

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/03
Speaking

Key messages

- The format of the test remained as in 2015 and was usually well understood in Centres.
- The standard of work heard was very similar to that heard in November 2015.
- Candidates had usually been well prepared for the role play tasks. Good Examiners did not deviate from the script and set tasks and prompted candidates appropriately.
- Timings in most Centres were correct but, in some Centres, candidates were disadvantaged as the tests were far too short or very long in the conversation sections. In some cases, a conversation section was missed out. Marks can only be awarded for sections if they are attempted.
- Topic coverage was satisfactory in most Centres. A few Centres needed to cover a wider range of topics across their candidature in the topic conversation section.
- Most Examiners are well aware of the need to ensure that past and future tenses are tested in **both conversation sections**. There are still some Centres where this is not the case. In such cases, the mark for Language is limited. All Centres need to ensure that questions to test different tenses are included in **both** conversation tests.
- The best work was heard in Centres in which spontaneous and natural conversations developed.
- In Centres in which internal moderation had taken place, this had usually been carried out correctly.

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates. As in 2015, the standard of work heard was good and covered a wide range of performance. Most Examiners were well aware of the format of the test and conducted the examination efficiently. Candidates were generally aware of the demands of the test and had usually prepared well. Examiners were usually sympathetic to their candidates and helped them to work for the marks and gave them the opportunity to show what they knew and could do.

In the role plays, candidates had usually made good use of the 15 minutes preparation time. Centres are reminded that Examiners may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order to prepare the role plays. Centres are reminded that the contents of these materials are confidential and must not be shared with candidates. The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once started, in the interests of security, the speaking tests should be completed as soon as possible within the Centre. There should not be a long interval of time between different groups taking the test within a Centre. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the sample should be checked and then sent as soon as possible after the tests have been completed.

Centres are reminded that candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area. Please also ensure that candidates do not bring mobile phones into the examination area and that Examiners' phones are switched off.

Examiners usually understood the requirements of the mark scheme and, consequently asked the right sort of questions which stretched candidates and gave them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, Examiners who included unexpected questions and went beyond the straightforward "closed" questions gave candidates the possibility of scoring in the Good band or above on Table B, Communication. "Safe" very straightforward questions which did not give candidates the opportunity to develop their answers did not enable candidates to score marks in the highest bands. It was also essential to include questions to elicit past and future tenses in both conversation sections as candidates needed to show they could use both of these tenses for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded on Table C, Language.

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, very 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. The lozenge should be shaded in and also the mark written in numerals in the column. A few Centres did not complete the mark column.

In larger Centres with several Examiners and in which internal moderation has taken place, **please ensure that any marks amendments for the samples of internally moderated work are applied to the whole of that Examiner's group and not just the sample candidates.** If internal moderation has taken place, please ensure that the final Centre mark has been entered correctly on the MS1.

Cover sheet for moderation sample

Nearly all Centres remembered to complete and submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample. This form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct before they despatch it to Cambridge.

Please remember that this is a form which must be completed and submitted to the Moderator with the sample. It is intended that this sheet serves as a checklist for the Examiner. If there is more than one Examiner per Centre, please remember to tick the relevant box on this sheet.

Sample size

As in 2015, most Centres had understood the sample requirements well and submitted the correct sample. It was very helpful, in large Centres, for the Moderators to receive a list of the sample candidates and in which examination group they could be found.

Recording quality

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a good clear quality and Centres are thanked for this. Most Centres submitted digital recordings which enabled Moderators very easy access to the sample. 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.**

Please use widely recognised recording programmes. **It is sometimes difficult to open files when they are not put on CDs as .mp3 files.** All files should be named correctly. It is essential that each candidate's recording is labelled with the candidate name and number on the box for the CD and that the sound file is correctly named. On the CD, the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. Moderators reported an increase in CDs being labelled incorrectly. The recording for each candidate should be on a separate file. Please remember to avoid sticking labels on CDs and do not write on the surface of the CD without using a CD friendly pen.

The Examiner must introduce the candidate by name and candidate number and also give the Role Play Card number. This announcement must not be made by the candidate.

Internal moderation in Centres

The standard of internal moderation in Centres which had been given permission to use more than one Examiner was usually good. New Centres are reminded that where more than one Examiner is used, Moderators need to be able to check that all Examiners have adopted a uniform approach to the test and applied the mark scheme consistently. **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.** A copy of this permission should be enclosed with the Centre sample. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation.

Centres are reminded that 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 the candidates whose work was in the sample checked.

Timings of tests / missing elements

Most Centres conducted tests of an appropriate length, but some Centres persist in going under or over the 5 minutes prescribed for the Topic conversation and/or the General conversation test. **Each of these two sections must last for approximately five minutes.** Centres are reminded that the presentation of the topic should last no longer than 2 minutes and that the remaining time of this 5 minute section should be spent in conversation on this topic.

Where conversations are short or missing, candidates can be greatly disadvantaged as marks cannot be awarded for tasks which are not attempted. In the Topic/conversation section, Examiners need to keep questioning focused on the topic in question and then introduce the final General conversation section of the test. This is helpful to both the candidate and the Moderator. **In some Centres, marks had been awarded for missing sections which resulted in marks being reduced by Moderators.**

Application of the mark scheme

Examiners in Centres usually applied the mark scheme fairly and consistently. Some large Centres had adjustments made just to part of the mark range in cases of lenient or harsh marking. Some Centres had larger adjustments made to their marks. **This was often due to short or missing sections, or the generosity of marks awarded in Centres on Table C when there was no evidence of past and future tenses.**

Centres are reminded that a short response in the role plays, 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 uses 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 should be queried especially 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 material given by the Examiner which is then repeated by the candidate.

In the Conversation sections, as in 2015, marking tended to be generous in some Centres. In such Centres, marks were often awarded in the higher bands 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. Moderators also reported that in some Centres high marks had sometimes been awarded when candidates could not go beyond a series of short responses to very straightforward questions. It remains crucial that Examiners 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

Please remember to check the number of the candidate's card before starting the test and to enter the number of the card on the working mark sheet.

Centres usually encouraged candidates to attempt all parts of each task and many Examiners did prompt when appropriate. Examiners needed to prompt candidates to try to attempt all tasks. If only one part of a two-part task was completed, only 1 mark could be awarded. As last year, two part tasks were split into **(i)** and **(ii)** on the candidate Role Play Cards. Most Examiners kept well to their script and did not change the cues.

Overlong answers remain not to be encouraged as marks can only be awarded for the set tasks. Indeed, should candidates go on and add material extra to the set task it may distort meaning and detract from an otherwise correct answer.

Candidates should be reminded that it is always important to listen to the Examiner as on all the Role Play A situations, there is always a task which requires them to listen and choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. If one of these options is not chosen by the candidate the appropriate mark to award is 0. Likewise, there is always one task which requires candidates to respond to an unexpected question on the B role plays.

A Role Plays

The A role plays were found to be of equal difficulty and appropriate for the candidature. They posed very similar challenges to those of 2015 and were a fair test at this level.

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 one 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 usually able to score at least one 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. **Examiners should query pronunciation if the meaning of the utterance is unclear due to mispronunciation.** Moderators this year reported a tendency in some Centres to accept poor pronunciation too readily.

Examiners should introduce Role Play A and start off the conversation. English should not be used to introduce the test. It is always helpful to read out the introduction to candidates.

At the café

This role play was attempted well by candidates. On **Task 1**, nearly all candidates could greet and say they wanted to have breakfast. The next task saying for how many they wanted a table was also well done and, on **Task 3**, most were able to opt for one of the choices offered by the Examiner. There were cases of some mispronunciation on drinks when candidates gave answers such as *chocolat chaud/thé*. Good attempts were made on the last task to formulate an appropriate question

At the cinema

Candidates generally approached this situation well. Nearly all candidates could greet and say they wanted to reserve *places*. The next task required candidates to pick out the kind of film they wanted to see. Most opted for one of the suggested ideas such as *aventure* or *policier* (which was sometimes mispronounced). Nearly all were successful in saying how many *places* they required and, on **Task 4**, many were successful in choosing one of the time options offered by the Examiner. Nearly all remembered to thank but some still found difficulty in asking the price.

At the market buying fruit

This role play caused candidates few problems. Nearly all greeted appropriately and were able to say what they wanted to buy. On **Task 2**, the meaning was usually clear but some mispronounced *vertes* or *rouges*. Nearly all were able to give an appropriate desired quantity as either a number or weight and, on **Task 4**, few problems were encountered in asking for a bag. The last task was usually well done but some candidates rendered the second part of this task as *Combien de prix ?*

B Role Plays

The B role plays were deliberately more demanding than the more straightforward A role plays in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, to apologise, express opinions and justify these opinions. The level of challenge was well balanced across the role plays and a similar performance across all cards could be seen. As in previous sessions, they differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score some marks on some of the tasks. It is important that Examiners know their own role and stick to the script and 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. Candidates 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. They should also be reminded that each card will always expect candidates to ask a question.

A phone call from a friend, Louis(e)

Most were able to cope well with the first task but some weaker candidates confused the possessive adjective and did not transpose the *votre mère* to *ma mère* in their answers. In such cases, the mark for that part of the task could not be scored as the correct meaning was not there and the message was lost. The next prompt required candidates to respond to an unexpected question about when their mother would be back. The majority of candidates gave an appropriate and brief response such as a day of the week/next week/at the weekend. The cue was usually well understood by candidates. On the third task, most were able to give two different ways in which they were helping or had been helping but errors of conjugation of verbs were often evident which meant that many did not score 3 marks. **Task 4** showed that, as referred to in previous reports, some candidates persist in not recognising the need to offer an apology when they meet the cue *Faites vos excuses*. This should be pointed out to candidates as it is a notion which, at this level they should be able to recognise and produce. In response, some candidates made a list of excuses as to why they could not go rather than **apologising** for not going. On the last task, candidates were required to formulate a question asking what the friend would like to do. Some made a suggestion as to what they could do together but this changed the nature of the task which required a question to be formulated.

A phone call to a taxi company about a bag

Candidates made a fairly confident start to this role play. Some confused *laissé* with *lassé* but the majority were able to convey they had left a bag in a taxi. **Task 2** required a response to an unexpected question about when the taxi ride had taken place. This was well done as most recognised key words in the cue with little difficulty. **Task 3** proved more difficult. Candidates needed to give two details about the driver. Only the better candidates could use *avoir* appropriately when describing hair and eye colour. There was some confusion as to when to use parts of the verbs *être* and *avoir* with descriptive detail. Candidates who opted to describe clothing found the task a little easier. On the next task, most were able to express their pleasure about the bag being found but only the best candidates could explain why they needed it. A phrase such as *mon portable/passeport est dans le sac* was sufficient to fulfil the task. Some candidates said their homework was in the bag. These were all appropriate answers. Some candidates suggested when they could call in at the office but this was not the set task which required a question to be formulated. Only responses in which an appropriate question was formulated communicated the required message.

