

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE French (8190 / 9190)

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AS Unit 1 (6441) - Listening and Writing

Nearly 12000 candidates sat this paper. As in other recent sessions, centres received both cassettes and compact discs. These contained the usual four passages, whose total running time was a little over five and a half minutes. Both the style of the paper and time allocation were unchanged, and the vast majority of candidates attempted all parts, with a wide spread of outcomes. As observed last summer, teacher and candidate preparation enabled some very high levels of achievement at the upper end. Practice with past papers clearly pays dividends. Heeding advice in recent Examiners' Reports helped to raise achievement. The paper was marked to exactly the same principles as in recent sessions, and its contents followed a familiar pattern. Passage 1, relating to Q1, was a multiple choice exercise worth 4 marks, concerning second homes, seeking straightforward, factual information from the passage. Passage 2, about the dangers of driving when tired, was divided in two, such that Q2, based on the first section, was an exercise requiring matching two halves of a sentence, worth 5 marks, and where Q3, also worth 5 marks, was a gap-filling exercise, selecting from a pool of words. Q4, where 12 marks were available, requiring responses in French, and Q5, stimulating two free responses of up to 40 words and 8 marks each, were based on Passage 3, concerning illegal immigrants. Q5(a) required candidates to comment on the family's situation, while Q5(b) was more general, and sought a personal opinion on how to help immigrant families. Passage 4, an interview about a newly-appointed Spanish teacher, was the basis for Q6, the English summary, for which 8 marks were available, where all parts were to be answered in no more than a total of 60 words.

Assessment Principles

In Q1, Q2 and Q3, only 0 or 1 could be scored for each part. In Q3, if the response selected was not wholly correctly transcribed, but could clearly not be confused with another item in the pool, it earned the mark. Thus *bouge* or *equilibre* gained 1 mark. As has been the case for several sessions for this Unit, Examiners assessed responses in Q4 and Q6 in the order that elements were presented by the candidates, and considered no more elements than the number of marks available. For instance, in a 2 mark question, only the first two elements offered gained credit. Repeating or re-working the question, or preambles to an acceptable response, did not count as elements in the response. While harmless additions did not cause credit to be withheld, vitiation through incorrect additions did. Q5(a) and Q5(b) were considered as separate entities. In either case, candidates needed to gain at least 1 mark for Content to access any marks at all for Language, and *vice versa*. An opinion was essential in Q5(a). The practice of enforcing word limits in Q5 and Q6 was unchanged: in Q5, Examiners read no further than to the end of the sense group after 40 words in either response, where *il y a* and its variants counted as a single word. In Q6, Examiners considered the first 60 words only, since for this summary exercise, whole sentences were not required to gain credit.

Candidates' responses

Question 1

This question, sought simple, factual information in a non-verbal exercise. It proved a serviceable question with which to encourage candidates at the start of the paper. Many candidates scored well, and full marks were not infrequent. (a) was a successful part for many candidates. In (b) *oeust* and *est* confused some candidates. (d) was not especially successful, and both distractors attracted similarly many erroneous responses.

Question 2

As has been advised at INSET meetings, candidates should note the grammatical considerations pertaining to the sentence halves, as such reflection precluded some incorrect distractors. (i) was a well-answered part, and the clearly understandable *si on avait bu de l'alcool* appeared to help many candidates to gain 1 mark. (ii) was also largely successful, perhaps due to *panneaux* being a less accessible item of vocabulary, thus attracting fewer candidates to the grammatically possible, but incorrect distractor D. The understanding of fractions when written as words is not universally good, and *un tiers* and *la moitié* were possibly the cause of confusion for a number of candidates in (iii). J was fairly frequently and erroneously offered in (iv), perhaps due to popular belief, rather than reference to the passage. *imprimé* was understood by a good proportion of candidates in (v). Overall, there were many good performances in this question, with 4 marks often being gained. Relatively few candidates scored 2 marks or fewer.

Question 3

As in Q2, candidates are perhaps becoming increasingly competent at using the grammatical context of the sought cloze response to guide their response, and at using technique to help their scores: as in June 2007, where an incorrect response was offered, it was frequently grammatically possible, which shows increasing awareness from many candidates. (a) discriminated well, between those candidates who had listened attentively and those who had assumed that rest and relaxation would be desirable. This first part was accessible only to more able candidates. (b) benefitted more candidates, and (c) was perhaps the most correctly answered part. In parts (b) and (c), the majority of candidates selected a noun and verb respectively. *sel* was offered by a significant number of candidates in (d), and in (e), *se dépêcher* was an improbably frequent offering. A pleasing number of candidates appeared to understand the general context of avoiding accidents caused by tiredness at the wheel, but even more candidates could have scored more if they had taken account of the overall context: hurrying when tired, as in (e), is possible, but unlikely to be safe. Examiners, as stated above, accepted unambiguous and recognisable responses which were clearly selected from the pool.

Question 4

There were a number of very successful responses, with some candidates gaining 10 marks or more for the whole question. There were a number of parts which enabled all but the very weakest candidates to gain some credit. A frequent cause of lost credit was untargeted lifting, where candidates appear to have understood accurately, but had either written everything possible, and ran out of elements; or where they had lacked the necessary manipulation of the passage to respond directly to the question part. Correct grammar was also important in ensuring that responses communicated. A number of very brief responses were able to be wholly successful. As anticipated, weaker candidates scored more on the more straightforward, factual parts: (b), (c) and (f). Parts (g) and (h) differentiated effectively, and direct lifts did not succeed here.

Q4(a)

There were mixed fortunes in this part which was envisaged as a straightforward start: *tourisme (t.c.)* or *vacances (t.c.)* gained the 1 mark on offer. *touristes t.c.* is an example of an oblique lift, and the English *tourists* did not score. *ils ont touristes* exemplifies a flawed lift which is untargeted, and grammatically inaccurate. *ils avaient un visa touriste* is again a lift, but does not respond directly to the question, since it is not a valid pretext.

Q4(b)

Two discrete notions were sought, and many candidates accessed either one or both marks. *Response, result, identity, demand, negative* and *papers*, frequently offered in English, could not score. Incorrect but existent verb forms are tolerated: *ils vit sans papiers* scores, but *ils vivrent sans papiers* does not. Faulty attempts at the perfect passive, not required in the AS programme of study, were also tolerated: *la demande a été refusé* gained 1 mark. *ils ont refusé (t.c.)* did not succeed, since *ils* is unclear. *ils vivent sans papier* was not successful, as it is ambiguous. Attempts to include the unnecessary information *un appartement de quarante mètres carrés* used up an element gratuitously. An accurate lift was sufficiently targeted to gain 2 marks: *ils ont attendu deux ans avant d'obtenir une réponse négative*

Q4(c)

The 2 available marks were awarded discretely, and required the overall sense of the risk of police stoppage. This was a very successful part with the vast majority of candidates gaining 1 or 2 marks. *s'arrêter* was accepted either in the sense of stopping or arresting Philippe. *Il est chauffeur de taxi* was very frequent, and was treated as a preamble, but candidates should be careful: the question did not require this information which might have been treated as an element. *Control* in English caused credit to be withheld from a number of candidates. *Les contrôles de police sont très, très fréquents* was a successful lift worth 2 marks; *les contrôles sont très, très fréquents* was only partially rewardable for 1 mark, as the police element is omitted.

Q4(d)

This part was generally well done, and was intended to furnish some credit for a wide range of candidates. Any two of four notions gained credit. *Elle a des amis (t.c.)* gained 1 mark, but was sometimes vitiated by a faulty attempt to lift: *elle a des amis dans les meubles, elle a des amis immobiles*. Many candidates attempted *elle va à la messe* but lost the mark by spellings of *messe* too wide of the mark: *maisse, mess, mez*. Even the attendance of Farah's children at school was credited, as it illustrated Farah's willingness to join in the French way of life. As the notions involved evidenced her current integration, responses in the future tense lost 1 mark: *elle ira à la messe*.

Q4(e)

This part met with frequent success, and either of two angles was accepted: education as a right, or no need for documents. *Une droite* was sometimes ambiguously offered for *un droit*, and did not score. *Besoin* is not a verb, and was unsuccessful: *ils ne besoin pas de papiers*. If *papier* was not a sequential error, it did not score: *ils n'ont pas besoin de papier* was ambiguous. *ils sont scolarisés (t.c.)* is true, but an untargeted lift. *Il ne faut pas avoir de papiers* or *il ne doivent pas avoir de papiers* were inaccurate attempts at *ils n'ont pas besoin de papiers* and did not earn credit.

Q4(f)

One mark was available for either of two notions: difficulty in seeking accommodation or employment. *Trouver* or *chercher*, in accordance with the general marking principle, were accepted in any existent form, and this aided many candidates. *travaille* for *travail* was tolerated. *emploi* or *poste* were acceptable alternatives for *travail*, but *métier* and *occupation* did not convey the sense finding paid employment, rather than a career. The omission of a verb was sometimes the reason for a lost mark. *apartment* in English was in the wrong language, so credit was withheld.

Q4(g)

Four notions would have gained credit, and candidates could score with any two. Therefore Q4(d), Q4(f) and Q4(g) all had more notions available than the number of elements sought, so candidates had a good chance of accessing full credit. For instance, *la famille (t.c.)* or *les enfants (t.c.)* scored 1 mark. The question sought to elicit two themes, and therefore, lifts of the questions were not targeted, and caused 1 mark to be withheld for the first such element. *Depuis combien de temps êtes-vous en France? Pour les enfants comment ça se passe?* gained 1 mark. *Le revenu (t.c.)*, *le travail (t.c.)* or *le salaire (t.c.)* did not score, as references to Philippe or the family were needed: *le salaire de Philippe*, *le revenu de la famille*. *La revenue de la famille* gained no credit, as it involves an ambiguous French word. *Comment sa se passe* was an accurate attempt to lift, but did not communicate enough to gain 1 mark. *La période* could be rendered profitably by *la durée* while *la duration* was not acceptable. Philippe was *le mari* but *la marie* or *la mairie* vitiated an otherwise correct response: *le revenu de son marie*.

Q4(h)

As in Q4(g), a direct lift of the question did not score, as it was oblique. This part differentiated well, as a good number of candidates lifted directly, but others extracted the theme which was required. There needed to be some indication of *si* or its equivalent: *si les enfants avaient d'autres frères ou sœurs* scored, but *les enfants avaient d'autres frères ou sœurs* was not a meaningful statement for this part's demands. Responses succeeded if they involved Farah having further children, or if the boys asked had siblings. *Si elle avait d'autres frères ou sœurs* was unrewardable, as the pronoun implied Farah having siblings. *D'autres personnes* for *d'autres frères ou sœurs* was too vague to be accepted. More general responses, as to whether Farah was a liar, or not, gained the 1 mark available: *si elle mentait, si elle ne mentait pas*.

Question 5

There were relatively few instances of candidates gaining no credit. In Q5(a), even the least able candidates tended to adjudge Farah's situation as *difficile*, and in Q5(b), help with accommodation or employment were often mentioned. The most profitable answers in Q5(a) did not necessarily look at both sides of Farah's situation. Successfully expressed views ranged from sympathy, given Farah's search for a better life and her attempts to integrate, through acknowledgement of her children's integration at school, to hostility and the view that the situation was self-inflicted, and could have been avoided by going back to Madagascar, rather than remaining in France as *sans papiers*. In Q5(b), a number of candidates indulged rather in unsympathetic views which, while valid personal views, did not respond to the question involving *aider les immigrés*. Sending Farah and her like to their native country and providing funds to facilitate this might be repellent to some, but at least went further than straightforward opinions that immigrant families should go home. Many responses were well-argued and balanced within the 40 word limit.

Grammatical accuracy and range varied enormously, from the usual contrived inclusion of subjunctive examples and several markers of opinion without actually opining anything, to succinct and simple views with clear arguments and serviceable grammar. Reworking of the questions was in evidence, and represents a waste of words. Centres are very much better at preparing candidates for Q5 than was the case a number of sessions ago, as seen in the reduced number of low scores for either part, and fewer responses vastly over the word count.

Question 6

Responses in French, the wrong language for the summary, were, as in June 2007, pleasingly rare. Some candidates attempted to include as many details as possible, rather than those sought, and then ran out of words. This affected Q6(f) most frequently, but some very lengthy responses were not considered after Q6(d). There were a number of very good scores of 7 marks or more. Few candidates gained no credit, as some parts proved highly accessible. The overall sense of passage 4 was well grasped by the majority of candidates, but the correct order of elements was not always observed.

Q6(a)

The key notion in this part was that it was the first lesson for this new teacher, or that she was realising her dream of becoming a teacher. *Teaching Spanish* was therefore not sufficient, but *she is teaching her first lesson* or similar did score. *It is her first day at school* does not make explicit that she is teaching for the first time. *Realising her dream* or *living the dream*, perhaps inspired by reality television, were not sufficiently specific.

Q6(b)

The discrete notions involved in this part are saying stupid things and making mistakes. Some candidates conflated these notions into a 1 mark response: *saying mistakes*; repeated a single notion, again for 1 mark: *she is afraid of making mistakes, doing silly things*. The order of elements rule affected candidates who erroneously mentioned her fear of standing in front of pupils: *she is afraid of standing up in front of pupils, making mistakes and saying silly things* scored only 1 mark. *Making erreurs* could not score, as it was in the wrong language. Information from the pupil perspective was oblique, so did not score as Véronique's concerns were involved: *pupils might think she was stupid*.

Q6(c)

This was an extremely successful part, with the 1 mark offered being gained by the vast majority of candidates. *1 year (t.c.)* scored. Vitiating spoiled some responses: *for at least one year, one year until her diploma, up to one year*. The notion could be rendered acceptable if the period involved was implied to be the remainder of the academic year: *until the end of the school year*.

Q6(d)

This part was perhaps the least successful part in Q6, as the vast majority of candidates focused on severity or strictness, which were traits of Véronique's intended future classroom management. Other candidates referred to her time worked in *public service*. Increased confidence or the ability to maintain discipline was required to score in this part: *she is confident that she can discipline her pupils* or *it will help her to be more confident*.

Q6(e)

This part was frequently well-answered. *Strict(e) (t.c.)* did not receive credit, as an adjective is not a quality, but *strictness* or *she can be strict* scored. There were sometimes references to Véronique's experience or length of service as a *surveillante* which were erroneous here. *Severity* is how Véronique defines how she expects to be, so she has not yet shown this trait. *Humanity* will also be shown in the future, so did not gain the 1 mark on offer.

Q6(f)

A noteworthy minority of candidates had exceeded the word count before this part, where 2 marks were relatively easily available. *Language and culture (t.c.)* had 1 mark withheld, as there needed to be explicit reference to Spanish. *To teach her language and Spanish culture* also gained 1 mark only, as the possessive adjective was ambiguous. A sizeable number of candidates offered references to humanity as the first element, so ran out of elements: *that she is humane, and to pass on her love of Spanish language and culture*. Some candidates rendered this part infelicitously: *to communicate as much as possible in Spanish, to speak about Spanish*.

Advice and Guidance

1. Basic grammatical knowledge remains essential, especially correct use of the various parts of speech.
2. Brief, dictated phrases are encouraged as practice. They can help to avoid meaningless lifts which cannot score.
3. The order of elements rule should be observed when preparing. Even correct elements cannot score when offered beyond the given number of elements.
4. Contextualisation of each passage is time well spent during the examination, since it helps to avoid illogical responses.
5. Gradual vocabulary acquisition is essential. This reduces the need for candidates to invent French words from their English equivalents.
6. Practice with the non-verbal, short answer question types and the English summary is gainful. While question types vary each session, this June, only Q4 and Q5 required the productive use of French.
7. In gap-filling exercises such as Q3, a response should be offered for every gap, with a correctly copied word from the pool.
8. In Q5(a) especially, information from Q4 might be reusable if targeted and appropriately deployed.
9. In Q5(b) a number of candidates gave views on what should be done with immigrants in general, rather than how to help them. Careful targeting of the question asked maximises performance.

AS Unit 2 (6442) - Reading and Writing

Four passages were set to test comprehension using a range of verbal and non-verbal question types. In addition, there was a test of continuous writing in French in response to a structured outline based on a stimulus passage, both expressed in French. In setting the material, the examiners consulted the tables of assessment objectives on pages 8 and 13 of the Specification, General Topic Areas 1 - 3 on page 15, the description of the Unit on page 19 and the Notes for Guidance on page 88. There were no changes to the paper.

Q1, worth 6 marks, was an exercise based on a short passage about a competition to produce a young person's newspaper. It was a true/false question. Passage two concerned the impact of the TGV in France. Q2 (6 marks) required the candidates to find an equivalent term in the text. In Q3 (6 marks) candidates had to match two halves of a sentence. Passage 3 concerned the falling popularity of the French café. Q4 (10 marks) required answers in French to questions in French about the passage. Passage 4 concerned the reintroduction of bears into the Pyrenees. Q5 (12 marks) required answers in English to questions in English about the passage. In Q6 (40 marks) candidates had to write a letter of 140 - 160 words in French about drink, drugs and smoking among young people.

Assessment principles

The 28 marks available for questions 1 - 4 were awarded positively for correct information successfully retrieved and conveyed. Credit was withheld if understanding was not conveyed. No half-marks were awarded. For all questions, the draft mark scheme was amended in the light of the candidates' responses.

For Qs 1, 2 and 3 candidates received 1 or 0 for each part of the question.

In Q4, credit was given for the required information in French, whether in complete sentences or not, provided that errors of language did not obscure transmission of meaning.

In Q5, the marks were awarded for transfer of meaning from French into acceptable and unambiguous English.

In Q6, under a generic mark scheme for content, candidates were assessed for their degree of success in completing the task (20 marks). 20 marks were awarded for quality of French. For Communication, the examiners took account of factors such as the candidates' understanding of the scenario, their degree of success in addressing and developing the four bullet points within the word limit, the overall structure and coherence of the answer and the suitability of the format adopted for the letter. For Quality of Language, marks were awarded for correct French which conveyed meaning, within the confines of the Grammar syllabus on pages 47-48, and for the range and variety of structure and lexis used; there was no negative marking. Language falling outside the defined grammar syllabus was ignored, e.g. the conditional perfect tense.

Candidates' responses

A wide range of achievement was represented. Generally, the basic meaning of the passages was understandable and the subject matter was accessible and largely familiar. Nevertheless, large numbers of candidates once again lost marks probably within their grasp because they did not read the passages and the questions closely enough, or did not pay sufficient attention to the articulation of their answers.

Passage 1 - Question 1

This question was answered very well by nearly all candidates. Very few ignored the rubric as has been the case in earlier sessions.

Passage 2 - Question 2

Most candidates understood the passage and the requirements of the question. However, many candidates lost marks in parts (c), (d), (e) and (f).

Passage 2 - Question 3

This question was answered very well by the majority of candidates.

Passage 3 Question 4

- (a) A lot of candidates lost the mark by using an inappropriate tense in the answer.
- (b) Many candidates either answered that the French chose nightclubs or restaurants without the necessary qualification.
- (c)(i) Many candidates copied the text.
- (c)(ii) Most candidates understood the question but many found it difficult to express the idea of price rises in French.
- (d) There was a lot of copying from the text. Negatives create surprising difficulties for many candidates.
- (e) Very few managed to answer this inference question even when they appeared to understand the gist of the passage.
- (f) Many candidates found it difficult to manipulate the language to answer this question.

Passage 4 Question 5

There were some key words that were misunderstood in this passage: bear and sheep were not known by a surprisingly large number. Very few knew the French word for flock or trained

- (a) Many either did not know the word bear or thought they did not need to express it. A very large number did not know the word for sheep.
- (b) *Prévoit* was very often taken to mean prevent. Many candidates thought that the bears were going to Slovenia or that Slovenia is in France.
- (c) Very few candidates who recognised the word for sheep knew the group noun flock. There were many very confused answers because neither term was recognised.
- (d) Once again *ne....que* created difficulties for many candidates.
- (e) Many candidates simply repeated the text rather than draw the required inference.
- (f) The word *formé* is largely unknown.
- (g) *cours de ski* was very often taken to mean ski slopes.

Passage 5 - Question 6

Content: the subject again provoked lively debate. There were few answers that were too short or too long. Most candidates addressed the points in order with a good contextualising opening.

Bullet 1 - Candidates often understood the demands of this part of the question including a necessary reference to young people.

Bullet 2 - A lot of candidates made no reference to young people in this section.

Bullet 3 - Many candidates made no reference to the attitude of young people and wrote exclusively about the effects of smoking.

Bullet 4 - Very few candidates gave more than one advantage of an educational programme.

Quality of language: the main problems were poor use of tenses (especially perfect tense) and lack of agreement and concord. Subordination was mostly limited to *parce que*, hypothetical clauses were problematic. The subjunctive was well handled. The most successful candidates managed to produce grammatically accurate sentences that contained subordinate clauses.

Notes for Guidance

- 1 Candidates should read the paper carefully. They should not begin answering a question until they have read the specific instructions for it. The wording of the question should be studied closely and answers should be related to the stimulus passage.
- 2 The whole text of passages 1 - 4 should be read before the questions are attempted. Candidates should try to identify the overall theme and the thread of any argument.
- 3 Candidates should be aware that the questions on passages 1 - 4 will be of varying difficulty, and that some will require deductions to be made or inferences to be drawn.
- 4 In answering questions on passages 3 and 4, candidates should try to ensure that their answer provides a **direct response** to the question set.
- 5 Answers in English should be checked for clarity and logic.
- 6 When attempting Q6, candidates should: (i) read the whole rubric carefully (ii) write within the word limits, since short answers will be self-penalising and excess beyond 160 words will not be marked (iii) try to allocate time for systematic checking of basic grammar.
- 7 In preparing for Q6, candidates should have experience of writing letters (formal and informal), reports and articles. The answers may be discursive as well as descriptive.
- 8 The instructions and guidance given in the Specification and the Teachers' Guide should be followed.
- 9 Candidates should write their final answers in **dark ink**.
- 10 Candidates should write within the borders of the page and avoid use of supplementary pages whenever possible.

AS Unit 3 (6443): Prepared Oral Topic

Overall impression

Examiners felt that this year candidate performance was generally an improvement on previous years but that many were let down by their teacher examiner's performance and the expression "it was a shame" was used all too frequently.

Preamble

Candidates are required to present and to discuss with their examiner a topic of their choice related to France, or a French-speaking country or community. During the discussion they must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of "*the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries*" where French is spoken.

Assessment Principles

The test is designed to assess:

- the quality of the language that the candidate uses to fulfil the task, including pronunciation, accuracy of grammar, range of lexis and structures, idiom (10 marks for Accuracy, 10 marks for Range = 20 for Quality of Language)
- the candidate's ability to engage in a *spontaneous discussion* by presenting information, developing that information, sustaining discourse and expressing opinion on the chosen topic (20 marks for Response)
- the extent of the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the topic including information, evidence of *research*, relevance, opinion and justification of opinion (20 marks).

Preparation for the test

1. Choice of topic

Judicious choice of topic is very important.

It is vital that candidates choose a topic that is securely rooted in a Francophone context and that does not invite comparison with the UK, or any other non-francophone country (e.g. "l'hooliganisme dans le foot en Europe"). It should be something that cannot degenerate into a general treatment of the topic (e.g. "l'obésité/l'anorexie/la jeunesse/la femme/l'alcool/les drogues/ le recyclage" even with the lip-serving tag "en France" stuck on the end). Similarly, topics such as "le nucléaire en France" must not fall into the trap of becoming a justification or a criticism of nuclear energy per se as this would be more appropriate to unit 6444_01. The topic must not be so wide that it precludes any development in depth (e.g. "La guerre de cent ans", "Paris") but it must at the same time have scope for development (e.g. "L'importance de Jeanne d'Arc dans la guerre de cent ans", "Paris de 1880 à 1914"). The best subjects for discussion as a topic are those that have limits but with the possibility of some depth.

The sheer range of topics presented was extremely wide but fell generally into the following categories (with examples of what was most popular):

- **Personalities.** Probably the most popular area and an area that is accessible to the whole range of candidates.
 - political: Nicolas Sarkozy (et Carla), Le Pen, de Gaulle .
 - historical: Marie Antoinette (It is not enough merely to regurgitate what happens in the film), Jeanne d'Arc, Napoléon 1.
 - singers: Edith Piaf (it is not enough to merely regurgitate what happens in the film "La Vie en Rose", Céline Dion.
 - sportsmen: Zinédine Zidane, Thierry Henry
 - fashion designers: Chanel, Gaultier, Dior, Louis Vuitton
 - scientists: Marie Curie, Louis Braille, Louis Pasteur
 - writers: Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Hergé, Dumas (père), Rimbaud
 - artists: Monet, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Matisse, Rodin
 - composers/musicians: Claude Debussy, Eric Satie
 - actors/directors: J-P Jeunet, Gérard Depardieu, Brigitte Bardot, Audrey Tautou

- **Geographical**
 - towns: Paris (... et ses monuments including the Moulin Rouge which should not be solely a description of the film and a eulogy of Nicole Kidman.), Rouen, Bordeaux - the inherent danger here is falling into the pitfall of remaining purely factual, descriptive and something of a "tourist guide"
 - regions: La Côte d'Azur, La Provence, La Bretagne - avoiding the danger of providing a variation on « mon séjour/stage à ... »
 - monuments/attractions: Disneyland Paris (avoiding comparison with the American version), Futuroscope, parc Astérix

- **Sport**
 Le Tour de France, le foot(ball) or a particular team (OM/OL) - both of these topics require depth of knowledge - la Coupe du Monde 1998, le rugby

- **Music**
 Le rap, le hip-hop français, la musique pop

- **Films**
 Les Choristes, La Haine, Amélie, Les Misérables, Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles, Moulin Rouge

- **Literature**
 L'étranger, la Peste (as with films, it is not enough to produce a summary of the plot or a few sentences about the characters)

- **Society**
 Health - notoriously difficult to keep embedded in a Francophone context - l'avortement, l'anorexie, l'alcoolisme, les drogues, la santé des jeunes, le tabagisme (frequently a misnomer for "fumer dans les lieux publics" but the new laws did allow candidates to remain more focussed), le racisme, l'immigration, le chômage, la violence, les émeutes - all these topics have the inherent danger of becoming too general in treatment, la laïcité (beware of mixing up "le voile" and "le voile")

- **Gastronomie**
 Les vins de Bordeaux, le foie gras - specialisms were better done than generalisms such as "la nourriture/gastronomie en France"

- **Fashion**
La mode en France (it was also important in the 14th century!) ... better to stick to a designer
- **Politics**
Le nucléaire, le Front National, les présidentielles
- **Companies**
Renault

Examiners also commented on the impressive number of original and stimulating topics chosen: e.g. le Guide Michelin, l'absinthe (!), les boulangeries, Paris-Brest, le vélib à Paris, le festival de BD d'Angoulême, Lavoisier, Dassault Aviation, J-F Champollion, Victor Hugo à Guernsey, le centre des études spatiales, Vincent Lagaf et le Bigdil, Aliénor d'Aquitaine, Taizé, le SAMU, Auguste Escoffier These were invariably well done and were rewarded accordingly.

