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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

FRENCH

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8682/01 and 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

It is pleasing to note that the majority of French oral examinations were well-conducted, with appropriate topics chosen by candidates, good questioning by Examiners, and clear recordings. It is important to remember that, however well the examination is conducted, if the recording is inaudible, moderation is impossible.

Examiners should make every effort to find a quiet room in which to conduct the examination, and prevent interruptions, which can be very disturbing to candidates. Background noise can be intrusive and can make it difficult to hear candidates clearly. Recording equipment should be tried out *in situ* before the examination: it is often necessary to position a microphone to favour candidates (who often speak more quietly than Examiners) whilst ensuring that the Examiner remains audible.

Cassette boxes should be labelled with:

- Centre name and number
- syllabus details
- candidate names and numbers.

The cassettes themselves should also be labelled, showing which candidates appear on which side, and Examiners should introduce the candidate clearly and audibly on tape by name and number before beginning each examination. Examiners should bear in mind that each examination should last approximately twenty minutes. In order to avoid disruption to candidates, *no more than two candidates* should be recorded per side of a ninety minute cassette, and *only one* per side of a sixty minute cassette. At the end of the examination, cassettes should be checked to ensure that recordings are audible.

In the interests of fairness to all candidates, it is important to keep to the timings as set out in the syllabus booklet. Where examinations are shortened to fifteen minutes, candidates are not given enough time to develop topics in any depth. Where examinations are extended up to and beyond thirty minutes, too much is being demanded of the candidate: though they may be given more time to express ideas and opinions, there tends also to be a higher incidence of errors.

There are ten marks available in the examination for questions asked by the candidate. Where candidates make no attempt to ask questions, Examiners are expected to prompt them to do so, in order to give candidates the opportunity to score marks for this element of the examination. Where no questions are asked in one or other of the conversation sections, a mark of *zero* must be recorded in the final column of the Working Mark Sheet for that section. It is surprising that so many candidates who had asked no questions were still awarded three or four marks for this.

There should be a mark entered in each column of the working mark sheet: these should be totalled carefully and the final mark for the component entered in the last column and transferred to the MS1. Moderators should receive copies of *both* the MS1 and the *Working Mark Sheet*, along with the cassette recordings. Please note, there are no half-marks in the mark scheme. Content/presentation, comprehension and responsiveness, accuracy and feel for the Language are all marked out of ten, but for each of the other categories (pronunciation/intonation, and language in the presentation, providing information and opinions, and seeking information and opinions in the conversation sections) the maximum mark available is five.

Presentation (three to three and a half minutes)

There was a wide range of topics chosen by candidates, ranging from general ones such as *L'Environnement, le Conflit des générations* etc, to more individual and personal ones – *Ballet, Le mariage d'Orsay, Haïti and voodoo, Moulin Rouge, Le Mariage homosexuel* – there was a notable personal view on the history of hip-hop which was clearly rooted in francophone culture. Candidates must be made aware that their presentation is expected to make reference to France or francophone culture. This has been a syllabus requirement for a number of years, and it is not enough merely to say *...ici, comme en France...* If candidates fail to do this, their mark for content and presentation will be *halved* and this was the case for a number of candidates this year. This is clearly stated in the presentation section of the mark scheme and it is surprising that so many candidates and Examiners seem unaware of the requirement.

Where candidates choose very factual topics for their presentation, it is sometimes difficult to develop these in sufficient depth for an A/AS Level examination. The assessment criteria for the presentation refer to both factual points and ideas and opinions, and a topic which remains strictly factual limits the potential marks. More personal and individual topics are often more successful from this point of view and are more likely to lend themselves to later discussion.

Candidates sometimes choose to ask questions during their presentation, often rhetorically. Examiners should note that the presentation is intended to be delivered uninterrupted for three to three and a half minutes and that there are no assessment criteria for marking questions during the presentation. Where Examiners choose to answer these questions, the presentation is often extended excessively, at the expense of the conversation sections, thereby reducing the time available for testing comprehension and responsiveness.

