

FRENCH

Paper 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

Recordings this year were mostly clear, and Centres have clearly made great efforts to achieve this and ensure that both candidates and Examiners were audible. Only one or two tapes were inaudible because of recording difficulties or background noise, and one or two recorded at the wrong speed. There were fewer clerical errors than in some years, but there were still some difficulties where Centres had omitted to submit Working Mark Sheets, or had only filled in section totals on their Working Mark Sheets – Examiners should enter a mark in each column of the working mark sheets, based on the criteria categories in the mark scheme. It is difficult to offer precise advice on marking pitch when it is not possible to see exactly how marks have been awarded, but it was clear in some cases that marks must have been awarded for *Seeking Information and Opinions* even where no questions had been asked by the candidates.

Timings of the examinations for each candidate varied between some 10 minutes, and approximately 50 minutes – in the interests of fairness to all candidates and international standardisation, it is important to try to keep to the timings set out in the syllabus booklet:

Presentation – no more than 3½ minutes;

(Examiners should interrupt with questions if candidates show signs of continuing for longer)

Topic Conversation – 7 to 8 minutes;

General Conversation – 8 to 9 minutes.

Questions

Candidates are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in **both** conversation sections. In each conversation section, 5 marks are available for this, so candidates who are not aware of the requirement and who are not prompted by the Examiner have lost the opportunity to earn 10% of their marks – they may need reminding of the importance of this! Candidates who ask only **one** question in each section cannot score more than 3 marks, and their question should be relevant to the topic under discussion (e.g. *Que pensez-vous, monsieur/madame?* would qualify). To score the maximum marks for *Seeking Information and Opinions*, candidates need to be able to ask more than one accurate question, relevant to the topic under discussion, and showing that they are able to use a variety of question forms. Where no questions from candidates occur naturally in the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt for them, in both conversation sections. Candidates should be discouraged from asking questions during their presentation as this occupies time which should be spent on the expression of their own ideas, but it is perfectly acceptable to end their presentation with a question directed to the Examiner. Where no questions are asked in one of the conversation sections, a zero should be recorded in the final column of the Working Mark Sheet for that section.

Section 1: Presentation

In general, the maturity of choice of topics was impressive, and there was a wide variety, from the mundane and factual to the literary, abstract and sociological. The syllabus makes it clear that the topic chosen by any candidate should be presented in such a way that it reflects knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a francophone country. A number of Centres still seem to be unaware of this, and where a candidate fails to demonstrate this, the mark for content must be halved. Teacher/examiners need to advise their candidates accordingly, so that those who choose wide general topics such as *Pollution* or *Tabagisme* or *Le conflit des générations* make sure that their references and sources are well rooted in francophone culture. It is important that candidates have some personal interest in the topic selected, or they may have problems sustaining a conversation at an appropriate level in the later Topic Conversation.

Information is now freely available on the Internet, and there were a number of factually based topics (*La Tour Eiffel, Le Louvre, La cuisine française*, the life of a famous French person) where candidates clearly had plenty of factual material at their disposal but were unable to develop this in any way to express ideas and opinions. This not only restricts the content mark available to them for the Presentation, but may also have a major effect on their mark for *Comprehension and Responsiveness* in the Topic Conversation section. Even at AS Level, this kind of topic has proved too limiting for candidates, offering little scope for conversation beyond IGCSE Level.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

The aim of the oral Examiner must be to provide opportunities for the candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities. This does not mean the opportunity to repeat pre-learnt sections from the presentation, nor to show how assiduously the examination has been practised, but rather the ability to respond to spontaneous questions, to think on their feet, and to take the chances offered to express and develop their ideas and opinions. A candidate who contents him/herself with a simple response to a question asked is probably not going to achieve the highest scores: what is looked for is a willingness to enter into discussion and an attempt to sustain a conversation at a mature level. In this section, the candidate has the advantage of having prepared his/her topic, and therefore some knowledge of the necessary vocabulary – it is an opportunity to engage with the Examiner, and even to ask their opinions of the topic. Candidates who are able to take some of the initiative will be more likely to achieve good marks for *Comprehension and Responsiveness*. Examiners may need to keep their initial questions short and open (Tell me about...) and may need to restrict their own contributions so that candidates have time to explain and develop their argument and ideas, but Examiners should then be prepared to react and respond to what the candidate has said and to interact (briefly) with them.

