

# FRENCH LANGUAGE AND FRENCH

Paper 9716/01

Speaking

## General comments

### Recordings

The quality was generally good, with some recordings of excellent clarity, but there are still cases where recordings are made at double speed and cannot then be played audibly by Moderators, and a number of cases where tapes are marred by ambient noise or constant clicks as the spindles of the tape recorder revolve. Some parts of the world are faced with electrical supply difficulties, but Examiners should be sure to check recording equipment to be used before the examination, in situ, and should make sure that the microphone position favours candidates rather than the Examiner.

### Administration

Examiners should make sure that cassettes and boxes are adequately labelled with the Centre and syllabus number – inadequate labelling, and in some cases no labelling at all, causes delays in identifying cassettes and despatching them to Moderators.

There were a number of clerical errors – those responsible for the addition and transcription of marks need to check totals very carefully and please try to ensure that they include the Moderator's copy of the MS1, or a printout of the final marks submitted to CIE, with the cassettes and WMS.

Examiners should be aware that Working Mark Sheets need to be completed with a figure in each column, rather than global section totals. Without a breakdown of the marks awarded, it is very difficult for Moderators to offer any useful advice on marking pitch.

### Section A

(Presentation, maximum of **20** marks, **3** columns)

Column 1 should contain a mark out of **10** for the Content/Presentation

Column 2 should contain a mark out of **5** for Pronunciation/Intonation

Column 3 should contain a mark out of **5** for the quality of the language used by the candidate.

### Sections B and C

(Topic and General Conversations, maximum of **40** marks, **5** columns in each section)

Column 1 should contain a mark out of **10** for Comprehension and Responsiveness

Column 2 should contain a mark out of **10** for Accuracy

Column 3 should contain a mark out of **10** for Feel for the language

Column 4 should contain a mark out of **5** for the Range of Vocabulary and Structures used by the candidate in **providing** information and opinions

Column 5 should contain a mark out of **5** for the Range of Vocabulary and Structures used by the candidate in **seeking** information and opinions – that is, asking questions of the Examiner.

## Format and timing of the examination

Before Examiners embark on the oral examination, they must be familiar with its format and requirements. If they are not, they are likely to do their candidates a disservice. There are as many over-long examinations, where at the end, the candidate is noticeably tired and responding less well, as there are very short examinations, often consisting only of superficial general conversation and giving candidates no real opportunities to show what they can do. In the interests of standardisation and fairness to all candidates, Examiners must keep to the timings as set out in the syllabus booklet. Once a candidate's examination has begun, the recording should run continuously.

There are three distinct parts to the examination:

3 to 3½ minutes for the Topic Presentation, without interruption by the Examiner, on a subject chosen by the candidate – this should make clear reference in some way to francophone culture/society. Candidates should be advised not ask questions during their presentation, since they only have 3½ minutes and any response from the Examiner will eat into that time, but there is no reason why they should not finish their presentation with a question.

7 to 8 minutes for the Topic Conversation – on the **same** topic as that chosen by the candidate for the presentation – the Examiner should be aiming to draw out candidates and give them opportunities to develop their ideas and express their opinions during this time. At the end of the Topic Conversation, Examiners should signal to candidates that there is now going to be a change to general conversation.

8 to 9 minutes of General Conversation, on topic areas chosen by the Examiner and different from that chosen by the candidate for the presentation. This is not intended to be a test of memory, where Examiners shoot a series of prepared topic headings at candidates who come back with pre-learned responses. Examiners need to be prepared to engage with candidates and try to establish some conversation and discussion where each person reacts to what the other says.

In both Topic and General Conversation sections, candidates are required to ask questions of the Examiner. Where they do not ask questions, Examiners must prompt them to make sure they are given the opportunity, since there are 10 marks at stake for this. Where candidates nevertheless ask no questions, they cannot be awarded marks for this element of the examination. A zero must be recorded in the final column of *Sections B and C* on the Working Mark Sheet.

