres. Only a few candidates ticked more than the statutory 6 boxes. Generally, this exercise was well answered, with many candidates scoring at least 4 or 5 of the 6 marks. The main problem for weaker candidates was **(i)** which was often selected instead of either **(b)** or **(d)**.

## Exercise 2

### Questions 18 - 25

In this exercise, candidates heard an interview with a singer and were required to give short answers in French, which weaker candidates found demanding. Only a few candidates failed to answer in French, but there was intrusion of Spanish and English in some answers. Full sentences were not required to answer correctly. In **Question 18**, most candidates managed at least one of the relevant points – *pour dire comment-sont les choses/pour dire ce qu'il pense* or *pour raconter ses impressions sur la vie*. In **Question 19**, *problèmes* was often spelt incorrectly – *problema* and *problem* were not tolerated on the first use as they were Spanish and English renderings; they were however tolerated if used more than once by candidates so that they would not be penalised twice for the same error. On **Question 20**, some misheard *violence* as *violon*. Answers in **Question 21** sometimes featured the incorrect *matière* rather than *métier*, but this was generally well answered. **Question 22** proved more difficult, some reference to the system not explaining how to live together was needed. **Question 23** was well answered, most could pick out *avion* well, but some confused the idea of not having flown with never having taken the train. In **Question 25**, some confused *métier* with *amitié* (the required concept).

## Section 3

### Exercise 1

#### Questions 26 – 31

Candidates heard an interview with a runner. The question type was multiple choice. This exercise was done well by candidates, who generally fared better on the last three questions. **Question 31** was answered well.

### Exercise 2

#### Questions 32 - 39

This was a suitably demanding final exercise and only the more able candidates scored more than half marks on this exercise.

The candidates heard an interview with a young woman working for a French bank. In **Question 32**, a reference was needed to the idea of her being responsible for a team (of 15 people). In **Question 33**, the notion of welcoming/wanting responsibility of financial independence was required for the mark. **Question 34** was well done. In **Question 35**, reference needed to be made to the idea of habit/custom or tradition of women studying literary subjects in the past. **Question 36** was well done, but some candidates spelt *dynamique* as *dynamic* and did not gain the mark. **Question 37** proved to be easy and many candidates came up with the correct answers *le travail* and *la famille*. **Question 38** was a searching question with few realising that both would do the childminding. *Son mari* was frequently the incorrect favourite response. The final question was also searching and an appropriate final task. It needed a comparison to be made and Examiners looked for the concept *elles sont aussi capables et efficaces*. Only the more able included the *aussi* which was a crucial element in the answer.

Paper 0520/02

Reading and Directed Writing

### General comments

As always, this paper produced a wide spread of marks. The level of difficulty was appropriate: the first section allowed weaker candidates to show what they could do and at the top end, some excellent candidates scored full marks. The vast majority of candidates performed very well and several Examiners commented on the high standard of work of the Centres they marked.

On the whole, it was clear that Teachers had done a thorough job in preparing their candidates for this examination.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### *Exercise 1*

#### **Questions 1 - 6**

A very large majority of candidates scored at least 4 marks in this exercise. **Questions 3** and **6** were the most difficult, indicating that candidates did not understand *ordures* and *faire un lit* and *draps*.

#### *Exercise 2*

#### **Questions 7 - 13**

Very well answered. Nearly all candidates scored 5 to 7 marks. No question caused particular problems.

#### *Exercise 3*

#### **Questions 14 - 20**

Very well answered on the whole. A few candidates gave the wrong answer for **Question 19**, choosing A instead of F.

#### *Exercise 4*

#### **Question 21**

On the whole, candidates did really well on this exercise – most were able to score at least 7 marks and a large majority scored full marks. Very few candidates ignored the prompts given via the pictures.

The main loss of marks came from **Tasks (c)** – some candidates wrote about **what** they ate rather than **where** they ate – and **(d)** – marks were lost by a fair number of candidates who wrote *Je vais a le market* (*market* could not score as it is not a French word) or *Je fais les cours* (the use of *cours* was judged to be ambiguous and misleading to the reader).

