

FRENCH

Paper 0685/01

Listening

Key messages

- The performance on this paper was very similar to that seen in 2013 with candidates showing good levels of both specific and general understanding. Candidates' performance was extremely good on the first two sections of the paper. The final section of the test is designed to be more challenging, but even so, most candidates scored marks in both exercises.
- **New Centres should remind candidates to write clearly in blue or black pen.** Candidates should not write first in pencil and then overwrite in pen as this can make answers very difficult to read.
- Candidates must cross out any material they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates need to take care when writing their answers. Where handwriting is difficult to decipher, Examiners will use all means available to decide what the candidate has written. However, if the Examiner cannot decipher an answer, a mark cannot be awarded.
- Candidates need to understand how to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions.
- Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is a danger that extra distorting details will be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers are marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.

General comments

The demand of this year's paper was found to be very similar to that of the 2013 paper. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section, with even weaker candidates managing to gain a few marks on the easier questions which are intended to keep concentration going until the end of the test. The candidature was familiar with the demands and structure of the paper and rubrics were usually well understood. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examination topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

The French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting the candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, as well as opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations. Longer extracts featured a variety of register and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary which is tested in the first two sections of the test is drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the defined content.

It is clear that candidates in many Centres appreciate the need to write as briefly and clearly as possible and understand that they are not required to write their answers in full sentences. Brief answers are preferable in order to reduce the risk that the candidate will include extra, distorting material which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Numbers can be written as words or numerals. Candidates need to remember not to answer or infer from general knowledge. Extra details which are not heard on the recording will probably invalidate an answer.

The listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clearly conveyed. If the answer sounds and reads like French it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous. Candidates need to cross out clearly any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.

Candidates need to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully. Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and not before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers so as to ensure that they are

familiar with the rubrics, when the pauses occur and at what point the extracts are repeated. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

Centres should note that the new syllabus will be examined for the first time in 2015. The Listening examination will retain much of its present format. The exercise types and approach to marking will remain as in 2014 but total marks for the paper will change slightly. Centres are reminded to consult the Cambridge website and view the sample materials well in advance of the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple choice questions with visual options. Candidates performed very well in this opening exercise which is intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. All candidates understood the rubric well and the visuals caused no problems of interpretation. The extracts were straightforward and short.

The vocabulary areas tested were numbers, transport, furniture, eating in a restaurant, types of TV programmes, personal belongings and weather. Nearly all candidates were successful on the first six questions. The last two questions proved a little more difficult. On **Question 8**, *un temps orageux avec de fortes pluies* was not always understood.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured an advertisement for an activity holiday at a youth hostel. Candidates were mostly required to show their understanding by selecting one from three visual options. As in previous years, candidates answered the vast majority of these questions correctly and many scored full marks on this exercise.

The only question to cause candidates any difficulty was **Question 12**. This tested *pension complète*, the understanding of which was supported by *tous les repas sont compris*. The other questions were found to be very accessible.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

The format of this exercise is now well understood and it was rare for Examiners to see too many or too few ticks. Candidates should, however, be reminded to use a consistent method of indicating the six correct answers, either six ticks or six crosses, and not to mix the two as this can become confusing.

Any ticks/crosses that are present on the script, whether made in pen or pencil, are counted by Examiners. Some candidates answered first in pencil and then went over their answers in ink but unfortunately did not completely remove their pencil answers. This meant that on occasion there were more than 6 ticks present and candidates lost marks as a result. Where candidates tick/cross in pencil on the first hearing and then in pen on the second, they must make it clear to the Examiner which six ticks/crosses are their final choice, preferably by crossing out any ticks/crosses that they do not wish the Examiner to consider.

Candidates heard four young people talking about birthdays and how they celebrate them. This was an accessible topic and the majority of candidates scored at least 4 or 5 marks, with many scoring full marks. The vocabulary was taken from the defined content and extracts included some opinions as well as use of tenses other than the present. Examiners reported that some candidates chose option h instead of option i. This could have been due to the fact that the *bande dessinée* had been referred to on the recording, though this was in the context of Coraline's enjoyment of reading them rather than getting one as a present. On the last section, option j (*Luc est né le 25 décembre*) was sometimes chosen instead of option k.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with a young teacher, Maxime. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). The requirements of the exercise were well understood. The missing words were lexically frequent items from the core vocabulary of the defined content. The exercise represented a step up in the incline of difficulty of the test and the extract heard was longer than that heard in the previous exercise.

Marks were generally very good on the first three questions. **Question 18** was generally answered correctly. On **Question 19**, a few offered Maxim's teaching subject instead of his father's: this highlighted the need for careful listening before writing an answer. On **Question 20**, *difficile* was identified by most. **Question 21** proved to be harder and many found it difficult to render *bruyant*. Provided that the concept of noise was conveyed, the ways to answer included a variety of spellings and options such as *bru(i)yant*, *bruyant*, *brillant* and *bruit*. Answers beginning with *bro...*, *bri...* and *bry...* were not accepted. **Question 22** required candidates to understand that Maxime played games with his candidates. The noun *jeu(x)* or parts of the verb *jouer* were acceptable. Again, this question proved fairly challenging though less so than the previous question.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

On the second part of this exercise, candidates heard the continuation of the interview with Maxime. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. All of the questions could be answered briefly without using a verb, apart from **Question 25**. On **Question 23**, many candidates correctly identified that *cartes* were on the classroom walls and answers such as *cart(s)* were acceptable. Attempts to render *de tous les pays du monde* did not usually prevent the mark from being awarded. **Question 24** was found to be challenging by many: incorrect answers often featured *passionnant/passion* despite the fact that candidates heard both *patient* and *patience* in the extract. The most demanding question on this exercise was **Question 25**, which produced many incorrect attempts at the verb *crier*, such as *griller*, *écrire* and *créer*. Some candidates thought that the shouting of candidates was the aspect Maxime did not like. On **Question 26**, either *VTT* or *kayak* gained the mark and there were good numbers who managed this. Incorrect attempts at *VTT* were in evidence, such as *DVD*, *VDU* and the phonetically transcribed *vétété*. Attempts at *kayak* had to start with *kay...* or *cay...* to gain the mark. On the last question, many found it hard to spell *fatigant* correctly but such misspelling often did not cloud the message and the mark was gained. An alternative correct answer was *devoirs à corriger*. If, however, candidates wrote *devoirs à faire*, the mark was not gained as a different concept was conveyed. Good numbers managed to gain the mark on this question.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