Before the end of the Topic Conversation, candidates who have not asked any questions of the Examiner should be prompted to do so. At the end of the Topic Conversation, it is helpful to both candidate and Moderator to signal this, and that the examination is moving on to the third section.

Section 3: General Conversation

In this section, conversation should move away from that chosen for the presentation – candidates should be able to demonstrate knowledge of other areas of interest and appropriate vocabulary, but clearly Examiners should make sure that candidates from one Centre are not all asked to talk about the same areas of study. General Conversation should be exactly that, a conversation between the Examiner and the candidate, where each reacts/responds to the other, not a series of “questions” followed by the regurgitation by the candidate of pre-learnt material from the topics covered during the course, followed by another “prompt” for them to make a statement on a different topic. It is not expected that all candidates will be interested in the same topics, and the Examiner may need to try several before finding something which both candidate and Examiner are comfortable discussing, but where there is no spontaneity, there is no real test of comprehension and responsiveness.

Questions should not be restricted to a level appropriate only to IGCSE, or to candidates’ everyday lives, but should be pitched to stretch them and demonstrate their real level of achievement. Since candidate are also expected to ask questions in the general conversation section, Examiners should prompt them again to do so before the end of the section.

Moderators were pleased to see the general level of maturity shown in the examination and that the majority of Examiners made every effort to give candidates opportunities to demonstrate their communication skills.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The performance of the candidates on this paper was very much in line with previous years, as was the overall level of difficulty of the paper. Candidates generally found the texts reasonably accessible, with the difficulty for many lying in the need to manipulate the text in giving their responses to it. This stretched (sometimes over-stretched) the linguistic competence of some, but a number produced excellent performances, making their points in accurate, idiomatic French which was a pleasure to read.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, and there were few signs of candidates having run out of time, although there were occasional signs of what one suspected may have been tiredness creeping in in the later stages.

That said, the practice of copying out the question in **Questions 3 and 4** as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which do nothing to enhance the overall impression for the quality of language mark. The most pointless examples consisted of copying out the entire question (sometimes in a different colour) before proceeding to the answer, but there were significant numbers of other candidates who insisted on trying to incorporate the words of the question in an introduction to every answer. For example, the answer to **Question 3(a)** : *Quels sont les avantages pratiques mentionnés dans le premier paragraphe qui pourraient expliquer la popularité des blogs ?* does not need to begin : *Les avantages pratiques mentionnés dans le premier paragraphe qui pourraient expliquer la popularité des blogs sont premièrement qu'ils ne coûtent rien.* The full mark for that element of the answer is scored perfectly satisfactorily by *Ils ne coûtent rien* on its own.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text was as usual quite a common feature, although encouragingly a little less prevalent this session, perhaps because several of the items in **Question 3** specifically requested a re-working/explanation of a phrase from the text. The rubric quite clearly states that candidates should answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. They may use material from the passage but they must use it in such a way as to demonstrate understanding. Copying sentences or whole phrases verbatim from the text in the hope that they contain the answer does not demonstrate understanding and is therefore not rewarded. Candidates should try to express relevant ideas using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language. Examples can be found in the specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. *On a seulement besoin de quelques minutes pour créer notre espace gratuit sur Internet* is not an improvement on *On a besoin de cinq minutes à peine pour mettre en ligne son blog.*

In **Question 1**, it is important to realise that the word or words given as the answer must be interchangeable in all respects with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing. This means, for example, that in Item 1 (e) the phrase *devenir moins agités(es)* could replace *se calmer* (correct), but not *calmer* or *à se calmer* (both incorrect).

A few of the most fluent candidates were attracted by the desire to ‘épater’ in **Questions 3 and 4** and produced long, complex and speculative answers which went far further than the text itself and far further than the requirement for scoring full marks. In the process some of them sadly overlooked the need to include the basic information from the text which was required to score the marks.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on Part **(a)** automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their personal response.

These limits are such that candidates simply cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble: ‘*Le blog a des bienfaits et des dangers. Cette phrase sera discutée dans les paragraphes suivants. Dans le premier texte il s’agit des bienfaits.*’ (24 words). Or ‘*En discutant des blogs, il faut qu’on fasse de la recherche avant de prendre une décision. Il y a beaucoup de bienfaits et de dangers des blogs*’ (27 words). Even relatively modest examples such as these (some were significantly longer) mean that the candidate has squandered over a quarter of the available words in which to score the ten points available for specific items summarised from the texts. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and material contained after the word limit has been reached is simply ignored. It is a summary/résumé of specific points from the texts that is requested in Part **(a)**, not a general essay. A general essay is quite likely to score 0/10 for content, which must be drawn from the two texts.

