

FRENCH

Paper 0685/01

Listening

Key messages

- Candidates showed good levels of both specific and general understanding. Performance was strong on the first two sections of the paper. Although the last section was found to be more challenging, as intended, a good number of candidates still scored good marks on the final two exercises. Outcomes were very similar to last year on all sections.
- New Centres should remind candidates to write clearly in blue or black pen. Candidates should not write first in pencil and then overwrite answers in pen as this can be very difficult to read. Candidates must cross out any material they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is a danger that extra distorting details will be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.

General comments

The demand of this year's paper was found to be very similar to that of the 2012 paper. Overall, the candidature performed well, with even weaker candidates able to achieve marks on a few questions in the final section. The candidature was familiar with the demands and structure of the paper and rubrics were understood. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics were accessible to candidates.

As last year, the French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, as well as opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations. Longer extracts featured a variety of register and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary which is tested in the first two sections of the test is drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the defined content.

Centres should note that where questions require a written response in French, full sentences are not required in answers. Brief answers are preferable as the risk of adding extra distorting material which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer is reduced. Candidates should not answer or infer from general knowledge as they run the risk of including material in their answers which is not on the recording and which may distort and invalidate.

The listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous. Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

Candidates need to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully. Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and there is not extra reading time before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers so as to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple-choice questions with visual options. Candidates performed very well in this opening exercise which is intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. All candidates understood the rubric well and the visuals caused no problems of interpretation. The extracts were short and straightforward. The vocabulary areas tested were prices, accommodation details, time, shops, school equipment, food, and personal items. Some experienced difficulty on **Question 2** which tested *à gauche* (incorrect answers often indicated *à droite*). Although other questions were very well done, **Question 7** (*le rôle de bœuf*) sometimes proved challenging.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an announcement for the town of St Valéry and tourist possibilities in the area. Candidates were mostly required to show their understanding by selecting one from three visual options. As in previous years, candidates usually managed a strong performance on this exercise. On **Question 9**, most spellings were recognisable and acceptable for *juin* but, occasionally, candidates offered *juillet*, *janvier* or even *aout*, which were not accepted. **Questions 10, 11, 13, 14** and **15** were well done. Some did not recognise *planche à voile* on **Question 12**. On **Question 16**, some did not recognise *grillades de fruits de mer*.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates heard four young people talking about the way they normally spend their holidays. The vocabulary was taken from the defined content and extracts included some opinions as well as occasional uses of tenses other than the present. The topic area was very accessible to candidates and large numbers achieved high marks. No one particular option seemed to be more difficult than another and no pattern of incorrect answers was discernible.

Candidates now appear to be very familiar with the requirement to tick six boxes on this exercise and there were very few incidents of candidates ticking fewer or more than the required number. Teachers should advise candidates to indicate the six true statements with either a tick or a cross. Some candidates used a system of both ticks and crosses to indicate both true and false statements which often proved confusing for them and for Examiners.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Marion talking about her life in Montréal. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). On **Question 18**, the word *banlieue* was not well known and appeared in various forms in candidates' answers. The most common incorrect renderings were an inappropriate split such as *bon lieu(e)* or *ban lieu(e)* which did not gain the mark. Centres are reminded of the general marking principle which states that words which are combined or split inappropriately do not gain the mark. On **Question 19**, many spellings of *canoë* were acceptable (*canoer*, *kanoë*, *cannue*, and *canoue*), as was the answer *kayak*. A frequently seen incorrect answer featured a different sport such as *patinage*. On **Question 20**, nearly all candidates were successful in identifying *différentes*. **Question 21** proved more difficult for many and only a few were able to identify and spell *court* correctly. Usually, an answer which is expressed with a word which means something else in French does not gain the mark. On this particular occasion, an exception was made to the general rule and, in this instance, the word *cour(s)* was accepted as a 'sound alike'. On **Question 22**, candidates could gain the mark either by rendering *arbres* or *feuilles*. Most chose to try to identify the first concept and were successful in gaining the mark despite many inaccurate spellings of the word *arbre*, such as *abre/arbe*: these were judged to be recognisable attempts at the word and worthy of the mark. Candidates who attempted to render *feuilles* also found this word difficult to spell. Provided that either of the elements was present, attempts at the other concept were disregarded and did not invalidate the answer, e.g. *faillies des arbres* gained the mark for the rendering of *arbres*. Overall, there was a wide range of marks on this exercise and the performance was generally very similar to the equivalent exercise in previous years.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The second part of this exercise featured another interview, this time with Nathan who also talked about his life in Montréal. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. All of the questions, apart from **Question 26**, could be answered briefly without using a verb. On **Question 23**, a good number recognised *animé* and rendered it successfully. Incorrect answers often featured reference to *un appartement*, e.g. *un appartement animé*, which distorted and invalidated the answer. **Question 24** was answered very well with nearly all candidates being able to identify and give an acceptable spelling of *géographie*. To score the mark on **Question 25**, candidates needed either to identify *professeurs* or to identify *ambiance* and many were successful. Acceptable spellings of *ambiance* had to begin with *ambi* or *embi* and finish in *ence*, *ense*, *ance* or *anse*. Some candidates who identified one of these concepts correctly then went on to invalidate their answers by adding an extra distorting concept such as *bonne faculté*. **Question 26** was the only question on this exercise where candidates needed to produce a verb to score the mark. Candidates needed to convey that Nathan watches the sport, rather than plays it, and many were able to do this with an answer such as *regarde le match hockey*. The final question proved very challenging for many and there were relatively few candidates who could render *sous-sol* correctly. Attempts produced as one word or two words were deemed acceptable. To score, the answer had to begin with *sous*, *sou* or *soux* and end with *sol*, *solle* or *sole*. Again, overall, performance on this exercise was very similar to that seen last year.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

The extract featured a longer interview with Sophie talking about a trip she made to Laos. Candidates coped quite well with this multiple-choice exercise which required them to follow a narrative that featured different time frames and in which feelings and opinions were expressed. In this exercise, candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section. Candidates understood the rubrics well. The vast majority attempted this exercise and managed to pick up at least two or three marks even if they went on to find the last exercise difficult. It is worth reminding candidates to use the longer reading time available at the beginning of this exercise, and the pauses, to read the question and options very carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give them an overall plan of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

