

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

<p>Paper 0520/01</p>

<p>Listening</p>

General comments

The Paper proved accessible to candidates and was of a similar level of difficulty to the 2007 examination. Candidates were generally aware of the requirement to complete all three sections of the test and there were very few who did not make any attempt on the last section. The range of question types used in the test was very similar to that used in 2007. As always there was an incline of difficulty on the Paper. The French heard gradually increased in terms of length and density as candidates worked their way through the exercises and questions moved from the identification of short factual information to the need to understand and identify opinions, explanations and narrated accounts in different tenses.

New Centres should note that where questions require a short written response in French, they are prepared in such a way as to minimise the amount of French which candidates have to produce. This remains a test of comprehension and Examiners do not expect candidates to phrase their answers in complete sentences. Inaccurate language is accepted by Examiners provided that the message of the answer remains clear (see published Mark Scheme for details).

The candidature increased yet again this year and a full range of performance was seen. The number of candidates scoring high marks was pleasing as was the number scoring marks in the 30s. Such work showed pleasing levels of attainment from candidates in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

Candidates had generally been well prepared in Centres and were well aware of the requirements of the examination. This year, Examiners noted that on multiple choice questions requiring one box to be ticked, some candidates had ticked an answer in pencil and then indicated another choice of answer in ink but had not deleted the original pencil tick. Candidates should be warned not to do this. If they change their mind they must ensure that any answer they do not want the Examiner to consider is clearly crossed out. If a candidate indicates two answers, whether in pencil or ink, the mark cannot be awarded. In **Section 2 Exercise 1** some candidates ticked only 4 of the required 6 boxes or ticked 8 boxes. Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with all question rubrics as these change little from year to year. Familiarity with question rubrics can only aid and reassure candidates in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations of a factual nature. Candidates performed well on this exercise. **Questions 3** and **5** caused problems to weaker candidates. Other questions were well done. There was no discernible pattern to incorrect answers.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an advert for a language learning holiday and had to answer a series of questions testing dates, leisure activities, geographical details, transport and numbers. As last year, candidates attempted this exercise well. Six of the eight questions required candidates to choose one option of visual multiple choice and the remaining questions required a month in French (**Question 9**) and two sets of numbers (**Question 16**). On **Question 9** the English spelling of June was discounted. The spellings *juin/juine/juien* were accepted. Most candidates scored well on **Questions 10-12** but on **Question 13** some did not know *à la campagne*. **Questions 14** and **15** were well done. On **Question 16** a good proportion of candidates successfully rendered 75 but many gave 65.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates are now familiar with this exercise type and are well aware that they should tick 6 boxes only although a few ticked 4 or more than 6. Candidates heard 4 young people discussing methods of transport and how they moved around. The most popular incorrect answers were A and D, but for candidates scoring 5 marks there seemed to be no discernible incorrect answer. Although a pleasing number of candidates scored full marks and many candidates did well on this exercise, there was a full range of performance. Overall, Examiners judged that the level of difficulty of this exercise was similar to that of last year as was the level of response.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

This is the second year that this exercise type has been used and candidates understood the requirements well. Candidates heard an interview with Malia, a young swimming champion, and were required to correct the incorrect detail in each of 5 statements. Virtually all candidates answered **Question 18** correctly. Incorrect spellings such as *diz* and *dis* were accepted for *dix*. Figures were also accepted. **Question 19** was also usually answered correctly, eg *sa mère*. Most were also able to render *natation* correctly on **Question 20**. Many made good attempts at *motivée* on **Question 21** but the spelling *métivée* invalidated the answer. On **Question 22** many answered correctly *froid/le climat* but there were frequent misspellings.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The candidates went on to hear the second part of the interview and had to respond with short answers in French. Full sentences were not required. **Question 23** was not answered particularly well by candidates. The required concept was that Malia did not/does not train on a Sunday. Incorrect answers frequently used the word *train*. Candidates answering that she did/does not swim scored the mark. On **Question 24** a good variety of answers were accepted such as *avec ses ami(e)s/tranquillement/elle ne sort pas/elle bavarde avec ses amis*. Many scored the mark on this question. On **Question 25** candidates needed to convey the idea that she could eat a lot of sweets or that she could eat anything. Answers without a verb did not convey the full idea and consequently did not gain the mark. **Question 26** was found to be one of the more challenging on this exercise and only the better candidates correctly wrote *c'est interdit* or identified that bikes cause accidents. Candidates referring to the notion of danger/dangerous scored the mark. Misspellings of 'forbidden' such as *enterdit* did not score the mark. On the last question, many were successful and correctly identified *Jeux Olympiques*.

