

FRENCH

Paper 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

The wide variety of Centres and countries which enter candidates for this examination is always impressive, and the quality of work produced, together with conscientious observance of the syllabus requirements and the mark scheme by Teacher/Examiners, is truly admirable. Linguistically, the candidates entered covered the full range, from the weaker candidates struggling to use verbs accurately, to those able to speak easily and fluently on any subject and comfortable with complex structures. About a third of Centres entered needed no adjustment made to their marks and almost half needed an adjustment to only part of the mark range. The vast majority of Centres do an excellent job in their conduct of the examination, and treat candidates very sympathetically.

For the benefit of new Centres, it is worth repeating advice on recording and administration: before the examination takes place, the room to be used and the recording equipment should be checked – recordings should take place in as quiet a room as can be managed, with external microphone(s) if possible. It is important that both candidate and Examiner are audible – it is difficult to assess how well a candidate is responding, if the questions he or she is being asked cannot be heard!

If examinations are being recorded onto cassettes, these should be new, and should be recorded at normal speed – cassettes and CDs alike should be recorded in a format suitable for play on a normal cassette/CD player. Cases/boxes and CDs or cassettes should be labelled visibly with syllabus and Centre details and should show the numbers and order of the candidates recorded. Candidates should be introduced audibly by the Examiner, giving name and number at the beginning of the recording of each examination, and once an examination has begun, the recorder should not be stopped or paused until the end of that candidate's examination. Recorded material should be checked for audibility before despatch for moderation.

Each examination should last approximately 20 minutes: in order to minimise disruption to examinations and possible loss of parts of an examination, if 60 minute cassettes are used, only one candidate should be recorded per side, and with 90 minute cassettes, a maximum of two candidates should be recorded per side.

The sample of candidates, as set out in the syllabus booklet, should be despatched for moderation together with a copy of the Working Mark Sheet, completed with a mark in each column, according to the Speaking Test mark scheme, and a copy of the MS1 or electronic mark sheet – the addition of the marks should be checked carefully before transfer to MS1s and final submission.

Conduct of the examination

It is important that Examiners be familiar with the syllabus requirements and the format of the Speaking Test before they begin examining candidates. The Test consists of three parts:

Topic Presentation, 3 to 3½ minutes uninterrupted by the Examiner, on a topic chosen by the candidate, clearly related to francophone culture or society;

Topic Conversation, 7 to 8 minutes, on the same topic as that chosen by the candidate for his/her presentation – during this conversation, candidates should ask at least one question of the Examiner;

General Conversation, 8 to 9 minutes, on different topics from that previously discussed, but developing from straightforward questions about the candidate's background or interests to deal with more abstract and/or current issues - during this conversation, candidates should ask at least one question of the Examiner.

Examiners should do their best to keep to these timings, in the interests of all candidates and standards – shorter examinations do not give candidates time to develop their ideas and opinions. In longer examinations, candidates rarely perform better – fatigue causes a noticeable fall-off in fluency and accuracy.

Where candidates have not asked any questions in the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt them to do so, a minute or two before the end of each conversation section. Examiners need to think carefully about the length of their own replies to candidates' questions – they must ensure that candidates are allowed the maximum possible time to express themselves, and that their own answers are not taking up time which the candidate could use profitably – the Examiner's role is one of creating opportunities for the candidate to show what he/she can do.

Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)

At both A and AS Level there was a wide range of topics chosen by candidates, both from the listed Topic Areas in the syllabus booklet, and also some based on areas of individual interest. Candidates need to be made aware, when choosing their topic, that this should show some clear connection with the culture or society of a French-speaking country. Sometimes candidates will choose a very broad topic such as *L'Environnement*, which may be a good idea since there will be plenty of things to say about it – more than they could possibly fit into a 3 minute presentation! - but they must remember that, unless they make the francophone connection – choosing Nuclear Power in France, for example, or conservation in Mauritius, or agriculture in Senegal, their mark for the content element of their presentation will be halved.

Among the topic areas this year were the perennial favourites of pollution, the media, religion, women/young people in society, and newer hot favourites were health and fitness, tourism, sport, and food. The four latter subjects tended to be dealt with in a much more superficial way, and candidates were often unable to go beyond the factual.

Study of the mark scheme gives an idea of what should be included in the presentation – to achieve a mark of 9/10 for Content, the presentation needs to show “full and well-organised coverage of the topic; ideas and opinions included as well as factual points”; for a mark of 7/8 “relevant factual points though may be less good in ideas and opinions” and so on to a mark of 3/4 where material is thin, showing “hardly any ideas and opinions”.

It must be clear from this that some topics are more suitable than others – it is difficult to express ideas and opinions about a topic which is strictly factual, and candidates are likelier to have ideas and opinions to express if they choose a topic which interests them, rather than something which appears to be suitable but in which they have no personal interest.

Within a Centre, candidates would not normally all be expected to choose the same topic, for example; they would presumably all have different areas of interest – and even if they did all choose the same topic area, conversation would not follow the same pattern, as each candidate would probably treat what might seem a similar topic in an entirely different way.

Examiners should allow candidates to speak uninterrupted for the 3 to 3½ minutes of their presentation, but if they show signs of continuing any longer, Examiners should interrupt and begin asking questions.

Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)

This section is intended to explore the chosen topic area in greater depth – the Examiner's aim must be to draw the candidate out and allow him/her to develop and explore areas of interest in greater depth. Questions may ask for additional factual information, but should never just ask for a repetition of material from the presentation – though candidates and Examiners may have rehearsed, there should still be some unexpected questions, or candidates will not be able to score more than 5/6 for Comprehension and Responsiveness. Questions should move on from the factual to those such as *Comment?* and *Pourquoi?* Examiners must remember that candidates are not being examined on their knowledge of facts, but on their ability to understand and respond to spoken French – there are not necessarily “right” answers to questions, and there may be opinions expressed which disagree with those of the Examiner, but the candidate should be encouraged to express them and defend his/her point of view.

In this section, there are 5 marks available for questions asked of the Examiner by the candidates. If candidates do not ask questions in the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt them to do so. No marks can be awarded where a candidate asks no questions! The mark scheme clearly states that for a mark of 4/5 more than one question should be asked, with confidence – to achieve 5 marks, the questions should be accurate, relevant, and using a range of question forms – 5 instances of *qu'en pensez-vous* should not therefore be awarded 5 marks.

General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)

At the end of the Topic Conversation, Examiners should mark the move to the General Conversation, so that candidates (and Moderators) are aware of the change of subject – questions in the General Conversation should not move back to the area of the Topic Conversation – candidates are expected to be able to hold their own in conversation on a variety of areas.

The syllabus booklet suggests that Examiners begin the General Conversation with straightforward questions, for instance, about the candidate – they should, however, quickly move on to more abstract or current issues within the general topic areas.

The basic questions asked at IGCSE (holidays, family, School routine) are not particularly appropriate at this level, though they may be suitable to start a topic which could be developed to greater depth. For instance, if beginning with the topic of holidays, Examiners could move on to deal with the effects of tourism, whether good or bad, the current fashion for eco-tourism, the effect of flights to faraway places and carbon footprint, which, in turn, could lead to pollution and the environment.

