FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/01

Speaking

Key messages

For teacher/Examiners:

- keep to the timings prescribed for the examination (see below) and, if necessary and appropriate, interrupt the Topic Presentation if it overruns significantly.
- if necessary, prompt candidates to ask questions during/at the end of each conversation section – but answer briefly.
- cover a range of topics in the General Conversation, some in depth, vary questions and topics from one candidate to another, be prepared to identify and follow the interests and passions of the candidate (not your own), and keep your own contributions to a minimum.
- create as natural a conversation as possible, interact with the candidate and avoid lists of pre-prepared questions, especially those which elicit a one-word or purely factual answer.

For candidates:

- make sure that the presentation is not just factual, but contains ideas and opinions and also allows further discussion in the Topic Conversation.
- ask questions of the teacher/Examiner in both conversation sections and make every effort to ask more than one question on the topic or topics under discussion in order to be awarded maximum marks.
- remember that the Topic Presentation must make clear reference to a francophone culture or society: *The presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken.* This must be more than a passing reference and candidates who live in a francophone country and who speak about an aspect of their own culture must make it clear beyond doubt to which country they are referring.

General comments

It is important for teacher/Examiners to remember that this examination is an opportunity for candidates to show what they have learnt and a chance for them to express and develop their ideas and opinions. Teacher/Examiners should see their role as providing and facilitating this opportunity.

The way in which a teacher/Examiner asks a question can make a huge difference to how a candidate is able to respond – teacher/Examiners need to be aware that very long, complex questions or closed questions often prompt short answers, sometimes just yes or no, whereas open questions such as *Comment?* or *Pourquoi?* may allow a candidate the freedom to answer at much greater length and in greater depth.

The examination should be a conversation, which can only be achieved by engaging with and responding to what the candidate says, not by asking a series of entirely unrelated questions with no follow-up. Going through a list of pre-prepared questions rarely results in a natural conversation.

Administration

Recordings this year were mainly clear, though there are still examples of faulty recording equipment and of the microphone favouring the teacher/Examiner rather than the candidate. There were a number of cases where recorded material was unplayable or where the recording had not been transferred correctly or where the original recording was inaudible or where the CD was damaged in transit or faulty. Teacher/Examiners must check the equipment before using it and ensure that the microphone favours the candidate without losing the teacher/Examiner's own contribution.

A number of recordings presented problems because of the recording format chosen. Where Centres use digital recording software, each candidate's file must be saved individually, as .mp3, and finalised correctly, so that each candidate's examination can be accessed for moderation. Files should be identified using precise candidate details rather than just "number 1, 2" etc.

Please ensure that all recording material (including CD and cassette cases) is labelled with details of the Centre, syllabus, and candidates, listed with their names and candidate numbers in the order of recording. Where a Centre has candidates at both A and AS, they should be recorded on separate CDs or cassettes. If using cassettes, only ONE candidate should be recorded per side of a 60 minute cassette and a maximum of TWO candidates per side of a 90 minute cassette. It is very disruptive to candidates for the teacher/Examiner to have to turn over a cassette in the middle of an examination - with the inevitable result that parts of the conversation are lost.

Centres are reminded that the sample of recordings they send should represent candidates throughout the range of the entry, from highest to lowest. There were one or two cases this session where there were significant gaps in the range, which impaired the moderation process.

Care should also be taken with the packaging of recorded material – CDs are not unbreakable and there have been a few cases of inadequately packaged CDs so damaged in transit that it has been impossible to listen to candidates. Please also avoid sticky tape or labels coming into contact with the recording side of CDs, as this makes them unplayable and runs the risk of damaging the equipment on which they are played.

There were a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transcribing them to the MS1 - this should be checked carefully before submission and all paperwork enclosed with the recordings. For the size of sample needed, please see the details in the syllabus booklet.

Some Centres awarded half marks, even though there is no provision for half marks in the Mark Scheme and several awarded marks out of 10 for *Providing* and/or *Seeking Opinions*, when the maximum is 5.

Centres are reminded that for moderation, in addition to the recordings, they need to send the Working Mark Sheet, the MS1 (computer mark sheet or equivalent), the Attendance Sheet and any other relevant paperwork.

Format of the examination

There are 3 distinct parts to the speaking test:

Presentation – to last 3 to 3½ minutes;
Topic Conversation – to last 7 to 8 minutes;
General Conversation – to last 8 to 9 minutes.

In order to be fair to all candidates across the world, these timings should be observed – where examinations are too short, candidates are not given opportunities to show what they can do, and where conversations are over-extended, an element of fatigue creeps in and candidates sometimes struggle to maintain their level of language. Teacher/Examiners must also remember that the longer their own contributions, the less time candidates have to develop their ideas. Responses to questions asked by candidates should be kept brief.

Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)

In this part of the examination, the candidate gives a **single** presentation, lasting about three minutes, on a specific topic of his or her choice, taken from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus booklet. This is the only prepared part of the examination and the only part for which candidates are able to choose what they want to talk about.

The topic list gives candidates a very wide choice – the most popular this year, at both A and AS Levels, remained *Le sport*, *Le conflit des générations, La famille*, *La cuisine française* and *La pollution*. There were a number of the usual favourites, such as drugs, unemployment, marriage, violence in society, discrimination, racism and immigration, some dealing with culture or politics in a French-speaking country, personal interests such as art or music. There were few topical presentations this session. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues.

For the most part, candidates were clearly aware of the need, stated in the syllabus, that the presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for *Content/Presentation* halved (see Speaking Test mark scheme).

Since the topic is chosen beforehand, candidates usually research quite widely, and have to select and structure their material to fit into 3 to 3½ minutes – additional material which cannot not be included in the actual presentation because of the time constraint may well prove very useful in the topic conversation section. In general, candidates had no problem speaking for the required time and many were able to give full and interesting presentations.

Candidates are advised to steer clear of very factual subjects – the mark scheme criteria for the *Content/Presentation* element makes it clear that in order to score well, the presentation should contain not just factual points, but ideas and opinions. Candidates need to think carefully before making their final choice and consider whether it will be possible to develop and expand their chosen topic.

Candidates only present ONE topic and the Topic Conversation which follows will seek to develop that same topic. A few candidates presented two topics instead of one as prescribed in the Syllabus.

Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)

In this section, candidates have the chance to expand on what they have already said and develop ideas and opinions expressed briefly during the presentation. Teacher/Examiners need to beware of merely asking questions which allow a repetition of the same material already offered – their aim should be to ask more probing questions in order to give candidates opportunities to expand on their original statements and then respond to what the candidate says. There are not necessarily "right" answers either here or in the General Conversation section and it is in the nature of a genuine conversation that those taking part may not agree with opinions expressed. However, differences of opinion can create lively debate (if handled sensitively and purposefully by the teacher/Examiner) and can give candidates the opportunity to defend their point of view.

