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FRENCH.....

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level **2**

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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 Subsidiary Level

<p>Paper 8682/01 Speaking</p>

General comments

There are more Centres than ever entering for these syllabuses, offering a wide view of candidates' interests and abilities, and an insight into cultural differences and perception of the world.

Recordings were generally clear and correctly labelled, but teacher/Examiners should make every attempt to ensure that when using ninety minute cassettes, the examinations of only two candidates are recorded per side, and when using a sixty minute cassette, the examination of only *one* candidate is recorded per side. It can be disruptive to be obliged to turn a cassette over during the examination, as material can be lost and the candidate's performance may be affected. Most samples were accompanied by the correct paperwork, though still with a few clerical errors.

It is helpful to Moderators if Working Mark Sheets have every column completed, rather than just a global total noted for each section, so that advice can be offered on assessing the various elements of the examination.

Examiners should note that it is preferable to spread the sample as evenly as possible throughout the range, so that appropriate moderation can be carried out.

Presentation

This is intended to last between three and three and a half minutes, without interruption by the teacher/Examiner.

Candidates had selected a wide variety of topics this year, ranging from the more personal and individual to the global, and had researched their topics conscientiously. Large, global topics give plenty of scope for development and discussion, and candidates dealt well with *La Religion*, *La Santé*, *La Femme*, *La Famille*, and *L'Energie Nucléaire*, among others. Candidates who choose this kind of topic may need to be reminded that it is essential that they make reference to France or francophone culture and society in their presentation, and this is also sometimes the case with more locally rooted topics. Though their whole presentation may be notionally based in a francophone environment, they must refer to it, or they risk their mark for content/presentation being halved. There are still a few Centres who do not seem aware of this requirement, though choosing topics which could be related to francophone culture (*La Famille*, *Les Ados*, *Le Sport*).

The more personal topics included *La cuisine en France*, *Debussy*, *Paris/Dakar*, *Grenoble*, and the *Selle Français*, together with a more personal view of the position of *La Femme musulmane*.

Teacher/Examiners would do well to advise their candidates to think about the structure of the presentation - they need to decide on the five or six most important points and be prepared to talk about them in a presentation which fits into three to three and a half minutes. They should not be delivering a speech learnt parrot-fashion - though Moderators appreciate that candidates are eager to do well - their presentations sometimes suffer from being over-practised. In the interests of international standards, teacher/Examiners should not let candidates continue uninterrupted for longer than this, as selection of material is, in itself, a skill needed here. If candidates are allowed to continue uninterrupted for seven to eight minutes, as occurred in some cases, the sense of the structure of the presentation is lost, and there is little time to ask questions and determine the level of comprehension and responsiveness.

Topic conversation

This section is intended to last seven to eight minutes.

Candidates generally coped well, though over-rehearsal can present a problem here, too. It is impossible to arrive at a fair mark for comprehension if the candidate knows exactly what questions are going to be asked and can trot out prepared answers to them.

The common failing again this year was that candidates did not ask questions. Marks are awarded for 'seeking information and opinions' which means that candidates *must* ask questions. Where candidates do not ask questions naturally in the course of conversation, the teacher/Examiner should prompt them to do so, both in this section and towards the end of the general conversation section.

General conversation

This section should last eight to nine minutes.

General conversation covered a good range of topic areas, generally different from those covered in the presentation and Topic Conversation. The examination should not consist of a series of questions answered by pre-learnt chunks of essay material - the ideal is to develop a discussion, a conversation between two people on a subject which interests the candidate and on which he/she is able to express ideas and opinions. He/she should also be able to ask questions of the teacher/Examiner on the subject. However many questions were asked in the Topic Conversation, it is still a requirement that questions be asked in the General Conversation section as well. Marks for this element cannot be awarded unless there are questions to be assessed, and teacher/Examiners must prompt candidates to give them the opportunity to gain these marks. Teacher/Examiners should be wary in their own responses, that they do not take up too much of the examination time, and allow candidates to demonstrate their own language skills.