Topics such as Médecins Sans Frontières, Algérie or any of the ex francophone colonies are problematical in that most are not now strictly French. Certainly it is possible to research the early years of MSF when it was a French concern or the years before Algerian independence, for which credit can be given, but the actions of MSF in the current world hot-spots cannot be construed as francophone and are therefore deemed irrelevant.

2. Research

Examiners commented on the fact that this session the vast majority of candidates showed evidence of research but that many showed it to be rather superficial or anecdotal or not well understood. Some relied on information gleaned from watching a film, reading one article, browsing a single website (not everything you read on the web is necessarily so) or gained from an exchange, family holiday or even hearsay! This was in stark contrast to the enthusiasm that some candidates showed for their topic and the excitement they generated. These candidates were rewarded accordingly. Examiners also felt that candidates whose topic related to their other AS level subjects, such as History ("La Résistance pendant les années 1940 à 1944"), Art ("Monet, architecte de l'impressionnisme"), Music ("Debussy et l'impressionnisme") were those that also performed well. Generally speaking it is unwise for all the candidates from one centre to do one or two topics. Whereas examiners are told to mark each test separately on its own merits, they are put in the invidious position of having to listen to the same material said in similar ways by candidates of varying ability. This led to predictable and very similar conversations and in such conditions it is very difficult not to be tempted to compare candidate performances. This goes against the spirit of the exam as it does not allow candidates freedom to develop their own ideas.

3. Source Material

The candidate must have access to relevant materials as well as a level of commitment ... and be followed up. With the advent of the Internet, research is much easier. However examiners commented that this year a number of candidates seemed to have done a minimum amount of research by concentrating on **one** website (e.g. Wikipedia) to gather their information. The best tests are those where the candidate has a genuine interest in the topic, has carried out sensibly **wide** research and has been given the chance to demonstrate his/her knowledge of facts/information and his/her understanding of the topic.

4. Oral Forms

"(Candidates) ... will be allowed to take into the examination a list of 5-10 target-language headings, as a prompt to remind them of key aspects of the topic"

This is a very important document since it is the only item allowed into the exam room and is the only link between candidate and examiner. Examiners reported that there seemed to be an increase in the number of oral forms without titles. This may have been because the form itself needs adjusting but headings such as "son enfance, sa carrière ..." with no reference to the subject of the topic made life very difficult for the examiner. Fortunately, such instances were still comparatively rare. However there was a marked increase in the number of forms that contained four, or fewer, headings (of which one was sometimes "Introduction"). This is unhelpful and does not in any case conform to the Specification. Since the bullet points set the parameters of the topic, this is insufficient for:

... candidates to focus their topic and inform the examiner of the aspects of it they wish to discuss,

... examiners to make sensible preparation to conduct the exam in the best interests of the candidate,

... examiners to identify any unpredictable questions.

Problems that have arisen this session:

- headings that consist of the first 3-4 words of each sentence (often the presentation)

- lists of facts/figures/dates/names required for various headings. Such information has to be discounted since it is written down and the test is an oral one.

- mix and match language: some French, some English.

- discrepancy between the title, the headings and the eventual discussion.

Centres are reminded that the oral form should be completed by the candidates themselves, although Teacher Examiners may check them for accuracy - it gives a bad first impression to read faulty French. A number of examiners commented that complete sets of oral forms from some centres were completed in the same handwriting.

5. Conduct of the Test

The role of the teacher examiner is so critical to the candidate's marks because he/she can influence the outcome in so many ways.

The test should last 10-12 minutes so a stopwatch is highly desirable. Examiners do *not start marking until the candidate starts their presentation* and they ignore the initial niceties. The candidate is invited to present his/her topic for **up to 2 minutes**. This presentation may well be learned by heart as it gives candidates the chance to overcome initial nerves. However, it should not be gabbled and should not be a mere reading of the headings. The presentation is merely an introduction to the topic and the most successful presentations are those where the candidate clearly sets out his/her line of thought, explaining those aspects of the topic that he/she has prepared. Examiners should interrupt if the presentation goes beyond 2 minutes but by the same token they should not wait until the 2 minutes is over before continuing the test, since the ensuing silence makes the candidate even more nervous. Many candidates in fact ended their presentation well within the 2 minutes. Nothing is to be gained by allowing candidates to speak their presentation for 4-5 minutes since

the second part of the test **must** be more than 8 minutes minimum. With a 4-5 minute presentation the test would have to last 12-13 minutes minimum.

At the end of the presentation, the examiner moves to the discussion by seeking **information** from the candidate, which is **supported by examples, clarification**, supported in turn by **detail**, and **opinion**. It is important that the discussion remain as natural as possible given the circumstances ... the examiner's aim should be to enable candidates to show that they can control the language, can develop their responses and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Examiners should, therefore, listen to what the candidate is saying and pick up on anything they find interesting and ask the candidate to explain/develop it. Questions such as "Why did you choose this topic?" or "Where did you do your research?" lead nowhere, unless the candidate wants to challenge the information (s)he has found during his/her research. Similarly "Tu as quelque chose à ajouter?" invariably leads to "Non!" and a sigh of relief!

It is not necessary to cover all the headings on the form during the discussion (there is no penalty for not doing so). Neither is it wrong to work through the headings as they appear on the form but this tends to encourage pre-learned speeches, which must be avoided at all costs.

The test should be brought to a conclusion after between 10 and 12 minutes; there is no benefit to be gained by going beyond 12 minutes as examiners are instructed to stop listening after 12.5 minutes. However tests that are short are penalised pro rata which means that a test timed at 9 minutes can only score a maximum of 90% of the Quality of Language and Response marks available. The Knowledge & Understanding mark will be self-penalising because not all the available information and comment could be given in 9 rather than 10 minutes. It was noted that a number of candidates who would have scored high marks, in fact will be disappointed with their result simply because their exam was timed as short.

"Examiners will also be expected to test students on their ability to engage in a conversation that goes beyond the target-language headings but remains within the chosen topic area" (Specification p 21)

This is the element that is referred to as the **"unpredictable"** question(s). This means that the question(s) refer to the topic under discussion but that cannot be anticipated from the headings as written down. The easiest unpredictable questions arise quite naturally during the course of the test as the examiner asks for more evidence on a particular point or for an opinion on a particular piece of information. If the candidate has done his/her research thoroughly the question(s) will, in all probability, not be unexpected. If they do not arise naturally, it is the responsibility of the examiner to find an "unpredictable" question as defined, perhaps involving considered thought, backed by evidence (rather than purely personal experience). Questions such as "Maintenant je vais poser des questions plus difficiles ..." only serve to generate panic in the candidate. Unpredictable questions cannot be in the form of general queries on the candidate's personal life, taste, preferences, leisure activities, future plans, holidays, health, habits e.g. "Tu aimes ...?, Tu as visité ...?, Quel(le) est ton/ta ... préférée?"; (in a topic about "Roland Garros" a question such as "Tu joues au tennis?" is not appropriate), nor should they be on totally unrelated topics e.g. asking a candidate who has been talking about Monet if (s)he knows another French painter, nor should they involve issues in the style of Unit 4 (e.g. "La violence, est-elle la réponse à un problème?"), nor should the candidate be told what to expect.

Again this session, examiners reported that some Centres allowed candidates to produce lengthy chunks of pre-learned material, which turned the test into a series of regurgitations interspersed with examiner's questions that prompted the next bit of regurgitation. Candidates must be deflected from this approach as they cannot do themselves justice in the long run and external examiners are fully versed in such practices. It is important that examiner and candidate respond to each other to create a meaningful dialogue. Concern has been expressed again this session that some examiners are restricting their questions to "Parle(z)-moi de ...", "Continue(z) ...", "Tu as fait des recherches sur ...", "Je crois que tu veux parler de ...", all of which can lead to another monologue. In such circumstances candidates cannot be expected to reach the higher marks in Response.

On the other hand examiners were reporting good examples of tests being carried out in the right spirit and within the rules of the game. Such tests made listening to them a pleasure as candidates clearly had enjoyed the research, had learned a great deal from the experience and had enhanced their knowledge of some of the other subjects they were studying. Examiners were pleased to be able to say to themselves "I learned a lot about ...".

6. Candidates' Responses

Many candidates were well prepared and had understood what was required of them; they had conducted careful research, could give examples and support their answers with evidence. Similarly many teacher examiners had prepared their topics and brought the best out of their candidates by skilful questioning and encouraging them to reach their ceilings in language and knowledge. It should be remembered that this is not a question and answer session but the chance for the candidate to speak authoritatively on their topic. Although most teacher examiners conducted the tests appropriately by varying questions, based on the candidates' responses, asking for further information, using the headings on the form, pushing candidates to develop and support their assertions, there were a certain number of concerns where candidates:

- were allowed to speak uninterrupted for too long, which encouraged monologues of pre-learnt, regurgitated material
- gave incorrect information that was not challenged by the examiner (Il y a quarante vingt filles - mères en France par an!)
- answered questions obliquely by providing answers to questions that they would like to have been asked and which fitted their own pre-learnt material
- were asked questions which entailed comparison with the UK (or other non-francophone countries)
- were not given the chance to develop their responses because the teacher examiner interrupted or finished the candidate's sentence
- were allowed to make vague assertions and generalisations that were not rooted in the francophone context and were not challenged
- were not asked about the specific situation in the francophone country
- were not asked an "unpredictable" question - examiners merely going through the oral form headings - this prevents candidates from reaching the top grids in Response
- were interrupted too quickly before they had time to develop their answers
- were asked lengthy, convoluted questions that often contained more than one question and which led to confusion and long pauses!

Quality of Language:

Most candidates had clearly researched their topic so that their "technical/topic specific" vocabulary was appropriate to the topic and some were able to produce a good range of structures. The top band of candidates could use subordinate clauses with natural linking phrases and expressions, (tout) ce qui/que, some subjunctive clauses, conditional sentences and a range of tenses where they were required. At the other end far too many tests were content to stick to the Present tense (the Historic Present was again in evidence where a past tense would have been more appropriate) and play safe by avoiding potential linguistic difficulty in vocabulary and structure. Examiners commented that the discrepancy between the quality of language in some presentations and that in the rest of the test was alarming e.g. candidates who confidently used a subjunctive in the presentation could not replicate it when an identical structure was used/required during the other 8-10 minutes.

Accuracy: The crunch here is whether the error actually impedes communication:

Verb work: agreement of subject and verb (vital if the interlocutor is to understand, *la famille ont, les SDF dort etc*), verb forms (especially any verb that was not -er and even then verbs became -er e.g *viver*, or went unfinished e.g. *chois...*), tense forms (*ils prennent, il a écrit, vous sont, il a recevoir, nous devons, elle a (été) perdu, ils sont travaillé, j'ai pensé, il est s'appeler*) basic « avoir » constructions (*elle était 10, elle était froide, il est chaud dans le sud, c'est beaucoup de touristes, il y avait plus récent ...*) sequence of tense (*elle avait 19 ans quand elle est brûlé*) the universal infinitive/past participle - *il utiliser/é/ait* no verb at all : *De Gaulle mort dans 1964*, ("mourir" caused many problems *le/la mort/e/meurtre/il a mort/meurtre ...* very confusing!)

Negatives : « ne » or « pas » missing or misplaced, especially in compound tenses
Frenchification : *ridiculeux, solver la problème, promouvoir, introducer, advertiser, démonstrer, obvieusement, arrêté, reconniser, des botelles, un change, un arrest cardiaque, rialistique, pressure, surroundé, improuver, follower (verb!) etc*

Lexis : *j'y suis allée trois temps, dire and parler* are not interchangeable, confusion between *parce que* and *à cause de*, *savoir/connaître, marier/se marier*,

Prepositions : *en Paris, à France*,

Anglicisms : *ils volent le célebs image, sur la télévision (!), je vais parler/demander sur, à école le foulard ce n'est pas d'accord, il besoin l'employé, si beaucoup*

Dates and numbers : *quarante vingt, à un mille neuf cent quarante dix six, à 1995*

Pronunciation : vowel sounds : *jeune/gens/jaune, faim/femme (or fèmm), l'amour/la mort, pays/paille/pace/pé, aide (pronounced ad), Mairie/Marie/mari/marié/mère, gare/guerre, ville/vie, décidé/décédé (!), créer/crier, fils/fille/fil/file, médecin/médecine, temps/tempe*

Final consonant pronounced : *et, cas, art, ils/elles, veulent (or veulent), blanc, beaucoup (sometimes unrecognisable), temps, droit, even " -ent"*

Final consonant not pronounced : *tout le mon(de), deux fil(s/Illes ?), semain(e), Caen/Cannes, person, représen*

English « -sh » in « *situation/nation/organisation/tradition* » or " - ee" in "*société*" ("sowshiytee")/"vairiytee"

vowels (nasal or not!): *immigration, intention, inacceptable, impossible, symbole*

Mispronunciations: *gouvèremou, péronz, Faux amis: supporter/support, assister/assist, place/place*

Gender altering meaning: *le/la mode, le/la livre, le/la poste, le/la Tour,*

Gender of pronouns: *il* when referring to Jeanne (Jean?) d'Arc.

Position/use of pronouns: *elle gardait la, Jeanne a visité lui, j'aime il, pour leur*

Prepositions following or governing verbs: *sans aidant*

Other errors noted were not ones which impeded communication:

Tenses: use of the Past Historic (*il fut/il pût (!)*) is inappropriate in an oral context)

Gender: *la père, la problème, une homme, un mère, un année, un chose, un relation, une projet*

Agreement of adjective and noun: *c'est une question important,*

Problems with contraction: *de le, à les*

Missing "que" as in "*je pense/crois c'est ...*"

Omission of articles: *France est un pays*

Nationalities: the bizarre « *les gens de France* », *les Angletterres*, and ... « *les Françaises* » were responsible for many things !

Range: The majority of candidates had a good range of lexis appropriate to their topic and a limited bank of structures that were adequate but less impressive. There was also an increasing trend to using "tu" where the candidate meant "on". This is not a correct use of register and has not yet been accepted as the norm in France.

Response: Most candidates understood the questions asked of them, answered them appropriately and could develop the discussion. Too many, however, were allowed to recite pre-learnt material without being interrupted so that the whole test formed a kind of play where the candidate and the examiner had particular roles, the one asking a question to cue the other to move on to the next part of the scenario. Candidates involved in such a test cannot score very high marks in this section since there is little, if any, spontaneity or genuine discussion. The examiner's performance is vital to the candidate's success and should involve more searching questions such as "pourquoi?", "expliquez-moi ça, voulez-vous?", "qu'est-ce que c'est que ...?", "comment expliquez-vous cela?". Clearly this also can contribute to the mark awarded for Knowledge & Understanding.

Knowledge & Understanding: This is an area where candidates can score well and a large number of them had prepared themselves well, had researched their topic thoroughly and thought about the implications of their topic and its impact/effect on French society or cultural heritage so that they were able to produce good detailed knowledge backed by sound evidence. They could express their opinions and could support them with examples. Examiners found it a delight to listen to those very motivated and engaged candidates' tests. On the other hand some candidates simply had not prepared enough to cover the 10 minute minimum requirement and spent the last few minutes repeating what they had said earlier. Another problem was that of anecdotal evidence (about, say, French cuisine), or personal experience (of, say, a region of France), neither of which can take the place of genuine research and which cannot therefore score high marks in this grid. Similarly candidates' tests that became too general (about, for example, health problems) or lack the francophone context, will find their marks at the lower end of the grid. The target language context must be focussed throughout the whole of the test. Occasionally some very able candidates, usually native speakers or bilingual candidates, are allowed to present topics in a "chatty/café-type" style which is inappropriate as it too often attempts (and fails) to cover up a lack of research. In addition this style affects the Quality of Language mark since their French lacks range and is delivered in an inappropriate register e.g. *bon, bin, p't-êt que, euh, tu sais, des gens comme ça, faut bin les mett en tôle pour des trucs comme ça, 'fin oui, je vois pas d'aut solution p'ce que c'est pas marrant à la fin, surtout pour les familles des mecs qui sont morts*. Elsewhere many candidates could talk about their topic but were undermined by inaccurate French, which prevented them from reaching the higher marks.

7. Advice and Guidance

Recordings

This session examiners reported that in general recordings were of satisfactory quality and acceptably audible. Centres are responsible to their candidates for the quality of the recording sent to the Edexcel examiner. Inaudible material can gain no credit. Centres should therefore ensure that:

- background noise is reduced as much as possible
- the centre and candidate numbers are announced on the tape - please note that the leader tape records nothing and it is important that the centre name and number be identified.
- both the examiner **and** the candidate are audible - the microphone should be placed favouring the candidate but the examiner's questions must be heard
- candidates who speak very quietly can be heard
- old tapes are wiped beforehand in order to avoid examiners hearing previous recordings
- feedback and/or machine whistle is avoided - normally the external volume control should be set at zero

- bangs on the table and other noises such as rattling jewellery are avoided as they cause the recording to fade (the problem with directional microphones)
- the record button is depressed
- the pause button is off
- the correct timing is adhered to
- the end of the recording is announced on both sides
- the cassettes themselves as well as the boxes are labelled - there were more instances of packets arriving where the two had become parted (usually broken) and it was difficult to match the right candidates with the right tape.
- there were more instances where the cassettes were not rewound to the start of side A and if they were not labelled examiners spent time trying to find out where the test began and with which candidate.

Centres should ensure that their candidates are well prepared by:

- carefully selecting an appropriate topic, avoiding the general, woolly title or the insufficiently francophone focussed
 - avoiding any comparison with a non-francophone country
 - researching appropriate, accurate source materials (not just one internet site, one article etc)
 - completing the oral form so that it serves its purpose for both candidate and examiner
-
- preparing a clear presentation/introduction to the topic which will provide him/her with a confident start
 - preparing to develop the topic by including examples to support what he/she says
 - considering problems, solutions and implications of the topic
 - learning topic specific vocabulary and practising the pronunciation of key words
 - having practice in answering questions but not to the extent of rehearsing a script
 - being able to respond to unpredictable questions by "thinking on their feet"

Centres should study the Specification, including the *Notes for Guidance* pp 80-90, the *Teachers' Handbook* pp 30-33 and previous subject reports.

Teacher examiners should also study the *Handbook of Instructions for Centres* before conducting the oral. Please note that where more than one Teacher Examiner is used in any one centre it is in the candidates' interests that there be some form of standardisation between them.

Administration:

Examiners reported very few administrative problems this session. Some attendance registers were not sent but very often the Centre enclosed a register that they had compiled themselves, for which examiners were very grateful. Some Centres conducted the test outside the examining period and one or two Centres had entered for the wrong option so that they did not appear on the examiner's allocation list. However, on the whole, examiners greatly appreciated the efficient way in which centres carried out their part of the administration.

A2 Unit 4.1 (6444/01): Oral Discussion of Issues

The aim of the Unit

The aim of this Unit is to test the candidate's ability to use language spontaneously whilst engaging in debate on issues.

Definition of terms

Debate is taken to mean the ability to explore ideas, to argue and to discuss, to convince by reasoned argument *supported by evidence* rather than relying on assertion, re-assertion, personal conviction or sweeping generalisation.

Debate encourages critical thinking and rational questioning of received ideas.

An *issue* is something of a, largely, moral or ethical nature surrounding which there is some controversy.

The candidate will have to deal with one known issue and two or three others, randomly selected by the examiner.

Outline of the test

Timing

- Up to 1 minute for initial declaration of stance
- 4 more minutes for debate
- 10 more minutes for discussion in further unpredictable areas

Total: 14 - 15 minutes

Inaccurate timing will result in a candidate's mark suffering. Extending the initial discussion, or returning to it at a later stage, constitutes limitation of the unpredictable nature of the test and will be reflected in a reduced Response mark.

Short tests are penalised.

Description

The test is in two parts, essentially.

The first is a 5 minute section during which candidates first make *a short personal statement of no more than one minute*, setting out the position they will be adopting in respect of the *issue* they have chosen to explore. They will then have to defend this position in the face of *vigorous challenge* from the examiner who will adopt the opposite viewpoint and put up arguments attacking the candidates' position.

When the 5 minutes are up, the examiner will move from the initial issue to a discussion of a further 3 issues, whilst still testing the candidates' ability to express and defend views. The examiner will no longer systematically take the opposing view to those of the candidates but will need to ensure that a constant level of debate is maintained throughout. Great care should be taken to see that the exchanges do not degenerate into a series of unsubstantiated expressions of opinion. This will not constitute debate and will therefore be deemed inadequate and marked accordingly. This is the commonest failing in centres that run their own tests.

A third of the total marks are awarded for this ability. This has implications for both the examiner and the candidates.

The Examiner

Examiners must prepare thoroughly to be able to challenge candidates' stated views in the first section whilst, at the same time, offering them the opportunity to demonstrate their grasp of the issue. Attention should also be given to the subsequent topics to ensure that debate can continue to take place and is sufficiently demanding to give candidates the opportunity to gain credit in the **Justification and Debate** section of the mark scheme.

The second section of the test (10 minutes) does not require candidates to demonstrate specialised or factual knowledge. However, the object of this section remains the same - namely to assess the candidates' ability to debate issues. Therefore, subsequent issues should not be extended beyond 3 if possible and questioning should aim to elicit opinions and views so that candidates can show independent judgment and an ability to develop and sustain ideas, as opposed to making unsubstantiated comment on a variety of topics.

Factual and personal questions about future plans or current occupations are not appropriate.

Importance of the Mark Scheme

Examiners are urged to ensure that they study and fully understand the mark scheme. It is the embodiment of the assessment objectives and an informed view of what it seeks to achieve will assist examiners in constructing the test to the advantage of their candidates.

The Candidate

Candidates should be aware that the Specifications require them to carry out reading and research to support their arguments for the initial issue. This should be apparent in the debate.

They are rewarded for their overall "grasp" of the issue, which means that, as well as having a position, they must demonstrate awareness of its wider implications and show that they have given these due consideration.

Relying solely on assertion and failing to produce evidence to back their stance, will be self-limiting.

Candidates will be rewarded for their ability to:

- show evidence of having conducted substantial research into the issue of their choice
- demonstrate "grasp" of the ramifications of their chosen issue, derived from the knowledge acquired
- substantiate their arguments during a debate on the chosen issue for the first five minutes of the test:
such knowledge may include relevant laws, practice, statistics, mores, attitudes, precedent or data drawn from sources which may be historical, economic, geographical, social, political, moral, scientific etc.
- engage in *spontaneous* discussion of, at least, two further, *unpredictable* issues.

Common failings

- presentations of stance running well over one minute. This reduces the time available for debating further issues and has implications for the Justification and Debate mark as well as that for Response.
- tests devoted entirely to the initial issue or to associated themes. This means that candidates will be assessed as if there were no further unpredictable areas and this will be reflected in their mark.
- short tests, where candidates clearly did not have the maximum time and space to express and justify views, thus restricting potential mark achievement in all three categories.
- overlong tests are more frequent, the longest lasting over 20 minutes. They gain no additional credit, since markers are instructed to stop marking after the allocated time.

Persistent misconceptions

There have been no changes since last year in the format or the criteria of the test. Still, the isolated centre appears to be unaware that the issue no longer has to be rooted in a French-specific area of interest since the AO4 element is now tested only in Unit 3 (AS) and in Units 5.1 and 5.2 (A2).

The commonest misconception, encountered far too often, is that the unit is similar to Unit 3. The consequence of this for the Initial Challenge is that examiners invite candidates to explain their position rather than challenging it robustly.

Pursuing this approach in the second part, results in a fact oriented test focusing on knowledge of things French instead of debate on issues of general interest, which quickly degenerates into a "question and answer" session. This only works to the disadvantage of the candidate, as such an approach will naturally be reflected in a poorer mark for Debate.

Clarification of terms

What is an issue?

An issue will generally be a matter of controversy that has a moral or ethical dimension.

In addition, it must be

- clearly defined to promote argument and allow substantiation
- "arguable" - which means that issues that place the examiner in a morally indefensible position are unacceptable - i.e. *pour ou contre la pédophilie* -; as are statements of faith - i.e. *Je crois en Dieu*.

Too many centres still do not pay enough attention to the choice of issue. Careful consideration of this aspect should result in candidates being able to approach the examination in a more confident frame of mind. It should be remembered that the second issue will, in some way, be germane to the first. Thus, certain issues will be more "predictive" than others. It is easier, for example, to see where a debate on abortion might lead to than one on free bicycles in Paris.

Debate

This is the organisation and presentation of evidence or up-to-date information and opinion with the intent of persuading someone else (in this case, the examiner) of the validity of the stance taken. It is also the defence of this position against attacks from the other person, by refutation.

The criteria necessarily eliminate choices that are no more than an expression of opinion - *je suis pour la voiture électrique*. Too many candidates submit "issues" of this sort and debate becomes problematic under challenge.

What is 'a definite stance'?

This should be a clear statement of personal opinion regarding an issue, entered *in French* on the Declaration of Issue form, normally in the form of *je suis pour/contre...*, and re-stated and introduced in the initial one-minute presentation.

What is 'spontaneous discussion'?

Spontaneity is not the same thing as novelty. Unpredictability does not mean that the first time candidates encounter an issue is in the examination room.

The unit does not require candidates to have to deal with issues they have never previously encountered. They will have been prepared for the A2 examination by teachers seeking to introduce them to ideas that people in France and elsewhere are discussing. An awareness of these and opposing arguments will make for a challenging and satisfying debate.

Familiarity with such issues is a pre-requisite for gaining the confidence to discuss them effectively under close examination. It is therefore legitimate for centres to prepare candidates for the "unpredictable" part of the test. It is also legitimate for issues dealt with in class to be raised in this part of the exam.

