

FRENCH

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. 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 150 (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, generally similar in overall level of difficulty to previous years, and one which produced a wide spread of marks. There were some good scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, but in some centres there were significant numbers of candidates whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them and who appeared to be out of their depth at this level.

In stronger centres, the majority of 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 whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4** or exceeded the word-count in **Question 5**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, although there were a few signs of weaker candidates running out of time – or perhaps energy faced with tasks which over-stretched them. Quite a lot of answers were unduly lengthy, with candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible: sometimes the answers were longer than the whole paragraph of the text to which they referred. **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: *un chien peut-il aider la vieille dame ...* 3(c); *certaines gouvernements ont-ils introduit des lois ...* 4(b). **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**, copying wholesale from the text has diminished considerably in recent sessions, but 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. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. 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 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 items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of a candidate's 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 150 words overall 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 (not doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this 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 which is quite likely to score 0/10.

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

Most candidates got things off to a positive start in this exercise. The need to find a feminine past participle to replace *menée* in (a) should have simplified the task, even if candidates did not necessarily know the exact meaning. In (b), some candidates introduced a redundant *a* before *prouvé* (which would have given *a prouvé*). On the other hand, the omission of *en* before *colère* destroyed the meaning in (c). *Epuisé* was usually correctly identified in (d), but *pareil* proved more elusive in (e).

Question 2

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

Item 2(a) required a transformation into the passive which should have proved straightforward, but a large number of answers were marred by an inability to produce the future tense of *être*: *vous serais / sera / soirez*. The past participle *jugé* often appeared as *jugéré / joué / juger / jugez*.

Item 2(b) offered a number of alternatives (*en caressant / si/quand on caresse*) but *par caresser* was not one of them. Some stood things on their head by suggesting that it was the animal's level of stress which was reduced.

Item 2(c) occasionally suffered a similar fate: *Bien que vous remontiez le moral du chien, vous allez être épuisé*. The stronger candidates were often successful in producing *vous soyez*, but others failed to appreciate the need for (or existence of) the subjunctive.

Item 2(d) was one of the better handled items in the exercise, even if *je me sens* trapped the unwary.

Item 2(e) required a transformation into the active using *on*. Most managed *on peut* but often struggled to adjust the ending of *attribuer*.

Question 3

Item 3(a) required candidates to demonstrate comprehension of *aveugle* and *berger*, which the better candidates achieved often by using *guider / garder* or *moutons* for the first two marks, despite efforts by some to press *berger* into service as a verb. The third required some element of finding people buried under rubble or snow or in the event of a natural catastrophe without resorting to lifting *lors d'une avalanche ou d'un tremblement de terre* or the too vague *après un accident*. The fourth mark was successfully scored by candidates who avoided the lift of *stupéfiants ou explosifs (drogues et bombes)*.

Item 3(b) Candidates generally understood the benefit of exercise and stress reduction enjoyed by dog owners, and scores of 2/2 were quite common here.

Item 3(c) offered three possible ways of scoring two marks. The question asked what a dog can *empêcher son propriétaire de faire*, suggesting the need for verbs in the answer. This was relatively easily achieved by transforming *isolement* to *se sentir isolé*, *dépression* to *être déprimé* or even *triste*, and avoiding lifting *du bonheur et de l'énergie*.

Item 3(d) required the elements of replacing human contact and the sharing (in either sense) of unhappiness. Better candidates found relatively easy ways to avoid lifting *compenser le manque de contact humain (il réduit la solitude par sa présence)* and *partager sa tristesse (il lui parle de ses problèmes)* in order to earn both marks.

Item 3(e) offered four ways of scoring a maximum of three marks and candidates were often successful in identifying ways in which confiding in a dog was less risky than confiding in a human being, and of expressing them in ways which avoided lifting *parle aux autres / jugera / prendre à contresens* or *l'amour ou la fidélité sans conditions*.

Item 3(e) offered three possibilities to score a maximum of two marks, provided candidates made the effort to avoid simply lifting *le chien est toujours content de voir son maître (il est content de vous voir/quand on rentre)*, or *remuements de queue (il remue la queue)*.

Question 4

Item 4(a) required the idea that the number of attacks is rising/has risen sharply and that efforts to reduce them have proved largely ineffective, without simply lifting *peu efficaces (les lois n'ont pas réussi etc.)*. *Pour protéger la population des chiens* did not convey the meaning presumably intended.

In **Item 4(b)**, there were four possible answers for a maximum of three marks: children need to be taught that dogs are not toys; don't try to stroke strange dogs; don't look them straight in the eye or disturb them when they are eating or sleeping. *Quand il fait ses besoins* was not rewarded for the last element.

Item 4(c) offered five possible answers for a maximum of four marks. The mistakes made by owners were in not establishing a hierarchy in the family and in treating the dog like a spoiled child. The consequences were that the dog thinks it's in charge and puts in place its own hierarchy with itself at the top, thereafter becoming aggressive to protect its position. Candidates who avoided lifting *ne trouve pas au sein de la famille la hiérarchie claire; être traité en enfant gâté; se croire le chef; mettre en place* and *comportements agressifs* scored well here.