This section should be an attempt at conversation, rather than one unrelated question after another, to which a candidate gives a well-rehearsed answer from memory, and after which the next question is on an entirely different subject. It is far better to discuss three or four subjects in depth than to ask a whole series of superficial questions where the answers never engage either candidate or Examiner. The Examiner must be willing to engage with the candidate and react to what he or she says – once again, there are no “correct” answers – what is looked for is the opportunity for the candidate to show that he or she is able to take part in conversation at a mature level, appropriate to A or AS Level.

In a Centre with several candidates, Examiners should take note that it is good practice to vary the topic areas and questions asked in General Conversation – candidates should not know what they are going to be asked about, or be able to predict what the next question will be! This variation should lead to more spontaneous and natural conversation, which is, after all, the aim of the examination.

Examiners must remember to prompt candidates to ask questions in this section too, and during preparation for the examination, remind candidates that they should try to ask questions relevant to the subjects under discussion.

For those wishing to improve their candidates' performances, the two most effective strategies would be to ensure that more demanding questions are asked in the General Conversation, and to prompt for questions in both conversation sections – 10 marks are available and candidates should be given the opportunity to work for them.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/21

Reading and Writing 21

General comments

Candidates generally appeared to find the topic relevant and one to which they could relate as part of their own experience. There were some highly commendable scripts from candidates who displayed a good level of comprehension of the texts with an ability to handle the language with fluency and accuracy in formulating their responses. At the other end of the scale, a significant number of candidates appeared ill-equipped linguistically to attempt the tasks with any degree of confidence. There were some for whom the texts clearly remained a mystery, and others who, even when one suspected that they might have understood some sections, had an insufficient level of competence in the language to enable them to make their points effectively.

A fair number of candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the required techniques, but others found the various tasks beyond them. Where candidates scored poorly, it was often because they copied whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own (often lengthy) opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text was a very common feature amongst some candidates. The rubric 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 – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake.

In **Question 1**, the word or words given as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing. See Comments on Specific Questions below for examples.

The practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which do nothing to enhance the overall impression for the quality of language mark: *Selon le deuxième paragraphe, les jeunes représentent-ils un marché intéressant parce que ... (3(a))*. The answer can begin perfectly satisfactorily: *Parce que ...*

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the question: 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the one section and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary section automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** A number of candidates wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin. Too often, good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

If, on the other hand, the responses to **Question 5** are significantly below the word limit, which was quite often the case here, the overall quality of language mark is reduced accordingly.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of not introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and, from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

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

The occasional candidate used bullet points to list the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark is likely to be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question proved quite straightforward: *lucratif*, *transmettre* and *impacts* (Items **b**, **d** and **e**) were the answers most often correctly identified, but *augmentation* commonly produced *grandissants* or *développement* rather than *expansion* in (**c**). *Touché* (**a**) caused some candidates to look for anything they thought might be a part participle: (*accepté*, *compris* or even (*le*) *marché*). Occasional marks were lost by the inclusion of extra words which meant that the answer did not fit the 'footprint' (see General Comments above): *impacts directs*; *pleine expansion*.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question, but the task proved beyond a number of candidates whose grasp of grammatical structures was not secure enough. Minor spelling mistakes were not penalised but grammatical errors were.

Item **2(a)** The straightforward transfer of passive to active was generally the best handled of the items, although the ending of *représente* was a source of some error.

Item **2(b)** The transfer from active to passive was less well handled however, a missing agreement on *comprise* accounting for some loss of marks.

Item **2(c)** The need for a subjunctive was recognised by a number of candidates, although not all successfully produced the correct form *transmette*.

Item **2(d)** The use of *dont* was beyond many candidates, and even if there were several other possible ways of reformulating the original: ... *qu'il lui faut absolument*; *qui lui est absolument indispensable*; *qu'il a absolument besoin d'avoir*, there were a number of incomprehensible attempts here.

In Item **2(e)**, candidates found it surprisingly difficult to supply an infinitive here, and even when they did, some made the sentence incomprehensible by leaving *mal* in the answer.

Question 3

In item **3(a)**, candidates needed to point out that young people represent a growing market with increasing purchasing power and influence on what the family buys, but without resorting to the straight lifting of *marché ... est en pleine expansion; pouvoir d'achat et ... influence sur la consommation familiale des adolescents et des jeunes grandissants* which many found irresistible.

Item **3(b)** was again subject to the lifting of *estime personnelle; l'image qu'il a de lui-même; le regard qu'il porte sur les autres*.

Item **3(c)** required three elements for three marks: that a thin/beautiful figure is the norm; that this is the only way for a girl/woman to be happy; and that boys must be dominant/rebellious/strong etc. to be cool. Candidates often managed this successfully, but it proved a demanding task for others.

Item **3(d)** was successfully handled by those who managed to avoid the temptation to 'lift' the quite easily re-phrasable *joue sur leur insécurité* and *ceux qui ne possèdent pas le produit offert sont nuls*.

Item **3(e)** asked what a young person could be led to do by a loss of self esteem, effectively requiring the candidates to re-work the nouns *isolement, dépression, consommation* and *déclenchement* into adjectives or verbs, or to preface them by appropriate verbs e.g. *subir une dépression*. Those candidates who saw the need for this generally scored very highly on this item; others who simply reproduced the list of nouns inevitably lost the marks through 'lifting'.

Question 4

Item **4(a)** Some candidates did not understand the *à quel point* in the question and simply answered *pendant leur jeunesse* or similar. But those who avoided the straight 'lifts' *une publicité toutes les trente minutes* or *huit spots ... sont diffusés chaque heure* found it relatively easy to score both marks.

Item **4(b)** 'Lifting' was again prevalent here with *tyrannie exercée; incapables de placer dans le panier; exercent une grande influence sur les décisions d'achat de la famille; meneurs du marché*, but many candidates successfully found other relatively simple ways of expressing the ideas: *Les enfants tyrannisent/forcent les parents ...; parents incapables de dire non à leurs enfants quand ceux-ci...; les enfants décident ce que la famille va acheter*.

In Item **4(c)**, candidates needed to mention that it was increasing obesity in young people. The question caused few problems other than some lifting (*développement rapide de l'obésité parmi les jeunes; ... que les publicités soient interdites*.)

Item **4(d)** suffered again from lifting (*ont maintenu fortement leur opposition; manqué d'activité physique, mauvais choix alimentaires*) all of which were relatively simple to avoid, but those who made the effort to re-phrase were often rewarded with 4/4.

Item **4(e)** *Pour lutter contre l'obésité, il faut que les autorités prennent des mesures comme la suppression des salles de sport* must have seemed improbable as an answer. There were some relatively easy marks on offer here to those candidates who manipulated the text even in small ways.