The conditions for spontaneity and unpredictability are met when examiners require candidates to do something with familiar subject matter they were not expecting - i.e. to provide an example, to clarify, to re-phrase, to evaluate a commonly held view that is in contradiction their own.

However, being prepared is not the same thing as resorting to pre-prepared utterances from which all creative reaction is absent. Examiners must seek to avoid behaviour of this sort and promote creative use of language by interrupting and challenging.

The practice of tripping through a list of prepared "topics/issues" with no investigation of their responses will disadvantage candidates. They may appear to be responding but they will not be doing so in the required manner of debate and will therefore be marked accordingly.

Choice of Issue

As alluded to above, this is a crucial area.

Centres should encourage candidates to choose issues that present several possibilities for development. The best ones are probably those for which opposing views can be readily identified, as they are easier to prepare counter arguments for. The worst are those that preclude debate - i.e. *je suis contre l'obésité* or *je suis contre le réchauffement de la terre* - one dimensional subjects result in candidates returning to their initial and often unique debating point, which means they fail to meet the requirement to demonstrate the ability to parry counter argument.

Candidate choice

Most candidates choose traditional ethical favourites, such as :

pour / contre la peine de mort, l'euthanasie / l'avortement / la constitution européenne/ l'entrée de la Turquie à l'union européenne/ l'annulation des dettes du tiers-monde/ les lois anti-terroristes en Grande-Bretagne les cartes d'identité/ la chasse au renard/ l'expérimentation animale/ la dépénalisation du cannabis / la légalisation des drogues douces / le mariage homosexuel / le droit à l'adoption par les homosexuels/ la pilule du lendemain/ la chirurgie esthétique/ le clonage/ la manipulation génétique/ les OGM/ le droit/l'interdiction de fumer dans les lieux publics/ l'Internet/l'ingérence dans les affaires d'autres pays/ les droits des animaux/ la mal bouffe etc

It has been said that it is less the choice of issue than its treatment that is important. For example, too many candidates fail to make use of material to be found in the press, or in other parts of the media, and choose to ignore this source of informed opinion, offering only their own unsubstantiated reactions in support of their stance. In the worst cases, candidates retreat to confessional positions that effectively preclude any objective discussion. Whilst faith-based positions are acceptable, centres should advise candidates that they will need to do more than re-iterate sincerely held beliefs if they are to be credited with a genuine ability to debate. A frequent example of this is *la laïcité. Je suis contre la laïcité* more often than not is simply a defence of the right to express one's religion, with no awareness of what the notion represents for French people in the wider political sense. It is rare to hear a candidate with a grasp of the historical background to the French position and an understanding of the implications of a secular society and a non-religious-based education. Arguing for human rights and against what they see as discrimination against Muslims is not enough. In some cases, the argument degenerates into a debate on *le racismisme en France*. Again, this re-iterates the point already made that candidates must show "grasp" of the wider implications of the issue to score well but also highlights the need for the approach to remain focused on the title.

The requirement to choose a genuinely debatable issue appears to have been heeded generally. However, examples of cases where more thought should have been given to the issue and the way it was framed would be:

Contre le tatouage/ Pétain a trahi la France pendant la seconde guerre mondiale/ Contre l'euro/ les bénéfices de l'énergie nucléaire/ contre le sexisme dans les entreprises/ pour la conversion à l'Islam / contre l'exploitation du Niger

For various reasons, issues of this sort are poorly chosen: What can one say about tattoos that is worthwhile? One cannot be against the Euro because it exists and functions well enough for several hundred million people. However, one could be against the UK joining the Euro. And who is going to argue in favour of sexism in industry and survive a visit to an all girls' school?

There were examples again this year of issues which were morally difficult or impossible to debate, such as :

contre le dopage / contre la torture / contre l'alcool au volant / contre le hooliganisme / contre la violence conjugale / pour la protection de l'environnement / contre l'obésité / contre la taille zéro / contre la discrimination au travail / contre la pollution des mers

It should never be forgotten that injudicious choice or formulation of the issue will limit access to higher marks for Justification and Debate.

Teacher Preparation

Teachers will prepare candidates for their oral discussion of issues as for all aspects of their work, but such preparation should not involve total rehearsal with pre-determined responses, which removes the opportunity for genuine self-expression and authentic reactions and goes against the spirit of the test. Indeed, in their preparation for the actual test, Teacher Examiners should seek ways of investigating their candidates' ability to react to the unpredictable as the mark scheme specifically rewards this.

Training candidates in debating techniques in the appropriate language register, and ways of expressing and parrying opinion with evidence and exemplification, should help to provide the necessary support and confidence.

By implication, Teacher Examiners will need to research the issues chosen by their candidates thoroughly in order to provide meaningful challenge during the initial section.

Such preparation should not involve a rigid list of questions and arguments but rather be an exploration of possible pathways enabling them to lead candidates into other areas and challenge opinions without either dependence on pre-determined programming or undue hesitation while wondering what to ask next. Nor should Teacher Examiners offer the same issues in the same order to all the candidates in the centre. Such a procedure will be seen by Markers as compromising the unpredictable nature of the test.

The best tests are those in which the Teacher Examiner genuinely listens to the candidate and picks up on what is said, developing the discussion and debate in the process.

Candidate Preparation for the Test

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the rubric and be fully aware of the requirements of the test.

They should take special note of remarks made earlier regarding choice of issues and ask themselves the following questions:

- is this an issue or just something I feel strongly about?
- does it have a moral and/or ethical dimension?
- could someone else have an opposing view?
- could someone find it morally/ethically repugnant?
- does the way the stance is expressed really convey what I want to say
- does it help me predict what subsequent areas are likely to arise?

They need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments and to show that they have a thorough grasp of their chosen issue and can draw on a range of references and examples during the debate, which constitutes the first five minutes of the test. They should acquire a good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate and learn to use the language of argument and justification.

They should practise the skill of re-formulating ideas so that when the preferred avenue of expression is closed off for whatever reason, they can continue the discussion using alternative forms.

Conduct of tests

The crucial role of the teacher examiner

It cannot be stressed too much that the outcome of the test for candidates is closely linked to and dependent upon the way teacher-examiners conduct the tests.

Teacher-examiners are required to invite candidates to initiate a debate by introducing a stance on their chosen issue and then to offer a clear and robust challenge to enable them to justify and defend their viewpoint with supporting evidence. The debate is launched with a strong challenge that gives candidates the opportunity to argue and debate. Objections and counter-arguments are voiced, but no pre-agreed routine is observed. After five minutes, the teacher examiner is instructed to indicate that that section of the test is over and effect a smooth transition to a discussion lasting a further ten minutes of at least two other unpredictable issues, moving on and away from the initial issue and not returning to it.

The best teachers demonstrate skill and sensitivity in their dealings with candidates in what is a very stressful situation.

The best examiners

- forget they are teachers
- are encouraging
- are not judgmental
- give the candidates space and time
- take an interest in their candidates as people and not merely pupils
- listen carefully to candidates' responses and develop them productively through debate

- facilitate exchanges without cueing, prompting, reminding, summarising, correcting,
- challenge and discuss productively
- push the candidate to their limits - linguistically and conceptually
- respect the time allocation

The best examiners avoid

- being unprepared
- failing to interrupt an overlong presentation
- failing to offer robust challenge
- failing to stick to the allocated time (total 5 minutes) for the initial section
- failing to indicate that the initial stage has passed and that the test is moving on to more general discussion
- choosing a transitional issue not germane to the initial one
- returning to the initial issue
- developing areas that are merely extensions of the initial one and do not develop new pathways
- introducing unexpected issues subsequently
- failing to explore subsequent issues satisfactorily
- introducing too many subsequent issues
- failing to encourage justification and debate during the remainder of the test
- following a pre-agreed line of development - (this is tantamount to cheating)
- requiring factual information rather than expression of opinion and argument
- allowing recitation
- talking too much
- asking convoluted questions
- asking personal questions
- inviting candidates to indicate which issues they would like to discuss next
- interjecting
- prompting
- correcting
- summarising and clarifying candidates' responses
- pursuing unproductive issues

Not all the above are found widely but they occur often enough to prompt markers to comment on them in their reports.

All the above areas will have repercussions in respect of the mark obtained by candidates. Eliminating them will greatly enhance the chances of their scoring well. Failure to do so will result in exchanges that contain little explanation or clarification as to why the issue has been chosen and tend to produce narrative or anecdotal material rather than stimulus for the language of debate. In some cases, the 'debate' turns into a general conversation or a question and answer session.

The worst "crime" is to offer candidates the opportunity to select the issues for debate as this automatically means that these will not be un-predictable and they will therefore be excluded from certain areas of the mark scheme.

Performance of candidates

Quality of Language

Accuracy

Though some candidates were able to demonstrate that they had mastered correct use of basic syntax and sentence structure, it was disappointing again to see that, at this level, accuracy showed little improvement overall compared with performance at AS level.

Examiners and Markers noted a discrepancy in the level of accuracy between the initial debate and the further areas of discussion. There was a widespread inability to use correct verb forms and to show a grasp of how grammar works in the composition of a sentence.

All the shortcomings highlighted in last year's report were to be found in exactly the same form this year and included:

- the use of the nameless 'non-tense' infinitive-sounding ending, *les gens penser / il n'aider pas / je préférer / tout le monde connaître / il améliorer / le gouvernement introduire /*
- incorrect forms of verbs in the present e.g. *le gouvernement doit / peut // ils doivent / avont / avent // je va / il reflet / vous disez / ils font / ils fontent // ils apprennent / j'étude* and problems with attempts at other tenses (*j'aura / elle mort / beaucoup de gens ont mourir / il a devenu / j'utilisé / ils ont survi / j'ai resté*) and with tenses often used indiscriminately, particularly confusion over perfect vs. imperfect and future vs conditional
- problems with use of negatives, *ne* or *pas* being dropped, or *pas* included with another negative, e.g. *je ne suis d'accord / il ne va pas jamais, / ils n'ont pas aucun droit*, or incorrect word order or format, as in *n'être pas obèse / pour ne parle pas / de non payer*)
- concord of subject and verb (often a plural subject with a singular verb) such as *les médecins qui n'a pas... / la famille ont... / les politiciens fait ... / les gens qui produit ... / les personnes qui dit ... /*
- finite verbs needing dependent infinitives (*ils veulent travaillent / il peut donne... nous pouvons prépare*)
- difficulties with pronouns ([*les filles musulmanes*] *ils portent le voile / ils aident leur-mêmes* and with direct / indirect objects, eg. *le gouvernement les a donné ... il faut aider aux gens de s'intégrer...*
- problems with partitives (*il existe beaucoup des gens / il y a des autres choses / il gagne un peu de l'argent / quelque chose intéressant*)
- basic gender errors (with consequent adjectival agreement errors) including *choix, chose, drogue, emploi, état, façon, femme, livre sterling, manque, monde, pays, sa père, phénomène, port, problème, qualité, racisme, règle, risque, santé, sondage, voile*
- problems with adjectival agreements eg. *une culture différent, l'année dernier, l'état française*
- *à + le(s)* and *de + le(s)*, eg. *de le monde / aux les problèmes / de les situations*
- articles omitted eg. *France a besoin... / il y a problèmes*
- incorrect plural forms, eg. *les animaux, les hôpitals, les problèmes sociaux*

- incorrect prepositions (*sur la télé, en Paris, il dépend sur, au même temps, sur le sujet de... différent à... encouragés de...*) frequent confusion between *penser à*

- and *penser de* ; incorrect use of preposition (*plusieurs de..*) and incorrect insertion of prepositions after *espérer, chercher, préférer, écouter*
- confusion of adjectives and adverbs (eg. *bon / bien , meilleur / mieux, mauvais / mal ; le seulement chose /*)
 - omission of *que* after *je pense / je crois* etc.
 - confusion over intensifiers (*trop beaucoup / plus mieux*)
 - difficulties with comparisons, eg. *aussi grand comme / plus que cinq millions / moins de l'année dernière*
 - inability to use *peut-être* correctly

The following comment has been made in previous years:

A feature that continues to depress examiners and markers is the overall inability to produce correct subordinate constructions. Invariably, the subordinate verb will not be in a finite tense and on many occasions is simply omitted. Relative pronouns frequently disappear. Utterances such as "les parents sait quoi ils veulent leurs enfants à faire" are encountered far too often and are not confined to the weaker candidates. It is a depressing comment to have to make.

Unfortunately, as a number of markers have pointed out, some teachers do not possess the command of spoken French necessary for examining candidates at this level. This is perhaps even more depressing.

Nothing in the current examination has occurred to make this judgment less valid.

Pronunciation and Intonation

The quality was very variable. While some candidates had generally good control of sounds and intonation and most spoke in a way that did not destroy intelligibility, others were not able to produce authentic p/i and first language patterns intruded. Sounds and stress patterns were often inauthentic. This was exacerbated in cases where candidates were over-prepared and launched into long learnt monologues. Among other problems were:

- poor intonation and a flat monotone, sometimes a characteristic of pre-rehearsed, regurgitated material as indicated above
- problems with nasal sounds such as *important, inacceptable, injustifiable, intention, inutile, censurer, compréhension, compte, principal, contemporain, éolien, infidélité, enceinte, enseignant, symbole*
- anglicised pronunciation of words such as *circulation, société, identité, introduction, nationalité, immigration, éducation, tradition, varié, exploiter, gouvernement, racisme*
- pronunciation of unsounded consonants in words such as *tabac, et, est, cas, coût, dans, droit, ils / elles pensent, les jeunes, succès, beaucoup, gens, hommes, cas, mort, temps, corps, succès, trop*
- incorrect pronunciation of *aide, alcool, créé, danger, dignité, distingué, drogue, emploi, environnement, équilibre, ethnique, eu, euro, européen, eux, famille, femme, fille, fils, gagner, idée, ignorer, Le Pen, méthode, qualité, question, religieux*
- poor vowel sounds resulting in unclear distinction between *créer* and *crier, deux* and *douze, guerre* and *gare, interdire* and *introduire, jeunes* and *gens, pays* and *paille, l'amour* and *la mort, ait* and *aille, chose* and *choix, magasins* and *magazines*

- mispronunciations such as *fable* [for *faible*] , *mailleur*, *amigrés*, *annocent*, *tout le mon*, *les déchats*, *attendre* [for *atteindre*] *les attentes* [for *attentats*], *un pêche* [for *un péché*] *l'obisité*, *communité*, *basse* for *base*, *baiser* for *baisser*, *le beef*, *le Grand Beton* [*la Grande Bretagne*] *la pain* [*peine*] *de mort*

Range

Most candidates were able to express their ideas, though with varying degrees of competence. There were some very good linguistic performances from non-native speakers with an impressive range of lexis and structures. Candidates were able to handle the language of justification and debate, using abstract concepts and expressions which conveyed reflection, hypothesis and considered opinion.

Candidates and examiners are advised not to adopt an informal register and to avoid conversational mots familiers.

Centres need to be more aware that tests for Unit 4 should be conducted in the register of debate. It is accepted that many teacher examiners prefer to address their candidates as 'tu' but not that candidates use 'tu' in their responses. Certainly visiting examiners would not expect to be addressed as 'tu'. *Tutoiement* would not be regarded as appropriate at this level within French culture, as the Président has decreed on his election. On many occasions, candidates used *tu* as a substitute for *on*. Similarly some candidates used colloquialisms, slang or abbreviated forms as if these were acceptable in formal debate (*bossier*, *le boulot*, *ça fend la tête*, *je m'en fous*, *la pub*, *ces trucs- là je suis plutôt contre*, *les flics*, *les manifs*, *les profs*, *les ados ... t'es pas bien le mec*)

Some native speakers who relied on "café chat" mode and failed to adopt an appropriate register or did not choose to exercise the facility of expression at their command, could not be awarded the high marks for language that might have been expected.

In an examination such as this, it is to be expected that candidates will speculate or hypothesise. It is difficult to do this if "si clauses" have not been mastered. Rare is the candidate who possesses this ability.

Some candidates displayed the ability to use a variety of structures and had acquired a range of lexis appropriate to their chosen issue, but were then let down by simple words. Better candidates showed a confident use of tenses including the conditional, especially *devrait* and *voudrait*, though correct sequence of tenses in unprepared sections sometimes eluded them. Occasionally there were problems when a second verb, usually *être*, was dropped, eg. *ça pourrait une bonne idée*.

There were very few examples of *dont*, *lequel / laquelle*, *celui/ celle*, and *ce qui / ce que* were very infrequently used.

For weaker candidates, satisfactory completion of sentences was often difficult and there were basic lexical errors and anglicisms such as *political*, *physicalement*, *obvieusement*, *définiment*, *absolument*, *chimicaux*, *contreversiel*, *cosmopolitain*, *signifiant*, *obsessé*, *financier*, *un change*, *invester*, *préventer*, *réducer*, *joindre*, *exercisé*, *le catholicisme*, *la dessécoration*, *l'argent d'Etat*, *l'interdire du publicité*, *le criminal*, *ministère* for *ministre*, *les scientifiques*, *La Bretagne* for *La Grande-Bretagne*, *en particulère*, *à une certaine extente*, *la patrimonie*, *vous êtes droit / vous êtes vrai* [= you are right, addressing the teacher examiner], *ça ne travaille pas*, *un Maghreb*, *plus et plus*, *moins en moins d'une choix*, *la Belge* [for *la Belgique*], *l'Allemand* [for *l'Allemagne*] *la Russe* [for *la Russie*] *il incombre aux écoles*, *le fumer*, *le tabagisme* [meaning 'smoking'], *faire mieux cette situation*, *autour du monde* or *dans tout le monde* for *partout dans le monde* or *dans le monde entier*, *c'est une issue intéressante*, *c'est un bon point*, *ce n'est pas le point / quel est le point ?*

Other difficulties included :

- misuse of *parce que* (to mean *à cause de*)
- confusion between *place* and *endroit*, *passer* and *dépenser*, *devoir* and *devenir*,
- *gens* and *personnes*, *le mode* and *la mode*, *le médecin/ les médicaments / la médecine*, *savoir* and *connaître*, *faire* and *rendre*
- use of *les gens français* rather than *les Français*
- confusion of *les gens* and *les jeunes* (or even *les jaunes!*)
- use of *les Françaises*, *les Anglaises* for *les Français*, *les Anglais*
- use of *d'après* and *depuis* to mean 'after' , *devant* for *avant*

Response

The general level of comprehension was high.

There were some good spontaneous performances with genuine and well-developed debate and discussion. These tended to gain higher marks for Response, even for less able candidates. Regrettably, there were still too many tests that failed to meet the requirement for linguistic creativity and thus did not score well in this department.

The three stages of a response

Candidates should seek to produce responses that contain the following stages:

- the first is the initial reaction to the examiner's question - showing understanding and making an initial indication of one's position
- the second involves a candidate expanding on this initial reaction and developing views or argument - showing greater understanding
- the third is achieved if candidates can sustain their input appropriately over a more extended period - showing the ability to extrapolate or hypothesise, placing the response in a wider more general context.

Too many candidates were prepared to sit back and wait for the examiner to prompt or move on. They offered a one or two sentence response to each point or question, or tailed off with phrases such as "*Il y a des problèmes*" or "*c'est difficile*." If they cannot develop their responses, the teacher examiner has to move on to other areas to give them further opportunities and this will often move them down into another category of performance description.

It bears repeating that Response rewards spontaneity and the ability to react to "unpredictable" situations. Therefore, it is entirely understandable that candidates whose teacher-examiner encourages a natural exchange of ideas have a greater chance of attaining the highest marks. Candidates who are asked inappropriate questions (see Conduct of Tests above) are accordingly disadvantaged.

Justification and Debate

This feature extends over the entire test and not just the initial section.

The one-minute presentation should not reveal all the arguments the candidate intends to use subsequently. Where both candidate and examiner had prepared properly there were some lively exchanges. The best were those where both candidate and teacher-examiner engaged in a mature and developing debate, with suitably justified supporting evidence from the candidate.

It was evident that many candidates found the test both stimulating and interesting. Some commented to visiting examiners that they had enjoyed the challenge and had been glad to have the chance to debate and discuss. Candidates who performed well were those with a lively and genuine interest in their chosen issue and its background, and in rational questioning and critical thinking.

Weaker candidates had little to contribute once they had voiced their main prepared points and relied on repetition, re-assertion of opinion or anecdote. Examiners reported that in many cases, inadequate research had been undertaken to provide evidence and support for the candidate's arguments and to parry contrary views. Even candidates who felt passionately about their issues were in many cases unable to argue convincingly by producing suitable justification and evidence to show that they were aware of the moral and social / political / historical background and its implications. Some who had carried out research on their chosen issue presented their material as information in isolation from their arguments and failed to make effective use of it.

In respect of the further issues, candidates in centres where attention had been paid to the possible avenues of development open to the examiner, were able to sustain interesting contributions on a variety of themes. Where no thought had been given to where the discussion might go after the first 5 minutes, candidates experienced difficulty in maintaining informed debate and the exchanges degenerated into Question and Answer sessions.

The exploration of possible avenues of development after the 5 minute debate is very productive. It primes candidates to issues that could well appear so that they can think about these in good time and be prepared to express ideas and views should the opportunity occur.

Reference has already been made to the crucial role played by the examiner in making it possible for the candidate to demonstrate ability by choosing appropriate areas for development and allowing the candidate space to respond. Centres are reminded of the importance of proper examiner preparation.

Useful debating expressions

The following expressions were given in a previous Report as examples of appropriate language and it may be helpful to new examiners and centres to repeat them here. Candidates are familiar with '*Je pense que... je considère que... il me semble que... je ne suis pas d'accord*' but could widen their bank of expressions to support and develop their arguments with expressions such as *Je vous concède que... je suis convaincu que... on va trop loin en disant que... par ailleurs... il n'a pas été démontré que... on exagère quand on affirme que... on a tort de croire que... incontestablement... jusqu'à preuve du contraire... il est inexact de dire que... par contre ... j'estime que... il faut constater que... il faut aborder la question de... afin de changer cette situation, il faudrait ... tous ces facteurs semblent indiquer que... à titre d'exemple, je cite... au niveau de... il est manifeste que... il est nécessaire d'envisager une situation où...*

Other issues

Declaration of Issue Forms

Centres are reminded that the form:

- should be completed by the candidate
- should include the date of the session
- should include all details relating to the centre and candidate
- should show the issue stated in the Target Language - *not in English*
- the candidate's stance "for or against" should be clearly indicated - *in French - i.e. Pour ou Contre*
- should also show what topic was chosen for Unit 3 and what coursework is being undertaken for other units
- should be signed by the candidate

These requirements are ignored too often.

Failure to provide any indication of a candidate's stance means that the Visiting Examiner then has to establish with the centre what the stance is prior to their visit. This involves unnecessary phoning or e-mailing and is an extra burden and inefficient use of that person's time. In admittedly rare cases, even the Teacher-Examiner had to establish what the candidate was defending - an eloquent comment on the nature of the preparation undertaken!

Quality of Recording

Centres are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring that candidates and teacher-examiner can be clearly heard. Centres do their candidates a great disservice in not checking equipment, choice of recording environment and quality of tapes and recordings before submitting the tests for marking.

Last year's report said - "In the main, clear tapes were produced but some were of poor quality or there was distracting background noise, such as people entering the examination room" - the same comment applies to this year's examination. Playground noise, telephones (portable and other) continue to intrude.

In a few cases, recordings were barely audible and marking was difficult. Centres are advised that is difficult to assess candidates who are not recorded and are therefore advised to check that each one has been recorded before sending the tapes to the moderator.

Potential problems

- incorrect placing of the microphone, so that the voice of the candidate and / or the examiner sounds muffled or distant - if the question cannot be heard, it becomes problematic to gauge whether the answer is appropriate. If the answer cannot be heard
- automatic microphones create much fade and warp and are not recommended - each time someone bumps the desk or coughs loudly the following 5 seconds are lost. This is sometimes the equivalent of a candidate's response!
- old tapes were used which had not been adequately wiped
- defective recording equipment
- persistent hum/clatter/whirr on the recording
- unacceptable levels of extraneous noises, many avoidable, including talking and laughing in adjacent rooms, background music and drumming
- unfortunate proximity of the examination room to building sites and traffic
- telephones and mobiles ringing in the examination room.

Administration

The majority of centres carried out all the administrative procedures correctly and efficiently, which is much appreciated.

Unit 4 should not be recorded on the same tape as Unit 3.

Only 2 candidates should be recorded on each side.

Cassettes themselves as well as their boxes should be labelled with centre and candidate numbers. This stipulation is not always observed and can result in tests going astray when packaging breaks and tapes fall out of boxes at some remote warehouse. A significant number of teachers failed to label both the tapes and the cassette boxes with the centre and candidate numbers - far more important than the date of the exam.

OPTEMS/ attendance registers should be included in the mailing to markers.

Conclusion

The ability to debate is one of the most difficult to acquire. It is a gauge of a person's mastery of language and logic. To demonstrate this in one's own language is difficult enough. To do it in a foreign language constitutes a real challenge for candidates and the fact that so many acquit themselves well of the task should be seen as a source of satisfaction for both them and the staff who have laboured long and hard to teach them how. It also provides a refutation of the argument that the A level examination has been "dumbed down."

Many candidates find this examination challenging but they see the benefits to be derived not just in terms of improved linguistic ability but also in the acquisition and development of conceptual abilities. It is appreciated by pupils, schools and universities because on a personal level it involves candidates intellectually and emotionally, promotes valuable research and expository skills and is a worthwhile and useful exercise preparatory to embarking on a career or university education.

A2 Unit 4.2 (6444/02): Interpreting

Preamble

There was an increase of some 7% in the entry for Interpreting this year, its penultimate session. Candidates were required to carry out one “consecutive bi-lateral interpreting” task between two interlocutors who, it was assumed, did not speak the other’s language. The tests were recorded and marked externally. The syllabus prescribes the topic areas of School/College, Work, Business, Leisure and Travel. As before, two pairs of tests were set, each pair consisting of variants on the same scenario as outlined on the Candidate Card, but with different narrative developments. The topic areas were Leisure (Tests 1 and 2) and Business (Tests 3 and 4). In Tests 1 and 2, candidates interpreted between two young people, one from France and the other from the UK, talking about their respective leisure activities. In Tests 3 and 4, candidates interpreted between one of their parents, a member of a family firm in the United Kingdom which produced home-made foods for sale in small local shops and markets, and a French stallholder at a visiting farmers’ market. Candidates were given one of these tests according to a prescribed sequence, which depended on the day the test was conducted.