Overall, this second part of the exercise worked well in that it gave more able candidates some challenging questions whilst still providing some questions which were accessible to candidates of average ability.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

Candidates heard an interview with a young girl about her passion for video games. The questions tested both specific and general comprehension. As last year, the candidates found the questions accessible and it was encouraging to see that those who found the last exercise difficult often managed to score marks on this exercise. Generally, the last three questions were better done than the first three and it was encouraging to see many candidates scoring 5 or 6 marks. On questions answered incorrectly, there was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

This last exercise was targeted to test the top level of IGCSE skills and, as intended, produced the biggest range of performance. Generally, weaker candidates found these final questions very demanding.

Candidates heard an interview with a *bandes dessinées* artist. They had to follow sequences of events, recognise reasons for actions and give explanations of ideas and opinions. Several of the questions tested not just facts but required candidates to think beyond the facts and explain why certain actions had taken place and to infer from the facts. There were some very accessible questions but, equally, there were some to challenge the most able candidates.

On **Question 34** many answered correctly and identified the teacher but incorrect answers frequently referred to parents and many candidates gave answers which attempted to render all of what they heard rather than focus on the vital interrogative *Qui?*. **Question 35** required the notion of playing. **Question 36** was attempted quite well and many identified school – candidates who wrote *au travail* did not gain the mark. On **Question 37** there needed to be a reference to the fact that Alex listened to music or his walkman. A good number of candidates scored well on this question. On **Question 38**, candidates needed to refer to the fact that too much time was spent on this activity and able candidates expressed this well. **Question 39** required the concept of inspiration to gain the mark. Candidates who answered with *aspire* did not gain the mark and this proved to be one of the more demanding questions on this exercise. On **Question 40** candidates needed to refer to the fact that Alex travelled or left Paris. Answers that stated he went to Ireland were accepted but many misheard this for *Londres* and this did not gain the mark. Likewise, *jeunes* and *gens* were often confused on **Question 41**: candidates needed to refer to people being observed so if young people were referred to, this was seen as a distortion of the message. Centres should emphasise the difference between *gens* and *jeunes*. **Question 42** was perhaps one of the most challenging on the paper and required candidates to understand that Alex and his wife did not cook and that the friends cooked. This was perhaps the least well answered question but the most able did answer well. If candidates answered that the friends cooked or that Alex and his wife did not cook, this was accepted. Weaker candidates often guessed that the father phoned or that he played with children. Finally, the vital concept on the last question was that Alex was afraid of the irregularity of work and not earning money/making a living. This was a difficult question but not beyond the more able candidates. Spellings of *salaire* were not good and sometimes invalidated the answer.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Candidates coped well with the requirements of the paper: it seemed accessible to all, and those who found **Questions 16** and **26** challenging were nevertheless able to show some understanding of the texts from **Section 3**. The majority of candidates attempted **Section 3**, and most scored marks in it: Centres are reminded that all candidates should attempt this final section. Very few candidates seemed to have found themselves with insufficient time to complete the paper, though equally, few seemed to have spent time re-reading what they had written and checking their work. Presentation and legibility were generally good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

The majority of candidates correctly answered **Questions 1** and **2**, but **Question 3** proved more problematic: *meubles* did not seem to be widely known and many candidates opted for D. **Question 4** also presented some problems, possibly because *four* was not well-known, and C was often given as the answer. **Question 5** was either answered correctly, or as D.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Questions 7 and **10** were sometimes answered as *Vrai* and **Question 9** as *Faux* but most candidates were able to score at least half the marks here.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