At both A and AS Level, questions should go beyond the sort of questions appropriate at IGCSE Level. Candidates need to be able to show that they are capable of taking part in a mature conversation. In some cases, candidates were not able to offer much development or sustain the level of language used in their presentation, but many were successful in expressing additional ideas and seeking the opinions of the teacher/Examiner.

In each conversation section there are 5 marks available for questions the candidates ask of the teacher/Examiner: candidates should ask <u>more than one question</u> and teacher/Examiners must prompt them to do so. Teacher/Examiners should make sure that they do not spend too long on their own answers to candidates' questions, thereby depriving candidates of valuable time.

Teacher/Examiners should note that it is helpful both to candidates and Moderators to signal the end of the Topic Conversation and the beginning of the General Conversation.

General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)

The General Conversation is the most spontaneous section of the examination. Candidates will have prepared their own choice of topic for the Topic Presentation (to be continued in the Topic Conversation), but here they do not know what the teacher/Examiner will choose to discuss (and it is the teacher/Examiner who chooses, not the candidate). Clearly the areas of discussion will be those studied during the course and there were many varied and interesting discussions heard. In a Centre with a number of candidates, candidates should not all be asked to talk about the same list of subjects – themes should be varied from candidate to candidate and should on no account return to the original subject of the presentation.

This section is intended to be a conversation between teacher/Examiner and candidate, so it is not appropriate for the teacher/Examiner to ask a series of unrelated questions, to which the candidate responds with a prepared answer, after which the teacher/Examiner moves on to the next question on the list. Teacher/Examiners should display sensitivity in asking questions about topics of a personal nature i.e. religion and personal relationships and should try to keep their questions general rather than moving inappropriately into personal areas.

Teacher/Examiners should aim to discuss a minimum of 2 to 3 areas in **depth**, giving candidates opportunities to offer their own opinions and defend them in discussion. Although the section may begin with straightforward questions about family, interests or future plans, which can, in themselves, be developed beyond the purely factual (questions asking “Why?“ or “How?”), candidates at both A and AS Level should be prepared for conversation to move on to current affairs and more abstract topics appropriate to this level of examination.

Candidates should be prompted to ask questions of the teacher/Examiner in order to give them the opportunity to score marks for this criterion, though teacher/Examiners should once again be wary of answering at too great a length.

Assessment

Across the vast majority of the entry, moderation saw marks either not adjusted at all or adjusted by less than 10%, although there were a few cases of adjustment of 10-20%. The greatest causes of difference were where marks had been awarded for asking questions where none had actually been asked or where topics did not relate to a francophone country. A handful of teacher/Examiners also found it difficult to establish an acceptable level for *Comprehension/Responsiveness*, *Accuracy* and *Feel for the Language*, while others found it tricky to differentiate between the bands for *Pronunciation/Intonation*.

Where candidates ask questions during the course of conversation, this should clearly be rewarded, but teacher/Examiners must remember to prompt candidates to ask questions in both conversation sections if candidates forget to do so: the mark scheme gives the criteria for awarding marks for this element of the examination and these marks should be awarded regardless of whether questions are spontaneous or prompted, provided that they are relevant to the topic under discussion.

Centres are reminded that if at all possible, they should engage only one teacher/Examiner per syllabus. In cases where the engagement of two or more teacher/Examiners on the same syllabus is unavoidable, the teacher/Examiners must co-ordinate with each other to establish an agreed standard. Otherwise, Moderation is extremely difficult. **All** Centres are asked to advise CIE, using form NOE, about the teacher/Examiners they intend to use.

In rare cases, teacher/Examiners misapplied the mark scheme, most frequently by awarding marks out of 10 for those categories like *Pronunciation/Intonation* and *Seeking Opinions* which carry a maximum of 5 marks.

Teacher/Examiners at Centres with a large entry of able candidates should be aware that marks may be bunched and that it is impossible to differentiate between candidates to a greater degree than the Mark Scheme allows.

In Centres with a number of candidates, teacher/Examiners were generally able to establish a logical rank order and appropriate marking pitch, but this is more difficult to achieve where Centres only have one or two candidates. Teacher/Examiners should be congratulated on their efforts to apply the criteria of the mark scheme so conscientiously.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Adding or omitting words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3** and **4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) words or phrases unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3** and **4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material over the word limit is ignored.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

The paper was felt to be a very similar in overall level of difficulty to previous years, producing a good spread of marks and giving stronger candidates an opportunity to display their ability whilst remaining accessible to the majority. There were however some, whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

The stronger candidates knew how to tackle the different types of questions, revealing a good level of familiarity with the format of the paper and the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was quite often because they copied phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3** and **4**.

The practice of copying out the question in **Questions 3** and **4** as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark: e.g. *Les télétravailleurs peuvent-ils être désavantagés parce que….* **(4c)** or *Le télétravail peut-il provoquer des tensions parce que ….* **(4d)**. Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

Candidates would do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished considerably in recent sessions, with candidates understanding how to 'work' the text to avoid it, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' sections directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3** and **4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement.

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realize the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit is ignored and scores no marks**. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the **Summary** automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their **Personal Response**. Although there has been a very marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some Centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are unnecessarily afraid of being penalized for not introducing the topic (no doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste 25% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, so, from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This exercise was well handled by the stronger candidates, who scored highly. Others thought that *chez soi* and *chez moi* were interchangeable for **Item (a)** or did not include *à* and/or *la* before *maison*, both of which were needed (see **Key message 1**). *Croissance* was often correctly identified as a synonym for *augmentation* in **Item (b),** but fewer appeared to understand the sense of *rendu possible* in **(c)**, or perhaps ruled out *facilité* thinking it was a noun. In **(d)**, some candidates felt that they needed to include *n'est plus* in the answer (which would have given *n'est plus n'est plus de rigueur*) or didn't include the *de* before *rigueur* (sometimes wrongly spelled). Item **(e)** was the most successfully handled of all.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question, but as usual, the task proved demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a) required the *à* of the original to be replaced by *de* in the reworked version. This was recognised by a significant number, but others either left the *à* unchanged, replaced it with *pour* or simply left it out.

Item 2(b) proved the most demanding of the Items. Quite a number merely rearranged the words in an order which meant nothing, whilst others who had done the difficult bit by re-structuring the sentence didn't remove the *e* from *conçue*.

Item 2(c) required more than one element to be adjusted in the transformation into indirect speech. Many handled this successfully but some left *chez moi* unaltered (or changed to *chez soi/lui*).

In **Item 2(d)**, required a transformation into the passive, which stronger candidates took in their stride, but a good number couldn't make *donnée* agree.

Item 2(e) required a subjunctive, which was again well recognised by the stronger candidates, although some spoiled things by forming it as *tennions* or by thinking that *compte* was a verb which needed to be put into the subjunctive.

Question 3

Item 3(a) The candidates who scored best on this opening question were those who realised that they could avoid 'lifting' (see **Key message 3**) *temps épargné, stress diminué, frais supprimés* and *efficacité améliorée* by the simple technique of rephrasing using finite verbs or infinitives: *Elle épargne du temps / d'épargner du temps; elle diminue son stress / de diminuer son stress; elle supprime les frais …; elle améliore son efficacité*.