Centres are reminded that this option will be offered for the last time in June 2009.

This year there was a very pleasing improvement in the candidates’ performance compared to 2006 and 2007. This was evident not only in terms of the general standard, which saw the Mean mark at one of its highest points since the introduction of this test in 1998, but also in terms of the greatly-improved overall pass rate, which was the best ever. It would appear that, compared to previous years, the candidates were better prepared and fewer had been entered inappropriately. Many candidates scored extremely high marks; far fewer scored below 20. Candidates may also have found that the balance in the language and the concepts between the topic-specific and the general was more even than in 2007.

The most successful candidates were those who had obviously practised the role of interpreter and experienced its demands. As their test developed, they were able to recall the outline provided on the Candidate Card and to relate it to the evolving dialogue. They avoided illogical sequences of ideas. Their command and understanding of French were good. They reflected before committing themselves, understood what ‘interpreting’ means and deployed strategies to deal with unexpected difficulties, such as processing unfamiliar or complex language under time pressure or re-casting a previous phrase in the light of what followed. Less able, or even quite able but less well prepared candidates, did not have the same capabilities.

Preparation for the Tests

It is clear that a positive and informed choice has to be made for Interpreting. It is also clear that an apparently innocuous dialogue may present a considerable challenge, particularly taking into account the need for precision of thought and accuracy of language. Although in professional interpreting terms this is a low-level test, it must be understood that it is very demanding for non-specialists at GCE A level.

The marking of the 2008 tests showed the need to re-emphasise the fact that the Interpreting option is skill based and candidates should be trained for it, systematically and on the basis of an informed choice. Relevant linguistic knowledge should be built up over the course. This option should not be taken lightly; it is a specialism and candidates should not be entered for it lightly. It should not be assumed that all the personal and linguistic qualities required for the parallel Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues are easily transferable to Interpreting; Edexcel can only offer options where the tests are clearly different from one another.

All five topic areas should be prepared in equal depth, the more so because the topics cannot be compartmentalised and overlap can occur, as in Tests 1 and 2 this year, where some lexis from the areas of Work and Education appeared. Over the years the examiners have had the impression that the Business topic receives less attention than it ought. This year was no exception because, ironically, many candidates were unable to recognise the basic word *affaires* which designates the topic (equally, in Test 1, many were unable correctly to produce *loisirs*), or to show receptive or productive use of other business lexis especially *échantillon*, but also *réunion*, *marchandises*, *livrer*, *profit/bénéfices*, *compagnie/entreprise*, *marque*, *marchand*, or to distinguish reliably between *vendre* and *acheter*.

Advice on preparation for this option and the qualities required of the candidates can be found in this and previous Examiners' reports as well as in the Teachers' Handbook (Pages 37 - 40). A feedback and guidance meeting will take place in London on 4 November 2008, assuming there is sufficient demand.

Assessment Principles

(See Specification Issue 4 pp 27-28 of the paper version or pp 30-31 of the online version in www.edexcel.org.uk)

The qualities assessed are Accuracy of the target language; Appropriateness of the target language and Transmission through both languages. The three criteria are equally weighted at 20 marks. Wherever possible assessment is positive but inevitably errors do impinge and must be taken into account.

Assessment of Accuracy

Assesses correct use of grammar, structure and syntax as prescribed in the Grammar Specification, and pronunciation & intonation.

Grammar: Gender and number of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, articles. Forms and endings of verbs: tense, auxiliary, agreement, past participle, finite and infinite.

Structure & Syntax: Infinitives after prepositions; distinction between direct and indirect object with personal and relative pronouns; varieties of relative pronoun eg *dont*, *lequel*; difference between *qui* & *que*, *ce qui* & *ce que*; word order eg negatives, pronouns, nouns and adjectives; interrogatives; presence or absence of conjunctions eg *que*; comparatives & superlatives; articles (definite, indefinite, partitive, reduced partitive); the passive; government of verbs.

Pronunciation & Intonation: Clarity and comprehensibility of sound and articulation; authenticity of vowels (including nasals), stress and intonation as opposed to anglicised accents; treatment of mute endings; awareness of the difference between spelling and sound; effect on grammar and meaning; proper articulation eg *aujourd'hui*, *merci*; awareness of homonyms eg *parents*.

Assessment of Appropriateness

Assesses modes of expression as required by the test: lexis; idiom; language of spoken interaction, *formules de politesse*; register (see Specification page 27); nuance/discrimination eg between '*revenir*' and '*retourner*'; avoidance of influence of first language; difference between translating and interpreting; treatment of difficult utterances eg *to need*; cross-cultural concepts eg *weights and measures*; suitability for context eg formal/informal, modes of address eg *tutoiement/vouvoiement*; attempted use of subordination; subjunctive; success with common idiomatic usage, eg *peut-être*, *venir de faire*; use of tense with '*depuis*'.

Assessment of Transmission

Assesses the whole interpreting performance. In the Specification "Transmission" is defined as "conveying the relevant information from one interlocutor to the other" (in both languages). This has quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Quantitative: Effective transmission of meaning; completeness of gist and detail; precision eg number, time, date, distance; importance of tense; difference between probability/certainty/possibility; avoidance of misleading or factually incorrect messages/misinterpretation/illogicality; presence or absence of significant detail and key information; recollection of outline given on Candidate Card.

Qualitative: Appropriate pace; engagement; insight into scenario; frequency of requests for repetition or clarification; ingenuity; good techniques eg backtracking/correction of non sequiturs/re-casting of an initial version; help or hindrance to interlocutors; fluency, hesitancy and tone; clear enunciation; suitability and accuracy of spoken language, both English and French.

Candidates' Responses

The improvement in overall performance noted above was pleasing. Within that, there was some variation. Significant features of candidates' performance in 2008 were:

1. A general sense that the candidates understood the tasks and the scenarios, even if they were unable to cope with certain parts, or at times expressed incorrect or incomprehensible ideas. There were problems in Test 1, sections A6 and B6; test 2, A3, B2 and B4; Test 3, A4, B3 and B4; test 4, A4 and A5, B2 and B4.
2. Some evidence of improvement in listening skills in the A section. Many candidates were able to deal readily with French spoken at an authentic pace. There were fewer requests for repetition and clarification, and fewer utterances not attempted at all. However, there were problems of understanding in some parts of section A, caused by factors such as faulty sound discrimination, inattentive listening and gaps in linguistic knowledge:

Test 1: A3: si je n'avais pas été passionné (if I was passionate / if you weren't passionate), ceux qui veulent apprendre (what you want to take) ; A5 : qui m'a appris (who took me to play / made me play) ; A6 : Là où j'habite (here where I live), à part les activités sportives (as part of ...), à des discos (to the disco), pour les touristes (by the tourists), but especially les jeunes du village (people in the village / the locals); A7: Quand est -ce que ... (how do you go there? - difficulty aggravated when elision not made)

Test 2: A2: ville de campagne (village of Campane/Campania); A3: il n'y que le sport, entre autres ; A4 : dis-moi (10 months), ton club (a/the club) ; A5 : me donne (gave me), j'ai fait (I'm making) ; je devrais (I will have to), des gens du même niveau (young people) ; A6 : s'il y a quelqu'un qui veut ..(that there's someone who can ..)

Test 3: A2: les marchés (the market), ce serait (it will be); A3: je serais prêt (I am ready), côté financier (financial cost(s)); A4: si je décidais (if I decide), ce que ferait chacun de nous (many incorrect or missing attempts, and the most elusive utterance of all the four tests), prix de vente (vente usually omitted), vos produits (our products); A5: en fin d'après-midi (in the afternoon).

Test 4: A2: je suis occupé (we're busy) ; A3 : je n'ai jamais vu (I've never had), ce que vous envisagez (I envisage that) ; A4 : produits de luxe (products from Luxembourg), vous perdriez (you're wasting/losing/you will waste - frequent errors here too) ; à essayer (no version of 'essayer'), villes de France (villages), A5: cela m'étonnerait (that surprises me), ce qu'ils vendent eux-mêmes (those who sell the same - also very common).

3. There were many candidates with acceptable to very good pronunciation and intonation whose French sounded authentic. However, it was in this area that the examiners noted a significant deterioration in standard. Candidates should be aware that incorrect or imprecise articulation of sounds can affect their accuracy mark, and can also impede or alter transmission of meaning.
- (a) Perennial errors in pronouncing *parce que, pour, leçon, cours, pourvu, sûr, ennuyeux, cas, argent, ans, ville, tout le monde, semaine, compagnie, entreprise, spécialité, sélection, compétition, informations, descriptions, ami, voiture, idée, faisons, trente, cinquante, intéressent, essayer, réaliser, magasin, gentil(e), j'espère (je spère)*.
 - (b) As before, inappropriate sounding of final consonants: *beaucoup, trop, temps, tard, nous avons, dans votre région, nous pouvons, ils pensent*.
 - (c) Anglicised pronunciation of the letter 'i', in *ils, il y a, discuté, difficile, liste*.
 - (d) confusion of 'ou' and 'u': *bucu (= beaucoup), pouvez-vu nu aider, trop forte pour nu*.
 - (e) mispronunciation of the letter 'u' in 'club and 'pub' - possibly minor with the former, but a major alteration to the sense with the latter, especially if attributed the feminine gender.
 - (f) confusion about nasal vowels: *onne m'a dit, nous avonne, eunne soir, but person, semain, les écoles locales ne don pas de cours*.
 - (g) confusion of 'gens' and 'jeunes' ; often the ugly 'jonnes'.
 - (h) incorrect pronunciation of the present subjunctive of 'avoir': *pourvu que tu ailles 18 ans - frequently replicated interlocutor's pronunciation of 'que vous ayez raison / qu'il n'y ait pas (que vous aiez raison, qu'il n'y aille pas)*.
 - (i) The major deterioration was noted in failure to elide consonant and vowel (the same was noted in some of the reading by the A interlocutors). Elision is a feature of spoken French; its absence produces an inauthentic sound and results in a lack of flow. It might be an indication of candidates who process only one word at time. Common examples were: *nous avons, parce que on, beaucoup de équipement, très animé, deux heures, c'est une grande ville, nous aider, dans un marché, les gens les aiment, que il livrera, de envoyer, après avoir discuté, que il y a, je vous empêche, ce que ils pensent*.
4. Idiom and Usage : Performance in this area was varied:
- (a) Only a minority of candidates were able to demonstrate control of tense use with 'depuis' and its variants, which was present in all four tests. Commonly, the passé composé was used.
 - (b) While many candidates attempted to use the subjunctive in 'I don't think it's a good idea' and 'provided you're over 18', the latter was often vitiated by incorrect pronunciation (see 3 h above) or inappropriate use of être.
 - (c) In section B of tests 1 and 2, it was felt that tutoiement (and its corresponding possessive adjectives) was more suitable than vouvoiement. However, consistency was as important as appropriateness; candidates who switched between the two lost credit.
 - (d) In section B5 of Test 2, idiomatic use of 'venir de' was known by most candidates, who often vitiated it by using a singular verb.

- (e) usage with 'peut-être' has been highlighted in most previous examiners' reports.
5. Lexis: performance was mixed here too. The following were quite widely known: connaître/connu, animé, louer, niveau, en fait, partager, avoir raison, avoir besoin, produit, puis-je?, expliquer, les Français, établir, gagner de l'argent (= to earn). Items where many candidates were unable to produce an idiomatic version: to have a drink, tomorrow afternoon, on Friday, into town, to have a good time, 2 a.m., by car, as quickly as possible, actually, to happen, to meet, to be interested in, to play tennis, would rather have, in the evenings/at weekends, to save money, open, until, everything, a larger selection, your area, fresh products, as far as the financial side is concerned, practical, that surprises me, successful, to deliver. In some cases there were clues in the A section of the script, but most were unable to profit from them. Nuance mattered in some cases, eg 'you don't need to buy': 'on ne doit pas acheter / il ne faut pas acheter' were considered inappropriate; 'are able to sell': 'sont capables de vendre' was not accepted; 'teenagers': 'jeunes' was felt to lack precision. 'biens' did not convey 'products'. Incorrect information was sometimes transmitted by wrong choice of word: 'sell their goods there: vendre leurs produits ici'; 'we want to sell them in France: nous voulons les acheter'; 'to send products: de vendre des produits'; 'last weekend: la semaine dernière'; 'French people .. British food: les Britanniques ... la nourriture française'; 'in your region: dans cette région'; 'what they think: ce que vous pensez'; '2 a.m.: 12 heures'.
6. Sentence structure/word order: use of relative pronouns 'qui' and 'que' was generally good, and the conjunction 'que' was rarely missing, but 'dont vous avez besoin' and 'ce qu'ils pensent' were less secure. Good candidates perceived the need to repeat the pronoun in Test 4, section B4: 'goods that are not well known and can't be found in shops'. Also well handled were interrogatives (Que pensez-vous? Qu'est-ce que tu fais?, Quelle sorte de choses y a-t-il?), and complex word order, eg 'pouvez-vous nous aider?', 'nous voulons les vendre', 'qui ne peuvent pas être trouvés', 'puis-je vous contacter?'. Negatives caused problems to many: 'je n'ai rien essayé', 'je n'ai réalisé pas', 'nous n'avons eu'. As always, the distinction between the future tense and the present conditional was blurred, in both the A and B phases; at times the difference matters, eg 'trouver quelqu'un qui vendrait nos produits', 'ton équipe ne sera pas trop forte'. Conveying 'could do' was relatively successful, but sometimes omitted (we could go = nous irions). However, the different sense of 'could' in Test 1, section B2: 'I would do it if I could' defeated most, the majority offering 'si je pourrais'.
7. Aspects of grammar: correct choice of article was inconsistent; subject-verb concord was mostly good, but 'beaucoup de jeunes qui veut jouer/dont vous ont besoin' were often heard. Gender of nouns and form of adjectives was unreliable: un petite ville français, une grand ville, magasins locales, produits locales, spécialités régionaux, le week-end dernière, ils sont ouvertes, la marché français, un pub/une pub, ton équipe ne sera pas trop fort ('la plus forte' given in previous

A section), la premier fois - but le premier fois/foie was at best ambiguous.

8. Non sequitur / illogical sequences: The recommended skill of backtracking (amending a version of an utterance in the light of the following one, or because common sense dictated it), though practised by some alert and well-trained candidates, was generally less in evidence this year. The many who regarded each utterance as an independent and discrete task to be forgotten once completed achieved a certain degree of success in presenting a coherent interpretation of the script. However, they risked creating nonsensical or illogical sequences of ideas if they were not critical of their own work. This was observed particularly in Test 1, A6, 'les discos devraient être interdites aux jeunes'. Most candidates offered versions like 'the discos should be forbidden to young people', then revised it to, for example, 'young people should be banned from the discos / should not be allowed in to the discos'. In Test 3, A4, after an unsuccessful attempt at 'ce que ferait chacun de nous', some realised the meaning on hearing the conditional present verbs 'serait' and 'partagerions' in the following utterances. Very few indeed spotted the illogicality in Test 4, A1, 'vous voulez exporter ...aujourd'hui', and offered, eg, 'So you want to export products to France? You'll have to do it quickly, because I have a lot of customers today' - admittedly an elusive concept. Some other examples are quoted in the commentaries.

A detailed commentary on all the tests is given at the end of this report.

Improving Performance in the Tests

Specific areas in which candidates might acquire more practice are:

1. Using their three minutes' preparation time to good effect. In all the tests this year, candidates might have avoided error had they remembered where the events took place.
2. Building up a topic-specific lexis whilst retaining transactional and more general conversational phrases possibly learned at GCSE.
3. Regarding accuracy of verb tense, agreement and form as important, in both interpreting phases.
4. Trying to ensure they have communicated all the detail expressed in a particular phrase.
5. Taking time to reflect on what they hear and to think about the sense of their versions in the developing situation. The sequence of events should be coherent. If it is not, candidates should practise the technique of backtracking to correct a previous version.
6. Knowing when it would be beneficial to request a clarification.
7. Experiencing difficulties and being able to deal with them.
8. Listening carefully and requesting repetitions sparingly.

The above assume that students are systematically trained and prepared for this option.

The Conduct of the Tests

It has to be reported again that incorrect or careless conduct of the tests disadvantaged candidates in some cases. Some 120 centres will receive feedback highlighting minor or major faults in the conduct or the administration. Many of these caused inconvenience and waste of time to examiners, eg missing or incomplete documentation, late despatch, poor-quality recordings.

The requirements are laid out clearly in the Teachers'/Interlocutors' Instructions and in the Interlocutors' Scripts booklet. The Candidate Cards give instructions to candidates, many of whom seemed unaware of them.

It remains a concern to Edexcel that the instructions were again blatantly flouted in some centres. This examination is unique at Advanced Level and has its own peculiar set of requirements. Edexcel depends upon all teachers to follow the instructions without deviation so that as far as possible all candidates take the same examination and the integrity of the examination is preserved, as with any externally-set examination. Candidates receive no credit for any advantage gained from unauthorised assistance, whether intentional or not. Teachers need to understand the implications of exchanging their usual role for that of examiner.

In this session these particular tendencies were noted:

1. As in 2007, in the A phase, breaking utterances down into smaller word groups, often of a single word, by the artificial introduction of pauses; failure to elide in order to highlight a particular word.
2. In both phases, deliberate and totally inauthentic emphasis on key words. This was particularly noticeable where a word which had caused difficulty was heavily stressed in a repetition.
3. Reading repetitions more slowly than the original reading; varying the reading speed according to the candidate.
4. Offering to repeat a phrase, or inviting the candidate to request repetition.
5. Repeating only a word the candidate had interpreted incorrectly, or omitted.
6. Correcting a faulty version.
7. Candidates able to offer a correct version of an utterance which had not yet been read out. In some cases, candidates gave a phrase from a different test.
8. The same faulty or unusual version offered by successive candidates.
9. Candidates who request a repetition only after attempting an utterance, (in some cases the candidate was heard to say 'Non?') giving the impression that some sort of non-verbal communication has occurred.

Some of the above undermined the simulation on which this examination depends, namely that the two interlocutors do not understand the other's language.

In some centres greater attention to the following is required:

1. Advance reading aloud of the tests in order to be fully familiar with them so that reading is smooth, meaningful and error-free. Hesitant reading and frequent correction of errors disadvantage the candidates. The scripts must be read exactly as printed (including observance of the pause marks). The candidates are given marks for their success in dealing with the tests as printed. They can receive no marks for alterations to or omissions from the scripts.
2. Correct pronunciation of the French. In these tests, some interlocutors were unable to pronounce correctly *ayez, ait, baigner, en plein air, campagne, canoë, original, collaborer, partagerions, prêts, pour, ancien, théoriquement*, to the disadvantage of their candidates.
3. Better briefing on the role of the B interlocutor.
4. Readiness to give, on request and spontaneously, useful clarifications of words which are relevant to the context and enable the candidate to render the sense of the original. It is not sufficient to simply repeat the original expression.
5. Full understanding of the requirements about repetition of phrases. Briefly, a complete utterance may be repeated once only on audible request from the candidate in the appropriate language. Thus, a part of a phrase only may not be repeated, however pressing the request from the candidate. The candidate must be heard to request a repetition, in French in the French-English phase and in English in the English-French phase. Candidates must understand how these requirements operate in practice.
6. Maintenance of an appropriate pace throughout. It is misguided to think that slow reading benefits candidates; it tires them unnecessarily, and the test may well overrun the 15-minute limit. Candidates score no marks after 15 minutes.
7. The sound quality of the recording. Even with a high-quality recording, candidates' voices can be obscured by extraneous noise, some of which must be within the centre's control. Unfortunately some candidates lost marks because the examiner could not hear them.
8. Ensuring candidates do the test which they have prepared.
9. Not recording over parts of another test.
10. Ensuring that the tests have recorded.

Administration (verbatim from the 2007 report because it bears repetition)

Cassette boxes and the cassettes themselves should be clearly labelled with Centre and Candidate names and numbers. It is important to be able to identify cassettes; cassettes without labels identifying the candidate or even the side of the cassette lead to errors and waste of time. Examiners greatly appreciated the thoughtfulness of those teachers who indicated the test numbers on the tape and the cassette label. The current **Interpreting Form** should be completed in full, including the correct test number and candidate number and the candidate's signature.

Advice and Guidance

Candidates

- need specific training for the necessary interpreting skills.
- need to understand the psychological stresses, such as the relentlessness of the experience, lack of control over the content, peaks and troughs of difficulty, increasing tiredness, loss of individuality.
- should be aware of the acceptable use of strategies such as seeking repetition or clarification sparingly, use of paraphrase or circumlocution. They should also be prepared to backtrack if a previous error is recognised
- should prepare all five topic areas in equal detail.
- need to be aware of the importance of feeling secure in the basic structure of the language - this will remove some of the stresses of the situation.
- should be reminded that the interpreter conveys the utterances verbatim, not as reported speech.
- should revise verb forms and tenses, especially irregular past participles, including the more complex tenses prescribed in the Specification; the passive voice; more complex word order eg with infinitives and object pronouns; dependent infinitives; articles; object pronouns; relative pronouns; interrogatives; words and phrases which recur in the tests from year to year

Teachers should

- be fully prepared for the requirements of the test by reading the *Teachers' / Interlocutors' Instructions* thoroughly and by doing trial readings.
- ensure that the equipment is properly sited and adjusted.
- follow the prescribed sequence of tests
- use new cassettes each year and ensure the cassette cases are robust.
- record two tests per side of the cassettes and use only one label per cassette case
- ensure the test number is entered on the oral form.
- enter the centre number on the cassette label
- enter candidates for this option
- not record other oral units on the same tape as 4.2
- enclose all relevant documentation properly completed
- check the condition of the cassette cases before despatching them
- send the materials to the correct examiner
- (This section is reproduced verbatim from the 2007 report, because the same issues arose in 2008, often at the same centres as in previous years.)
- In addition, avoid noisy locations and movement of objects (eg the microphone, doors) within the examination room.

COMMENTARIES ON THE TESTS

	Test 1 (NB: Note form used occasionally)	'p/i' = pronunciation and intonation
A1	J'aimerais bien savoir ce qu'on peut faire ici pendant son temps libre.	Straightforward opener for most candidates, but this was a general enquiry about young people; the 'we►our' sequence altered the meaning. Omission of 'peut' accepted. Specific sense of 'bien' not essential, but treated as a minor bonus. Some stilted English: 'what one can do here in your free time'.
B1`	Unfortunately, there's not much to do here for young people. We have the tennis club and also the leisure centre, but that's a bit boring. What sort of things are there to do where you live?	First utterance largely correct, but 'beaucoup de faire' not accepted, and 'gens/jans/jonnes' for 'jeunes' a frequent error not only of p/i but also of transmission. 'Il n'y a pas beaucoup qu'on peut faire pour les jeunes' altered the meaning. p/i errors with 'club' common, & occasionally of 'ennuyeux' (typically 'enniuu'). Some ignorance of 'loisirs' (the title of this topic area) and failed attempts at it (lésirs/léseurs); 'centre/complexe de sport/sportif' accepted. Final sentence done well, but some inappropriate 'vouvoisement', compounded by incorrect concord with verb (vous habite); 'là où' not essential (and very rare).
A2	Eh bien moi, j'habite à la montagne dans une station de ski où il y a beaucoup d'activités en hiver. Mes copains et moi, nous faisons du ski le plus souvent possible.	Many totally or partly stilted versions, with some detail not transmitting (Me, I live in/on the/a mountain in/near a ski station where there are many activities in the winter. Me and my friend(s), we do skiing as much as possible). Others conveyed idiomatically and in appropriate register for a young person. One candidate claimed the visitor lived 'on the piste'.
B2	I've never done any skiing myself but it's something I would do if I could. But I've been told it's quite expensive, because you need a lot of equipment.	Varying degrees of success. First verb sometimes present tense, creating non sequitur with following utterance. Some problems with word order (je n'ai fait jamais) and inability to produce 'jamais'; 'myself' often omitted (minor lapse of transmission). Versions such as 'Moi, je n'ai jamais skié' heard occasionally. Major problems with verb forms and tenses in the 2 nd utterance (que je faisais/fairais si je pourrais). Conditional of 'faire' often correct, but minority produced an acceptable imperfect tense to convey 'if I could'; most offered the conditional or the present. 'Si c'était possible' accepted, but not 'si possible'. Pronoun 'que' frequently present and correct; 'je le ferais si je pouvais' accepted. 'on m'a dit + que' usually correct; 'quite' = très' accepted for transmission only. 'on a besoin de' (or 'il faut) beaucoup d'équipement/matériel' required; 'tu/vous' not appropriate. 'on ne doit pas acheter/il ne faut pas acheter' altered the sense. 'parce que on / de équipement' heard frequently.
A3	C'est vrai! Si je n'avais pas été passionné(e)par le ski je n'aurais pas demandé à mes parents de m'acheter tout l'équipement. Mais pour ceux qui veulent apprendre, il n'est pas cher de louer tout ce qu'il faut.	Accuracy of tense more frequent with conditional perfect than pluperfect. 'if I wasn't / weren't (so) passionate / enthusiastic' accepted, but not 'I wouldn't ask my parents'. Some failed transmission: 'if you weren't passionate .. you wouldn't ask my parents...' Omission of 'me' accepted, but not 'get all the equipment'. Final sentence done well, with many acceptable idiomatic versions of 'ce n'est pas cher'; 'hire' preferred, but 'rent' accepted. Some problems with first utterance; mishearing (or misreading by interlocutor) of 'ceux qui' as 'ce qui' confused candidates ► 'apprendre' rendered as 'take'.
B3	What do you do in summer?	More difficult than it seemed. 'que/qu'est-ce que' successful, but problems with form and tense of 'faire', and 'in summer': 'l'été / en été / pendant l'été' accepted, not 'dans'. Some poor p/i: 'ètté'.