Question 5

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

Candidates were required to summarise *les moyens employés par la publicité pour attirer les jeunes et les effets que la publicité a sur eux et sur leurs parents*. There were 14 rewardable points to be made here, the most commonly identified as far as the means are concerned being: the exploitation of young people's insecurities; their desire to be cool; the presentation of idealized images; television campaigns during programmes for children and young people. Amongst the most commonly identified effects were the influence on what and how much is bought; the impact on self-esteem and view of other people; the possibility of isolation, depression etc.; and the risk of obesity. Some candidates latched onto one or two points early on (usually *l'obésité*, on which a number of general essays were produced) and simply repeated them in different words, but the better candidates scored quite highly here.

The Personal Response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic. The better candidates generally did with some imagination and originality – assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Others confined themselves rather unambitiously to reproducing elements from the text or to repeating the warning about obesity.

The quality of language varied considerably from idiomatic, fluent and accurate French, to barely comprehensible sentences. Verb forms were frequent sources of error e.g. the plural form of *il regarde* being given as *ils regardes*; verb agreements also seemed problematic. The difference between *à cause de* and *parce que* was not appreciated by a good number, and even when it was, it often appeared as *parceque*, *parsque* or *pasque*. Examples of a phonetic approach to spelling were fairly common: *le malau vent* (*le mal au ventre*); *ses l'a fotte de* (*c'est la faute de*). *Ses*, *ces*, *c'est*, *s'est* and *se* all appeared interchangeable in some scripts, as did *leur/leurs/ses/eux*. The use of definite and partitive articles was eccentric in many scripts, as was the use of pronouns.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/22

Reading and Writing 22

General Comments

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

The topic (mobile phones) was relevant to the experience of the candidates and one to which they appeared able to relate. This actually sometimes proved a problem in that the candidates repeated their own experiences or opinions rather than basing their answers on the evidence of the texts.

The majority candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own (often lengthy) opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, but a few failed to attempt one or both elements of **Question 5**, either because they had run out of time or stamina, or perhaps because they found the task beyond them.

As far as running out of time is concerned, the practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract from the overall impression for the quality of language mark: *Le portable peut-il être utile à l'adolescent quand ...4(c)* etc. The most pointless and frustrating examples consist of copying out the entire question before proceeding to the answer, the reasons for which are unclear. **It would help both candidates and Examiners if this habit could be discouraged.** There were also significant numbers of other candidates who insisted on trying to incorporate the words of the question as an introduction to every answer. For example, the first part of the answer to **Question 4(a)** does not need to be: *Les qualités du portable mentionnées dans le texte qui expliquent sa popularité sont qu'il est petit.* The mark is scored perfectly adequately by *Il est petit* on its own.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text was still quite a common feature amongst the weakest candidates, although perhaps somewhat less prevalent than in the past. 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.

The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake.

In **Question 1**, it was pleasing to note that candidates appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or

words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing. Some marks are still lost on this - see **Comments on specific questions** below.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original text and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** A large number of candidates wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin. Too often, good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

If, on the other hand, the responses to **Question 5** are significantly below the word limit, the overall quality of language mark is reduced accordingly.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of not introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

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

The occasional candidate used bullet points to list the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark is likely to be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally answered quite well, with most candidates getting off to a good start by correctly identifying *monter* (a) and *précisé* (b), but *interdire* (c) caused problems for those who failed to identify an infinitive, let alone the correct one. The plural *études* was very commonly and unsuccessfully pressed into service as a substitute for the singular *rapport* by quite a large number of candidates who interpreted *rapport* in the sense of 'report' rather than 'connection' and therefore missed the correct *lien*. *En conduisant* was well recognised but sometimes invalidated by the omission of the *en*. Some answers on the other hand were unfortunately invalidated by the addition of extra words which meant that they did not fit into the 'footprint' (see **General Comments**): *faisant monter* (a), *un lien* (d).

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.

Item 2(a) Some candidates found the transformation to the active surprisingly difficult, with carelessness over the removal of the agreement on *imposé* accounting for a large number of lost marks.

Item 2(b) The reverse happened commonly here, with failure to provide the necessary agreement on *conseillé* when transforming from the active.

Item 2(c) The need for the subjunctive was recognised by an encouragingly high proportion of candidates, some of whom then unfortunately lost the mark by producing *sois/soient/soi* or *interdi/interdis*.

Item 2(d) There were a number of acceptable answers here: ... *que le portable est utilisé / s'utilise / que l'utilisation du portable a lieu / qu'on utilise / qu'a lieu l'utilisation du ...* but this proved demanding and quite a large proportion of answers made little sense: *c'est dans la voiture un lieu d'utilisation...*

Item 2(e) Despite the number of operations to be performed, candidates scored surprisingly high on this item, with *elle se sens* being the main cause of those marks which were lost.

Question 3

Item 3(a) was well answered, with most candidates finding both the required elements. There were however some curious answers: *les tissus de la tête/des oreilles montent* and *cela dépend de la distance entre votre tête/vos oreilles et vous*, which raised the danger of mobile-phone use to a previously unsuspected level.

Item 3(b) was again generally well answered, but some failed to identify the difference in level of proof of danger as the required element for the second mark. *Les cigarettes sont mauvaises pour les poumons, les portables pour le cerveau* provided a fresh take on the question.

Item 3(c) discriminated between those candidates who scored the full four marks by straightforward manipulations (most obviously by converting the nouns into verbs) and those who failed to score by 'lifting' the easily avoided *limitation du temps et de la fréquence d'usage / utilisation d'un téléphone fixe / enlèvement des boucles d'oreilles etc.* Quite why one would be advised to *mettre des boucles d'oreille* before phoning remained unclear, but it was at least more likely than *il faut enlever les oreilles / interdire les oreilles*.

Item 3(d) required small manipulations to transform the 'lift' of *la fatigue, l'alcool et la prise de médicaments* into the perfectly acceptable *Quand on est fatigué, a bu ou a pris des médicaments*.

Item 3(e) was successfully handled by most, other than by those who became confused about shortening or lengthening reaction time, as was Item 3(f) other than by those who got lost by appearing to think that *détriment* was either the third person plural of a new verb or an adverb.

Question 4

Item 4(a) The sense of *tout-terrain* was not widely understood, but candidates generally made the point that *portables* are easily portable, although one suspected that some had taken the idea of not needing to cut holes in pockets/handbags/wallets rather literally. A small number thought that one needed to be careful using mobile phones on a *terrain qui glisse*.

Item 4(b) gave rise to some difficulty in distinguishing grammatically between parents and children and singulars and plurals, but it was not unreasonable to suppose that those who were going to *collège* at the age of eleven were children rather than parents.

Item 4(c) was subject to a fair amount of 'lifting': *un bus raté; une rentrée à la maison plus tard que prévue* etc were not difficult to avoid by using clauses beginning with *si* for example.

Item 4(d) was generally well understood, but *factures* sometimes became *facteurs*, *la ligne téléphonique* quite frequently became *le linge téléphonique*, and there was again some 'lifting' of *payées avec l'argent de poche*.