### **Section 2**

#### *Exercise 1*

#### **Questions 22 - 30**

The vast majority of candidates had no problems understanding the text with a very large number scoring full marks. Answers to **Questions 22 to 26** were nearly always correct.

Weaker candidates found **Question 27** more difficult, and lifted the whole sentence *Domage! car c'est là que se cachent les vitamines* from the text. It was decided that for candidates to score the mark, they had to remove *dommage*. For **Question 30 (a)**, weaker candidates often wrote *supprimer les repas en famille*, which is in fact the very opposite of what parents would like.

#### *Exercise 2*

#### **Question 31**

Only a few candidates had problems understanding the rubric and many had very interesting things to say about their countries.

The most common problems were:

- A small number of candidates did not pay enough attention to the rubric and this resulted in the loss of communication marks: instead of writing about their country (*décrivez votre pays, dites si vous aimez ce pays et pourquoi*) they wrote about their town or their house.

- Occasionally introductions were too long: candidates asked their friend how s/he was, about his/her parents etc and as a result they ran out of words before they got to **Task (c)**. Candidates should be reminded to concentrate on what they are asked to do by the rubric as this is what will score Communication marks.
- Candidates losing Accuracy marks because they failed to put accents on verbs.

### **Section 3**

#### *Exercise 1*

#### **Questions 32 - 38**

On the whole, candidates coped well with this exercise, and very many were able to score 8 or more marks, though, as intended, the exercise did prove more challenging for weaker candidates who tended to just tick boxes and did not attempt to correct the sentences which were *faux*.

The most difficult questions were: **Question 34**, where many candidates ticked Vrai; **Question 36**, which often produced sentences such as *on espère que le public va découvrir d'autres modes de transport*, which was not the *but principal*; and **Question 37** where many candidates had not understood that, *les ambulances, les pompiers et la police* were *véhicules prioritaires* and gave them as the answer.

#### *Exercise 2*

#### **Questions 39 - 45**

This exercise was a good discriminator. Good candidates were able to answer the questions precisely, thus demonstrating a thorough understanding of the text. Weaker candidates tended to simply copy out chunks of the text without adapting the material to answer the question they were being asked. For instance, in **Question 41**, such candidates often wrote *Claire veut aider les enfants malades à vivre les moments difficiles*, which, as it stands, does not answer the question *Qu'est-ce que l'Association (...) offre aux enfants malades?*

#### *Exercise 3*

#### **Questions 46 - 65**

Although only the most able candidates scored highly in this exercise, most managed to score some marks: **Questions 46, 47, 48, 62, 63** and **65** were often correctly answered. The most difficult questions were **53, 57, 58** and **64**.

**Paper 0520/03**

**Speaking**

### **General comments**

This Paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core Curriculum and an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as last year, there was a wide range of performance from candidates.

As last year, the ability to communicate displayed by these candidates is impressive, and Moderators commented on the lively performance from candidates. Well over half the candidates scored at least half marks and, overall, the standard heard was very comparable to that heard last year.

Centres generally conducted the examination very professionally, and it was only in a few Centres that Examiners were not well prepared for the Role Play situations and/or did not always ask appropriate questions in the Topic and/or General Conversation sections. Moderators generally commented that Centres had prepared candidates well for the examination.

Moderators are pleased to report that the administrative work in Centres was very good this year and there were fewer clerical errors than on previous occasions.

Recording was usually well done in Centres, but a few tapes were difficult to hear – it is vital to check equipment prior to use.

Generally, marking in Centres was close to the agreed standard and in the majority of cases no adjustments, or only slight adjustments, to marks were required. Some Centres had larger adjustments made, usually due to one of the following:

- Poor timing – some Centres did not spend 5 minutes on the Topic/Discussion **and** 5 minutes on the General Conversation.
- In both the Topic and the General Conversation sections, candidates must be given the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames. If candidates could not display their ability to use these time frames, marks in category B (linguistic quality) were often not scored.
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the Role Play section – Centres must ensure that the Examiner prepares his/her role thoroughly.