A4	Nous allons nous baigner dans la piscine en plein air et moi, je passe beaucoup de temps à jouer au tennis.	Largely successful. Omission of 'nous baigner' not felt to be major in the context. Some stilted versions: 'the swimming pool outside/me I spend'.
B4	How long have you been playing tennis ?	Success rate low. 'pour' + passé composé disappointingly common. Few candidates able to profit from hearing 'jouer au tennis' and p/i of 'temps' in previous section.
A5	Ça fait plusieurs années maintenant. C'est mon père qui m'a appris à jouer, car il joue très bien et grâce à lui notre équipe est la plus forte de la région.	Sense understood and largely conveyed, but transmission often flawed because of stilted English or incorrect rendering of the French (It's been many years. It is my father that taught me how to play, because he plays very well and ['grâce à lui' omitted] the team is the strongest of the region'). 'appris à jouer' sometimes rendered as 'took me to play' or 'made me play'. 'My father/dad taught me' transmitted sense well.
B5	I hope your team won't be too strong for us. We haven't had a lot of matches recently because we don't have enough members and there aren't many young people who want to play. The local schools don't give tennis lessons and in any case most people I know would rather have a job in the evenings or at weekends in order to save some money for their holidays.	Many instances of flawed or incorrect transmission. 'won't' mostly 'serait'; 'strong' mostly masculine, despite 'la plus forte' in previous section. Problems in producing 'nous n'avons pas eu': present tense, incorrect p/i of 'eu', omission of 'ne' and/or 'pas'. Partitive articles and lexis incorrect (il n'y a pas <u>beaucoup des gens</u>). 'vouloir' often singular. 'local' often incorrect gender (écoles locaux / collèges locales). Imprecise p/i of 'donner' (don); 'font' not accepted. Omission of 'de tennis' accepted in context, but the commonly incorrect p/i of 'cours' altered the sense (cors/corps/cœur). 'leçons' accepted if p/i correct, but often simply a nasalised version of the English. 'classes' disallowed. Good versions of 'in any case' but 'casse' not uncommon. Next utterance often correct, but there were errors of gender or lexis with 'most' (tous/beaucoup), and incorrect article and relative pronoun (le plupart de gens qui ...); minority of candidates offered 'je sais'. Difficulty in finding an acceptable version of 'would prefer': ambiguous 'préférer/préféraient' common, few examples of 'aimer mieux'. 'job' often incorrect or inappropriate (une travail/un métier/un poste); 'un travail/un (petit) job/un boulot' accepted.. 'le soir' rare, 'dans le soir' common; 'at weekends' very often omitted. 'économiser de l'argent/mettre de l'argent à côté/faire des économies' accepted; 'gagner/avoir/sauver/ramasser/absence of verb' rejected. Unnecessary but grammatically correct subjunctive accepted. Article frequently incorrect; imprecise p/i of 'argent' (des agent). 'les vacances' accepted, 'ses' rejected.
A6	Là où j'habite très peu de mes ami(e)s ont un petit job car normalement ça ne se fait pas chez nous. Quand nous sortons, à part les activités sportives, nous allons de temps en temps à des discos organisées pour les touristes. Mais c'est difficile d'y entrer car certains visiteurs pensent que les discos devraient être interdites aux jeunes du village.	Largely successful apart from 3 rd and final utterances. Some stilted English and/or incorrect meaning affected transmission (There/here where I live, very little / a lot of my friends / very few people have a small job because there aren't any at mine. If we leave, we take part in sport activities, we go from time to time to the disco organised by the tourists. But it's difficult to go there / enter (there) because certain visitors say that the disco must be banned/forbidden for/to the locals / the people who live in the town). Credit given for appropriate version of ' <u>petit</u> job', eg 'little/part-time'. 'sports/sporting activities' accepted for 'activités sportives'. 'pour les touristes' often misread by interlocutor as 'par les touristes', which disadvantaged candidates - credit is given only for interpreting the scripts as printed. Versions such as 'young people from the village should not be allowed into the discos / should be banned from the discos / the discos should be off limits/out of bounds to ..' required for satisfactory transmission of 'devraient être interdites';

		accessed by a minority of candidates, some of whom showed good interpreting skills by backtracking during their attempt.
B6	If that's what you like doing, perhaps we could go to Newcastle one evening, it's very lively. Provided you're over eighteen, we could have a drink in a pub, then go to a club afterwards. They stay open until about 2 am.	Variable degree of success ; there were many pitfalls in this section. Lexis and idiom caused problems, eg usage with 'peut-être'; precise transmission of ' <u>could go/could have</u> '; lexis and mood with different versions of 'provided that'; idiom to express age and 'to have a drink'; confusion of gender and p/i of 'pub', which altered meaning; lexis to convey 'open', 'until', 'two' and 'a.m.'. There were also grammatical difficulties, eg correct relative pronoun for 'what'; gender of 'soir'; gender of 'they' and 'open' depending upon noun chosen for 'club'. 'Si tu aimes faire ça' accepted, and 'si cela te plaît' considered to be full transmission of the utterance, but 'si tu aimerais' not accepted, nor 'le soir'. 'vivant/animé' widely known ; 'amusant/fréquenté/divertissant' accepted, but not 'vif' or some approximate circumlocutions, eg 'il y a beaucoup de monde'. 'si' accepted in lieu of 'pourvu que', but appropriate mood and lexis required in the verb. 'avoir' generally attempted, but incorrect p/i of subjunctive as 'ailles' could not be taken as transmitting. (Étant) donné que' disallowed. 'plus de' usually omitted. 'on' for 'you' led to non sequitur in 'nous pourrions / on pourrait aller'. Few candidates able to express 'have a drink' idiomatically (boire/prendre un verre/quelque chose, etc) ; 'boire', 'avoir un(e) boisson/un boire' not accepted. 'un pub/un bar/une brasserie' accepted for 'pub', but incorrect gender and/or p/i of 'pub' transmitted wrong information. 'un club/une boîte/une disco' accepted for 'club', but incorrect gender for 'boîte' and 'disco' usually followed in 'ils restent ouverts ..'. 'sont' accepted for 'stay'. 'ouvre/ouvert/ouvert' common versions of 'open'. 'à' frequently offered for 'jusqu'à', 'environ' usually omitted, time often incorrect and attempts at 'a.m.' were unidiomatic (10/12 [heures] [dans] le matin/le soir).
A7	Génial! Quand est-ce qu'on y va?	Tone and register appropriately conveyed by most candidates (depended upon reading of the interlocutor), but some diluted versions of 'génial' (yes/good), and occasional omission of 'when'. Renderings of 'on' as 'you' ► 'when do you go?'.
B8	I'll tell you tomorrow.	Mostly accurate ; 'je vais te dire' accepted, but combinations of 'je tu dira à demain' were heard.

	Test 2 (NB: Note form used occasionally)	(Comments from previous tests not repeated)
A1	J'aimerais savoir ce qu'on peut faire ici pendant son temps libre.	
B1`	Fortunately, there's a lot to do here for young people. This is a big city with a university, so it's very lively, with all the pubs, clubs, cinemas, - there's something for everyone!	Occasionally began 'malheureusement'. Frequent p/i errors : 'vie' for 'ville' and 'tout le mon' - affected transmission. Mixture of genders ; 'un(e) grand ville avec un université/faculté'. 'cité' not accepted. 'beaucoup de' for 'tous les' transmitted some of the idea.
A2	C'est tout à fait le contraire de la petite ville de campagne où j'habite. Il faut aller à la grande ville la plus proche qui se trouve à une vingtaine de kilomètres.	Many stilted versions, eg 'it is the complete contrary to ..'; diluted versions of 'tout à fait le contraire'; versions expressing the complete opposite (it's the same as ...); misunderstanding of 'campagne', often caused by interlocutor's incorrect p/i. 'It's different from a small village in Campania where I live. It is necessary to go to the nearby big town which is found at 20 kms'. Addition of 'from here' invalidates.
B2	Well, you'll have a good time here. We can go into town on Friday. How old are you? Provided you're over eighteen, we could have a drink in a pub, then go to a club afterwards. They stay open until about 2 am. Would you like that?	's'amuser' not widely known. Anglicised versions of 'you'll have a good time' (tu auras une bonne tempe), though many candidates able to use the future tense in otherwise unacceptable versions. Versions such as 'tu passeras un bon séjour / de(s) bons moments ici' accepted. Some inappropriate vouvoiement, often with switching to tutoiement in later utterances. Incorrect attempts at 'on Friday': à / le / sur vendredi (or samedi). 'Voudrais-tu faire ça/cela?' accepted, but not 'tu veux ça?' 'Cela te plairait?' from some candidates.
A3	Génial! Ça me plairait énormément. Si j'avais su qu'on allait sortir en ville, j'aurais demandé plus d'argent à mes parents! Comme distractions chez moi, il n'y a que le sport - le tennis et le canoë entre autres.	Many good versions : 'Great ! (etc). I'd love to / I'd really like that! If I'd known we'd be going into town, I would have asked my parents for more money. All there is to do where I live is sport - tennis and canoeing, as well as (some) other activities'. But also stilted and/or inaccurate versions with varying degrees of transmission, typically: 'Yes. That pleases me enormously. If I'd of known / if I knew we could go out in town, I'd of asked / I wouldn't of asked / I asked for more money from/of my parents. Like distractions at my house, there is sport - the tennis and the canoeing among others'. Occasional p/i error by interlocutors: 'canou', replicated in B3 by candidates.
B3	I've never tried canoeing myself, but I would do it if I could. I've been told that it's not too expensive because you can hire everything so you don't need to buy a lot of equipment.	Most candidates unable to replicate 'canoë': 'canou/canot' or the English. 'fait' offered for 'tried'; some p/i errors: essaye/essaié. 'tout' hardly known; typically 'tous les choses', which was disallowed. 'il n'est pas nécessaire d'acheter' accepted.
A4	C'est vrai. Quand tu viendras en France faire l'échange, tu auras l'occasion de faire du canoë. Mais dis-moi, puisque je suis là dans ton club de tennis, j'aimerais jouer dans un match car je ne l'ai jamais fait. C'est possible?	Generally done well, but occasional problems with idiom and lexis (when you will come in France to do an exchange / for a change ... but ten months ... when I am in a tennis club ...). Some good understanding of 'puisque': 'now that I'm here ..'. 'game' diluted the sense of 'match'. Some inappropriate intonation with 'c'est possible?' - depended upon interlocutor's reading.

B4	Yes, I'm sure we can arrange that. Have you been playing tennis for very long?	First sentence done well; see Test 1 B4 for 2 nd sentence. 'Nous pouvons le faire' not precise enough.
A5	Je viens juste de commencer. C'est mon ancien prof d'éducation physique qui me donne des cours. Il a dit que j'ai fait d'excellents progrès et que je devrais profiter de ma visite pour jouer contre des gens du même niveau que moi.	Variable success. 1st, 3rd & 4th utterances satisfactory, but often 'Physics teacher', and non sequitur from 5th to 6th utterances depending upon version of 'profiter', eg: 'I should make the most of my visit <u>to</u> play ...'. 'contre des gens' often incorrect: 'with young people'. Some stilted versions of 'du même niveau que moi' : 'at the same level as myself'.
B5	It won't be difficult to find someone of your standard. Perhaps I could put your name on the list of people who want to play this week. We have a lot of members because the local school gives tennis lessons. In fact, last weekend, about fifty people played in a competition for teenagers who have just started to play.	A difficult section for many candidates, but done well by the most able. Problems with tense (it won't .. I could ... who want ... people played ...), subject-verb concord (gens qui veut jouer ...environ 50 personnes a joué ... qui vient de commencer ..), verb form (de trouve qqn... qui veulent jouer ... nous avonne l'école donner ...), lexis, p/i and gender (votre standard/nouveau [inability to replicate from A5] ... placer tonne nomme ... le liste ... ce semain ... l'école locaux ... les cors ... la semaine [for 'week-end'] ... cinquan persons ... un compétichion / un conorse ... les jeunes/jans [adolescents/teenagers more precise]), and omission of 'commencer' in the final utterance ; 'qui vient/viennent de jouer'. Transmission was often impeded. But some good versions heard occasionally : une cinquantaine de personnes, un tournoi, qui viennent de commencer à jouer / qui ont juste commencé à jouer.
A6	Ce serait formidable, ça a l'air d'être juste ce qu'il faut pour que j'arrive à améliorer mon jeu. Quand est-ce que tu me diras s'il y a quelqu'un qui veut jouer contre moi ?	Generally done well. Some imprecision (that is just what is needed ... when did you say ... someone who can play with me), and misunderstanding of 'quand', often resulting from absence of elision when read by interlocutor.
B6	I hope I'll be able to tell you tomorrow afternoon.	Often done well: some idiomatic versions: 'j'espère pouvoir te le dire ..'. Some poor p/i : 'je spère / je porrai / je peurai'. Incorrect grammar: 'je tu dira'. Lexis : omission or incorrect tense of 'pouvoir' / l'après-midi (à) demain.

	Test 3 (NB: Note form used occasionally)	(Comments from previous tests not repeated)
A1	Alors, voulez-vous m'expliquer votre idée, s'il vous plaît ? Si j'ai bien compris, vous voulez vendre vos produits en France.	Approachable starter, but some stilted versions : '... explain to me your idea .. if I have understood well ..'. Some incorrect transmission: ' import ... from France'. Word order of 'voulez-vous' inverted by some interlocutors, leading candidates to misinterpret: 'You want to explain your idea to me, please.' 'produce' accepted for 'produits'.
B1	Yes, that's right. We have a small company. We have been making regional specialities for many years. We sell them in local shops, and now we want to sell them in France as well. Can you help us?	Done reasonably well, apart from 3 rd utterance (see test 1, B4). Errors with gender (une petit compagnie ... spécialités régionaux ... magasins locales), lexis and p/i (compagne ... entreprise ... fèzons ... plusieurs [for 'beaucoup'] ... acheter [for 'vendre'] .. nous les vendons <u>aux</u> magasins = failure of transmission). Word order well handled : nous les vendons ... nous voulons les vendre ... pouvez-vous nous aider ?, but some errors with verb forms : on les vende ... pouvez-vous nous aide ?
A2	Ça me semble très original ! Il faut dire que je n'ai jamais vu de produits britanniques dans les marchés français que je connais. Donc, à mon avis ce serait difficile. Vous pourriez me donner plus de détails sur ce que vous espérez faire?	Generally successful. Some incorrect transmission and stilted versions (One must say ... I've never had British products ... the <u>market</u> I know ... markets I know of ... on what you intend to do ...). 'English' accepted, but conditional required for 'serait' in order to convey speculative nature of the transaction. Last two utterances sometimes sounded more like a statement than a question.
B2	Well, what we want to do first of all is to find somebody who would sell our goods in a market in a small French town. To begin with, we could give you some samples, then if people like them, we can send a larger selection later. What do you think?	Done quite well, apart from major problem due to ignorance of 'échantillon': 'exemples' not adequate, but 'exemples de ce que nous fabriquons' transmitted the notion. Some errors with gender and number: notre produit ... une marché ... un petite ville (or vie) français. Some incorrect tenses and verb forms (nous voulions faire ... qui vendra ... nous pourrons vous donner ... si les gens les aimer / aimons) but word order well handled, apart from the common 'une sélection plus grande'.
A3	Eh bien, en principe je n'y suis pas opposé(e) et je serais prêt(e) à collaborer avec vous, mais j'ai beaucoup de questions à vous poser. Par exemple, que ferez-vous pour transporter les marchandises en France ? Est-ce que ce seront des produits frais ? Avez-vous quelque chose à me proposer en ce qui concerne le côté financier?	Variable success. 'would be prepared' required (see A2), but some flexibility with 'ferez-vous' and 'ce seront'. Given the context, ' <u>to</u> France' required for 'en France'. Some good versions, eg 'How will you transport ...?'. Other errors of transmission: proposer = ask, côté = costs. Flawed transmission resulting from some stilted versions: I'm not opposed to it ... collaborate with you ... will the products be fresh ... to propose to me... in what concerns ..

B3	I've got the information you need. A friend who has a house in your area has said he will deliver the goods by car. I don't think it's a good idea to send fresh products the first time. As far as the financial side is concerned, perhaps we can share the profits between us.	Variable success. Many unable to convey 'deliver ..by car', 'the first time', and 'as far as the ... is concerned' (heard at the end of A3), or to use the correct relative pronoun in the first sentence. Change of gender from 'friend' to 'he' ignored. 'habite' not accepted for 'has a house', nor 'quartier/près de chez vous' for 'in your area'. 'dans cette région' = error of transmission. Problems with p/i of 'informations', 'renseignements' and 'idée'. . Errors of appropriateness (je ne pense pas que c'est une bonne idée) and agreement (produits fraîches) did not affect transmission seriously, but 'le premier foie' and 'produits fraises' did. Many candidates able to produce subjunctive in 4th utterance, and versions like 'peut-être que nous pouvons partager les bénéfices entre nous'. Fewer conveyed the notion of a future delivery: 'a dit qu'il livrera/transportera/apportera/amènera/fera la livraison'; 'va/pourra livrer (etc)' accepted. Conditional also appropriate. 'send' sometimes misheard by candidates as 'sell', leading to failure of transmission.
A4	Théoriquement, cela me semble une bonne idée, mais je ne peux pas donner mon accord tout de suite. Si je décidais de travailler avec vous, j'aurais besoin de plus de précisions. Nous devrions organiser une réunion d'affaires pour mettre au point tous les détails - ce que ferait chacun de nous, quel serait le prix de vente de vos produits et comment nous partagerions les bénéfices.	A difficult section ; candidates' success depended to an extent upon appropriate reading by the interlocutor. First sentence generally done quite well, but the many candidates to whom the noun 'accord' exists only in the expression 'd'accord' and means only 'OK' (see also test 4, section A5) produced a familiar version of 'donner mon accord'. 'agreement / consent' accepted. In 2 nd sentence, a correct tense <u>sequence</u> was accepted (if I decided / decide ... I would need / will need); some good versions eg 'if I <u>did</u> decide ...' were heard. Most were able only to produce a literal version of 'précisions': 'precise / exact / specific details / information' was heard from some. The full sense of 'devrions' escaped many, as did the meaning of 'd'affaires' (the title of this topic area), which was commonly omitted altogether, or conveyed somehow with the verb 'to do'. There was mixed success with 'mettre au point' (clarify/sort out/finalise); 'discuss/look at/talk about' not precise enough. Understanding of the final three utterances (especially 'ce que ferait chacun de nous', which defeated many) depended upon the intonation of interlocutor A; interlocutors who read 'ce que' as 'ce qui' led the candidates into transmission error. Alternative word order (what would each of us do ... how would we share ...) accepted, but conditional tense required for full transmission. Full sense of 'prix de vente' often missed, but some good versions (selling/retail price). 'divide/split' accepted for 'patagerions', but 'benefits' for 'bénéfices' disallowed.
B4	After discussing this with you, I realise there are more practical difficulties than I thought. You are right, we can't talk about this now because you have come here to earn money and I am preventing you from selling your products. May I contact you later when the market is closed?	Mixed success. Difficulties with lexis (se rendre compte / plus de / pratique / fermé, but particularly empêcher) and verb forms and tenses impeded communication. 'réaliser/comprendre/voir/se rendre compte' accepted for 'realise', but with the latter the reflexive pronoun and the auxiliary caused problems, and 'j'ai rendu compte' altered the meaning. 'vous êtes correct' disallowed for 'you are right'. 'arrêter' for 'prevent', but not 'prévenir'. Some phrases well handled : après avoir discuté / que je pensais / que j'avais pensé / vous avez raison / nous ne pouvons pas en parler/le discuter / gagner de l'argent / de vendre vos produits / puis-je vous contacter. There were errors of grammar and structure : après discuter le,

		je rende compte, des difficultés plus pratiques (usually the result of reading by interlocutor B) ► non sequitur with 'que je pensais', nous ne pouvons pas le parler, nous ne le parlons pas, vous avez venu, puis-je contacte vous. Present tense in final phrase not accurate but accepted for transmission.
A5	Oui, bien sûr, je vous retrouverai ici en fin d'après-midi.	Many misinterpretations of lexis : I'll find you here in the afternoon. 'You'll find me' accepted as conveying the idea.

	Test 4 (NB: Note form used occasionally)	(Comments from previous tests not repeated)
A1	Alors, pourriez-vous me donner plus de détails sur votre projet, s'il vous plaît ? Vous voulez exporter des produits en France, c'est ça ? Mais il faudra faire vite, car j'ai beaucoup de clients aujourd'hui !	Approachable opening for many candidates. Some stilted lexis (projet = project - idea conveyed but 'plan' better; clients = clients, felt inappropriate for a market, 'customers' better). Some non sequitur with 'il faudra faire vite': 'you'll have to do it quickly' (export goods) contradicts next utterance. 'You'll have to be quick/speak quickly' accepted.
B1`	Yes, of course. Our company makes local specialities which we sell in small shops in this area. Now we want to sell them in France as well. Would you be able to help us?	Generally done well. See test 3, B1.
A2	Comme vous voyez, je suis très occupé(e) en ce moment. Je ferai de mon mieux pour répondre à vos questions, mais ce n'est pas le meilleur moment !	Done well, but some stilted English : ' ... I am very occupied ... respond to your question .. not the best moment'.
B2	Alright, I'll explain my ideas as quickly as possible. Here is a list of the products we make, with descriptions in French. We have been selling them for over thirty years. As you can see, they are completely different from the products that are on sale here. We think that French people are interested in British food, and that they would like to try our goods.	An increase in difficulty, both in lexis (j'explainerai / assez vite que possible / aussi rapide comme possible / ici il y a une liste / en française / 30 = vingt + other numbers / en vent / les gens français / sont intéressants dans / transposition of français and britanniques), in grammar/structure (future of 'expliquer', un liste, usage with 'depuis', forms of 'vendre', de les produits qui nous fêzons, différents de les produits, que sont vendus/qui nous vende, notre produit) and in p/i (idies, anes, s'entressent, que ils aimeraient essaïer). 'that are on sale' could be 'que nous vendons' or 'que vous vendez'. Good and complete transmission achieved only by able candidates.
A3	Je ne crois pas que vous ayez raison sur ce point ! En plus, je n'ai jamais vu de produits britanniques dans les marchés de la région où j'habite. Donc, ce que vous envisagez serait très difficile.	Generally done well. Some misinterpretation of lexis and grammar (have never had French products / the market where I live) and stilted expression (I don't think you have reason / that which you are envisaging). 'What you envisage (doing) / what you plan to do / are thinking of doing' often heard. Notable for mispronunciation by numerous interlocutors of 'ayez' (aïez, sic), often replicated in tests 1 and 2 (pourvu que tu ailles plus de 18 ans). Correct transfer of tense 'serait' required at this point in the discussion.
B3	I didn't realise that. It will probably be very difficult to establish our company in the French market. Actually, I've never been to France but I've been told that a lot of British companies are able to sell	Mixed performance. Good handling of passé composé (je n'ai pas réalisé / je ne suis jamais allé en France / je n'ai jamais visité la France / on m'a dit) but 'je ne me suis pas rendu compte' more hazardous, and 'it will' mostly rendered in the conditional, presumably a hasty repeat of the end of section B3. Lexis of varying quality ; 'difficile / compagnie / société / marché / en fait / britannique / produits' mostly known, but there were errors of various sorts

	their goods there.	(probablement / probablement / établir / actuellement). 'sont capables de vendre' considered inappropriate. 'en France' accepted for 'there', but 'ici' altered the meaning, as did further transposition of 'français' and 'britannique'.
A4	C'est vrai, mais ce sont les marques les plus connues qui réussissent, notamment la mode et les produits de luxe. Mais à mon avis vous perdriez votre temps à essayer de vendre vos produits sur les marchés des petites villes de France.	Mixed performance: some attempts were expressed very well, others were incorrect or unidiomatic. Problems with lexis (marques = marks/markets, la mode = mode/method, de luxe = from Luxembourg, perdre = lose, villes = villages) and more complex detail (les marques <u>les plus</u> connues, conditional sense of 'perdriez', (present and future tenses incorrect at this stage of the conversation) à <u>essayer de</u> vendre [often omitted], transposition of 'petites' = the little markets of France). Some good versions of 'les marques les plus connues qui réussissent, notamment ...' (it's the best-known makes/brands/labels that do well, especially fashion and luxury goods/items...) and 'vous perdriez ..' (you'd be wasting ...), but some stilted phrases (it is the makes the most well known that succeed, notably the fashion ..).
B4	That surprises me, because this market is very successful. People buy goods here that are not well known and can't be found in shops. Could that happen in France too?	Found difficult in whole or in part by most candidates. Main problems were with (a) verbs: surprises = suprende/surprise/éton; buy = acheter; can't be found = ne peut pas trouve; could that happen = ça pourra passe? and (b) relative pronouns: des produits que ne sont pas bien connus et qui on ne trouve pas .../ que ne se trouvent pas ... There were some good versions, eg 'cela m'étonne, car ce marché a beaucoup de succès. Les gens achètent des produits ici qui ne sont pas bien connus et qui ne peuvent pas être trouvés dans les magasins. Est-ce que cela pourrait se passer en France ?'
A5	Cela m'étonnerait, mais si vous insistez, je pourrais discuter de votre projet avec les autres marchands pour voir s'ils seraient prêts à collaborer avec vous. À condition qu'il n'y ait pas de compétition directe avec ce qu'ils vendent eux-mêmes, je crois qu'ils pourraient être d'accord pour vendre vos produits.	Done well by many candidates. Good versions showed appreciation of the tense in 'cela m'étonnerait' (but some idiomatic freer versions were heard too, eg 'I doubt it / I don't think so') and 'pourraient', the meaning of 'ce que' and 'eux-mêmes'; the very best attributed the pronoun 'ils' correctly throughout, and understood the sense of 'être d'accord' in this business context. The less thoughtful offered versions such as 'That surprises me' (an illogical answer to the question asked by B), 'with those who sell the same' [possible mishearing of 'ce que'] and the decidedly ambiguous 'those who sell themselves', 'it would be OK'. To their credit, some realised the latter was incorrect, and backtracked on hearing the final utterance. This section exemplified well the limits of some candidates' understanding of language; most can attribute a sense to individual words but not all can understand overall meaning.
B5	That's very kind of you. Perhaps I could meet you later and you can tell me what they think.	Short but not easy. 'Vous êtes gentil(le)' sufficed, but 'gentile' and 'sympa' were disallowed. 'rencontrer' was accepted along with 'retrouver', but there were problems with the form of the infinitive and the word order: 'peut-être je peux rencontre / recontre / raconter (avec vous)'. The final utterance was of variable quality: either completely correct, or error-ridden: 'vous (or tu) peut ma dit que ils pensent (or vous pensez)'.
A6	D'accord. À plus tard !	Intended as a simple valediction, but some versions turned out to be inappropriate: 'Thank you! Later!'.