Topic Conversation (seven to eight minutes)

Candidates were generally successful in discussing their chosen topic, though a few examinations sounded over-rehearsed and lacking in spontaneity. It is inevitable that candidates will have practised their presentation beforehand, and at least considered along what routes the discussion might go, but they should not be aware of exactly what questions they will be asked, either in this section or in the **General Conversation** section. If there are no unexpected questions, candidates cannot be said to show either comprehension or responsiveness. Candidates are required to ask questions of the Examiner and should be given every opportunity to do so – Examiners must prompt them and candidates should be aware that if they refuse the invitation to do so, they are throwing away five marks in each conversation section.

General Conversation (eight to nine minutes)

It is helpful to Moderators and candidates alike if the Examiner signals for example that *...maintenant on va parler de choses plus générales...* and it also serves as a reminder to the Examiner that the examination should now be concerned with topic areas different from that covered in the **Presentation** and **Topic Conversation**. There were a few instances this year where the entire examination covered only one topic area. **General Conversation** may start from the personal but should then move on to more general issues of current interest, whether national or world-wide. It is understandable that not all candidates will be interested in the same topics, and each examination, even in the same Centre, will be different, as Examiner and candidates react to each other. It is not acceptable for each candidate in the same Centre to be presented with an identical set of questions, in the same order, to which they respond with pre-learnt material from themes studied during their course. The examination is intended to be a conversation, and there should be some exchange of views, rather than the candidate being instructed to talk about one subject after another, with no attempt at discussion.

Examiners who find this section of the examination difficult may need to prepare a bank of starter questions as a way of sparking off discussion, though questions they ask each candidate should be varied. They should not necessarily expect the candidate to echo their own views – this is not a factual examination, it is an attempt to encourage candidates to express their own ideas and opinions at a level appropriate to A and AS. Once again, candidates are required to ask questions as part of the examination, but Examiners should take care not to answer at length and monopolise conversation at the expense of the candidate. A short answer gives candidates the chance to extend their own question technique and ask for further views. Assessment can sometimes be over-generous where the Examiner has taken a large part in the conversation and ends up awarding marks for his/her own performance rather than that of the candidate.

In both conversation sections, candidates should be encouraged not merely to answer questions but to develop their answers and demonstrate their language skills, for which the mark scheme rewards them.

Overall, the vast majority of Centres had applied the mark scheme conscientiously and showed commendable accuracy in its application. Wider variance tends to be shown by Centres with fewer candidates, where it is possible to establish a rank order within the Centre, but difficult to find the correct pitch, and by Centres in French speaking countries where assessment tends to be a little more severe than in the rest of the world.

In general, Examiners and candidates alike should be congratulated on their efforts in this examination.

<p>Papers 8682/02 and 9716/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p>
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General comments

The performance of the candidates on this paper was overall satisfactory. The paper proved to be as demanding as the previous year. Candidates found the texts accessible but in many cases difficult to re-phrase or manipulate. As a result the quality of the written French was often less than fluent and accurate.

Copying wholesale from the text was a common feature this year. This does not, however, show comprehension and therefore gained no marks.

In **Questions 3** and **4** where candidates are required to answer in French, the rubric quite clearly states that candidates should answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. They may use material from the passage but they must answer in such a way as to demonstrate understanding of the text. Candidates should try to express relevant ideas using different vocabulary or structures. Even small changes to the original show that the candidates can handle the ideas and the language. Examples of manipulation of the language and content are given below.

It was encouraging to note that fewer candidates copied out the question as part of their answer thereby saving a great deal of time.

Some candidates failed to complete all of the questions on the paper. It is extremely important that candidates learn to manage their time well. **Question 5** is worth 20 marks and failure to start and or to complete this can affect the overall mark on the paper quite dramatically.

In **Question 5** the rubric states that both parts of the question should be answered in 140 words in total. Candidates should observe the word limit because only limited latitude is allowed beyond this figure. Candidates will not be awarded content marks after the 140 words. No introductory remarks about the subject are needed. They will gain no marks and only use up valuable words out of the 140 maximum.

In general candidates should aim to use 90 to 100 words for the résumé and 40 to 50 words for the personal response. This relates closely to the content marks available for each part.

More candidates than in previous years wrote a general essay in answer to **Question 5**. In this case the candidate will score 0 for content which must be drawn from the two texts.