Generally, candidates found the first three questions easier than the last three questions on this exercise. **Questions 31** and **32** were found to be the most challenging. On **Question 31**, it was necessary to listen to the whole of Sophie's observations about her first impressions and consider all the options. In order to answer correctly, (option C), candidates needed to recognise the importance of *surtout* in the sentence *je voyais surtout beaucoup de gens qui avaient seulement l'eau sale de la rivière pour se laver*. Weaker candidates opted for option A, (perhaps having heard the word *routes*) or option B (having heard *beaucoup de gens*). On **Question 32**, candidates needed to understand that the work had been done in the school library and not in classrooms. Candidates who answered incorrectly often opted for the answer which featured the word *décoré*, perhaps because they had heard *peinture* on the recording.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

This final exercise was intended to be the most demanding on the paper and included questions that were suitably challenging for the more able candidates. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates. The performance on this exercise was, again, very much in line with the standard of work seen last year. Candidates heard an interview with a DJ and questions tested both specific and general understanding. The extract featured more complex language with a range of tenses and also included opinions and explanations of opinions. There were two pauses in this exercise.

Candidates are required to write their answers in French. The language required in the answers featured vocabulary which was in the defined content. Many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (though **Questions 35**, **36** and **41** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Candidates did not have to write in full sentences. Most candidates had been well prepared and although there were some cases of overlong answers, Examiners reported that, on the whole, candidates seemed more aware of the need to answer as concisely as possible and were writing briefer answers. Some long answers featured many crossings out and were sometimes difficult to read. Weaker candidates sometimes tried to transcribe as much material as possible. If an Examiner is put in the position of having to try to locate the correct answer in the midst of extra irrelevant material (or several different answers which distort the

correct answer) the mark will not be awarded. Candidates should also not include inferences which are not heard on the recordings as this may invalidate their answer: answers are always to be found on the recording. Again, time spent reading the questions is never wasted as it gives candidates a framework to the recording and can help them to focus on the content of what they are about to hear.

On **Question 34**, a good number answered *argent de poche*. The word *argent* alone was not enough to gain the mark. Likewise *argent de poche* and *argent de porche* did not gain the mark. **Question 35** required candidates to convey the concept of going to bed. Candidates were awarded the mark for using any recognisable part of the verb *se coucher*, in any tense. The reflexive pronoun was not insisted upon. Acceptable alternatives such as *aller au lit* gained the mark. Consequently, a fair number of candidates scored the mark here. **Question 36** was phrased in such a way as to encourage candidates to respond with an infinitive rather than try to conjugate the verb. *Aller en discothèque* was enough to gain the mark. When candidates used other verbs such as *faire* or *voir*, this was likely to distort meaning. **Question 37** was found to be very accessible by candidates, with a good number responding briefly and adequately: *pas contente*. Answers which omitted the negative could not be rewarded. **Question 38** required the concept of taking the *bac* and this was found to be more difficult. Weaker candidates did not always render *passe* correctly and if *pas ton bac* was written, the mark was not awarded: such responses conveyed the opposite of what was required. Some attempted to offer alternatives such as *faire des études*, which was not precise enough to gain the mark. **Questions 39** and **40** required brief, one-word answers. Although spellings were often incorrect, many were successful in conveying the correct concepts: *nouvelle* for **Question 39** and *préférée* for **Question 40**. On **Question 41**, the idea of *manger équilibré* was successfully communicated by a good number. An alternative correct answer was *boire eau*. In the case of both these answers, attempts at any part of the verb were acceptable. **Question 42** proved to be one of the most challenging of the paper. Many candidates found it difficult to give an acceptable spelling of *oreille* and to combine this with *bonne* or *musicale* for the mark to be awarded. **Question 43** provided an appropriately difficult last question which was not beyond the more able candidates. Several concepts could gain the mark. Examiners looked for the idea of the job not being for/lasting a long time and if candidates could give the brief *pas longtemps* or *ce n'est pas long*, the mark was awarded. Of those that tried to say that the oldest DJs were 40, some invalidated their answers by saying that one could not work at 40 (which was not true according to the recording), rather than that one could not work after 40 (which was correct). Some wrote that one had to be young which was also accepted.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/02
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- keep their answers brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**.
- make sure that they read the essay question carefully and answer every part of it.
- allow time for checking their work to ensure that they have attempted every question (a blank space cannot be awarded any marks) and to make any corrections needed.
- ensure that when they change an answer they do so in such a way as to make it clear what is their final answer and what the Examiner is to mark.

General comments

Candidates seemed to be well-prepared for the style of the paper, and had no obvious difficulties in completing it within the time allowed. The vast majority attempted all sections and exercises on the paper. Levels of grammatical accuracy were variable, with verbs, genders, possessives and pronouns showing problems. Candidates should re-read what they have written once they have finished the paper, and correct simple errors such as words miscopied from the text, particularly in **Section 3** where such errors may mean that a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Candidates scored very well here, with most achieving the maximum mark. **Question 3** occasionally presented some difficulty, with a few confusing B (*chat*) with D (*chien*).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the vocabulary for various jobs: most candidates correctly identified at least four of the five. Candidates sometimes answered **Question 9** with F (*Facteur*) rather than connecting *Il vend de la viande* with C (*Boucher*).

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates read an e-mail from Grégoire to his friend Jean, and then answered a series of five multiple choice questions. Here, again, candidates scored well, with few incorrect answers.

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there are three marks available for communication, and two for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked write an invitation to a party, providing three pieces of information based on the pictures given:

- (a) where the party is taking place (*restaurant, café, hôtel, chez moi, chez mon ami, à la maison, dans la salle à manger*);
- (b) the date of the party (*10 / le dix juillet*);
- (c) what they are going to do (*danser, aller danser, aller à la discothèque*).

Many candidates combined the first two tasks into one sentence, which was perfectly acceptable.

There were a number of possible choices for the party venue, so most candidates managed something appropriate for the first task. Supplying the date for the second task was very straightforward, though many alternative spellings for *juillet* were produced (the correct spelling of this word was given on the question paper). The third picture presented candidates with a number of possible activities and these were credited where the interpretation seemed reasonable. *Danser* was seen on many occasions, and although this was credited for communication, it did not score a language mark.

In order to score the two marks available for language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Candidates who used a correct third person form of *être* in each of the first two tasks (*La fête est au restaurant, la date est le 10 juillet*) could score a language mark for each instance.