A2 Unit 5.1 (6445/01): Topics and Texts

Preamble

In the penultimate year for this paper in this form there were no new prescriptions and there will be none for the rest of the life of this specification. All facets of the paper and its assessment remained as in previous years. This was the second year in which the paper was marked using the e-pen electronic system. A certain number of candidates again ignored the rubric and wrote their two answers in one half of the booklet. The popularity of the topics and texts remained roughly the same, which is probably not surprising as the specification nears the end of its currency. Joffo's *Le sac de billes* attracted most candidates by quite a margin, followed by the prescribed works of Molière and Maupassant. These were in turn followed by the most popular topics, the films of Truffaut and the Occupation in that order. Once again the least number of essays was found on Education and *Le Mode de Vie*. The standard of performance was remarkably similar across all the questions except for Topic 5 *Le Mode de Vie*, where the average mark for essays was significantly lower than on all the others. Amongst the latter the differences in average scores were negligible but, for the record, essays on Camus, Mauriac and Maupassant produced the best marks.

Assessment Principles

Candidates' answers were assessed positively using the published grids. Thirty marks were allotted to the assessment of the Knowledge and Understanding of each topic or text chosen by the candidate, nine marks were available for the Organisation and Development of each essay and six for the quality of the language used to convey the ideas. Candidates were required to write two answers on separate topics or texts and, thus, the paper was marked out of a total of 90 marks. Under the heading of Knowledge and Understanding credit was given for grasp of the implications of the chosen question, relevance, clarity, analytical ability and for evidence of independent judgement. When assessing the Organisation and Development of the answers, examiners looked to reward a clear shape to the essay, control of the material, coherence and a logical development of the argument. The accuracy, range, register and general comprehensibility of the Language were all taken into account but, with only six marks available in this category, subtle differentiation was not possible. Largely irrelevant answers or those showing sketchy knowledge did not score good marks. Answers considered to be totally irrelevant gained no credit but there were only a tiny number of such responses.

Candidates' Responses

Few problems were encountered with the wording of the questions on this year's paper, there did not seem to be any ambiguity or potential for widespread misunderstanding in any of them. In Q1(b) *événements* was not widely taken to mean specific events, which led to some rather general responses. In Q2(a) *aspects culturels* was given a broad interpretation, in some cases it was seen to mean anything which could be said about the region in question. The very small number of candidates who produced an answer to Q5(b) tended to ignore the word *hébergement* and wrote about holidays in general, often with little or no reference to France or the French. Some questions inevitably proved more demanding than others. This was true in the case of the two tasks which required a discussion of realistic elements in the picture of society given (Q4(b) and Q9(b)). Many candidates found it hard to illustrate in these cases. However much guidance is given in the question, it seems that candidates have difficulty with tasks which require them to focus on either the start or the end of a literary work. In such circumstances they tend to write about the whole of the book. Such proved often to be the case this year with Q7(b), Q12(b) and Q13(b). On the other hand, a question which asked for consideration of a specific part of a work, Q8(b) did lead to the required concentration. All questions were, as usual, formulated in such a way as to elicit both factual information and evaluation. It is accepted that it is not possible to achieve complete balance between the two sides of the question but candidates should ensure that both sides are given due treatment. This did not always happen this year. It is perhaps more common for candidates to give more attention to the factual side of the question and to leave themselves little time for an acceptable amount of analysis. This was particularly true in Q1(a), Q4(a) and Q8(b). Sometimes imbalance is found when a candidate gives more prominence to the evaluation. This was often found to be the case this year in Q13(a) and Q11(b). Questions which worked well and brought about a very even treatment were the two alternatives set on Camus and Q7(a), Q9(a) and Q10(b).

In general the paper worked well. Most candidates were able to demonstrate detailed, relevant knowledge and to proceed to use facts to analyse in a reasoned way. As ever, the best essays were those which did not simply make unsubstantiated assertions but rather illustrated the points being made with apposite references to the topic or the text under consideration. The majority of the candidates chose to deal with the factual side of the question first and then to consider the evaluation in the light of the detail which had been given. From the point of view of the organisation of the essay this often gives rise to a straightforward, clear approach. Other candidates chose to intertwine the two strands of the question as they went along. Such a method probably requires a little more skill but is equally legitimate. Examiners noted that most essays had a recognisable shape and a logical way of proceeding. Inevitably some candidates are tempted to digress in a rather irrelevant way and quite a number find it hard to concentrate on the precise terms of a question, others tend to answer a question they would like to have been asked, rather than the one they have chosen from the paper. Very lengthy essays were again often found to be rambling and repetitive. Only a very small number, however, were felt to be totally illogical or incoherent.

The grid which assesses language on this paper has very few marks available and the vast majority of work falls into the middle ground. Almost all essays communicated their message comprehensibly and a pleasing number were written in accurate, fluent, quite sophisticated French in a register entirely commensurate with the task. The verb *décrire* is often used, particularly in the literary section, and this is

frequently conjugated incorrectly. Some candidates still have problems differentiating between *savoir* and *connaître* and a few forget which verbs are conjugated with *être* in compound tenses.

Question 1(a) - This was the slightly less popular of the two options on the Occupation but it was quite well handled by those who chose it. Most candidates had a sound understanding of *le système D* and managed to illustrate its ingenuity with concrete examples. The second part of the question was not quite as successful, as candidates tended to make statements and assertions without demonstrating why people were coping or not. It was generally felt that it was impossible to lead a normal life in wartime circumstances and some saw collaboration as a means of attaining some sort of normality. The most thoughtful responses came to the conclusion that, whilst ingenuity helped, to lead a normal life was difficult, with the best answers exemplifying the hardship experienced by the occupied nation.

Question 1(b)

Candidates may have been guilty here of not reading the question carefully enough for a large number did not pick out the word *événement* as the key element. Many essays described the Resistance in very general terms, speaking of how the Resistance worked, giving details of its actions, its members and its structure or they gave social and economic conditions, such as food shortages, Nazi policies and political views as reasons why people joined the Resistance. Certainly a lack of specific knowledge about 'events' was noticeable. Those who did write about events concentrated on Pétain's call for collaboration and his meeting with Hitler, De Gaulle's radio broadcast, the start of the STO, the occupation of the *zone libre*, and the D-Day landings. A few sensibly included other events, including Hitler's invasion of the USSR, the German defeat at Stalingrad and in North Africa. In the evaluation there was a tendency for some candidates to overstate the role played by De Gaulle's appeal and the Maquis.

Question 2(a)

Responses to this question varied enormously and the phrase *aspects culturels* was widely interpreted. Some candidates wrote anything they could about their region, others wrote predominantly about agriculture, some talked about the weather or the landscape as part of the local culture. Evaluation was often thin, amounting to little more than claims that the region's culture will stay strong. More thoughtful treatments talked of the impact of people moving out of a region and of others moving in, of the effects of television, the Internet and of global generic culture and of the need to entertain tourists.

Question 2(b)

Most candidates were able to write about Industry in the chosen area, even if they could not describe recent changes in this domain very convincingly. The second part of the question, which required candidates to discuss the effects of changes and to reflect on them, was found to be more demanding. In both questions, where the Ile de France was chosen, candidates tended to write only of Paris.

Question 3(a)

This topic did not attract a great number of candidates. *Les années récentes* was a rather vague time interval which allowed candidates a wide interpretation. The introduction of ZEP was commonly seen as the most recent reform, although a few candidates were able to give more recent changes to the system. There were a few very competent answers but most were unfortunately general and unconvincing.

Almost all candidates found it hard to evaluate the success or otherwise of recent reforms.

Question 3(b)

This was the only question on the paper to have the factual and the analytical sides bound together in the formulation *Décrivez et commentez* which has quite often been used in previous sessions. Candidates found it easier to fulfil the first requirement than the second. More informed candidates included changes to the *bac général* in the context of recent reforms in education. In general, few essays produced the detailed analysis about subjects, hours, *épreuves anticipées*, sport etc that many AS candidates can produce for a Unit 3 oral on this subject. Examiners gained the impression, on this question and on the topic in general, that centres may be working with out of date material.

Question 4(a)

This was a popular question. Candidates showed a good knowledge of the two films and of the major male characters. They tended to produce individual character studies of the latter without distilling a common picture of the *héros truffaldien*, which is a prescribed part of the specification. Quite a few omitted the characters' passion for the Arts. The analysis was somewhat limited with many candidates failing to develop beyond simple statements about their likes and dislikes. There were many answers in which it was possible to infer a certain amount of analysis, as a number of candidates seemed content to let it be felt that anything they said in response to the first part represented what they thought in relation to the evaluation section.

Question 4(b)

Candidates seemed to find this question to be the more demanding of the two options. Quite a few talked about the effects of war on society and some dealt with the changing role of women. Many candidates did not separate the two strands of the question, the need to show how society is portrayed in the films and how realistic the films are. There was a tendency to rely on what was known about the films without reflecting carefully about the question and thus candidates often made claims such as that Truffaut shows that love triangles existed at the time. There were relatively few references to specific features of contemporary society. More was usually said about *le dernier métro* than about *Jules et Jim*.

Question 5(a)

There were only a few answers on this topic and once again examiners had the impression that some responses were attempted by candidates who had not actually studied the topic. There were a few excellent, detailed accounts of the state and the role of the cinema in present day France but all too often essays were short, banal explanations of why people commonly go to the cinema which could have applied to anywhere in the developed world. In extreme cases there was no reference to France at all.

Question 5(b)

There were hardly any answers to this question. Most of the essays which were seen wrote of holidays in general with little or no treatment of accommodation in particular. Much of what was said again could have applied to anywhere, very little was specific to France.

Question 6(a)

For the most part, the study of Camus seemed to have been undertaken by some very competent students. This question was generally well answered, essays showed a clear understanding of the two texts. Most candidates gave a succinct description of the two main protagonists which managed to capture the essence of their characters. It was felt that both were engaged in a struggle against conventional society in their respective situations, even if in the case of Meursault it was fairly unwittingly. More sympathy was expressed for Meursault than for Kaliayev.

Question 6(b)

This question also gave rise to some sound answers. Kaliayev's preparations were documented in some detail. Most candidates were of the opinion that Meursault did not plan his murder but some nevertheless chronicled the chance happenings which led up to it, in order to prove that it was unplanned. Candidates showed sympathy for Meursault but were disturbed by the number of shots he fired, most were willing to pardon Kaliayev because he claims to be acting for the Russian people. Quite a lot of essays showed a great deal of independent judgement and there were a few excellent ones which said that both men refuse the possibility of pardon because to accept it would undermine their innermost being. This, it was claimed, makes them seem more sympathetic but not necessarily more pardonable. Some thoughtful candidates also considered the nature of the victims in the assessment. With a small number of essays here, and with the Sartre questions, examiners had the impression that candidates were regurgitating ideas they did not fully understand.

Question 7(a)

This was a popular question and it was well done in many cases. Good detailed knowledge of Azouz's attempts to be more like the French were given, as were the reactions of his fellow gones. There were some good evaluations too. There were many well balanced discussions of whether Azouz is admirable or not. His industry, commitment and perseverance were seen as worthy of our approval but some of his treatment of his parents and some of his dubious actions when he had moved from the Chaâba were less acceptable. The more superficial evaluations tended not to mention his less admirable features. Many essays of varying standards gave an impression of widespread engagement with this text.

Question 7(b)

Many essays managed to give a good description of the Chaâba but these were not always the *premières impressions*, the question explicitly called for a consideration of the first impressions at the very beginning of the story but certainly a large number of essays did not limit themselves to this material. On the other hand there were some quite perceptive accounts of the attitudes of the inhabitants. In spite of the difficult conditions a sense of identity and solidarity was mentioned and many candidates were able to show quite convincingly a progressive change in attitude by those who lived in the Chaâba.

Question 8(a)

Many essays gave a good account of several strands of political thought and actions, as exemplified by a range of characters. However, when they came to assess other interesting aspects of the play, many essays became a little rambling and difficult to follow. Most, however, managed to show that the play is more than just a political tract.

Question 8(b)

Good, detailed knowledge of exactly what happens in this particular scene was evident. The tension between the contrasting characters was usually described but there was less appreciation of the *jeux de scène* and of the actions which add to the suspense. Candidates perhaps perceive of the play more as a work to be read than to be staged.

Question 9(a)

Some detailed knowledge of the text was displayed in answer to this question, although in some essays the Famille Mancelier tended to be limited to Ambroise and sometimes Françoise. Many reasons were found to support the idea that this was an important episode, most focussing on the growing maturity and independence of Jo. There were some other responses which, whilst accepting that the period in the Mancelier household was quite a significant one, expressed the opinion that this was not one of the most important episodes and nominated others which were seen to be of greater consequence. Most candidates mentioned the occasion on which Jo intervened on Ambroise's behalf as a noteworthy one.

Question 9(b)

A few allusions to occupied France were made in answers to this question but in general candidates struggled to illustrate realistic elements. Many essays referred only to very early parts of the book and thus a lot of potential material was missed. In many cases the evaluation was more impressive than the factual knowledge shown. Candidates pointed to the interest of the relationship between the two boys, the passage of Jo to maturity, the idea of loss of innocence and many spoke of the fact that the world was as seen by a young boy with emotional involvement and a very personal approach.

Question 10(a)

Perhaps because the alternative question was very straightforward, there were very few attempts at this question. References to a shallow adherence to religious rites and practices were made and there was mention of religious intolerance in the family's attitude to the Jew, Azévédo. Because of this lack of genuine religious feeling, it was generally felt that *Thérèse Desqueyroux* was not a religious book. A small number of candidates pointed to the religious overtones of Mauriac's short prologue and felt that the novel gave a stark picture of a life and world without God.

Question 10(b)

There were many full answers to this question which showed detailed knowledge of the text and revealed genuine appreciation of the issues raised. Bernard's character was well described with much good illustration. Many reasons were put forward for his failure to relate to his wife. Quite a lot of essays showed a good understanding of the complexity of the relationship between Bernard and Thérèse and by no means all the blame for the breakdown in the relationship was apportioned to Bernard. A large number of candidates showed that they had studied this text carefully and thoroughly.

Question 11(a)

The requirement to narrate and/or to describe using detailed evidence was well handled in both questions on this text. This question in particular allowed candidates to refer to several *contes* with good references to the suffering of Prussians in the nominated category, as well as the French. Candidates felt a lot of solidarity with Boule de Suif but the majority sympathised most with the central characters in *Deux Amis*. Some candidates spent quite a lot of time discussing the 'grands' in various stories but, even as a contrast, this was not particularly relevant.

Question 11(b)

The development of the relationship between la mère Sauvage and the four Prussian soldiers who were billeted on her was quite well documented, although in some cases there could have been a little more precise detail. When candidates came to consider what Maupassant was aiming to show through the five characters, a lot of tenable things were said about la mère Sauvage but, rather surprisingly, the four victims were given only very sketchy treatment.

Question 12(a)

There was quite a range of performance on this question. Most candidates were able to give a description of the two young ladies with varying degrees of detail. Although it was not specifically called for by the question, there were some good attempts to differentiate the characterisation of Elise and Mariane. It was pointed out that one of them suffers from the loss of her mother and the other fears the loss of her mother. When considering the role, most candidates concentrated on the furtherance of the plot. Many underlined their importance in inspiring Valère and Cléante to stand up to Harpagon. There was some mention of the two female characters illustrating themes such as the position of women in society and the relationship between children and parents and some said that they were invaluable in highlighting the character of Harpagon. These various strands were rarely all mentioned in one essay.

Question 12(b)

There were a number of good answers here but candidates often did not start in the right place and did not always summarise the required section effectively. In general, candidates thought that the ending was satisfying but looked at it only from the point of view of the characters. Everyone had what they desired and the ending was a happy one. Few candidates looked at it from the standpoint of the audience, although some perceptive essays discussed the realism of the ending and the unresolved nature of parts of the plot and sub-plots.

Question 13(a)

Overall the answers on *Candide* were rather disappointing. In both questions many candidates failed to give detailed descriptions and accounts in the first part of the task, but indulged in extensive, often repetitive and unclear analysis in the second. In this question very little was said about Martin himself and Candide's journeys and adventures in his company were not dealt with in any great detail and depth. Most candidates simply discussed Martin's pessimism as the antithesis of Pangloss' optimism in answers long on analysis and assertion but short on facts.

Question 13(b)

Many candidates gave lengthy narrations of all parts of the tale other than the ending. In answers which did follow the instructions more carefully accounts of the visit to the dervish and the old Turk were sketchy but the final scene and conclusion were well covered. Quite a few candidates felt that the ending could be interpreted in several ways. It was also quite commonly thought that Candide finally comes to a balanced view somewhere between the extremes which had been shown to him. Examiners had the impression that the text had quite often been read wholly or largely in English which, if true, would be highly regrettable.

Advice and Guidance

At this late stage in the life of this Unit and this Specification it is difficult to say anything new in terms of Advice and Guidance. Overall the work seen this year was very similar to that of earlier sessions and, therefore, what has been said in previous reports remains very valid. Candidates, when they get to the examination room, are no doubt often very keen to embark immediately on their essays on a paper which has obvious time constraints. Nevertheless, they should take a few moments to read the questions carefully, possibly highlighting any key words. A short plan in French may well help the eventual writing of the essay. Candidates should make sure they are fully aware of the two sides of the question which should then both be addressed to produce a balanced and relevant answer. If asked to consider a particular feature or part of any topic or text, they should try to remain focussed on that aspect and not digress into other areas which they may know well but which are not pertinent to the task in hand. Essays are never particularly impressive if they consist merely of unsubstantiated claims and assertions. Such opinions must always be backed up with clear and accurate references to the text or topic. In the case of the former, references do not have to be in the form of direct quotations. If these are short, accurate and apt, they can be a good example of useful references. Long, inappropriate quotations which have been learned off to fit into any essay rarely serve any useful purpose.

A2 Unit 5.2 6445/02 - Coursework

(Page numbers refer to Edexcel Advanced GCE in French Coursework Guide - First Examination 2002, Issue 2, October 2003).

Preamble

Candidates were required to produce two pieces of coursework, one of 450-500 words and one of 900-1000 words of French, on two clearly distinct topics firmly rooted in the life and/or culture of a French-speaking country. As before, candidates properly supported by their teachers and schooled in the necessary techniques tended to produce good coursework (see page 4, The Role of the Teacher and page 16, Management of coursework). In centres where commitment to the option was lukewarm or where Edexcel's requirements for coursework had not been absorbed, the work tended to score lower marks. Most of the work was rooted in a target-language country (page 5), but there were still some general treatments. Most subjects were suitable, but some teachers could have taken greater note of page 8, Unsuitable Topics, especially 1, 2, 5 and 7. There is no additional tolerance for length beyond the word limits specified above. Work that does not respect those limits should be treated as per page 22, Long and Short work.

Application of Mark Schemes

Each piece of work was assessed out of a total of 45 marks, using the principles and the mark grids given on pages 19-21. The mark for the long essay was doubled, giving a total of 135 for the paper. Much of the marking was realistic and within tolerance. The grids for Organisation and Development and Language continued to produce better standardisation; however, a number of marks for Knowledge and Understanding were too high. Unrealistic marking resulted in the doubling of any reduction applied by the moderator in essay 2 when the final total was calculated. Reasons for mark reductions included: unsuitable subjects, unfocused titles and essays, thinly-resourced pieces, use of English source material, excessive credit awarded for sheer volume of study, absence of analysis and/or argument, insufficient use of evidence and source materials. Unsubstantiated personal feelings about a topic were often credited as "analysis" or "independent judgement". In some centres candidates seemed to have received credit for the insertion of quotations irrespective of the use made of them. Some pieces with no coherent structure, or with an essentially simple sequence based on chronology, were overmarked for Organisation and Development of material.

Candidates' Responses

A range of achievement was represented. Compared with previous years, there were fewer truly excellent pieces, but also fewer candidates who were out of their depth. Much of the work was pleasing to read because it showed evidence of individual research and reflection, and conveyed the candidates' enthusiasm for their subject. In contrast, there were a number of undemanding factual essays, or unimaginative treatments of universal themes such as obesity or euthanasia with passing or specious reference to the TL context.

The most popular format was the discursive essay, followed by literary topics, then creative writing. The phrasing of titles for discursive and literary essays did not always encourage an evaluative/analytical approach. The usefulness of the plans varied. The range and suitability of the bibliographies was not uniform either; some were unsatisfactory, particularly with regard to the reliance on English source material and, for the Long Essay, the lack of a TL book.

Candidates should be aware that coursework is a demanding academic and intellectual exercise. To produce good coursework, they must: work in consultation with their teachers; acquire the skills peculiar to coursework (see the section "Coursework Skills" below); choose challenging topics; research them thoroughly; select and discard material as appropriate; understand the key issues; reflect upon them; use their material to illustrate an argument or a creative development; reach a sustainable conclusion derived from the material. The degree of the candidates' interest and engagement depended upon the extent to which their choice of topic was genuinely personal; individual response to the material tended to produce better work. This was often the case with literary and creative pieces and with new or demanding angles on established topics. Candidates who settled for factual treatments of perennial topics tended not to produce purposeful and analytical essays. See also page 9, "Treatment of topics" and "Creative writing as coursework".

In most cases the balance in demand and scope between the short and the long essay was appropriate, although a number of candidates' titles for the short essay were too broad in scope. Provided that suitable fields of study and tightly-focused titles were chosen, and the advice on page 6 was followed, it was perfectly possible for candidates to produce interesting analytical treatments of a theme within 450-500 words. It is intended that the short essay be done first, both to enable the candidates to benefit from a staged development, and to allow feedback before the writing of the long essay. The majority of centres adopted this approach. Where this was not the case, it seemed to the moderators that the candidates had been deprived of one of the benefits of the scheme. However, teachers are entitled to reach their own decision on this matter. The two essays should be clearly distinguished on the candidate record card.

Titles

With both the long and the short essay, two crucial but often neglected aspects of preparation - the wording of the title (page 10) and the plan (page 14-15) - governed the candidates' chances of writing a good essay. Titles modelled on the examples given on pages 10-13 were more likely to lead to successful essays. They should be expressed succinctly in correct French which gives a clear idea of the purpose of the essay. Unclear, unfocused or rambling titles led to aimless essays with no clear direction (see page 6, "Evaluation/interpretive skills", and page 9, "Coursework topic titles"). It is permissible for teachers to correct titles.

Titles couched as questions tended to be the most helpful to candidates. Those prefaced "Dans quelle mesure ...?" or "Jusqu'à quel point ..?" had the best chance of success, always provided the evaluation implied by these phrases was carried out. Where titles were flawed, likely reasons were: they defined only the overall topic area rather than the angle of enquiry; they were convoluted and tried to define the whole content of the essay, leaving the main focus unclear; they encouraged departures from the TL context; they were closed, leaving no scope for argument or exploration; they encouraged personal opinion and debate, rather than objective

analysis and reasoned evaluation, they were based on a false premise; they were narrative or anecdotal. Candidates should ensure that the content of the essay is relevant to and addresses the title. It is essential that candidates understand the sense of key terminology in the TL context, eg "la delinquance", "un delit", "la banlieue", "l'intégration", "les immigrés", "les SDF", "la laïcité".

Plans

Examples of good practice were seen, but generally the quality of the plans, agreed by teachers, has not improved. In some centres little regard seemed to be given to this part of the process, which meant that the opportunity for teachers to assist in the preparation of a good essay was squandered. Too often the document was simply an index or a synopsis, content-specific rather than directional, lacking in conceptual development, and ending with a meaningless heading such as "Conclusion", "Mon opinion personnelle" or "L'avenir" with no elaboration. Some plans had clearly been written after the essay and consisted only of sentences taken from the essay. The moderators consider this to be short-sighted: the effort devoted to the design of a good plan, showing clear conceptual development, which is then followed, will be repaid in terms of the quality of the essay and argument and consequently, the marks awarded.

The moderators believe that many candidates had no awareness of the purpose of the plan as the driving force behind the essay. They needed to appreciate the impact of a good (or a poor) plan on their essays, and to understand the notion of "conceptual development". A structured and organised piece of work does not necessarily show conceptual development. The "conclusion" tended to be the part of the plan which was least helpful to the candidate and to the reader. It should be presented in detail, and should draw together the threads of the essay, leading to a "prise de position" based on the material. Any analysis present should not be reserved until this stage of the essay. In the event, it was usually nothing more than the final paragraph of the essay, in which the candidate offered a subjective and unsupported reaction to the issue. This tended to say more about the candidate than about the topic.

Examples of plans, with comments, can be found on pages 14-15, 27, 32, 38, 43 and 49.

The Standard of the Work

Most candidates were able to demonstrate **knowledge** of a suitable and relevant topic, but only those who showed **understanding** were able to access the higher mark ranges; these candidates were able to undertake analysis and criticism. The best work was produced where candidates had chosen a clear and succinct title which implied that an enquiry would be undertaken, and where a reasoned conclusion was reached based upon the material adduced. Such pieces were effective because the candidates had understood their sources, made reference to them in the work, (eg by using footnotes) and were prepared to take a critical view of them. Candidates who were prepared to research and consider contrasting views of an issue, to question the commonplace, to probe beneath the surface, to be sceptical, to challenge biased opinions and in conclusion to address such terms as "Dans quelle mesure ..." were more likely to merit the higher mark ranges.

All too often, however, it seemed that the source material had not been understood but simply incorporated uncritically into the essay. Candidates who have not assimilated their material are unlikely to be able to reflect about it; they may well demonstrate knowledge of their theme, but not understanding (see mark grid, page 19). The result was often a collection of facts about a topic, to be used at all costs with no apparent thought about sequencing or about the real significance of the material. Many were prepared to accept without question that the unemployed will inevitably become homeless, that “la semaine de 35 heures” means that nobody works more than 35 hours, that “le foulard islamique” equates only with repression, that the causes of the recent “émeutes” are solely down to racism and integration problems, that excessive youth drinking results only from childhood trauma, that failure at school leads inevitably to a life of crime, that legislation on any problem automatically resolves it. Broad conclusions tended to be drawn from isolated examples. Candidates do not need to explain their choice of subject; this merely consumes valuable words, especially in the short essay, and is impossible to assess according to the criteria. “Independent judgement” should consist of the candidates’ own critical comment upon the material, woven into the text rather than as a separate final personalised paragraph. Reproducing critics’ ideas or restating other people’s “prise de position” or making extensive use of quotes in order to state points cannot be credited with a high degree of independent judgement or analysis. A subjective or emotional addendum about the issue in general, ie a form of “personal response”, is not “analysis in depth”. The mere pronouncement of an opinion does not suffice; it must be supported by evidence.