In **Item 4(d)** most mentioned the cost of vets' bills. Candidates found good ways of avoiding lifting *engagement à long terme* and *assumer la responsabilité jusqu'au bout (un chien, c'est pour la vie etc.)*. *Tout dépend de la taille* and ... *la durée de vie du chien* were both accepted for the final mark.

Item 4(e) presented two relatively straightforward marks. *Il faut se laver les mains* was not enough without mentioning touching the dog and *Il faut les laisser salir/saler les trottoirs* suggested a lack of understanding of *empêcher*.

Question 5

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to mention possible ways of reducing the risks posed by dangerous dogs, giving their own views. 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.

Candidates were required to summarise *les avantages et les inconvénients ou dangers apportés par les chiens* presented in the two texts. *Les chiens utilitaires* were specifically excluded by the rubric, although some candidates wasted words by including them. The mark scheme identified 15 rewardable points, of which some of the better candidates identified the maximum of 10. The most commonly identified advantages were the benefits to health through more exercise and less stress, reducing depression and providing company. Among the dangers, attacks, cost and infections appeared most frequently.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic - which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. The 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 slant of their own: the banning of certain breeds; compulsory training for owners; forcing owners to keep dogs on leads in public places.

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. Some candidates 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. Particularly concerning again was the wide-spread notion that the plural of *il diminue* is *ils diminues*. Examples of incorrect verb forms (*ils faissent*; *ils prennent*) were common, and the use of the infinitive (-er) ending often seemed interchangeable with the past participle (-é). Basic agreements in general were simply routinely ignored by some candidates: *les chien*; *ils trouve*; *les enfants gâté*; *ils sont agressif*; *il caressent*.

There was often a phonetic approach to spelling even very common words – *otres* ; *pass que / par ceque* ; *les chosses* ; *deu* and *deus* for *deux* ; *assé* ; *qu'en (quand)*. *Ce/se/ceux* were apparently interchangeable in some scripts, as were *si* and *ci*, *sa* and *ça*, *on* and *ont*, *son* and *sont*.

Constructions with certain common verbs caused regular problems: *permettre*, *aider*, *encourager*, *empêcher*, *persuader*, *obliger*. *Leur/leurs* were more often wrong than right, and the need for *ce qui* rather than just *qui* was not appreciated by a large number.

Although some weaker candidates clearly found the task beyond them, the linguistic ability of most certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/22
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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.
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- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (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, similar in level of difficulty to previous years, and one which produced a wide spread of marks. There were some first-rate scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, and 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, there were elements which were accessible to nearly all.

The topic generally appeared to be one of which candidates had some awareness and one to which they appeared able to relate.

The majority of 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 whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own (often lengthy) opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, although quite a lot of answers were unduly lengthy, with candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible: sometimes the answers were longer than the whole paragraph of the text to which they referred. **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 from the overall impression for the quality of language mark: *la productivité a-t-elle progressé parce que ... 3(c); Le commerce équitable bénéficie-t-il aux producteurs parce que ... 4(b)*.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text has diminished considerably in recent session, but remains a common feature amongst the some 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. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. Candidates should try to express

the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs) 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 the 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.

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These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that some candidates are unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the topic (not doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this 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 and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This exercise held few fears for the majority of candidates, and full marks were regularly scored. The only frequently occurring wrong choice was *dont* instead of the correct *soit* for *c'est-à-dire* for **(b)**. The *s* was occasionally omitted on *engagements*. There was some evidence of candidates sensibly narrowing down the possible choices by looking for an infinitive or a past participle (for example), even if they did not necessarily know the exact meaning of the word to be replaced.

Question 2

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

Item 2(a) was well handled at the outset by those who could form a passive, but the necessary agreement on *constaté* caused problems for a number of candidates. Others didn't observe the pluperfect tense of the original.

Item 2(b) produced a number of alternatives to the obvious *tue* (*fait mourir, cause la mort*). *malnutrition tuent* was common. Not following the present tense of the original also cost some marks.

In **Item 2(c)**, many candidates handled the first part of the sentence well but either omitted *si nos prévisions sont bonnes* or simply wrote *les prévisions...* *Nos provisions* was sometimes found.

Item 2(d) was one of the better handled items, with candidates evidently on the look-out for a subjunctive and able to form one correctly.

Item 2(e) often suffered from a failure to adjust the agreement: *une réduction de prix a accompagnée*.

Question 3

Item 3(a) proved to be a fairly challenging question. Many candidates identified the concept of reducing the number of *sous-alimentés* but were not sufficiently precise about halving it. Some candidates struggled to understand or express the idea that the number had now returned to the level of the 1970, having seen a slight drop towards the end of the century, rather than having remained constant *depuis* 1970.

Item 3(b) Candidates were generally successful in identifying the difficulty of providing for the family, but some resorted simply to 'lifting' *subvenir aux besoins de la famille*. Most candidates understood *le chômage* and managed to find satisfactory alternatives to *faire face à*.

