

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

This Paper was found to be accessible to candidates and to be of a similar level of difficulty to the June 2008 Paper. The exercises worked well, discriminating across the full range of ability. The range of question types used in the examination was very similar to that used in 2008 and as usual there was an incline of difficulty on the Paper. The French heard gradually increased in terms of length and density and questions moved from testing candidates' ability to understand short factual information to requiring them to understand and identify opinions, explanations in narrated accounts and interviews in different tenses in the later exercises.

The candidature increased yet again this year and a full range of performance was seen by Examiners. As always, it was pleasing to note the number of excellent performances from Centres all over the world. Such work showed pleasing levels of attainment from candidates on tasks requiring both specific and general comprehension. This is reassuring as it is evidence that Centres recognise the importance of listening and responding and that this skill is being well taught in many Centres. It was gratifying to see that the topics and themes of the exercises were well within the knowledge and life experience of candidates located across a wide geographical area.

Centres are reminded that questions requiring a short written response in French are set in such a way as to keep to a minimum the amount of French which candidates have to produce. The Listening examination remains a test of comprehension and Examiners do not expect complete sentences in response to many of the questions. If candidates get into the habit of keeping their answers brief and to the point this reduces the risk of them adding extra incorrect material which can invalidate an otherwise correct response. Responses written in inaccurate French are accepted provided that the message remains clear.

In the majority of Centres, candidates had been well prepared for the examination and were usually well aware of the requirements. Regrettably, a few candidates ticked more than one box in response to the multiple choice items in the very first exercise. Likewise in **Section 2 Exercise 1** some candidates only ticked a total of 4 of the required 6 boxes or ticked more than 6: candidates should be warned that they must tick the number of boxes stated in the rubric. New Centres should note that question rubrics change little from year to year and that the format of the paper remains fairly constant. In preparation, Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with the rubrics as such familiarity can only aid and reassure them in the examination.

As last year, Examiners noted that some candidates, on multiple choice objective questions requiring one box to be ticked, had ticked a provisional answer in pencil and then made a final choice of answer in ink, but had not deleted the original tick in pencil. Candidates must be warned not to do this: if a candidate makes 2 choices whether in pencil or ink, the mark **cannot** be awarded. Answers which the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

Candidates generally did well on this exercise which tested the comprehension of short items of a factual nature. In **Question 2** *la salle d'attente* was not always well known. Apart from **Question 8**, where option **D** was sometimes selected (*jardinage* and *fleurs* were heard), there was no discernible pattern to incorrect answers on this exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-15

This exercise featured information about a cinema workshop in Annecy. Questions tested dates, activities, geographical/accommodation details and required candidates to either tick one box on multiple choice, give a one-word answer in French or provide a number (in words or in figures). **Question 9** was generally well answered as was **Question 10**, though some distorted their answer on this question by writing *3 et 10*. **Question 11** proved to be the most difficult question on this exercise. Despite a tolerant approach to the marking of different spellings of *peinture*, many candidates failed to score here. On **Question 15**, incorrect answers frequently featured *cinéma* (used by itself), or *auberge de jeunesse*.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates were generally aware of the requirements of this exercise, which featured four young people talking about their choice of careers in journalism, sport, medicine and the perfume industry, and on the whole coped well with the questions. The extracts included factual detail and simple opinions and presented candidates with a greater variety of language and tenses than they had heard in the earlier exercises. The most popular incorrect options chosen were (d) and (l). Many candidates scored at least 4 marks and there were good numbers scoring 5 and 6 marks on this exercise. Overall, candidates performed in a very similar way to what was seen last June.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

This is now the third year that this exercise type has been used and candidates seem confident about how to respond. Candidates heard an interview with a young Russian student, Maxim, who had family links with France. Questions required candidates to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements and tested simple family details. One word was required for each answer and questions were well attempted apart from **Question 22** where *paresseux* was not always well known. On **Question 18** many correctly gave *restaurant* and on **Question 19** many good attempts were made at *université*. **Question 20** was well understood and answered but there were many poorly spelt renderings of *guitare* on **Question 21**.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

Candidates went on to hear the second part of the interview, which was by its nature more demanding in that it required short answers in French. On **Question 23**, Examiners were looking for the concept that there were a lot of children/students in the class. Answers stating that there were 30 students could not score the mark as there were **more** than 30. On **Question 24** the word *magasin* was deemed sufficient to gain the mark, but some invalidated their answer by adding the concept of the same restaurants. On **Question 25**, reference needed to be made to *cuisine* or good food. Spellings of *cuisine* were often poor but recognisable. However, candidates answering *il fait la cuisine* did not gain the mark as this was not the case. It is worth emphasising to candidates that if correct details are provided alongside details which distort, the mark can be lost. **Question 26** proved to be the most challenging on this section as Examiners looked for a correct comparison to be made in the context of the question asked. Candidates are reminded to make good use of the reading time and to note key words. Answers such as *ils sont moins timides* (referring to the French) gained the mark, but if the proffered answer implied that the Russians were less shy the mark could not be scored. Other correct answers were those which said that the French were more open to other cultures. The final question required the notion of *voyager* and was usually answered quite well. Weaker candidates still confuse *travailler* with *voyager*.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