Coursework Skills

Coursework is a demanding option for which training is needed.

(i) Candidates need to devote more thought to the **overall structure and coherence** of their work; many essays comprised lists of facts showing no purposeful sequencing and no overall thread. Some essays presented facts in the first section, leaving the analytical element for the latter part. The essay should be viewed as a cohesive whole in which the candidate provides knowledge but also undertakes argument throughout. It is a great advantage if students are convinced about what they are doing and can reach reasoned conclusions of their own. At the outset they could ask themselves what they are trying to achieve or argue in the essay, and how best to use their material in the process. They need an enquiring, sceptical frame of mind. They should ensure that the title is addressed.

(ii) Not only must students learn the obvious **techniques** of introducing and concluding, they also need to acquire the skills of sequencing their points effectively, of expressing an analytical or critical examination of an issue, and of making explicit the relationships between different paragraphs or sections. The best candidates possessed more refined skills, eg methods of attribution, stating clearly the purpose of a paragraph and developing balanced points within it, reaching interim conclusions and synthesising them in the conclusion. These candidates made effective use of a variety of “mots de liaison”.

(iii) The moderators were pleased to note the good **quality of the French** in many candidates’ work, but it must be said that meaning was sometimes obscured by inaccurate or unclear language. Accuracy of basic grammar and use of tenses (apart from the pluperfect) were generally good, but more checking could be done of endings and genders, eg “le/la voile”, “les Français/Françaises”. More thought could have been given to improving idiom and widening range through the correct and

judicious use of relative pronouns, reflexive verbs, the passive voice and variations of word order and subordination; candidates could be encouraged to use sophisticated language in order better to express sophisticated ideas. Candidates could have shown better mastery of the language of speculation, and of syntax generally. Without the more complex tenses such as the pluperfect and the conditional perfect, or a range of conjunctions, analysis and evaluation cannot be adequately conveyed. The language of a few candidates suffered from excessively literal translations and where candidates had not worked with target-language materials, the French tended to be awkward and anglicised, with key terminology not known.

(iv) The moderators also expressed continuing worries about lack of **attribution** or convincing use of source materials in the essays. The general criteria for Knowledge and Understanding (page 19) include "ability to use evidence and source material" and the mark grid (page 19) includes phrases such as "ability to analyse and use evidence and source material". Candidates must attribute any quotations they use, and should show in some way how they have used other evidence and source material. Whilst footnotes are not required, they are a simple device for referring to sources and one which makes any piece of work more authoritative and readable. Footnotes are not included in the word count and can therefore be used to provide background information. High marks should not be awarded where candidates make assertions which they do not or can not support by reference to a source. Illustrative material such as graphs, statistical tables or photographs should lead to the drawing of conclusions rather than the simple re-stating of their contents. The less the candidates referred to their sources, the more the treatment of the topic tended to be generalised. Weaker candidates tended to take an uncritical view of their material. It was clear that some lists of sources had a merely cosmetic role. It is not necessary to list dictionaries, text books and grammar reference works.

Choice of Topic

The vast majority concerned metropolitan France, with a fair number focusing on Francophone countries in West Africa, eg La Côte-d'Ivoire, Le Sénégal and on L'Algérie.

When choosing their topics, candidates should not be guided simply by a personal affinity for a subject. Strong feelings about issues like pollution, social justice, euthanasia, the death penalty, hunting, fairness and unfairness, moral right or wrong are not necessarily a good foundation for coursework. Before proceeding to study such issues, candidates should consider the availability of resources and the possibilities for an objective, evaluative approach to a question.

Perennially popular socio-political topics were much in evidence again - immigration; education, violence in schools; health issues; crime; youth issues; sources of energy and their effect on the environment; pollution; unemployment; homelessness; drugs; the family, marriage and divorce; religion; transport; Corsica; science and technology, including ethical dilemmas; mai 68; tourism and holidays; the role of women; les banlieues; sport; antisemitism; the "Loi Evin"; Médecins sans Frontières, "Les Restos du Coeur". It must be stressed that these and other enduring subjects studied for coursework (eg unemployment, les SDF, La Loi Evin, violence in the banlieues, the health system) need to be re-examined periodically in the light of events, and the source materials updated; otherwise they risk becoming hackneyed, outdated and ossified. Recent events which have lost some or all of their topicality were less in evidence, eg La Canicule de 2003, the 2002 elections; "les 35 heures". Candidates who chose these rarely rose above narrative, and often struggled to

demonstrate the lasting impact of the topics.

The most popular authors were again Camus, Sartre, Voltaire, Pagnol, Molière, St-Exupéry, Baudelaire, Racine, Zola, Begag, Maupassant, Mauriac, Ionesco and Joffo. This year some very challenging studies of authors or their works were presented and there were again some in-depth pieces on the concepts of "l'existentialisme" and "l'absurde" as well as "l'optimisme" in *Candide*. The moderators reported that Edexcel's requirements concerning literary coursework seem now to be better understood, although some candidates suffered from too narrow a focus in their pieces or from insubstantial research. It was clear that many centres had insisted that their candidates read widely, including works of criticism, and that they refer to more than just one book, but a number of candidates did not show the necessary wider reading. Some bibliographies were limited to the book or books studied and were therefore inadequate; film versions of the novels do not contribute to extensive and wider research. In some cases, many candidates submitting essays on the same works or authors showed little independent and personal research and there was similarity in analysis or illustration of points across the different pieces. Better candidates rose above narration of plot or pure character study, exploring instead how different authors depicted similar themes, how comedy or tragedy were used or how concepts such as existentialism, optimism or didacticism was represented in a series of works by one or two authors. Some essays explored how an author's life was reflected in his or her works; it was felt there was a tendency towards conjecture and towards artificially forcing material to fit the question.

Of the cultural themes, the cinema, painting, French music, both contemporary and classical and the fate of the French language were the most popular. Historical topics continued to be popular, especially the Revolution, de Gaulle, Pétain, World War II, Resistance and Occupation, Algeria, Marie Antoinette and Napoléon. Those that rose above a narrative treatment and did not rely too heavily on reported opinion were generally done well and those that explored an original aspect of the topic did very well.

Many candidates profited from the freedom allowed in the scheme to study highly topical or recent issues or personalities, eg the recent elections, Chirac's legacy, Sarkozy, the impact of the law banning smoking, "la réforme du BAC", the current concerns in the wine industry, DNA testing for immigrants, "Le Vélib", "les regimes spéciaux de retraite", and the new hours in French primary schools. These enjoyed a greater or lesser degree of success depending upon the resources available and the candidates' understanding of the whole scope of an issue. For example, although more candidates demonstrated an understanding of the peculiarly French notion of "laïcité", some still approached the question from an anglo-centric point of view and few analysed the current issue from different perspectives. Usually it was presented in simplistic and subjective terms of right or wrong / fairness or unfairness and candidates sometimes assumed that the concept of "laïcité" equated with being anti Muslim. Essays on the impact of the new anti-smoking law often simply recounted previous laws or made assertions about French cafés and their loss of mystique and suffered from a partial understanding of the full present-day context. Better essays on this topic focussed on whether the law was successful in terms of achieving its desired aims or was being successfully enforced in the current context and climate. Essays on Sarkozy tended to focus particularly on his media image, which led in some instances to generalised debate on whether a politician's private life should be exposed, with little reference to the specific Target Language context. Few essays on Sarkozy explored his political impact so far. Successful essays on his popularity considered his political influence as well as his media image. Successful essays on the

impact of the Vélib moved beyond mere description and fact or general assertions about the benefits of cycling and provided a balanced assessment of its potential. Treatments of “les 35 heures” or “le CPE” and the response to them tended to be better researched and more objectively evaluated as long as candidates were fully informed of the latest available developments. Some of the essays unsuccessfully used works of fiction such as films and novels as concrete evidence of facts and events, for example in essays on the “émeutes” and inner city tensions, where “La Haine” was used.

There were a few original topics, such as “Dans quelle mesure Bruxelles est-elle un obstacle face à la scission de la Belgique?”, “Le film de Molière: vérité littéraire ou littéraire?”, “Dans quelle mesure Manon Roland a-t-elle été exécutée pour ses idées politiques?”, “Dans quelle mesure la France a-t-elle besoin d’une Sixième République?” although these were less in evidence compared to previous years.

Creative writing tended to be done well in accordance with the requirements (page 9). Diaries, letters and debates were popular formats, eg, “Journal intime d’un membre de la Résistance en France” or “Je suis sans papiers en France et ma vie est un enfer”. There were some excellent creative essays, such as, for example, “Lettre au journal Le Parisien concernant le réforme des régimes spéciaux” which managed to successfully and plausibly use the source material studied in an evaluative way beyond mere reproduction of fact. There were a number of instances of creative pieces based on literary texts this year, mostly in the form of a diary or letter, a template more suited to the shorter essay. The more successful ones did not simply recount the story, but managed to both show a good understanding of the character and write in a plausible tone. Candidates must be aware that the creative option, like any other, must demonstrate a firm basis in TL source material, with reference to sources. Some creative pieces did not take full advantage of the opportunities to show a manipulation of source material, with the result that there was a tendency to show knowledge rather than understanding. Some of the creative pieces also lacked plausibility of language and tone.

There were some undemanding studies, for example of French football, fashion, Coco Chanel, Edith Piaf, Brigitte Bardot, “l’immigration” or “le droit des femmes” where these consisted of a historical recount; and some general titles such as “l’obésité”, “la peine de mort”, “l’anorexie”, “l’euthanasie”, “le tabagisme”, “le végétarisme” or “la constitution Européenne” which, though referring to France in the title, tended to digress from the target language culture and encourage over-personalised responses.

Duplication

See page 5. Teachers should not approve choices where there is any doubt that the two essays focus on completely different topics. In some cases the overlap is obvious, eg two essays about the works of Camus, the films of Jeunet, two transport issues (Concorde/TGV). In others it is less so, e.g. two essays on different aspects of pollution (La pollution de l’air à Paris / La marée noire) or health issues (diet/obesity). Candidates must not be allowed to use the same bibliography for both essays. In cases of blatant overlap, moderators will reduce content marks commensurate with the degree of duplication.

It is also reminded that candidates should not closely share source material or collaborate on essays with identical or similar titles.

Layout and Presentation

The moderators commented again upon the generally high standard of presentation of coursework and the associated documentation by candidates and teachers (pages 3 and 16). Some teachers could have taken more care over the addition of marks or the accurate transfer of these to the OPTEMS. Unfortunately, it has to be said that there was still a few poorly-presented pieces. Candidates who submit no checklist (page 74) or a fictitious one are doing themselves a disservice. Those who casually tick all the boxes are in effect ignoring the guidance given. It is recommended that candidates be familiarised with the checklist before doing their work rather than afterwards. The inclusion of an accurate and complete Title Page for each essay is essential (page 76); without it, the essay cannot be identified once the moderator removes the record card. Several pieces lacked clear or accurate identification of word length. It should be noted, as regards word count, that only quotes and footnotes can be discounted and that proper nouns and numbers should form part of the final count.

Bibliographies and source materials (see page 15)

As in 2007, the moderators reported on the reducing demands some teachers are placing on their candidates in terms of breadth of study. Bibliographies for the long essay seemed to be increasingly limited. Some literary studies and film studies were not supported by the required wider reading. A worrying number of candidates had undertaken coursework with inadequate resources at their disposal. Candidates whose work was based on nothing more than a few newspaper articles, their A-level course book or ill-defined material from the Internet produced superficial work. Bibliographical references such as "college dossier", "fiches du prof", "l'Internet" or "google.fr" are not adequate. In many instances, there appeared to be a lack of discernment in the use of sources, with weight being given to blog material and other biased web sites. Some bibliographies on the surface appeared to have a broad range, but it became clear in the essay itself that only one or two sources had actually been used and some bibliographies included items, most commonly a book for essay 2, that were then never referred to or used in the essay itself. Nevertheless, there were many detailed, relevant and well-presented source lists. Candidates should not be allowed to use as reference material within their coursework sources originally in languages other than French. Source materials should be as up to date as possible, depending upon the topics. See page 3 for the amount of definition required. Study of an unsatisfactory bibliography for Essay 2 should be reflected in the marks for use of evidence and source material.

The Internet

The concern expressed in the 2007 report seems to have gone unheeded; indeed, websites represented an even bigger proportion of the sources used. Whilst articles from the Internet are recommended as source material for the short essay (page 7, no 8), they must be regarded as secondary sources for the long essay, for which extensive reading from a number of sources is required, the equivalent of one substantial TL book plus other sources (page 7, essay 2). Many candidates were allowed to prepare Essay 2 on the basis of study only of Internet material, often quite inadequately defined, originally in English, or impossible to trace. Moderators also noted candidates' extensive reliance on "wikipedia", quite often exclusively so, without questioning the validity of the material and resulting in limited breadth of

research. Where bibliographies dominated by Internet sources do not meet the specification requirements, the centre should reflect this in its marks. If necessary, moderators will adjust marks to take account of this. The moderators are now seriously concerned by the reduction in candidates' reading of TL books, and in the type and range of material being studied. It is feared that the status of coursework is being eroded.

Plagiarism

While not as widespread as in 2007, plagiarism continues to threaten the integrity and existence of coursework. Blatant unattributed copying from sources was still evident. In most cases, the teacher had authenticated the work in contradiction of the declaration on the record sheet. Candidates must understand what constitutes plagiarism (page 22) and be warned about the consequences, which range from proportionate reduction in marks to complete disqualification from the coursework unit, i.e. they cannot obtain an A-level French qualification. University places may well be at risk. Teachers need to supervise the activities of their candidates closely, and to follow the advice given in the 2003 report: "Teachers are advised to have sight of all source materials used by their candidates and to instruct them only to use materials produced and listed in the bibliography." Teachers must report to Edexcel any suspected malpractice, and should not sign the candidate Record Sheet in cases of doubt.

The role of the teacher

This is resumed on pages 4 and 16. There is also a requirement to complete the associated paperwork, to take part in internal moderation, and to provide comments upon the marking. Many teachers ignored this last requirement, which conveyed the impression that the marking of the work had been cursory; indeed many pieces were submitted without a single inscription or comment from the teacher. On the other hand, it should be noted that no inscriptions should be made in the body of the script (see page 22). The opportunity to provide the candidates with useful feedback after the first essay seemed often to have been lost. It was noticeable that teachers who had marked the work as required (page 22), giving detailed marginal comments throughout the essay about strengths and weaknesses, were those whose marks were the most accurate and the least likely to be adjusted. Less detailed marking often led to unrealistic interpretation of the criteria for assessment, especially on the Knowledge and Understanding grid. The various forms devised by centres for recording marks and comments were much appreciated by the moderators.

Edexcel coursework does give students and teachers considerable freedom to choose topics and working methods. The corollary of this for the teacher is increased responsibility. Coursework should not be taken on lightly or seen as a non-examined version of Module 5.1 in which the teacher plays a passive role. Candidates should not be left to their own devices; it is not satisfactory to expect or allow candidates to "work independently". Teachers should play an active part in advising candidates on the suitability of topics, not only in terms of the TL country and of good taste, but also in terms of the intellectual demands of this examination (page 2). The teacher also has an active part to play in supervising the research and planning phases of the work. The section "Subsequent work" (page 15) defines clearly the limit on teacher involvement, in particular that any re-drafting of work must be done on the candidates' initiative; page 17 makes it clear that the submission of trial essays is not

allowed, and that once submitted, the work cannot be amended, abridged, edited or altered in any way.

Notes for Guidance

1. Coursework is not necessarily a wise option for all centres and all candidates.
2. Close study of the new Coursework Guide for Edexcel Advanced GCE in French, first examination 2004, is essential. Attendance at the relevant INSET meetings would be useful. This and earlier subject reports provide much relevant guidance.
3. Centres should take account of the feedback given by their moderator on the U9 form. This is intended to provide confirmation of good practice and useful pointers for improvement, where necessary.
4. Students need gradually to develop the skills required for the production of good coursework (see above, Coursework Skills)
5. Students should be encouraged to reach their own conclusions based on material, and to justify them logically.
6. Teachers should take an active and critical role in candidates' choice of topic, and in the planning of the work.
7. Bibliographies must satisfy the specification requirements.
8. Teachers and candidates should ensure that the work is firmly rooted in the life/society/culture of a TL country. Europe-wide treatments must be avoided.
9. The importance of a good title and plan should be stressed.
10. Candidates should treat the checklist seriously.

A2 Unit 6a (6446/01): Listening and Writing

Preamble

Over 6500 candidates sat this Unit. The paper retained its style from recent sessions, and most candidates completed the paper in the allocated forty-five minutes, producing a wide variety of achievement, thus indicating that the Unit differentiated well. Where candidates appeared to run out of time, lifting from passage 1 abounded, and wholesale translations or transcriptions of passage 2 had often been attempted. Subsequently, untargeted responses were clearly time-consuming, but yielded relatively few marks. The paper, as ever, comprised two passages, totalling just over four minutes, which dealt with how flying doctors assist in remote locations, and the role and evolution of an international medical organisation founded by Didier Carne. In Q1, candidates were required to respond to eight target-language questions in French. In Q2, six bullet points guided candidates to transfer the meaning from the target language passage into a structured English summary, in no more than 100 words of continuous prose.

Assessment Principles

In Q1, as in previous sessions, 15 marks were available, this time in response to eight target-language comprehension questions, which ranged in value from 1 to 3 marks. In order to gain credit, responses had to target the information sought by the questions. Therefore, lifted sections could be rewarded, but only if focused or appropriately manipulated. However, lifted answers, where the tense or the viewpoint adopted in the response were illogical or oblique with regard to the question, could not score. These principles will be exemplified in the part by part analysis below. As in previous sessions, examiners assessed responses in the order of their presentation, and only considered as many elements, as marks available. Thus, in answer to a question worth 1 mark, only the first element of the response was considered. This principle was applied throughout Q1. Preambles or reworking of the question were not treated as elements. Harmless additions were tolerated, but incorrect additions which vitiated the response, led to no credit being given. So that candidates accessed as much credit as possible, marks were awarded discretely where a given part was worth 2 or 3 marks. This advantaged candidates, since it prevented a 2 mark part from being worth 0 or 2, but not 1 mark. Words in English in Q1 could not be credited. Similarly, misspellings in French which constituted another word were ambiguous, and did not score. In Q1, there were a number of alarming grammatical errors which were widespread: major problems of grammar were correct gender of common nouns such as *le population, la niveau*; agreement of adjectives: *les soins médicale* with which candidates escape penalty-free. Many common verb and tense forms were inaccurate, though tolerated: *il permis, ils benefice*, as were possessive and demonstrative adjectives: *cette endroits, sa besoins*.

Q2 was worth 20 marks in total: up to 15 marks were available for the contents of the summary, and a further 5 marks were available for the quality of grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS). The two grids published in the Specification were used. In Q2, candidates had to gain at least 1 mark for their summary skills, in order for GPS to be credited, and *vice versa*. In counting words, examiners considered responses in Q2 up to the end of the sense group after 100 words. As it was foreseen that many candidates would refer to *International SOS*, and would quote or translate *the whole world is your waiting room*, these concepts, along with proper nouns, each counted as a single word.

Candidates' responses

Question 1

Q1a: This part was among the most successful, with many candidates gaining the 2 available marks. Recognisable and unambiguous spellings of *catastrophe*, *guerre* and *épidémie* scored. *Guère* vitiated, as an ambiguous French spelling. There needed to be an indication of *s'il y avait...* or equivalent, and a wide range of clumsy or marginal alternatives were accepted: *dans les guerres*, *pendant les épidémies*, *pour les catastrophes*. If there were no such indication, 1 mark was withheld. Faulty passive attempts, in contrast to the AS units, were rejected in this A2 unit: *les pays toucher par les guerres* did not gain credit. *Toucher* for *touché* was rejected, as it is a verb form when an adjectival form is needed.

Q1b: This part was also largely successful, and required the notion of *les endroits isolés* or *partout dans le monde* to be communicated. *Étranger*, *loin (de Paris)* and *vite* did not suffice, as isolation was not explicit in these offerings. Spelling affected a number of candidates: *communité* was considered to be too close to the English; *access* is English. *Accèss* was just creditworthy due to its accent and consequently attempted French spelling. *Il y a de plus en plus de tourisme par travers le monde* was often offered, but did not target the question.

Q1c: This part drew many blanks from some, and untargeted lifts, even when examiners were as indulgent as possible in seeking the ideas of care for workers in isolated places. The 2 marks were on offer discretely. *Certaines entreprises se sont installées dans les endroits isolés* gained no marks, though it was frequently offered and appears to include the isolated notion: as a whole, the statement is true, but completely untargeted. Like *toucher*, *isoler* was not deemed an acceptable adjectival form. *Loin de Paris* was not sufficient to indicate isolation. The English spelling *enterprises* occurred sometimes, despite the correctly spelt French word appearing in the question. *Les jeunes* for *les gens* was offered in some cases. Candidates gained both marks when they successfully manipulated the information to the demands of the question.

Q1d: This part was also marked discretely. The then and now distinction proved generally accessible, but its rendition differentiated between candidates who transcribed what they had heard without great consideration; and those who took account of the grammatical and syntactical context. A long list, if grammatically accurate enough, in line with the marking principles above, gained both marks. The first element needed either a past tense, or an equivalent tense marker: *avant*, *autrefois*. *Expatrier*, *communauté*, *voyager* and *bénéficier* were all frequent causes of lost marks, as they were too far from the correct spelling, or resulted in a change of part of speech. *Ne...que* was attempted, sometimes vitiating: *ils n'aident que les voyageurs*, *ils aident toute la communauté*. Mention of *l'environnement* misled a number of candidates into believing that the environment, in an ecological sense, not the context of the whole community, was at issue. Information from the passage was sometimes erroneously inserted, and vitiating: *les entreprises bénéficient la communauté avec les pipelines pour le pétrole*.

Q1e: The vast majority of candidates cited the correct information in this part. Unfortunately, some carpet-bombed with all the information they had heard and ran out of elements by including references to *les pipelines* as the first element; others lost 1 mark through the English spelling *petrol*. *Cherche* was tolerated in all its existent forms, including the inelegant *chercher pour* construction. *La cherche* or *la recherche* was rejected as the wrong part of speech. References to the purpose of finding, rather than looking for scored: *pour trouver le pétrole*. *L'essence* was an unsuccessful alternative for *le pétrole* from some candidates.

Q1f: Discrete marking once again enabled many candidates to access 1 mark for the comparison idea: *le niveau de santé est inférieur*, scoring 1 mark, was frequently offered for *le niveau de soin est inférieur*. Examiners accepted even the most implicit of contrasts: *les services de santé sont différents que les excellents services occidentaux en France* gained 2 marks. Illogical responses were not uncommon, and sacrificed credit: *les Français n'ont pas les mêmes soins que les Français* or *les expatriés n'ont pas d'accès au niveau de soin en France, ils ont un niveau occidental*. *le(s) même(s)* without embellishment could not score, as it was not clear whether the level of care was better or worse in Metropolitan France.

Q1g: This was a very well answered question part, and many candidates gained the 1 available mark. Either economic or health benefit scored. *Ils bénéficient économique* did not suffice to communicate. *Economic* as not uncommon, and did not pass muster. However, the laconic *économiquement* targeted the question better, and did score. Credit was often lost due to the non-existent *bénéficier* and its variant being offered as a verb form. References to crude oil or pipelines were sometimes erroneously made, and ran several candidates out of elements. *Meilleur* or equivalent was needed as an adjective to show the comparison. No comparison caused loss of the mark. *La santé plus mieux* or *plus bon(ne)* were not close enough to communicate.

Q1h: With 3 marks on offer, discrete marking advantaged candidates greatly. Most candidates gained some credit in this part, even when comprehension was apparently marginal. Thus *qui correspond à leurs besoins* gained 1 mark, even when *leurs* was not clearly explained elsewhere in the response. Frequent errors included the failure to mention *local* with regard to the population, *fonctionner* for *fonctionner*, and the notion that the French expatriates continued to run the medical centre. Untargeted lifts wasted elements and often lost marks through illogical or incomprehensible attempts to transcribe sometimes extended sections of the passage: *il correspond alors besoin, de fair fonctionner pour eu meme. il corresponde* was an acceptable element of an answer, as the form is existent, but attempts to conjugate *correspondre* as an -er verb were rejected. *Leurs besoins* was sometimes presented ambiguously, so did not always score: *les entreprises ont des centres médicaux qui correspond à leurs besoins*.

Question 2

This question yielded very wide performances. There were few candidates at the extremes of the spectrum, with very few candidates failing to gain some credit, perhaps helped by a number of straightforward details available. Very few instances were reported of summaries entirely in French. The issue of word limit was, as in June 2007, a less frequent problem than in past sessions, and therefore should have contributed little to reduced scores for the summary. However, attempts to translate in full or in substantial chunks from passage 2 abounded once again. This often led to rushed or partial summaries, where the GPS was less satisfactory. In a number of cases, examiners took account of bullet points, when no continuous prose summary was offered. Checking time would once more have been beneficial in avoiding blatant inconsistencies: English cannot be a universal language if some people do not speak it; *propre* was rendered as *clean* or *proper*, so local inhabitants were thought to speak either no proper language, or no clean language.

1: French nationality was routinely mentioned, but expatriate status was often missing. *Didier Carne (t.c.)* did not score when cited as the founder, as the notion of two French expatriates was needed. *to find* and *to found* were confused by some.

2: In the second detail, nationality and expatriate status were often both missing, and *those living abroad* was offered. *No access* and *healthcare* did not convey completely the notions of *little access* nor *quality healthcare*, so received some, but not full, credit. *In distant locations* needed reference to isolation, so *outside of France* or equivalent were insufficient.

3: The initial role of the clinic differentiated well, and many candidates conflated the treatment of sick people in remote places with the initial aims of the clinic, which were to provide medical training to local people: *the clinic was set up to begin with to treat sick people in distant places* could not score at all, therefore. The key issue which was often misconstrued was that the clinic initially sought to train, not to treat.