The same five point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4** and **5**. This means that candidates must maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the paper if they are to score high marks overall.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates had little difficulty matching up the correct alternatives. Both the correct number and/or definition were accepted as the answer. Minor copying errors were also tolerated.

- (a) This was generally well done although occasionally candidates thought that alternative (ii) was the correct choice.
- (b)(c)(d) These were well done.
- (e) This was well done although *passible* was often rendered as *franchissable* instead of *punissable*.

Question 2

This task proved to be extremely difficult and required the candidates to manipulate the grammar of the sentence. Minor spelling mistakes were not penalised but grammatical mistakes were.

- (a) This question proved to be quite difficult because of the use of the passive and the need for feminine agreement on *devrait être interdite*.
- (b) This question was quite well done. Many different approaches were accepted including *ce n'est pas seulement pour fumer le tabac que le papier à cigarettes est utilisé/ce n'est pas seulement pour fumer le tabac qu'on utilise le papier à cigarettes*.
- (c) This question was not well answered. Candidates needed to change from the passive to the pluperfect tense. This time, the removal of agreement caused problems (i.e. *avait rejeté* from *avait été rejetée*).
- (d) This question proved to be too difficult for most of the candidates who failed to make accurate use of the passive.
- (e) This was extremely difficult and only the best candidates managed the future tense with some relevant phrase such as *sera nécessaire, devra avoir lieu, devra être mis en place*.

Question 3

Candidates who copy whole sentences and even paragraphs from the text are not demonstrating comprehension of the text even if they include the correct information within the answer. The candidate must show some ability to alter the text: without doing so they will score no marks. A lot of copying from the text was observed.

- (a) Most candidates managed to score 2 of the 3 marks for this question. They realised that more effective measures were being demanded especially for young people. However, the candidates could also have deduced, and for a third mark, that MPs were not satisfied with the measures taken by the government.
- (b) This question attracted a great deal of copying. Most candidates successfully identified the relevant information but instead of making small changes they frequently copied the text thereby failing to score any marks. Minor changes to the text would have been rewarded such as *il faut interdire toute publicité* to *il faut arrêter/supprimer toute publicité*.

Similarly *interdire la vente de tabac aux moins de 16 ans* could have been given a mark for *interdire la vente de tabac aux adolescents* and *rendre obligatoire l'inscription sur les blocs de papier à cigarettes du message "fumer tue"*, by changing it to *l'inscription "fumer tue" doit être imprimée sur les blocs de papier à cigarettes*.

Candidates who replaced *les papiers à cigarettes* with *les paquets de cigarettes* changed the meaning and therefore were not given a mark.

- (c) This was well answered. Nearly all the candidates managed to say that the statistics related to the number of deaths caused by smoking and that children were beginning to smoke at a younger age.

- (d) This was generally well handled with 2 marks being given for *la peine proposée/un an de prison* was too heavy.
- (e) This was quite well done. *Ne.....que* was confused with *nepas* by many candidates leading them to believe the opposite of what Monsieur Bur was thinking. If the candidate managed to say that in packets of 30, tobacco was less expensive, then they generally gained a second mark by saying that people would be encouraged to smoke or vice versa for packets of 20.
- (f) This produced some good answers about the fact that Monsieur Bur wanted to increase the price of cigarettes and that it would discourage smokers. Often candidates failed to say that the debate was necessary to decide if taxes should be increased or not. An alternative mark was available for saying that the ministry wanted to protect the health of the population.