Credit is only given for the required tasks, so candidates have no need to write long answers, or add extra material. While communication marks can be scored with brief phrases, candidates should try to formulate sentences in order to score the marks available for language. A very few candidates did not base their answers on the drawings provided, perhaps seeing them as examples, and went on to offer different dates, places and activities – no marks could be awarded.

The majority of candidates attempted this exercise, and many scored at least four of the five marks available.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text and answer the questions in French. The majority of candidates coped well, and scored equally well. The focus of this exercise is to test candidates' ability to locate the correct answer to each question in the text provided. Therefore, although often a one or two word answer was sufficient, provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct information, answers lifted directly from the text were acceptable even if they contained a lot of extra material. This additional material was ignored except in the few instances where it contradicted the correct answer.

For **Question 17** there were two possible answers – either that Luc's parents were going to buy him a bike, or that Luc would be able to carry on playing football, though the second answer was much rarer. **Question 18** was sometimes incorrectly answered with *dans sa nouvelle maison...* rather than *loin (de sa nouvelle maison)*. In their answer to **Question 19**, candidates needed to explain that Luc had wanted a bike for a long time, and some only gave part of this answer. **Questions 20, 21** and **22** were all straightforward and were generally answered very well, with many candidates able to offer more than two reasons for **Question 22**. For **Question 23**, a number of candidates did not quite understand *...une nouvelle piste cyclable...* and tried to make something of *Il ne va pas devoir rouler sur la route*. **Question 24** was usually well answered, though some candidates did not make it clear that Luc was the person buying the bike and Arthur was the person helping to choose.

Exercise 2 Question 25

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were asked to:

- (a) describe the clothes they like to wear at weekends, together with their reasons;
- (b) describe the clothes they do not like, with their reasons;
- (c) say what clothes they would like to buy if they had a lot of money, again with reasons for their choices.

Ten marks were available for communication of the required elements and five marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available.

The vast majority of candidates attempted this question, dealing with all the tasks, and they were generally familiar with the vocabulary they needed. A very few seemed to be confused by the word *vêtements* – some thought it referred to food, and some just wrote about their activities at the weekend, rather than the clothes they liked to wear. Most candidates clearly spend their weekend wearing jeans or shorts and t-shirts, and there seems to be a universal dislike of school uniform. The reasons for their choices often involved comfort,

but many were unable to manage the correct spelling *confortable / inconfortable*. Trying to talk about 'formal' clothing also presented a few problems, as did the spelling of *couleur* and *chaussures*. For the third part of the task, candidates were able to express a range of opinions, many saying they would like to buy expensive and fashionable clothes by famous designers, because they were good quality, or because they loved fashion. Many others said that even if they had a lot of money, they would still buy the same sort of clothes as they do now.

Many essays were clearly written, in three paragraphs, as candidates concentrated on each section in turn, and many used elegant and fluent language. It is important that candidates take care to convey enough pieces of information to score the ten available marks for communication – where a candidate mentioned only one item of clothing and one reason for each task, this could only score six of the available communication marks.

The language used was very good, for the most part, although frequently lacking adjectival agreements and with some misspelling. Many candidates scored four or five marks for language, even if they did not score the maximum for communication.

Section 3

In **Section 3**, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer French texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for: candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. While it will be possible to lift some answers from the text, candidates need to be very discriminating in what they choose – additional material copied may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux* (they are told two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*). Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement. Where candidates decide that an answer is *Vrai*, the box **must be ticked** or no mark can be scored.

Question 26 was *Vrai*, which most candidates spotted, and the next four statements were false. Most candidates chose *Faux* for **Questions 27 to 29**, but a number incorrectly identified **Question 30** as *Vrai*, and **Question 31** as *Faux*.

The most common correction to **Question 27** was *On y mange des plats inspirés de toutes les grandes cuisines du monde*. The phrase from the text about *cuisine originale* was not enough on its own to correct the statement, but it was accepted as part of a longer answer. Some candidates offered just *Cuisine chinoise et indienne*, or made no reference to *...toutes/grandes...*, missing the point that the cooking at the restaurant was inspired by **all** the great styles of cookery, including French.

For **Question 28**, the correction looked for was that by the age of 32, Angèle was one of the best-known chefs in France. Some candidates tried for a correction using a different age, but it is never stated in the text at exactly what age she decided to start cooking. **Question 29** needed the idea that Angèle's father felt that she should go to university / finish her studies, or that he felt that she should cook in her spare time, which many candidates managed to express very well. Some were distracted by the beginning of the statement (*Son père...*) and chose as their correction the sentence from the text *Son père était à cette époque professeur...*, or invalidated an otherwise correct answer by including *donc* from the following part of the text.

For those candidates who realised that the statement in **Question 30** was false, the correction was very straightforward. Instead of going to university, Angèle had entered a cookery competition, or had won a cookery competition – the mention of cookery was seen as essential, so a few candidates who just said that she had entered a competition did not score the mark.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-38

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and many candidates found it quite challenging. Even though they were able to locate the correct part of the text, they were often not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response to the question or they were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptable response. In this exercise, candidates need to be

able to make the necessary changes between direct and reported speech and to deal with the resulting pronoun / possessive adjective confusion. It was often the case that where candidates chose to copy a chunk of text with the correct answer buried within it, the extra details they included rendered their answer invalid. It is worth bearing in mind that if one line of space is provided for candidates to write in, the expected answer will not be three or four lines long.

It was clear that candidates had generally found the text accessible, and had understood it well, even though answers did not always score because of faulty French and/or invalidations.

For **Question 32(a)**, the most straightforward answer was *la chaleur*, so answers involving mention of 'one of the hottest summers of the last 50 years', or 'temperatures which rose as high as 35°' were credited, and many candidates answered this well. Those candidates who did not focus on exactly what the question asked, and lifted from the text *Tout le monde trouvait difficile de s'adapter à la chaleur* invalidated their answer by the extra material copied. **Question 32(b)** was also done quite well: almost all candidates understood that old people who lived alone were the ones most at risk. In some cases the 'living alone' element was omitted, and in others, the addition of *pourtant* was an invalidating factor. The next question was also well answered and candidates were able to say that some students abandoned their studies *À cause du manque de logements à prix réduit*. Answers which began with *Car...* or *Parce que...* (as a replacement for *À cause de*) were not accepted, nor were answers beginning *Du manque...*

A number of candidates lifted the sentence in direct speech, beginning *Pour moi, c'était évident...* as their answer to **Question 34**. In fact, what was needed was the next sentence, about arranging contact between the two generations. **Question 35(a)** was better answered than **35(b)**: the students wanted *logement / loyer à prix réduit*. Some candidates invalidated their answer to **35(b)** (*La présence d'une personne jeune*) by the addition of extra material.