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

A number of candidates used bullet points to illustrate the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark may be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the sentences consequently lack fluency.

The same 5-point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4 and 5**:

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

If any of the individual sub-questions in **Questions 3 and 4** score 0 for content, or if the responses to **Question 5** are too short, the overall quality of language mark is adjusted.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally answered well, although there were perhaps fewer candidates scoring the maximum 5 marks than in some years. *Gratuit, grandissant* and *quotidiennement* (Items a, c and d) were the answers most often correctly identified, whilst the verbs *émettre* and *se calmer* (Items b and e) caused more problems, with the latter producing a good number of examples of candidates missing the necessary reflexive or of destroying the answer by adding superfluous words - see **General comments** for the need for candidates to ensure a complete ‘fit’ with the words being substituted. Minor copying errors were tolerated.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual, the task proved very demanding for candidates with a less-than-secure command of grammatical structures. Minor spelling mistakes were not penalised but grammatical mistakes were. Candidates should not change the vocabulary in the sentence for its own sake, but merely re-arrange the words and make any changes to the grammar required by the start of the sentence given – see **General comments**.

Item 2(a) This question offered a variety of acceptable possibilities apart from the obvious *On a besoin de cinq minutes ...*: *On peut mettre...;* *On doit avoir...;* *On prend/met...;* etc. Sadly the commonly offered *On faut* was not one of them.

Item 2(b) Most candidates handled this well, although *tout le monde* produced a fair number of plural verbs. *Tout le monde sont consultables par les blogs* was offered by some who clearly had not understood the sense of the sentence.

Item 2(c) The weakest candidates saw no need to do anything other than copy out the original phrase, but others who were unsure about handling the most obvious *Les blogs sont plus qu'un ...* were ingenious in finding a variety of ways of successfully negotiating the language if they had understood the meaning - e.g.: *Les blogs sont un phénomène de mode, mais ce n'est pas tout.*

Item 2(d) The need for (or existence of?) the subjunctive was not appreciated by a large number, but held few fears for the strongest. Some candidates went through rather painful contortions to avoid having to use a subjunctive, rarely very successfully.

Item 2(e) There were several elements to manipulate in putting this sentence into indirect or reported speech, but it was generally done satisfactorily. It was a pity that so many of the better candidates overcomplicated things by writing *dont elle ne pouvait plus s'en passer*.

Question 3

This set of questions was generally well answered but there was a fair amount of lifting of phrases from the texts. It is important to remember (**see General comments**) that simply 'lifting' sections directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer.

Item 3(a) was well answered. Nearly all gave an example of what the blog could be used for (*afficher des photos etc.*) and most scored the other marks available by mentioning the fact that they are free, easy and fast to set up/maintain. Some candidates were admirably concise - *Ils ne coûtent rien. Ils sont rapides et faciles à établir.* Some strayed into areas of the answer required in Item 3(b).

Item 3(b) was generally well answered, with most candidates successfully expressing the notions of the freedom to write what one wants, and the lack of restrictions and sanctions/censorship. Some scored 0 by resorting to copying out the relevant sentence, where the simplest of manipulations from *on peut tout dire, sans aucune barrière, sans risque de censure* to *on peut dire ce qu'on veut, il n'y a pas de barrières ou de censure* would have been perfectly acceptable.

Item 3(c) was generally well answered, most candidates scoring one or both of the two available marks by mentioning the ideas that blogs increase communication and bring people into contact.

Item 3(d) was well handled. Candidates were generally successful in referring to young people spending their time in front of computer screens rather than television screens, although some appeared more concerned about protecting the shape of the sofa from damage.

In Item 3(e) most candidates identified the danger of spending less time on homework. Usually they were also able to point out the benefits of students being able to use blogs to help each other, write comments or seek additional explanations on line, sometimes pointing to the fact that this could be encouraged and facilitated by teachers.

Item 3(f) was well handled, with most candidates seeing clearly the connection between more time being spent communicating 'on line' and less with the family.

Question 4

Most candidates found **Question 4** more difficult than **Question 3**, although the better candidates continued to cope well. Weaker candidates tended to try to include as much material from the text as possible in their answers in the hope of including some of the correct information.