This multiple choice exercise was answered well by candidates and was deemed to be of comparable difficulty with previous examinations. The candidates heard two short interviews with students who talked about how they helped other students in their schools. There was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-42

As intended, this final exercise, targeted to test the top level IGCSE skills, elicited the widest range of performance. There were some very accessible questions, affording even the weakest candidate an opportunity to score one or two marks, but there were also questions to challenge the most able candidates. Candidates heard an interview with a young writer, Alexandra, who talked about her life and her books. This exercise required candidates to follow sequences of events and also to recognise reasons for actions and explanations of ideas and opinions.

On **Question 34** the required concept was that Alexandra was 14 years old or was young. Many were successful on this question. **Question 35** required the concept that she started to write or wrote a diary. Although a fair number of candidates answered correctly, some invalidated their answers by including the words *à* or *pour* with *un journal*: this changed the meaning of the response and could not score. Many candidates were successful on **Question 36**, though the correct subject pronoun needed to be given, *Il était malade*, to score the mark. **Question 37** proved more challenging. The required concept was that the Headteacher contacted/brought in a TV crew. Some candidates included the incorrect information that it was the Headteacher who published Alexandra's first book and could not score the mark. **Question 38** was the question most frequently answered correctly on the exercise: candidates found it easy to pick out the key words and to spot the negative. **Question 39** was also answered correctly by most candidates. **Question 40** required the identification of the kinds of books Alexandra would like to write and many identified *dramatique* or *policier* correctly. Candidates only needed to give one type of book to score the mark but if they wrote one of the above correctly they had to be careful not to invalidate this by adding the incorrect *romantique* or *grammatique*. Candidates should be reminded that the inclusion of extra incorrect material can invalidate otherwise correct responses. The wording of **Question 41** focused on how Alexandra was **different** from her friends. She was different in that she read a lot and only watched a small amount of TV. Incorrect answers often featured what she had in **common** with her friends (music and going out) and therefore did not answer the question. Again, candidates should be careful not to include extra material they hear as this can distort an otherwise correct answer. **Question 42** was only answered well by the best candidates and proved to be a suitably challenging final question. The concept of *la peur* on **Question 42(a)** was not generally well known. **Question 42(b)** was demanding and perhaps the most challenging on the paper. To score here, candidates needed to indicate that Alexandra could see/meet/discuss/speak/ with the/her public/readers. Some candidates misheard *discuter* as *disputer* which distorted the answer and could not score.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Candidates showed themselves able to cope with this year's paper: they were well-prepared and the paper was generally well done by all, with the majority scoring more than 50% of the available marks. There did not appear to be any problems with insufficient time to complete the paper, and presentation and legibility were generally good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Questions 1, 3 and 5 were generally well-answered, but **Question 2** presented some problems – *charcuterie* was unknown for a number of candidates, and the question was often answered with B or C; **Question 4** showed some confusion – perhaps *apprendre à conduire* was not well understood, many candidates offered B.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Most candidates scored well, here – the most common wrong answers were *Faux* for **Question 8**, and **Question 10** was sometimes incorrectly answered as *Vrai*.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

The majority of candidates scored at least 3 marks here, though **Question 11** caused some difficulty – *nettoyer* did not appear to be well-known – and in **Questions 12 and 13**, *boissons* and *grillades* appeared to be unfamiliar items of vocabulary.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Here, there were 3 marks available for Communication and 2 for Appropriateness of language: candidates were expected to be able to convey that they were going to arrive at 10 o'clock (morning or evening were both accepted), by train or *métro*, and that they would like to go to a café (or restaurant/café terrace) for something to eat or drink. In (a) Examiners expected some indication of *heures/h* with the time. In (b) Examiners were looking for a reasonable attempt at the spelling of *train*. Candidates sometimes had problems with *moyen* (*votre moyen de transport*). *Je travaille à train* was not accepted. For (c) many candidates found it difficult to construct a sentence about eating or drinking at a restaurant/café and some tried to say that they wanted to work in a café – reasonable attempts were accepted for a Communication mark. In order to score full marks for language, candidates had to use two correct verb forms – correct forms of the present and future tenses were credited, but not past tenses.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-26