Centres are reminded that if they have large numbers of candidates and wish to use more than one Examiner, they should first contact the IGCSE Foreign Languages Product Manager to obtain permission and discuss the establishment of internal moderation procedures within their Centre. Where more than one Examiner is used, it is vital that all Examiners interpret the assessment criteria in the same way to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

Examiners are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. If only one part of a task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded.

As last year, the **A** role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are primarily designed to be at an easier level than the **Section B** role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content, Areas A, B and C. Generally, candidates found them accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score 1 or, more usually, 2 marks on each task. Candidates should be reminded to greet and thank as appropriate and that it is always the Examiner who opens the situation.

#### **At the youth hostel**

Candidates coped well with this role play. The first three tasks were very straightforward. Weaker candidates sometimes found it difficult to formulate a question in *Tasks 4* and *5* but, generally, most candidates coped well.

#### **Inviting a friend to the cinema**

Again this was a role play which posed few problems. Most managed to invite the friend out and relate days and times without problems. The most difficult task was the last one. Candidates could have answered with a place and time only, i.e. with no verb (in response to the cue). Occasionally, candidates produced longer utterances and then made mistakes, which sometimes limited their mark to 2.

#### **Making a restaurant reservation**

Candidates managed to ask for a reservation and give subsequent details with few problems. Again, the last task, in which candidates had to formulate a question, challenged the weakest candidates, but most performed well.

## **Section B**

The **Section B** role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations, justifications or apologies where necessary.

Again, the cards were equally balanced in terms of difficulty, each having its easier and its more challenging tasks. Many Examiners split longer tasks, which is quite appropriate, and there were, consequently, some good natural performances.

Candidates generally understood the need to take in the setting provided in the introduction. This is important as it provides a contextualising framework for each role play.

### **In a clothes shop**

*Task 1* was straightforward, but weaker candidates found it challenging to explain accurately in *Task 2* that a friend had bought the pullover. *Task 3* was well done, but not all candidates could respond with diplomacy to the colour. *Task 5* was usually well done and the better candidates responded with phrases such as *vous êtes très aimable*.

### **After the party**

*Task 1* was well done, but weaker candidates could not always reassure the father/mother that there had not been problems in *Task 2*. *Task 3* was well done and nearly all were able to communicate the message that they would tidy up in the kitchen. Most candidates could apologise with ease in *Task 5*, but could not always explain that they would buy more pizzas.

### **Enquiring about a job**

*Task 1* was well done. Candidates gave their age in *Task 2*, but did not always communicate where and when they had previously worked. Most could say what activities they did with children, but in *Task 4* they were less successful in giving 2 desirable relevant personal qualities. The last task posed few problems.

### **Topic (prepared) conversation**

As last year, a pleasing and wide range of topics was heard. Examiners correctly stopped candidates after a minute or so and then asked questions. The best examining in this section sounded natural and not too over-rehearsed. It gave rise to natural, spontaneous exchanges whilst encouraging the candidates to use a variety of tense, vocabulary and structure. Examiners are reminded to let candidates speak for a full minute before interrupting: in a few cases candidates were questioned as soon as the section started and this was offputting for them.

The choice of topics was appropriate in most cases, but in a few Centres, candidates talked on very challenging topics which were of a level comparable with AS and A level presentations. In such cases, they could not sustain a high level of performance in the discussion section and would perhaps have been more comfortable choosing a typical IGCSE topic such as holidays, free time, school, ambitions/future plans. There were, pleasingly, **very** few examples of *moi-même* – which is not a good topic to choose for the presentation as it can pre-empt the General Conversation section.

Candidate performance was on the whole very good on this section and some fluent, interesting expositions and discussions were heard by Moderators.