4: This point was frequently and erroneously dealt with under the bullet point above. Where it was successfully addressed, both elements tended to be identified. Occasionally there were unsuccessful references back to *places far away from Paris* or self-contradictory responses: *treating people in towns who lived in isolated areas*.

5: This bullet point received the least successful treatment, as many candidates offered the slogan in English, French or both, but did not explain it. The vaguest

allusions to doctors working worldwide gained full credit: *the slogan means that doctors would treat people everywhere. The third world is your waiting room* suggests a mishearing of *entier*. *The whole world and your waiting room* implies mishearing of *est*, but might have been spotted as illogical if checking occurred. *Salle d'attente* led to many mishearings and fanciful translations, including references to aunts. The history of French doctors or adventurers was often mentioned, but was not one of the required details.

6: This bullet point's general context was largely understood: the fact that in the absence of a *lingua franca*, hand gestures served purpose in medical contexts. Only the more attentive candidates gained full credit: *English is almost universal* was needed, rather than *English is universal; colleagues speak only their native language* was correct, but *locals only speak their own language* was only partially correct; *hand signals* are not quite *hand gestures*. *Some areas*, referring to English being not quite universal, was omitted by many candidates.

Five marks were relatively seldom gained for Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS), but 4 marks abounded. Capitalisation was generally more consistent, although frequently absent with *French* and *English*; and the use of ampersand was largely avoided. Capitalisation with direct quotation, and the punctuation around it, was less secure. Numbers, *2 Frenchmen* and *20 years ago*, should have been in words, not numerals. There were still a significant number of candidates who did not use commas appropriately, nor concluded sentences with full stops. *However* was often incorrectly used in a medial position: *English is an almost universal language, however, some locals speak only their own language*. Misspelling of a number of words was rife: *expatriot, recrute, appealed, slogan*.

Advice and Guidance

1. In Q1, candidates must ensure that their French is fit for purpose. Lifting without considering the grammatical roles of the parts of speech often led to incomprehensible responses.
2. The order of elements rule in Q1 needs practice, as carpet-bombing often loses credit.
3. Candidates should refrain especially from offering words in the wrong language.
4. Candidates should avoid wholesale translation or drafting of passage 2, as this places them under considerable time pressure.
5. As grammar, punctuation and spelling are assessed in Q2, candidates need to practise writing in formal register under time pressure.
6. Examiners mark to the end of the sense group after 100 words in Q2, giving no credit thereafter. Candidates should be mindful of this, as many summaries included uncreditable, but correct points, beyond the word limit.
7. All details must be addressed for high scoring, and candidates might like to tick off bullet points as they answer them, to foster full coverage.

A2 Unit 6a (6446/02): Reading and Writing

Description of the Unit

One passage was set to test comprehension, using questions in French. In addition, there was a test of transfer of meaning from English into French based on the passage. In setting the material, the examiners consulted the tables of assessment objectives on pages 8 and 13 of the Specification, General Topic Areas 1 - 5 on page 15, the description of the Unit on page 38 and the Notes for Guidance on page 88.

Question 1, worth 15 marks, was a series of questions in French based on a short passage about attempts by France to use cultural diplomacy to improve its international standing. Candidates answered the questions in French. Incorrect spelling and grammar did not vitiate correct answers. However, the ideas put forward by the candidate were considered in the order they appeared and had to be comprehensible to the examiner. Eight marks were awarded for correct information correctly retrieved, and a further seven marks were awarded for the quality of French in the answer.

Question 2, worth ten marks, was a passage in English, which had to be translated into French. The English passage was based on the passage for question one and contained several elements that could be either copied or adapted from the original text.

Assessment principles

The 8 marks available for the comprehension part of Q1 were awarded positively for correct information successfully retrieved and conveyed. Credit was withheld if understanding was not conveyed. No half marks were awarded. For all questions, the draft mark scheme was amended in the light of the candidates' responses. Candidates received 1 or 2 marks for the answers, whether in complete sentences or not, provided that errors of language did not obscure transmission of meaning. The marks were allocated to the ideas contained in the answers. If the same idea was repeated there was no additional mark. The seven marks for quality of language were awarded according to the published grid. The criteria used to judge the quality of language were complexity of structure, idiom and nuance.

In Q2, the marks were awarded for translation from English into equivalent French. The passage was divided into thirty marking units. Each unit received 1 or 0. There were no half marks. Marks were awarded only for fully correct material (correct spelling, gender, tense, agreement, concord). Non-grammatical accents were ignored. The mark was then divided by three and the total rounded up to a mark out of ten.

Candidates' responses

A wide range of achievement was represented. Generally, the basic meaning of the passage was understandable and the subject matter was accessible. More candidates this session took on board the need to write full answers to have access to higher quality of language marks. Unfortunately, this led a lot of candidates into error.

Question 1

In Q 1(a), many omitted *en Europe* and many focused instead on the nature of the reputation rather than its loss.

In Q 1(b), many did not focus on *moderniser* and lots were misled by *variés*.

In Q 1(c), the majority of candidates answered this question accurately but many focused on the announcement rather than the creation.

In Q 1(d), *y compris* in the text led to a lot of confusion about understanding.

In Q 1(e), there was a lot of good language manipulation by candidates.

In Q 1(e), there was a large variety of acceptable answers.

Quality of language: Candidates struggled to conjugate verbs accurately. Few could handle *en* plus present participle. Candidates should be told to answer in full sentences and to answer the question directly using their own words where possible. They should also be told to check their work carefully to avoid basic errors of spelling, gender, concord and agreement.

The following were the commonest problems:

- Conjugation of *se dégrader*
- Gender problems: *réputation, moyen, perte, agence, lycée, livre, film*
- Comparatives especially "worse"
- Adjectival agreement (*un nouvel lycée, un livre française*)
- Spelling : *payes, modern, filme, construire*
- Subject pronouns
- Interrogatives
- Passive
- Relative pronouns
- Present participle

Question 2

There were many excellent, accurate translations. The level of translation skill appeared even higher this year than last. There were very few highly inaccurate answers. It would appear that candidates are well trained in translation and can handle this skill much better than in transfer of meaning when answering comprehension questions.

The nouns that caused most difficulties were:

government, country

The adjectives that caused most difficulties were:

best

The verbs that caused most difficulties were:

might, has been damaged,

The tenses that caused most difficulties were:

conditional, present participle

Notes for Guidance

- 1 Candidates should read the paper carefully. They should not begin answering a question until they have read the specific instructions for it. The wording of the question should be studied closely and answers should be related to the stimulus passage.
- 2 The whole passage should be read before the questions are attempted. Candidates should try to identify the overall theme and the thread of any argument.
- 3 Candidates should be aware that some questions may require deductions to be made or inferences to be drawn.
- 4 In answering questions, candidates should not assume that verbatim copying from the passage can provide the required answer. They should try to ensure that their answer provides a direct response to the question set.
- 5 Candidates should be aware that some elements to be used in the translation passage are always provided in the French text.
- 6 Candidates should check their work carefully for agreement and concord as well as accuracy of spelling and gender.
- 7 It would be helpful if candidates practised Q2 using double spacing.
- 8 Candidates should use dark ink, write within the boundaries of the page and avoid use of supplementary pages.

A2 Unit 6c (6446/03): Writing in Registers

Preamble

This unit was the same as in previous years in every way and will remain so for the rest of the life of this specification. Many of its features will be carried over into the new syllabus, due to be examined for the first time in June 2010. Candidates were required to answer one question from a set of nine tasks, choosing either a piece of creative writing, a discursive essay or a task-based assignment.

There were three choices in the creative writing section. In the first candidates had to read a literary extract in which the author describes falling asleep on a beach and waking to find himself alone, his companion having disappeared. The task was to continue the past tense narrative in the first person, describing what had happened to the other person, saying what efforts were made to locate the missing person and giving an outcome. The picture stimulus for the second question was a still shot from a Brigitte Bardot film of 1958 showing the actress running down some steps in a garden. The candidates could interpret the picture as they felt fit but a past tense narrative was required, which had to respond to some sub-questions in the rubric. These called for an explanation of why the young woman was running and where she was going and asked for an outcome to be supplied. The third choice required a journalistic account based on a newspaper headline denoting a 'moment of panic' in a fast-food restaurant in Saint-Denis. The task was to produce an article in the style of a newspaper using past tenses which explained the panic and gave an outcome. There were four choices of discursive essays. In the first candidates were asked to assess whether it is useful to continue space exploration. In Q5 a quotation was given stating that in the world of business the only important thing is profit and candidates had to say if they agreed with this claim. The next question also consisted of a quoted statement to the effect that, in order to protect a democracy against terrorism, certain democratic rights would have to be withdrawn. Candidates were invited to discuss this viewpoint. In the last of the discursive questions candidates were asked to express and explain their views on the idea that individuals should increasingly expect to pay for some services provided by the state in areas such as education and health. As usual, there were two task-based assignments, the first of which was set in a business context. A person doing work experience in the offices of a French company, in which there had recently been a fire, was given the task of writing a report on the incident based on notes supplied by various witnesses to the fire. In the second, more general task-based assignment, information was given on the exhibitions contained in a section of the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in Paris. The task was to select four of the exhibitions for a visit by a school party consisting of students not studying science subjects and to explain why they should be visited. The wording of these questions did not in itself appear to lead to any misunderstanding but many candidates could have taken more time to read the question more carefully, since there were quite a few instances in which the instructions were not followed closely or even at all.

Assessment Principles

The candidates' work was marked positively out of 40, using the published grids, with half of the marks being allotted to content and half to Quality of Language. The language marks covered a consideration of Accuracy, the Range and Appropriateness of Lexis and the Manipulation of Language. The Content grid was used to assess the relevance and appropriateness of the response to the question or stimulus. Accuracy in the forms of the language could earn up to 5 marks. Aspects to be judged here included verb endings, agreements, concord, spelling and structural accuracy. Ten marks were available for the range and appropriateness of the lexis which included the variety and suitability of the vocabulary used for the given task and the aptness of the tone and register. Finally 5 marks were awarded for the skill with which candidates manipulated the forms of the language in terms of the variety and sophistication of structures used.

Candidates' Responses

The same pattern of popularity of the various sections of the paper which has been noted in previous years was again evident. The discursive essays attracted by far the largest number of candidates. This year the choice of essay was spread fairly evenly across the four questions, Q7 and Q5 were slightly more popular than the other two. The task-based assignments again had a good number of subscribers, the numbers being split evenly between the two. The creative writing tasks again proved to be the least popular and it is in this section that examiners encountered the greatest number of shortcomings. Candidates who chose one of the first three options had a marked tendency to ignore the rubric, they wrote at an inappropriate length and paid little attention to the wording of the question and any sub-questions. Much of the work this year in this part of the paper was utterly banal and many candidates still seem to think that to write creatively one has to produce completely weird and implausible scenarios.

In general the rubric concerning word limits was well respected. There were very few essays which were too short but there were some long essays, very often in the creative writing section. Any work beyond the upper word limit was not taken into consideration and this affected the Content mark, since there was no conclusion or outcome, and in some extreme cases essays had barely touched on the question before the word limit ran out. A significant number of candidates included the title, sometimes minimally reworked, in the opening introductory paragraph. This is poor use of the word count.

Presentation of the essays again left much to be desired. Examiners encountered much poor handwriting, lengthy deletions, afterthoughts tacked on at various intervals and in a variety of places and a confusion of rough notes and the final version. All too often plans were conceived in English, which inevitably leads to anglicisation of the finished product. There were, however, some pleasingly well organised and developed essays which had a good shape and a logical progression of ideas. Most of the discursive essays at least acknowledged the fact that there were two sides to an argument, even if balance between the two was not always achieved. There were still a number of one-sided responses. Candidates are perfectly at liberty to take a strong stance, even from the outset if necessary, but they should at least show an awareness that there are counter arguments, if only to refute them. Candidates did not always make good use of examples to reinforce their views and some students still obviously think that they have to base their arguments on the situation in France, which led to some confusion and inaccuracy, for example when

discussing education and health provision in Q7. In the task-based assignments the shortcoming which is most often found is the mere repetition of data rather than the use of it to fulfil the given task. This was again noticeable in Q9 where candidates often simply explained what was in the exhibitions without giving an explicit reason for visiting them. In Q8, however, candidates did more commonly use the data to give their own version of the incident and its repercussions.

Last year it was pleasing to note that candidates did not commonly try to force subject matter they had used in other areas of the specification into pieces of work on this paper. Unfortunately this trend was very much reversed this year. Examiners reported a great deal of 'recycling' of material candidates had met during the course of their studies or which they had already used in coursework or as the basis of the discussion of issue in Unit 6444/01. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that no question this year was based entirely on the environment, since many candidates make every effort possible to drag vocabulary connected with this topic into any essay by whatever means. Occasionally a passing reference to the environment could be quite useful. For example, in Q4 it was quite often suggested that we might find in space new sources of energy and solutions to pressing environmental problems, or in Q7, if people paid for services, the government could use the money saved to solve such difficulties. In Q9 it was sensibly said that a greater understanding of environmental problems could be gained from a visit to a particular exhibition. Brief mention of such points was legitimate and strengthened the debate but candidates were not content with such short allusions to their favourite topic, all too often they embarked on a lengthy explanation of climate change, global warming, the pitfalls of nuclear energy or the need to recycle and left themselves little room to pursue the actual question. In Q6 candidates quite commonly digressed into a prepared consideration of immigration. In some extreme cases there were even more cynical attempts to rework familiar material. In Q2 the young woman was seen as a journalist or an expert in a particular field who was rushing to file her copy or give a speech on the latest findings on cloning, euthanasia, stem cell research or the death penalty. Candidates who adopt this approach usually find it counter-productive, the content is invariably irrelevant and cannot receive much reward and the vocabulary is inappropriate to the chosen subject matter and the essay cannot score highly in the category of Range.

There was a wide range in the quality of French used in the essays. When looked at in isolation, the forms of the language were quite often accurate, even when the piece of French was not very impressive for other reasons. Quite a number of candidates were able to produce French which, judged solely on the accuracy of the forms, was almost free of error. Some essays, however, showed a good deal of carelessness over spelling, accents, the gender of common words and simple agreements. Candidates could often form the subjunctive successfully but committed errors in the basic present tense of regular and irregular verbs and in auxiliaries. A small number of essays were written in a phonetic way and almost needed to be read aloud to be understood, producing such forms as : *cet un (c'est un) , un notre (un autre) , ils mon demandait (ils m'ont demandé) etc.*

Most essays were written in an appropriate register. The range and accuracy of vocabulary, however, was often rather disappointing. Many candidates relied on a narrow range of common words which were used repetitively. Relatively few displayed a more sophisticated, topic specific range of lexis. Many overused or misused pre-learnt idiomatic phrases, the most common being *un thème brûlant de l'actualité*, which is universally used to describe any issue imaginable. If deployed sparingly and aptly, such formulaic language can enhance a piece of French but many

candidates use these expressions to excess and choke the flow of their essays. In the worst cases, learnt by heart phrases, usually written accurately, appeared in the middle of nonsensical, flawed French. There were, as ever, a large number of interesting expressions, which seemed to be made up on the spur of the moment, including *allumer la voiture*, *sauver l'argent*, and *obvieusement*. Some English words took the place of French ones (*le seul witness*, *unfamiliar avec le sujet*) and anglicised forms were also much in evidence (*s'involver*, *improver les vies*). *Ses* and *ces* were often confused, *aucun* was used to mean 'any' and arguments were commonly introduced with *d'une main / de l'autre main*. This year several contexts required the expression of 'free' and to render this *libre* and *gratuit* were often confused. There was also some difficulty in making the distinction between *public* as an adjective or a noun. In creative essays there were many passages of scene setting which had obviously been pre-learnt ready to be inserted into any context. Rarely did these fit the beach scene of Q1. The best essays had a good amount of varied, appropriate vocabulary, which was enhanced by the judicious use of adjectives, adverbs and idioms. In discursive essays the language of debate was often deployed to good effect.

The ability to manipulate French was very varied. The choice of tense was usually sound, although in the narrative sections of Q2 and Q3 the Imperfect was often used when the Perfect was needed. *Si* clauses still cause many problems, although this year the correct sequence of tenses seemed to be adhered to a little more accurately. There was some good subordination and common uses of the subjunctive were often well handled. On a less positive note, *falloir* was frequently incorrectly used with a whole range of pronoun subjects, *mieux* and even *souvent* were used as adjectives, *ça* was substituted for *que* and the latter was used instead of *qui* and vice-versa. Candidates still experience difficulties with pronouns, even in the most straightforward of cases and the passive remains a demanding feature of the language for many candidates. Overall, however, most candidates showed some ability to manipulate French beyond the production of simple translated language.

Report on individual questions

Question 1 - There were a few well written essays here which were fluent and imaginative, even humorous at times, in which various past tenses, including on occasions the Past Historic, were well applied. The majority, however, were far less impressive, since most candidates paid little or no attention to the stimulus or the instructions. Many essays ignored the original setting of a beach, stories took place in all sorts of other places, such as in houses, hotel rooms, shopping centres and cafés. In spite of the instruction *Continuez cet extrait sous forme de narration* many candidates wrote at length about what had happened before the narrator went to sleep or about the previous relationship between the two people. Some of the scenarios were quite incredible but most were banal in the extreme, a mixture of *Série noire* and the most crass of soap operas. There were many dreams and nightmares. The language was also often flawed. *Pleuvoir* was used instead of *pleurer*. Some attempts at fanciful language served only to puzzle the reader : *mon dilemme était énorme comme une baleine*, *abandonné comme un chien sans montre* and *je me nage dans tes yeux qui brillent comme le soleil qui reflect dans l'eau sallé comme des crystal*. *Mon cœur plein d'amour qui couvre le ciel sur ta tete*. *Sur le sable imprimé mes pas à tes côtés ou j'avais rêvé de rester depuis la fin de mes souffles*.

Question 2 - Here too many candidates felt the need to say in great detail what had gone before the scene in the picture. They were so busy recapping on previous events that they did not get to the point when Eva was running until late in their piece of writing. As mentioned above, some candidates tried to use the character's obvious hurry as an excuse to reproduce familiar subject matter. Those who did obey the instructions more closely wrote fairly shallow stories of unhappy relationships, accidents and life-changing escapes. There were very few references to the other person in the photograph.

Question 3 - The requirement here was to write an article in a journalistic style using past tenses. Only a small number of candidates managed to do this, producing good answers which showed appreciation of the term *moment* and describing panic which was short-lived. Short statements from eye witnesses or police spokesmen were included and the articles often ended with some appropriate reflection about the event. Such essays were unfortunately the exception rather than the rule. Most were clearly not articles but little stories, often in first person narrative throughout. A certain number of candidates used the context as an excuse for recycled essays or oral presentations on obesity and nutrition. Many essays created scenes of violence and mayhem with hold-ups, often with hostages taken, explosions, lorries crashing into buildings, fights and arguments.

Question 4 - Overall the first of the discursive essays was well handled. Few candidates paid much attention to the phrase *continuer à* in the title but most candidates found some cogent arguments for and against space exploration in general. The pros included the need to satisfy curiosity, the possibility of finding other life or answers to earthly problems, the possible colonisation of other parts of the universe and it was pointed out that space exploration had hastened many technological advances. The main arguments against were the cost - the money could be better used alleviating problems on earth, the fact that space travel is dangerous and polluting and no positive discoveries are at all likely. In spite of these arguments the majority of candidates were in favour of continued space exploration. The tendency to use this question as an opportunity to expand at length on largely irrelevant topics such as GM foods and global warming has already been noted, as has the fact that such essays cannot score well for Content. Some candidates lacked the knowledge of technical, subject specific vocabulary and produced items such as *species, scientistes, aliens, meteors* and there was the interesting use of *lunette* for *lune* and *étants* for 'beings'. Much of the work on this question, however, was very creditable.

Question 5 - Rather surprisingly the phrase *Dans le monde du commerce* caused some problems here. Several candidates took it to mean advertising and thus produced a rather irrelevant essay. Many others ignored it and from the personal point of view of an individual, the question was thus understood to be asking 'is money the only thing that matters in life'? Some went on to discuss charitable organisations. Candidates who did write about the world of business usually accepted that profit is needed if a company is to thrive, profits can be invested to ensure viability and growth. Some of the ideas expressed on the other side, as important aspects other than profit, such as the quality of products and good customer relations, were actually likely to lead to increased profit. Other aspects of business life were also said to be important. These included environmental concerns and the need to treat workers well. The latter point led many candidates to discuss the exploitation of workers in Third World countries. Several international companies and high street retailers were indicted over this issue. Although there was a certain amount of irrelevance in many essays, there were also some thoughtful responses

which gave an interesting insight into what candidates saw as acceptable and unacceptable. Idealism probably won over economic pragmatism.

Question 6 - Responses to this question were a little mixed. Many essays did not quite get to the heart of the matter, there was a good deal written on the causes and effects of terrorism, what is a terrorist, what leads people to become terrorists, how to discourage terrorism and the various forms of punishment applicable, including consideration of the death penalty. Answers often referred only to Islamic terrorists and this in turn led to some lengthy digressions on racism and immigration. There were, however, many essays which did treat the question more closely. It was generally acknowledged that terrorism posed a great threat which needed to be countered robustly and, if this entailed the losing of certain freedoms, many were prepared to accept this. A greater number thought that democratic rights should be preserved but many essays suffered a little because few examples of democratic rights were given in illustration. At the time of the examination the debate about 42 days detention was very much in the news and this was often quoted to good effect but other than this the term democratic rights remained a somewhat nebulous concept. There were, however, some good balanced treatments. The best responses did not limit the argument to the suppression of the rights of terrorists, for example with imprisonment without trial, it was also felt that all citizens may have to lose some liberty through such things as ID cards and CCTV. The USA came in for much criticism for ignoring the human rights of prisoners.

Question 7 - This was the most popular of all the titles but the intended subtleties of the question escaped virtually everyone who answered it. The phrases *de plus en plus* and *certain services* were universally ignored. The debate either became a state versus private one or whether services should be completely free or entirely paid for. This latter approach was allowed in view of the fact that so few candidates addressed the question in the way which had been originally intended. Not many candidates advocated payment for services, although it was felt that payment might bring better services and less abuse of provisions. It was universally felt that the poor should be given full access to services, particularly in the field of health, whatever happened. A number cited the USA in terms of excluding people from the health system and others spoke confusingly of a completely free system in France. Some candidates thought that those who had brought ill health on themselves, such as the obese, smokers and heavy drinkers, should be expected to pay for treatment. The idea of 'pay as you go' was also much used and some felt that this would stop foreigners from taking advantage of our system, another cue in some cases for a lengthy treatment of immigration. The health system was the main focus but there was some discussion of schools and how much worse society would be without education at all. However, it was also felt that if one had to pay for education a lot of people would not bother to avail themselves of it! It has to be said that a small number of candidates revealed a woeful ignorance of the situation that exists.

Question 8 - Of the two TBAs this was handled more successfully than the other. Most candidates covered the four strands of the task, although treatment was not always well balanced, with the description of what had happened being given much more prominence than the other three parts. Nevertheless, the content could usually be considered at least satisfactory. The data was not simply repeated in most cases, the majority of candidates used a large proportion of the facts given to provide their own version of events, although the phrase *documents totalement ou partiellement brûlés* was often dropped in verbatim. There was some confusion over what was meant by *consignes de sécurité*, it was often taken to signify that there were no security men on site. By and large a lit cigarette was seen to be the trigger of the

fire but other versions did not stand up to logical scrutiny as they claimed that an open window or the presence of inflammable material were in themselves the cause of the conflagration. Some accounts did not sound particularly authentic, as it was not really the job of the author to demand sanctions against named individuals. Overall, however, those who had been well trained for this type of writing produced satisfactory, sensible responses.

Question 9 - This task gave rise to a lot of copying of the data. Most candidates simply reiterated what was in the various exhibitions. Presumably they felt that from this the reader could infer a reason for going to each section but this was rarely stated explicitly. Even those who did give some good justification for their choices could not often sustain it across all four selections. Reasons given were overall not well argued, the exhibitions were merely described as *intéressant*, *amusant* or *super*. Some candidates mentioned areas of the location which would not be worth visiting. The need to cater for non-scientists was not always picked up. Many essays seemed to reveal a distinct lack of interest in the topic which was not likely to enthrall potential visitors. Nevertheless, there were some well outlined answers in which exhibitions chosen were linked by a common theme.

Advice and guidance

Everything which can be said by way of advice and guidance on this paper has no doubt been mentioned over the years in successive subject reports but the most important pieces of advice bear repetition. Candidates should always take a few moments to study the questions carefully before making a choice. It is not advisable to choose on the spur of the moment a task for which a candidate has not been trained, however attractive a question might appear superficially. One element which needs to be considered when making the choice of question is whether or not the candidate is familiar with a reasonable amount of core vocabulary which is appropriate to the subject matter. Having selected a question it should be studied carefully, highlighting any key words or phrases, to make sure that the implications have been fully understood. It is sensible to prepare a short plan in French. This seems a better use of time than the fairly common habit of writing out a version, crossing it out and then rewriting it almost word for word. Candidates should map out an introduction, a logical way of proceeding to make sure that the whole question is covered and finish with an apt conclusion. It is not a good idea to prepare a large set of language items to force into any essay irrespective of the subject matter. Nor is it sensible to try to 'shoehorn' familiar ideas and topics into essays unless the candidate is absolutely convinced that such material is relevant and justified. Essays should be as fluent and sophisticated as a candidate can comfortably make them, without using complexity for its own sake in a misguided attempt to impress. Pre-learnt phrases should be used sparingly and appositely, they certainly should not swamp the rest of the work. The word count for the particular task should be strictly adhered to. Once written, the forms of the language, particularly verb endings and the concord of subject and verb should be checked carefully. Pieces of creative writing do not necessarily have to be weird and extraordinary, they should follow the instructions carefully and have a plausible outcome. Discursive essays should at least show an awareness of both sides to any argument and the TBAs should use the data provided rather than just reproduce it.

Statistics

Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	33	29	25	21	18
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	52	47	42	38	34
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3 Prepared Oral Topic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	43	38	33	28	23
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	45	40	35	30	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.2 Interpreting

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	44	38	33	28	23
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5.1 Topics and Texts

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	56	50	44	38	32
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5.2 Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	135	103	91	79	68	57
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6 Listening and Writing, Reading and Writing & Writing in Registers

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	61	54	47	41	35
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

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