Question 4

- (a) Nearly all candidates scored 1 mark out of the 2 available for this question. They correctly stated that more men than women die from smoking. Few, however, noticed that a second point could be made for stating that women felt reassured as a result, believing that cigarettes were not as dangerous for them.
- (b) This question was well answered. Most said that men were smoking less and women more but the second part produced a great deal of lifting of the phrase *mettent la main plus souvent au paquet de cigarettes* instead of *fument plus souvent/de plus en plus souvent*.
- (c) This question was well done.
- (d) This proved to be a difficult question. Few candidates understood the quotation knowing neither *ne....point* nor the sense of *parité*. It was necessary for candidates to explain or re-phrase the quotation (e.g. *devant le tabac – à propos du tabac/il n'y a point – il n'y a pas/de parité – d'égalité*).
- (e) This question was well answered as there were five possible answers and only 2 marks. Despite this, many candidates wrongly indicated *cancer du poumon* as a danger which affected only women whereas low fertility, risks of smoking and the pill, more dangerous pregnancies, smaller babies and premature ageing of the skin were more obvious answers.
- (f) This question produced a great deal of lifting. It is simply not enough to copy *un plan de formation pour les professionnels de santé*. Some manipulation must take place such as *il propose de former les professionnels de santé* or *un plan de formation pour les médecins*. The second mark equally attracted a lot of copying, this time with the phrase *une campagne de communication en direction des femmes*. This could easily have scored a mark by changing *communication* for *information* or *en direction* for *pour*.

Question 5

It is essential that candidates manage their time correctly so that they answer all the questions on the paper.

Candidates should stick to the word limit. Part of the exercise is to get the candidates to focus on a summary of the main issues of the two texts. It would be unfair to candidates who do find ways of summarising succinctly if lengthy essays in excess of 200 words were given full marks. Similarly, if candidates write significantly less than 140 words, they cannot be expected to be awarded the full language mark.

No introduction to the answer is required and, given the amount of information to be summarised, they should not waste words on general reflections.

It is vital to recognise the importance of the rubric defining the task. There are two clear questions to answer:

- a summary of the texts
- a personal response to the subject.

140 words is the aim for the two sections and only a limited number of words beyond that figure are allowed, usually the completion of the sentence. Clearly candidates should consider writing a summary of 90 to 100 words which can gain 10 content marks and a personal response of 40 to 50 words which can gain 5 marks.

There were two clear areas indicated for the summary: *résumez les dangers du tabac et les mesures proposées pour les combattre*. The mark scheme is constructed to take account of this dual task. The question also states *telle qu'elle est présentée dans ces deux textes* so candidates can only gain marks by making reference to specific details in the texts.

The remaining 5 marks for content require candidates to give a brief personal response to the topic, which is marked as a mini essay taking account of ideas, personal point of view and interest of response. If a candidate writes only a general essay it will be regarded as a personal response and can only score a maximum of 5 marks out of 20.

Language is marked on a global assessment out of 5 as illustrated below:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 5 | Very good. Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures. |
| 4 | Good. Higher incidence of error than above but clearly has a sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures. |
| 3 | Sound. Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems informing correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions. |
| 2 | Below average. Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions often incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives. |
| 0-1 | Poor. Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error. |

Papers 8682/03 and 9716/03

Essay

General comments

This paper was generally completed satisfactorily, being very similar to that of previous years, both from the point of view of the standard of written French, and from the range and depth of ideas used. Few candidates produced essays showing a total misunderstanding of the question, and it was pleasing to note that there were fewer scripts in which the required number of words stated in the rubric had been greatly exceeded. This showed sound preparation and examination technique.

At the top end of the range, essays showed evidence of thorough preparation and impressive knowledge of the topic chosen, with ideas clearly linked and developed and leading to a conclusion. The language was accurate, ambitious in its use of more complex structures, and demonstrated a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.

In the middle of the range, there tended to be less focus. In **Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5** for example, candidates needed to take two major ideas into account before structuring their essays, and quite a number failed to do so, dealing with one or the other but failing to link the relationship between the two. The language tended to be somewhat inconsistent and patchy, perhaps due in part to candidates leaving themselves with insufficient time to carry out a systematic revision of what they had written.

Weaker candidates' essays were characterised by considerable irrelevancy and generalisation, with little focus on the issues involved. They tended to show a general weakness in paragraphing and little or no development of an argument leading to a conclusion. Correct use of basic grammar was a problem, elementary errors were frequent, and vocabulary showed little variation, with considerable repetition of common words or of extracts from the question.