Question 36 needed to be read carefully – the question asked *Quelle tâche ménagère...?* to which the answer was *Nettoyer*. The inclusion of additional material such as *...rendent de petits services...* or *...passer un peu de temps avec...* was treated as invalidation as it became unclear whether or not the candidate had understood the question. The next question was the one which candidates seemed to find the most difficult – the idea they needed to express was that the meeting between the two generations was essential so that each participant could **get to know the other** or could **find out whether they would get on**. **Question 38**, the last on the paper, asked in part **(a)** what the friendship had brought to Estelle – *conseils / l'expérience de Marie-Louise*; and in part **(b)** what it had brought to Marie-Louise – *l'informatique / elle est en contact e-mail avec ses enfants*. This second part was generally answered very well. Candidates had clearly understood the text, but some reversed their answers to parts **(a)** and **(b)**.

The accessibility of the text was shown by the fact that almost all candidates, at a range of linguistic levels, attempted some, if not all the questions of this last exercise, and achieved a range of scores.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/03
Speaking

Key messages

- Candidates who performed well in the Role plays were concise and kept to the tasks stated on the Role play cards.
- Timings were usually well observed in Centres. In a few Centres, conversation sections were too short or too long.
- Most Centres remembered to include questions in **both** conversation sections to elicit past and future tenses from candidates. Such tense usage is essential if candidates are to score more than 6 marks for Linguistic content.
- As in 2012, the best performances at all levels of ability were in Centres where there had not been over preparation of work and in which spontaneous and natural conversations were allowed to develop. In such Centres, candidates were given the opportunity to respond not just to straightforward questions, but also to unexpected ones which enabled them to develop their answers and explain their opinions.
- While the breadth of topic coverage was good in most Centres, a few Centres needed to cover a wider range of topics.

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed a Core Curriculum or an Extended Curriculum course.

The standard of work heard was very good and similar to that heard in previous years. Most Examiners were familiar with the format of the test and conducted the examination efficiently. In the Role plays, Examiners were usually careful to adhere to the cues provided, prompting where necessary and encouraging candidates to work for marks. Examiners generally seemed aware of the need to give candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do in the conversation sections. On the whole, candidates seemed aware of the demands of the test and had done the necessary preparation.

Centres are reminded that while Examiners should be granted access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' notes booklet/Role play cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted, so that they can prepare the Role plays, **it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the contents of these materials remain confidential and are not shared with candidates.** The Teachers' notes booklet and Role play cards must be returned to the Centre's secure storage facility whenever preparation is not taking place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the materials must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are also reminded that candidates must not be permitted to do any writing during their preparation time or in the examination and must therefore not be allowed to bring any pens/pencils etc with them into the preparation area. There must be no whispering between the Examiner and candidate in the examination: communication between the Examiner and the candidate must be clearly audible on the recording. Candidates must not bring mobile phones into the preparation/examination area and Examiners' phones must remain switched off.

Examiners need to understand the requirements of the mark scheme in order that they ask the right sort of questions, which will stretch candidates and give them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, Examiners who included unexpected questions and went beyond straightforward 'closed' questions gave candidates the possibility of scoring in the Good band or above on scale **(a)**, Comprehension/responsiveness. It is also essential to include questions which will elicit past and future tenses in both conversation sections as candidates need to show they can use both of these tenses accurately for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded on scale **(b)**, Linguistic content.

The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out in the Teachers' notes booklet and all Centres are strongly advised to read through a past paper well in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties. A French language version of these requirements also exists and is available on the Cambridge website.

- **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently and Centres are thanked for this. Although, overall, the number of clerical errors found by Moderators decreased this year, in certain Centres a number of clerical errors, some very large, were discovered. In some cases, the addition of marks was incorrect and in others, although the marks had been added up correctly on the working mark sheet, an incorrect total was then transferred to the MS1 mark sheet/computer. It is essential that all clerical work is checked with great care to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate must be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Nearly all Centres remembered to submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample, duly completed, with their recorded sample and mark sheets. This form is intended to serve as a checklist for those in the Centre responsible for preparing the sample for external moderation and despatching it to Cambridge. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct before they despatch it to Cambridge, and the completed form must be submitted to Cambridge with the sample. If there is more than one Examiner per Centre, the relevant section on the form must be completed.

- **Sample size**

Nearly all Centres submitted a correct and representative sample. Centres with more than one Examiner had clearly gone to some trouble to ensure that a good range of marks and Examiners were represented on the sample. Many such samples were well documented. New Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed.

- **Recording quality and presentation of sample**

This year, Moderators commented that a high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality. Most Centres submitted digital recordings. Centres are reminded that whatever the method chosen for recording, if an external microphone is used, this should be positioned to favour the candidate.

In some cases it was difficult or impossible to access the recorded sample provided by the Centre:

- Several Centres sent blank CDs or CDs of recordings that were barely audible: Centres must check the CD to ensure that their recorded sample is clearly audible before despatching it to Cambridge. This check should be carried out on a different machine to the one on which the recordings were made. If there is a problem, the Centre should get in touch with Cambridge immediately. Centres are reminded of the need to check all recording equipment prior to the live exams.
- Some recordings had not been saved as .mp3 files and could not be accessed by the moderator: it is essential that files are saved as .mp3. If new Centres are considering ways to record, it is worth obtaining a digital voice recorder (IC recorder). These are easy to use and the sound quality is excellent. Because the device is small, it helps make the experience less intimidating for candidates.
- Some CDs were damaged when they arrived at Cambridge: CDs/cassettes must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a bar-code) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge.
- In some cases, poor labelling made it difficult for the moderator to establish which recordings had been sent as part of the sample and/or to find the particular recordings required. Please note:
 - The cassette/CD must always be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings (candidate name and number). For cassettes these must be presented in order of play.