This exercise was generally very well-done. Examiners were looking for precise information but were prepared, in this section, to accept longer answers lifted from the text provided that they contained the required information and the additional material did not render the answer ambiguous. Some candidates had not clearly understood, or were unable to express that the text was about *le père de Paul* and marks

were lost because they said that Paul arrived late, or brought work home. Candidates who said *deux heures par jour passées dans le métro* as their answer to **Question 24** did not score, whereas those who answered simply *deux heures* did get the mark. The majority of candidates scored at least 9 marks in this exercise – the most challenging question was **Question 26** where candidates needed to be able to explain that, because he would arrive home earlier, Paul's father would be able to explain maths to his son. Answers of *il va pouvoir t'expliquer les mathématiques* did not make it clear that the *il* referred to Paul's father and the *t'* in the sentence was, in fact, Paul, and candidates who offered *s'expliquer* did not realise that the *s'* would be seen as referring to Paul's father.

Exercise 2 Question 27

Very few candidates failed to attempt this question, and the full range of marks was scored. Candidates had to say what they and their friends liked doing together (**a**), whether their parents let them go out often (**b**), why their parents might say 'no' from time to time (**c**), and what they did when their parents said they could not go out (**d**). The necessary vocabulary was well within the reach of all candidates, and many were able to give plenty of detail of activities for (**a**). Some candidates slightly misinterpreted (**b**) and talked about what they would like to do if their parents let them go out, but Examiners credited this material where possible. Many said for (**b**) that their parents were strict, or easy-going and allowed them out at week-ends or provided they were with friends the parents liked. Most of the answers for (**c**) included when they were behind with school work, were doing badly at school, had examinations approaching or were expected to attend a family occasion, but many and varied were the responses for (**d**) – some sulked and went to their rooms, some understood their parents' point of view and felt they had their best interests at heart, some worked, some helped their parents until they relented and allowed them out in the end, and some made their escape when unobserved! Many candidates were able to write easily and fluently on this topic, using a good range of vocabulary and appropriate verbs, and scored well, though candidates did not always give enough detail to score all the communication points – if, for instance, they merely said that they went out with their friends, they were credited with a single point for (**a**), whereas those who said they went out shopping, or to the cinema, or to play football or tennis, or to the beach, were able to accumulate additional points. In order to score well, candidates need to elaborate and provide extra detail. Good answers were characterised by the use of clear accurate language and a variety of structures; weaker answers tended to use repetitive language and simple structures.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

This is a familiar exercise for candidates – having read the text, they need to decide which of the statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given – a simple negative version of the original is not enough to score a mark. There is no need to provide a sentence where they decide that the statement is true. In **Section 3**, it is possible sometimes to lift answers from the text, but candidates need to be very precise in choosing the exact detail needed – additional material copied may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. For example, for **Question 28**, candidates needed to be able to say that Paris/the mayor/the Parisians ...*a/ont fait des efforts pour améliorer les transports en commun*. Many found the correct section of text, but copied the sentence beginning *Malgré les efforts faits...* and therefore did not score the mark, and some mistakenly classed the Vélib project as part of the public transport initiative. Similarly for **Question 31**, candidates who copied from the text *Là vous cherchez la station la plus proche...* or *Il suffit donc de prendre un vélo...* etc did not score – those who omitted the *là*, or the *donc* did, but candidates often found it difficult to express the idea that bikes could be returned to a different station. **Question 30** needed a response using a verb, showing that candidates understood that *les stations Vélib* were not only in the centre of Paris, but **also** in the suburbs, and for **Question 32** Examiners were looking for some indication that candidates understood that the service was not free, even for Parisians, even though it only cost a small amount, or for the actual cost per year: many were successful here. A number of candidates thought that **Question 33** was *Faux*.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-42

In this exercise, once again, selective lifting showing comprehension of the text and the question was credited where appropriate: candidates who answered **Question 34** with the complete second sentence of text did not score – those who selected the essential elements (*sur un bateau* or *en plein milieu de l'Arctique*) did, though there were a number of candidates who wandered into the realms of the Antarctic or the Atlantic and even America. Many candidates were able to provide the information needed for the answer to **Question 35**, that Emilie had a *diplôme en écologie* and for **Question 36** the two elements looked for were

the conditions in winter – the low temperatures and the fact that it was dark all day. Many candidates offered answers about temperatures in summer invalidated otherwise correct answers – there is no particular problem with this as the temperatures of 3 degrees. For **Question 37**, candidates needed to use the reflexive verb *s'occuper* correctly, and many mistakenly offered here the need to leave the boat to study the state of the snow or to go ashore to collect plants. For **Question 38** the important point was that the plants allowed the measurement of the effects of *le réchauffement de la terre*, and many answered correctly. In answer to **Question 39**, many candidates correctly offered *on risque de tomber dans un trou* but some added the first part of the sentence as well *Pendant ces sorties quotidiennes* and invalidated their answer. **Question 40** was generally correctly answered, that Emily was responsible not for the food on board, but for the *réserves de nourriture*. For **Question 41**, the information needed was that the evening meal was an opportunity for the team to meet up (*se retrouver*) and socialise and the majority of candidates realised this, but those who also added *Le repas du soir est important* did not gain the mark. The last question on the paper proved demanding for many – Emilie was unhappy not just that the boat was moving too fast, but because this was an **indication** (*ça veut dire que... ça montre que... ça prouve que...*) that the ice was disappearing.