Overall, candidates had generally been well-prepared for the examination and were able to demonstrate a good linguistic knowledge, together with an ability to discuss a wide range of subjects, revealing interesting insights.

Paper 8682/02

Reading and Writing

General comments

There was a full range of performance on this paper. The best candidates gave full and accurate answers in fluent French whilst weaker candidates found difficulty in re-formulating information from their available vocabulary and grammar. There were however few very weak candidates who found the task of comprehension of the texts and accuracy in written French too demanding.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time repeating the question as part of the answer. No marks can be gained in this way and a good deal of time is lost.

Candidates should not copy extended sections from the text in answer to comprehension questions as is stated clearly in the rubric. Candidates may of course use material from the passage in their answers but in such a way as to show understanding of the text. The candidate may provide an explanation of the information by adding to or extending the quoted material. Even quite small changes in the language will show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language. If an answer consists of an extended quotation with no indication of understanding, the marks will not be awarded.

Quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If a candidate scored zero for content, it would be impossible to give any mark for language. (If this were not true, any irrelevant or faulty set of answers could be awarded). Therefore, if individual questions score zero for content, the final mark for language is adjusted accordingly.

With regard to **Question 5**, candidates lose marks if they write a general essay rather than address the specific points in the original passage.

It is important that candidates observe the word limit, for only limited latitude is allowed beyond that. Candidates will not be awarded content marks if they make points after 140 words. No introduction to the task is necessary.

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. The categories for quality of language are given in the syllabus.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was very well answered. Few candidates found difficulty matching the words given to specific words in the text. Items **(a)**, **(b)**, **(d)** and **(e)** were generally correct. Item **(c)** presented some difficulty to a number of candidates who answered *inexistant* instead of *vital*. *Le minimum vital* was also accepted. Minor spelling errors such as the circumflex accent on *chomage* were tolerated but not grammatical mistakes.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered and many candidates scored full marks. It is however a test of grammatical knowledge and candidates must not omit significant parts of the sentence.

Item **(a)** was well done. Candidates showed that they were able to re-structure the original phrase into *c'est votre pays qui a le devoir moral de nous aider*. It was important that *moral* or *moralement* was linked to *devoir* and not to *aider*.

Item **(b)** required the use of the subjunctive after *il a fallu que*. Both the present and the perfect subjunctive were accepted.

Item **(c)** brought a wide range of acceptable answers such as *quitter son pays, c'est le voeu du Malien* and *quitter son pays, c'est ce que veut le Malien*. The spelling of *voeu* presented problems to many candidates but others found acceptable alternatives in *le souhait* and *le désir*.

Item **(d)** required the use of *tout ce que* and many candidates failed to include *ce*.

In item **(e)** candidates were asked to re-phrase the question using *ce n'est que par*. This was generally well done although some candidates failed to see that in using the negative it was no longer necessary to retain *exclusivement*.

Question 3

Candidates are reminded that those who copy *des phrases entières du texte* are not demonstrating comprehension and do not therefore gain full marks. Candidates must seek to manipulate the language in some way even by making small changes or by explaining the sense of the phrase by using different vocabulary or structures.

Item **(a)** was well answered. Candidates realised that Senegal and Mali turned *naturellement* to France because they were former colonies and that their people had fought for France. As a result France had a moral obligation to help and to shelter.

Item **(b)** required candidates to explain the phrase *synonyme de succès et de réussite sociale*. Most candidates managed to indicate that living conditions in France were better than in their country of origin, that jobs were available and it was possible to improve one's social status. A further answer was that, for these migrants, France equals success and that going to France means that they will prosper.