In **item 3(c)**, the points about levels of productivity were well made by many, but some lost marks by not making a sufficiently clear distinction between developed and developing countries. Others relied heavily on 'lifting' *une augmentation de la productivité* or *la situation ne s'est pas reproduite*, both of which were easily avoidable, for example with *la productivité a augmenté* or *ce n'est pas le cas*. *L'écart s'agrandit* regularly suffered the same fate.

Item 3(d) A misunderstanding of the phrase *faute de* caused some candidates to suggest that the machinery was often breaking down, but they were generally much more successful in expressing the idea of working by hand.

Item 3(e) Most candidates mentioned the idea of a fall in prices, avoiding lifting *la réduction des prix*, but not always being sufficiently precise as to the scale. The other three elements of the question were generally accessible.

Question 4

Marks on this question were generally somewhat lower than on Question 3.

Item 4(a) saw many candidates expressing the idea of *freiner* (*ralentir, limiter, réduire*) without going too far with *stopper* or *éliminer*. Relatively few understood *l'exode rural*, some appearing to think that *rural* was an adjective associated with *la rue*.

In **Item 4(b)**, there was a good deal of lifting of *des conditions commerciales plus justes* and *combattre la pauvreté*. The third mark required some notion of pro-activity on the part of the *agriculteurs* in shaping their own destiny.

Item 4(c) suffered again from the very avoidable lifting of *un prix de vente plus avantageux, la stabilité des prix* and *des produits de meilleure qualité*. *Investissements* could also have been easily expressed with a verb. Here, as elsewhere on the paper, it was very often thought to be an advantage that prices should be *abordables*, whereas in fact the point was that lower prices disadvantage the *petits producteurs*, because what is being referred to is the prices paid to (not by) them.

Item 4(d) asked what the *petits producteurs* were enabled to do, offering similar straightforward opportunities to rephrase using verbs instead of nouns: *augmentation; creation; amelioration*. *Ils peuvent augmenter leurs revenus, créer ces emplois et améliorer les structures communautaires* earns all three marks.

In **Item 4(e)**, few candidates mentioned the possibility of a specific bonus but often scored three marks anyway by identifying the three other benefits mentioned, although the distinction was not always made between their own efforts to protect the environment and raising awareness in other people of the need to follow their example.

Question 5

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to refer to possible ways of reducing the problem of hunger, giving their own views. 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.

Candidates were required to summarise *les éléments qui contribuent au problème de la faim et les bienfaits du commerce équitable* as presented in the two texts. The mark scheme identified 16 rewardable points, of which many candidates managed perhaps 6 or 7 or more, with a good number reaching 10. The most commonly identified contributory elements included the increase in population, low prices paid to the *producteurs*, unemployment and low productivity, but few included the gap between developed and developing countries and the lack of rainfall/fertile soil. The most usually mentioned benefits of fair trade were higher/more stable revenue, improved quality and yield, job creation, reduction of poverty, and the encouragement of investment.

Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore no mark.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic - *à mon noble avis ...* - which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Some 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 slant of their own. Contraception, legislation to limit family size, GM crops, eliminating food waste, improving distribution chains, growing your own vegetables, international aid without misappropriation by corrupt governments, and spending money on agriculture rather than arms or the space race were all relevant ideas that took the response beyond the confines of the texts.

The quality of language varied from excellent to poor. Some candidates found it difficult to express their ideas in a grammatically correct form, with verbs as usual being far the most common sources of error. Particularly concerning again was the wide-spread notion that the plural of *il travaille* is *ils travaillent*. Examples of incorrect verb forms and agreements were many, and the use of the infinitive (-*er*) ending seemed interchangeable with the past participle (-*é*). But basic agreements in general were simply routinely ignored by even some of the more fluent candidates: *les produit, le produits*. This was exacerbated by a general interchanging within the same sentence of *il* with *ils* and therefore of *son/sa/ses/leur/leurs*. Particularly in longer sentences (of which there was no shortage!), candidates appeared to forget the subject they had started with and switched apparently at random.

There were instances of phonetic approach to spelling - *saisser* (*cesser*), *des prix plus chaire* - which extended even to very basic words - *maix; qu'an; assé/asser; pas se que; eu* (for *eux*); *pa*. *Ce/se/ceux* were often treated as interchangeable, as were *si* and *ci*, *sa* and *ça*, *on* and *ont*, *son* and *sont*, *donc* and *dont*. *D'avantage* was almost universal, as were *revenue* and *l'emploie*. *Vent/vend/vente/ventre/vendre* were also sometimes treated as interchangeable.

Constructions with certain common verbs caused regular problems: *permettre, aider, encourage, empêcher* and even *pouvoir*. *Leur/leurs* were often wrong and attempts at using *dont* very often went awry. The difference between *qui* and *ce qui* was not appreciated by a large number. There was also frequent redundant insertion of *en*: *Il y en a des avantages; il s'en servent de machines*

That said, the linguistic ability of most candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/31

Essay

Key Messages

In order to perform well on this paper, candidates need to select a title with which they feel comfortable and write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherently structured. The use of French should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Sentence patterns should show some evidence of complexity and the style should be easy to follow.

General Comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 5 titles, 24 of the 40 marks available being awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. Many of the essays were well structured but they tended to be rather limited in scope and the relatively small number of points that were made were often repeated in the conclusion. At the bottom of the scale, a number of candidates struggled since they simply did not have the linguistic means to communicate what ideas they might have had. From the linguistic point of view, even in the best work some inconsistency was in evidence in the matter of verb forms, tenses, prepositions and adjectival/subject-verb agreements. In the weaker essays, grammatical errors were numerous, among the most recurrent being confusion of *qui* and *que*, the use of the preposition *à* after many verbs (e.g. *aimer à toutes les enfants*, *écouter à les personnes*) and the use of *de les* and *à les* instead of *des* and *aux*. Though there was some variation in the choice of vocabulary and structures in the better work, there was also a fair amount of repetition, not least of such words as *les choses* and *les personnes*, the latter often being made to do duty for *les gens*. Many candidates, were over-reliant on words and phrases taken from the title, which made for somewhat awkward expression and essays that did not read very well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Les loisirs: le meilleur remède contre tout ce qu'il y a de mauvais dans la vie. Êtes-vous d'accord?

This was one of the popular titles and many candidates chose it. Leisure activities were variously seen as a remedy for ill health, for stress and depression, for social scourges such as drugs and delinquency and for loneliness. A few better candidates widened the scope by pointing out that, though leisure activities play a very important role in our lives, there is a danger of devoting too much time to them at the expense of schoolwork and professional duties. Moreover, in an age where many people's idea of leisure is activities involving computers and the Internet, there is the problem that they will fall victim to an excessively sedentary existence and also to such ills as Internet pornography, Internet gambling and the well-known evils attendant on the over-use of social networking sites. One candidate also drew attention to leisure pursuits that are inherently dangerous such as mountaineering and climbing and even some forms of skiing.

Question 2

Qui dit médias dit mensonges. Partagez-vous ce point de vue?

Not many candidates chose this title and the ensuing essays were not very successful. Some essays simply made the point that was repeated but, alas, not supported by any examples that, though the media can be a valuable source of information, journalists often tend to distort both the stories they report and the photos they print. Other candidates dwelt on the question of media advertising, expressing the view that *la pub et les médias sont la manière plus efficace de augmenter les achats, alors ce n'est pas important si la pub est rempli de mensonges*. Some candidates highlighted the danger that the media pose to the environment

because of all the paper they use and the destruction of forests and animal habitats occasionally. True though it may be, this is clearly irrelevant to the question set.

Question 3

Les experts exagèrent quand ils soutiennent que la préservation de la biodiversité est d'une importance vitale pour la survie de l'espèce humaine. Qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?

This was another popular subject. Some irrelevance was again in evidence when candidates wandered from the topic of *la biodiversité* and talked more generally about the problem of pollution and the damage being done to the environment. Those who wrote relevantly focused on the need to protect animals, insects and plants which constitute vital links in life-sustaining eco-systems. Examples were quoted of plant and animal life which is important in such functions as purifying water supplies, of insects that pollinate trees and plants which are a source of food and also, in some cases, of medicines, and of the forests which are such an important source of oxygen. The importance of Nature for the economy was highlighted not only in the matter of the fruits and vegetables and flowers that can be sold on world markets as well as locally but also in that of attracting the tourists who are such an important source of revenue in many parts of the world: but for the rich diversity of the flora and fauna they would not come. Sometimes, however, the argument did not quite hang together: candidates pointed to the importance of plants and animals as a source of food and clothing for the human race, which is precisely why many species are threatened, and in the same breath highlighted the need to protect the species concerned as well as those which will suffer the same fate if action is not taken now.

Question 4

C'est le foyer familial et non pas l'école qui joue le plus grand rôle dans l'éducation des jeunes. Discutez de cette affirmation.

This was by far the most popular choice of subject. The starting point for many was the importance of the academic education received at school in providing candidates with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to secure the diplomas required by both universities and employers. Moreover, a school community is a society in miniature where children learn to interact with others and to accept and respect classmates who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. It is at school too that they become aware of the importance of competition in a world governed by the principle of the survival of the fittest. However, many essays agreed with the proposition advanced in the title and saw the family as having an equally if not more important role to play. The child's emotional and moral development will depend on the way in which the parents have brought him or her up, and careful parental guidance is of the essence in a world which holds more and more dangers for the unsuspecting child, the most often quoted example here being the evils of the Internet and social networking sites. Not least, it was also suggested that the attitude instilled in the child at home in his pre-school years will be very important in determining his attitude towards his school studies and whether or not he makes the most of the opportunities afforded by the educational experience. A very common linguistic problem in this essay was the inability to conjugate the verb *apprendre*: *apprenent*, *apprenons*, *apprendrent*, *apprendre* and *sont appris* all figured.

Question 5

Les activités culturelles ne servent à rien sur le plan pratique. Êtes-vous d'accord?