Item 4(a) Most candidates successfully identified the students' offence as that of insulting their teachers with comments and photos/drawings on their blogs. Some failed to express this successfully by writing: *Ils ont publié des commentaires méchants de leurs professeurs*.

Item 4(b) Most candidates pointed to the fact that this involved 'good students'. The points about the immediate destruction of the blogs and the apologies offered often suffered from direct 'lifting': *en s'excusant sincèrement* (for example) was not difficult to re-express as *Ils se sont excusés sincèrement*, or *Ils ont demandé pardon*, or even *Ils ont dit 'pardon'*. Candidates were often less successful in identifying or expressing clearly the reason given by the *directeur* for excluding the students. Several thought that it was a question of the *directeur* himself not being able to look the teachers in the eye if he did not exclude the students. Reassuringly perhaps, those candidates who offered comments were unanimously in favour of the teachers and of the *directeur's* decision, except for those who saw exclusion as far too good for the students.

Item 4(c) The better candidates pointed to the greater seriousness of publishing something on the Internet by virtue of its world-wide accessibility, although *puisque'on s'adresse à l'ensemble de la planète* was unnecessarily lifted, given the relative ease of *parce tout le monde/le monde entier peut le lire* or something similar. Many gave confused answers, some suggesting that there were strict laws applying to written documents whereas Internet defamation was legal, not least because you could never be tracked down and you could always get rid of the site. Others thought it was fine to write whatever you wanted either on paper or on the Internet, but that an image made it far more serious.

Item 4(d) Most candidates were successful in pointing to the dangers of publishing personal prejudices. Failure to understand *peu soucieux* often meant that the second answer about publishing false information was the opposite of what it should have been.

Item 4(e) Most candidates identified at least one of the required elements: publishing material that is defamatory to specific individuals; publishing material that is offensive generally; or publishing photos taken without permission. However, a large number of candidates resorted to copying sections of the text - *Les contenus à caractère diffamatoire, injurieux, obscene, violent ou raciste sont interdits* - when all that was needed was *Si on diffame quelqu'un ou si on est obscène* or similar. The word *caractère* was often misunderstood to refer to a person.

Item 4(f) was well handled, most candidates understanding and expressing the dangers of giving personal data to people whose true identity is unknown.

Question 5

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages in part **(a)** and then to reflect on them in part **(b)** giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

It was interesting that a small number of candidates began their answer with the personal response. There is no reason why they should not do this but they should remember that the personal response can gain only 5 marks and if they write more than 40 to 50 words, they are reducing the limit for the summary which is worth 10 marks.

Candidates were required to summarise 'les bienfaits et les dangers des blogs tels qu'ils sont présentés dans les deux textes'. Most managed to identify and list several benefits as well as several dangers. A few invented benefits or dangers of their own for which there was no evidence in the text and thus no mark.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which candidates generally did with some imagination and originality – assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage.

The quality of language varied considerably: some found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, but the best candidates wrote with impressive fluency and accuracy. Verb endings

were common sources of error, as was a tendency to confuse common homophones: *ces/c'est/ses; ce/se; on/ont*. There were particular problems with *leur/leurs/ses : leur parents ; leurs blog ; les élèves ont insulté leur/ses profs ; ils leurs a dit....* The use of definite and partitive articles was eccentric, as was adjectival agreement and the choice of tense in many cases.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/03

Essay

General comments

Candidates were given a choice of 5 questions, one on each of the following topics: *La famille, La santé et la forme, L'emploi et le chômage, La guerre et la paix* and *La conservation*. The essays were marked out of 40, with a maximum of 24 marks for Language and 16 for Content. It was felt that the overall standard of performance was very similar to that of previous year as far as Language was concerned and a little lower from the point of view of Content.

Language marks tended to fall in the middle of the good category. Quite a number of candidates lost marks due to careless and avoidable errors which might have been picked up had time been reserved for a thorough and systematic revision of what had been written: sound examination technique which future candidates are urged to put into practice.

Marks for Content were predominantly between the lower end of the good and the middle of the adequate categories. Here, introductions and conclusions showed a tendency to be aimed at the topic rather than at the specific question on that topic, although stronger candidates produced thoughtful, well-structured and developed answers.

Most candidates observed the rubric on the number of words to be used, and most appeared to have had sufficient time in which to complete their work.