- **On CDs, it is essential that each recording be saved as a separate file.** The recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number.
- Each CD/cassette must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette/CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. (For CDs, this introduction can be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction'.))
- Whether Centres are submitting samples on cassette or CD, the Examiner must introduce each candidate on the recorded sample by name and number, and also state the Role play card number. **This announcement must not be made by the candidate.**

In addition to the above, Centres are reminded to avoid sticking labels on CDs and to only write on the surface of the CD with a CD-friendly pen.

It remains crucial that the Centre replies promptly if Cambridge gets in touch to query any aspect of the sample.

● **Internal moderation in Centres**

The standard of internal moderation was, as last year, very good. Centres showed professional commitment in their efforts to achieve parity of application of the mark scheme across Examiners. Documentation of the procedures followed in Centres was usually very clear.

All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation.

Where internal moderation is carried out in a Centre it is doubly crucial that the addition of marks is checked for clerical errors before the process begins. This is to avoid the situation where an Examiner's marks are adjusted by the internal moderator on the basis of mark differences created by errors in the adding up.

Please note, if internal moderation procedures find only minor differences between the marking of an Examiner and the agreed Centre standard, the marks of candidates in that particular Examiner's group **should not be changed**, but should be submitted as they are. In other words, if no adjustment to an Examiner's marks as a whole is necessary, the marks of the specific candidates sampled must not be changed in isolation. However, if after checking the sample for a particular Examiner the decision is taken to adjust that Examiner's marks, **that adjustment must then be applied to the marks of all the candidates who were examined by that Examiner**, and not just to the work of those candidates who were part of the internal check. Likewise, if an Examiner is judged to be out of line over part of the mark range, the marks of all the other candidates s/he examined with a mark in that range should be adjusted. Where a particular Examiner is judged to be out of line, it is good practice to select some more of that Examiner's candidates for a further check.

● **Duration of tests / missing elements**

Most Centres adhered to the stipulated timings, but some Centres persist in going under or over the five minutes prescribed for the Topic presentation/conversation and/or the General conversation test. Each of these sections **must** last for approximately five minutes. Where conversations are short or missing candidates will be disadvantaged.

● **Application of the mark scheme**

As last year, Examiners in Centres were usually successful in applying the mark scheme fairly and consistently. Many Centres had no adjustments made to their marks as they were in line with the agreed standard. Some Centres had adjustments made to just part of the mark range.

In the Role plays, some Examiners did not realise that a short response to a task (in some cases, just one word), if appropriate, is worthy of a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task then Examiners are free to split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be

awarded is 1. If a candidate chooses to use a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and not 3 is appropriate.

In the Conversation sections, marking tended to be generous in some Centres, as marks were awarded in the higher bands when there was no evidence that candidates could respond **in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions or that they could communicate consistently and accurately in past and future tenses**. Impression marks were usually awarded fairly in Centres.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

This section of the test was conducted most successfully when Examiners kept to their script. Examiners are reminded not to change their cues as the level of difficulty should remain the same for all candidates.

Nearly all Centres encouraged candidates to attempt all parts of each task and many Examiners prompted appropriately when candidates needed encouragement. Two-part tasks were split into (i) and (ii) on the Role play cards. This helped candidates to remember to attempt both parts of the tasks and there were few cases of candidates (and Examiners) missing out parts of tasks.

Overlong, elaborate answers are to be discouraged as marks are only awarded for the set tasks. Candidates need to understand that if they add material to the set task, it may distort meaning and detract from an otherwise correct answer. They should be reminded to listen carefully to the Examiner as on all the A Role play situations, there is a task which requires candidates to listen and choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. Likewise, on all the B Role plays there is always one task which requires the candidate to respond to an unexpected question.

A Role plays

The A Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty, very similar in difficulty to those of 2012, and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All of the A Role play situations featured a task which required a question to be asked and a task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner. Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least 1 mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded. If it can be done naturally and sympathetically, Examiners should feel free to query pronunciation in the Role plays in cases where mispronunciation renders the message unclear.

Buying ice cream

Candidates performed well on this Role play. Some candidates combined tasks and this was perfectly acceptable. All were able to state what they wished to buy. In Task 2, candidates who ordered two ice creams did not always pronounce *deux* well. The vast majority chose to order chocolate flavour ice creams for Task 3. Task 4, which required candidates to choose the size of ice creams from the two options offered by the Examiner, was well done, as was the last task, which required candidates to ask a question.

Buying a jumper

Again, candidates performed well on this Role play. Pronunciation was not always accurate in attempts at the first task and frequent mispronunciations of *pull* as *poule* were heard. Most were able to say for whom they were buying the jumper and what size they required (Tasks 2 and 3). In Task 4, all were successful in choosing the preferred colour from the two options offered. The last task was well done.

Buying tickets for a theme park

This Role play was also approached well by candidates. In Task 1, pronunciation of *billets/tickets* proved difficult for some. Candidates did well on Tasks 2 and 3: they were able to choose a day from the two options offered and say how many tickets they wanted to buy. In Task 4, candidates were successful in asking an appropriate question. In the last task, while most could communicate their nationality, some candidates gave the name of their country e.g. *Je suis Espagne* rather than their nationality. Such answers

gained 2 marks (the judgement was that although the required information was communicated, the language used was not the most appropriate).

B Role plays

The B Role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, give an opinion, apologise or express displeasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the Role plays. As last year, they differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score marks on most tasks. It is important that Examiners know their own role and stick to the set tasks. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to consider likely questions in the 15 minutes preparation time, immediately prior to the Speaking test, and to listen carefully in the examination room.

Inviting a friend to go out

The initial task of inviting the friend out was usually done quite well. Difficulty manipulating phrases such as *je veux t'inviter en ville* were a characteristic of less successful attempts. Some confused *t'* with *l'* and produced a phrase such as *je l'invite*. In order to gain the 3 marks available for Task 2, candidates needed (i) to apologise and (ii) to explain why they did not want to go to see the film. For (i), instead of an apology, some candidates offered excuses for not going out (the second element of the task). Completion of one element was rewarded with 1 mark following the usual rule. Task 3 was usually well done by candidates, although some mistook *Comment...?* in the cue to mean 'When...?'. On the last task, to score 3 marks, candidates needed to use a correct verb in their question. Many were able to communicate and use an interrogative form, but the conjugation of the verb was difficult for weaker candidates.