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 previous years, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. Overall, the standard of work produced by candidates was extremely encouraging and very similar to the standard heard in 2008.

The majority of Centres carried out the tests in a highly professional way. Examining was usually good and candidates were generally given plenty of opportunities to show what they knew and could do. Moderators have frequently conducted such tests themselves and acknowledge that it can be a demanding process. However, the Speaking test remains an **essential** component of this syllabus as it enables candidates to show how well they can communicate in a variety of everyday situations and is a reflection of the hard work and effective learning which have preceded the examination in IGCSE French classrooms.

Most Examiners were familiar with the requirements of the test and had studied the mark scheme carefully. Careful preparation is vital as Examiners who are unfamiliar with the format of the test and the mark scheme can seriously disadvantage their candidates by failing to ask the correct questions to stretch their candidates appropriately.

Centres new to CIE are reminded that the requirements of the Speaking test are clearly laid out on Pages 6-11 of the Teachers' Notes booklet. The Teachers' Notes booklet is a confidential document and as such must be stored in a secure place in the Centre before and after the Speaking tests take place. However, teacher/Examiners may be allowed access to this document up to 4 working days before the first test is to be conducted in order to prepare for the test. (This booklet once opened **must** remain in the Centre in secure conditions and the contents **must not** be divulged to candidates.) All Centres are strongly advised to read through the instructions in the Teachers' Notes booklet and also to familiarise themselves with the Role play situations. Teacher/Examiners need to be aware of their roles in order to ensure that they give candidates the correct cues which allow them to attempt the stated tasks. As ever, the role of the Examiner remains crucial in helping candidates to perform to the best of their ability, and thorough preparation is vital.

Administration

Regrettably, Moderators reported that although the majority of Centres carried out clerical work efficiently there were still Centres in which clerical errors occurred. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that a working mark sheet (WMS) is completed by the Examiner, to check that the marks on the WMS have been added up correctly, and that the Total marks have been transcribed correctly to the MS1 mark sheet or Cameo. Some Moderators commented that Centres with small entries were often the worst offenders! **Please check all work carefully as it is essential that all candidates receive the correct marks.**

Quality of recording

This was, in the majority of cases, good and usually very good when a CD was used. Please ensure that all recording hardware is checked well before recording starts and that a venue with as little echo as possible is used. If a laptop is used to record, an external microphone must be used. Examiners are reminded that microphones should always be placed to favour the candidates rather than the Examiner. Moderators reported that there were more Centres than usual which failed to label samples correctly. All cassette/CD covers and cassettes/CDs must be clearly labelled as per the instructions in the Teachers' Notes booklet and on the recording each candidate must be clearly identified by the Examiner (not the candidate).

Moderators will listen to audio cassettes, audio CDs and .mp3 recordings as long as cassettes/CDs are standard size and recordings have been made at standard speed. Where a CD is used, Centres must use a

separate track/file for each candidate to ensure ease of location. This session there were seven Centres recording the Speaking tests for various languages/examinations onto one CD: acceptable.

The large number of Centres submitting good clear recordings are thanked for their efforts.

Sample size

Centres are reminded that a representative sample of the work of 6 candidates should be sent. The work of all candidates should **not** be sent. It is the responsibility of the Centre to choose the sample and to retain the work of other candidates. Clear guidance on the selection of the sample is provided on page 3 of the Teachers' Notes. Centres are reminded that 'the candidates selected should be spread as evenly as possible across the range of marks'. It is very difficult for Moderators to check the application of the mark scheme across the full range of marks in a Centre if a wide range of the Centre's marks is not represented in the sample supplied.

Centres with large numbers of candidates and in which more than one Examiner is used are reminded that permission should be sought from the IGCSE Languages Officer at CIE well before the start of **each** examination period. Where permission is given to use more than one Examiner, internal moderation must take place at the Centre to ensure that all Speaking tests are marked to the same standard. The Centre's sample of 6 recordings should feature the work of each Examiner and an Oral Summary Mark Sheet (WMS) should be submitted for each Examiner. Centres should also include a brief letter describing the Centre's internal moderation procedures.

Duration of Tests/Missing elements

Most Centres adhered well to timings and conducted the Speaking test very efficiently. However, as last year, some Centres submitted tests which 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.