In Item 4(e), a surprising number of candidates omitted the second element (when might you need to contact *un dépanneur?*) but the first part was generally well handled despite some rather over-vague answers.

In Item 4(f), candidates were very successful in finding an alternative to the original (*abandon du monde enfantin*) and to a lesser extent *autonomie*, but *appartenir* was clearly not understood in quite a lot of cases, resulting in some woolly answers about talking to friends.

Question 5

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

Candidates were required to summarise '*les principaux dangers et avantages des téléphones portables, tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ces deux articles*'. The mark scheme identified sixteen rewardable points. A good number of candidates managed 8, 9 or 10. Of the dangers, the most usually mentioned were distraction, damage to the brain, lack of concentration and speed of reaction for drivers, the cost and the effect on homework. As for the advantages, the most commonly identified were size, calming parents' anxieties, safety, fewer disputes between parents and children, and talking to friends. Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore no mark. Others latched onto one or two points early on and simply repeated them in different words.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which some candidates did with some imagination and originality – assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Others did little other than recycle points made in the texts, sometimes without addressing the question of whether mobile phones should be allowed in Schools.

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. The weakest found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, with verbs (even entirely regular ones) being far the most common sources of error: particularly concerning was the notion that the plural of *il parle* is *ils parles*. There was a tendency to spell words as they sound: *des mots (maux) de tête; si on n'ai fatigué* etc. *Ce, ces, c'est, se, ses* appeared virtually interchangeable, and there was no discernible pattern to determine whether to use *ses/leur/leurs*, or *du, de la, des* or the ubiquitous *de*. Adjectival agreement was largely ignored by many. That said, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/23

Reading and Writing 23

General Comments

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

The topic (mobile phones) was relevant to the experience of the candidates and one to which they appeared able to relate. This sometimes even proved a problem in that some candidates repeated their own experiences or opinions rather than basing their answers on the evidence of the texts.

The majority of candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own (often lengthy) opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, but a few failed to attempt one or both elements of **Question 5**, either because they had run out of time or stamina, or perhaps because they found the task beyond them.

As far as running out of time is concerned, the practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract from the overall impression for the quality of language mark: *Le portable peut-il être utile à l'adolescent quand ...4(c)* etc. There were also significant numbers of other candidates who insisted on trying to incorporate the words of the question as an introduction to every answer. For example, the first part of the answer to **Question 4(a)** does not need to be: *Les qualités du portable mentionnées dans le texte qui expliquent sa popularité sont qu'il est petit*. The mark is scored perfectly adequately by *Il est petit* on its own.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text was still quite a common feature, although perhaps somewhat less prevalent than in the past. 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.

The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the place 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.

In **Question 1**, it was pleasing to note that candidates appear more aware of the need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing, but some marks are still lost on this - see **Comments on specific questions** below.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the question: 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the one and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores not awarded. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary section automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Many candidates wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin. Too often, good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

If, on the other hand, the responses to **Question 5** are significantly below the word limit, the overall quality of language mark is reduced accordingly.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of not introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

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

The occasional candidate used bullet points to list the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark is likely to be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally answered quite well, with most candidates getting off to a good start by correctly identifying *monter* (a) and *précisé* (b), but *interdire* (c) caused problems for those who failed to identify an infinitive. The plural *études* was very commonly and unsuccessfully pressed into service as a substitute for the singular *rapport* by quite a large number of candidates, who interpreted *rapport* in the sense of 'report' rather than 'connection' and therefore missed the correct *lien*. *En conduisant* was well recognised but sometimes invalidated by the omission of the *en*. Some answers on the other hand were unfortunately invalidated by the addition of extra words which meant that they did not fit into the 'footprint' (see **General Comments**): *faisant monter* (a), *un lien* (d).

Question 2

Item **2(a)** Some candidates found the transformation to the active surprisingly difficult, with carelessness over the removal of the agreement on *imposé* accounting for a large number of lost marks.

Item **2(b)** The reverse happened commonly here, with failure to provide the necessary agreement on *conseillé* when transforming from the active.

Item **2(c)** The need for the subjunctive was recognised by an encouragingly high proportion of candidates, some of whom then unfortunately lost the mark by producing *sois/soient/soi* or *interdi/interdis*.

Item **2(d)** There were a number of acceptable answers here: ... *que le portable est utilisé / s'utilise / que l'utilisation du portable a lieu / qu'on utilise / qu'à lieu l'utilisation du ...* but this proved demanding and many answers made little sense: *c'est dans la voiture un lieu d'utilisation...*

Item **2(e)** Despite the number of operations to be performed, candidates scored highly on this item, with *elle se sens* being the main cause of those marks which were lost.

Question 3

Item **3(a)** was well answered, with most candidates finding both the required elements. There were some curious answers: *les tissus de la tête/des oreilles montent* and *cela dépend de la distance entre tête/vos oreilles et vous*, which could not be rewarded.

Item **3(b)** was again generally well answered, but some failed to identify the difference in level of proof of danger as the required element for the second mark.

Item **3(c)** discriminated between those candidates who scored the full four marks by straightforward manipulations (most obviously by converting the nouns into verbs) and those who failed to score by 'lifting' the easily avoided *limitation du temps et de la fréquence d'usage / utilisation d'un téléphone fixe / enlèvement des boucles d'oreilles etc.*

Item **3(d)** required small manipulations to transform the 'lift' of *la fatigue, l'alcool et la prise de médicaments* into the perfectly acceptable *Quand on est fatigué, a bu ou a pris des médicaments.*

Item **3(e)** was successfully handled by most, other than by those who became confused about shortening or lengthening reaction time, as was Item **3(f)** other than by those who got lost by appearing to think that *détriment* was either the third person plural of a new verb or an adverb.

Question 4

Item **4(a)** The sense of *tout-terrain* was not widely understood, but candidates generally made the point that *portables* are easily portable, although one suspected that some had taken the idea of not needing to cut holes in pockets/handbags/wallets rather literally.

Item **4(b)** gave rise to some difficulty in distinguishing grammatically between parents and children and singulars and plurals.

Item **4(c)** was subject to a fair amount of 'lifting': *un bus raté; une rentrée à la maison plus tard que prévue* etc. were not difficult to avoid by using clauses beginning with *si* for example.

Item **4(d)** was generally well understood, but *factures* sometimes became *facteurs*, *la ligne téléphonique* quite frequently became *le linge téléphonique*, and there was again some 'lifting' of *payées avec l'argent de poche.*

In Item **4(e)**, a surprising number of candidates omitted the second element (when might you need to contact *un dépanneur?*) but the first part was generally well handled despite some rather over-vague answers.

In Item **4(f)**, candidates were very successful in finding an alternative to the original (*abandon du monde enfantin*) and to a lesser extent *autonomie*, but *appartenir* was clearly not understood in a number of cases, resulting in rather vague answers about talking to friends.