Candidates coped well with this multiple choice exercise and the vast majority were able to gain at least two or three marks even if they went on to find the last exercise difficult. Candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section and had to be able to follow a narrative that featured different time frames and in which feelings and opinions were expressed. Candidates understood the rubrics well. It is worth reminding candidates to use the longer reading time available at the beginning of this exercise, and the time available in the pauses, to read the question and options very carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give candidates an overall plan of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

Candidates heard an interview with Thibault who had spent a year in China. Generally, candidates fared better on the middle two questions, **Questions 30 and 31**, which were very well answered. On **Question 28**, candidates often chose option B, which was perhaps a logical answer but showed that the candidate had not followed the sequence of events in the narrative in that it was Thibault's stay in China that had motivated him to start to learn the language. On **Question 29**, the word *immeuble*, heard in the extract, was not always well known. **Questions 30 and 31** presented few problems. The final two questions presented more of a challenge. **Question 32** required understanding of the concept heard, *sa famille lui manquait*. The use of bold in the question **du jour de Noël**, was intended to help candidates sequence what they were hearing and to guide them to the right section of material. Some answered the question before they had heard all the relevant material. The final question required candidates to make the connection between *moins de conflits* and the correct answer, *il se dispute moins avec sa famille*, which was fairly challenging but answered correctly by the majority of the candidates.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

This was a very appropriate final exercise and, as intended, the most demanding on the paper, including questions to challenge the most able candidates. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates. The performance on this exercise was, again, very much in line with the standard of work seen last year.

Candidates heard an interview with a young girl, Louisa, talking about her scooter. Questions had been phrased in such a way as to try to encourage candidates to answer as briefly as possible rather than to have to write a lot. Full sentences were not required but some questions did require verbs so as to give a complete concept.

The exercise started with a deliberately accessible question, **Question 34**. Many answered correctly. Incorrect attempts often featured the spelling *minuit* (another word and meaning) or included *une heure*. Two marks were available for **Question 35**, one mark each for two separate points. For the first mark, the required concept was either avoiding or not taking public transport. The word *éviter* was not widely known and was often misspelt. *Les transports en commun* also proved difficult to spell for many. Some rendered an incomplete idea such as Louisa avoiding transport she hated but this was not enough to gain the mark as there was no mention of public transport. The second mark proved a little more accessible and slightly more candidates were able to express the idea of getting up. Answers such as *se réveiller* and *se laver* were not accepted. Any part of the verb *se lever* was acceptable and the reflexive pronoun, in this instance was not insisted upon. **Question 36** was found to be the most accessible question on the exercise and many were able to identify *cher* or *le prix*. On **Question 37**, a fair number were able to render *anxieuse* acceptably and recognisably; although the spellings were often very inaccurate, the concept was still clear. On **Question 38** the mark could have been gained quite simply with the words *attention* or *prudente*. Incorrect answers often featured guesses such as *plus responsable*. This was found to be one of the harder questions on this exercise. Candidates did better on **Question 39** in which they had to convey the idea of driving in town. Most gave acceptable versions of the verb *conduire*, but were not always able to link it to the idea of town. Candidates writing *conduire à l'école* invalidated their answer and did not gain the mark. **Question 40** was answered correctly by only the most able candidates and proved to be the most challenging question on the paper. The required concept was the notion of whether Louisa stopped/waited at the traffic lights. Also accepted were whether she respected the lights/went through the lights/stopped at red. Candidates fared slightly better on **Question 41** and were able to produce either the nouns *voleur/vol* or part of the verb *voler*. On the last question a good number were able to identify correctly *moins indépendante*. The comparative was vital in this answer. Answers which spelt *moins* as *mois* did not gain the mark.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/02
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- check that they have answered all questions.
- read all questions carefully, especially question words (e.g. *où, qu'est-ce que, qui*).
- keep their answers to comprehension questions brief but focused.
- check the accuracy of their French, especially in the essay in **Section 2**.
- write relevantly, and no more than the required amount, for the writing tasks.

General comments

The paper proved accessible to almost all candidates. This paper followed the style and format of previous years and candidates appeared to be familiar with the range of tasks required of them. The vast majority attempted all sections and exercises on the paper and it was evident that they had ample time to complete the paper. With that in mind, candidates should show more evidence of checking of work. Any time left after they have finished may profitably be spent checking that they have answered all the questions, that where they have been able to use material directly from the text it has been copied correctly, and that where they have changed their mind about the answer to a question, their final answer is clear. Standards of legibility and presentation were generally good but candidates should be advised that answers written in pencil then rubbed out and/or overwritten in pen can be difficult to read when scripts are scanned for marking.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was done very well by candidates with many scoring full marks. **Question 4** and **Question 5** were stumbling blocks for some candidates, suggesting variable knowledge of the vocabulary of parts of the body (*main*) and road signs (*rond-point*).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the vocabulary of various school subjects. Full marks were common and most candidates scored at least 4 of the 5 marks available. Occasionally the matching of *étudier les personnages du passé* with *histoire* was not managed.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

In this exercise, candidates were required to read a longer piece of connected text in the form of an email from Céline, writing about her home town. They then answered a series of five multiple choice sentence completions. Generally, candidates scored well. Occasionally, **Question 12** or **Question 15** caused problems. In **Question 12**, candidates needed to connect *tous les vendredis* in the text with *une fois par semaine* in the question.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are 3 marks available for the communication of three pieces of information, indicated by illustrations, and 2 marks for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked to write an email to a friend, saying:

- (a) what the time is (*Il est dix/10 heures*).
- (b) where the candidate is in the house (*Je suis dans la salle à manger/cuisine*).
- (c) what the candidate is doing (*Je lis / Je fais mes devoirs / J'étudie / Je regarde un livre*).

This exercise was generally well handled with many candidates scoring full marks for communication and at least 1 mark for language. The naming of the room proved to be the most demanding task. Sometimes candidates tried to overcome this gap in their vocabulary by referring to the table: *Je suis à table* was acceptable for both communication and language. Unfortunately *Je suis sur la table* was all too common and was not accepted.

In order to score the 2 marks available for appropriateness of language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Where candidates did not score full marks for language this was usually on account of using *C'est...* rather than *Il est...* in task (a) and inaccuracies in the conjugation of the verb *lire*.

Some candidates combined tasks neatly as in this example: *Il est dix heures. Je suis en train de lire dans la salle à manger*. This is perfectly acceptable.