Regrettably, some Centres missed out the General conversation section completely. **It is not acceptable to miss out either of the conversation sections.** Marks cannot be awarded for sections of the test not attempted and Centres which omit sections disadvantage their candidates.

In the Role play section it is also important that Examiners keep to the 'script' and give the candidate the opportunity to attempt all mark-bearing tasks and to work for the marks. Examiners sometimes pre-empted candidates by completing the tasks for them, thus denying them the opportunity to score the available marks. Examiners need to be particularly careful not to offer candidates vocabulary items or options unless these appear in the Teachers' Notes booklet.

Application of the marking 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 conversation and/or General conversation sections
- Failure to complete all the Role play tasks
- Lack of questions to elicit past and future meaning in both 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. Examiners in new Centres did not always realise that in the Role plays, short responses, if appropriate, can score 3 marks. In other cases, Moderators commented that Examiners were too generous in awarding 3 marks when candidates offered a verb which was inaccurate or inappropriate. In Role play tasks requiring 2 elements to

be completed both elements must be completed for a mark of 3 to be awarded. Conversational skills were usually awarded consistently, but were sometimes generous: Centres are reminded that a mark of 3 cannot be awarded on Scale (b) if past and future meaning are not conveyed. There was also generosity on Scale (a), Comprehension/respondiveness, as some Examiners awarded marks in the 'Good' and 'Very Good' ranges when there was little or no evidence that candidates could respond spontaneously/unexpected questions.

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 2008, 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 the 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, as last year, were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of 3.

At the train station

This Role play was well within the capabilities of the candidature. On Task 2 some could not offer an appropriate day and needed to be prompted by Examiners. Some did not listen to the prompt and chose the wrong time on Task 3. On Task 4, return and single tickets were better known than in previous years. Nearly all candidates were more than capable of asking the price.

At the tourist office

Again, this was well attempted by candidates. The first 3 tasks were well done but Task 4 required candidates to listen to the question about their age and respond appropriately. This was difficult for some candidates. The candidates were, pleasingly, usually able to ask a relevant question about the concert.

In a clothes shop

The first task was well done, but candidates were less sure about giving their size. Sizes should not be given in English, eg 'medium'. The most difficult task on this card was asking to try on the t-shirt, but the vocabulary was provided and it was the skill of asking permission rather than the lexical item which was being tested. Some very good attempts included asking where the candidate could try on the t-shirt. The last task was well done.

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 where examining was sympathetic and Examiners were familiar with the testing points, even the weakest candidates were able to score some marks on most tasks.

Consulting a pharmacist

Most coped well with explaining they were ill in Task 1, but weaker candidates were not always familiar with *depuis* on Task 2. Task 3 was well done but many found Task 4 to be the hardest on the card. The best candidates were able to use a structure indicating 'having to do' and phrase an appropriate question but weaker candidates struggled with asking a question and using an appropriate verb accurately. The last task was well done.

Phoning a friend to explain a late arrival

The Role play started easily on Task 1. On Task 2 many tried to give a plausible reason for missing the train, but weaker candidates found it hard to use an accurate verb. Most, however, were able to score well as their message was communicated. Most coped well with saying that they were going to stay in a hotel and would be leaving the next day, but on this task some missed out the apology. The last task was well done.

Phoning a campsite about a job

Task 1 was straightforward and posed few problems. Most were able to give a valid reason as to why they wanted to work at the campsite and were able to say when they would be free to start. The fourth task was less well done and not all were able to say they had previously worked in a hotel. Some missed out an explanation of why they liked the work. The last Task required candidates to ask a question about the job. This was usually done well by candidates. Many sensible questions were asked concerning salary, hours of work and uniform. If candidates chose to ask a different question, but one which was still valid in the context, this was acceptable.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

Centres are reminded that this section of the test should last for approximately 5 minutes: the initial presentation from candidates should last for a minute or two and the remainder of the 5 minutes should be spent discussing the topic. Please note that the timing of the initial presentation should be respected: candidates must be allowed speak for 1-2 minutes before questioning begins, but if their presentation lasts beyond 2 minutes the Examiner should interrupt. It is worth reminding candidates of the need to speak clearly in the Topic presentation as sometimes initial nervousness makes them speak very quickly and the message can disappear! In the follow-up discussion it is important that Examiners ask questions of a spontaneous nature so as to encourage the development of a genuine conversation. Examiners are also reminded to ask questions which will enable candidates to use both past and future tenses. **Marks of 7 or more on Scale (b) cannot be awarded unless candidates show their ability to use a range of tenses.**

Moderators reported hearing a wide range of performance, but were generally impressed by the quality of work produced by candidates across a wide range of topics. Many had prepared their topic well and were able to sustain their performance in the follow-up conversation, where they displayed 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. 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.