### **Presentation**

Once again, candidates chose from an extremely wide range of topic areas, from the usual scientific/environmental (*pollution, énergie nucléaire, conservation*) to the far more numerous social themes (*jeunes, mariage, violence, crime, chômage, éducation et laïcité, médias, alcool*) with a passing glance at sporting and hobby-related topics, and notably several dealing with various aspects of food (*gastronomie, cuisine provençale, nourriture saine*). Candidates were generally well-prepared to speak on the chosen topic and Examiners occasionally had to interrupt and begin asking questions after candidates had exceeded their allotted time. There were still some candidates who appeared to be unaware of the requirement that their topic must make reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the language is spoken (see Speaking Mark Scheme) and consequently the mark for the content/presentation element of their topic presentation was halved.

### **Topic Conversation**

In this section, candidates have the chance to develop their ideas further – Examiners need to try to draw them out, and get them to expand on what they have said during their presentation, rather than just asking for a repetition of some of the details already given. Candidates who have researched their topic thoroughly often have more material than can be used in the 3 minute presentation, and this is the moment when they can really make use of their preparation. However, some candidates did appear to have over-rehearsed for the examination, and when this is the case, spontaneity is lost and there is considerable reliance on prepared responses – this may limit the possible mark for Comprehension and Responsiveness (see Speaking Mark Scheme). All candidates should be faced with some unexpected questions during the course of the examination.

In addition, candidates must make the effort to ask questions of the Examiner, since there are 5 marks available for this in each of the conversation sections. They should try to ask more than one question and make sure questions are relevant to the topic.

Examiners should signal to candidates at the end of the time allowed for this section that they are moving to more general topics.

### **General Conversation**

This section is intended to begin with fairly straightforward questions about the candidate's everyday life and will then move quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. Sometimes, particularly at AS Level, Examiners failed to move on from everyday questions and gave candidates no opportunities for anything but the most superficial discussion. However well candidates are able to respond to this basic sort of question, there is no evidence that they are able to sustain a conversation at an appropriate level for this examination and they cannot, therefore, be awarded marks from the highest bands. Examiners need to be aware that they should not return to the topic chosen for the first part of the examination, but should try to draw the candidate into conversation on different topic areas. There is no requirement to touch on all the topics covered during the course, in fact there would scarcely be time for any real discussion, and this should be the aim of the Examiner – to encourage the candidate to take part in conversation and be prepared to allow them openings to express and develop their ideas and opinions. They may not always be correct, they may not agree with the Examiner's views, but they should nevertheless be given the opportunity to express themselves. In addition, since there are another 5 marks available for asking questions in this conversation section, they should be given the chance to ask questions of the Examiner – they should once again try to ask more than one, and should try to ask questions on the topics being discussed. Examiners need to be wary about the length of their response to questions asked by the candidate – it is, after all, the candidate who is being examined, and Examiners may need to keep their answers brief in order to allow the maximum time for the candidate.

Overall, the vast majority of Examiners and candidates, from all areas of the world, made every effort to observe the format and advice given about this examination, and Examiners conducted very professional examinations, doing their best for their candidates. Assessment varied, as always, but well over a third of the Centres entering awarded marks which needed no adjustment to bring them into line with the agreed standards. Centres and candidates alike should be congratulated for their efforts.

# FRENCH

Paper 9716/02  
Reading and Writing

## General comments

This year's paper proved to be a fair test for which most candidates appeared to be well prepared and to understand how to approach the various exercises. There were relatively few examples of candidates who appeared totally defeated by the tasks, even though the topic and concepts were perhaps less familiar to them than has sometimes been the case. Even so, it was not uncommon for candidates to focus on what they thought the text ought to say rather than on what it actually said, or to introduce 'facts' for which there was no evidence in the text. Apart from in the Personal Response (Question 5b), it is important that candidates confine themselves to the evidence of the texts, unless specifically invited to do otherwise.