Candidates should be aware that credit is only given for the required tasks, which can be completed briefly, as in the examples above. Some candidates wrote overlong responses to the task and sometimes ignored the specific information required. Irrelevant and additional material, no matter how well expressed, is not rewarded and candidates could make better use of their time on other exercises.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a longer piece of text (an email from Sébastien in which he describes his family to his friend David) and answer questions in French. The focus of this exercise is to test candidates' ability to locate the correct answer to each question in the text provided. Therefore, although often a one or two word answer was sufficient, provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct information, answers lifted directly from the text were acceptable, even if they contained a lot of extra material. This additional material was ignored except in the few instances where it contradicted the correct answer.

The majority of candidates coped well, and scored equally well. For **Question 21**, the key idea that candidates needed to convey was that it was difficult for Sébastien to look after his sisters / someone: *garder + sœurs / les / la / lui* etc were all accepted, as was the direct lift of the appropriate sentence from the text. Where candidates used *regarder* instead of *garder* this was not accepted as it introduced a confusing concept. In addition, *ses sœurs sont pénibles* was not enough on its own as there was no reference to *garder*. In **Question 24**, *ensemble* was judged to be incomplete as an answer: there needed to be some reference either to going to school by car or going with their mother. Some candidates thought that Sébastien's sisters went to school by *car scolaire*, which was incorrect.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were required to:

- (a) Describe their house or flat.
- (b) Say whether or not they liked their house/flat, giving reasons.
- (c) Say what their house/flat would be like if they had lots of money.

A good number of candidates were able to write about their current and 'dream' home with some fluency. There were very few scripts in which all three tasks had not been attempted and candidates seemed generally to have most of the necessary vocabulary at their command to tackle the subject.

Up to 10 marks were awarded for the communication of the required points of information and 5 marks were available for language. Many candidates shared the maximum marks available.

Some candidates, sometimes using elegant and ambitious French, did tend to wander off the point, for example by talking about activities with friends or family at weekends. This meant that in some cases even very strong candidates did not quite manage to score the maximum 10/10 for communication.

Not all could accurately manage the conditional required for the third task but most could make it reasonably clear that they were talking about improving their existing house or planning their ideal home which was sufficient to score for communication.

For the most part, essays were written in good French and scores of 5 for language were common. However, candidates generally could do a better job of checking their work for errors to maximise their chances of a high mark. For example, most candidates were clearly capable of correcting *Ma maison et grande* to *Ma maison est grande* but did not necessarily do so.

Section 3

In **Section 3**, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for. Candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. While it will be possible to lift some answers from the text, candidates need to be very discriminating in what they choose – additional material copied may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux* (they are told two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*). Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false statements in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement (or vice versa). Where candidates decide that an answer is *Vrai*, the box **must be ticked** or no mark can be scored.

Most candidates completed the tick boxes, even if a few did not complete the corrections to the false statements. Most did attempt the corrections. The majority of candidates ticked *Vrai* and *Faux* correctly. Common errors were to tick *Vrai* for **Question 30** and *Faux* for **Question 32**.

Question 27 was usually correctly identified as *Faux*. Corrections were usually correct, though a number of candidates gave their answer as *le camp recevait beaucoup de jeunes espagnols* which was judged to be too unfocused to score the mark. **Question 28** was usually correctly identified as *Faux*. Candidates sometimes did not score on the correction because they omitted the subject or because they included *il n'était pas très enthousiaste*. **Question 29** was usually correctly identified as *Faux*. However, the correction frequently did not score because candidates lifted phrases about the camp, the waves etc. or because they referred to liking surfing, rather than conveying the idea of intention to surf in their answer. **Question 30** was often incorrectly identified as *Vrai*. When correctly identified as *Faux*, the correction sometimes could not be rewarded because candidates omitted the subject in their answer, while others omitted *avec* from *Pedro était le garçon avec qui il allait partager la tente*. **Question 31** and **Question 32** were *Vrai* and required no correction.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-40

This final comprehension exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and many candidates found it quite challenging. Most could clearly access the general meaning of the text and generally understood the questions. Many were able to locate the correct part of the text relevant to the question but they were often not selective enough in formulating an answer. Some were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptable response. In this exercise, candidates need to be able to make the necessary changes between direct and reported speech and to deal with the resulting pronoun / possessive adjective confusion.

Although most candidates were able to score the mark on **Question 33**, some answers were invalidated by inappropriate inclusion of *qui* or by the introduction of *meilleures notes*. **Question 34** caused difficulties for candidates. Many lifted sections of text which were not appropriate (e.g. *elle a un grand talent*) or they

omitted *que* or *de* in their answers and so were unable to score. **Question 35** was often answered correctly, though some candidates did not score because they did not include reference to biology/the subject and simply said that the girls were good/successful. In **Question 36(i)** and **(ii)** most candidates were able to score at least 1 of the marks and many scored both. A number of candidates spotted the correct part of the text but did not give a complete answer, for example: *les médecins étaient sans réponse devant la grave*. The most common non-scoring answer for **Question 37** was *elle comprendrait la maladie d'Amélie*. **Question 38** and **Question 39** were both generally well done. A lot of candidates managed to score at least 1 of the marks available for **Question 40**, even when they had found other questions in this exercise difficult.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/03
Speaking

Key messages

- Candidates had usually been well prepared for the Role play tasks. Good Examiners did not deviate from the script/set tasks and were willing to prompt candidates when necessary.
- In most Centres, timings were appropriate. In some Centres, the conversation sections were too short or too long and this affected candidates' marks.
- Although most Examiners were aware of the need to elicit past and future tenses in both conversation sections, there were a number of Centres where this was not the case. All Centres must ensure that questions to test different tenses are included in both conversation sections. The omission of different tenses will limit a candidate's language mark.
- Topic coverage was satisfactory in most Centres. A few Centres needed to cover a wider range of topics across their candidature and/or a wider variety of questions each time a topic was covered.
- The best work was heard in Centres where the style of examining allowed spontaneous and natural conversations to develop.
- In Centres in which internal moderation had taken place, this had usually been carried out efficiently.
- The quality of recordings continues to improve.
- **Recorded samples for this Speaking test must not be submitted on memory stick.**

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed a Core Curriculum or an Extended Curriculum course.

As in 2013, the standard of work heard was generally good. Most Examiners were familiar with the format of the test and conducted the examination efficiently. On the whole, they were sympathetic to their candidates and helped them by making them work for the marks available and by giving them the opportunity to show what they knew and could do. Candidates were generally aware of the demands of the test and had usually prepared well.