Common linguistic problems included the following:

- Misspellings of common words such as *caractère, problème, contrôler, alcool, autorité, grands-parents, société, guerre, contrôler, chacun, pilier, ressources, coopération*.
- Confusion/misuse of: *ou/ou, ce qui/ceux qui, ces/c'est, ses/ces, leur/leurs, cela/ceux-là, tandis que/pendant que, les/des, mal/mauvais, bien/bon*.
- Constructions: *ils ne sont pas permis de fumer, ils commencent de rentrer tard, des maladies tel que, en faisant de l'exercice l'obésité est évitable, des problèmes qu'on fait face à*.
- Inclusion of *y* and *en* when not required.
- Gender of important, commonplace nouns such as: *pollution, problème, valeur, dispute, régime, nourriture, paix, monde, espèce, ressource, manque*.
- Failure to link a verb with its subject: *un exemple de ces sortes de problèmes sont...*
- Past participles used instead of infinitives, and vice-versa. This is a commonplace occurrence in the work of very weak candidates: *ils ont commencer, ils vont commencé*.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

This was a very popular question, attracting many candidates across the ability range, as did **Question 2**. It was generally agreed that most families experience problems at some time or another, with many candidates feeling that they mostly occur because families spend insufficient time together if both parents are working, an increasingly common situation. This means that the children are left to their own devices and become the prey of various temptations, which lead to arguments and family discord. Few painted a totally pessimistic picture, however, and most candidates felt that the family is a good and valuable part of society and that problems can and need to be talked through.

Question 2

This attracted many candidates, boys and girls, across the ability range, and produced some interesting and well structured answers. Healthy living seems to be an important issue worldwide. The majority of candidates focused on the increasing problem of obesity, which they attributed to poor diet and lack of exercise related to the spread of fast-food outlets, convenience foods, and to the growth of the amount of time spent by young people in front of computer and television screens. Others also considered the effect on health of various forms of pollution, and of habits such as smoking and drug-taking. Not all were totally pessimistic, pointing out that advances in medical research have enabled many people to lead more healthy and fulfilled lives, for example in areas traditionally badly affected by malaria, thereby addressing the part of the question that asked them to what extent the introductory statement is true.

Question 3

This was a much less popular question, but it nevertheless produced some well-structured answers, particularly from candidates who had prepared the topic thoroughly and who were able to illustrate their argument with relevant statistics and examples. Stronger candidates were able to show how society has arrived at the situation and to make interesting suggestions as to what measures governments could or ought to take to tackle the problem. Weaker candidates tended to agree with the statement and to limit their answer to rather vague generalisations about some of the causes of unemployment.

Question 4

Whilst attracting a relatively small number of candidates, this question aroused strong feelings in a number of them, and produced some intelligent and mature, well argued answers. There was quite a degree of polarisation, some candidates arguing that religion is essential to civilisation, seeing it as a positive force for good, working for peace. Others condemned it as having only negative effects on society. Candidates in both camps illustrated their argument with generally accurate references to the past and to the present. Weaker candidates tended to restrict their response to descriptions of terrorist attacks without going deeper than that.

Question 5

This was by far the least popular question, and was generally not well answered, there being a tendency for candidates to ignore the notion of *causes perdues* and to limit themselves to a general survey of environmental problems such as various forms of pollution. Stronger candidates, however, did explain what they understood by conservation before discussing such issues as climate change, endangered species, wasting of natural resources and the extent to which such problems can be tackled.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/04

Texts

General comments

All questions were attempted, but relatively few candidates answered on *Le Chercheur d'Or*, Becket and *Le Diable au corps*. Predictably, Molière was the most popular author, closely followed in **Section 1** by Mauriac. Camus was the most popular choice in **Section 2**, followed by Bazin and Flaubert.

Whilst there were, on this occasion, few instances of candidates writing at excessive length, a surprising number of candidates failed to observe the rubric and attempted two answers on one book. It was noticeable, furthermore, that a number of candidates who wrote adequate answers on two books did not attempt a third question, thus denying themselves the possibility of reaching a satisfactory total mark.