Phoning a friend to organise a birthday party

The candidates made a confident start to this role play and were able to say they were phoning about organising a celebration for Julie's birthday. The second task required them to respond to an unprepared question and nearly all were able to communicate the date of the birthday. In **Task 3**, some failed to express their enthusiasm but nearly all were able to say what kind of birthday cake Julie would like and this in most cases was *au chocolat*. On the next task, two activities which Julie would like to do were required. Some candidates did not relate the activities to Julie and just said instead what they themselves would like to do. This was not the set task. This underlines the need for some candidates to read the cues very carefully and listen to the Examiner's lead in cue. Finally, as on the other cards, if the candidate merely suggested going shopping rather than asking the friend to go shopping with them, this changed the nature of the task. As noted above, candidates need to be reminded that a correct question is always required on the B role plays rather than a suggestion as it is the skill in formulating an interrogative which is being tested.

Topic presentation & conversation

The general standard heard this year was very similar to that heard in 2015. There was again a full range of performance and candidates had usually prepared their material well. The best presentations were presented at a reasonable speed, were clear to understand and they showed something about the candidate in a very personal way. Most candidates did not go over the maximum time of 2 minutes for the presentation part of this section of the test. The remaining time of the 5 minutes allowed here should be spent on conversing on the topic.

Many were able to do themselves justice on their presentation but it was often the case, and especially so with weaker candidates, that there was a drop in the level of performance in the topic conversation section. The most able candidates were however usually capable of sustaining a consistent performance in the topic conversation part of this section of the test. Such performances were characterised by good justifications and routine explanations which made use of a wide range of accurate language.

A good range of subjects was usually chosen by candidates. Many talked about a pastime, life at school, their ambitions, life in another country or a holiday. Candidates must be reminded that they should not prepare *moi-même* as a topic as this can replicate the General conversation section. This part of the test is

intended to give them the opportunity to go into depth on one topic rather than cover several topic areas. Centres should also ensure that candidates cover a good range of topics across the Centre. The range of topics in a few Centres was rather narrow. A variety of topics across a Centre enables spontaneous and natural examining to take place and avoids repetition of similar questions from candidate to candidate.

Candidates usually presented their topic at a comprehensible speed and did not rush. This is important so that the message is not lost. Examiners are reminded not to interrupt candidates too early as this can be off putting for them. In the conversation on the topic, Examiners are reminded of the need to avoid asking questions which ask candidates to repeat material already heard on the presentation. The best performances heard were ones in which an interesting lead was followed up by the Examiner which allowed the conversation to develop in a natural way. Some Examiners asked very few questions in this part of the test and sometimes did not ask questions to elicit past and future tenses. **Centres are reminded that past and future questions should be asked in both of the conversation sections. To score a mark of more than 6 for Language candidates must show that they can use not just the present but also past and future tenses.**

It was helpful to both candidates and Moderators at the end of this part of the test when Examiners made a clear transition in French to the next part of the test.

General conversation

Examiners generally realised the need for questions to be put to elicit tenses but timings were again often inconsistent in this section. This section of the test should last for 5 minutes. Some General conversation sections were very long and others very short. This can disadvantage candidates.

Most Centres covered an appropriate range of topics and are reminded to try to cover two or three topics with each candidate in this final section. It is understood however that with candidates who are less able, 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 too many topics were covered rather briefly with all candidates. In such cases, candidates cannot see a logical order in the questioning when questions become unrelated and, at worst, it can be highly confusing for them to change topics frequently when the questions appear unlinked or feature questions which appear to test general knowledge. 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 what was being moved onto next by the Examiner. Concentrating on two or three topics enables the Examiner to go into depth on fewer topics rather than cover more topics superficially. The topics covered in the general conversation should be different from and not related to the topic chosen by the candidate for the presentation so as to ensure good syllabus topic coverage. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be aware of which general conversation topics will be examined before the test.

Questions which are very straightforward and which require simple short responses do not give candidates access to the upper mark bands for both Communication and Language. The best examining gave candidates logically related questions on a topic and featured some open ended questions such as *parle-moi de* or asked candidates to develop or explain an answer or reason for an opinion. This meant that candidates could try to develop their answers in a natural way. As in the Topic conversation, candidates need to be able to develop their answers, give and explain opinions and be able to respond to unexpected questions in a spontaneous way in order to gain high marks. **A few Centres made use of too few questions or the same questions in the same order on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: this approach should be avoided.** It is also important to give candidates the opportunity to respond to unexpected questions which arise naturally and Examiners should follow up interesting leads presented by the candidate.

A very full range of performance was heard by Moderators in this section of the test and the standards heard were very similar to those heard in 2015. Many candidates communicated well and in an interesting way on topics such as holidays, future plans and ambitions, the environment, their town/country, school, family life, leisure activities, food and drink, healthy lifestyle, and daily routine. A good number of candidates were able to communicate their message clearly, often thanks to sympathetic and patient examining. In so doing, they also showed that they had a good control of a range of linguistic features. The better candidates were able to use a good range of tenses. The more able were also able to go beyond working in the first person and conjugate verbs with different subjects. The work of such candidates showed 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, perfect infinitives, *avant de* + infinitive and, occasionally, compound tenses.

Many candidates heard by Moderators were enthusiastic about the relevance and importance of learning a foreign language and had enjoyed their experience of learning how to communicate in French.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/11
Listening

Key messages

- The format and question types of the Listening test remained as in November 2015. Candidates were usually well aware of the requirements of the examination.
- The candidate performance on this paper was similar in standard to that of November 2015. As intended, there was a gradient of difficulty on the paper and the final section was found to be the most challenging but even weaker candidates usually scored some marks on this section.
- Centres need to remind candidates to write very clearly in blue or black pen. Some candidates wrote first in pencil and then appeared to overwrite answers in pen but in so doing, they left first attempts at ticks or words. This was often very difficult to read. Candidates should cross out very clearly any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Poor handwriting often made scripts very difficult to read and was much more in evidence this year.
- Many candidates now appreciate the need to write as briefly as possible. Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is the danger that extra distorting details may be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension. Some candidates still need to be more aware concerning ticking the correct number of boxes in objective exercises.

General comments

This session's paper was found to be generally in keeping with the demands made in 2015. The candidature overall performed quite well on the first two sections of the paper. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section with weaker candidates able to answer a few questions correctly in each of the two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the rubrics and was aware of the requirements of the test types. There was some evidence, however, that a few candidates were unsure as to the correct number of boxes to be ticked on multiple choice exercises and, in particular, on **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

As in the paper set last year, 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 was tested in the first two sections of the test was drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the Defined Content.

Candidates in many Centres had appreciated the need to write as **briefly and clearly as possible and understood that full sentences were not required in response**. Brief answers are preferable on this paper as candidates do not run the risk of extra distorting material being added which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Candidates were usually aware of the need not to add extra material which was not on the recording and were also aware of the need not to answer or infer from general knowledge.

This year, Examiners reported more cases of poor handwriting which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers whether they were brief or long. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly and not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen. **Please remind all candidates that, if they wish to make a second attempt at an answer, they should cross out their first attempt very clearly**. Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

The Listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous.

Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and there is not extra reading time before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

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 usually performed well in this opening exercise which was intended to give them a confident start to the paper.

In **Question 2**, candidates sometimes confused *à droite* and *tout droit* and did not therefore choose **option C**, the correct answer, preferring **option D**. The time in **Question 3** was picked out correctly by the vast majority, as was the item of food in **Question 4**. Occasionally, candidates were not able to select the correct answer, **option C**, *promenade à cheval*, in **Question 5**.

The final three questions in this section were answered very well, with most candidates scoring 2 or 3 marks. **Question 6** was answered well by the majority of candidates and very few incorrectly identified *film d'amour* in **Question 7**. The majority of candidates scored 6 to 8 marks on this first exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 9–15

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured information about a hotel. Candidates answered the first three questions extremely well and correctly identified *mer*, *balcon* and *jardin*. The second part of this exercise was also answered well, with candidates rarely choosing incorrect options. The final question, **Question 15**, required candidates to correctly identify *trente-quatre* and it was extremely pleasing to see that the vast majority correctly identified the number with only a handful answering with 24.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Performance on this exercise was good and continues to improve as many candidates are accustomed to the exercise type and its requirements. There were still however cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only.

This year, another method of answering was seen by Examiners: candidates put a dot in the box, indicating a correct answer. This made marking the question extremely difficult and candidates must be reminded to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together.

Candidates should not attempt to put a tick and a cross in all boxes. Six of the twelve boxes need to be left blank.

In this exercise, the candidates heard four young people talking about sport. The majority of candidates gained high marks on this exercise, with many scoring 6 marks, with a few candidates incorrectly choosing **option (j)** in preference to **(k)**.

Exercise 2 Questions 17–21

In this exercise, candidates first heard an interview with Philippe and then an interview with Émilie who both live in Libreville, in Africa.

In the first interview, candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they were clearly familiar. The missing words were all items which appear in the vocabulary lists 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.

The candidates responded well to the first three questions with many acceptable spellings of *dessert* in **Question 17** and *poisson* in **Question 18**. There were few mistakes in **Question 19**, where candidates had to identify *lundi* as the day when the restaurant was closed. The answer to **Question 20** was sometimes distorted by the incorrect addition of a *d* in the middle of the word *agréable* but it was very pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates answered **Question 21** correctly.

Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

In the second interview, candidates had to respond in French with no more than two words to four questions. These questions proved more challenging but many candidates correctly responded with *vêtements* in **Question 22**. A significant number of candidates responded with *professeur* in **Question 23**, but the question clearly asks for a place (*où*).

The vast majority of candidates attempted the final two questions in this exercise, but there were many incorrect attempts at the spelling of *chaleur* in **Question 24** and a significant number of candidates did not make an attempt at answering this question. It was pleasing to see a good number of correct responses to **Question 25**, especially as two elements were required, *logement* + *climatisé*. Again, however, a significant number of candidates did not attempt an answer to this question.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates heard an interview with Mathilde who had worked as a volunteer in a school in Bénin and the question type used was multiple choice. Questions tested not just specific factual information but also gist understanding over the longer extract. Candidates needed to identify attitudes and emotions in some questions and be able to understand a narrative which, in places, depended upon them understanding a sequence of events in the past. Performance was much in line with the performance seen on the comparable exercise in 2015. The topic area was generally accessible and candidates made a good attempt at this exercise.

This was a suitably demanding exercise for this stage of the examination and candidates performed in much the same way on this exercise as in the last session. Less able candidates usually managed to score a few marks on this exercise and a full range of marks was evident with a good number of candidates scoring 4 or more marks. It was very pleasing to see that the vast majority of the candidature answered all these questions.

Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

As in 2015, this was found to be an appropriately challenging exercise at this stage of the paper. Very few candidates left all the questions blank and were usually able to score a few marks. Candidates heard an interview with Édouard who was a mountain guide. There was a good mix of challenging and more accessible questions on this last exercise. Most candidates scored some marks with some questions only being successfully answered by the most able, as intended. It was especially pleasing to see that a significant number of candidates correctly answered the final question.

The questions were designed to make short responses possible and only a few candidates seemed unaware of this. Candidates should be reminded not to write long answers as sometimes they add extra detail which is not on the recording which can distort and invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

There were many correct answers to **Question 32** but answers were occasionally invalidated by the omission of *près*. The next question required two elements, *meilleur* and *poste*. Only the more able were successful here, especially as the spelling of *meilleur* caused significant difficulties.