Centres are reminded that while Examiners should be granted access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' notes booklet/Role play cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted, so that they can prepare the Role plays, **it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the contents of these materials remain confidential and are not shared with candidates.** The Teachers' notes booklet and Role play cards must be returned to the Centre's secure storage facility whenever preparation is not taking place and after each session of examining. Once started, the Speaking tests should be completed as soon as possible within the Centre – there should not be a long interval between different groups taking the Speaking test within a Centre. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the Teachers' notes booklet and Role play cards must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are also reminded that candidates must not be permitted to do any writing during their preparation time or in the examination and must therefore not be allowed to bring any pens/pencils etc with them into the preparation area. Candidates must not bring mobile phones into the preparation/examination area and Examiners' phones must remain switched off.

After the Centre's tests have been conducted, **the sample for external moderation must be checked and then sent to Cambridge as soon as possible.** The work from some Centres arrived very late this year and this delays the moderation process.

Examiners need to understand the requirements of the mark scheme in order that they ask the right sort of questions which will stretch candidates and give them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, Examiners who included more open-ended 'unexpected' questions and went beyond straightforward 'closed' questions gave candidates the possibility of scoring in the Good band or

above on scale (a), Comprehension/responsiveness. 'Safe' straightforward questions which do not give candidates the opportunity to develop their answers will not enable them to score marks in the highest bands. It is also essential to include questions which will elicit past and future tenses in **both** conversation sections as candidates need to show they can use both of these tenses for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded on scale (b), Linguistic content. Centres are reminded that although in 2015 the descriptors in the Speaking mark scheme will change, candidates will still be required to show they can use past and future tenses to score above 6 for language.

Centres are reminded that the full requirements of the Speaking test for 2015 can be found on the Cambridge website. All Centres are strongly advised to read through these well in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties.

- **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently and Centres are thanked for this. Usually, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate, but in some Centres, large clerical errors were found. It is essential that all clerical work is checked with great care to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked. **In larger Centres, with more than one Examiner, where internal moderation has taken place, any amendments made to the marks of individual candidates as a result of internal moderation must be applied to the whole of that Examiner's group.** On the MS1 mark sheet, the Centre must enter the total mark for each candidate in figures as well as shading the lozenges. If internal moderation has taken place, it is important to ensure that the final Centre mark has been entered correctly.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Nearly all Centres remembered to submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample, duly completed. This form is intended to serve as a checklist for those in the Centre responsible for preparing the sample for external moderation and despatching it to Cambridge. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct before they despatch it to Cambridge, and the completed form must be submitted to Cambridge with the sample. If there is more than one Examiner per Centre, the relevant section on the form must be completed.

- **Sample size**

Centres understood the requirements and nearly all Centres submitted a correct and representative sample. Centres with permission to use more than one Examiner had taken care to ensure that both a good range of marks and different Examiners were represented on the sample. Many such samples were very well documented. It was particularly helpful in such cases for the Moderators to receive a list of the recordings included in the sample for external moderation and in which examination group they could be found. New Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed.

- **Recording quality and presentation of sample**

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality and Centres are thanked for this. Most Centres submitted digital recordings which were very clear and easy to access. Centres are reminded that whatever the method chosen for recording, if an external microphone is used, this should be positioned to favour the candidate. Centres should note that the recording should not be paused between different sections of the test.

In some cases, it was difficult or impossible to access the recorded sample provided by the Centre:

- Several Centres sent blank CDs or CDs of recordings that were barely audible: Centres must check the CD to ensure that their recorded sample is clearly audible before despatching it to Cambridge. This check should be carried out on a different machine to the one on which the recordings were made. If there is a problem, the Centre should get in touch with Cambridge immediately. Centres are reminded of the need to check all recording equipment prior to the live exams.
- Some recordings had not been saved as .mp3 files and could not be accessed by the Moderator: **it is essential that files are saved as .mp3.** If new Centres are considering ways to record, it is worth obtaining a digital voice recorder (IC recorder). These are easy to use and the sound quality is

excellent. Because the device is small, it helps make the experience less intimidating for candidates.

- **Some Centres sent their recordings on a USB/memory stick. Only CDs/cassettes are accepted by Cambridge.**
- Some CDs were damaged when they arrived at Cambridge: CDs/cassettes must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a bar-code) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge.
- In some cases, poor labelling made it difficult for the Moderator to establish which recordings had been sent as part of the sample and/or to find the particular recordings required. Please note:
 - The cassette/CD must always be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings (candidate name and number). For cassettes these must be presented in order of play.
 - **On CDs, it is essential that each recording be saved as a separate file.** The recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number.
 - Each CD/cassette must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette/CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. (For CDs, this introduction can be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction'.)
 - Whether Centres are submitting samples on cassette or CD, the Examiner must introduce each candidate on the recorded sample by name and number, and also state the Role play card number. This announcement must not be made by the candidate.

In addition to the above, Centres are reminded to avoid sticking labels on CDs and to only write on the surface of the CD with a CD-friendly pen.

- **Internal moderation in Centres**

All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation.

The standard of internal moderation in those Centres where more than one Examiner was used was usually high. The Coordinating Examiner in such Centres had approached the process of internal standardisation/moderation conscientiously and care had been taken to ensure the consistent application of the mark scheme across the different examining groups. Documentation of the procedures followed in Centres was usually very clear.

Where more than one Examiner is used, Cambridge needs to be able to check that all Examiners in the Centre have adopted a uniform approach to the conduct of the test and have applied the mark scheme consistently so it is important that examples of the work of each Examiner are included in the sample for external moderation.

Please note, if internal moderation procedures find only minor differences between the marking of an Examiner and the agreed Centre standard, the marks of candidates in that particular Examiner's group **should not be changed** in the Centre, but should be submitted as they are. In other words, if no adjustment to an Examiner's marks as a whole is necessary, the marks of the specific candidates sampled must not be changed in isolation. However, if after checking the sample for a particular Examiner the decision is taken to adjust that Examiner's marks, **that adjustment must then be applied to the marks of all the candidates who were examined by that Examiner**, and not just to the work of those candidates who were part of the internal check. Likewise, if an Examiner is judged to be out of line over part of the mark range, the marks of all the other candidates s/he examined with a mark in that range should be adjusted. Where a particular Examiner is judged to be out of line, it is good practice to select some more of that Examiner's candidates for a further check.

- **Duration of tests / missing elements**

Most Centres adhered to the timings stipulated in the syllabus and the Teachers' notes booklet, but some Centres persist in going under or over the five minutes prescribed for the Topic presentation/conversation and/or the General conversation test. Each of these sections **must** last for approximately five minutes. Where conversations are short or missing, candidates will be disadvantaged.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

Examiners were often consistent and fair in the way they applied the mark scheme and in such cases no adjustments were made to marks. In some cases, large adjustments were required to the marks awarded in Centres, often because sections of the test were very short or had been omitted. Some Centres had adjustments made just to part of the mark range.