Item 3(b) offered a similar opportunity to avoid *la création de mon propre horaire … l'harmonisation des responsabilités … l'allocation de plus de temps …* by re-phrasing using the verbs *créer, harmoniser* and *allouer*, even if it was not always clear whether candidates necessarily understood their meaning. The problem was that the verbs offered sometimes bore an unfortunate resemblance to English: *créater* or *allocater*.

I**tem 3(c)** The advantages of working from home were generally well understood and it was not difficult to score the marks by finding alternatives to *tranquillité (on est plus tranquille), interruptions, distractions (on peut travailler sans être interrompu)* and *une meilleure concentration (on peut se concentrer …)*. A significant minority misinterpreted *le salarié* as *salary*, claiming that teleworkers earn more.

Item 3(d) Most appeared to understand that the advantages included less crowded public transport and fewer cars on the road (thus less CO_2) even if their powers of expression were sometimes heavily taxed. There was also a common misconception *that transports … moins surchargés* referred to surcharges which meant that public transport would cost less. The point about saving office space was relatively infrequently found for the third mark.

Item 3(e) The question began *A part les handicapés …*, which meant that answers which talked about the disabled were not rewardable. Otherwise, many found a variety of very straightforward ways of re-phrasing *les habitants des régions rurales (*e.g. *les gens qui habitent à la campagne)* and *… obligation de se déplacer vers les centres urbains (*e.g. *ils ne sont pas obligés de venir en ville).*

Question 4

Item 4(a) Many candidates appeared to appreciate the risk of the teleworker feeling isolated and losing perspective, without always being able to express it clearly. Some thought *isolation* was the same as *isolement*, and there was some uncertainty about the meaning of *perspective*.

Item 4(b) was again best handled with verbs, as indicated by the question *(… permet à Yves de faire)*. So the very straightforward *échanger les idées, travailler en équipe et se réunir avec des camarades* scored all three marks.

Item 4(c) was generally successfully handled, with candidates able to identify the disadvantages for teleworkers. Some were worried about *l'assurance*, others about teleworkers' *sécurité* in general.

Item 4(d) depended on candidates identifying the danger of work invading family life without resorting simply to lifting *déborder* – e.g. *envahir, affecter, intervenir dans, devenir intrusif dans, se mélanger/confondre avec …*, but not *interrupter*). The two remaining marks were scored by a good number of candidates who saw the need to establish *des règles/limites/frontières/normes* and to create a separate space in which to work or store working materials.

Item 4(e) was an uncomplicated final question requiring candidates simply to name three personal qualities needed by the teleworker**.** It was not always obvious that candidates understood the use of the word *qualités* in this context, but those who simply opted for *la motivation, la discipline et l'organisation* scored all three marks*.*

Question 5

This Question asked the candidates to summarise the positive and negative aspects of teleworking and then to consider whether a similar arrangement could be applied to schools.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction. The word limit is becoming much better respected, but it is a pity to see occasional candidates still wasting over a quarter of the word limit by starting with: *Les arguments pour et contre le télétravail sont présentés dans ces deux textes. Dans le premier texte on parle des avantages et dans le deuxième texte on parle des inconvénients. Considérons d'abord les avantages présentés dans le premier texte …* However worthy, this scores no marks.

The mark scheme identified 16 rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed perhaps 7 or 8, with some reaching an impressive 10. Others spent too long making and re-making a single point or on irrelevant material. A handful misunderstood the requirements of this exercise and gave their own opinion on the subject. The most commonly identified positives included the positive impact on the quality and quantity of the work produced, on family life/life-work balance, less stress and less traffic/CO_2. The most commonly identified negatives were isolation, lack of dialogue/perspective and the need for discipline/motivation/organisation.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to result in a lower quality of language mark.

The **Personal Response** gives candidates the chance to express their feelings on a specific topic, which some of the stronger candidates did convincingly, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. A few were very enthusiastic about the idea of distance-schooling and on-line courses, but the majority thought that candidates would not be mature or disciplined enough to profit. More importantly for some, they would simply miss out on one of the main reasons for coming to school – to be with other candidates and to learn to interact socially and intellectually. Weaker candidates tended to seek refuge in the text and ventured little, resulting in some rather unambitious and derivative responses, but others were rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or personal slant of their own.

It is acceptable to offer the Personal Response (5 marks) before the Summary, but it does not make sense to do so if the candidate is going to run out of words available for the Summary (10 marks).

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from the excellent to the very poor. The very weakest found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, with verbs (even entirely regular ones) as usual being far the most common sources of error. The notion of agreement of verb with subject seemed to be foreign to the weakest, and even when an attempt was made, it could result in the plural of *elle travaille* emerging as *elles travailles.* Inconsistency of pronouns did not help in this respect: a sentence could start with *il*, change to *ils* and finish with *on* or *nous*. Basic agreements of adjectives too were simply routinely ignored by weaker candidates.

There was sometimes a phonetic approach to spelling, even with very common words e.g. *pars que; part tous (partout); qu'elle que jours; maichant; éde (aide).* C*e/se/ceux* were apparently interchangeable in the weaker scripts, as were *sont/son, est/et, on/ont, ses/ces/c'est/sais enfants*. Accents were sometimes largely ignored or scattered at random, most seriously in the omission of the acute accent on past participles: *organisé, discipliné*.

Spanish words made regular appearances in some Centres: *ser, hacer, compartir, interrumpir, di(s)minuir, disfrutar,* while the reflexive *se* often appeared in a position more compatible with Spanish structure than with French. Attempts to use the construction *tener (que)* rendered phrases such as *il tient que être organisé* incomprehensible.

English hovered very closely beneath the surface in other Centres: *l'avoidance; les disabilités; commuter; promoter; distracter; interrupter; involver; emitter; displacer; balance/imbalance, un border; dévoter; allocater; silente.*

The choice of *leur/leurs/ses* was far more often incorrect than correct, as was the spelling of *travail* as a noun and *travaille* as a verb: *ils faisent ses travailles*.

Constructions with certain common verbs as usual caused regular problems*: permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, demander, obliger.*

A cause de and *parce que* were often confused, as were *peu* and *un peu*, and *temps* and *fois*.

That said, the linguistic ability of a good number of the candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which made very good reading.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3** and **4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) phrases unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3** and **4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the prescribed word count (total for parts **(a)** and **(b)** combined) is ignored.
- In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

This was felt to be a fair test, very comparable in overall level of difficulty to previous years, and one which produced a wide spread of marks. There were some very good scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

The topic generally appeared to be one to which candidates could relate.

The better candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of questions, revealing a good level of familiarity with the format of the paper and the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied material unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3** and **4**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions although a few of the weaker ones wrote rather short summaries and personal responses. Quite a lot of answers in **Questions 3** and **4** were unduly lengthy, however, with candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible. Some candidates still neglect the straightforward answer and look to over-complicate things.