It is pleasing that the message about avoiding the topic 'Myself' now seems to be well understood in Centres. Moderators heard some super topics this year on musicians, favourite places and interesting accounts of life/school in a different country. Some candidates spoke very touchingly about how they loved their place/country of birth. Moderators commented upon the maturity of these candidates who seem genuinely to appreciate their education and the opportunities they have for contact with the life and culture of other countries. This was very heartening to hear. Some candidates chose very ambitious topics which were almost beyond the syllabus in terms of their demand, for instance AIDS or global warming. Provided that the candidate could cope with such a topic, this did not pose a problem, but it would be inappropriate to expect such topics to be a routine choice at this level of language learning. Choosing a more demanding topic does not necessarily equate with achieving a higher mark. It is far better to let candidates choose a topic in which they have a genuine interest (with Teacher guidance) and then encourage them to do their own research. Another approach is for teachers to cover a range of general conversation topics in class and then ask candidates to choose one for their Topic.

General Conversation

The overall performance in this section was again of a **most** encouraging standard and very similar to that heard last year. The best performances were those in which candidates were given the opportunity to respond to open questions, both expected and unexpected in nature, and to develop their answers, going beyond the expression of simple opinions to show the ability to explain and justify points of view.

It is crucial that in this section of the test candidates are asked questions on a range of topics from the topic covered in the Topic conversation section and it was regrettable that in a handful of cases candidates were denied this opportunity to talk on a range of different topics. This section of the test last for about 5 minutes. It is not enough for an Examiner to ask 2 or 3 unrelated questions over a minute so, and indeed, such examining will seriously disadvantage a candidate. Thankfully, such cases were few and the examining in many Centres was highly professional. Questioning was sympathetic and pitched at an appropriate level, enabling candidates to show what they knew and could do.

Although the young people who comprise this candidature reveal a huge variety of life and school experiences in the course of the Speaking test, they also express a range of common experiences and preoccupations. It is clear to Moderators that they clearly value the role of languages in their education and this in many cases is due to the positive experience they have had in their IGCSE foreign language classrooms. The achievements of these candidates continue to evidence the hard work of both teachers and learners on a daily basis over a period of time.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The overall standard of performance in this component continues to impress. The majority of candidates understood the demands made by the rubrics and set about their work with enthusiasm. The best marks were obtained by those who responded thoughtfully to each of the required elements and stayed within their linguistic limitations, thus ensuring a good degree of accuracy. Better candidates displayed a wide range of structures and vocabulary with only a minimal incidence of error. A minority found it difficult to express ideas in French but most were able to put up a good show.

Answers to **Question 1(a)** on health suggested many candidates had already written on this topic and they were ready with appropriate comments. Similarly most of those who wrote a letter to a friend were comfortable handling a familiar task. However, as in past years, the quality of responses to **Question 2** (the narrative set in the past) was rarely as high. The ability to express a series of events and reactions using past tenses was confined to the stronger candidates.

It is gladdening to report that there was little incidence of irrelevant material. This gains no reward in the Mark Scheme. Again it was pleasing to find fewer candidates writing over long answers. Material which appears outside the 140 word limit is not rewarded.

The presentation of work was generally of a good standard but a minority of scripts gave cause for concern. Some papers were virtually illegible and contained a mass of crossing out. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt when they can, but when words are indecipherable no credit can be given.

Carelessness remains a feature of many answers. It was a pity when casual errors occurred, such as faulty genders or misspelling of words which were often used correctly elsewhere in the same piece of work. The time allowed for this component is generous and enables candidates to reread their work and correct it when necessary. Sadly, many did not take advantage of this and errors made in a rush perhaps at the start remained undetected.

Question 1(a) – La santé des jeunes

Some excellent answers were received and it was clear that health was a topic many candidates had prepared thoroughly. Most understood the requirements of the rubric and had the vocabulary and linguistic skills to compose an interesting and personal response. It was a pity some ignored most of the tasks and wrote about health in general.

Most claimed to be fit and said they put it down to healthy eating and/or regular exercise. A minority admitted to being overweight and blamed the absence of such worthy practices. Some did not mention their own fitness at all but chose to write about the issue as a social problem, which did not fulfil the task.