This was a new-look exercise and almost all candidates correctly gave E as the answer for **Question 12** and B as the answer for **Question 15**, but D was often given for **Question 14**, where candidates fixed on the word *antiseptique* and ignored *pastille*. *Le sparadrap* did not prove to be well-known.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Here, for communication, candidates were expected to give some indication that they were in Cannes, that the weather was good, and that they were swimming/on the beach. Within these requirements, Examiners were flexible in what was accepted. In order to score full marks for appropriateness of language, candidates had to use two correct verb forms – the weather idiom had to be used correctly to score. Most candidates opted for the present tense, though where a past tense was used in logical sequence, this was also accepted.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

This was generally very well done: where it was clear that candidates had understood and were using appropriate areas of the text for their answers, Examiners overlooked errors in the use of possessive pronouns and adjectives. Most candidates scored 9 or 10 here, but for **Question 17** a few candidates gave the incorrect answer *Mathias habite Rennes*; for **Question 23** some candidates did not mention *le calme de la campagne* but merely said *ils ne veulent pas partir* and for **Question 25**, a number said that Mathias was happy that he would be able to go out twice a week, but omitted the all-important element of *avec ses amis*.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This was very accessible for the vast majority of candidates – even weaker candidates were able to score a few communication marks for saying that they lived in a flat in a town, for example. Some candidates misinterpreted the rubric, and wrote about their ideal house, and some thought they were being asked to compare living in a flat with living in a house, but where possible, credit was allowed. Many candidates produced lists of rooms and their contents, which were credited accordingly, and scored high levels of communication marks for **(a)** and **(b)**. A number of candidates misunderstood the word *pièce* and for **(c)** described some possession or piece of furniture in their homes. They were consequently unable to score the maximum of 10 communication marks, since their answer needed to include mention of all three parts, but they were nonetheless able to score 9 for their coverage of parts **(a)** and **(b)**. Many candidates were able to score full marks for accuracy, some by writing elegant descriptive essays with a wide variety of expression, and others by use of relatively simple but accurate French – there tended to be considerable reliance on the use of *il y a*, though this appeared in many guises (without spaces and with apostrophes, for example), and the correct use of adjectival endings, agreements and prepositions varied markedly.

Section 3**Exercise 1 Questions 27-32**

In this exercise, candidates needed to decide which of the statements were true, and which false, and then correct the false statement with another positive one. For example, for **Question 29**, where a candidate ticked *Faux*, but wrote *Clémence n'a pas pris l'avion de Londres à Nice*, he or she would score only 1 of the 2 available marks – *le vol est annulé* or *elle a pris le bateau et le train* would score the second mark. Some candidates still do not realise that where they choose *Vrai*, no sentence is required. Many candidates ticked the correct answers without always providing sentences where needed. Many candidates thought that **Question 27** was *Faux*, and some had difficulty manipulating the text for **Question 28** – and often lifted inappropriately (*elle de retrouver...*) – but **Question 29** seemed relatively simple to correct. **Questions 31** and **32** proved more demanding – for **Question 31**, many lifted the sentence about the taxi accident from the text, but failed to add the information that this had made Clémence miss her train; for **Question 32**, many lifted *Clémence apprend qu'elle doit y rester jusqu'au jour de son retour en Angleterre* without explaining that *y* referred to the hospital in Nice.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-40

Questions 33 and **34** were quite straightforward, and generally well done, though there were a number of candidates who, having identified the answer for **Question 33** as the books François had read, failed to score the mark by lifting *après avoir lu des livres passionnants sur le Grand Nord* from the text. For **Question 35(a)**, the answer of *il faisait des parcours de plus en plus longs* did not score without mention of the Arctic. Most candidates were able to answer **Question 35(b)** correctly, but for **Question 36**, those who lifted the answer *il achète dix chiens qui vont tirer tous les bagages* did not score: careful selection was needed – *ils vont tirer les bagages*, or *pour tirer les bagages*.