Too few candidates chose this title for any meaningful comment.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/32

Essay

Key Messages

In order to perform well on this paper, candidates need to select a title with which they feel comfortable and write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherently structured. The use of French should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Sentence patterns should show some evidence of complexity and the style should be easy to follow.

General Comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 5 titles, 24 of the marks available being awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. The best essays were very fluent, consistently accurate and deployed an extensive range of vocabulary and idiom. They featured a clear and relevant introduction to the title set, a coherent and logical argument supported by convincing analysis and well-chosen examples and a final paragraph which drew together the various strands of the argument to arrive at a balanced conclusion that did not simply repeat what had already been said. However, too many candidates continue to pay insufficient heed to the issue(s) specifically raised in the question title, being content rather to reproduce material prepared in advance and focusing solely on the umbrella heading printed in italics on the question paper. Again, there were lots of formulaic definition-based introductory paragraphs, in which the only reference to the title was in a sentence that was somewhat artificially appended to the definition offered. In a number of Centres, candidates produced transparently cloned openings which were simply not relevant to the question set and following which the level of accuracy plummeted. Conclusions too often completely ignored the specifics of the title. Quotations calculated to impress often had quite the opposite effect since they were either misquoted and/or attributed to the wrong person. Moreover, they were not infrequently inappropriate and therefore detracted from rather than supported the point being made.

As far as the quality of the language was concerned, better candidates made a genuine effort to rise to the demands of fluent expression, clearly had a sound grasp of the grammatical elements and demonstrated some capacity to use more complex structures accurately and appropriately. At the other end of the spectrum, a certain proportion of essays were characterised by persistent errors which suggested that there were considerable limitations to the use of basic grammar and, as a result of which, communication quite often broke down. That being said, the majority of candidates fell into the middle range, submitting work that was characterised by a fair level of accuracy though with some inconsistency in the matter of tenses, irregular verbs, adjectival and subject-verb agreements and the like. They made some use of less common vocabulary and structures but usage was not always correct or appropriate, with the result that their intended meaning was not always totally clear. Close repetition of the same words and phrases, overuse of the noun *chose* and of clauses introduced by *il y a*, a tendency to begin sentences with clauses prefaced with the word *avec*, injudicious use of *cela* and of the demonstratives *ce*, *cette* and *ces* and weak paragraph links (e.g. *D'abord*, *Aussi*, *Ensuite*, *Puis* and *Mais*) were all recurrent features that made for a certain awkwardness and compromised fluency to a certain extent. Many of the linguistic errors and infelicities that have been highlighted in recent reports were again common currency. They included:

- redundant use of the pronoun *en*, e.g. *s'en servir de ces nouvelles techniques, on peut s'en rendre compte que*
- unnecessary use of the subjunctive in a clause where the subject is the same as that of the previous clause, e.g. *ils le font pour qu'ils puissent être sûrs....*
- the use of *pour* followed by infinitive where a subjunctive clause is needed, e.g. *le travail est notre source de revenu pour pouvoir faire face (...pour que nous puissions faire face), les activités sont nécessaires pour mener une bonne vie (...pour que nous menions une bonne vie)*

- injudicious use of the word *voire*, e.g. *elles s'occupent de la future génération, voire des enfants*
- the use of *grâce à* in negative contexts, e.g. *certains meurent de faim grâce au chômage*
- confusion between 2 words which differ in spelling by just one letter but which have very different meanings, e.g. *dont* and *donc*, *trône* and *prône*, *s'écouler* and *s'écrouler*
- confusion between homonyms, the most frequent problems being encountered with the infinitive and past participle of *-er* verbs, with *ou* and *où*, with *ces* and *ses* and with *peu* and *peut*
- slips in register, e.g. *boulot, ça, plein de, bosser, bouffer, des fois* (very often following *souvent*), *truc, télé, infos*
- indiscriminate use of the pronouns *on* and *nous* often within the same sentence and, usually in weaker work, use of the second person pronouns *tu* and *vous*.
- redundant use of the negative particle *ne* in constructions with *non seulement*, e.g. *n'a non seulement*
- inconsistencies in adjectival and subject-verb agreement
- injudicious use of *entre autres* which, moreover, figured variously as *et entre autres, entre d'autres, entre autre* and *en autres*
- adjectives prefixed with *non* and *pas*, e.g. *non-réguliers, non-fixés, non satisfaisant, pas sain*
- *qui* made to do duty for *ce qui* and *que* for *dont* and *auxquels/auxquelles*, e.g. *les problèmes qu'ils font face, les choses qu'ils ont besoin*
- tautological phrases, e.g. *dans ce monde moderne où nous vivons aujourd'hui, ainsi donc, mais cependant, mais toutefois, comme par exemple, selon moi je pense que*

Lexical items which were commonly spelt wrongly included *de nos jours* (*des nos jours*), *régner*(*reigner*), *fatigant*(*fatigant*), *environnement* (*environment*) and *gouvernement* (*government*), and among anglicisms that figured in quite a lot of scripts were *balance(r)* for *équilibre(r)*, *définitivement* for *certainement* and *éventuellement* for *finale*ment.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Les gens qui se plaignent tout le temps de leur activité professionnelle ont tort car c'est le travail qui les fait vivre. Qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?