Question 5

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

Candidates were required to summarise '*les principaux dangers et avantages des téléphones portables tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ces deux articles*'. The mark scheme identified sixteen rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed 8, 9 or 10. Of the dangers, the most usually mentioned were the risk to the brain, lack of concentration and speed of reaction for drivers, the cost and the effect on homework; of the advantages, the most commonly identified were size, calming parents' anxieties, safety, fewer disputes between parents and children, and talking to friends. Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore no mark. Others latched onto one or two points early on and simply repeated them in different words.

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

stage. Others did little other than recycle points made in the texts, sometimes without addressing the question of whether mobile phones should be allowed in Schools.

Verbs (even entirely regular ones) were by far the most common sources of error: particularly concerning agreement. A common error was the notion that the plural of *il parle* is *ils parles*. There was a tendency to spell words as they sound: *les mots (maux) de tête; si on n'ai fatigué* etc. *Ce, ces, c'est, se, ses* appeared virtually interchangeable, and there was no discernible pattern to determine whether to use *ses/leur/leurs*, or *du, de la, des* or the ubiquitous *de*. Adjectival agreement was largely ignored by many. That said, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/31

Essay 31

General comments

In each paper candidates were given a choice of 5 questions, one on each of the following topics; *les Rapports humains, La Vie urbaine et rurale, La Santé et la forme, l'Égalité des chances* and *L'Environnement*. The questions on these topics were the same on papers 8682/31 and 9716/31, whilst different questions were set on papers 8682/32/33 and 9716/32. Many more Centres opted for the 9716 and 8682/32 than for 9716 and 8682/31.

The essays were marked out of 40, with a maximum of 24 for Language and of 16 for Content. It was felt that the overall standard of performance by candidates taking paper 9716/31/32 was a little higher than that of the previous year, whilst that of candidates taking 8682/31/32/33 was very similar to that of previous years, both for Language and Content. Scores ranged from a relatively small number of single-figure essays to a more satisfactory number in the lower thirties.

The Language work of weaker candidates was characterised by rather persistent errors in verb and tense forms, consistently simple sentence patterns with little use of subordinate clauses, frequent repetition of common words and little variety of vocabulary.

Candidates in the middle of the range showed a fair level of accuracy, common tenses and regular verbs being mostly correctly formed. There was some difficulty with irregular verbs and with the use of some prepositions. There was some variation in the choice of vocabulary, less common words being used, with a smaller incidence of inaccurate spelling.

The work of stronger candidates revealed a sound grasp of grammar and the capacity to use accurately more complex structures. Essays read easily in spite of lapses. Vocabulary tended to be varied and interesting.

Marks for Content, as in previous years, tended to fall between the lower end of the good and the middle of the adequate categories. Weaker essays were characterised by loose generalisation with little specific reference. Arguments were naïve and simplistic. Candidates tended to write loosely on the topic area with little concern for the question set. There was a general weakness in paragraphing and little build-up of an argument leading to a conclusion.

In the middle of the range, candidates displayed more focus on the question set, although the material presented was not consistently relevant. Ideas were generally quite well structured, paragraphing was more efficiently handled, arguments more clearly developed. Candidates showed a somewhat greater capacity to draw a conclusion from the material presented.

Towards the top of the range, sound knowledge of the subject and a clearer understanding of the issues involved were displayed. Relevance to the question set was maintained. There was a coherent structure to the essay, with a logical progression of ideas leading to a conclusion or conclusions.

The majority of candidates observed the rubric on the number of words to be written and most appeared to have ample time to complete the task. Presentation was on the whole satisfactory, though the handwriting of a disappointing number of candidates was almost illegible. Candidates finishing their work with ample time to spare would be well advised to carry out a systematic and careful revision of their work in order to eradicate careless, avoidable errors which may well have cost them marks. Adjectival agreements, verb endings, the spelling and gender of common nouns are areas that should be checked if time allows.

Examples of common language problems follow:

Misspellings of common words such as *mariage, tous les jours, problème, humain, déjà*,

recyclage, gaz, beaucoup, néanmoins, atmosphère, chacun, ressources, environnement, g
exemple, autorité, criminel, exercice, pays, technologie, il y a.

Gender of commonplace nouns such as *crime, acte, divorce, problème, monde, groupe, manque,*
façon, chose, exemple, espèce, augmentation, nourriture, repas, régime, rôle, solution.

Confusion / misuse of *tandis que/pendant que, parce que/à cause de, puisque/car, notre/nôtre, ce qui/ceux*
qui, ses/ces, guère/guerre, a/à, ou/où, leur/leurs, des/les, malade/maladie, bon/bien mauvais/mal,
place/endroit.

Inclusion of *y* and *en* when not required.

Omission of *ne* particularly in *ne...que*.

Failure to ink a verb with its subject as in *cela les aident, une cause de ces problèmes sont, les autorités*
d'un tel pays doit.

Constructions as in *La pollution est aujourd'hui importante de contrôler, nous sommes en détruisant la*
planète, les gens sont donnés moins de respect, des maladies causées par l'obésité qu'on fait face à.

Comments on individual questions (Papers 9716/32 and 8682/32)

Question 1

This question was the least popular but nevertheless attracted candidates across the ability range. It was generally agreed that in our increasingly materialistic and fast-moving society respect for others is on the decrease. Candidates compared modern times with the old days when young people showed respect for their elders and those in authority, such as teachers, and when society appeared to function better. Reference was made to lack of manners, social graces and the desire to help others such as older people.

Stronger candidates felt that society has improved in many ways and that a lack of respect is the price to be paid for this progress. It was generally felt that there will be no full return to former attitudes but candidates nevertheless stressed the importance of the role of parents and Schools in ensuring that children are brought up with a clear sense of morals and of what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour.

Question 2

This was the third most popular question and was often poorly answered. A number of candidates seemed unable to write about technology in terms of the question. Many tended to discuss the differences between rural and urban life in rather simplistic terms, with little reference to technology, and to explain reasons for the rural exodus. Stronger essays pointed out that the improvements in communication resulting from the Internet, mobile phones and satellite TV, and the better transport links between town and country meant that rural areas are not so isolated and that the two styles of life are coming closer together. A quite common view was that country life is better as there is less pollution and more room, and that with better transport links more people can live in the country and work in the town, thus having a better lifestyle.

Question 3

This was the second most popular question. A minority of candidates misunderstood *démarches* and discussed the need for young people to take more exercise, particularly in the form of long walks. Many candidates concentrated on the problem of obesity and attempts by the government to educate young people on the dangers of an unhealthy diet. Stronger candidates pointed out the need for young people to be informed about eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia, and sexually transmitted diseases. A fairly common view was that the government should produce documentaries and public information films to alert youngsters to the dangers to their health and that this approach to the problem is on the increase is being done more. It was felt that many parents need to be better informed about health problems so that they can monitor the state of their children's health. It was generally felt that much is being done but that it does not seem enough to change habits dramatically, and that teenagers throughout the world are now falling prey to Western-style illnesses and disorders.

Question 4

This was a less popular question but was on the whole quite well answered..