In item **(c)**, again it was important to define the terms and to explain the significance of the phrase. Poverty on its own was not powerful enough to gain a point for *le degré zéro de pauvreté*. It required extreme poverty linked to a lack of employment, food and a failing economic system. A number of candidates misunderstood the phrase thinking that *le degré zéro* meant that there was no poverty at all.

Item (d) was misunderstood by a number of candidates. *Retour* was sometimes interpreted as... candidates managed to include the fact that the country depended on money sent back from... failed to say what the effects of a mass return would be on employment, food and the economy. The... the conditional tense was only rarely seen.

Item (e) was generally well answered. Candidates realised that money earned in France was sent back to the country and used to finance projects and to help the country. Some candidates were uncertain who *les Maliens français* were or where they were. The reference to 80% was frequently misunderstood. Many thought that 80% of the population of Kaye was living in France. The spelling of *projet* caused problems for some candidates.

Item (f) was well answered with most candidates scoring 2 marks.

Question 4

Candidates must find ways of expressing their ideas without copying whole sentences from the text. It is important to manipulate the text some way in order to obtain maximum marks.

In item (a) most candidates scored well, realising that the French authorities were failing to pursue the traffickers, stop the trade and dismantle the networks. Some candidates thought that *se plaindre* was a positive statement about what the authorities were doing.

Item (b) was well answered. Candidates understood that people were prepared to sell everything to pay illegal organisations for the journey. Less frequently offered was the fact that they were prepared to leave everyone behind.

Item (c) was very well answered and most candidates scored 2 marks.

Item (d) proved to be more difficult. Many candidates had difficulty re-phrasing *en ratifiant la convention* and *il faut rapidement légiférer*. The conditional tense was rarely used in answer to this question. However, the best candidates did manage to find excellent interpretations not only of these phrases but also of *dotés d'outils efficaces*.

Item (e) was a difficult question and required candidates to summarise the main elements of the trade. Most candidates managed the fact that the migrants were exploited and ill treated by the traffickers. The reasons for leaving their country however were rarely covered.

Question 5

It is important that candidates stick to the word limit in this question. Part of the exercise is to get the candidate to focus on a summary of the main issues. 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, words should not be wasted 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 two texts
- a personal response to the subject.

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

There are two clear areas indicated for the summary:

- *les raisons pour lesquelles les migrants cherchent à tout prix à partir*
- *les difficultés et les dangers qui se présentent.*

The mark scheme is constructed to take account of this dual task. The question also states *les trouvez dans ces deux textes* so candidates can only gain marks by making reference to specific details in the passages. No marks can be gained by writing a general essay. The remaining five content questions require candidates to write 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 the response. To be able to score 5 marks for a personal response, candidates must have enough words left out of the 140. Language is marked according to the language grid given in the syllabus. Candidates should be aware of anglicisms such as *le government*, *les avantages*, *les autorités* and *reigner*. Some confusion exists in the use of *ce/sel/ceux/c'est/ses/ces* and *tout/tous* (as in *tous le monde*).

Paper 8682/03

Essay

General comments

A choice of six titles was given and essays were marked out of 40, with 24 marks being given for language and 16 for content. The best candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of their chosen topic and an ability to focus clearly on the specific demands of the question set. Their French was not only grammatically correct but was also elegant and characterised by a fine sense of appropriate idiom. At the other end of the scale, essays bore witness to very little grammatical awareness and a failure to structure a coherent argument. Many essays were too general, showing a reliance on prepared answers to the prescribed topic areas and little, if any, attempt to target the title. Generally speaking, the need to organise the essays, write in paragraphs using an introduction and a conclusion, had been well instilled into the candidates right across the board. However, regrettably this was not the case for the upper limit of 400 words which was frequently exceeded. In future, it is intended that Examiners will be told to stop reading an essay once it is clear that a candidate has exceeded the word limit referred to in the rubric, with the result that over-long essays will be seriously penalised.