For **Question 37**, *les chiens* was sufficient answer, but many candidates then got sidetracked by the episode with the polar bear and were unable to pick out the details needed to answer the rest of the questions. For **Question 39**, candidates needed to realise that, with his tent gone, François had no shelter from the elements. For **Question 40**, some candidates returned for their answer to the beginning of the text, *...la région est couverte de glace et le froid est intense...* and many others contented themselves with lifting the whole of the last sentence from the text, rather than selecting the necessary details – 2 elements were required from a possible 3; the time taken, the distance travelled, or the weight François had lost during his journey.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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 in 2007, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. Overall, the standard of performance from candidates was very similar to last year.

In most Centres, examining was good or satisfactory and candidates were usually given plenty of opportunities to show what they knew and could do. Moderators reported that, as last year, many tests were carried out very professionally and that candidates were put at ease and encouraged by sympathetic examining.

Most Examiners were familiar with the requirements of the test and had studied the mark scheme well. This is necessary in order to pitch questions at an appropriate level and to ask questions which will stretch the candidates. Regrettably, Moderators reported that a few Examiners were clearly not familiar with the requirements of the test as laid out on pages 6-11 of the Teachers' Notes and this disadvantaged their candidates. The Examiner plays a crucial role in helping candidates to achieve of their best and this means that thorough preparation is vital. Conducting Speaking Tests is undoubtedly a demanding task, but this component is an essential element of the syllabus as it enables candidates to show how well they can communicate in everyday situations and it bears witness to the hard work and effective learning which have preceded the examination in the IGCSE French classroom.

Administration

It is disappointing that despite the increase in clerical errors reported last year it is not possible to report a marked decrease this year. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all marks entered on Working mark sheets are added up correctly and that the total mark is then transferred correctly to the MS1 Summary mark sheet. Some of the worst cases this year occurred in Centres with a small candidature. This is unacceptable as it can seriously affect a candidate's grade. Please ensure that all additions and transcriptions are checked carefully after the examination and before despatching forms.

Quality of recording

Many Centres submitted good, clear and well-labelled samples and are thanked for their efforts. Unfortunately, however, there was a marked increase in the number of inaudible or barely audible recordings as well as samples recorded at the wrong speed and CDs which did not seem to contain any recorded material even after Moderators attempted to listen to them on a variety of machines. All samples **must** be checked before they are despatched and CIE contacted if there are problems, but perhaps even more importantly, all recording hardware **must** be checked before the recordings are made and in the room where the examination will take place. It is important to choose a method of recording which is reliable and which results in output that is clearly audible to the Moderator. Moderators are willing to listen to tapes, CDs and MP3 recordings but these must not be made on laptops without the use of an external microphone. Whatever the chosen method, it is important that a good microphone is used to avoid submitting samples which are muffled, faint or in the worst case, inaudible. Where Examiners are working in air conditioned rooms they are advised to try to cool the room as much as possible prior to the examination and to keep the use of noisy systems to a minimum. It is also advisable to use a small room whenever possible as this can reduce any echo resulting from a tiled floor. Examiners are reminded that microphones should be positioned to favour the candidate as Examiners are used to projecting their voices and candidates less so!

Examiners are reminded that it is they who must identify the candidates and give their names and candidate numbers. Candidates must not be asked to identify themselves. It is also the Centre's responsibility to label all tapes/CDs carefully and also the cases.

Sample size

Centres are reminded that a sample of 6 candidates should be submitted. Please do not send all candidates' work. The Centre is responsible for choosing a representative sample of 6 only.

Duration of tests/missing elements

Most Centres adhered well to timings and conducted the test efficiently. However, as last year, some Centres submitted tests that were very short in the conversation sections. Each of the 2 conversation sections should last approximately 5 minutes. Where they are shorter than this, candidates do not have the opportunity to show what they can do and marks will be affected accordingly. There were, pleasingly, only very few instances of over-long tests.

Examiners are reminded that all sections of the Speaking test must be completed. Where sections are omitted this will disadvantage candidates as marks cannot be awarded for sections of the test not attempted. In the Role play section it is also important that the Examiner keeps to the 'script' and gives the candidate the chance to attempt all the mark-bearing tasks and to work for the marks. Examiners need to be particularly careful not to offer candidates vocabulary items or options unless these appear in the Teachers' Notes booklet.