The verb *grimper* was not well known in **Question 35** and again only the most able were successful in answering this question correctly with many candidates leaving this question blank. Candidates were more successful in rendering the notion of *se casser le bras* in **Question 36** and a higher proportion gained the mark in **Question 37** by correctly identifying *documentaire*.

Question 38 was perceived as very challenging by the candidates with a significant number leaving their answers blank. When candidates did answer here, the spelling of *chemin* was often unacceptable and in the second part to the question *dangereux* was often omitted. It was especially pleasing to see that a significant number of candidates correctly answered the final question with *services*.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/12
Listening

Key messages

- The format of the Listening test was as in November 2015. Candidates were usually well aware of the requirements of the examination and the rubrics.
- Candidates found **Section 2, Exercise 2** more challenging this year and were unaware of the meaning of some Defined Content words.
- As intended, there was a gradient of difficulty on the paper and the final section was found to be the most challenging but even weaker candidates usually scored some marks on this section.
- Centres need to remind candidates to write very clearly in blue or black pen. Some candidates wrote first in pencil and then appeared to overwrite answers in pen but, in so doing, they left first attempts at ticks or words. This was often very difficult to read. Candidates should cross out very clearly any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Examiners reported an increase in cases of poor handwriting.
- Many candidates appreciate the need to write as briefly as possible. Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is the danger that extra distorting details may be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.
- Candidates need to be aware of ticking the correct number of boxes in objective exercises.

General comments

This year, the candidature overall performed quite well on the first half of the paper but found **Section 2, Exercise 2** a little more demanding than in 2015. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section with weaker candidates being able to be successful on a few questions in each of the two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the rubrics and was aware of the requirements of the test types. There was some evidence, however, that a few candidates were unsure as to the correct number of boxes to be ticked on multiple-choice exercises and, in particular, on **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

As last year, 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 was tested in the first two sections of the test was drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the Defined Content.

Candidates in many Centres had appreciated the need to write as **briefly and clearly as possible and understood that full sentences were not required in response**. Brief answers are preferable on this paper as candidates do not run the risk of extra distorting material being added which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Candidates were usually aware of the need not to add extra material which was not on the recording and were also aware of the need not to answer or infer from general knowledge.

This year, Examiners reported more cases of poor handwriting which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers whether they were brief or long. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly, in the space provided, and not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen. **Please remind all candidates that, if they wish to make a second attempt at an answer, they should cross out their first attempt very clearly.** Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

The Listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous.

Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and there is not extra reading time before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

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 usually performed well in this opening exercise which is intended to give them a confident start to the paper. The extracts were straightforward and short. The vocabulary areas tested times, places in a station, food and drink, household items, personal descriptions and garden equipment. Rubrics and visuals were generally well understood by candidates.

Question 1 was usually attempted well but some candidates chose 11.00 rather than 11.20. On **Question 2**, over half the candidates could successfully identify *la salle d'attente*. Candidates answered **Questions 3, 4** and **5** quite well. **Questions 6** and **7** were the least well answered in this section. On **Question 6**, many confused *blouson* with *robe* and, on **Question 7**, many did not know *couverture*. **Question 8** was very well done.

Exercise 2 Questions 9–15

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured an advert for a holiday village. Questions tested months, geographical surroundings, site facilities and entertainment on site. Candidates approached this exercise confidently and generally did well with very good numbers being successful on **Questions 9, 11, 12, 13, 14** and **15**. **Question 9** required candidates to write the month *octobre* and most were able to offer an acceptable spelling. On **Question 10**, weaker candidates chose either **option B** or **option C**, and on **Question 11** some chose **option C**, *chalet*, instead of *caravane*. The final four questions of this exercise were well done by most candidates.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Performance on this exercise was quite good with good numbers scoring well. Candidates are, mostly, well accustomed to the exercise type and its requirements. There were still, however, cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only. Candidates should also be reminded to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together. They should not attempt to put a tick and a cross in all boxes. Six of the twelve boxes need to be left blank.

Candidates heard four young people talking about pocket money and what they did to earn money. The topic area was accessible to candidates with many scoring 4 marks. Even the weaker candidates were able to score 1 or 2 marks here. There was no discernible pattern of incorrectly placed ticks.

Exercise 2 Questions 17–21

In this exercise, candidates heard an interview in two parts in which Thibault talks about his experience of living in Quebec. In the first part of the interview, candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they were clearly familiar. The missing words were all items which appear in the vocabulary lists of the Defined Content but some proved to be very challenging. 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.

Candidates this year generally found the first part of this exercise very demanding. Incorrect answers to **Question 17** were frequently answered with *octobre*. This could have been because the word crossed out on the paper was a month so some may have thought that another month was required. Also, as some had heard *octobre* on the previous exercise, they thought that this was also the answer here rather than the word *automne*. Candidates fared in a similar way on the next question which tested *beau*. Incorrect answers often featured the word *bon*. **Question 19** proved to be very hard as very few candidates knew the Defined Content word *douane*. Some phonetic renderings were attempted but a frequent incorrect answer was *doin*. Better attempts were made on **Question 20** which tested *accent*. Some found it very difficult to spell this word but the mark scheme was fairly tolerant here. This was also the case for the spelling of *propriétaire* on **Question 21** and about half the candidates were able to gain the mark here.

Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

The second part of the exercise was a little better attempted. Candidates heard the second interview with Thibault and needed to respond to questions by writing a brief answer in French. The words tested here seemed to be better known by candidates. On **Question 22**, *saucisson* was tested. Spellings of this word were often inaccurate but able to convey the correct message and thus, gain the mark. The next question, **Question 23**, which tested *bruit*, was often well done. On **Question 24**, some quite good attempts were made at *dur* by a fair number of candidates, but weaker candidates often wrote *bur*. The last question here was, again, well attempted and many were obviously quite familiar with the word *sévères*. A few candidates invalidated their answer here by adding a negative notion to the answer which distorted the correct answer.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates heard an interview with Thomas who talked about his voluntary work in France.

The topic area was generally accessible and usually candidates made quite a good attempt at questions with even the weakest candidates being able to score 1 or 2 marks. Only the very best candidates scored 5 or 6 marks here and the exercise discriminated well at this stage of the examination. Candidates found the first three questions easier than the last three questions on this exercise. On questions answered incorrectly, there did not appear to be any pattern of incorrect answers with options which had proved more attractive than others. The question type used was multiple-choice with written options. Questions tested not just specific factual information but also gist understanding over the longer extract. Candidates needed to identify attitudes and emotions in some questions and be able to understand a narrative which, in places, depended upon them understanding a sequence of events in the past. The questions found to be most challenging were **Questions 30** and **31**, both of which required not just an understanding of a specific details but more in terms of global skills in that they required candidates to identify how the parents of Thomas thought he had changed and how the experience overall had changed the life of Thomas.

Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

As in 2015, this was found to be an appropriately demanding and challenging exercise at this stage of the paper. Some questions were only answered well by the very best candidates. Many weaker candidates did however make commendable efforts to answer at least some questions and were usually able to score a few marks. Candidates heard an interview with Nicole, a young French woman who talked about her work in Australia. There was a mix of harder and more accessible questions on this last exercise.

The questions were designed to make short responses possible and only a few candidates seemed unaware of this. Candidates should be reminded not to write long answers as sometimes they add extra detail which is not on the recording. This can distort and invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is appreciated that candidates may try to write quickly but they do need to be aware that, if writing is unclear or incorrect, and should spaces appear in and split words inappropriately, this may also invalidate their answers. Examiners need to be able to see an answer clearly as the addition (or the omission) of a letter can change the meaning of a word. Candidates also need to be reminded that they should not require the Examiner to choose from two options or a list of answers in which the correct answer may feature. Such answers count as invalidation and do not score the mark. Candidates also need to be reminded to make good use of the reading time and to make sure they read the questions carefully and understand exactly what is being asked rather than trying to write down too much detail from the recording. The questions are phrased in such a way so as to keep their written input to a minimum.

Candidates attempted the middle part of this exercise with more confidence than the first and last parts. On **Question 32**, Examiners looked for the key concept of recommending places to visitors. Many found this quite challenging and some needed to include the second part of the concept. On **Question 33**, very few candidates were familiar with the Defined Content item of vocabulary, *les incendies*, with many guesses at the word apparent. On **Question 34**, *raconter* was not always known. Candidates fared better on the next section of questions. The vast majority of candidates were successful on **Question 35**, and were able to identify *plage*, but the spelling of the commonly met word *bouteilles*, in an acceptable form, caused problems for many candidates on **Question 36**. Some also seemed to be unfamiliar with the verb *ramasser* which featured in the question. Good attempts were made on **Question 37** with well over half the candidature being successful in identifying *tourisme écologique*. The last section required candidates to identify *langues* on **Question 38**. Here, many invalidated their answer with spellings such as *long/longues* with just under half the candidates scoring the mark. On **Question 39**, candidates needed to identify that Nicole described this experience as *la meilleure*. Some good attempts were made, but, again, an acceptable spelling of this comparison proved difficult for many. It is worth noting that at this stage of the test, candidates need to be able to identify and communicate comparisons. On the final question, **Question 40**, only the better candidates could identify that Nicole intended to write a book with many thinking that she just wanted to be a tourist. Invalidations were often seen here as candidates often added distorting detail when trying to add *vert* to answers. Reference just to the fact of writing a book was enough here to score the mark.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/13
Listening

Key messages

- The format and question types of the Listening test remained as in November 2015. Candidates were usually well aware of the requirements of the examination.
- The candidate performance on this paper was similar in standard to that of November 2015. As intended, there was a gradient of difficulty on the paper and the final section was found to be the most challenging but even weaker candidates usually scored some marks on this section.
- Centres need to remind candidates to write very clearly in blue or black pen. Some candidates wrote first in pencil and then appeared to overwrite answers in pen but, in so doing, they left first attempts at ticks or words. This was often very difficult to read. Candidates should cross out very clearly any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Poor handwriting often made scripts very difficult to read and was more in evidence this year.
- Many candidates now appreciate the need to write as briefly as possible. Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is the danger that extra distorting details may be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension. Some candidates still need to be more aware concerning ticking the correct number of boxes in objective exercises.

General comments

This session's paper was found to be generally in keeping with the demands made in 2015. The candidature overall performed quite well on the first two sections of the paper. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section with weaker candidates being able to be successful on a few questions in each of the two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the rubrics and was aware of the requirements of the test types. There was some evidence, however, that a few candidates were unsure as to the correct number of boxes to be ticked on multiple-choice exercises and, in particular, on **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

As last year, 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 was tested in the first two sections of the test was drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the Defined Content.

Candidates in many Centres had appreciated the need to write as **briefly and clearly as possible and understood that full sentences were not required in response**. Brief answers are preferable on this paper as candidates do not run the risk of extra distorting material being added which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Candidates were usually aware of the need not to add extra material which was not on the recording and were also usually aware of the need not to answer or infer from general knowledge.

This year, Examiners reported more cases of poor handwriting which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers whether they were brief or long. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly and not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen. **Please remind all candidates that, if they wish to make a second attempt at an answer, they should cross out their first attempt very clearly**. Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

The Listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous.

Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and there is not extra reading time before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

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 usually performed well in this opening exercise which was intended to give them a confident start to the paper. The extracts were straightforward and short. The vocabulary areas tested clothing, food and drink, numbers, shopping and personal items. Candidates coped well with most of these questions. **Questions 2, 4 and 6** were very well done by candidates. The question least well attempted was **Question 8** which tested *la caisse*. On other questions, there was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers. Rubrics had been well understood and cases of ticking more than one box were rare.

Exercise 2 Questions 9–15

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured information about a tourist resort called Sarval Plage. Questions tested tourist activities, transport and accommodation. Candidates made a very good attempt at this exercise and were mostly successful in identifying *septembre* on **Question 9**. The question least well attempted was **Question 10** which tested *aquarium*. **Questions 11 and 12** were well done. High numbers of candidates were also successful on the remaining three questions in this exercise.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Performance on this exercise was good and continues to improve as many candidates are accustomed to the exercise type and its requirements. There were still however cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only. Candidates must be reminded to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together. They should **not** attempt to put a tick and a cross in all boxes. Six of the twelve boxes need to be left blank.

Candidates heard four young people talking about their families. This exercise was quite well done and good numbers of candidates scored at least 4 marks on the exercise. The topic area was clearly very accessible to candidates. On questions answered incorrectly, there was no clear pattern of incorrect ticks.

Exercise 2 Questions 17–21

In this exercise candidates first heard an interview with Ariane and then an interview with René who both talked about football.

In the first interview, candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they were clearly familiar. The missing words were all items which appear in the vocabulary lists 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.

Good attempts were made on **Question 17** with many correctly identifying *cousin*. The next question, **Question 18**, was found to be a little more difficult but the majority gave an acceptable rendering of the word *physique*. **Question 19** which tested *kilomètres* was done less well with some clearly not understanding the word *trajet* which appeared on the Question Paper. Some incorrect answers featured the word *équipe* instead. On **Question 20**, incorrect answers such as *champion* rather than *championnat* were seen very frequently. On the last question, **Question 21**, very good attempts were made at *timide* and a high proportion of candidates scored the mark.

Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

Candidates scored less well on this second part of the exercise. On **Question 22**, many were not familiar with the word *genou*. To score the mark here, answers had to begin with *gen*. Many incorrect spellings such as *jenu* and *junou* were in evidence. The spelling of the word *voisins* on **Question 23** also proved difficult for many with renderings such as *voissants* being fairly common. Weaker candidates often wrote *amis* instead as this word was heard before the information about the neighbours not being happy. Candidates need to be reminded to use the words in the question to help them listen very carefully as the same words often appear as cues in the recorded extract. The *n'était pas content* in the question was important as the candidates heard *les voisins n'étaient pas contents*. A fair number identified two years on **Question 24** but did not pick out the *plus tard* which was the extra detail needed to convey the whole correct concept. Some invalidated their answers by joining words inappropriately such as *plutard*. The final question in this section, **Question 25**, was much better attempted and good numbers conveyed the concept of confidence successfully.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates heard an interview with Marcel who talked about his life as a fisherman at sea. The question type used was multiple-choice with written options. Questions tested not just specific factual information but also gist understanding over the longer extract. Candidates needed to identify attitudes and emotions in some questions and be able to understand a narrative which, in places, depended upon them understanding a sequence of events in the past. Performance was much in line with the performance seen on the comparable exercise in 2015. The topic area was generally accessible and candidates made a good attempt at this exercise. Even the weaker candidates were usually able to score a few marks on this exercise. This was a suitably demanding exercise for this stage of the examination and candidates performed in much the same way on this exercise as in the last session. A full range of marks was evident with a fair number scoring 3 or more marks. There was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers on this exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

As in 2015, this was found to be an appropriately challenging exercise at this stage of the paper. Many weaker candidates made commendable efforts to answer at least a few questions and were usually able to score a few marks. Candidates heard an interview with Corinne who had left France to go and work in Canada. There was a good mix of harder and more accessible questions on this last exercise. Most candidates scored some marks with some questions only being successfully answered by the most able, as intended. The questions were designed to make short responses possible and only a few candidates seemed unaware of this. Candidates should be reminded not to write long answers as sometimes they add extra detail which is not on the recording. This can distort and invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

Candidates made quite a good start to the exercise on **Question 32** with good numbers being able to convey the concept that she was a student or had been studying. If candidates added details such as *dans une école*, this invalidated the answer as it was not heard and distorted the answer. **Question 33** proved more challenging. Candidates needed to convey the concept of her leaving with, going with or being accompanied by a friend. Only the better candidates were successful here. On **Question 34**, many found it difficult to identify the word *serveuse* and sometimes offered *vendeuse* or spellings such as *savoureuse*, *servo* or *sauveuse*. Candidates did better on **Question 35** with good numbers being able to give an acceptable rendering of the word *appartement*. On **Question 36**, candidates could gain the mark in a variety of ways. The question had been worded in such a way as to minimise the need for a long answer. An answer such as *comprendre l'anglais* gained the mark. Candidates who chose to add more detail could also gain a mark with answers such as *les gens parlaient anglais* or *Elle/Corinne ne comprenait pas l'anglais*, which were all deemed to be acceptable answers. Consequently, a fair number of candidates were able to gain the mark here. Many were also able to identify that Corinne was helped with her accent on **Question 37**. **Question 38** needed candidates to read the question with care as some interpreted it as what the friend did rather than what the friend bought. Consequently, many just said she returned to France and did not therefore answer the question. Candidates needed to indicate that she bought an air ticket or a ticket to return to France. Without the idea of *billet*, the answer was incomplete and only partially successful. A better attempt was made on **Question 39** but quite a lot of candidates were not able to spell the frequently encountered Defined Content word *paysage*. Answers such as *pizza*, *pisage*, *passage*, *payage*, *payasage* and *pay sage* were seen. Examiners looked for the letters *pays* or *pais* at the beginning of an answer and the spelling *age* at the end of the word. The final question, **Question 40**, proved to be the most challenging on the paper and only the very best candidates were successful in rendering *esprit* and *ouvert* here.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/21
Reading

Key messages

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

- select carefully only that information from the text that answers the question, in particular in the last two exercises,
- check whether some manipulation is required in order for the answer to be correct,
- use grammatical markers to assist with the gap fill exercise.

General comments

Candidates appeared to have sufficient time to complete the paper and almost all candidates were appropriately entered for the examination. There were some instances where candidates had put two ticks for a question and it was not clear which one was their final answer.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

Questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 proved accessible to almost all candidates, but **Question 2** provided some challenge, with *balayer* not being known.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–10

Again, scores for this exercise were generally high and full marks were common. Some candidates had difficulty with **Question 9, F** being a common distractor.

Exercise 3 Questions 11–15

This exercise was accessible for candidates, although **Question 14** proved challenging. The correct answer was **B**, but **A** was frequently selected.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 16–20

For this exercise, candidates completed statements in French, choosing words from a list. Some candidates appeared to make use only of perceived meaning of the option words and the text, and did not use the grammatical markers in the sentences to assist with narrowing down their options. *Transport* was a common distractor for **Question 19**, but so was *renseignements*, indicating that candidates had not considered the grammar.

Exercise 2 Questions 21–29

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended text in the form of an email from Selma on the subject of a recent event in her life. The text was mostly straightforward and the vocabulary covered house and home for the most part. Most candidates were able to cope with the demands of the task. Although long answers are not required, and often only a few words would answer the question, many candidates chose to copy a couple of sentences from the text for each question. For this exercise, extraneous material and incorrect tenses are often ignored as long as they do not in some way invalidate the candidate's correct response.

In **Question 21**, some candidates seemed to think that *chez* was a noun. In **Question 24**, the question word *quand* did not always seem to be known, leading to some incorrect answers. Likewise, *comment* in **Question 25** did not always appear to be understood.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 30–34

In **Section 3**, examiners are expecting a higher level of attention to detail and for candidates to be more selective of the information they take from the texts when correcting the false statements. Candidates are reminded that they should not merely write the opposite of the statement and need to look for the alternative information.

Question 30 proved the most challenging, with candidates having little trouble with the other statements. Candidates cannot be credited with a justification if they have ticked *VRAI* for the statement, so there is no benefit in writing a justification for every response.

In terms of the justifications, for **Question 30**, candidates sometimes targeted the wrong information, such as that the owner wanted to re-let the apartment, which does not correct the statement. The justification for **Question 31** was the most accessible, but **Question 34** gave rise to some misunderstandings, with some candidates thinking that he had given the painting to the association.

Exercise 2 Questions 35–41

This final exercise was intended to be the most challenging part of the paper. Where candidates lost marks, it was often through writing too much and including information that did not answer the question. Candidates are advised to look at the number of lines to indicate the expected length of answer.

Some candidates left answers blank in this segment, and only a minority scored full marks. There was again some evidence of question words such as *où* not being known.

Questions 39 and **41** proved the most difficult. Many candidates wrote about the classes being small for **Question 39**, which does not answer the question asked. Finding a grammatical answer to the question was a problem for **Question 41**. Many copied the sentence directly from the paper – *ils ont enfin appris à vivre avec les autres*. In the context of the original passage, it is clear who *ils* are. However, in answer to the question, it is not clear who is being referred to.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/22
Reading

Key messages

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

- select carefully only that information from the text that answers the question, in particular in the last two exercises,
- ensure that their responses grammatically answer the question in **Section 3**,
- remember that questions follow the order of the text.

General comments

Almost all candidates completed the paper, so candidates appeared to have sufficient time. Examiners saw a full range of performance and almost all candidates were appropriately entered for the examination. Scripts were mostly legible but there were instances where candidates had crossed out work and it was not always clear what their intended response was.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

The opening exercise posed few difficulties for many candidates. **Question 1** was accessible to virtually the entire candidature, but the remaining questions gave some problems, especially **Question 5**. *Sparadrap* seemed unknown by some candidates, **B** being a commonly used distractor.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–10

Again, scores for this exercise were generally high and full marks were common. **Question 7** appeared to be the most difficult for candidates, with a number opting for **B** rather than **D**.

Exercise 3 Questions 11–15

As would be expected, **Exercise 3** posed few problems for most. **Question 14** led to some wrong answers, but many scored full marks on the exercise.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 16–20

For this exercise, candidates completed statements in French, choosing words from a list. *Simple* was commonly chosen instead of *sain* for **Question 17**, and *mer* was frequently selected for **Question 18**. Some candidates appeared to make use only of perceived meaning of the option words and the text, and did not use the grammatical markers in the sentences to assist with narrowing down their options. **Question 20** presented the most difficulties, with a large number choosing *surveillants*.

Exercise 2 Questions 21–29

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended text in the form of an email from Luc to his friend Michel on the subject of a recent cinema trip. The text was mostly straightforward and the subject matter was familiar. Most candidates were able to cope with the demands of the task. Although long answers are not required, and often only a few words would answer the question, many candidates chose to copy a couple of sentences from the text for each question. For this exercise, extraneous material and incorrect tenses are usually ignored as long as they do not in some way invalidate the candidate's correct response.

In **Question 21**, some candidates did not specify the cinema was *à côté de la zone industrielle*, thus changing the meaning, although almost all were able to identify when the trip took place. Spelling of *fanatique* caused a few difficulties, with some reading it as *fantastique*. For **Question 26**, some candidates homed in on buying the sweets rather than realising that a place was needed. In **Question 27(b)**, many ignored *nul* and gave answers such as the film being long as the opinion on the film.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 30–34

In **Section 3**, examiners are expecting a higher level of attention to detail and for candidates to be more selective of the information they take from the texts when correcting the false statements. Candidates are reminded that they should not merely write the opposite of the statement and need to look for the alternative information.