The texts attempted to explain at the outset the terms and concepts involved, and this was generally successful, but some candidates nonetheless were under a misapprehension: that OGMs are a means of protecting consumers from illness, wild beasts and global warming (*permet ... de résister aux maladies, aux prédateurs ... et aux conditions climatiques*); or that *le développement des plantes transgéniques rend nécessaire une population croissante*. This was no doubt related to the misunderstanding that OGMs were presumed to be needed for nuclear energy and for in vitro fertilisation (*Que ce soit pour l'énergie nucléaire ... ou pour la fertilisation in vitro*).

*Les OGM* were often mistakenly written as *les OMG* and very often appeared as *l'OGM* in the singular (presumably thought of as a concept, or possibly because the French plural does not take an 's'). There was also confusion between *l'OIC* (*l'Organisation Internationale des Consommateurs*), *les (compagnies) multinationales* and *les OGM*, which appeared interchangeable in some scripts. Some candidates appeared to think that *OGM* was the trade name of a multinational company. The confusion was exacerbated by candidates' indiscriminate use of *elle/elles/il/ils* to refer to any or all of the above in their answers.

As usual, a major source of lost marks was the word-for-word copying of phrases and sentences from the texts ('lifting') as answers, and exceeding the word limit in **Question 5** (although there did seem to be some improvement in this latter respect).

Nearly all candidates completed all sections of the paper and there were few signs of candidates having been under undue time pressure, but many of the weaker candidates wrote considerably more than was needed. The stronger candidates tended to make the necessary point(s) succinctly and proceed to the next question.

Centres are urged to tell candidates that in Questions 3 and 4 there is no point including the questions in their answers as a pre-ambule. This wastes candidates' time, and means that they have less time available for checking the accuracy of what they have written.

In **Question 1**, candidates appeared well aware of the need for the word or words given as the answer to be interchangeable in all respects with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing – and there were fewer examples this session of marks being lost by the addition of superfluous words.

In **Question 2**, the re-working of the sentence must begin with the words specified in the brackets. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary. Candidates should not change the vocabulary in the sentence for its own sake, but merely re-arrange the words and make any changes to the grammar required by the new start to the sentence given. In other words, answers to this question should use the vocabulary of the original wherever possible.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, the rubric quite clearly states that candidates should answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. Copying sentences or whole phrases verbatim from the text (or indeed the question) 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 structure. Quite small changes or manipulations of the text can show that candidates are able to handle both content and the language. Candidates are also advised to look at the number of points awarded for each question (indicated in brackets) as a clue to what may be required in terms of answers. It was encouraging to see some candidates setting out their answers with this clearly in mind.

In **Question 5**, it was pleasing to note fewer candidates exceeding the word limits set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, which could be sensibly split into 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. Material beyond 150 words overall is not marked.

These limits are such that candidates simply cannot afford to include an introductory preamble: « *D'après ma lecture de ces deux textes, je peux conclure que les organismes génétiquement modifiés peuvent apporter beaucoup de bienfaits et de risques à l'homme.* » Worthy though it may be, this has simply used up 25 of the available words without scoring any marks. An efficient summary of specific points drawn from the texts is required in **Question 5 Part (a)**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates keep track of the number of words they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *qu'est-ce que c'est?* It is also helpful if candidates make a clear distinction between Parts (a) and (b) in setting out their answers.

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

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

This question was answered well. Most candidates correctly identified *propriétés*, *objectif* and *substantielle* for (a), (b) and (c) respectively. *Augmentant* was sometimes incorrectly offered instead of *augmentation* in (d). *Taille* (e) was less successfully identified, with *grandeur* frequently generating *noble* or *richesse* and resurfacing subsequently in answer to **Question 3(b)**.