The practice of copying out the question in **Questions 3** and **4** as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark. *Ce stéréotype a-t-il dû être modifié parce que ...* 3(c) ; *Les femmes sont-elles vulnérables aux accidents …* 3(e) ; *Les hommes peuvent-ils causer des accidents …* 3(f) ; *Les adolescents y sont-ils plus prédisposés parce que …* 4(d). Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

Candidates would do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished in recent sessions, with more candidates understanding how to 'work' the text to avoid it, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do

this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3** and **4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement.

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90 – 100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response**. Although there has been a marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidate are unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the topic (no doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste up to a third of the available words on this for no reward: *Les points forts et faibles des quatre catégories de conducteurs (femmes, hommes, seniors, jeunes) sont présentés dans les deux textes. Dans le premier texte il s'agit des femmes et des hommes, et dans le deuxième il s'agit des seniors et des jeunes. Considérons d'abord les femmes:* However worthy, this sort of introduction merely wastes words for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning, drafting and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This relatively straightforward first exercise was quite successfully negotiated by the majority, with a good number of candidates scoring well. *D'après* was the least well identified item **(c)**, sometimes because of a failure to include the *d'*. If all else fails, looking for past participles with feminine agreements might have nudged candidates towards *réalisée* for **(a)** and *partagée* for **(e)**. A similar tactic with infinitives might have narrowed the field towards *démentir* **(b)** and *constater* **(d)**. For some reason, *constater* appeared as the response to most of the other items at one stage or another.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but, as usual, the task proved demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item **2(a)** offered a very simple first mark which was gratefully accepted by most, apart from by those who left *dangereuses* unaltered (or altered it to *dangereus*) or who did not see the need either to change *plus* to *moins* or to insert a negative.

In Item **2(b)** the past participle agreement was not made by some. Others lost the mark by making the verb plural (presumably because of the plural *des accidents)*, or by changing the tense unnecessarily. Even more unnecessary was the common addition of *par nous* at the end.

Item **2(c)** required a straightforward transformation to the active, which was very successfully handled by those who remembered to remove the *e* from *faite*.

Item **2(d)** was the least well done, with *ses recherches* being very common indeed, as well as an occasional change of tense. Some candidates left out any mention of *d'après leurs recherches*.

Item **2(e)** required the subjunctive. For a significant number, this appeared to be uncharted territory, but others knew how to go about it, even if some spoiled things by writing *soit* or occasionally *soyient*.

Question 3

Item **3(a)** required candidates to find another way of expressing *les femmes au volant*, most successfully done but those who used some part of the verb *conduire*, less successfully by those who thought that *volant* here was part of the verb *voler*. There were many successful attempts to render *sous prétexte d'humour : pour faire rire, rigoler, plaisanter, être drôle, amuser les gens* etc.

Item **3(b)** required candidates to make two fairly straightforward comparisons which stronger candidates did efficiently, avoiding 'lifting' *taux de collisons supérieur* and *kilomètres parcourus/parcourant* …). Others suggested that women cause (*font/causent*) more accidents, rather than simply being involved in them (*ont/sont impliquées dans plus d'accidents*).

Item **3(c**) rewarded candidates who managed to avoid *la prudence féminine* either by an adjective (*prudentes)* or an adverb (*elles conduisent plus prudemment/sagement)*.

Item **3(d)** saw some weaker candidates getting confused about which is *le sexe faible* according to the OSR. For the second mark here, candidates needed to find an alternative way of indicating that men are at fault in the majority of accidents – *les hommes sont coupables/font/causent … etc*.

Item **3(e)** suffered from a good deal of easily avoidable 'lifting'. *Faible gravité, inattention and infractions* were not difficult to avoid: *pas très graves/sérieux ; elles sont inattentives/ne font pas attention ; elles ne respectent pas le code/les règles de la route.*

In Item **3(f)** candidates who realised the need to manipulate the laquage achieved all four marks relatively simply: *grands excès de vitesse – ils conduisent (beaucoup) trop vite ; en colère – fâchés/énervés*; *à la recherche du risque – ils (re)cherchent/ont le goût du risque ; voulant montrer leur côté audacieux – ils veulent prouver leur audace/témérité/qu'ils sont audacieux.*

Question 4

Item **4(a)** saw some confusion of *seniors, femmes* and *machos*, with some suggesting that older drivers criticized women, and many did not appear to understand *conduite circonspecte* or to be able to find another way of expressing the idea – e.g. *ils conduisent avec circonspection/prudence/sont plus circonspects au volant*. Likewise, *le kilométrage annuel parcouru* was not difficult to re-work : *ils parcourent/conduisent/roulent/font moins de kilomètres.*

Item **4(b**) offered further very straightforward means of scoring the first three marks with *Ils font moins attention ; ils réagissent moins vite ; ils voient moins bien*. The question carried four marks and candidates who noticed this often used *à la campagne* as a successful replacement for *en zone rurale*.

Item **4(c)** was generally successfully negotiated by candidates well versed in the simple technique of changing the nouns *abus, manque, utilisation* and *désir* into verbs.

Item **4(d),** A substantial number misunderstood the idea of *le pied lourd*. There was some clumsy rephrasing concerning hormonal levels, but a good number nevertheless managed to get the point across for the second mark.

In item **4(e),** weaker candidates again found it hard to switch between words within a lexical group (*transgresser/transgression ; agression/agressivité/agressif ; prendre/prise*) which would have made it easy to score the three available marks.

Question 5

This question asked the candidates to summarise the strengths and weaknesses of four groups of drivers as presented in the two texts and then to suggest measures designed to reduce the number of road accidents.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

The mark scheme identified 15 rewardable points, of which the majority of candidates managed 6–7, with a good number reaching 10. Many wasted words by (for example) quoting statistical findings in studies by OSR/Suva. The most commonly identified strengths and weaknesses included men being responsible for causing more (and more serious) accidents, sometimes by driving too fast and in anger ; seniors driving less and more carefully, thus having fewer accidents ; seniors having problems of concentration, eyesight and reaction time ; juniors not respecting the rules and trying to show off to their friends.

The **Personal Response** gives candidates the chance to express their feelings on a specific topic, which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. The question asked for a personal response to a more general question, and those candidates who merely rehashed what they had written in 5(a), (producing a summary of a summary) scored few marks. Weaker candidates tended to seek refuge in the text and ventured very little, resulting in some unambitious and derivative responses, but others were rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or personal slant of their own. Speed reduction, more police, heavier fines and education were often suggested as measures for improvement

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. The very weakest found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, with verbs as usual being far the most common sources of error. Some were unable to conjugate basic verbs such as *faire, vouloir, pouvoir* or *conduire*. Others seemed to have little notion that the endings of verbs are meant to have some relationship with their subjects. It didn't help that these subjects could begin the sentence as *elles*, mutate to *il* and finish as *on/nous*. Incorrect verb forms and agreements were legion, and the use of the infinitive (*-er*) ending – or indeed anything else that sounded similar - seemed interchangeable with the past participle (*-é*): e.g. *il faut éducait les jeunes.* Basic agreements of adjectives and plurals too were simply routinely ignored by weaker candidates.