Most candidates correctly identified **Questions 32** and **33** as being false, but **Question 34** was frequently ticked as false in preference to **Question 31**. Candidates cannot be credited with a justification if they have ticked *VRAI* for the statement, so there is no benefit in writing a justification for every response.

In terms of the justifications, for **Question 30**, most candidates who had ticked false selected the right information, but their expression in French sometimes let them down, even though much could be lifted. Candidates who left *qui* in their answer did not show enough comprehension to be rewarded. For **Question 32**, some candidates wrote about where the card could be purchased. For **Question 35**, it was usually copying from the text without thinking how to adapt it which led to the mark being lost.

Exercise 2 Questions 35–41

This final exercise was intended to be the most challenging part of the paper and at least some of the questions require candidates to manipulate their selected information from the text. Where candidates lost marks, it was often through writing too much and including information that did not answer the question. Candidates are advised to look at the number of lines to indicate the expected length of answer. Answers in the section are usually required to provide a grammatical response to the question.

Some candidates left answers blank in this segment, and only a minority scored full marks. There was again some evidence of question words such as *qu'est-ce qui* not being known.

Questions 35, **37** and **41** proved the most accessible for candidates. *Sonia* or *sa soeur* was frequently given in answer to **Question 36**. Candidates tended to write too much for **Question 38**, and difficulties with transposing direct speech led to loss of the mark in **Question 39**. Very few candidates seemed to have understood **Question 40**.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/23
Reading

Key messages

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

- ensure that all questions are answered,
- in **Section 3** in particular, use language from the texts selectively and carefully,
- keep answers brief and grammatically accurate (**Section 3**).

General comments

Candidates generally dealt confidently with the variety of reading comprehension exercise types on this paper. All candidates seemed to have ample time to complete the paper. The paper offered an appropriate challenge and gradient of difficulty and a range of performance was observed.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

This exercise was handled with a high degree of success by the majority of candidates. Occasionally, **B** was chosen instead of **C** in **Question 2**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–10

This exercise was very well done. Errors were rare.

Exercise 3 Questions 11–15

This final exercise in **Section 1** was generally well understood.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 16–20

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a short information piece about a horse-riding course and complete statements in French, choosing words from a given list, in order to show comprehension of the text. The majority of candidates handled this task with a fair degree of success. Candidates should be aware that the list contains words which can fit the structure of the statements grammatically but which do not show comprehension of the text. In **Question 16**, *professionnels* was sometimes incorrectly selected. **Questions 17, 19 and 20** proved to be the most accessible. **Question 18** was the main stumbling block.

Exercise 2 Questions 21–29

For this exercise, candidates read a blog by Natalie on the topic of working on her parents' campsite. This was a straightforward exercise requiring candidates to understand questions in French, select the appropriate information from the text and to write down an appropriate response. Most candidates scored very well on this exercise, showing good understanding of the question words (e.g. *où, pourquoi, quand*) and of the text. It is to be remembered that long answers are not required and the space allocated to the answer is normally sufficient.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 30–34

In **Section 3**, examiners are expecting a higher level of attention to detail, and for candidates to be more selective of the information they take from the texts when correcting the false statements. Candidates are reminded that they should not merely write the opposite of the statement and need to look for the alternative information.

Selection of the true/false statements was generally successful. Correcting the three false statements proved more of a challenge. Correction to the false statements need to be appropriate and “lifted” material needs to be handled thoughtfully. For example, in **Question 33**, the correction (*Non*) *l’argent vient/venait d’une soirée cinéma* was acceptable. Some candidates identified the paragraph containing the information required but did not correct the statement appropriately. The lifted *L’argent obtenu servirait à l’achat de tout le matériel nécessaire* was a common unacceptable answer.

Exercise 2 Questions 35–41

This final exercise required the reading and understanding of a longer passage about Damien’s beginnings in voluntary work in Africa. Comprehension was tested by means of questions and answers in French. Most candidates attempted answers to all questions. Candidates are to be aware that answers should grammatically answer the questions and that a verb is not always needed in an answer but, if used, must be correctly formed in an appropriate tense to ensure that comprehension is clear. In **Question 35**, for example, the answers *Pour participer à des projets humanitaires* and *Il voulait participer à des projets humanitaires* were equally acceptable.

Questions 36 and **40** were generally well understood and answered. **Question 37** could be easily answered by the brief *à un mariage*. In **Question 38**, the selected lift of *Damien était certain qu’il voulait suivre son exemple* was an acceptable answer here. The addition of *l’association cherchait de nouveaux bénévoles* was an invalidation. **Question 39** was generally well answered by candidates who identified *anxieux* in the text and answered briefly, but some misunderstood the question and mentioned the high temperatures in South Africa. For **Question 41**, the brief answer *une autre façon de voyager* was the most successful but not the most common response. Candidates who attempted to manipulate the direct speech from the text usually ended up with an unclear response.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/41
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should read the whole task carefully before starting to write their answers.
- Candidates are advised to highlight or underline key words in questions and sub-tasks.
- Candidates should ensure that they respond in the same time frame as used in the question.

General comments

The full ability range was represented. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

In each question, there are key words which inform the candidates of what is required. Candidates must be aware of these, otherwise they risk producing work which may be linguistically accurate but which is in some measure irrelevant. It is particularly important that candidates are aware of the full range of interrogative adverbs, e.g. *Combien ?* which can be used in a number of ways and does not only refer to the cost of things.

Question 1

One mark was awarded for each noun which identified an object represented by the illustrations. Candidates should be reminded that if they cannot recall a particular word, they are free to add different nouns which fit the context of the question. Definite/indefinite articles are not required.

Question 2

Communication

One mark was awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information in order to gain a mark. Up to 10 marks are awarded across the question. There is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each task, however candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks. The most straightforward way of gaining full marks is to address each task in a new sentence and where possible to add extra relevant detail. Provided that each new piece of information is given in a sentence or clause with an appropriate verb, marks will be awarded.

Candidates are also reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

Language

The published criteria offer a clear guide to what is expected. Candidates should use basic sentence structure, using appropriate verb forms, definite/indefinite articles, adjectives, time phrases and prepositional phrases.

Question 3 offered a choice of three options: a letter, a blog, a story line to be continued.

A crucial decision for candidates is: which question will allow me to show best the French that I know? This is particularly important given the method by which marks are awarded across the three categories. Candidates are advised therefore to read all three options before making their choice. A close reading of the tasks within

the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary, verb tenses and structures which will be needed in order to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Frequently the rubric provides key vocabulary. Candidates should always copy correctly key vocabulary items from the rubric and also look for clues of the gender of any significant nouns.

In the very best work, the language flowed naturally.

Communication: to gain the 2 marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the five tasks using a tense which is appropriate. Candidates are strongly advised to answer each task in the tense used in the rubric. The use of a different tense will distort the meaning and invariably lead to the loss of marks.

As with **Question 2**, there was some evidence to suggest that candidates thought that they must only write 140 words. The recommendation is a guideline: it reflects the fact that the question can be answered in detail within that amount of words. A small number of candidates crossed out important pieces of information. The act of editing a piece on completion is quite difficult especially if there is little time available. Unfortunately, some candidates crossed out details which were vital for the successful completion of the task. Excessive length often leads to error, repetition and irrelevance. Candidates should be advised to be selective when they are planning their responses.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs. The maximum mark of 8 is awarded for 18 verbs; there were instances where candidates produced more than that. Candidates must remember that each different form of a verb earns a tick. Repeated correct forms of a verb do not qualify for a tick. By way of illustration, when expressing their opinions about situations and events, instead of using the same verb each time, many candidates used a variety of verbs which conveyed the same notion: *je pense, je trouve, je crois* and when appropriate, used them in different tenses.

Candidates should be reminded of the correct use of verbal structures such as *avant de* and *après avoir/après être*; many seem not to be aware that these can only be used when the action refers to the subject of the main verb.

Other linguistic features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The ablest candidates will be able to demonstrate, among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses such as *quand, si, parce que, car, qui, que* object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions (e.g. *donc, cependant*), strong negatives (e.g. *ne... jamais, ne... plus*), comparative/superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions such as *depuis, pendant, pour* and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity, common prepositions, without this they will not access the top most bands.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1: La salle de classe

Candidates were asked to write a list of 8 things which could be found in a classroom.

To maximise their chances of scoring the 5 marks available, candidates are well advised to provide a list of 8 items. The 8 pictures only serve as a guide and candidates are free to use different items provided that they fit the context of the question. *Professeur, élèves, étudiants* could not be credited.

The vast majority of candidates scored the 5 marks available.

Question 2: *La télévision*

For this exercise, candidates were asked to write an essay of 80 to 90 words about *la télévision*. It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates kept to the recommended word count.

Candidates are advised to:

- Check that they have addressed every task fully.
- Produce clear and concise answers which remain focused on the task. There is no need to include generalities on the topic at the beginning of the essay as they cannot be rewarded.
- Offer a variety of choices.
- Avoid giving opinions/justifications unless they are required by the task.
- Highlight or underline key words in each task.
- Write in well-defined paragraphs.

Communication

For Task (a), candidates were required to say how many hours a day they watch television **and** where. This was very well done by the vast majority of candidates. Some scored extra communication marks as they provided alternatives: *en semaine, le week-end*.

Some candidates did not gain any Communication marks for the task as they did not use an appropriate verb. *Je regard, je vois, je veux la télévision* could not be rewarded.

In Task (b), candidates had to say what types of programmes they prefer. The key word *émissions* was not widely understood. Some candidates gave titles in English/Spanish or abbreviations (TNT, HBO) which failed to convey any meaning. However, types of films (*films policiers, d'amour, de science-fiction, etc.*) were acceptable.

For Task (c), the candidates who offered alternatives scored well. It was also pleasing to see many candidates providing several justifications for watching television with their family or on their own. Being able to spend time with other members of their family as well as being able to discuss the programmes were common reasons. On the other hand, many preferred being on their own as they could choose what to watch or complained that other people talked too much.

In Task (d), opinions were divided as to whether they preferred watching films at a cinema or on television. Those who preferred going to the cinema often mentioned that it was an outing with their friends, that they enjoyed eating pop-corn or that they liked the atmosphere. Some candidates could not communicate effectively "the screen is bigger" as they used *télévision* instead of *écran*. Those who preferred to watch films at home often mentioned that it was more comfortable, the cinema was too expensive/noisy.

In the last task, an idea of future had to be communicated. The use of *pendant les vacances prochaines* followed by a verb in the present tense was rewarded for communication. Many candidates stated that they would not watch (much) television as they wanted to do more interesting activities, be with their friends or were going on holiday with their family.

Language

The vast majority of candidates scored 5 or 4 for the Language mark. They produced pieces of work which were coherent, showed that they could use relevant verbs and vocabulary with a fair degree of accuracy.

Some candidates were not secure in their use of the future tense. The last task of the essay usually requires the use of a future tense. It is therefore essential that candidates are trained to use *je vais/voudrais* + infinitive accurately. To score the 5 marks available for Language, candidates need to show an awareness of different time frames.