The vast majority of scripts were legible and presentable. Examiners continue to draw attention to the fact that some candidates do not state, in **Section B**, which essay they are attempting, and it is not always easy to tell. There is no need for candidates to waste time copying out the title, but they should be told to write clearly the number and letter of the question they have chosen. Some candidates still do not seem to understand that there is no merit in reproducing objective information about dates of publication, first performances of plays, biographical details about the author, and other facts which, in most cases, have no bearing on the essay topic. An introductory paragraph which outlines the candidate's approach to the question and communicates a clear understanding of its implications is of much greater value.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Mauriac: *Le Nœud de vipères*

- (a) Most candidates had no difficulty in identifying the boy as Luc, or in explaining the unusually positive responses that he engendered in Louis. Relevant parallels were drawn with Marie. The second part of the question prompted a good many candidates to digress and to pay more attention to Louis's character than to Isa's. The better answers referred appropriately to her weary cynicism and inability to register anything positive about him, with appropriate explanations involving the breakdown of their marriage at an early stage. Answers which focused on the uncharitable nature of her response were more relevant than those which went into unnecessary detail about the earlier stages of their relationship. It was, of course, appropriate to point out that relations between the two were characterised by a fundamental lack of communication, for which the fault lay on both sides. Candidates generally understood that Isa's remark quoted in the third part of the question was ill-judged and unfair.
- (b) The essay on Louis's harsh self-appraisal produced answers of greatly varying quality. The differentiating factor was not so much the ability to justify and explain the remark as the amount of relevant detail and the structure of the answers, which, in a good many cases, left much to be desired. An apparently random selection of examples of Louis's sense of isolation and lack of engagement with his family could not score as well as a closely argued essay with suitable textual references. That said, most candidates did well to point out the largely futile efforts made by Louis to change his behaviour towards the end of his life, and understood why he felt the need for some spiritual fulfilment.

Question 2

Molière: *Les Femmes savantes*

- (a) Surprisingly, not all candidates established that Chysale was talking to Bélide, whilst aiming his comments at Philaminte, and not all mentioned his fear of confronting his wife. The principal weakness in answers to the first two parts of this question was an undue emphasis on the dismissal of Martine for making grammatical mistakes. The question offered candidates an opportunity to point out that Chysale is complaining about the general domestic upheaval caused by unnatural behaviour. Candidates readily agreed that his complaint was justified, but many saw the problem in over-specific terms (Martine, soup and bad poetry) rather than considering what was meant by *ce mauvais air* in the household. The third part of the question required an analysis of Philaminte's use of the word *bassesse* rather than a repetition of her immediate priorities (Martine and Trissotin again).
- (b) It was pointed out in this report a year ago that many essays on this text did not focus on the main point of the play: to provoke mocking laughter at the expense of those whose pretensions are not matched by their performance. Examiners were surprised to find candidates who disagreed with the premise of the question, which is very clearly set out by Clitandre. A number of answers did not even refer to Clitandre, which was disappointing. An analysis of his role would have provided the basis for a relevant and appropriate answer.

Question 3

Anouilh: *Becket*

- (a) Candidates' knowledge of the situation in this extract was often far from clear. Whilst they were aware, in most cases, that Becket had come to France to ask for protection in the wake of his refusal to capitulate to King Henry's demands, they were seldom able to give a clear picture of the state of play at this juncture. Answers to the second part of the question showed little or no understanding of the use of the word *cuisine* either here or elsewhere in the play. The notion of political expediency and its more unattractive manifestations is a key issue in this and other plays by Anouilh, and candidates are expected to be in a position to comment on it. As to Becket's reasons for visiting the Pope, some answers simply failed to identify them, and most others were sketchy. A few managed to refer to the scheming and self-interested nature of the Pope's deliberations with his cardinals, but the majority of answers did not communicate a grasp of the implications of the question.
- (b) The standard of answers to the essay question was generally disappointing. Whilst most candidates were able to explain that the King emerged somewhat wiser from the tragic sequence of events, surprisingly few dealt satisfactorily with Anouilh's central and recurring theme of self-fulfilment through self-sacrifice. They saw Becket's death as tragic rather than as the realisation of his destiny. This limited perception of the outcome made it impossible for Examiners to award much credit, since the resonance of the quotation did not seem to have been fully understood.

Question 4

Le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

- (a) This text again produced sound work from most of those who chose the guided commentary. Weaker candidates confused Mananava with the location of the abandoned family home, thus revealing a lack of understanding about the place which evoked a dream world isolated from the trials of urban life. The role of Uncle Ludovic was generally well understood. Some were able to mention his lack of support for the father's scheme and his exploitation of the family's misfortune. Their sense of exile from their previous environment was clearly defined and explained by most candidates.
- (b) Only a few candidates tackled this question, and their answers varied greatly in quality. At the top end there was a clear perception of the path which led Alexis to adjust his scale of values in the direction of something more lasting and satisfying than gold. At the other end there was a limited response in terms of his learning various practical skills (e.g. fishing and sailing), which betrayed a somewhat superficial reading of the text.