In the Role plays, some Examiners did not realise that a short response (in some cases, just one word), if appropriate, can earn a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task, then Examiners are free to split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be awarded is 1. If a candidate chooses to use a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2, and not 3, is appropriate. Examiners are reminded that poor pronunciation can be queried if it prevents clear communication of a task. Apart from the task in Role play A which requires the candidate to listen to two options and then choose one, candidates cannot be awarded marks for merely repeating an 'answer' supplied by the Examiner.

Where marking in the conversation sections was generous, this was usually because marks in the higher bands had been awarded when there was no evidence that candidates could respond **in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions or that they could communicate consistently and accurately in past and future tenses**. High marks are not appropriate when the candidate does not do more than provide a series of short responses to straightforward questions. It is for this reason that Examiners must pitch the level of questioning at a different level for candidates of different abilities. Impression marks were usually awarded fairly in Centres.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

This year, nearly all Centres encouraged candidates to attempt all parts of each task and prompted appropriately when candidates needed encouragement. If only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. As in previous series, two-part tasks were split into **(i)** and **(ii)** on the candidate Role play cards. This helped candidates to remember to attempt both parts and there were very few cases of candidates (and/or Examiners) missing out parts of tasks. Examiners were generally careful to keep to the script provided – new Examiners are reminded not to change the cues in the scripts unless it becomes clear that the candidate cannot understand and reformulation is required. Examiners should check the number of the candidate's card before starting the test.

Overlong answers are not to be encouraged as marks are only awarded for the set tasks. Indeed, should candidates add material which is extra to the set task, it may distort meaning and detract from an otherwise correct utterance. Candidates should be reminded that it is important to listen to the Examiner as on all the A Role plays there is a task which requires them to listen and choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. Likewise, there is always a task which requires a response to an unexpected question on the B Role plays.

A Role Plays

The A Role plays were found to be of equal difficulty. They posed similar challenges to the 2013 situations and were a fair test at this level. New Centres should note that the A Role plays are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All of the A Role play situations featured a task which required a question to be asked and a task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner. Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least 1 mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded. If it can be done naturally and sympathetically, Examiners should feel free to query pronunciation in the Role

plays in cases where mispronunciation renders the message unclear. Examiners should introduce the A Role play and start the conversation off. English should not be used to introduce the test.

At a café

Candidates approached this well. All were able to state what they wanted to eat although some mispronounced *omelette*. The task requiring the candidate to choose what to have with the omelette was well done. In the third task, brand names for drinks were accepted. The choice of desserts was fairly wide. The word *dessert* was not needed to complete the task, but when it was used it was often mispronounced. Candidates know that they will be required to ask a question in the A Role plays and most were successful in framing a simple but appropriate question. Those asking *Où est les toilettes?* scored 2 marks.

Phoning a youth hostel

Again, this was an accessible set of tasks. Nearly everybody could state that they wanted (to make) a reservation. Reference to a reservation already made did not score the marks as the incorrect message was conveyed. Some were not able to specify a date, despite the very clear cue. A reference to a general notion such as *la semaine prochaine* was deemed to be incomplete and therefore only scored 1 mark. In cases such as this it is possible for the Examiner to prompt by asking *Quand exactement?* Where candidates were prompted in this way, they were able to work up to a mark of 2 or 3. The other tasks caused few problems.

Buying a train ticket

Most candidates coped well with asking for a ticket, though *billet* was often mispronounced. They were usually able to state for which day the ticket was required and then choose one of the two times offered. Some Examiners chose to offer different times from those cued, and made the task harder for candidates. Candidates successfully stated the number of tickets they required and on the last task most offered the simple *C'est combien?* which gained 3 marks.

B Role Plays

The B Role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, give an opinion, apologise or express pleasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the Role plays. As last year, they differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score marks on most tasks. It is important that Examiners know their own role and stick to the set tasks. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to consider likely questions in the 15 minutes preparation time, immediately prior to the Speaking test, and to listen carefully in the examination room.

Phoning a friend/responding to an invitation

The context of the Role play was clear to all and most were able to say they had stomach ache. The pronunciation of *ventre* together with the appropriate use of the correct *avoir* expression caused weaker candidates some problems. After reflection, many did well on the response to the unexpected question and communicated what kind of food they had eaten but were not always successful in using an appropriate tense. On the third task, responses in past, present or future tenses were all deemed to be appropriate, even where candidates stated that they were playing vigorous sports in spite of their illness! The fourth task was less well done: many did not express their pleasure and merely stated why they wanted to go to the concert. During their preparation time, candidates should look for the task which will require them to express an emotion or reaction and then remember to complete all parts of that task in the examination room. The best candidates were able to state that they loved the group or their music. The last task was the hardest task on this Role play. Many opted for just suggesting a place to meet. The task required an appropriate question to be formulated for a mark of 3 to be awarded. The best candidates were able to ask *On se rencontre où?/Où est-ce qu'on va se rencontrer?* which gained 3 marks.

Phoning a friend to say you are late

The first task was attempted well, but many needed the Examiner to repeat the cue for the second task. Sympathetic prompting often helped weaker candidates to convey the message as to where they were. Any appropriate response was accepted. Weaker candidates could usually attempt a reason for being late. Reasons varied and went from an argument with parents to lots of traffic or the bus being late. Some candidates only provided one detail instead of two. The task in which candidates needed to formulate a question proved difficult for some and highlighted the need for practice in using interrogative forms, as many

confused *Est-ce que...?* with *Quoi...?* and *Qu'est-ce que...?* For the last task, many candidates were able to apologise and say when they would arrive using an appropriate tense.

Phoning a restaurant to ask about a lost present

Most approached the first task fairly well but weaker candidates sometimes pronounced *J'ai laissé...* as *J'ai lassé...* Most were able to go on and describe the present giving two appropriate details. Many were able to communicate where the present was, though inaccuracies of preposition sometimes affected the clarity of the message. For the fourth task, most were able to say what they had liked about the previous evening, but there was little elaboration and the positive opinion was frequently omitted. On the last task, candidates sometimes tried to avoid formulating a question and just suggested a time for going to the restaurant. A question rather than a suggestion was required for 3 marks to be awarded.

Topic presentation and conversation

A wide range of topics was presented by candidates. Generally, candidates were enthusiastic about their chosen topic and are to be commended for the way in which they had prepared their material. Centres are reminded that candidates in one teaching group should not all prepare the same topic as it makes it very difficult for the Examiner to explore the material in a spontaneous and individual way with each candidate.