The approach to spelling was often phonetic. *Ce/se/ceux* were apparently interchangeable in some scripts, as were *si* and *ci*, *sa* and *ça*, *on* and *ont*, *son* and *sont, quand* and *quant.*

New words and phrases were also much in evidence: *la circumspectation; la conduction* (for *la conduite) ; les hommes expriment leur muscularité et leur machocisme.* Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent : *diminution/diminuer ; réduction/réduire ; inattention/inattentif ; agressivité/agression/agressifs ; conduite/conduire ; recherche/ rechercher ; réaction/réagir ; prudence/prudent/prudemment ; la vue/voir ; abus/abuser ; impression/impressionner* (rather than *impresser*) ; *expression/exprimer* (rather than *expresser*) ; *bombardement/bombarder ; prise/prendre ; transgression/transgresser* (rather than *transgrédir*).

Constructions with certain common verbs took their usual toll: *permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, apprendre, permettre.* The difference between *leur, leurs* and *ses* and *qui* and *ce qui* was not appreciated by a large number. Other common sources of error included distinguishing between *à cause de* and *parce que* ; *baisse* and *basse* ; *mieux* and *meilleur* ; *vite* and *rapide*. Incomplete negatives (missing *ne*) caused confusion, as did the very common use of *par* + an infinitive/present participle instead of *en* + a present participle

That said, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which made very good reading.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Additional or missing words invalidate the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material above the prescribed word count (total for parts **(a)** and **(b)** combined) is ignored.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

This was felt to be a fair test, very comparable in overall level of difficulty to previous years. There were some excellent scripts submitted and the overall level of performance was commendable, with the vast majority of candidates understanding the requirements of the various exercises and being able to meet them.

The standard of presentation was generally high and there were few signs of undue time pressures.

The topic generally appeared to be one to which candidates could relate.

Where candidates lost marks, it was often because they copied material unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3** and **4**. In these questions, there was also a tendency for some candidates to write unnecessarily lengthy answers, which did not always address the questions, or to over-complicate what should have been relatively simple responses.

The number of marks allocated for each question serves as an indication of how many separate ideas need to be included in the answer in order to gain full marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise is to find the word(s) in the text which best match(es) the word(s) in the question. The word(s) given as the answer need(s) to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word(s) to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

This question held few problems for most candidates, and most scored highly. In **(a),** the necessary *se* was sometimes omitted, whilst in **(b)** *récemment* was offered instead of *dans le passé*. *Employeur* occasionally appeared in place of *emploi* for **(c)**, but *obtenu* and *montrent* caused relatively few difficulties in **(d)** and **(e)**.

Question 2

There were some good answers here from the majority of candidates, even if some of the weaker ones found it challenging. This is an exercise in grammatical manipulation and is not the time to attempt to find

other words for vocabulary used in the original sentence. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement.

Part **(a)** required a relatively straightforward transformation into the active, using *on*. This was well handled by those who resisted the temptation to alter the tense unnecessarily.

Part **(b)** required the reverse process of a transformation into the passive, but the need to make the past participle agree was missed by some.

In part **(c),** a good proportion of candidates recognised the need for a subjunctive, but some were unable to form it, sometimes offering variations on *servissent* instead.

Part **(d)** produced a few confused responses, with some not realising that the infinitive could serve as the subject of the new sentence and simply re-ordering the words in seemingly random fashion.

Part **(e)** required candidates to express the sentence in direct speech, involving two changes of pronoun. Some again made unnecessary changes to the tense in the process.

Questions 3 and 4

Some answers in **Questions 3** and **4** were unduly lengthy, with less secure candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible. Unfortunately some candidates still neglect the straightforward answer and tend to over-complicate things.

The practice of copying out the question in **Questions 3** and **4** as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark. *Le jeu favorise-t-il la socialisation ...* **3(b)** ; *Les jouets peuvent-ils influencer …* **3(c)** ; *Le fait de jouer peut-il …* **3(e)**. Answers beginning with *parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that in general copying wholesale from the text has diminished in recent sessions, with more able candidates understanding how to 'work' the text to avoid it, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language.

Question 3

Part **(a)** offered three reasonably straightforward opening marks and most candidates successfully scored all three.

Part **(b)** was best handled by the simple technique of re-working some of the nouns as verbs:
respect/respecter ; partage/partager ; devenir compétitif ; coopérer/travailler en équipe/ensemble.

Part **(c)** was generally well handled by candidates who suggested that toys/games may enable children to discover/develop new interests, some of which may influence future career choices.

Part **(d)** was most easily answered by candidates who reversed the process in **(b)** and avoided lifting by expressing the ideas with nouns – *les jeux aident le développement de leur imagination et leur créativité en même temps que leur développement physique.*

Part **(e)** saw a good number of candidates successfully expressing the idea of *exprimer ses soucis/joies* and of *oublier le stress*, even if they occasionally went too far in suggesting that *les problèmes mentaux* are reduced. Not all looked for the third mark here, but those who did, often gained it with sentences such as *cela rapproche la famille* or *cela encourage les relations familiales/entre les générations*.

Question 4

Part **(a)** required candidates to understand that parents can equate a child's happiness with the number of toys he or she receives (*ils pensent que leurs enfants (ne) pourront être heureux (que) s'ils ont beaucoup de jouets / plus ils ont de jouets, plus ils sont heureux*) which many did, even if it was not always very fluently expressed. The second mark was earned by suggesting that giving toys was an attempt to compensate for their own absence *(pour se faire pardoner le fait qu'ils sont souvent absents*). The third needed some element of recreating the parents' own childhood (*retrouver/ revivre/évoquer* etc.). Some candidates used *r**e**créer* successfully, but those who wrote *r**é**création* changed the meaning.

In Part **(b)**, the stronger candidates found ways of re-working *comme signe d'amour de ses parents (l'enfant va croire que plus il a de jouets, plus ses parents l'aiment)* and *le sens réel du geste d'offrir (il ne ap/comprend pas ce qu' « offrir » veut dire).* The third mark required the idea that, in the case of a separation, a sense of competition could develop between the parents (not between a child and his/her friends) in terms of gifts.

In Part **(c)** an easy mark was gained by expressing *la capacité de se concentrer* with the noun *la concentration. Blasé* proved less accessible, but a good number communicated (if somewhat clumsily at times) the idea *of la satisfaction de persévérer/compléter un jeu/l'exploration complète du jeu* for the third mark.

Part **(d)** was generally well handled by those candidates who understood the dangers of parents following blindly the latest fashion and of not fully understanding the precise nature of what they are buying for their children. Somewhat more challenging was the desire to ensure that their child has the same toys as his or her friends, so that *ils achètent (tout) ce que l'enfant demande/exige*.