This essay was by far the most popular choice. It required candidates to discuss in what ways work can be said to be a life-giving force or a force that enhances the quality of life or gives meaning to life, and then to go on to consider what reasons a person may have for complaining about the work he/she does and whether the complaints are justified. Too many candidates simply wrote a general piece on work in which there was little if any reference to either of these two key elements. A lot included long sections on the value and importance of *les loisirs* which were usually completely irrelevant.

The starting point for many of those who wrote relevantly was the material aspect. Work provides the money to live to support oneself and one's dependents, to buy food, to pay the rent and the various household bills and to pay for the little luxuries such as a car and holidays which enhance the quality of life. Work brings the comfort, security and independence that are essential ingredients of a life well lived. In order to be deemed to have made a success of his life, it is essential that a man be accorded dignity and respect in the community in which he lives, that he enjoy a certain social status. Having a job and thereby contributing to the smooth running of society confers that social status which is not accorded to someone who is unemployed and has to demean himself by depending on charity to survive. Work, moreover, gives meaning to someone's life by giving him/her a sense of purpose and the will to live that is instilled in someone who feels that he is making full and proper use of the gifts and talents with which life has endowed him. People who have no job and hence no such sense of purpose often succumb to boredom and/or depression since they feel that life has nothing to offer them. From there it is but a short step to major psychological problems, to drug taking and even to suicide: because they have no job, the individuals concerned feel that life has

passed them by. Man is also by nature a social creature and feels the need to be with and interact with other people: this essential ingredient of human life is again provided by the workplace where opportunities for interaction with others are a prerequisite.

However, it was generally agreed that, despite the desirability of having a job, the conditions in which many people have to work is a legitimate cause for complaint. Many workers are victims of exploitation by enterprises which show no concern for their well-being: rightly or wrongly, the fast-food industry and restaurants in general were quite often singled out in this connection. The hours they have to work and the poor wages paid figure high on the list of grievances: it is impossible to support a family on the wages received by many employees for whom the little luxuries of life are but a dream. Moreover, the time available to devote to their family and to leisure activities, many of which are, in any case, beyond their very limited means, is minimal. In certain cases, the difficult conditions in which people have to work and/or the long hours that they have to put in, take a heavy toll on both their physical and mental health. Not least, many jobs are highly tedious and monotonous, providing little job satisfaction: complaints are born of boredom and frustration and, justified though they may be, they can be of little avail. Harassment of various descriptions is an evil that rears its ugly head in a certain number of enterprises: the victims are sometimes too afraid to complain lest they lose their job but if there are no complaints, the scourge will go unchecked and countless others will suffer the same fate. Nepotism and favouritism in the workplace are another problem: people work hard to achieve promotion but their hopes of advancement are rudely dashed when they are passed over in favour of a much less worthy candidate. A less serious complaint, but one deemed to be not without some justification, is the dehumanisation of the workplace: man, the social animal, is turned into a slave of technology whose only contact is with his computer mouse and his computer screen.

An interesting line taken by a few candidates was that *le travail permet de survivre* but that it is *les loisirs*, which the money earned working make affordable, which provide the enrichment that is truly life-giving. Having said that, as already stated, much of the material about *les loisirs* that figured in many essays was irrelevant.

Common linguistic errors that featured in essays on this title were distorted versions of the adjective *rémunéré* which was often given as *rénuméré*, the use of *les travaux* for *les emplois*, clumsy variants on the phrase *gravir les échelons de la hiérarchie sociale*, e.g. *grimper l'échelle sociale*, confusion between *statut* and *statue* and the inability to conjugate the verb *se plaindre*: *se plain*, *se plainner*, *se plaindrent*, *nous nous plaindons* and *se plaigne*, taken to be the 3rd person singular indicative form, were among a number of flawed suggestions that figured.

Question 2

La vision du monde présentée par les médias est souvent loin de la vérité. Discutez de cette affirmation.

This title was the third most popular choice and one that proved very fruitful in the case of those candidates who were able to support their points with a range of appropriate reference and illustration.

The point was made in a number of essays that there is no such thing as total impartiality: every journalist has views on the subjects that he is called upon to report and, try as he might to remain an impartial observer, by very virtue of choosing to portray or dwell on certain aspects rather than others, he is putting a certain slant on the topic which is the subject of his journalism. However, very often, and for a whole variety of reasons, the slant is much more deliberate and the picture painted as a result is much more one-sided. Many media sources have a strong political bias. They support the policies of a certain political party and do all in their power to persuade their readers or spectators of the wrongs of the policies pursued by their political opponents. Key details are exaggerated, others omitted, sometimes some of the evidence put forward spills over into the realm of fiction, all with the aim of winning their audience over to the party line espoused. In some countries, it was observed, the media are subject to the whims of a totalitarian regime: if a newspaper or TV channel fails to support the practices and views, however repugnant they may be, of the regime in power, either the reporter or the newspaper or TV channel in question will almost certainly be the subject of a swift crackdown or worse. As a result, what is presented represents a gross distortion of the truth. Another problem is sensationalism. Newspapers need to increase their sales and the best way of achieving this goal is by appealing to the popular imagination: the sordid is made more sordid and the glamorous more glamorous, to the extent that the true situation is completely obscured. A frequent example given in this connection was the reporting of the events surrounding the downfall of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the ex-Director of the International Monetary Fund: so many different and contradictory versions were put forward in the press that it was impossible to distinguish fact from fiction. Despite what many candidates saw as the more or less inevitable deformation of the true picture that media sources purvey, most were of the view that we nonetheless have cause to be grateful to them for opening the eyes of the public to the truth