Candidates tended to outline the advances that have been made in the struggle for equality, referring to the fact that in many countries women have the vote, have high level jobs and freedom to express themselves. On the other hand it was pointed out that in some countries and cultures women are still seen as the property of their family or husband and that this is a barrier to equality. It was also made clear that women in high powered jobs are often paid less than their male counterparts and that some companies are reluctant to employ women at all because of their role as child bearers. Candidates came from a variety of viewpoints depending on their background and culture but argued vigorously and sometimes passionately in favour of equality, but were fairly sceptical about an acceleration of the rate in which it is going to come about.

Question 5

This was the most popular question and it gave candidates the opportunity to comment on the current state of the environment and on possible ways forward. There was no shortage of ideas amongst candidates about ways in which to go about improving the chances of the planet's survival. Stronger candidates wrote expansively on government projects, local and regional projects, personal individual responsibilities and the role of Schools and the media. They spoke of recycling, the use of public transport, development of electric and hybrid cars and alternative sources of energy such as hydro-electric, wind, solar and nuclear. Weaker candidates found scope for advocating the sorting of household waste for recycling and the placing of rubbish bins in all public places. The imposition of heavy fines on both a personal level and a corporate level was seen as an effective means of discouraging pollution of the environment. There was a tendency for candidates to feel that the reduction of pollution is not an easy task because of the apathy and ignorance of the general population.

Comments on individual questions on papers 9716/31 and 8682/31.

Fewer than 24% of the overall entry opted for these papers. Very few candidates indeed chose **Questions 1, 4 and 5.**

Question 1

The few candidates who answered this question tended to present a brief survey of some of the alternatives to the traditional form of marriage, focusing predominantly on cohabitation and same gender versions. An overall weakness was for candidates not to state clearly whether they found the move away from tradition a positive or negative development.

Question 2

This was the second most popular question but nevertheless attracted less than 15% of the total entry. On the whole, answers were quite sound., though weaker candidates tended to restrict themselves to a list of crimes without attempting to explain why the crime rate is rising. A lack of suitable, or crowded housing, unemployment the subsequent shortage of money, the formation of gangs and their role in the spread of the use of drugs and the need of money to pay for them were examined as reasons for the rise in criminality.

Question 3

This was by far the most popular question, attracting candidates across the ability range. The less able tended to restrict their answer to defining what constitutes a healthy diet (or what constitutes an unhealthy diet) with little reference to how the growing problem of obesity in society can be solved. More wide-ranging essays spoke of the rise in fast-food outlets, the need to educate young people in particular about the dangers of eating typically high-calorie foods saturated with fat and of the need for Schools to provide healthier, less fattening menus and more time for candidates to spend on sport and exercise in general. The role that the media could play in educating the general public was discussed. Quite a number of candidates were fairly pessimistic about long term solutions due to the spread of Western eating patterns worldwide and the increasing use of unhealthy convenience foods quickly microwaved.

Question 4

This was the least popular question of all and attracted so few candidates that an attempt to mark answers would be virtually pointless.

Question 5

Very few candidates chose this question. Of these, more were optimistic than pessimistic about the future of the planet, referring to the role that Schools, the media and such organisations as Greenpeace are playing in raising awareness of threats to the planet.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/32

Essay 32

General comments

In each paper candidates were given a choice of 5 questions, one on each of the following topics; *Les Rapports humains, La Vie urbaine et rurale, La Santé et la forme, L'Égalité des chances* and *L'Environnement*.

The essays were marked out of 40, with a maximum of 24 for Language and of 16 for Content. The overall standard of performance was good, and the performance of the candidature covered a wide range of marks. There were a number of excellent scripts from able and well prepared candidates with commendable fluency, accuracy and range, whilst there were some at the other end of the spectrum whose level of linguistic competence was clearly not up to the task they faced.

The Language work of less successful candidates was characterised by persistent errors in verb and tense forms, consistently simple sentence patterns with little use of subordinate clauses, frequent repetition of common words and little variety of vocabulary.

Candidates in the middle of the range showed a fair level of accuracy, common tenses and regular verbs being mostly correctly formed. There was some difficulty with irregular verbs and with the use of some prepositions. There was some variation in the choice of vocabulary, with a smaller incidence of inaccurate spelling.

The work of candidates at the higher end of the spectrum revealed a sound grasp of grammar and the capacity to use complex structures accurately. Essays read easily in spite of occasional lapses. Vocabulary tended to be varied and interesting.

The above variety of performance was evident in Content as well. Some essays were characterised by loose generalisation with little specific reference and simplistic arguments. Writing was only loosely connected to the topic area with little concern for the question set. There was a general weakness in paragraphing and little build-up of an argument leading to a conclusion.

In the middle of the range, candidates displayed more focus on the question set, although the material presented was not consistently relevant. Ideas were generally quite well structured, paragraphing was more efficiently handled, arguments more clearly developed. Candidates showed a somewhat greater capacity to draw a conclusion from the material presented.

Towards the top of the range, sound knowledge of the subject and a clearer understanding of the issues involved were displayed. Relevance to the question set was maintained. There was a coherent structure to the essay, with a logical progression of ideas leading to a conclusion or conclusions.

The majority of candidates observed the rubric on the number of words to be written and most appeared to have ample time to complete the task. Candidates finishing their work with ample time to spare would be well advised to carry out a systematic and careful revision of their work in order to eradicate avoidable errors which may well have cost them marks. Adjectival agreements, verb endings, the spelling and gender of common nouns are areas that should be checked if time allows.

Examples of common language problems follow:

Misspellings of common words such as *mariage, tous les jours, problème, humain, déjà, recyclage, gaz, beaucoup, néanmoins, atmosphère, chacun, ressources, environnement, gouvernement, exemple, autorité, criminel, exercice, pays, technologie, il y a*.

Gender of commonplace nouns such as *crime, acte, divorce, problème, monde, groupe, nation, façon, chose, exemple, espèce, augmentation, nourriture, repas, régime, rôle, solution.*

Confusion / misuse of *tandis que/pendant que, parce que/à cause de, puisque/car, notre/nôtre, ce qui/ce que, qui, ses/ces, guère/guerre, a/à, ou/où, leur/leurs, des/les, malade/maladie, bon/bien mauvais/mal, place/endroit.*

Inclusion of *y* and *en* when not required.

Omission of *ne* particularly in *ne...que.*

Failure to link a verb with its subject as in *cela les aident, une cause de ces problèmes sont, les autorités d'un tel pays doit.*

Constructions as in *La pollution est aujourd'hui importante de contrôler, nous sommes en détruisant la planète, les gens sont donnés moins de respect, des maladies causées par l'obésité qu'on fait face à.*

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

This question was the least popular but nevertheless attracted candidates across the ability range. It was generally agreed that in our increasingly materialistic and fast-moving society respect for others is on the decrease. Candidates compared modern times with the old days when young people showed respect for their elders and those in authority, such as teachers, and when society appeared to function better. Reference was made to lack of manners, social graces and the desire to help others such as older people.