Section 2

Candidates had to choose one essay out of three options: a letter, a blog and a story line to continue. There are 10 marks for Communication, 8 marks for Verbs and 12 marks for Other linguistic features. Candidates were expected to write 130 to 140 words to complete the task. It was pleasing to see that candidates kept to the recommended word count.

Question 3 (a): *Mes cadeaux d'anniversaire.*

This option was very popular.

Each task was awarded 2 Communication marks.

In the first task, the use of a past tense was required to fulfill the task. Many successfully answered *j'ai dépensé l'argent en vêtements* or *j'ai acheté un nouveau portable*. Some candidates could not score the 2 marks available as they explained how they were planning to spend (or that they were not sure how to spend it). This underlines the need for candidates to pay attention to the tense used in the rubric.

The second task asked candidates what other presents they received. This was very successfully done as most candidates could use *mon père/ma mère m'a donné* or *j'ai reçu... de mon père/ma mère*.

In the third task, most candidates indicated that they preferred receiving money. Some used an inappropriate form of *préférer* (*je préférer*) and could not score any marks for this task. It was disappointing to see that some candidates had not read the task carefully enough and used *je préfère recevoir* or *je préfère de recevoir* in response to *préférez-vous recevoir*.

For the fourth task, 2 marks were available for the reason for the choice. Many candidates liked being able to spend their birthday money on things they liked. Some candidates could not score the 2 marks for this task through confusion over the use of relative pronouns *Je peux acheter que/qui je veux/les choses j'aime*.

In the last task, whilst most candidates understood *faire des économies*, they were not always able to justify their opinion in a meaningful way.

Question 3 (b): *Mon emploi de vacances*

This option was equally popular.

This essay was, on the whole, well done and many candidates scored 6 or more for Communication.

The first task asked candidates where **and** how long they worked. Some candidates could not score the 2 marks available as they only partly answered the question. Many omitted to say for how long they worked. Others provided the two details required but lost a Communication mark as they did not use an accent on the end of *travaillé*. More careful reading of the rubric is essential if candidates want to avoid losing Communication marks.

In the second task, most candidates used one of the suggestions offered in the rubric (*guide, serveur/serveuse* or *vendeur/vendeuse*). Some distorted the message they were trying to convey as they used *j'ai travaillé comment guide* instead of *comme guide*.

In the third task, candidates were required to give their impressions of the experience. Many candidates scored the 2 marks available for the task as they could clearly state *j'ai aimé travailler dans le musée* or *le château était beau*. There was some confusion as to the use of *bon/mauvais* as some candidates used the adverbs *bien/mal* instead. *C'était une bien/mal expérience* was a common error. Some candidates also distorted the messages they were trying to convey by stating *J'ai fait des nouveaux amis* or *J'ai connu des personnes intéressantes*.

For Task 4, the vast majority of candidates thought that it was important for young people to have a holiday job as it prepared them for the future, enabled them to earn money or to become more independent. These opinions were usually clearly expressed.

A further 2 marks were available for any extra detail provided for any of Tasks 2, 3 or 4.

Question 3 (c): « Je rentrais à la maison vendredi dernier, quand j'ai trouvé un portefeuille par terre... »

Very few candidates chose this option.

Candidates were required to continue the story line.

In Task 1, a name, address or phone number were details which were rewarded. Description of the wallet such as colour or size could not gain marks. Some candidates misunderstood the word *portefeuille* and wrote about finding a portfolio. *Numéro de téléphone* was not widely known often resulting in the use of *un nombre de téléphone* which did not communicate a clear message.

In Task 2, looking up the owner on Facebook was a common action taken by candidates. Others decided to use the phone number found to get in touch.

For the third task, many candidates arranged to meet the owner of the wallet in a café and to have a chat. Candidates often used the verb *retourner* rather than *rendre*.

There were 4 Communication marks available for the fourth task. Reactions, whether the candidate's or the owner's were credited wherever they appeared in the essay, not just at the end. *Être surpris/content/heureux* were popular reactions for both the candidate and the owner of the wallet.

Verbs

In **Question 3**, there are 8 marks available for the accurate use of verbs. The repetition of the same verb in the same form should be avoided as it can only be rewarded once. Many candidates used *ma grand-mère/ma mère/mon père m'a donné* in **Question 3(a)** and *j'ai travaillé* in **Question 3(b)** several times, limiting the amount of verbs which could be ticked.

Candidates must ensure that they make the verb agree with its subject. Candidates need to be reminded that a verb without a subject, either a noun or pronoun, cannot be credited.

The use of *é* at the end of a past participle is essential for *-er* verbs used in the perfect tense.

Other linguistic features

There are 12 marks available for the use of Other linguistic features in **Question 3**. The published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected for each mark band. To score in the top mark bands candidates need to demonstrate that they can use complex language (subordinate clauses, object pronouns, conjunctions, negatives and comparatives) as well as simple structures. Whilst many candidates could use *car* successfully, they were not always as confident with their use of *parce que/que* which often lacked an elision before a vowel.

It is also important that the essay produced shows the accurate spelling and gender of common words, adjectival agreements and basic prepositions. It was disappointing to see the same word spelt differently within the same essay.

When deciding which task to choose, candidates should first consider how familiar and secure they are with some less common vocabulary pertinent to the subject matter.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/42
Writing

Key messages

- It is vital that candidates be familiar with all the common interrogative adverbs.
- In **Question 2**, candidates must address all the tasks and give opinions only when they are required.
- The recommended word count for both **Question 2** and **Question 3** is not mandatory; candidates should not feel obliged to remove significant detail in order to meet the word count.
- Candidates should read carefully each of the options in **Question 3** and should choose the one which best allows them to demonstrate the linguistic knowledge they have.
- Candidates aiming for the highest grades should use a range of verb tenses, sentence structures, and more complex linguistic patterns.
- Candidates should always aim for a high standard of legibility and presentation. When candidates write in pen over an initial draft in pencil their work is often difficult to read.

General comments

The full ability range was represented. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

In each question, there are key words which inform the candidates of what is required. Candidates must be aware of these, otherwise they risk producing work which may be linguistically accurate but which is in some measure irrelevant. It is particularly important that candidates are aware of the full range of interrogative adverbs, e.g. *Combien ?* which can be used in a number of ways and does not only refer to the cost of things. It is worth noting that *Comment ? D'où ?* and *Depuis quand ?* are forms of the interrogative which occasionally cause problems for some candidates.

Question 1

One mark was awarded for each noun which identified a place represented by the illustrations. Candidates should be reminded that if they cannot recall a particular word, they are free to add different nouns which fit the context of the question. Definite/indefinite articles are not required.

Question 2

Communication

One mark was awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information in order to gain a mark. Up to 10 marks are awarded across the question. There is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each task, however candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks. The most straightforward way of gaining full marks is to address each task in a new sentence and where possible to add extra relevant detail. Provided that each new piece of information is given in a sentence or clause with an appropriate verb, marks will be awarded.

Candidates are also reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

Language

The published criteria offer a clear guide to what is expected. Candidates should use basic sentence structure, using appropriate verb forms, definite/indefinite articles, adjectives, time phrases and prepositional phrases.

Question 3 offered a choice of three options: a letter, an article, a story line to be continued.

A crucial decision for candidates is: which question will allow me to show best the French that I know? This is particularly important given the method by which marks are awarded across the three categories. Candidates are advised therefore to read all three options before making their choice. A close reading of the tasks within the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary, verb tenses and structures which will be needed in order to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Frequently the rubric provides key vocabulary. Candidates should always copy correctly key vocabulary items from the rubric and also look for clues of the gender of any significant nouns.

In the very best work, the language flowed naturally.

Communication: to gain the 2 marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the five tasks using a tense which is appropriate. Candidates are strongly advised to answer each task in the tense used in the rubric. The use of a different tense will distort the meaning and invariably lead to the loss of marks.

As with **Question 2**, there was some evidence to suggest that candidates thought that they must only write 140 words. The recommendation is a guideline: it reflects the fact that the question can be answered in detail within that amount of words. A small number of candidates crossed out important pieces of information. The act of editing a piece on completion is quite difficult especially if there is little time available. Unfortunately, some candidates crossed out details which were vital for the successful completion of the task. Excessive length often leads to error, repetition and irrelevance. Candidates should be advised to be selective when they are planning their responses.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs. The maximum mark of 8 is awarded for 18 verbs; there were instances where candidates produced more than that. Candidates must remember that each different form of a verb earns a tick. Repeated correct forms of a verb do not qualify for a tick. By way of illustration, when expressing their opinions about situations and events, instead of using the same verb each time, many candidates used a variety of verbs which conveyed the same notion: *je pense, je trouve, je crois* and when appropriate, used them in different tenses.

Candidates should be reminded of the correct use of verbal structures such as *avant de* and *après avoir/après être*; many seem not to be aware that these can only be used when the action refers to the subject of the main verb.

Other linguistic features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The ablest candidates will be able to demonstrate, among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses such as *quand, si, parce que, car, qui, que* object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions (e.g. *donc, cependant*), strong negatives (e.g. *ne... jamais, ne... plus*), comparative/superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions such as *depuis, pendant, pour* and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity, common prepositions, without this they will not access the top most bands.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1: À l'hôtel

A very high proportion of candidates scored full marks for this question. There were at least five common nouns which candidates could identify: *chambre, piscine, douche, jardin/parc, restaurant, magasin*. There were two which were less well known: *balcon, ascenseur*. Candidates also offered: *bar, court de tennis, cuisine, terrasse, salle de bain* amongst others which are listed in the published mark scheme.

The key word in the rubric was 'endroits': items of equipment and furniture were not accepted.

Question 2: Mes devoirs

Communication

It was evident that some candidates misunderstood the sense of *devoirs* and wrote about the jobs which they do or about how they spend their day.

For the first task, candidates were required to say how long they spend doing their homework: *j'ai deux heures de devoirs chaque jour, je passe une heure à faire mes devoirs, le professeur nous donne une heure de devoirs tous les jours* represent the types of answers which gained a mark. Candidates who reported: *en semaine je fais une heure et le week-end j'ai trois heures de devoirs* gained a mark for the additional piece of information.

The second task invited details about where candidates did their homework. The most common response was: *je fais mes devoirs dans ma chambre*. Additional information was also rewarded: *et quelquefois je fais mes devoirs à la bibliothèque*. Some candidates chose to explain why they did their homework in the place mentioned: the question did not require reasons and no marks were awarded for these.

Candidates had to state whether they use a computer to do their homework for the third task. A simple response such as: *j'utilise mon ordinateur, je n'utilise pas un ordinateur* gained a mark. It was a little disappointing to see that some candidates were rather careless in writing the verb *utiliser* and in so doing missed the mark. Candidates gained a mark for each reason given; common amongst the positive reasons were: *c'est plus rapide, je peux faire des recherches*. Those who stated that they do not use a computer variously suggested: *je n'aime pas les ordinateurs, je préfère utiliser mon stylo et mes livres*.

The fourth task provided candidates with the opportunity to gain a number of marks. Those who identified the easiest subject and the most difficult subject gained a mark for each; marks were awarded for each reason given. Many candidates did just this and deservedly boosted their overall mark; it is a pity that some candidates confined themselves to one element of the question.