Question 5Flaubert: *Madame Bovary*

- (a) The terms of reference of the question were well understood. Most candidates established that Emma's pre-conceived ideas of romance, based on her reading, were bound to lead to disappointment in the face of reality. Some answers devoted unnecessary attention to her husband's inadequacies. Most were fair in their treatment of Emma, ascribing part of the blame to the male characters. Whilst the overall picture was generally accurate, a number of answers lacked the detail which is expected for a high score. For example, it was desirable to give examples of Emma's excitement at the very idea of having a lover, or of the behaviour she expected of them, based on her idealised vision of the relationship. Similarly, instances of the banality of what happened, and of the naïvety displayed by Emma in failing to see Rodolphe's cliché-ridden performance, would have enhanced otherwise sound answers.
- (b) Much the same observations hold good for this question. Candidates were aware that the ball represented, for Emma, the realisation of her dreams. One or two of the best answers alluded to the peasants looking through the window, and inspiring the determination in Emma to remain on the right side of the divide. Again, some answers dwelt at length on Charles's inability to satisfy her, whereas the thrust of a really perceptive answer should have been that this world was, in reality, anything but ideal. Candidates did not appear to have registered the fact that Flaubert's critical eye was just as active in his depiction of the upper classes as of the bourgeoisie, and Emma's inability to see the negative aspects of these people and their life-style was part of her problem.

Question 6Bazin: *Vipère au poing*

- (a) The first appearance of this text attracted a number of Centres, but unfortunately the questions set were largely misunderstood by those who tackled them. Whilst many essays displayed a good knowledge of the text, they failed to address the issues raised by the questions. The social attitudes displayed by the Rezeau family were the main issue in a minority of answers. Where Examiners were looking for old-fashioned, even outdated values and practices, obsession with appearances, snobbery, superficial piety and so on, they all too often found a largely narrative account of Mme Rezeau's treatment of her children.
- (b) Most of those who chose this question did not consider the quotation in its context. They appeared to assume, wrongly, that the narrator was addressing himself personally to his mother, whereas the remark alludes more generally to his background and upbringing, of which his mother is certainly a significant part, but not the only aspect. Consequently, candidates generally gave an account of the battle between mother and son and failed to note that the narrator's apparent self-congratulation is related to his determination to put this damaging upbringing behind him and forge a new life with independent attitudes and values.

Question 7Camus: *L'Étranger*

- (a) Many candidates used the description of Meursault as *un monstre moral* as a signal to follow the logic of the prosecuting authorities by condemning his behaviour as set out in the first part of the story. This was not the point of the question. Candidates who understood that the quotation reveals more about the prosecuting authorities than it does about Meursault were on the right track. The way in which the character's unconventional behaviour and attitudes are perceived as a threat to society should have been read as an indictment of that society, not of Meursault. Candidates are not penalised for expressing personal views such as disapproval of Meursault's treatment of his mother, his girl-friend, or even the Chaplain, but they are expected to show an awareness of the author's position too.

- (b) Answers to this question tended to be sketchy and anecdotal. The better essays correctly established that the Court paid little attention to the attempts of Meursault's friends to defend his character. Only a few candidates were able to supply the relevant details and to point out that these individuals were not taken seriously by the Court because they were not 'respectable' people. Weaker essays included paraphrases of the testimony of the staff at the old people's home, who were not, in fact, Meursault's friends.

Question 8

Radiguet: *Le Diable au corps*

- (a) The heroic posturing of Radiguet's 'hero' is a major feature of the novel. Candidates who attempted this question were, by and large, unable to provide an analysis of this aspect. There are many examples of the adolescent boy trying, and usually failing, to behave like a Romantic hero. His tendency to review his own performance in this role enables the narrator to underline the hero's ineptitude and lack of experience. Candidates who pursued this line of enquiry were suitably rewarded.
- (b) Answers to this question were mainly more focused, although not always more detailed, than answers to **Question (a)**. Candidates showed a good understanding of the theme of freedom, as provided to the young in unusually large measure by the onset of war. Most commented on the fact that Marthe's husband was a soldier, but only the best answers engaged with the hero's ambivalent response to this, in the sense that he both took advantage of the enforced absence of his 'rival' and also felt some guilt and admiration towards the man.