The descriptions of their eating and sporting habits were accessible for most. Many played games for school teams or just for fun or to keep fit. Others simply rode a bicycle or went jogging. Candidates knew expressions such as *faire de la natation/de l'équitation/du sport* and *jouer au foot/au rugby* and were able to use them properly, saying where and with whom they did these activities and how regularly. Some had difficulty with *faire partie d'une équipe*. Eating habits were quite easy to express. *Je mange* followed by suitable food items was enough to fulfil the task although many made errors with genders and especially the partitives *du, de la* and *des*. Some sophisticated vocabulary was used in relation to diet such as *calories, vitamines* and *protéines* but the task could be fulfilled in simple terms. Nearly all recognised what *alimentaires* meant and they described their regular meal patterns. Some thought eating a little but often was good. Others decried snacking between meals. Examiners were impressed by how many knew *grignoter*. Most had three meals a day and ate plenty of vegetables, fish and fruit, and meat only occasionally. Nearly all disapproved of fast-food and gave good reasons. It was *mauvais pour la santé* or

sometimes mistakenly *mal pour la santé*. Some confessed a guilty liking for it but only rarely. Sugar was to be avoided most of the time, but an occasional *bonbon* or chocolate did not do any harm. Virtues of moderation have been well learned it seems. None of our candidates drink anything but water apparently.

The greatest threat to young people's health was usually taken to be poor diet and lack of exercise. Only a minority referred to drugs but cigarettes were cited regularly. None of our candidates ever smoked of course. The topic of obesity seems to have been discussed widely and they had plenty to say about it. Too much food, unsuitable food and laziness were all to blame. Candidates' associates sat for hours at TV or computer screens instead of keeping fit like their worthy friend.

When asked how they could improve their own fitness a number wrote in generalities about good healthy practices which did not answer the question. A proper response was an expression of their own intentions. Candidates wrote about an improved diet with fewer fattening foods. *Un régime équilibré* was the objective, although not all could express this idea. They could eat more greens and fruit, cut out sweets and desserts and avoid eating between meals. And they would never go to McDonald's, however tempting it was. Some would continue or increase their physical exercise or take up a new activity. Some would cycle or walk to school instead of taking the bus. A minority said that spiritual health was important too and they would seek serenity through yoga or good loving relations with others. As the question was expressed in the Conditional tense (*Que pourriez-vous changer?*) an appropriate response might have begun *je pourrais* with an infinitive but a future tense as in *à l'avenir je mangerai moins de sucreries* was acceptable. Many put *je voudrais* or *j'espère* with infinitives which was good too. Unfortunately some wrote so much that the last point fell outside the limit of 140 words and it could not be credited.

Apart from the last task, the question did not require candidates to use tenses other than the present and the vocabulary was that of everyday. As a consequence, much accurate work was presented and high marks were common.

Question 1(b) – A letter to a friend

This was the more popular choice. The informal letter format is a familiar one and candidates seemed to relish the opportunity to write a letter to a friend on an everyday topic such as a future visit. The quality of work was generally quite high.

Nearly all began with the usual letter etiquette, thanking for a previous letter and enquiring briefly about the friend's wellbeing. Few indulged in over long preambles, which was to be commended. There is a limit to the number of ticks awarded for such material anyway.

Candidates were required to state that the original dates for a planned visit by the friend must be changed. Attempts to use *devoir* were often faulty and it was disappointing to find so many putting *je deve* or even *je devez*. Other verbs were acceptable, including *il faut*, *je suis obligé de* and *je veux*. It was surprising how many put *les dates de sa visite* (lifted from the rubric) instead of *ta visite*, thus distorting the message. Although it is usual for the young to employ *tutoiement* to address each other there was no penalty for using *vous* provided there was consistency. When *tu* and *vous* were mixed, only the most frequently used was rewarded. Nearly all were able to give a plausible reason for changing the dates. These reasons were often related to illness in the family or an accident. Linguistic problems occurred in attempts to say *maman est malade* and *papa s'est cassé la jambe* etc. Others were to be visited unexpectedly by aged relatives who would be occupying the friend's bedroom. Confusion frequently occurred with *visiter* and *rendre visite*.

Offering new dates for the stay might have been straightforward. *Peux-tu venir le 5 mai?* would have served. Marks were lost by over elaboration, as candidates tried to say 'Is it possible for you to come from the 8th to the 15th instead of ... ?' etc. Sometimes the message became garbled as in *au 5 mai du 15 mai*.

The projected activities were usually well expressed, although certain phrases tended to be overused as in *il y a la piscine*, *il y a le parc*, *il y a la plage* etc. A more varied choice of phrases was well received. Better candidates tended to begin the task with *on pourrait* with a dependent infinitive as in *on pourrait aller à la plage* or to employ an interrogative as in *veux-tu jouer au tennis pendant ton séjour?* Activities inevitably reflected the area where the candidates lived. Some suggested the seaside, others monuments or tourist attractions such as theme parks or safaris. Others stuck to games, discos and especially shopping. Reasons why the activities would be interesting were often omitted. This was a pity, as a simple statement would have secured a Communication mark as with *on pourrait aller à X, le paysage est magnifique là-bas/on peut acheter des vêtements élégants*. As with **Question 1(a)** the last Communication mark was sometimes lost when the 140 word limit had been exceeded.