The best presentations were delivered at a reasonable speed, were clear to understand and reflected the interests and/or personality of the candidate. Often, candidates used a variety of tenses and structures. It is worth impressing upon candidates that material heard in the opening presentation does contribute to their marks for both content and language for this section of the test.

Most candidates chose to speak about their school, their country/town of origin, life in another country, their holidays or their leisure interests. There were some inspiring topics about future plans and some interesting, mature reflections on contrasting cultural experiences, the environment and candidates' local contexts. Festivals and celebrations also featured. One candidate spoke of his ideal house in the future and this made for an imaginative and fascinating account. There were also some touching accounts about people admired by candidates. This year, there were hardly any cases of candidates talking about *moi-même*. This is a subject to be avoided as it is too general, making it difficult for the Examiner to find appropriate fresh topics for discussion in the general conversation.

Some candidates were allowed to present their material for much longer than the stipulated maximum of two minutes. A few did not present enough material and their presentation did not last for the minimum one minute. Centres should remind candidates to keep to the timings stated. Candidates should also be advised not to race through their prepared material – sometimes it was difficult to follow a candidate's presentation because of the fast pace at which it was delivered. Once the candidate has delivered his/her one to two minute presentation, the Examiner must spend the remainder of the five minutes allocated to this section discussing the topic of the presentation with the candidate. It is essential that this Topic conversation is not omitted and that it lasts the correct amount of time. If there is no Topic conversation, or if only one or two questions are asked, the candidate's marks for this section of the test will be affected.

In the Topic conversation section, Examiners need to focus their questions on the topic area chosen by the candidate. Although it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the Topic conversation, if candidates are to score highly, this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers, with both Examiner and candidate knowing what is coming and in which order. Questions should instead arise spontaneously as the conversation develops. It is important that Examiners remember to include 'unexpected' questions in this section of the test, in order to allow more able candidates to show that they are capable of 'thinking on their feet' and manipulating their prepared material, in terms of vocabulary and structures, according to the needs of the Examiner. The more natural the style of questioning used in this section, the more interesting it becomes for both the candidate and the Examiner. It is also important that questions do not encourage the candidate merely to repeat information which has already been given in the presentation. The best performances were ones in which the questions and answers developed into a natural conversation.

Although, Examiners were often aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses, in a few Centres questions to test different tenses were not asked in the Topic conversation. Examiners need to remember that when questions in different tenses arise, they should be relevant to the candidate's chosen topic.

At the end of the Topic conversation the Examiner should introduce the final General conversation section of the test. This is helpful to both the candidate and the Moderator.

General conversation

Topics covered in General conversation included holidays, future plans, the environment, the candidate's town/country, school, leisure activities, food and drink/health living, daily routine and family. Sympathetic and careful examining allowed candidates of all levels of ability to show what they could do. Many candidates were able to go beyond straightforward messages of a brief nature and could produce longer utterances conveying more sophisticated messages and including feelings, opinions and explanations of their opinions. The more able were not limited to talking in the first person. Candidates scoring very high marks for communication showed that they could respond to 'open' questions in a natural way. Many candidates were also able to show that they could speak accurately in tenses appropriate to the questions asked. The best work in terms of linguistic content featured longer more complex utterances which made use of structures such as *si* + imperfect plus a conditional tense, *avant de* + infinitive and, occasionally, compound tenses. This remains even more impressive when such structures are heard in response to unexpected questions which arise naturally in the course of a conversation. In the best performances, good use was made of adverbs, quantifiers, comparisons, dependent infinitives and impersonal verbs such as *il faut*.

The topics covered in the General conversation should be different from and not related to the topic chosen by the candidate for the Topic presentation. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be aware of which General conversation topics will be examined. Different topics must be covered with different candidates in order to ensure good syllabus coverage for the Centre as a whole. It is not acceptable to cover the same two or three topics with each candidate. In a small number of Centres, while a variety of topics was covered across the candidature, on each occasion that a particular topic arose, the same questions were asked: this approach must also be avoided. While it is common practice to make use of banks of questions in the classroom, reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test will result in stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and where the candidates seems to be delivering a series of pre-learnt mini presentations.

Most Centres had understood the need to cover only **two or three** topics from the syllabus with each candidate in the general conversation section and to cover these topics in some depth. It is understood that with candidates who have less French at their disposal, it may be necessary to cover more topics in less depth in order to keep the conversation going. There were still some Centres in which far too many topics were covered, each very superficially, and in the worst cases where each question was on a different topic area. Where many topics are covered in quick succession by the Examiner, it is confusing for the candidate.

The best examining featured an announcement as to which topic was going to be discussed and then at the end of this topic, an indication as to which topic would be covered next. For each topic, the Examiner linked questions in a logical fashion, while following up interesting leads presented by the candidate. The descriptors in the Mark scheme refer to a hierarchy of questions, moving from straightforward to unexpected questions. In order to access marks in the higher bands, candidates need to do more than answer a series of straightforward, predictable questions. They should also be able to answer 'unexpected' questions, requiring opinions and justifications and the use of more complex language and structures.

Although Examiners were usually aware of the need to ask questions in a variety of tenses in the General conversation, in a few Centres such questions continue not to be asked. The Examiner should routinely include questions in different tenses on each of the two/three topics examined. Such questions should not be left until the final topic is covered. There were excellent examples of this technique in many Centres. Centres are reminded that if candidates only produce statements in the present tense, and do not show evidence of being able to work in past and future tenses, the language mark will be limited to a maximum of 6.

As last year, it was clear that the Speaking test remains the culmination of **much** hard work on the part of both teachers and candidates in IGCSE language classrooms. Many candidates were very positive as to their educational experience thus far and were clear as to the value and place of their foreign language learning within this experience.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

The more successful candidates' work was characterised by the following features:

- The demands of the rubric were observed throughout.
- The length of each answer was between 130 and 140 words as directed.
- The answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- The candidate balanced ambition with the need for linguistic accuracy.
- Presentation was good.

General comments

As many of those reading this report will know, this writing paper will have a new format in 2015. Although the shape of the papers will change, the underlying principles of the writing examination will remain the same. Much of the advice given below, although based on observations of candidates' performance on the June 2014 paper, remains just as valid for future examinations.

The entry for the June session continues to grow and the quality of large numbers of scripts remains high. The best candidates rose to the challenge and produced responses which did them great credit. The majority made the best use of their knowledge and ability, and presented answers which addressed the tasks set in the proper manner, using less complex language. A number of candidates did not make the most of their opportunity and it is to this group mainly that the following advice is offered.