In part **(e)**, candidates often found it reasonably straightforward to identify the fact that parents could end up in debt and having to sacrifice essential items, but the concept of a child having to learn to save up for things was sometimes confused with not understanding *l'économie* or *les difficultés économiques*.

Question 5

This question asked the candidates to summarise the positive aspects of toys and games and the negative consequences of having too many, as presented in the two texts. They were then asked to recall a favourite game or toy in their own childhood and its later influence.

Being concise is part of the task. Candidates need to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction which will score no marks. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

Candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response**.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning, drafting and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

The mark scheme identified 16 rewardable points up to a maximum of 10, which was achieved by a number of the stronger candidates. The most commonly identified strengths included the development of a spirit of competition and teamwork, and improvements in imagination and creativity, as well as physical benefits. The weaknesses included parents trying to make up for their own absence by buying toys or using them to compete with each other, children being unable to maintain concentration, and parents incurring debts.

The **Personal Response** gives candidates the chance to express their own ideas on a specific topic, which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Weaker candidates tended to seek refuge in the text and ventured very little, resulting in some unambitious and derivative responses. Others were rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or personal slant of their own: dolls leading to an interest in fashion or child-care, construction sets leading to an interest in engineering, etc.

Quality of Language

The quality of language produced by candidates in this cohort varied from good to excellent. Verbs and pronouns were, as usual, the most common sources of error. A handful of weaker candidates routinely ignored basic agreements of adjectives and plurals – *le parents ; les enfant*.

Constructions with certain common verbs took their usual toll: *permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, apprendre, permettre.* The difference between *leur, leurs* and *ses* remains problematic to some.

The approach to spelling (and indeed grammar) was sometimes phonetic amongst weaker candidates: c*e/se/ceux* appeared to be interchangeable in some scripts, as were *si* and *ci*, *sa* and *ça*, *on* and *ont*, *son* and *sont.*

New words and phrases made an appearance, often heavily based on English: *significance ; financiel ; opponent ; associété.* English patterns also appeared in answers such as *aller sans les essentielles de vie pour compenser pour les jeux.*

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent: *expression/exprimer ; respect/respecter ; création/créatif/créer ; rapprochement/rapprocher ; développement/développer ; orientation/orienter ; compensation/compenser ; association/associer ; exploration/explorer ; économies/économiser ; partage/partager ; exigence/exiger ; initiation/initier ; sacrifice/sacrifier ; exploration/explorer.*

That said, the linguistic competence of most of the candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst a pleasing proportion wrote commendably idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which made very good reading.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/31

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well on this paper, candidates need to choose an essay title about which they can write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherent. The aim should be to use accurate and idiomatic French which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary. Candidates should plan essays carefully using the introduction to show their understanding of the essay title with all its elements and the conclusion to show their considered final judgment of the issues they have discussed.

General comments

There were many essays this year whose authors were sufficiently in control of the language to be able to write coherent, balanced pieces that targeted the question set, but in numerous cases candidates struggled to express themselves coherently with the result that content was very basic and ideas were not communicated.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Partout dans le monde, le dimanche – autrefois jour de repos – devient un jour comme tous les autres : phénomène positif ou négatif?

This was quite a popular choice but, alas, a substantial number of candidates made little attempt to address the question and wrote basic pieces that were little more than lists of the activities that they and their families engage in on Sundays. Some better essays took as their starting point the waning importance of religion in today's society, its place taken by a whole range of other activities that, in years gone by, either did not exist or simply did not take place on the Sabbath. Rather than go to church, people now play or watch sports on a Sunday and/or spend time shopping, going to the cinema, or at their computers, often chatting with others on social media sites. Increasingly busy lifestyles mean that, far from being a day of rest, Sunday is now the most stressful day of the week for an increasing number of people. Mounting domestic chores such as ironing, washing, grocery shopping and cleaning, which people have not had time to do during the week because of their work commitments, have to be done on Sunday. The point was made that many have busier schedules on a Sunday than on a weekday and thereby lose out on time needed to recover from a tiring working week. Moreover, such are the pressures of the working environment that many feel the need to use what should be their rest time to prepare for the week ahead. Even those who do manage to spend rest time with their families on a Sunday are often embroiled in bickering and arguments induced in no small part by tiredness and stress. On the positive side, some argued that Sunday would be a very boring day indeed if all of the leisure activities such as sporting fixtures, shopping and cinema-going that, in years gone by, were restricted to weekdays, were not available on Sundays. The point was also made that for young people, the weekend job is their opportunity to earn some money and thereby not to be dependent on their parents. Adults too appreciate the opportunity to earn some extra money to provide for their family and make ends meet.

Question 2

Nos prisons sont surpeuplées. Que faire pour remédier à cette situation?

This question was not widely chosen. The main ideas put forward were the provision of government money to build new prisons, more discretion given to judges to impose punishments other than custodial sentences for those found guilty of non-violent crimes, greater use of rehabilitation centres rather than prisons, greater use of electronic bracelets and, not least, better social provision for those without jobs and/or homes in order that they do not feel forced to resort to crime in the first place in order to survive.

Question 3

Si de plus en plus de gens sont atteints de maladies mentales, c'est la faute de la société. Dans quelle mesure partagez-vous ce point de vue?

This question was the choice of quite a lot of candidates but many of them had little of substance to offer. The starting point for quite a few essays was the dramatic increase in the number of cases of mental problems, ranging from depression to schizophrenia to bipolar disorder, that are recorded, and the fact that an alarmingly high percentage of people suffer some form of mental problem in the course of their lives. Stress induced by the pressures of everyday life – the need to do well at school, competition in the workplace, financial worries, relationship problems often induced by external factors – was cited as the main way in which society is responsible for problems of a mental nature. Other factors cited included the ease of availability in today's society of recreational drugs whose long-term use engenders all manner of mental disorders and also the widespread use of addictive medications such as anti-depressants and sleeping pills which encourage people to go to their doctor's with problems that they would have dealt with and overcome in the society of days gone by. Some argued that the substantial increase in the incidence of mental illness can be put down in large measure to over-diagnosis of mental disorders and that nowadays the science of psychiatry is guilty of pathologising what, a couple of decades ago, would have been deemed perfectly normal even if slightly eccentric behaviour. A number of essays argued, albeit not very convincingly, that it is wrong to attribute blame to society since mental disorders are by and large genetic.

Question 4

En ce qui concerne le chômage, les gouvernments devraient privilégier les jeunes travailleurs. Discutez de cette affirmation.

There was a significant number of essays on this topic. All agreed that much needs to be done to help young people who should indeed be given priority since the morale of the younger generation is at an all-time low. Among ideas suggested were investment in infrastructure, particularly in the construction industry since the heavy labour involved goes mainly to the young generation, a requirement that firms reserve a certain percentage of the jobs available for young people rather than insisting that applicants should have previous experience, legislation to force older people to retire at a certain age thereby freeing up jobs for younger people and, not least, financial help for young people undertaking vocational and other educational courses with the objective of furthering their chances of getting a foot on the career ladder. Lower taxation for young workers was also put forward in a number of essays as a desirable measure needed to help young people at the stage in their lives when they are seeking to set up a household and start a family.