Stronger candidates expressed the idea that society has improved in many ways and that a lack of respect is the price to be paid for this progress. It was generally felt that there will be no full return to former attitudes but candidates nevertheless stressed the importance of the role of parents and schools in ensuring that children are brought up with a clear sense of morals and of what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour.

Question 2

This was the third most popular question and was often inadequately answered. A number of candidates seemed to have difficulties with writing about technology in terms of the question. Many tended to discuss the differences between rural and urban life in rather simplistic terms, and to explain reasons for the rural exodus, with little reference to technology. Stronger essays pointed out that the improvements in communication resulting from the Internet, mobile phones and satellite TV, and better transport links between town and country meant that rural areas are not so isolated and that the two styles of life are coming closer together. A quite common view was that country life is better as there is less pollution and more room, and that with better transport links more people can live in the country and work in the town, thus having a better lifestyle.

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This was the second most popular question. A minority of candidates misunderstood *démarches* and discussed the need for young people to take more exercise, particularly in the form of long walks. Many candidates concentrated on the problem of obesity and attempts by the government to educate young people on the dangers of an unhealthy diet. Stronger candidates pointed out the need for young people to be informed about eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia, and sexually transmitted diseases. A fairly common view was that the government should produce documentaries and public information films to alert youngsters to the dangers to their health and that this approach to the problem is on the increase. It was felt that many parents need to be better informed about health problems so that they can monitor the state of their children's health. It was generally felt that much is being done but that it does not seem enough to change habits dramatically, and that teenagers throughout the world are now falling prey to Western-style illnesses and disorders.

Question 4

This was a less popular question but was on the whole answered quite well.

Candidates tended to outline the advances that have been made in the struggle for equality, referring to the fact that in many countries women have the vote, have high level jobs and freedom to express themselves. On the other hand it was pointed out that in some countries and cultures women are still seen as the property of their family or husband and that this is a barrier to equality. It was also made clear that women in high powered jobs are often paid less than their male counterparts and that some companies are reluctant to employ women at all because of their role as child bearers. Candidates came from a variety of viewpoints depending on their background and culture but argued vigorously and sometimes passionately in favour of equality. Many were fairly sceptical about an acceleration of the rate in which equality for women is going to come about.

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This was the most popular question and it gave candidates the opportunity to comment on the current state of the environment and on possible ways forward. There was no shortage of ideas amongst candidates about ways in which to go about improving the chances of the planet's survival. Stronger candidates wrote expansively on government projects, local and regional projects, personal individual responsibilities and the role of schools and the media. They spoke of recycling, the use of public transport, development of electric and hybrid cars and alternative sources of energy such as hydro-electric, wind, solar and nuclear. Weaker candidates found scope for advocating the sorting of household waste for recycling and the placing of rubbish bins in all public places. The imposition of heavy fines on both a personal level and a corporate level was seen as an effective means of discouraging pollution of the environment. There was a tendency for candidates to feel that the reduction of pollution is not an easy task because of the apathy and ignorance of the general population.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/41

Texts 41

General Comments

Overall, scores appeared to be slightly higher than in the June 2009 session, and the 40–48 mark range was the area which showed noticeable improvement. Some candidates, however, manifested language problems which suggested that they had been inappropriately entered for examination at this level.

All questions were attempted, the most popular texts being *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre*, *Candide*, *Les Mains sales* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Many of the answers on *Caligula* and *Le Curé de Tours*, texts which are new to the list this session, as well as those on *Regain* which first appeared in October/November 2009, lacked detail and depth of knowledge, yet answers on *La Dentellière* and *Le Blé en herbe*, also newcomers to the list, proved the exceptions in this respect. *La Dentellière* makes its second appearance in fairly recent years, but there was a marked improvement in the quality and the number of answers on this text, compared with the introductory stage of its first appearance. *Le Blé en herbe* proved quite popular, candidates appearing to find the text very accessible, no doubt because they could identify closely with the two adolescent characters, Phil and Vinca. Consequently there were some pleasingly sensitive responses to both (a) and (b) questions. Given the demands of *Caligula* and *Les Mains sales* in terms of precise explanation of philosophical ideas and political ideologies, some scripts of weaker candidates revealed considerable language difficulty in their answers on these texts. The reception of *Le Curé de Tours* (also returning to the list after an absence of several years) does not appear to be very different this time. Answers seen in both sessions tended to be short, narrative and lacking in analysis.

Most candidates provided the required three answers, and scripts were, in the main, clear and quite well-presented. The major failure of those attempting the (b) alternatives in **Section 1** or any of the questions in **Section 2**, was the lack of careful planning of material to achieve good structure and effective argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Maupassant: *Boule de Suif et autres contes de la guerre*

- (a) There were some very reasonable and well-detailed answers, however a number of candidates failed to identify the cause of “*la crainte qui hantait les esprits*” in (i), i.e. those with no clear picture of the chronology of events, making premature assertions, assuming that it was as a result of the Prussian officer’s demands of *Boule de Suif* and the realisation that the gathered company were at the mercy of her decision. Candidates were also or alternatively unable to identify the correct reason for the “*indignation*” in (iii). These errors, together with failure to set the extract in its context, cast some doubt on the candidates’ overall understanding of the text. Nevertheless in (i), the strongest candidates explored a variety of contributing factors to the characters’ fear, including the war, their riches and their uncertainty as to the nature of the Prussian officer’s proposition and to why they were not being allowed to leave. In (ii), many candidates were able to cite the example of Monsieur Loiseau selling poor quality wine at inflated prices, and some were able to provide more detail about him, even quite perceptive insights. Madame Loiseau was frequently overlooked, despite the fact that the question specified “*le ménage Loiseau*”. The best answers to (iii) differentiated between the initial indignation, the corporate change of mind and the ensuing disdain of the characters for *Boule de Suif*.

- (b) On the whole, candidates found it difficult to engage with this question. A number of candidates revealed failure to understand it, and not all candidates who did understand it were able to support their assertions with evidence from a sufficient number of the stories to make their arguments convincing. Nevertheless thoughtful reference was made to *St Antoine*, *Mademoiselle Fifi* and *Lit 29* in particular.

Question 2

Voltaire: *Candide*

- (a) Success here depended on the amount of relevance and detail provided. Many candidates correctly located Candide in Holland in (i), however some answers failed to summarise adequately the experiences of Candide prior to his arrival in Holland – obviously important detail with significant bearing on his continuation of the saga of misadventure. The incident with the Orator and his wife was generally understood and fairly commented upon in (ii). A small number of candidates failed to realise that (iii) required general evaluation of Optimism and of Candide's inability to marry his experiences with the doctrine of Pangloss. Nevertheless, the question as a whole was fairly well answered overall, and the most able candidates achieved high marks.
- (b) There were a few answers to this question, but not all achieved balance or could provide detailed and accurate evidence from the text. Many candidates did not acknowledge that Candide was still too naïve to doubt Pangloss' philosophy, that he was merely at the stage of wondering why his experiences to date were so at odds with Pangloss' teachings and had not yet reached the stages of development seen later in the book, as the revelation of Pangloss' extremism came gradually.