A common difficulty across the board was in selecting the correct possessive adjective, or preposition used with *on*, as in phrases such as *on doit nous occuper de vos enfants*, instead of *on doit s'occuper de vos enfants*. Conversely, particularly in the case of some of the weaker candidates, there was a tendency to produce phrases such as *s'il y a un problème, vous devriez...* instead of *on devrait...*

Further common areas of difficulty, particularly amongst candidates in the middle of the range and below, included: the use of *ce qui*, *ce que*, *ce dont*, *leur/leurs* as adjectives and pronouns; *faire face à* (commonly as in: *les problèmes qu'on fait face, les problèmes qu'on fait face à*); confusion of *à cause de/parce que/grâce à*; *chaque/chacun* (*chaque d'entre eux*); *apparence/apparition*; *changer/changer de*; *résulte/résultat*; the construction of *apprendre, enseigner, donner, penser, permettre, plusieurs, un nombre de, beaucoup de*; the spelling of *pollution, technologie, tendance, caractère, aggraver, agressif, délinquant, inonder, problème, exemple, environnement, pétrole*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question attracted very few candidates, some of whom did not relate it to a French-speaking country, but to the region in which they live. Whilst problems were identified, weaker essays did not suggest solutions. Some of those who opted to use the conditional tense to answer *Que peut-on faire pour les résoudre?* tended to have some difficulty with tense sequences. The most commonly discussed problems were war, political unrest, poverty, Aids, drug abuse, rising crime rates and inadequate infrastructures.

Question 2

This was a fairly popular question. Perhaps surprisingly, a minority of candidates confused *intolérants* with *intolérables* and wrote essays on that theme. Few candidates disagreed with the statement and most took the slant that if their parents appear to be intolerant, it is because they wish to protect them from some of the evils of society, something that they will probably wish to do for their own children in the future.

Question 3

This was one of the more popular questions and attracted candidates from across the ability range. There was quite a strong tendency for the first part of the question to be explored at much greater length and in greater depth than the second, producing rather unbalanced essays. Here, many answers focused on an account of personal trips and on ways in which candidates think these may have affected them, such as making them more appreciative of what they have got, becoming aware of some of the shortcomings of their own country, eradicating some of their stereotyped images of other countries or enriching them culturally. However, candidates who also addressed the second part of the question came up with a wide range of ideas, such as: "genuine culture is being eroded and made commonplace just to put on shows for tourists"; "tourism can bring with it an increase in social evils such as drug and alcohol abuse, as well as prostitution"; "younger people in less developed countries wish to adopt aspects of the lifestyle of the visitors' culture such as fashion, music, fast food, much to the alarm of the older generations, thus creating social tensions".

Question 4

This was the second most popular question, and was on the whole well answered with most candidates making valid comments in generally well structured essays. The vast majority disagreed with the statement, the commonest argument being that there is no substitute for experience in the classroom. Other points included the view that if all teachers over the age of thirty were to retire or be made redundant, there would be an acute shortage of teaching staff, along with the fact that there would be a lack of experienced practitioners to guide younger colleagues in the early stages of their careers. Those candidates who produced wider-ranging consideration of the question also addressed the idea *le monde change vite*, focusing principally on the increasing use of technology, particularly computers, in the classroom. Here, the principal points made were that the content of such subjects as History, languages and Maths does not really change, and that dedicated teachers will in any case take the necessary steps to keep abreast of changes in their subject. From the vocabulary point of view, common errors resulted from a failure to differentiate between *savoir* and *connaître*, the use of *sujet* for *matière*, and in the construction of *enseigner*.

Question 5

This was by far the most popular question, and on the whole, the most competently answered, using a sound subject-specific vocabulary. Candidates across the ability range showed a sound knowledge of conservation issues, touching amongst other issues on the various forms of pollution and their causes, climate change with its consequences, renewable energy, recycling and deforestation. Other issues such as overpopulation and the possible threat of a disaster such as Chernobyl appeared in the more wide-ranging essays. Less well-informed candidates made reference to unwelcome but relatively rare threats to the planet such as *marées noires* and the dropping of litter in the street and on beaches, whilst a minority of others referred to unwelcome natural disasters such as earthquakes as a threat to the planet's survival. The main difficulty arose when the phrase *il est trop tard* in the essay title was ignored until the conclusion, although better-informed candidates made impressive reference to steps already being made by some countries to try and stop further degradation of the environment. Most of these showed faith in the power of man's inventiveness and of technology to ultimately overcome current threats.