Question 5

Internet : la pire invention du vingtième siècle. Jusqu'à quel point êtes-vous d'accord?

This proved to be the most popular of the five questions set. Some essays made quite a good range of points and demonstrated some ability to develop an argument leading to a convincing conclusion. The essays of weaker candidates, quite apart from the fact that their authors struggled to communicate their ideas, were often somewhat repetitive: a weakness in paragraphing was in evidence in many cases and there was no real build-up of an argument to a conclusion. The best answers gave a balanced picture. The evils of the internet that would support the view expressed in the title set were fully covered in a good many essays: the potential the internet affords for the theft of personal information; the fact that when one uses a credit card to shop online, the credit card information can also be stolen, effectively giving the thief a blank cheque; the very serious threat to young people presented by sexual predators and by the ease with which they can access pornography and other unsuitable material; and, though less harmful, but nonetheless annoying, the practice of spamming. However, most candidates took the line that, despite these disadavantages, provided that due caution is exercised, the internet is in fact the best invention of the

twentieth century: it is thanks to the Internet that we enjoy instantaneous and usually free communication with family members and friends wherever they may be, social networking sites enable us to make as many new friends as we like, the internet is an unlimited treasure trove of information on every topic under the sun and, not least, it is possible to download an untold number of games, videos, and films as well as a whole range of other entertainment software from the internet, much of it without charge.

Language

Better essays demonstrated a very fair productive use of French grammar (verb forms, tenses, prepositional usage, word order, etc.) in spite of some lapses, along with some capacity to use more complex structures accurately and appropriately. They also contained quite a good range of vocabulary and idiom appropriately used. However, many essays were characterised by persistent errors in verb forms, tenses, agreements, genders, spellings of common words and the like, coupled with a very limited range of vocabulary and idiom. There was also a considerable degree of interference from English, and in some cases Spanish, to the extent that communication often broke down.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/32

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well on this paper, candidates need to choose an essay title about which they can write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherent. The aim should be to use accurate and idiomatic French which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary. Candidates should plan essays carefully using the introduction to show their understanding of the essay title with all its elements and the conclusion to show their considered final judgment of the issues they have discussed.

General comments

The overall standard of this group of candidates was similar to that in previous years. There was a wide range of ability demonstrated from the very poor to the very good. In some cases it was clear that candidates had a poor command of linguistic structures and appropriate vocabulary and register – candidates often referred to the Examiner as *tu*. Their answers were naively expressed in very simple and often inaccurate language and often avoided the question set, concentrating instead on the overall topic heading. Candidates who did not target their essays on the question set inevitably did less well since their answers contained much irrelevant material. Fake statistics were also common and mostly unhelpful in the context of the candidate's argument. More able candidates planned their essays carefully, defined the terms of the question and wrote a logical and persuasive argument, and arrived at a balanced conclusion. They used a range of structures and idioms and convinced the reader with their arguments. Essays that were vague and general in tone as well as lacking clear development or exemplification of points made scored much lower.

Common errors included:

Incorrect genders/spellings (sometimes even when the word was in the title): *manque, travail, pays, environnement, développement, gouvernement, monde, phénomène, vacances, ennemi, chômage, clonage, prison, aspect, loi*

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Use of *le taux* for *le nombre*.

Use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de.*

Random and inappropriate use of words and phrases to link paragraphs such as *néanmoins(usually wrongly spelled), pourtant, toutefois.*

Overuse of the word *personnes (for gens)* and *cela/ça.*

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Inaccurate and erratic use of double letters in words such as *développer, agressif, ressources*.

Inaccurate and careless use of accents including words used in the questions such as *phénomène* and *chômage,* and examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences.

Confusion between/misuse of: *ces/ses, les/des, place/endroit, bon/bien, mauvais/mal, c'est que/ceux que, ceux qui/ce qui, ou/où, a/à, sa/ça), mieux/meilleur, leur/leurs, ils/eux.*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the most popular question on the paper and was attempted by candidates across the full range of ability. Answers varied from the highly superficial to the competent and thoughtful. Most candidates could see the benefit of holidays for the purposes of rest and relaxation after a hard term at School. This led many into a discussion of what they did on their holidays. Most candidates did attempt to answer the question by suggesting that usually candidates found the holidays too short while parents and teachers found them too long. Parents who had to work were not available to spend time with their children which could lead to bad behaviour on the part of children and teachers found the candidates had forgotten everything they had learned the term before when they went back to school after the holiday. Some candidates were clearly disposed to enjoy as much free time as possible, while others were keen to point out that long holidays could become very tedious. There were some interesting essays which tried to posit quite complex solutions to the arrangement of school holidays throughout the year to enable enough free time for candidates and teachers and enough time for serious and uninterrupted study which would lead to better futures for all. Each in their different way and according to their level of ability answered the question set.

Question 2

This was the fourth in popularity of the questions. It was well understood and candidates explained the reasons behind the creation of prisons and the expected benefits of having them. These included keeping criminals away from the rest of society, allowing a chance for prisoners to reflect on their crimes and making an attempt to rehabilitate them and to reintegrate them into society. It was clear to candidates that the ideals of the prison system were not borne out in reality since prisons were largely full of gangs, drugs and AIDS and prisoners generally came out of prison only to commit crimes again and be re-imprisoned. More able candidates discussed the nature of human rights and talked about freedom and incarceration in philosophical terms while others looked at the human dimension of the question including effects on the prisoners, their families and society in general. It was clear that candidates had plenty to say on the topic and their answers were relevant and either superficial or competent depending on their ability to express themselves.

Question 3

This was the second most popular question. There was a huge spread of marks for this question since it was answered in many different ways according to ability. New technology meant many different things to candidates. It was variously taken to be televisions, computers and mobile phones or medical equipment and medication or cars, planes and environmental hazards. Most candidates chose to discuss the effects of the modern generation's addiction to all things digital. This was obviously leading to an epidemic of obesity, eating disorders, heart disease and diabetes as well as an inability to socialise face to face. Candidates were all too happy to explain that technology was the main factor in the poor health of the population but often failed to point out the benefits that it has brought or limited those to the use of a Wii to help with exercise. Some candidates felt that people were healthier 50 years ago. More able candidates talked about the medical advances brought by new technology and the increase in life span as a result. They were aware of the hazards of the technological age on the environment and health in general terms but could see that these effects must be balanced by the huge benefits. These candidates felt that individuals should take responsibility for their own health and do everything in moderation.