Question 3

Sartre: *Les Mains sales*

- (a) Detailed knowledge and in-depth understanding of the political scene and of the stances of both Hugo and Hoederer were vital to this answer and, with a small number of exceptions, most answers failed to provide all the facts with the necessary level of accuracy and economy. Candidates could have chosen much to write about in (i), but mention of the deal proposed by the Prince and Karsky was sufficient. Karsky was not named in the extract, but stronger candidates made specific reference to him. Attention to Hugo's social background and his party involvement was required for (ii). Misunderstandings were often manifested in (iii), with some suggesting that Hugo or Jessica pulled a trigger, but conversely, many candidates were able to identify Olga, and Louis, and their involvement.
- (b) There were fewer answers to this alternative, which demanded an understanding of the need to compromise for political expediency. Although "*salir les mains*" was often quoted, few answers explained its meaning satisfactorily. Again, as in (a), the mark depended on the amount of accurate detail and relevance the answer provided.

Question 4

Giono: *Regain*

- (a) Occasionally candidates showed appreciation of the poetic quality of the language and were able to make valid and detailed comments on the abundance of metaphor and simile, amply illustrated with appropriate quotation from the text.
- (b) This was not one of the most frequently studied texts, and the answers seen lacked detailed knowledge of the text and were thus unable fully to meet the demands of the question.

Section 2

Question 5

Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*

- (a) As in previous sessions, there was a tendency for random narrative to dominate the essay, or for candidates to present an essay of their “own agenda”. The question demanded understanding of the word “*sentimentale*”, which posed a problem to many candidates. In the main, the story line was universally appreciated, and the temptation to relate all or part of it seemed to have been too great to resist for most candidates.
- (b) Successful answers to (b) relied on the correct interpretation of the word “*pathétique*”, with a significant number of answers betraying having resorted to the false friend “pathetic”. Answers to both (a) and (b) were probably equal in number, but (b) met with greater success overall. There were, however, a few very capable answers to both questions.

Question 6

Balzac: *Le Curé de Tours*

- (a) It had been anticipated that (a) would prove to be within the capabilities of candidates with a reasonable knowledge of the text, however, answers seen were often short and displayed insufficient knowledge to provide a satisfactory narrative.
- (b) As previously mentioned, this new text to the list did not appear to have been widely studied, but the few answers to (b) seemed unable to provide more than a half page of very vague information.

Question 7

Lainé: *La Dentellière*

- (a) The level of understanding of this text was pleasing. Although there were fewer answers to this question, most were quite competent, tracking the importance of Marylène in her impact on Pomme, being the only friend that Pomme took home before Aimery. Better answers contained material about the holidays that the two women took together. Stronger candidates wrote about Marylène’s character and values, and her beauty, in contrast to Pomme, as well as the contribution that Marylène made to Pomme’s feeling of rejection and gradual decline, when Marylène suddenly deserted Pomme in Cabourg for a man, as abruptly as Pomme’s father had deserted her years before and as she and Aimery would part company later.
- (b) The general level of quality was higher here, and there were a few very comprehensive and intelligent answers. Among the variety of good points made by candidates were those of the difference of social class, with Aimery’s *bourgeois* background in contrast to that of Pomme. Their respective occupations and level of education did not give them much common ground, given that Pomme was employed in a hairdresser’s salon, whereas Aimery was a candidate and intellectual with aspirations for his own progress as well as Pomme’s, but to which she did not rise. The couple’s monotonous routine and Pomme’s total acquiescence were key, as was their lack of communication, particularly as time went on, when Pomme busied herself with the housework and Aimery began no longer to be able to tolerate her.

Question 8

Camus: *Caligula*

- (a) The phrase from Act IV scene xiv was correctly located by many candidates. Some knowledge of the philosophy of Camus was essential to a competent answer to this question. Candidates who did not have that as a basis clearly found great difficulty in arriving at a general understanding of the text and were unable to explain Caligula’s comment in precise terms. Conversely, of course, there were the obvious dangers of dwelling too heavily on the philosophy and failing to relate routinely to the text; several otherwise very good answers fell into this trap and were limited to a maximum mark of 17 for essays which are too long. Candidates are asked to write 500-600 words per essay.

- (b) Candidates appeared to have found it easy to make a reasonable attempt at this question, but it was rather more difficult to answer it well. Some equated drama with violent action on the stage and failed to mention other dramatic features of the play.

Question 9

Colette: *Le Blé en herbe*

- (a) There were some very pleasing answers to this question, and there was generally a good level of understanding of the text. Weaker answers failed to comment in terms of “positive” and “negative” as required by the question, but the general drift of these answers was usually satisfactory. Even the essays containing excessive narrative did more than merely relate events, which bodes well for future sessions. Some weaker candidates became preoccupied with the transition from childhood to adolescence rather than focusing on the passage from adolescence to adulthood as specified in the title.
- (b) Average answers were not adequately balanced in that they stood firmly pro or contra the statement, but there were a few which showed more sensitivity by demonstrating that roles changed in different circumstances or at different stages. The best answer seen challenged the whole premise and knowledgeably concluded that Colette’s intention was not to show the superiority or inferiority of either male or female, but to highlight and celebrate the universal differences between the sexes.

FRENCH

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Texts 42

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- (b) On the whole, candidates found it fairly difficult to engage with this question and many had problems illustrating their assertions with evidence from a sufficient number of the stories to make their arguments convincing. Nevertheless, thoughtful reference was made to *St Antoine*, *Mademoiselle Fifi* and *Le Lit 29* in particular.

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- (b) There were quite a few answers to this question, but not all achieved balance or could provide detailed and accurate evidence from the text. Many candidates did not acknowledge that Candide was still too naïve to doubt Pangloss' philosophy, that he was merely at the stage of wondering why his experiences to date were so at odds with Pangloss' teachings and had not yet reached the stages of development seen later in the book, as the revelation of Pangloss' extremism came gradually.

Question 3

Sartre: *Les Mains sales*

- (a) Detailed knowledge and in-depth understanding of the political scene and of the stances of both Hugo and Hoederer were vital to this answer but unfortunately a lot of answers were unsuccessful in providing all the facts with the necessary level of accuracy and economy. Candidates could have chosen much to write about in (i), but mention of the deal proposed by the Prince and Karsky was sufficient. Karsky was not named in the extract, but a number of insightful candidates made specific reference to him. Attention to Hugo's social background and his party involvement was required for (ii). Misunderstandings were often manifested in (iii), with some suggesting that Hugo or Jessica pulled the trigger, but conversely, many candidates were able to identify Olga, and Louis, and their involvement.
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- (b) Successful answers to (b) relied on the correct interpretation of the word “*pathétique*”. A number of answers betraying having resorted to the false friend “pathetic”. Answers to (b) were probably equal in number, but (b) met with greater success overall.

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Balzac: *Le Curé de Tours*

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- (b) In a number of cases the text did not appear to have been studied very thoroughly and answers to (b) seemed quite vague and uncertain.

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Lainé: *La Dentellière*

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