Question 6

This was the least popular question, attempted by a very small number of candidates: most answers were rather weak, a common feature being a failure to define *les risques que courent les scientifiques* or to address *excessifs*. The overall tendency was to list various forms of medical progress such as cloning, stem-cell culture, with little analysis.

Papers 8670/04 and 9716/04

Texts

General comments

The paper produced a wide spread of marks, but with a more substantial proportion in the middle and lower reaches of the scale than at the top. Examiners found it difficult to award really high marks for an entire script, often because of the inconsistency in the quality of the three answers. It was not uncommon to find two essays of clear Grade A quality but a third which did not reach that standard. This was sometimes a matter of inadequate time management, betrayed by a short third essay, sometimes one of uneven knowledge across the texts studied. At the lower end of the spectrum, there were quite a lot of scripts with only two answers.

Once again, many candidates who had clearly gained a thorough knowledge of a particular text let themselves down by failing to address the question set. Past reports have consistently drawn attention to the self-penalisation of candidates who either ignore the question and present their own agenda, or make a passing reference or two to the question, usually in the first and last paragraphs, but fail to address it in the main body of their answer.

There were few instances of rubric infringement. The length of essays is now mostly within the recommended word count, and only a very small number of candidates answer more than one question on a particular book. However, infringements of one kind or another persist, and Centres are advised to remind candidates to adhere to the instructions in the question paper. The majority of scripts were legible and well presented, but in some cases the standard of handwriting and the quality of written French was so poor as to make the work virtually impossible to read. The problem of pre-learned material re-surfaced in cases where relatively weak candidates produced obviously derivative paragraphs interspersed with unconvincing and poorly expressed comments of their own. This contrast is always a give-away.

Comments on specific questions**Section A****Question 1**

André Gide: *La Porte étroite*

A substantial number of candidates answered on this text. They mostly showed a good knowledge of the narrative, and the best essays managed to convey an understanding of the characters. Weaker candidates, however, found the moral dilemma and psychological issues difficult to analyse.

- (a) Most candidates succeeded in identifying the reference to the Pasteur's sermon in the opening words of the extract. Some, however, made vague and general comments about Jérôme's upbringing – which were not necessarily irrelevant in themselves – without pinpointing the context of the phrase. The second part of the question generated answers of widely varying quality. Candidates were generally able to convey an awareness of Jérôme's determination to be virtuous, and also the idea that it would make him happy to be so. What most candidates did not seem to understand was the resonance of the word *confondais*. A good commentary on almost any extract from this text requires an awareness of Gide's irony. Candidates were invited, implicitly, to appreciate the narrator's self-criticism. Virtue for its own sake manifestly failed to bring happiness to either Jérôme or Alissa, and candidates should have taken this line rather than simply paraphrasing Jérôme's naïve aspirations. Explanations of the word *victoires* were not always accurate: abler candidates realised that the theme of this extract was self-control in pursuit of purity, whilst others suggested that Jérôme was talking about academic success or about overcoming Alissa's reluctance to allow the relationship to develop naturally.
- (b) The essay question clearly referred to Alissa's letters to Jérôme and not to her journal, but this did not prevent a significant number of those who attempted this question from writing to a greater or lesser extent about the latter. Whilst it was perfectly legitimate to use the journal to demonstrate that Alissa was not being honest in the letters, candidates were not expected to devote a larger proportion of their essays to this aspect than to an analysis of the letters themselves. Such an analysis would have focused on the excuses endlessly presented to postpone their meetings, and the encouragement to Jérôme which is followed systematically by further prevarication. The best answers found instances of these features, and the odd one even managed to pick up on the *ne...que* in the question, showing that the letters show, for example, not only a lack of honesty but also her frustration and confusion. The mention of such words would have removed the unduly censorious tone that some candidates took in their attempts to demonstrate Alissa's dishonesty. References to moral ambiguity in Gide tend to convey a better understanding of the text than a 'black and white' approach.