### **General (unprepared) conversation**

Again, the best performances from candidates in this section of the test were ones where they were encouraged to use a variety of tenses, relevant vocabulary and appropriate structures. As last year, the overall standard of work heard in this section was high. A good range of topics was discussed, with most Examiners covering at least 2 or 3 topics. It was clear from the natural way in which most candidates spoke that oral work is an important activity in IGCSE classrooms. Topics covered included school, holidays, family life, education, daily life, life in other countries, geographical surroundings and free time – all of which were entirely appropriate.

Most Examiners spent approximately 5 minutes on this section, but some examined candidates for longer – this is not necessary as 5 minutes is adequate to assess a candidate's strengths.

## **General impression**

These marks were generally awarded well in Centres.

**Paper 0520/04**  
**Continuous Writing**

## **General comments**

Again, Examiners were pleased to report that the quality of written French continues to be of a high standard in a majority of Centres. Candidates were generally well prepared for the linguistic demands of the Paper and were able to respond appropriately to the tasks set. Better candidates tackled the questions with much enthusiasm and showed off their French to its best advantage. **Question 2** permitted those with a creative imagination to venture into a piece of original narrative, while those who were more comfortable with a discursive subject could discuss current fashion or public transport in response to **Question 1**.

Marks awarded for **Questions 1** and **2** were very similar this time, unlike previous years when the narrative usually failed to score as well as the letter/article. This improvement in narrative skills would indicate that Centres have made the use of past tenses a high priority in their teaching.

While scores for linguistic content were encouraging, it must be pointed out that many of the old failings, referred to regularly in these Reports, do persist. Carelessness continues to blight many scripts. The demands on written accuracy are quite stringent and a failure to spell properly or to present the correct gender of a noun or form of a verb will be reflected in the mark awarded. No credit is given for the use of an adjective which fails to agree appropriately in number and gender or for verbs which are wrongly formed or in an inappropriate tense. Less forgivable was the failure to copy correctly from the Question Paper. *Aéroport* was given but frequently misspelled as *airoport* (sic).

Presentation continues to leave much to be desired. There was no noticeable decrease in the number of scripts rendered barely legible by poor handwriting or the overuse of correcting fluid. Candidates should be reminded that on very badly written scripts, Examiners will not always give the benefit of the doubt to every ambiguity.

Again, many candidates wrote far more than the 140 words which the Examiner actually reads on a given script. No credit is given, either to content or to language, to material in excess of the maximum permitted and many Communication marks were lost by those who wrote too much.

The candidates who scored well were those who kept closely to the requirements of the rubric. Centres are reminded that Communication marks are awarded for the specific tasks set and that failure to address a particular element always results in a loss of marks. Many candidates this year seized upon a chance to write freely about fashion or transport in general and failed to complete the particular tasks set in the rubric.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

It was evident that in both options **(a)** and **(b)** a majority of candidates had the vocabulary and depth of language necessary to handle these topics at a fairly sophisticated and abstract level. A number of very thoughtful pieces were offered in response to the questions set.

#### **(a)** *Transports en commun*

Some very interesting pieces were presented on this topic. Many candidates were clearly only too familiar with the problems of getting around in an urban environment and with the pollution which affects so many cities. It should be pointed out that the rubric required candidates to say how they themselves travelled and why, and to give the advantages and disadvantages of public transport as such. Some failed to address all these points, instead writing generally about cars and pollution only, thereby missing out on a number of Communication marks.

A minority of candidates did not seem to grasp what *les transports en commun* were and wrote instead about cars, cycles and taxis to the exclusion of public transport, even though the rubric specifically invited them to consider trains and buses.

The best candidates were able to state clearly their own practice in daily travel (often parents' car or walking) and to make a thorough assessment of the pros and cons of using buses, trains and sometimes the métro. They listed among the advantages, low fares, convenience and the desire not to overcrowd the cities with too many private cars on the one hand, and poor quality vehicles, cramped conditions and urban crime as disadvantages on the other. Those who scored less well for Communication tended to concentrate on only one or two aspects of the question (usually the car/pollution debate) to the exclusion of the rest.