Centres are reminded that Examiners may open the Teachers' Notes booklet 4 working days in advance of the date(s) set aside for the conduct of the Speaking test in order to prepare for the examination. (This booklet once opened must remain in the Centre in secure conditions and the contents must not be divulged to candidates.)

Application of the mark scheme

Most Centres were consistent in their application of the mark scheme. Some Centres had large adjustments to their marks due to the following:

- Short Topic/Discussion and/or General conversation sections
- Failure to complete all the Role play tasks
- Lack of questions to elicit past and future meaning in the conversation sections.

Centres with more than one Examiner usually marked consistently within the Centre. Such Centres are reminded to seek permission from CIE (from the Product Manager) if more than one Examiner is to be used. If more than one Examiner examines, internal moderation **must** take place in the Centre in order to ensure consistency in marking standards between Examiners. A common standard of marking should be applied to the whole candidature and a sample of 6 candidates submitted, across the mark range, to cover all examining groups.

Generally, many Examiners did mark consistently and it was heartening to see that there were many Centres whose marks were in line with the agreed standard or required only small adjustments.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Examiners should ensure that they do not miss out or change any tasks, nor should they add extra tasks which can confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. If only one part of a task is completed then only one mark should be awarded.

Role Plays A

As in 2007, the **A** Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than **B** Role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weaker candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded.

At the hotel

Most candidates remembered to include the greeting and managed to say that they wanted to make a reservation. Some failed to indicate the date of arrival and if not prompted by Examiners did not always state how long they wished to stay. Nearly all coped well with saying how many nights they wished to stay. Nearly all were successful on Task 4. Some found it difficult to formulate a question using the correct form of the verb in the last task in which they had to ask a question about opening times of the restaurant. Generally, this Role play was well done.

At the grocer's

Again, this Role play was within the capabilities of the candidature. Most tasks were approached well. Some candidates gave brand names for drinks on Task 2. This is difficult as not all local brand names are known worldwide! Candidates should wherever possible use non brand names, eg try to give a generic drink such as *jus d'orange*. Other tasks were well done but, again, some found it difficult to ask a relevant question on the last task.

An invitation

Candidates generally approached this task well. Times and places for meeting up were provided and brief answers could gain full marks where appropriate. Candidates fared less well on the last task which required the formulation of a question about the finishing time of the film.

Role Plays B

The **B** Role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses and to explain, excuse or justify as appropriate. Candidates should be reminded always to include greetings and thanks where appropriate. These Role plays differentiated well across the candidature, but if conducted sympathetically by Examiners who were familiar with the testing points, it was not beyond even the weakest candidates to score some marks on most tasks.

Phoning the owner of a holiday home

Candidates generally fared well on the first task but were not always able to say that they were not happy about things on Task 2. Most were able to say where they had eaten the night before but did not always complete the task by giving an opinion. Many stated the problem in the next task but frequently could not use a modal verb alongside a reflexive in the infinitive. On the last task, weaker candidates found it hard to ask a question about when the owner would arrive.

Reporting the loss of a bag

The first task on this card was well done but weaker candidates often missed out one of the two parts of Task 2. Examiners are reminded that they can split tasks and can split the cues as this sometimes makes tasks more accessible. This is quite acceptable. Descriptions of the lost bag and its contents were done well. On the last task some did not say that they would go to the office.

A bike accident

The opening task was usually quite well done but on the next two tasks some found it difficult to conjugate *tomber* and were not always able to describe injuries well when using reflexive verbs. *Casser* continues to cause confusion: some used *casser* with an incorrect auxiliary when describing injury. Some of the injuries described were quite serious rather than minor though this did not affect marks! The last two tasks were approached well by candidates.

Topic Conversation

This section of the test should last for approximately 5 minutes in total and gives candidates the opportunity to talk in some depth on one chosen topic. It should start with a short presentation by the candidate of their topic: the initial presentation from the candidate should not last for more than a minute or two and if two minutes has elapsed and the candidate is still presenting their topic, the Examiner should interrupt and start questioning the candidate on the topic. Examiners should try to approach the follow-up questions in a spontaneous way so as to allow a genuine conversation to develop. Examiners are also reminded to ask

questions which will enable candidates to use both past and future tenses. Marks of 7 or more cannot be awarded unless candidates show their ability to use a range of tenses.