Question 2

Molière: *Les Femmes savantes*

- (a) A new Molière text this year, but with no change in the high percentage of candidates choosing to answer on it. As usual, most were fully conversant with the situation evoked by the passage, but dealt with varying degrees of success with the effect of Molière's comic techniques. Many answers to the first part of the question tended to paraphrase the text, whereas what was wanted, both here and in (ii), was commentary on the in-built and absurd contradictions of Armande's position, caused in part by her limited understanding of the true nature of *préciosité*. Candidates should be careful not to give the impression that the movement was by definition ridiculous. They were not always able to show that Henriette's common sense throws into comic relief the illogical and irrational position taken by bogus *précieuses* such as Armande. Thus, it was not enough to say – as most did – that Armande was ridiculous because she was still in love with Clitandre, jealous and determined to prevent his marriage to Henriette. Few candidates really got to grips with the comic discrepancy between Armande's pretence and the reality of her common humanity which she tries but fails to hide. Most dealt confidently with the third part of the question, and those who pointed out that Clitandre had every right to reject a woman who made such ludicrous demands on him were given appropriate credit.

- (b) Answers on the role of Clitandre were generally sound, if not always well-structured. There was a tendency in some quarters to rely heavily on lengthy quotation and/or paraphrase, and it was pointed out again that such an approach does not gain more than average marks. The best answers followed the entirely legitimate line that Clitandre represents a balanced view of intellectual people. Some might profitably have pointed out that the role of the *raisonneur* is a theatrical device deployed to point out the absurdity of extreme attitudes and behaviour. Candidates who applauded Clitandre as a perfect human specimen perhaps overstated the view that he is the playwright's mouthpiece.

Question 3

Anouilh: *Becket*

- (a) This was also a new text this year, with a good take-up in many Centres. Candidates gave a good account of the situation in the extract, although weaker ones failed to point out the symbolic significance of the Archbishop's vestments in Becket's preparation to face his assassins. The best answers explained his decision to appear in the Cathedral and assume his pastoral role before meeting his death. Commentaries on the behaviour of the monk were all too often descriptive rather than analytical. The question and the context offered candidates the opportunity to evoke the first meeting of the two characters and to comment on Becket's influence on the monk in the course of the play. Those who succeeded in doing this had no difficulty in identifying the 'joy' alluded to in the third part of the question, but candidates with a less thorough knowledge of the text produced answers which were wholly inaccurate.
- (b) The type of question which invites candidates to register their level of agreement with a given statement all too often leads them to make a firm commitment one way or the other in their introductory paragraph. This question provided a classic example of the opportunity for the good candidates to weigh up the points 'for and against' the given statement and to offer a balanced judgement. A significant weakness in many answers was an almost random list of events in the play which were taken to show that Becket was or was not a warm human being. It was rare to find an essay which first set out the reasons why this perception of Becket might be justified, followed by the counter-arguments. There is still some merit in the old formula 'thesis – antithesis – conclusion'.

Question 4

Balzac: *Le Père Goriot*

- (a) Candidates were ill-advised to tackle this question unless they were able accurately to place the passage in context. Those who ranged over a number of issues which may or may not have been on Rastignac's mind at the time did not convey a clear perception of the reference to the temptation involving Victorine, and the role of Vautrin as a tempter. The question on his starry-eyed reference to Delphine prompted some rather confused responses. Candidates were able to provide contrasting views of Goriot's daughters, following Rastignac's own line of thought, but many candidates missed the opportunity to allude to Rastignac's naivety with regard to Delphine, and the very big 'if' on which he bases the hypothesis of her frequent visits in the future. Similarly, candidates were able to account for Rastignac's condemnation of Madame de Restaud, but less inclined to explain his 'black and white' perception of the two women in terms of his immaturity.
- (b) The general quality of answers to this question was somewhat disappointing. Candidates offered perfectly viable explanations of the use of the word *enfer* to describe Parisian society, but explanations of Rastignac's sense of obligation to remain there were often unclear or over-simplified. Answers which showed an understanding of his determination to succeed were of course on the right lines, but Examiners would have welcomed fuller comment on the moral ambiguity or even, perhaps, moral abdication implied by his acceptance of society's terms of reference.