Candidates are reminded that specific marks are given for conveying the precise information required by each task in the rubric. If a task is omitted, the candidate automatically limits the number of marks s/he can access. In **Question 1**, candidates are required to use three different time-frames, present, past and future. It is necessary to observe the tense in each stimulus and to use that tense in the response. In **Question 2**, the narrative must be expressed in past tenses, as indicated. Marks in this question are awarded for recounting events and the narrator's reactions to those events. If any of these elements are not addressed, the candidate will limit the number of marks s/he can be awarded. More successful candidates scored highly for communication by giving direct answers to questions in **1(a)** and **1(b)**, and by adhering closely to the directions set out in **Question 2**.

Stronger candidates planned their answers with care and prepared a plan under certain headings or paragraphs. To an extent, in **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** such a framework was provided by the rubric. In **Question 2**, candidates must devise their own anecdote, and a number did not give sufficient thought to planning their response. Often the result was that the early tasks were treated at such length that the answer exceeded 140 words, and later tasks fell outside the word count and could not be credited for communication. Others concluded their answer in about 100 words and either presented a short answer, which restricted access to the full number of language marks, or resorted to verbiage to pad out the story to the required 130-140 words, thus impairing the general impression.

More successful candidates composed each sentence carefully and paid particular attention to verb forms. Correct spelling and genders were necessary to gain language ticks, and a faulty noun would invalidate ticks for verbs, adjectives and prepositions. Verbs had to be in the correct tense and person to qualify for ticks. Better candidates did not put too much reliance on set phrases. They employed a variety of structures which enhanced their work. Examples of good practice were the use of object pronouns, negatives and a range of infinitive constructions. Those of more modest capacity should try not to be too ambitious and should stay within their limitations. In free or guided composition it is a wise maxim to say what one knows to be correct and avoid what one does not know or is unsure of. Candidates should aim to show the Examiner what they

can do, not what they cannot. For instance, if a candidate is unsure of the verb *pleuvoir* (to rain), s/he should say it was fine instead.

When candidates have finished an answer, they should make use of time left to check their work for mechanical errors. A systematic trawl through their work, examining first verbs (person, tense, agreements if necessary with *être* or reflexive verbs), and then adjectives (position and agreement), should eliminate a range of grammatical slips. They should re-examine the spelling of common nouns in particular, and ensure that the spelling and gender of these nouns are consistent. The gender of the narrator too must remain consistent throughout. There is normally ample time available to make such revisions.

Presentation is very important. The best answers were a pleasure to read. Some writing was barely legible. Examiners do not reward French they cannot read. There was no evidence of any improvement in the general standard of presentation and handwriting, which was sometimes so difficult to read that the message was obscured.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Être en forme

Keeping fit was easily the more popular option. Many candidates were clearly familiar with this topic and had a good knowledge of the vocabulary required to discuss it. Some excellent responses were received. The majority wrote within the 140 word limit and addressed each of the tasks. Some wrote in such detail on the early tasks that they had exceeded the limit before they came to the final task, and a communication mark was lost.

The first task was to say what they liked to eat and drink. The response was within the capacity of most candidates, as all that was required was to say *J'aime (manger) les pizzas* or *J'aime (boire) le coca*. Some contrived not to score the mark for communication by complicating their answer and making verbal errors. Others chose to ignore the obvious and embarked on a catalogue of healthy/unhealthy options instead, thus missing an easy communication mark. There were errors over articles, as when the definite article and the partitive were confused (*J'aime du fromage* for *le fromage* and *À midi je mange les pâtes* instead of *des pâtes*). Genders of everyday items were frequently incorrect. Such errors often affected ticks for language but did not compromise the mark for communication. Favourite foods covered a very wide spectrum. All kinds of fast-food were mentioned, and various sorts of confectionery, such as cakes, sweets and biscuits. Some confessed to enjoying these delights, while admitting how unhealthy they were. There was regular confusion of *mauvais* and *mal* in attempts to say what was bad for you. Some solemnly dismissed all fatty and sugary items with disdain, and stated a preference for fruit and vegetables. They preferred a healthy glass of water to any other beverage.

Secondly, candidates were asked if the diet (*le régime*) of adolescents was well balanced (*bien équilibré*) and to explain their view. *Équilibré* seemed to be well understood, but not all recognised *le régime* as referring specifically to diet and wrote about the life-style of young people in general terms. A sympathetic view was taken by Examiners towards this interpretation. Many said the diet was not well balanced, but weaker candidates were sometimes unable to use the negative (as in *Le régime n'est équilibré pas*). They said many adolescents ate too much and in particular ate the wrong things, such as sweets, burgers and chips. *Beaucoup* regularly gave problems, both with spelling and with the need for *de jeunes* (rather than *des jeunes*). Candidates said that adolescents in general hated fruit and vegetables and other foods perceived to be healthy, and drank too much alcohol. This phenomenon resulted in obesity and laziness. Others were firmly of the view that young people had a very balanced diet, because they ate such nutritious meals in their school canteens, which 'never served fast-food'. The ethos of school life was such that adolescents were healthy in body and mind. There may have been a touch of irony in such remarks, but that did not matter in the context.

Next, candidates were asked to give a view on the importance of sport in school. Many wrote about school sports in general. Sport at school was necessary for keeping fit (the title of the question was *Être en forme* after all). A simple statement such as *Le sport est bon pour la santé* was enough to secure a mark for communication, but again candidates attempted complicated answers which then contained verbal and other errors, often invalidating the communication mark. A surprising number omitted the definite article and began *Sport est bon parce que...* Some expressed the view that sport was not only good for the young, but was also a much needed way of relaxing after the trials of schoolwork. Others wrote impressively of the 'team ethic' fostered in games like rugby, football and hockey, which was of benefit to the 'inner self' and encouraged cooperation and good sportsmanship. Sport was good because it took you outdoors and

enabled you to make more friends. The opposite view was only seldom expressed. A small minority said there was too much sport in schools and it was *fatigant* or *ennuyeux* (rarely correctly spelled). A number wrote only about their own school experience of sport, which was deemed to be a legitimate interpretation of the question. They stated that sport was very important in their school, because there were so many sports to choose from and there were so many teams, which implied how seriously sport was taken. Others attended schools which offered little if any sport, but these were few in number.

The next task was to say what sport the candidate did recently. A simple statement in a past tense was enough to score the mark for communication (e.g. *J'ai joué au foot / J'ai fait de la natation / J'ai pratiqué le ski*). The verb *pratiquer* was used in the question, but few chose to use it. Many put *jouer* instead, but did not include the necessary *au*, as in *jouer au tennis*. A large number ignored the past tense in the question (*Quels sports avez-vous pratiqués récemment?*) and answered in the present tense. To score marks for communication it is so important to look at the tense employed in the question and to use that tense in the reply. Some wrote only about their favourite sport in this section or about the sport they are currently doing, which did not address the task.