Many Centres conducted this section of the test well and Moderators reported a wide range of topics. Fortunately, few candidates had chosen 'Myself' as their topic: as mentioned in the Teachers' Notes booklet this is an unwise choice of topic as it can pre-empt the General Conversation section. Candidates usually chose topics which were appropriately matched to their linguistic ability. Many chose this year to talk about their country of origin, leisure activities, their 'adoptive' country, their education or a favourite trip. As last year, there were some interesting presentations on future plans and ecological themes. Many had prepared their topic well and the best candidates were able to sustain their performance in the follow-up conversations, which revealed a good range of vocabulary, competent use of tenses and a very good range of structures. It was pleasing to hear many candidates able to express and justify their opinions and make comparisons.

Moderators reported a full range of performance on this section but were generally impressed. As ever, the best performances heard were those where a natural conversation developed in which candidates were given the opportunity to respond to both expected and unexpected questions.

General Conversation

In this final section of the test, a wide range of performance was heard from the candidates. There were some excellent examples of candidates of all abilities talking on a range of topics at a level appropriate to their ability. At the top end of the mark range, candidates showed they could use a range of tenses and structures to express not just factual information but also their opinions and feelings.

As last year, Moderators commented upon the fascinating variety of daily life experiences expressed by candidates. It remains heartening to hear all these candidates, whatever their location, willing to express themselves in a foreign language and able to express their common experiences and aspirations. The achievements of these candidates demonstrate the hard work of teachers in making the learning of French a worthwhile experience.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

As usual there was much to commend in this year's performance by candidates. The questions provoked a lively and interesting response on the better scripts and were accessible at a basic level to those with a less secure command of the language.

The problem of the over long essay is gradually receding as most candidates have clearly been informed that work in excess of the 140 word limit is not rewarded. Some do, however, include so much detail in dealing with the early tasks that they overrun and Communication marks are lost for the later tasks. In **1(a)**, for instance, a number included a 'question' after the limit and sacrificed a mark. Normally, only the weaker candidates were unable to offer roughly 140 words for **Question 1**, though **Question 2** was more of a challenge.

Irrelevance was not a major problem and most were able to keep to the subject. Examiners did not award any marks to those who diverted a letter about working on a campsite to an irrelevant pre-learnt account of a traffic accident or one's daily routine. However when candidates genuinely misunderstood the rubric (eg confusing *l'environnement* with the countryside, or even *interne* with *externe*), Examiners took a generous view wherever possible and gave marks for the correct use of language.

As indicated in past reports the time allowed to write two short pieces (1 hour 15 minutes) should suffice. Hardly any answers were left unfinished. Candidates should be urged to think each sentence through before committing it to paper and then revise their work as they go along and again at the end. Verbs especially should be given close attention. Those who have difficulties should be advised to confine their answers to French they are sure of rather than attempting to translate word for word from their own language. There was a common incidence of anglicism this year, as in *chercher pour*, *demander pour* and anglicised spelling such as 'advantages' for *avantages*.

Wise candidates began by reading the rubric carefully and then undertook each task in sequence. **Question 2** for instance required them to say *ce que vous avez fait* so they set out a series of activities they undertook in the course of an 'Environment Week'. It did not require a debate on green issues as such, although reference to them was inevitable.

As in past years, successful responses to **Question 1**, which was more structured, were not always matched by the quality of what was presented for **Question 2**. This was usually due to lack of coherence in the narration of events and a failure to use past tenses correctly.

Question 1

(a) Job application to a campsite

This topic inspired some imaginative responses and most candidates understood what was required, tackling each of the tasks in turn in the manner recommended in previous reports.

The letter format seems to have been well rehearsed and most were able to achieve a correct formal beginning and ending with the customary courtesies. A minority employed an inappropriate register and gained nothing for addressing the campsite manager as 'tu' and using such phrases as 'Bien à toi' and 'bises'.