Typically for the first part, candidates stated: *l'anglais est la plus facile, je pense que l'histoire est la plus difficile*. The reasons given were many and varied. On the positive side: *j'aime les maths, le professeur est très bien*, whereas on the negative side, the following were common: *je ne comprends pas la biologie, le professeur n'explique pas bien*.

A significant proportion of candidates mentioned chemistry either as the easiest or most difficult subject. Unfortunately, many of them did not gain a mark as they could not spell the word *chimie*.

The final task required candidates to convey the notion of future time to say whether or not they would do homework during the holiday. Many understood what was needed, offering: *je vais faire mes devoirs pendant les vacances, je ne vais pas faire des devoirs*. Those who were going to do homework gave reasons such as *je voudrais être prêt pour l'année prochaine*, whereas those who were not going to do any homework suggested: *je voudrais me reposer, le professeur ne donne pas de devoirs*.

As has been mentioned above, it is important that candidates read the question carefully before beginning their answers. It is well within the capabilities of the vast majority of candidates to gain full marks for this part of the examination: by so doing, they can provide a solid basis which may in turn give access to the top grades. Too many lost marks unnecessarily because either they made careless errors or they did not provide the information which the individual tasks invited.

Language

Very many gained full marks. The writing did not need to be error free for the award of 5 marks. Candidates who use simple structures, who can correctly form verbs and who check their work can readily access the top bands.

Section 2

Question 3(a) *Vacances à la montagne*

This was the most popular choice by far with more than 70% of candidates opting for it. A very small number misunderstood the question: some wrote of their plans for a future trip, others invited their friends to make a visit. In such instances, marks were awarded for individual tasks if by chance the information corresponded to what was required.

Communication

The first task invited candidates to give details of when and with whom they went to the mountains. This was a straightforward task: *je suis allé à la montagne avec ma famille l'été dernier, j'ai visité la montagne avec mes amis en juin*. When two pieces of information are required, candidates should always remember to give both: it was easy here as both could be combined with the same verb.

Some gained only 1 mark because they did not give a correct verb in the past tense. Errors such as: *je voyagé, je parti, je aller* were common.

A past tense was also required for the award of 2 marks for Task 2. Candidates had to mention something which they did during the visit. Marks were awarded for any piece of information: *j'ai fait du ski, nous avons fait une randonnée*, but marks were not exclusively awarded to mountain related activities, the following statements were accepted: *j'ai nagé dans le lac, nous avons fait un pique-nique, je suis allé au musée*.

As with the first task, lack of control of the past tense, resulted in many gaining only 1 mark.

Candidates needed to make a comment about the region they visited for Task 3. The mark scheme allowed for information in present and past tenses and for a range of comments: *la région est belle et calme, il faisait beau, on peut faire des promenades à la campagne*. Most candidates gained marks here.

Task 4 invited candidates to state what their ideal holiday destination would be. It was quite easy to manipulate the rubric to give a clear response: *ma destination idéale serait la France, ma destination idéale serait la plage*. Some were a little more adventurous: *je préférerais aller aux États-Unis, j'aimerais visiter le Canada*. Candidates who felt that the mountains were themselves their ideal destination were also rewarded. There was a significant minority of candidates who did not understand this question.

For the final task, 2 marks were available for the reason for the choice. Opinions ranged from the simple to the more complex: *il fait beau, j'aime la cuisine, je voudrais améliorer mon français, je pourrais découvrir une nouvelle culture, j'ai toujours rêvé de visiter le Japon*.

Verbs

The popularity of the question suggested that the topic was very accessible. Candidates could use very familiar verbs to complete their accounts. It can be quite challenging to produce 18 different verb forms, unfortunately some candidates did not spell correctly or properly when conjugating quite common verbs: perfect tense verbs formed with the wrong auxiliary and accents omitted from past participles.

Other linguistic features

Candidates whose rather basic language had brought them a good mark for Communication scored relatively poorly in this section if they had not been able to use some more complex sentence patterns. There were opportunities for using varied and complex sentence patterns: *quand nous sommes arrivés, comme il faisait beau, pendant qu'on était à la montagne, si j'avais le choix, je voudrais visiter*.

Question 3(b) *Les loisirs*

This question attracted almost 25% of candidates.

Communication

In the first task the key word was *récemment*. Candidates therefore needed to give the information in a past tense. Many did not appear to have noticed this and gave information in the present tense, often using *normalement*. The mark scheme allowed one mark for such responses. Those who fully understood the task commonly responded: *j'ai joué au foot, je suis allé à la piscine, j'ai fait une promenade avec mon chien*.

The second task required candidates to say where and with whom they had spent their time, again in a past tense. Marks were awarded to those who referred back to the activity previously mentioned and to those who introduced another activity: *je suis allée au cinéma avec mes amies, j'ai joué au badminton dans le jardin avec ma soeur*. This was a relatively easy task as the language required was quite basic.

The third task required candidates to state whether they preferred outdoor or indoor activities. This was also quite a straightforward task requiring simple manipulation of the verb *préférer*: *je préfère les activités en plein air, je préfère les activités à l'intérieur*. There were many more who preferred to be out of doors.

The marks for Task 4 were awarded for a reason for their choice. For some candidates, it was a matter of weather conditions: *il fait beau, il y a du soleil, il fait trop chaud*. For others it was the activities which were important: *je peux jouer au foot avec mes copains, j'aime nager dans la rivière, je peux rencontrer mes amis, j'aime les jeux de société*, whereas for some, health was the issue: *je peux rester en forme, c'est plus sain*.

The 2 marks for the final task were awarded for an opinion about the time spent by young people on the computer. Positive reasons offered included: *on peut rester en contact avec la famille, il y a beaucoup de jeux*. However the majority of candidates took a negative view: *c'est mauvais pour la santé, ce n'est pas bon pour les yeux, les jeunes ne sortent jamais*.

Verbs

Marks tended to be a little lower on this question generally because candidates did not have at their disposal sufficient variety to avoid repetition: many relied on *aller, faire, jouer, regarder*. In some instances, they did not use familiar verbs accurately, as was mentioned for option (a).

It is quite a challenge to reach the top marks for correct verb forms. It might be helpful to encourage candidates to think of what range of relevant verbs they know which they can use in their answers before they make their final choice of question.

Other linguistic features

As always, the correct use of basic vocabulary is critically important; uncertainty about the gender and spelling of common nouns and prepositions will always have a limiting effect on the mark which can be awarded. In this instance, it was reasonable to expect candidates to know and use accurately: *jouer au badminton, faire de la natation, aller au cinéma*. There were opportunities for more complex sentence patterns: *si j'ai le choix, je préfère, quand je joue dehors, si les jeunes passent trop de temps*.

Question 3(c) *Quel bruit !*

This question attracted about 20% of the entry. As is always the case with this final option, it was a little more demanding in that it placed a heavy emphasis on the consistent use of past tenses. Unfortunately, some candidates did not fully realise this and they wrote exclusively in the present tense, thus limiting the number of marks they could gain. However, if candidates respected the requirement to use past tenses, then it was relatively easy to gain full marks for Communication by using very straightforward vocabulary and structures.

Communication

For the first task, candidates were required to mention what they had seen and heard. For the purpose of this session, marks were awarded for one piece of information: *j'ai entendu des jeunes qui chantaient, j'ai vu des enfants qui dansaient dans le jardin, j'ai vu une grande voiture dans la rue*.

The second task invited candidates to say what they decided to do. Some claimed: *je ne pouvais pas faire mes devoirs, donc j'ai décidé de regarder la télé, je ne pouvais pas dormir, alors j'ai téléphoné à la police.* Others seeing that they were missing out on a party stated: *il y avait une boum, je suis allé à la maison en face et j'ai vu des amis.*

Candidates needed to say what happened next for the third task. Marks were awarded for any detail which moved the story on. Those unhappy with events mentioned: *je suis descendu dans le jardin et j'ai parlé aux jeunes,* whereas those who had decided to join in stated: *j'ai parlé à mes amis, j'ai commencé à danser.*

As is the regular pattern for this option, the final tasks invited responses to the experience. Marks were awarded for reactions throughout the piece: those who were initially annoyed by the noise: *j'étais fâché* but who were later happy with the outcome: *à la fin, j'étais très content* earned 2 marks for each reaction, as did the candidates who chose to give two reactions towards the end of the account: *j'étais heureux de voir mes amis, j'ai passé une bonne soirée.*

Verbs

The heavy reliance on past tenses to convey the story effectively was a challenge for the very small number of candidates who chose this option.

Other linguistic features

The (c) option does provide candidates who have a good range of linguistic skill the opportunity to show fully what they know. They have the freedom to develop the story within the guidelines of the rubric and can, with careful planning, incorporate a range of familiar vocabulary and sentence structure. The use of adverbs and adverbial time phrases to establish the sequence of events is a very useful method of structuring such a narrative response: *d'abord, premièrement, ensuite, plus tard, tout de suite.* Basic errors of spelling and gender did have an impact on the marks awarded, as did the failure to make simple feminine and plural agreement of adjectives.

FRENCH (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0520/43
Writing

Key messages

- It is vital that candidates be familiar with all the common interrogative adverbs.
- In **Question 2**, candidates must address all the tasks and give opinions only when they are required.
- The recommended word count for both **Question 2** and **Question 3** is not mandatory; candidates should not feel obliged to remove significant detail in order to meet the word count.
- Candidates should read carefully each of the options in **Question 3** and should choose the one which best allows them to demonstrate the linguistic knowledge they have.
- Candidates aiming for the highest grades should use a range of verb tenses, sentence structures, and more complex linguistic patterns.
- Candidates should always aim for a high standard of legibility and presentation. When candidates write in pen over an initial draft in pencil their work is often difficult to read.

General comments

The full ability range was represented. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

In each question there are key words which inform the candidates of what is required. Candidates must be aware of these, otherwise they risk producing work which may be linguistically accurate but which is in some measure irrelevant.

Candidates must know the full range of interrogative adverbs, e.g. *Combien ?* which can be used in a number of ways and does not only refer to the cost of things. It is worth noting that *Comment ? D'où ?* and *Depuis quand ?* are forms of the interrogative which occasionally cause problems for some candidates.

Question 1

One mark was awarded for each noun which identified an object represented by the illustrations. Candidates should be reminded that if they cannot recall a particular word, they are free to add different nouns which fit the context of the question. Definite/indefinite articles are not required.

Question 2

Communication

One mark was awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information to gain a mark. Up to 10 marks are awarded across the question. There is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each task, however, candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks.

The most straightforward way of gaining full marks is to address each task in a new sentence and where possible to add extra relevant detail. Provided that each new piece of information is given in a sentence or clause with an appropriate verb, marks will be awarded.

Candidates are reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

Language

The published criteria offer a clear guide to what is expected. Candidates should use basic sentence structure, using appropriate verb forms, definite/indefinite articles, adjectives, time phrases and prepositional phrases.

Question 3 offered a choice of three options: a letter, an article, a story line to be continued.

A crucial decision for candidates is: which question will allow me to show best the French that I know? This is particularly important given the method by which marks are awarded across the three categories. Candidates are advised therefore to read all three options before making their choice. A close reading of the tasks within the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary, verb tenses and structures which will be needed in order to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Frequently the rubric provides key vocabulary. Candidates did not always copy correctly key vocabulary items from the rubric.