To a large extent, common language errors replicated those found in recent years. They included:

- confusion between homonyms and near homonyms, e.g. *ce/ceux, ces/ses/c'est, on/ont, dont/donc, d'avantage/davantage, guère/guerre, partilpartie, été/étaient, public/publique*
- omission of *ne* in negative structures, especially in phrases with *ne....que*
- inability to distinguish between the possessive pronoun *leurs* and the indirect object pronoun *leur*
- random use of *en* as in *il en existe des gens*
- use of plural verb forms with singular subjects as in *le gouvernement sont*
- use of hanging participles, i.e. *en* + present participle and *après avoir* + past participle, not linked to the subject of the sentence
- difficulties with the use of *dont* and *ce dont*, e.g. *tout ce qu'ils en ont besoin*
- indiscriminate use of *on/se* and *nous/notre* within the same sentence
- anglicisms, e.g. *éventuellement* (eventually), *définitivement* (definitely), *place* (for *endroit*), *supporter* (for *soutenir*)
- use of *travaux* for *emplois*
- confusion between single and double letters in the spelling of such words as *aggraver*, *pillier*, *raisonnable*, *familial*, *handicapé*
- repeated misspellings, e.g. *autorité*, *grand-parents*, *apart*, *auqu'un*, *entre autre*, *développé* (despite the fact that the word was given in the title).

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

Very few candidates opted for this question. Most of those who did so explored the reasons why towns prove so attractive as to initiate mass migration towards them, but not many analysed the possible negative effects on the countryside. The most perceptive of those who did pointed out that there is also an opposite trend at present, in western countries, away from the now polluted and stressful towns back to the countryside. Specific references to *les pays francophones* were few and far between, and the phrase *dans les pays francophones* was generally included only as a token gesture towards the title.

Question 2

This was a popular question. Unfortunately, quite a lot of candidates paid no heed to the phrase *dans notre société* and, as a result, failed to focus on the question of public order: their essays, which often seemed to be pre-learnt, went down the road of the Iraq war, the 11th September and terrorism. Others gave a one dimensional response, agreeing with the statement and providing a number of fairly unconvincing examples taken from local *actualité*. Better candidates, on the other hand, were careful to tease out the role of governments, laying at least part of the blame for the increase in violence in society on their lack of action. Good essays also tended to examine the blame that can be apportioned to the role of the media, to the decline in religious beliefs (as most religions encourage law-abiding behaviour and non-violence), to the rise of the new god "Science", which gives no guidance as to appropriate behaviour in society, and to a general decline of morality.

Linguistically, a significant number of candidates had some difficulties with tenses, switching haphazardly between present and conditional, often within the same sentence but, on the whole, vocabulary was not a problem.

Question 3

Although quite popular, this question produced few really balanced essays. The majority of candidates tended to speak enthusiastically about the new technology as a tool for entertaining and also learning, or to deplore at length its evil influence and the dangers lurking behind every screen. The most common fault was the failure to analyse the reasons why schools could be regarded as more important: in many cases, schools were only mentioned in the conclusion. Though the ideas of some candidates who tackled this subject lacked subtlety, a number of interesting points were made, e.g.

- TV and the Internet are excellent learning tools in developed countries but they are not often available in the Third World
- Only if a child has a good grounding at school can they make full use of the Internet
- The Internet may be of great use after school years but it is not as important when a child is developing
- Schools act as a babysitting service when parents are at work. TV and the Internet cannot fulfil this role
- Influential does not mean important
- Schools make use of the Internet and the television as an adjunct to learning anyway
- The new technology may provide extra knowledge but not an education in the broader sense.

Better candidates acknowledged the contribution made to students' learning by the television and the Internet but demonstrated that schools have a great deal more to offer psychologically and socially. Moreover, as children adopt negative attitudes thrust upon them by television and the Internet, schools have an even more critical role to play than before, in order to counterbalance the damaging influence on the young and vulnerable adults of tomorrow.