It was a pity that some found it necessary to copy out most of the stimulus in their answer. Lifting verbatim from the Question Paper gains no credit for the use of language and is very wasteful in terms of the word count.

**(b)** *Les Vêtements de marque*

Rather fewer candidates chose this option. The best answers were very perceptive and one was impressed by how worldly and sophisticated the teenagers of today seem to be in matters of fashion and taste.

Most seemed to think that it was folly to spend large sums of money on designer labels. They roundly condemned the *beaucoup de jeunes* who bought labels out of snobbery, fear of rejection by peer groups or the need to conform or to copy their idols. Nearly all stated a preference for casual, comfortable clothes for daily life and made a good case to support this view. Jeans and T-shirts were almost standard, whatever the country. A minority chose traditional clothes and made a good case for wearing them. Some went with the crowd in matters of dress, but were often very self critical, saying how weak they were, to be so influenced by peer pressure, advertising etc. Most insisted that value for money was the first priority they considered when shopping but they had to look 'cool' too!

Again, Examiners had to withhold marks from those who never actually stated a personal opinion or said what they wore themselves, limiting their answers to general remarks about fashion. Three of the required tasks related to personal preferences. It was a pity that a number of candidates, carried away with their enthusiasm for fashion generally, forgot to give fairly basic responses to *Aimez-vous?* and *Que portez-vous?*

**Question 2**

*La valise perdue (?)*

Some very lively stories were presented in response to the tasks. Invariably the case was picked up in error and the Narrator was involved in a lengthy pursuit of his/her belongings. Imagination ran riot in some accounts, as vast sums of cash were discovered in the 'wrong case', or drugs or even small animals. Nearly always the visit to the airport resulted in the recovery of the right green case, which shows that our young people have a perhaps naïve faith in the world's airports and their regard to luggage.

Linguistically most candidates were up to the task of telling the story, often with a degree of humour. Certain words or expressions gave particular difficulty such as 'to get the wrong case', 'to telephone the airport', 'to go back', 'to return the case' (often *retourner*), 'to exchange cases' and especially 'the case was not mine'. Some lacked the 'airport specific' vocabulary such as 'information desk', 'clerk', 'lost property office', 'passengers' or the necessary hotel vocabulary such as 'receptionist' (rarely correct), 'going up and down stairs', 'entering and leaving rooms' etc. There was common confusion over *quitter*, *laisser* and *partir*. The gender of the Narrator often varied in the agreement of adjectives and past participles. Candidates frequently addressed airport or hotel staff as *tu*, which would be most regrettable if they were to do so in reality.

The best candidates were able to sustain their narratives. They had a good variety of 'time phrases' to link events and added life to the narrative through the use of direct or even indirect speech. A feature of the best scripts was such usage as *il m'a expliqué que...*, *je lui ai dit que...*, *on leur a demandé si...* followed by appropriate tenses. Weaker scripts contained a confusion of Perfect and Imperfect tenses mixed with some inappropriate use of the Present. Many involved the police in their stories and inevitably ran up against the problem of whether to use a singular or a plural. This is a regular problem in stories such as these.



As ever, full marks were given for Communication to those who observed the rubric closely. They kept to past tenses throughout as indicated (*Décrivez ce qui s'est passé, ce que vous avez fait*), said what the 'wrong case' contained, expressed a reaction (shock, horror usually) and related a coherent sequence of events leading to a conclusion (usually satisfactory) and the recovery or not of the case. Better answers avoided verbiage and unnecessarily long scene setting or description. A feature of weaker answers this year was the copying out of virtually all the stimulus given in the preamble: the words considered for examining purposes began after the word *mais*. Again, candidates are advised that lifting from the rubric such phrases as *pour résoudre la situation* is unlikely to be credited with language marks.

Despite obvious shortcomings in matters of usage and accuracy, the standard of performance by the majority of candidates continues to be high and the work of some was a real pleasure for Examiners to read.