There was occasional misinterpretation of the rubric when candidates thought they were going to their friend and not the other way round. This must have been due to hasty reading as the rubric said *vacances chez vous*. Examiners looked charitably on such misunderstandings and only one Communication mark was lost, even if a number of other statements were falsified by the error.

The range of vocabulary required to answer the question was fairly basic as in **Question 1(a)**. Candidates were able to write about everyday topics such as holidays, dates, family and activities and these were within the compass of most. As in **Question 1(a)** the present tense could be used throughout, although the conditional or the future could be used at times. Many were able to put together an interesting letter which fulfilled each of the required tasks.

Question 2 – The Language and Culture Festival

The majority of candidates understood the concept of a 'Language Festival' held at their school and attempted the answer in the right manner. The best were able to show off their language skills in their accounts of the preparation of the *fête*, the events on the day and their reactions. Some highly imaginative pieces were received. However, on many scripts linguistic shortcomings which had been masked by the fairly predictable demands of **Question 1** were exposed by the open ended nature of **Question 2**, an anecdote set in the past. Many would have fared better if they had taken a more down to earth approach. The Communication mark allocated to describing *les préparatifs de la fête* for instance could have been gained by simply saying *mon ami a acheté le pain* or *nous avons préparé des sandwiches*. Instead, over ambitious candidates attempted to say things like 'we divided into groups to make up language games' which were well beyond their compass to express.

Many candidates included in their first sentence a wordy lift from the Question Paper. No ticks were awarded for the copying out of *pour célébrer l'importance des langues et des cultures différentes*. Wiser candidates got started immediately by describing the preparation. One wonders why so many changed the word *préparatifs* which was given, to the incorrect *préparations*. Food and drink were bought, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the event, pasta from Italy, sausages from Germany and tea from England. Classrooms were decorated with flags and home made posters. Invitations were prepared and delivered. Presentations were written and costumes from many countries were obtained. Some went into such detail over the preparation that they left little time or space for the event itself.

A minority of weaker candidates did not understand *ce qui s'est passé* and put *le directeur s'est passé à la fête* but most knew what to do and said what happened 'on the day'. Again, over complication marred a number of scripts as candidates tried to express high minded objectives such as efforts to spread the gospel of harmony and understanding across the world through a shared linguistic and cultural experience. Only the better candidates were up to expressing such complexities. Many did state that their school had candidates from many countries so they were predisposed perhaps to espouse these ideals. However in a foreign language writing examination it is wise to stay within one's limitations. Communication marks could be accrued by giving simple facts in past tenses.

More modest candidates set about describing a party with an international theme. The two marks available for describing events at the *fête* could be obtained by saying that foreign language films were shown, music was played, candidates performed traditional dances, songs and plays, presentations were given and original poems were read out. Food from various different countries was served (although many had difficulty with *nourriture* and *cuisine* and not all knew *plat*). Long lists of food to describe the feast were common. They tended to include many errors of spelling and agreement and gained few language marks. Parents and candidates from other schools were in attendance and participated fully in the activities the narrator and his/her friends had arranged. Games took place but *jeu* was not always known. Competitions took place but *concours* was rarely found. People wore traditional costumes, but few could use *s'habiller* correctly. More success was gained by putting *mettre* or *porter*. The correct spelling of *traditionnel* was very rare. Some finished off by saying a local dignitary graced the event with his/her presence and even gave a speech.

Impressions of the *fête* were invariably favourable. The writer was proud and satisfied with his/her own contribution and was keen to do it again next year. Candidates enjoyed a flavour of different cultures and learned a few words in a new language which they appreciated wholeheartedly. All had a good time, although *tout le monde* was often thought to require a plural verb. Weaker candidates wrote *tout le monde était joli*, presumably thinking they were saying *heureux*. The two Communication marks could be gained by saying that the event was a great success and that people liked all or some part of the proceedings. It was a pity some included only one reaction when the rubric required more.

As stated above, performances were generally not up to the standard achieved for **Question**. A factor in this was the failure to express abstract concepts in appropriate language, but also there was a common weakness when it came to writing in past tenses. The choice of the perfect and imperfect tenses was frequently mistaken. Negatives were again a widespread source of errors. One found attempts such as *ils étaient ne contents pas* on some scripts. When deprived of a ready made plan such as was furnished in **Question 1**, candidates tended to ramble. Content was less clear and grammatical errors multiplied. The gender of the writer varied, simple agreements of adjectives and participles were missed and everyday words such as *beaucoup* and *professeur* were regularly misspelled. Common verbs were confused such as *parler* and *dire*, *écouter* and *entendre* and *regarder* and *voir*. Weaker candidates offered garbled versions of past tenses, such as *j'ai étais*.

Nonetheless, some very good work was presented and the combination of flair and an assiduous attention to detail on the best scripts were most commendable.