of scandals at home and abroad and atrocities unfolding in various parts of the world. Without this example, we would remain ignorant of the terrible devastation caused by natural disasters in various regions and of the war crimes perpetrated by such men as Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia and Assad in Syria. The example was also quoted of Wikileaks providing information that enabled the press to expose the public key information that, for whatever reason, had been hidden and kept back by various governments.

Quite common in essays on this topic were the use, despite the title, of *le média* for *les médias*, the use of *le peuple* and *la population* where the candidate clearly meant *le public* and the infelicitous *à travers les médias* for *dans les médias*.

Question 3

Comment concilier la conservation et les aspirations insatiables de la population à un niveau de vie plus élevé?

In order to score a high mark for content, candidates who opted for this title, who were very much in a minority, needed to identify the *aspirations insatiables* referred to and then to detail their impact on the environment and the measures needed to palliate that impact. Alas, a significant proportion of candidates who chose it paid little heed, if indeed any, to the specifics of the question and simply reproduced the essay that they had prepared on *la conservation*.

Good introductions often focused on the economic development throughout the world which means that more people have more and more money to spend on material comforts ranging from furniture to electronic goods to smart cars. A rapidly increasing number of people can afford foreign holidays, they want bigger and better houses, faster public transport, more hospitals and more leisure facilities. The impact on the environment is already plain for all to see and the damage inflicted will soon be irreparable if steps are not taken to ensure that the ecological cost is mitigated. Rampant consumerism and the ever-increasing need for more buildings and infrastructure to cater for man's insatiable living and recreational needs entail not only unacceptably high levels of pollution but also the depletion of stocks of natural resources such as wood, both of these resulting in the destruction of life-sustaining eco-systems and of the natural habitats of animals and plants. Candidates were of the view that it is imperative therefore that, as a matter of urgency, governments launch reforestation programmes as well as increasing public awareness of the damage being done and of the need to make greater use of synthetic rather than natural materials for the purpose of both building and furnishing. It may even become necessary to impose restrictions on the use of natural materials. As far as plant and animal life is concerned, not forgetting, of course, marine life, a whole raft of measures needs to be implemented to protect the eco-systems that sustain them: laws controlling the exploitation of natural resources must be tightened and strictly enforced as too must legislation to prevent the pollution of eco-systems by the factories that operate round the clock to satisfy the needs of the consumer society. The energy needs consequent on man's insatiable thirst for greater comfort are enormous. Here again, governments have a major role to play: more investment is needed to develop renewable energy sources and to put the results of scientific research in this area into operation. This will in turn necessitate higher taxes, including a substantial eco-levy on fossil fuels, to finance the investment needed: man must expect to have to pay the costs entailed by his constant search for ways of improving his living standards. It was further argued that the enormous increase in tourism engendered by man's new found and seemingly endless passion for foreign travel can only be sustained if governments implement programmes designed to minimize the impact on the local environment: the careful management of natural resources such as water, eco-friendly tourist infrastructures, energy efficiency and recycling are all essential components of such programmes. Not least, with a view to reconciling human needs with ecological needs, it is essential that individuals, with the guidance of government bodies, adopt a more responsible attitude towards the environment. If only more people participated in and put into action the whole panoply of eminently accessible schemes and measures designed to reduce a human being's carbon footprint – car-sharing, making better use of public transport, recycling, turning off electronic devices instead of leaving them in stand-by mode – the human race would go a long way to mitigating the devastating ecological impact of its own never-ending quest for an ever higher standard of living.

Question 4

L'éducation est une arme essentielle dans la lutte contre l'inégalité. Jusqu'à quel point êtes-vous d'accord?