The first task, why you wish to work at the campsite, was quite easily achievable by simply saying *je veux/voudrais poser ma candidature pour le poste/travailler au camping parce que* and a reason such as: *j'aime faire du camping* or *j'adore le plein air*. All kinds of reasons were offered. Some said they needed pocket money, or they wished to engage with other young people. More earnest reasons included the desire

to practice or improve their French or to experience life in a new country. Most were found to be apt and were accorded a communication mark. A minority thought *le camping* meant the countryside (*la campagne*) and lost out as a result. *Travailler* was confused with *travel* in some weaker scripts. A disappointingly large number did not know *faire du camping* and opted for *aller au camping* instead.

The second task, when the candidate would be available and for how long, was more demanding. An effective response was deemed to be what might be useful to a potential employer. *Pendant les vacances* and *pour deux mois* with no other details were regarded as insufficient and missed the communication mark. Many attempted responses such as *je pourrais travailler du 3 juin au 30 juillet* but failed to find the correct phrasing. A surprising number did not know the French for the months of the year.

Candidates were usually able to give reasons why they would be able to do the work and the correct use of the conditional tense, as in *je pourrais* followed by an infinitive, was in evidence on the better scripts. Some said they had already experienced work at a campsite or had enjoyed previous family camping holidays so they knew what the job would entail. Others claimed to know the site in question or even to have worked there before. Some quoted previous employment in other spheres such as restaurant or hotel work. Taking their cue from the rubric, many referred to their personal *capacités*. They were patient and reliable. They were strong and could work long hours. They knew French and could play with French children. They were sports lovers and looked forward to organising games or coaching football or swimming. All these reasons and many more were found to be appropriate and received one or often two communication marks for multiple reasons. Few were realistic enough to state a willingness to clean toilets or do heavy work but that was understandable.

The final task required a question about the work. Many asked about the salary or the working hours. Others enquired, unwisely perhaps, how much time off they would be allowed. Some were able to ask about the nature of the work they would be expected to do. A minority, thinking perhaps that *travail* meant travel, asked how to get to the campsite. The interrogative was rarely well handled and inversion was seldom used correctly. Even the easier *est-ce que* was written *est que* on many scripts. This inability of many to ask a question of any kind was disappointing. Some avoided the interrogative by saying *je voudrais savoir si*, which was acceptable, but many candidates encountered difficulties even with this method.

Overall, the linguistic demands of the question proved to be fairly modest. The vocabulary was everyday and the present tense was the norm for most of the letter. A knowledge of the conditional and the past tenses was necessary to achieve the highest marks. It was pleasing to observe that the job application, a genuinely authentic task for teenagers, had been well practised at so many Centres and was within the scope of the majority.

(b) Advantages and disadvantages of being at boarding school.

Fewer candidates opted for the discussion format required in **1(b)**, although at some Centres virtually all chose this question. There were some excellent responses but others encountered difficulties with the task of comparing different kinds of school life.

It was clear most IGCSE candidates attended day schools but most could easily imagine the pros and cons of living in a boarding school. Again, the demands of language were familiar i.e. school and home and usually the present tense was appropriate, which simplified matters. The variation lay in Task 3 where they were asked which kind of school they would prefer if they had a choice. As usual the old standby *je voudrais* solved the problem for many.

It was a pity some candidates did not heed advice to treat each task in order. An easy communication mark was lost by a large number of candidates for not stating at the beginning whether they were boarders or day candidates. Instead they plunged straight into the debate.

Examiners were generous in allowing many variations in the interpretation of the rubric. Credit was given for any advantage or disadvantage of either one kind of school or the other. Provided their language was clear, many were able to score two communication marks. It was not always evident in some statements whether candidates were providing an advantage or a disadvantage. Does *il y a beaucoup de gens dans le lycée* mean it is good or not? Again, markers gave the benefit of the doubt in such cases if the context justified a mark. Many said life in a boarding school must be/is preferable because candidates live with their friends all day, there is a better environment for studying, teachers are at hand to help with academic or personal problems, they have access to facilities such as tennis courts, swimming pools and good food. On the other hand, discipline is strict, there is little privacy, you have to get up and go to bed at set times, there is no television, teachers can be difficult, you cannot go out when you want and above all you are away from

home and family. Many did not recognise the problem with the verb *manquer* and put *je manque mes parents* which did not convey the message they intended. Those going to a day school could enjoy greater freedom, feel the security of the parental home, eat mother's food, play with siblings, go out, watch television or play on Playstation when they chose. Disadvantages included having to wash up, strict parents, not seeing much of their classmates and above all, it seems, travelling long distances every day to go to school.