Talking to a friend about a job

Again, the first task was approached well and most candidates were successful in saying where they worked. Task 2, requiring an opinion and a reason for this opinion, was attempted in a variety of ways. Opinions varied from the straightforward to the more complex and candidates offered some good reasons for liking or disliking their jobs. Most could state when they started and finished (Task 3) – if candidates chose to answer with two verbs, both needed to be correct for a mark of 3 to be awarded. In Task 4, the unexpected question could be answered in any tense and candidates were free to say what they had done or would do with their earnings. Most stated what they wanted to buy, eg clothes and a new phone. A few indicated that they needed to save for future studies. Any appropriate question was accepted on the last task. Most asked what kind of job the friend wanted, but some asked more specific questions concerning pay, times and location. Again, for a mark of 3 to be scored, the verb needed to be accurate.

Phoning a hotel

The first task proved straightforward and most candidates were able to say that they were going to arrive late. More complicated explanations were not required. In Task 2, the examples provided in brackets had clearly helped candidates to focus during their preparation time and most chose to say they had used the Internet to make their booking. Candidates who stated that they wanted to make a reservation did not gain the marks for this task. The unexpected question was often answered well – a brief response was quite appropriate, and sufficient to attract full marks. In order to gain the 3 marks available for Task 3, candidates needed (i) to express their displeasure and (ii) to explain why they were not pleased. For (i), most opted for *je ne suis pas content(e)* or *ça ne va pas*. Good explanations included *j'ai très faim* or *j'ai fait un long voyage et je veux manger*. The last task proved difficult for some. Weaker candidates tried to make the reservation themselves or said they wanted to eat in the Italian restaurant: such responses gained 1 mark for partial completion of the task. To score 3 marks, candidates needed to ask the hotel employee to make the booking for them.

Topic presentation and conversation

The standard of work heard in this section covered the full range of performance. The whole section (Topic presentation plus Topic conversation) should last for about five minutes. As last year, the timings were generally good. The instructions state that the presentation by the candidate should last between one and two minutes, and candidates must not be allowed to present their prepared material for longer than this. The remainder of the five minutes allocated to this section of the test should be spent on the follow-up conversation. Most Centres were accurate in their timings but there were cases of overlong presentations (which then cut short the time available for the follow-up questions) and there were also cases of very short

presentations. In both of these cases, candidates are likely to be disadvantaged. Examiners should not ask questions too early during the presentation time, but should start asking questions once the candidate has spoken on their chosen topic for two minutes.

While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. It is also important that the questions do not encourage the candidate merely to repeat information which has already been given in the presentation. Questions should instead arise spontaneously so that the conversation develops in a natural way. While, Examiners were usually aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses, in a few Centres, questions to test different tenses were not asked in this section.

It is evident that Centres are warning candidates that 'Myself' is not a suitable topic. New Centres should note that this is because it is too wide-ranging and therefore leaves little material to explore in the General conversation section of the examination. It should also be noted that it is not in the spirit of the examination for all candidates in a Centre/teaching group to prepare the same topic. As usual, a wide range of topics was heard. While topics on the environment, and healthy living are increasingly popular, many candidates continue to choose *mes vacances*, *mon pays*, *mes projets d'avenir*, *mon école*, *le sport*, *mes loisirs*, which are all very suitable choices. The study of literature does not form part of this IGCSE syllabus, but should candidates wish to present a topic on a book or a film, this is acceptable providing that they have the linguistic maturity to express their ideas both in the initial presentation and in the follow-up conversation. Given the international nature of this candidature, and the fact that many candidates have connections with more than one part of the world, there were many fascinating accounts of life in other countries. A common theme in many such presentations was the importance of education as a means to fulfilling aspirations.

Candidates had usually prepared their topics thoroughly. The vast majority were able to sustain their presentation for at least a minute, with many choosing to talk for between one-and-a-half and two minutes. The pace of delivery was generally appropriate – it is important that candidates present clearly, at a reasonable pace, but not too fast. Candidates should be reminded that good pronunciation is important if the message is to be communicated unambiguously. The best performances came from candidates who had worked hard to equip themselves with the vocabulary and structures they needed to present their topic, and who could then maintain the level they achieved in the presentation in the follow-up conversation. Such performances were possible where Examiners allowed a genuine conversation to develop, listening carefully to what the candidate had to say and asking questions that arose naturally from the presentation and in the course of the discussion, and avoiding questions which required candidates to repeat material already offered.

General conversation

As always, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. Very good numbers of candidates showed that they could communicate effectively, evidence that oral work remains central to learning in IGCSE classrooms. Many candidates were clearly used to responding to 'open' style questions fluently and spontaneously. The language used by candidates in such performances displayed very good control of tenses and use of subordination, as well as a wide range of structures and appropriate vocabulary.

Most Centres understood that this section of the test should consist of 5 minutes of discussion and that questions should focus on two or three of the examination topics listed in the syllabus and encourage better candidates to develop their answers and introduce more complex structures. There was still a tendency in some Centres to ask each candidate a series of unconnected questions on a large number of topics. With weaker candidates who can only answer 'closed', superficial questions it may be necessary to cover more than two or three topics, but care must still be taken to link questions and clearly signal any change of topic so as not cause confusion.

Different topics should be covered with different candidates in order to ensure good syllabus coverage for the Centre as a whole. It is not acceptable to habitually cover the same two or three topics with each candidate. In a small number of Centres, while a variety of topics were covered across the candidature, on each occasion that a topic was covered, the same questions were asked: this approach must also be avoided. While it is common practice to make use of banks of questions in the classroom, reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test will result in stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and where the candidate seems to be delivering a series of pre-learnt mini presentations. The descriptors in the Mark scheme refer to a hierarchy of questions, moving from straightforward to unexpected questions, in both conversation sections. In order to access marks in the higher bands, candidates need to do more than answer a series of straightforward, predictable questions. They should also be able to answer unexpected questions, requiring

opinions and justifications and the use of more complex language and structures. It was noted by Moderators that there seemed to be a greater awareness in Centres this year of the need to systematically include questions to test past and future tenses.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

The more successful candidates' scripts were characterised by the following features:

- The rubric was followed closely.
- The answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- The length of each answer was between 130 and 140 words, as directed.
- The candidate wrote mainly French which s/he knew to be correct and avoided language with which s/he was unfamiliar.
- There was a variety of lexicon and structures with little repetition.
- Answers were presented with minimal incidence of basic errors.
- Handwriting was clearly legible.