This was the second most popular question. A number of better essays began by making the point that it is thanks to both their formal education in the classroom and the informal education received at home and via the media that young people gradually become aware of their own fundamental rights and of those of others

who differ from themselves in such matters as ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation. Education, it is affirmed, seeks to instil a certain open-mindedness and to break down barriers of prejudice. It promotes tolerance and the acceptance of differences, thereby encouraging young people to welcome into their lives people who differ from themselves, perhaps because they have a physical handicap perhaps because they have been brought up in a different faith. A school community, moreover, is a society in miniature where candidates of different ethnic origins, different creeds and often different intellectual and physical abilities are brought together under the same roof: harmony reigns and friendships are formed which take no account of such potentially divisive factors as skin colour and religious upbringing. A lot of candidates alighted on the major role played by education in the matter of the progress that women have been able to make in society. Equal educational opportunities being extended in most countries of the world to girls and boys, girls have been able to develop their talents and skills with the same facility as their male counterparts, to attain the same level of academic achievement and thereby to compete on an equal footing with boys, whether it be for university places or for jobs. Far from inciting jealousy, the success achieved by women at school and university has brought men to appreciate the contribution that they can make to society, thereby further breaking down the barriers of prejudice erected by bygone generations. Another common theme was the role played by education in breaking down the barriers between rich and poor and thereby promoting social equality and mobility. The children of poor parents who make the most of the educational opportunities afforded them and thereby do well in public examinations are able to escape from the poverty trap and aspire to a standard of living and a social status beyond their parents' wildest dreams. Countless examples can be cited of individuals from the humblest of backgrounds who, thanks to the start in life given to them by their education, have succeeded in attaining the highest offices in the public and corporate domains. However, as many pointed out, education can also be a source of inequality in that those who are not academically gifted and who do not therefore fare well at school very often find themselves marginalised by society. Even while at school, they are not afforded the same attention as gifted candidates and often find themselves in classes taught by teachers who take little interest in them and whose pedagogical competence is frequently questionable. Then, when they leave school with no qualifications and no diploma, they find it impossible to find employment and consequently fall prey to the classic social scourges of delinquency and drug-taking. A very valid observation made in some of the best essays was that education can be subverted by fanatical religions and totalitarian regimes to inculcate prejudice and spread values that are quite the opposite of egalitarian, examples cited including the Taliban and the Nazi regime in Germany. It is also true that the egalitarian values inculcated by the formal education delivered at school and university can be undermined by the informal education that young people receive at home where they are exposed to the values of parents who have been imbued by their forebears with notions of the superiority of one race or one religion over another.

Even though it had no bearing on the title or, usually, on the candidate's argument, Aristotle's celebrated aphorism about the difference between an educated and an uneducated man was oft quoted, though by no means always very accurately.

Question 5

Selon vous, la mondialisation a-t-elle été un phénomène positif ou négatif pour la culture de votre pays? Justifiez votre réponse.

This title did not attract a great number of candidates. In order to score highly those who did choose it needed to marshal evidence to support both views and then make some sort of value judgement based on the points made for and against. The mark awarded depended on the range and sophistication of the issues raised and the way in which they drew together the various strands to arrive at a conclusion. A significant number of candidates stretched the meaning of *la culture* which they read as being synonymous with *la société*: this interpretation was accepted provided that there was a reasonable degree of reference to matters cultural, which there almost invariably was.

A good many essays focused on the fact that globalisation has brought in its train much closer collaboration between nations on a number of levels, not least at the economic level: poorer countries have benefited a great deal from foreign aid and investment which has in turn resulted in a very marked improvement in the standard of living enjoyed by the inhabitants. Also of great economic benefit to many countries has been the tremendous boost to tourism given by the advent of globalisation. Opportunities to study abroad, often at prestigious European and American universities, have also greatly increased in number. The large-scale influx of tourists and the access to foreign media sources has had a very positive influence on people's attitudes: they tend to be less insular, less inward looking, more open to differences and more tolerant whether it be in the matter of race, religion or sexual orientation. This change in attitude, it was claimed, has been reflected in the much higher number of mixed marriages and marriages between people of different religious creeds.

However, almost everyone agreed that these changes for the good have been countered by a number of adverse effects entailed by the globalisation movement. Perhaps chief among them has been the regrettable but inevitable erosion of local traditions: traditional local crafts such as weaving and pottery no longer interest the young, traditional local dress has been abandoned in favour of jeans, tee-shirts and leather jackets, traditional local cuisine has lost a lot of ground to international dishes particularly convenience food, among young people the local creole has been largely displaced by English, and the decline of religion, also attributable in large measure to foreign influence, means that the number of traditional religious festivals is in decline. The concomitant erosion of traditional values by western values has taken a particular toll among teenagers and young adults, a number of whom have allowed themselves to be dragged down by the scourges of western society (alcohol, drug taking, sexual promiscuity etc.) which were virtually unknown fifteen years ago. Many young adults now eschew marriage in favour of cohabitation. The influence of foreign films has led to a marked increase in violence: as one candidate put it, *les faits divers mauriciens sont maintenant dignes des films hollywoodiens*. It is true that the opportunities to study abroad are much more numerous but, alas, many of those who are given the opportunity to do so, never return. Added to which, many of the best graduates from local universities and other young people who have risen swiftly within their chosen professions are lured away by foreign firms, thereby depriving the country of a great deal of talent. The defection from traditional cuisine to convenience food has affected people's health: obesity is on the increase and there has been a marked increase in the number of cases of diabetes and cardio-vascular problems. Notwithstanding the obvious economic benefit, the advent of mass tourism has also brought its share of ills, most notable among which are damage to sites of natural beauty, higher levels of pollution, a more unashamedly materialistic outlook on life among the local population and, not least, the spread of prostitution.