The third task, which kind of school the candidate would choose, was not always handled with clarity. Many could not say *si j'avais le choix je choisirais...* Many others omitted to state which they preferred, assuming perhaps that it was evident from the pros and cons stated earlier. The reason could be a positive one as in *j'aime voir ma famille tous les jours* or a negative one as in *je préfère être interne parce que je n'aime pas voyager tous les jours*.

The topic could be treated using a variety of subject pronouns. The first person was adopted throughout by some but others varied it with *on*, *tu*, *vous* or *nous*. Inevitably this led to confusion when candidates combined two different versions as in *tu ne peux pas voir vos amis*.

The subject was certainly of interest to a large number of IGCSE candidates and some wrote with feeling on the issues, drawing, it seemed, on personal experience. It was a more open topic than **Question 1(a)** which had a more structured lay-out. Weaker candidates who chose it might have fared better on the other question where the tasks were more precise and did not ask for opinions and justification.

Question 2 The environment week at school

Although most had probably never had a real environment week at their school, the majority understood what was meant and tackled the subject in the manner intended. One would suppose that the subject of protecting the environment had been thoroughly covered in most schools. Certainly, some candidates were able to refer to a host of relevant issues which they had no doubt studied in French and other lessons. A small minority seemed to think that *l'environnement* was the countryside and wrote about walks and picnics without reference to the real topic.

Although the environment was at the heart of the topic, the main test involved not stating a view on green issues but writing an account of incidents in the past and stating reactions. As mentioned above, marks were almost invariably lower for **Question 2** than for **Question 1**. Problems ranged from the lexical to the grammatical. The weakest found it difficult to find enough ideas.

Better candidates chose to take the environment week one day at a time, describing a particular activity each day. The more successful answers mentioned such activities as cleaning up the mess in the neighbourhood, recycling refuse, removing litter at school (this proved particularly tricky to express), preparing posters and carrying out a publicity campaign, attending lectures, films and discussions, studying nature, planting trees and flowers and observing at first hand the damage caused to the environment by urban life. An impressive range of vocabulary was in evidence on the better scripts. Some chose to describe sporting events, plays or concerts which were held to raise money for good causes such as Greenpeace. Walks in the woods and picnics were not always very closely linked to the environment but Examiners allowed a fairly liberal interpretation of what was relevant.

Reactions were expressed usually as an afterthought at the end but these could occur at any point of the account. Some expressed initial reluctance to participate in the week's events but were so moved by the whole experience that they committed themselves fully to the cause of protecting the environment. A communication mark could be gained simply by saying how glad they were to have made a difference or stating how much they had learned about ecology. Some simply said how interesting they found the events but added how tiring it all was.

Linguistic problems were evident in the usual areas, especially verbs. Complexities in the perfect tense were a barrier to the weaker candidates and many had trouble differentiating between the perfect and the imperfect. The pluperfect was not usually well handled and object pronouns were a regular source of error. As ever, many potential language marks were lost due to mechanical errors. The spelling of key words tended to be inconsistent, even with words which were given in the rubric such as *l'environnement*. Adjectives and past participles often failed to agree where required and common verb forms were not known. The writer's gender varied, as in *je suis allée... j'étais heureux*. Everyday words were commonly misspelled, notably *malheureusement*, *professeur* and *rencontrer*. However, the overall standard does seem to be improving and it was pleasing to see some very accurate French on a larger number of scripts this year.

Poor presentation is still commented on by most Examiners. Heavy crossing out and barely legible hand writing are commonplace and are liable to lead to a loss of marks.