Question 4

This was another popular question. Many candidates showed themselves to be well-informed on the issue and armed with plenty of relevant and apt vocabulary. Some, however, were unduly influenced by last year's title, focusing almost exclusively on aid from wealthy countries and bemoaning the selfishness of the rich. Although it was virtually impossible not to make some pertinent points relevant to the question set, too many candidates wasted time splitting hairs over terminology and attempting to differentiate between *les pays sous-développés* and *les pays en voie de développement*.

Organising the material proved quite a challenge for many. Some candidates, however, obviously very interested in the issue, analysed thoroughly the causes of the lack of prosperity of developing countries, outlining possible lines of remedial action for each of the problems identified, and wrote convincing, well-structured pieces. The better essays highlighted political stability, education, birth control and health care as major issues in determining the success of developing nations in their bid for self-improvement, with heavy debts and a lack of technical expertise as pressing areas of concern if countries with marketable resources are to achieve a measure of improvement in the standard of living of their citizens. One point, made only in some of the best essays, was that developed countries should not try to attract highly trained professionals such as nurses, doctors or computer technicians away from their own under-developed nations.

Question 5

This was the least well done of the questions. A fault common in many essays was a failure to highlight the different nature of the various problems caused by smoking on the one hand and drug taking on the other. A small number of candidates agreed with the statement in the title but, frequently, one had the impression that it was more through an inability to think of arguments against it rather than because of a genuinely held conviction. "Serves them right" and "let them suffer as a deterrent to others" were the main arguments used, whilst some also pointed out that precious resources should go to more deserving causes. Many wrote at length about the rebelliousness of teenagers, leading to consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs (all of which were lumped together as being illegal) and then belatedly remembered the title in the conclusion. Quite a lot of candidates, unable to think beyond the idea that it is a doctor's job to help people who are sick, launched into long passages full of sympathetic comments towards those afflicted with a whole range of ailments, including obesity, without proper focus on the issues raised by smoking and drug taking. *Le serment d'Hippocrate* - not uncommonly *le sermon d'Hippocrate* - was frequently well used by those who disagreed with the statement. Other arguments put forward by good candidates to counter it included the need to treat pregnant women for the sake of the unborn child, the desirability to lessen the cost of smokers' ill health to the world of work, and the urgent need to curtail the social evils which follow in the wake of drug taking. The human rights issues involved were also quite commonly addressed.

From the linguistic point of view, *drogueur* for *drogué* was rife. Moreover, quite a lot of candidates experienced difficulty with the tenses required to argue their case and also tended to confuse *pouvoir* with *devoir*.

Question 6

This was the most popular subject but, unfortunately, many candidates failed to read the question properly. One group totally ignored the *ne...que*. Of these, some simply waxed lyrical on the virtues of the delightful *cocon familial* perfectly formed to ensure the cosy and successful blossoming of a child. Others, interpreting *pour* as *par*, set out to demonstrate that only the arrival of children "makes" a family. Others noticed the *ne* but interpreted *que* as *plus*. Essays, then, analysed the way in which families nowadays do not cater for their children's needs: they have all but disappeared and certainly cannot be said to exist for the sake of the children. Another group substituted *ne devrait exister* for *n'existe que* and duly castigated irresponsible parents, especially mothers, for going out to work and neglecting their children. Other roles for families were said to pale in comparison with the essential role of producing and raising the next generation. Yet another creative interpretation was that *la famille n'existe que pour avoir des enfants et pour passer son bien aux enfants*.

Those who read and understood the title correctly generally wrote sensible essays. Most pointed out that children also support parents, often keeping them together at times of stress between father and mother, and that the elderly also need and deserve the support of younger adults and grandchildren. The better candidates also explored the important role of the family in transmitting values and traditions within society and in providing stability and restraint in times of rapid social change.

Linguistically speaking, most essays, whether properly focused or not, showed evidence of a sound knowledge of the basic vocabulary needed to handle this topic successfully.