Lastly, candidates were asked what they would change in their own lives to improve their fitness. A conditional tense was indicated by the question, so a response beginning *Je changerais...* or *Je voudrais changer...* was appropriate. Equally acceptable were answers such as: *Je mangerais plus de fruits/moins de bonbons* or *Je ferais plus de sport*. Some would do more physical exercise if it were not for all the exams and homework they were required to do! Statements in a future tense, as in *À l'avenir je mangerai plus de légumes* or an intention, as in *Je veux changer... / J'ai l'intention de changer... / J'espère changer...*, were also accepted. As stated earlier, a number of candidates could not score a communication mark for this response, as they had already exceeded the word count.

Question 1(b) L'invention la plus utile du monde

Although this was a less popular choice, some interesting responses were presented, sometimes in excellent French. Comprehension of the tasks was usually good and most candidates had enough ideas to fill 140 words on the topic.

Many cited the computer or the mobile phone as their choice of 'most useful invention', and they were not short of ideas on how these devices helped in their daily lives. Answers to the second task (why is it useful?) often began *Je peux...* followed by an infinitive such as *...parler à mes cousins en France* or *...faire des recherches pour mes devoirs*. Other popular inventions were cars, television, bicycles and planes which enabled them to travel. Some unexpected choices included the invention of paper, the knife and fork and electricity.

Next, a past tense was required to say what the candidate did lately, thanks to the invention. As in **Question 1(a) task (iv)**, a number did not recognise the need for a past tense and responded in the present tense, thus failing to secure the mark for communication. Modern phones enabled candidates to take photographs, consult the Internet, and to contact family, friends or the police in the event of an emergency. The computer helped them to do their homework and provided fun playing video games. Bicycles enabled them to travel cheaply. Cars and planes carried them on holiday or to visit distant friends and relations.

A conditional tense was required in task **(iv)**, what would your life be like without this invention? A simple reply such as *Ma vie serait très difficile/pénible/impossible* was enough to score a communication mark. Some put *Sans l'avion je ne pourrais pas voyager à l'étranger* or *Sans la bicyclette, je serais obligé(e) de prendre le bus* or *Sans mon portable, je ne pourrais pas contacter mes amis/je serais seul(e)*. This was quite a demanding task, but some very credit-worthy responses were presented.

Question 2 Une semaine d'activités pour collecter de l'argent pour votre école

Comprehension of the tasks was almost universal. Candidates understood the need to write about what they did during a week of activities to raise money for their school, and to give their reactions to this experience. The challenge was to sustain a narrative in past tenses over 140 words. Most found plenty to say on the topic and included reactions as they went along. Those who left reactions until the end ran the risk of losing communication marks, if they occurred outside the word count.

The narrator often took a leading role in proceedings. He/she and the rest of the class set about raising money in the conventional way, apparently familiar to candidates world wide. They washed cars for parents and teachers. They did housework for mother. They did baby-sitting. They worked in gardens. They took part time jobs. They collected money in the street. Most described a fête which raised large amounts of

money. They made and sold cakes. They sold their old clothes. There were competitions of all kinds, sports, tombolas and stalls. The class put on a show or a concert. They organised games between staff and candidates, which the candidates always won. There was a disco on the last evening. They did a sponsored walk or cycle ride, but this proved difficult to explain. Candidates are advised that in a free composition such as this, it is best to keep to what you know and to avoid such complications as explaining sponsored events. Some gave structure to their accounts by allocating a certain activity to each day of the week, which often worked very well. Better candidates were able to offer at least two statements in past tenses to say what the candidates did, and to score each of the communication marks allocated to this section. As ever, the perfect tense proved too big a hurdle for many and some simply resorted to present tenses, which scored neither marks for communication nor ticks for language.

The purpose of the fund-raising was varied. Some collected money to pay for new facilities, such as a swimming pool, a football pitch, more modern science laboratories or a new gym. Some bought a new minibus. Some said they replaced the old canteen with a brand new one. Some week! Amazing what selling a few items can raise! More realistically, others said the funds were spent on buying new books or computers. More idealistic candidates gave all the proceeds to a good cause, such as deprived children in their own country or abroad. This was not strictly *pour l'école* but full credit was given anyway. Some disreputable candidates spent all the money on a class holiday! Although the question of 'how the money helped the school', was set in the past tense, Examiners rewarded future tenses as in *l'école aura bientôt de nouveaux ordinateurs* or a present tense as in *maintenant nous avons beaucoup de nouveaux livres dans la bibliothèque*. Sadly, some overlooked this task altogether.

Reactions were uniformly enthusiastic. As stated, these were rewarded at any point in the account and not just at the end. Two communication marks were available and they were awarded for simply saying *C'était amusant, J'étais heureux/euse* or *Tout le monde s'est amusé*. Some summed up their reactions with *Je n'oublierai jamais cette expérience*. This element of the narrative is usually well handled now.

Candidates for the most part entered the spirit of the question and responded enthusiastically. They seemed to enjoy telling a story with a personal involvement. One supposes some were drawing on personal experience.

It was evident that a number of candidates who scored well on **Question 1**, where the tasks were clearly indicated in the rubric, performed less well in **Question 2** where they had to provide most of the content themselves. This was particularly apparent in the number of language ticks awarded for correct usage. The narrative question required a little more thought and preparation. Basic errors were more frequent, which indicated a need for more thorough revision of one's work at the end to eliminate these. The misspelling of everyday words was wide-spread. Words which were commonly misspelled were: *par exemple, malheureusement, beaucoup, construire, nouveaux, délicieux, nourriture, professeur, élève* and *laboratoire*. Facilities were mistakenly rendered as *facilités* and *attendre* (to wait) was commonly used in 'to attend school'. Genders were regularly faulty, and the genders of nouns and of the narrator himself/herself tended to vary throughout the piece. The auxiliaries *avoir* and *être* were confused. Most common of all was the distortion of the perfect tense, both in the auxiliary and the past participle, and the omission of an acute accent with *-er* verbs. The better candidates planned each statement carefully and observed the requirements of sequence of tense and agreements. They were competent in using verbs with dependent infinitives (*essayer de...*, *commencer à...* etc.). They used both perfect and imperfect tenses correctly and the pluperfect when required. They used a variety of complex constructions successfully and displayed a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. It was a pity some spoilt their answers in their determination to work in all the set phrases they had prepared, often several times, regardless of the context.