General comments

The entry for this paper continues to expand and the overall quality of the candidature remains high. The questions were tackled with enthusiasm by the majority and the knowledge of the French language displayed on many scripts was impressive. Answers to **Question 1**, where candidates are given specific tasks to fulfil, were particularly well handled. The narrative in **Question 2** was not always of the same standard and this issue is addressed in a later section of this report. Where candidates were not able to do themselves justice, this was often because they did not follow the directions given in the rubric and omitted certain tasks, because they wrote to excessive length to the detriment of their answers, or because of other shortcomings in examination technique. It is to these candidates in particular that the following advice is addressed.

To score well for communication it is very important, especially in **Question 1**, to observe the detail of the directions given in the rubric. A number of candidates overlooked certain tasks which automatically restricted their ability to gain marks. Each task must be addressed and should be answered in a tense appropriate to the task. If the task is phrased in a present tense, a reply should be made in the same tense. In **Question 2**, past tenses are required as indicated in the instructions. Some candidates wrote in a mixture of different time frames which was inappropriate. Some did not include *réactions* as directed in **Question 2**, and marks for communication were affected. More successful candidates kept closely to the requirements of the questions set and avoided verbiage or irrelevance. Material which was introduced which did not pertain to the subject was not credited for language or content.

The more successful candidates used their time effectively, preparing a brief plan under certain headings or paragraphs. To an extent, the detailed directions in **Question 1** provided such a framework. In **Question 2**, the narrative, the candidates are left to their own initiative to devise an anecdote, and some did not give sufficient thought to planning their answer. The result was that they sometimes said all they had to say in 100 words or so and resorted to verbiage or marginally relevant material to reach the target of 140 words. Others attempted so much that they wrote far in excess of the word limit, to the detriment of their answer, and increasing the likelihood of linguistic errors. No credit can be given for content or language that occurs after the 140th word.

The better candidates composed each sentence carefully and paid particular attention to verb forms. Grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. Correct genders and agreement of adjectives and past participles, where necessary, are conditions for obtaining marks for language. Verbs must be in the correct tense and the correct person to gain credit. The better candidates did not put too much reliance on repeated phrases, such as *il y a* or possessives. They did not 'force in' certain set phrases or idioms, regardless of the context. The latter practice had a detrimental effect on the quality of some answers, which was reflected in a reduced mark for 'general impression'. A minority tried to

make use of as many adjectives as possible. This should be discouraged as it is unnecessary and spoils the effect of the response.

Some candidates wrote freely in French and included a rich variety of vocabulary and more complex linguistic structures. Others of more modest capacity should try not to be over-ambitious and should aim to write within their limitations. In free composition, such as is examined in this paper, it is a wise maxim to 'write what you know is correct and avoid what you do not know or are unsure of. If you cannot say it, say something else. Show the Examiner what you can do, not what you cannot'. For example, if candidates do not know the verb 'to rain', they might use the verb 'to snow' instead.

When they have finished answers, candidates are advised to make full use of the time left to check their work for errors. The time available for this component is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look at the spelling of common words in particular and ensure that the gender of the writer or of the persons in a narrative is consistent throughout. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French they cannot read. This year showed a deterioration in the standards of presentation with much crossing out and alteration. Some answers were made in such minuscule writing that Examiners could barely decipher what was meant. Some employed a style of writing which rendered certain letters indistinguishable from others. Examiners give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can, but there are limits and marks may be sacrificed if handwriting is illegible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) A house exchange

This was the more popular option and some interesting responses were received. Comprehension of the bullet points was generally good and most candidates were able to find plenty to say. Some made the mistake of writing too much in answer to the earlier tasks, which resulted in an over-long piece. In such cases, the last task could sometimes not be credited, as it fell outside the word count.

Success in handling letter etiquette was varied. Some addressed Madame Gant alternately as *tu* (informal) and *vous* (formal) and mixed formal register with familiar expressions. Examiners were tolerant of the use of the familiar, as Madame Gant may have been a friend of the writer, but inconsistency, such as the juxtaposition of *tu* and *votre*, could not get full credit for language.

Most began their letter by saying that they wished to make a house exchange with Madame Gant's family. Usually, candidates relied on the rubric's phrasing and said *Ma famille voudrait faire un échange de maisons avec votre famille*, while others had difficulty in saying *Ma famille et moi voudrions...* Candidates usually followed this opening with a simple statement such as *Nous avons déjà fait un échange de maisons*, which was enough to secure the first mark for communication. Some had visited distant lands such as Japan, Australia or USA. Some remained in their own country. Some unfortunately omitted the task or did not use the past tense.

Positive opinions of the experience were often thoughtfully expressed. Some simply said the exchange was excellent for all parties, which was enough to secure the communication mark for the task. Others went further, saying how much they enjoyed discovering the culture and language of a new country. On a practical level, some said how affordable the experience was and referred to the advantages of house dwelling against expensive hotels. Attempts at past tenses were not always successful and weaker candidates tended to mix past and present tenses in answer to this task.

Reasons for choosing Paris for a house exchange were varied. Some said they wished to practise their French. Others had family or friends who lived there. Candidates wrote of fine food, boat trips on the Seine and friendly people. Some were drawn to the hustle and bustle of living in a capital city. Others were attracted to the charms of a 'quiet, small town'. Many made reference to the beauty and culture of Paris and wished to visit the sights. These regularly included the Eiffel Tower or the Champs Élysées. No penalty was incurred for misspelling such proper nouns. It was appropriate to use present tenses to describe the attractions of Paris, but some made correct use of the conditional tense to say what they would do during their stay. This topic was treated with enthusiasm.

The task of describing their own house was relatively straightforward, requiring present tenses and everyday vocabulary. Some houses were extremely lavish, containing multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, and with

indoor and outdoor pools and extensive gardens. The Gants would be impressed by the modern facilities, the IT equipment, the large TV's and the well equipped kitchen. Those who described flats stressed how roomy they were, occupying several floors and being ideally situated. Finding the appropriate vocabulary was not usually a problem but precision of spelling and the accuracy of adjectival agreements were not always in evidence.

Nearby attractions were many and varied. They included smart shops, historic buildings, sports centres and beautiful countryside. Ideas were successfully expressed by using present tenses to describe the attractions, and conditional or future tenses to say what the Gants would or will be able to enjoy or admire during their stay.