Section B**Question 5**Camus: *La Peste*

- (a) Examiners have continued to find relatively little of high quality in candidates' work on this text, despite its being a veteran of A Level papers over the last thirty years, and therefore unlikely to present problems in terms of preparation and anticipation of likely questions. Analyses of the character and philosophical position of Tarrou tended to be rather sketchy. Candidates were able, on the whole, to describe his background and particularly the influence of his father's involvement in passing the death sentence. They were rather less clear, in most cases, about how to define 'sainthood' in this context, and there was not enough by way of detailed references to what he says in the lengthy discourse from which the quotation in the question was taken. On the other hand, most essays contained instances of Tarrou's contribution to the fight against the plague, but this often consisted of narrative, rather than the practical examples being used to illustrate the theory.
- (b) This question was (perhaps unexpectedly) similar to that in last June's paper, but on the whole practice did not appear to make perfect. Candidates dwelt on the practical manifestations of isolation, starting with the closing of the gates and moving through the crises faced by a number of individual characters. The better essays went beyond narrative accounts of people being physically separated from loved ones and identified selfishness as a root cause of isolation. This theme should have led to a discussion of the solution (i.e. moving from selfishness to solidarity), and high marks were awarded to the few candidates who took this broader view of the question, in contrast to the anecdotal approach adopted by most.

Question 6del Castillo: *Tanguy*

- (a) Candidates who had studied this text, new to our syllabus, appeared to have a good grasp of the story line and the evolution of the main character. They were able confidently to assess the negative impact of his father on Tanguy's childhood. The issue of betrayal and the disintegration of the family unit were well documented in the majority of answers. That said, the essay title invited candidates to focus on the last section of the novel, in which the reasons for Tanguy's inability to relate to his father are made clear, and few candidates provided sufficient detail to explain the character's understandable rejection of his father's attitudes and way of life.
- (b) Very few candidates attempted this question, with the result that it is impossible to comment usefully on trends, strengths and weaknesses. The better answers found something positive to say as well as cataloguing the negative impact on Tanguy. Candidates who focused on the implications of this episode for Tanguy's response to religion in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular were given appropriate credit.

Question 7de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

- (a) Most answers to this question ranged from competent to very good. Laurence's journey towards the potential assertion of her individuality was well understood, and essays mostly provided a reasonable amount of detail, albeit not always in an order which suggested thoughtful planning. It must again be stressed that an essay which conveys a sense of direction will receive more credit than one in which the order of points appears random. The title also provided the opportunity for those who read the question carefully to distinguish themselves: the word *principal* enabled such candidates to move on from their treatment of the theme of a quest for identity to address whatever they saw as the main theme. This was welcomed by Examiners, provided of course that the argument was adequately justified and supported by examples from the text.
- (b) Examiners could not understand why candidates chose this question without, apparently, a clear understanding of its terms of reference. An able candidate had the opportunity to show real sophistication in dealing with the concept of irony, but most of the relatively small number of answers showed little or no understanding of it. Consequently, even quite detailed accounts of the characters and their activities could not be given much credit, in that the words of the essay title were used without their being linked logically to what was being written about the novel. This was a case where a weak third essay, possibly as a result of a mistaken choice, lowered a potentially high overall score.

Question 8

Zobel: *La Rue Cases-Nègres*

- (a) The reappearance of this novel on the syllabus has clearly been welcomed by many Centres, and it has already attracted a great deal of interest and generated some of the best work in the scripts marked in this session. Indeed, many average or fairly weak candidates scored a higher mark on this text than on the others they studied. There is a clear analogy here with the recently departed *Sac de billes*: an engaging story line and a fairly straightforward set of characters and issues. That is not to say that all fared equally well when they tackled these two questions. Some who chose (a) concentrated on José's relationships with various adults and excluded the important aspect involving the way life in this community is depicted.
- (b) Answers were generally good. Only a few of the weaker candidates were unable to go beyond José's sense of obligation to his grandmother. Many essays successfully alluded to the effect on him of opportunities to learn from various people throughout the story. The theme of social injustice was hinted at by those who talked mainly about M'man Tine's lot in life, and was expanded upon to good effect by those who saw that this theme assumes increasing importance in José's mind as he grows up. Examiners look forward to more good work on this text, in the hope that candidates will read the questions carefully and address them precisely.