Question 4

This was the third popular question. Many candidates wrote a general essay on the topic heading of work and unemployment relating little of their answer to the exact terms of the question. Many avoided the second part of the question and just described the unemployment situation using some spurious statistics for countries around the world. Candidates generally understood the reasons for high levels of unemployment whether it be among the young or the workforce in general. These were given as the economic crisis, the increase in the retirement age for workers, the robotisation of factories, the attitude of the young, the support given by the benefit system. Only more able candidates tried to suggest some solutions to these problems and some were quite draconian such as forcing older workers to retire and removing benefits for young unemployed people. Other suggestions including government aid to set up new apprenticeships or to help young entrepreneurs to start up their own companies. There was much criticism of the attitude of young people who are happy not to work if enough support is given to them. Those candidates who engaged with both parts of the question were awarded good marks while those who wrote generally about unemployment did less well.

Question 5

This was the least popular question. There were some mature and thoughtful answers to this question which was generally answered by more able candidates. They clearly understood the ethical and moral issues associated with cloning but could see the benefits for medicine and food production. They were clear in their view that cloning should be limited to a small range of uses and that scientists should not be allowed to create armies of clones to fight wars or a robot workforce to take the jobs from humans. These rather fantastical science fiction notions obviously appealed to candidates' imagination. The benefit of cloning organs for transplantation was seen as a major advance as well as the creation of animal clones to help provide good quality food for a growing world population. Interesting points were made about whether clones had feelings or intelligence and whether they could mutate. The question gave scope to a range of candidates to show their understanding of a controversial but always fascinating topic.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/33

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Key messages

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General comments

In this paper, candidates are given a choice of 5 questions and are awarded up to 24 marks for quality of language and up to 16 for content. It was clear that most candidates understood the rubric for this paper and wrote essays of approximately the right length. Planning is an important first step in writing a good discursive essay. Most of the candidates did write a plan but it was often short and rather superficial. Those candidates who defined the terms of the question in their own mind and organised the material into some kind of order before writing generally gained higher marks for content. An essay that considers all elements of the question and is logically constructed will be highly rewarded in its content mark. It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general overarching topic area. There was a wide range of ability in this cohort, with some candidates demonstrating little grammatical, structural or idiomatic awareness. Pre-learned phrases were often used but frequently served only to highlight the deficiencies in the candidates' own writing. Other candidates used a range of structures and appropriate vocabulary, did not over-reach themselves and managed to express their ideas in accurate, ambitious and succinct language.

Examples of good use of language included:

Appropriate use of linking words/phrases such as *d'après ce qui précède, ainsi, puisque*, *cependant*, *pourtant*, *d'abord, d'ailleurs, en outre, ensuite, néanmoins, d'autre part, en revanche*

Range of structures including correct forms of the subjunctive. Use of a range of verbs such as *accompagné de, reposer sur, promouvoir, justifier, cesser de*

Range of topic appropriate vocabulary demonstrating that candidates have read a range of media on subjects as diverse as advertising, health services and the electronic cigarette.

Correct use of idioms such as *en ce qui concerne, il convient de, en d'autres mots, venons-en à, au revers de la médaille, il est généralement admis que, c'est un fait bien connu*

Common errors included:

Incorrect genders/spellings (sometimes even when the word is in the title): *démarche, mode de vie, manque, travail, environnement, développement, gouvernement, monde, rôle, exemple, avis, phénomène, deuxièmement, problème, aspect, service, public, loi*

Use of *beaucoup des* with plural noun.

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de* and *car* for *pour.*

Overuse of the word *chose/choses* and *cela/ça.* Use of *personnes* for *gens.*

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Confusion between/misuse of : *ces/ses, les/des, place/endroit, bon/bien, mauvais/mal, c'est que/ceux que, ceux qui/ce qui, ou/où, a/à, sa/ça (overused instead of cela), mieux/meilleur, leur/leurs.*

Use of *faire* for *rendre*

Agreement of the past participle e.g. *ils ont organisés*

Use of the wrong preposition after common verbs followed by an infinitive structure, e.g. *aider de, préférer de*

Use of *avoir besoin de* instead of *devoir.*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the second most popular question. Candidates were keen to point out the importance of advertising in the modern world. They understood the significance of advertising for companies wishing to sell their products and for the consumer to see the range of products available. They were keen to demonstrate, however, the negative effects of advertising such as the encouragement to overspend and the fact that we are bombarded by advertising both within the home on the TV and computer and outside by giant billboards and flashing displays. They felt that publicity shots involving super-thin models were having a negative effect on the health of young women and that advertising was often dishonest and manipulative. On the whole, candidates felt that advertising was a necessary evil but that it did have some very negative effects on society. The question was generally handled well with some clear arguments for restriction and control but not outright banning of advertising.

Question 2

This was the least popular question and was attempted by very few candidates. Answers were, on the whole, rather superficial and examples were not always well chosen. Most candidates talked about reforms to the police service making it more accountable. They spoke of restricting what they saw as poor policing such as stop and search of young people and police brutality at demonstrations. They spoke of decriminalising personal drug use and the removal of laws relating to minor infringements such as dropping litter. They felt that a system of laws is necessary to keep a society running effectively but felt strongly about personal liberty and freedom of expression.

Question 3

This was the third most popular question. Unfortunately, for many it became a general discussion of the modern way of life without much reference to medical services. Candidates recognised that our modern way of life does have an effect on health. They described the sedentary lifestyle resulting from dependence on computers and consoles, the overeating that accompanies watching TV or playing computer games, the lack of exercise because of the reliance on cars. Many essays did not go beyond this level of discussion. More able candidates were keen to point out that medical services were being pushed to the limits by the excesses of the modern age but that there were other factors such as the increase in the number of old people living to a much greater age and requiring medical treatment for a range of problems. They also mentioned widespread viruses, antibiotic resistance and an awareness of medical conditions created by universal access to the Internet.

Question 4

This was the most popular question. There were some very mature and thoughtful essays on this topic. Candidates mostly agreed with the statement made in the question and went about explaining why people might have this negative attitude to work. Some mentioned the general apathy of the young and their desire to do as little as possible. This was helped by living at home and being supported by parents. Others mentioned the lack of variety in most jobs where each day is the same and there is no chance of promotion or change of scene. It was clear that many candidates held the view that work is, by its very nature, boring and is guaranteed to take people away from doing what they enjoy. There was recognition that to enjoy free time one needed money and that too much free time can also become boring. There were some essays

which took the discussion to a deeper level quoting philosophers and/or explaining why work could be a great positive in life bringing fulfilment and enjoyment. All candidates had strong views on the topic and answered according to their ability.

Question 5

This was the fourth most popular question with candidates of all abilities choosing to answer it. Some were clearly in favour of the electronic cigarette, others clearly against. The first group felt that the health benefits were important as well as the possible cost advantages. They felt that electronic cigarette smokers were not seen to be social pariahs in the way tobacco smokers are. The second group were not in favour of this new-fangled invention which could only be seen as innovative and cool by young people and lead to more of them taking up the habit of smoking it, later to revert to ordinary cigarettes. They also pointed out that the long term effects are not yet known. Many felt that money put into creating this device should have been spent in doing more to encourage people to stop smoking altogether or in research on cancer. All in all, candidates had strong views and expressed their opinions to the best of their ability.