Question 1(b) A bad camping experience

Although less popular than **Question 1(a)**, this question inspired some excellent responses. Letter etiquette was usually well observed as candidates, being on familiar ground writing to a friend, were able to keep to an informal register. They began with a friendly *Bonjour* or *Ça va* and closed with a well known *formule* such as *amicalement* or *bisous*. *Tutoiement* was the norm, although Examiners were tolerant of the use of the formal *vous*, provided there was no inconsistency.

Misunderstanding of the topic was rare, and candidates generally tackled the question with enthusiasm. Most began by saying they had had a bad experience on a camping trip. The first task (say when you returned from your holiday) was not always addressed. Some seemed to overlook it in their eagerness to write about the calamities of the trip. The task could be fulfilled by using the verb *rentrer* from the rubric in the perfect tense and a time, as in *Je suis rentré(e) hier / samedi dernier / il y a deux jours*. Some said when they went on the camping trip, but did not complete the task set, which was to say when they returned.

Problems at the camp site were related with relish, although not all could use past tenses consistently. Weaker candidates tended to alternate between present and past tenses. On the campsite everything went wrong. Parents forgot to bring food, sleeping bags or even the tent. Facilities, especially the toilets and the cafés, were appalling and there was no hot water. Neighbours kept them awake at night with loud music. Other family members were annoying. There were mosquitoes, illness and accidents. Above all the weather was unkind. Many were unable to use weather expressions correctly. The simple *Il faisait froid* was rendered incorrectly with the verb *être*, even on above average scripts. There were storms and strong winds and rain, which caused particular havoc, wetting the campers and their equipment. Many attempted the irregular verb *pleuvoir* but only the better candidates used it correctly. Some confused it with the verb *pleurer*. Those who were unsure of this verb could easily have avoided it by saying something else.

The next bullet point was 'do you like camping and why (not)?'. Many gave reasons for liking camping. It was affordable. They loved nature and the open air. Camping offered peace and quiet and a change from the stress of city/school life. It was a chance to spend time with friends and family. They enjoyed the activities, swimming, games, hiking and the beach. Others disliked camping, especially in view of their recent experience. Too often it was cold and wet. They hated the small tents, having to do so much work, the flies and the absence of friends. They were tired of family holidays. They missed their PC and other IT items. They missed a warm bed and the comforts of home. One felt many were drawing on personal experience.

Next year, some would choose to go back to camping, as they liked it so much. The majority would go somewhere completely different. The future context was conveyed by various means. Some put a simple future, as in *Nous irons au bord de la mer*. Others used the verb *aller* with an infinitive as in *Je vais passer les vacances chez mon oncle*, while many used the construction in the stimulus and put *je voudrais...* with an infinitive, as in *Je voudrais passer mes vacances en France*. All these strategies were acceptable. Most offered a good reason for their choice. They would go to X to visit the sites. They would enjoy the comforts of a big hotel. They would go somewhere with a good climate and no summer rains. They would go to X because family members lived there. They would go to France to improve their French. There was a wide variety of destinations and reasons to go there.

Question 2 Lost during a walk

The narrative question required candidates to continue a story: 'On a long country walk with friends, you suddenly realised you were completely lost. What happened next?'. Many candidates attempted a dramatic adventure involving frightening walks through dense forests, encounters with wild animals such as bears and wild boar, more storms and bad weather. (Some made the same linguistic errors they made in **1(b)**). At last they found a road or a house and a friendly person to save the day. Some stories were told with a touch of

humour and self-deprecation. Candidates lost or forgot to bring a compass or a map (surprisingly few knew *la carte*). They argued fiercely over which way to go. Some climbed trees or hills to get a better view of their surroundings. Nearly all, it seemed, resorted to their mobile phones but there were usually problems. These did not work. There was no signal. Parents were not at home. (Candidates should be reminded that the verb *téléphoner* requires an indirect object.) Candidates were reduced to wandering about in the countryside. Some walked for hours and even days before they were found. They ran out of food or water. It was dark. They made camp for the night. Some fell ill or had serious accidents. Some candidates attempted the construction *se casser la jambe* but were unable to use it properly. Again they are advised to avoid such difficulties by saying something else of which they are more confident. Stories ended happily. They finally got through on the phone and parents and friends came to their rescue. Some summoned the police or the fire service. Others finally remembered how to get back to the starting place. They were reunited with the rest of the group or their parents. With hindsight, the adventure seemed like fun, but they had been afraid at the time. They decided never again to wander off without adult supervision or never to go out without the right equipment. Some did not grasp that they were lost at all and wrote about an item of lost property during a walk. Others ignored the direction to 'continue the story' and began with a long introduction, 'setting the scene'. No communication marks could be awarded to such material.

Some excellent accounts were achieved by the better candidates, who 'showed off their French' to good effect. They were able to relate a series of events in a variety of verbs and persons, using mainly perfect and imperfect tenses appropriately. Communication marks were awarded for three separate incidents, each expressed in a successful past tense. They handled *réactions* well. They expressed surprise and shock, joy and relief. The situation was curious, extraordinary or frightening. Two marks were awarded for two separate reactions, each expressed in a past tense. The narrative of the best scripts was conveyed with a minimal incidence of error and there was a wide range of vocabulary and structure.

Other, less gifted candidates, who may have achieved some success in **Question 1** where the tasks were more specific, performed markedly less well in **Question 2**, when they had to devise their own content. Linguistic demands were more stringent too, with the emphasis on past tenses. The narrative requires more thought and preparation than **Question 1** and above all it requires a thorough and methodical revision at the end to correct inaccuracies. The time allowed for this component should be sufficient to do this. Certain basic errors recurred on even above average scripts and many of these might have been eliminated. Typical of these errors was the failure to use the correct forms of verbs in the perfect tense, especially in the case of *être* verbs and reflexives. Common sources of error were weather expressions and expressions with *avoir* such as *avoir froid* and *avoir peur*. There was confusion of everyday words. *Entendre* was expressed as *écouter*, *voir* as *regarder*, and *crier* was used for *pleurer*. Common words were regularly misspelled, such as *beaucoup*, *malheureusement* and *rencontrer*. The agreement of adjectives and past participles was a regular source of error and the gender of the narrator alternated between masculine and feminine.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, the performance of large numbers of candidates was most creditable and the enthusiasm many have for the language was evident throughout.