In the very best work, the language flowed naturally.

Communication: to gain the 2 marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the five tasks using a tense which is appropriate. Candidates are strongly advised to answer each task in the tense used in the rubric. The use of a different tense will distort the meaning and invariably lead to the loss of marks.

As with **Question 2**, there was some evidence to suggest that candidates thought that they must only write 140 words. The recommendation is a guideline: it reflects the fact that the question can be answered in detail within that amount of words. A small number of candidates crossed out important pieces of information and in so doing removed details which were vital for the successful completion of the task.

The act of editing a piece on completion is quite difficult, especially if there is little time available. Excessive length often leads to error, repetition and irrelevance. Candidates should be advised to be selective when they are planning their responses.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs. The maximum mark of 8 is awarded for 18 verbs; there were instances where candidates produced more than that. Candidates must remember that each different form of a verb earns a tick. Repeated correct forms of a verb do not qualify for a tick. By way of illustration, when expressing their opinions about situations and events, instead of using the same verb each time, many candidates used a variety of verbs which conveyed the same notion: *je pense, je trouve, je crois* and when appropriate, used them in different tenses.

Candidates should be reminded of the correct use of verbal structures such as *avant de* and *après avoir/après être*; many seem not to be aware that these can only be used when the action refers to the subject of the main verb.

Other linguistic features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The ablest candidates will be able to demonstrate, among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses such as *quand, si, parce que, car, qui, que* object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions (e.g. *donc, cependant*), strong negatives (e.g. *ne... jamais, ne... plus*), comparative/superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions such as *depuis, pendant, pour* and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity, common prepositions, without this they will not access the top most bands.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1: *La cuisine*

Able candidates easily gained full marks here, however this question proved to be a little challenging for some candidates who were not as readily familiar with the vocabulary for common items around the kitchen. Some items featured in most lists: *chaise, table*. Many were able to give *frigo* or one of its acceptable alternatives. Less well known items included *assiette, couteau, poubelle, verre*. Some knew *four* but others who attempted *cuisinière* often wrote *cuisinier* which could not be accepted as it has a different meaning.

Resourceful candidates completed their lists with other common items found in a kitchen: *boîte, bol, bouteille, casserole, fourchette, pot*, all of which were accepted, as well as others listed in the published mark scheme.

Question 2: *Le sport*

Communication

One mark was awarded for each relevant piece of information conveyed using a verb.

For the first task, candidates were required to give details of what sports they do. Most candidates were able to respond with a simple statement: *je joue au foot, je fais de la natation, je pratique la gymnastique*. Candidates who sensibly gave more than one piece of information were able to build up their score here; the advice should always be that candidates should take the opportunity to give more than one detail when the opportunity arises.

The second task invited candidates to state how often they play. Many offered sentences such as *Je joue au tennis deux fois par semaine*. If candidates had given information about more than one sport for the first task, there was a chance here for them to gain marks for details about when they did each of the sports mentioned. Marks were awarded if they gave the days on which they were active: *je joue au rugby le jeudi et le samedi*. As can be seen from the mark scheme, candidates who combined the information for Tasks 1 and 2 in one sentence gained marks even if they only used one verb.

Candidates were asked to say where and with whom they played for the third task. For the purposes of this question, a separate verb was not required for each element: two ticks were awarded for statements such as *je fais de la natation à la piscine avec mon frère, je joue au rugby à l'école avec mon équipe*.

For the fourth task, candidates needed to state whether they preferred individual or team sports and to give the reason for their choice. Most were able to gain a mark for the first part and many earned more than one mark for the second element as they provided additional reasons, e.g. *j'aime être avec mes amis, c'est plus amusant*. The verb *préférer* was not always well known: some candidates lost marks because the verb as presented was not a correct, phonetic or otherwise recognisable form.

The final task was the most challenging as it required candidates to convey some notion of future time. They needed to identify what sport they would like to do and to provide a reason for their choice: again, marks were given for each reason. This pattern of question is a regular feature and candidates should aim to use the straightforward pattern: *je voudrais jouer au badminton, je voudrais faire du cheval*. Marks were also awarded to rather more assertive responses: *je jouerai au volley, je vais faire du vélo*. Candidates gave a range of reasons: *c'est génial, je peux rencontrer d'autres personnes, c'est bon pour la forme*.

Language

Many gained full marks. However, the lack of control of verb forms did result in a lower mark for a significant proportion. The writing does not need to be error free for the award of 5 marks. Candidates should aim to construct a series of simple sentences with a correct verb and they should be able to convey future time. Checking work is invaluable: it is so easy to assume that once something is written down it must be correct.

Section 2

Question 3(a): *Un(e) nouvel(le) élève à l'école*

This was the most popular choice with more than 70% opting for it.

Communication

The first task invited candidates to give some information about a newly arrived student. Marks were awarded for details using the present or a past tense. This was a straightforward task: many candidates found it easy to gain both available marks for details such as *elle s'appelle Aline, il a 15 ans, elle est Canadienne, il est sportif, il est grand*.

A past tense was required for the award of 2 marks for Task 2. Candidates had to say where the student lived before moving: *il habitait au Japon avant, elle a habité en Australie*. More candidates should have been able to express this simple concept.

For Task 3, candidates were invited to say what they did to help this person. Again, a past tense was needed. Some conveyed this idea using the verb *aider*: *je l'ai aidé avec son travail, je l'ai aidée dans les cours de maths*. Other responses included: *je lui ai parlé, j'ai mangé à la cantine avec Jean*.

Candidates had to explain why they find this student friendly or unfriendly. There were some interesting responses: *elle m'aide avec mes devoirs de français, il m'a invité chez lui, elle a les mêmes intérêts que moi*.

In the final task, 2 marks were available for a reason for wanting or not wanting to study in another country. Many suggested that they would like to do this: *parce que je pourrais me faire de nouveaux amis, je pourrais découvrir une nouvelle culture*. Those who did not like the idea commented: *je ne voudrais pas quitter mes amis, ma famille me manquerait*. It was pleasing to see this more complex structure being used: however, some candidates did not know how to use it correctly and wrote: *je manquerais ma famille*.

Verbs

Candidates were able to use a range of common verbs to answer this question. There were some who demonstrated control of tense and knowledge of a variety of verbs but there were comparatively few who gained the maximum mark. It should be noted that there were errors in common verbs which, although they did not affect the mark for Communication, did result in candidates not gaining marks in this category: *il s'apelle, il est 15 ans, je l'ai assisté for je l'ai aidé*.

Other linguistic features

Candidates whose rather basic language had brought them a good mark for Communication scored relatively poorly in this section if they had not been able to use some more complex sentence patterns. There were opportunities for using varied and complex language, e.g. *si elle avait un problème, je l'ai aidée, quand on est allé à la cantine, je lui ai parlé, comme je ne parle pas bien le chinois, il m'a aidé*.

Question 3(b): *Le Nouvel An*

This question attracted just over 20% of candidates.

Communication

The first task invited candidates to mention where and with whom they had marked the New Year. A past tense verb was required for the award of both marks. Responses reflected the season and the candidates' home area: *je suis allé à la plage avec ma famille, mes amis et moi nous avons fêté le Nouvel An en ville*. Those who chose to travel abroad were also rewarded: *je suis allé en Inde avec ma famille, mes amis et moi nous avons fait du ski au Japon*.

For the second task, candidates found it quite easy to mention something they did, although some did not correctly give a past tense. Common responses included: *nous avons dansé dans la rue, nous avons regardé les feux d'artifice*. Reflecting the fact that New Year falls in summer for many, marks were also awarded for those who celebrated by doing some sport: *nous avons nagé dans la mer, j'ai joué au tennis avec mes amis*.

In the third task, candidates had to specify what they like best about the celebrations. Candidates gained marks for general comments in the present tense: *j'aime passer du temps avec ma famille, j'aime danser toute la nuit*. Candidates were also rewarded for past tense references to the events mentioned in earlier tasks: *j'ai aimé regarder les feux d'artifice le plus, j'ai aimé nager dans la piscine pendant la nuit*.

Candidates then had to provide a reason for Task 4. It was possible to gain marks for simple comments in a tense relevant to the detail given: *c'est amusant, c'était fantastique*. There were some more considered responses: *j'aime passer du temps avec mes copains, je ne vois pas mes grands-parents très souvent*.

The 2 marks for the final task were awarded for a reason explaining why candidates preferred celebrating with family or with friends. Opinions ranged from the simple: *c'est plus amusant avec les amis, mes parents sont ennuyeux*, to the more complex: *ma famille me manque quand je suis à l'école*.

Verbs

It was possible to respond to this question using very familiar verbs. However, there were many frequent errors not least in the use of *aller* in both the present and the past tense, the rather careless misspelling of *vister* for *visiter*, and the lack of control of common irregular verbs such as *faire, prendre, pouvoir*. As has been mentioned, it is quite a challenge to reach the top marks for correct verb forms. It might be helpful to encourage candidates to think of relevant verbs they know which they can use in their answers before they make their final choice of question.

Other linguistic features

As always, the correct use of basic vocabulary is critically important; uncertainty about the gender and spelling of common nouns will always have a limiting effect on the mark which can be awarded. The correct spelling of words such as *beaucoup*, the appropriate preposition in constructions such as *jouer au tennis*, the agreement of adjectives in phrases such as *l'année dernière* should be the aim of all candidates wishing to access the middle bands.

For a mark in the top bands, candidates must demonstrate not only accuracy in simple sentence structures but also range in terms of complex patterns. There were opportunities to do that here: *après avoir dansé, nous avons regardé les feux d'artifice, j'ai téléphoné à ma copine en Australie pour lui dire 'Bonne Année'*.

Question 3(c): « Hier soir, après l'école, je suis arrivé(e) à la maison. Il n'y avait personne... »

This was not a popular choice, attracting less than 5% of the entry. It was a more demanding option in that it placed a heavy emphasis on the consistent use of past tenses: those candidates who chose it were often not able to show the necessary control of verbs and tenses.

Communication

Candidates had to explain how they tried to get into the house for the first task. Mention was made of finding an open window, telephoning parents, calling at a neighbour's house.

For the second and third tasks, candidates needed to give details of how they spent the time waiting for their parents to come home. A variety of information was provided: *j'ai mangé, j'ai écouté de la musique, j'ai parlé à mon ami, j'ai regardé la télévision*. The responses were generally quite simple.

As is the regular pattern for this option, the final tasks invited reactions to what happened, either the candidates' own or those of their parents. Candidates were a little more successful in managing these familiar tasks and were rewarded wherever in the account they chose to comment: *j'étais fâché, j'avais peur, j'étais content de voir mes parents, mon père a ri*.

Verbs

The heavy reliance on past tenses to convey the story effectively put a strain on almost all of the candidates who chose this option.

Other linguistic features

The (c) option does provide candidates who have a good range of linguistic skill the opportunity to show fully what they know. They have the freedom to develop the story within the guidelines of the rubric and can, with careful planning, incorporate a range of familiar vocabulary and sentence structure. The use of adverbs and adverbial time phrases to establish the sequence of events is a very useful method of structuring such a narrative response: *d'abord, premièrement, ensuite, plus tard, tout de suite*.