#### Question 2

**2(a)** There were several ways of re-phrasing the original, some involving the use of *en* with a present participle and others involving the use of *par* and a noun, but a combination of the two was not acceptable. *On peut reprogrammer la nature d'une plante en modifiant sa génétique* sounded convincing, but distorted the meaning of the original.

**2(b)** The switch from passive to active was relatively well handled, but some candidates kept an incorrect agreement on *lancé* or introduced a cedilla.

**2(c)** Agreements posed similar problems with *personne*. *Personne (n)' a (pas) été tuée* and *personne n'ont été tué(s)* were quite common.

**2(d)** This was generally negotiated quite successfully (either by a straight transfer into the passive or by *est nécessaire à cause de/pour* etc.) apart from some problems with the tense.

**2(e)** For many, *il a fallu que* appeared not to be related to *il faut que*, and even amongst those who realised that a subjunctive of some sort was called for, *mise* or *doive mettre* appeared quite regularly. Frustratingly, a number of candidates who got this bit correct fell at the last hurdle by the insertion of *se* in *que l'homme se mette dans la balance*.

**Question 3**

**3(a)** was generally well handled, but there was wide-spread lifting of *conditions climatiques* and *augmentation de la productivité* (even amongst candidates who had correctly identified *hausse* as an alternative to *augmentation* in 1d). Some candidates failed to score the mark about insecticides, suggesting that their use had been eliminated rather than reduced. *Déterminer* was sometimes misinterpreted as *distinguer* when dealing with the new characteristics.

**3(b)** was similarly well handled (albeit with a certain amount of lifting of *des aliments dont la richesse correspond aux besoins humains*). Relatively few candidates mentioned the improvement in quality.

**3(c)** was well answered, with most scoring two out of three, but many missed the point about meeting the needs of an expanding population.

**3(d)** proved more difficult. *Ces aliments n'ont tué personne* was a frequent straight lift and many failed to add a timescale to the consumption of GM foods.

**3(e)** was probably the most difficult question for many candidates, some of whom took it as an invitation to express their own views on a whole range of topics: technology, nuclear power, IVF treatment. Most scored one mark for indicating the need for a positive outlook, but many became rather confused in trying to express the other ideas. Attempts to use the verb *balancer* added to the confusion here.

**Question 4**

**4(a)** Most candidates successfully expressed the idea that genetic manipulation destroys/destabilizes the work of nature, and a good number also made the point that it is an artificial process carried out by man, but only the best managed the concept of putting together genes that nature had kept separate. There was a good deal of lifting of *qui n'auraient jamais existé dans la nature*.

**4(b)** Nearly all candidates successfully handled the idea of *partage/répartition*, but a large number failed to score the first relatively simple mark by resorting to an unnecessary lifting of *il y a/aurait assez/suffisamment de nourriture*.

**4(c)** Most candidates scored the mark for the companies being interested solely in profits, and stronger candidates produced some good ways of expressing the idea of *de la poudre aux yeux* and the doubtful credibility/impartiality of laboratories collaborating with the multinationals.

**4(d)** A good number of candidates failed to score the first mark by resorting to copying (*cette*) *pollution génétique est irréversible*, and there was a good deal of confusion over which type(s) of pollution have which effects. A number overdid things by suggesting that there would be only one plant left in the world, whilst others did not help matters by using words such as *réverser* or *renverser*.

**4(e)** This was generally well answered. Most candidates managed the idea of deliberate pollution, but there was a good deal of lifting of *Elles (or more usually Ils) pourraient imposer leurs prix* and *Elles contrôleraient la production de la nourriture mondiale* for the third and fourth points.

**Question 5**

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two texts in **Part (a)** and then to reflect on them in **Part (b)**, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** above 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 bienfaits et risques des OGM'*. Although there was a relative scarcity of candidates who managed to score all the ten available marks for identifying ten of the fourteen points for which marks were available, many managed to identify and list quite a high proportion. Highest marks were scored by those who dealt simply and systematically with making the points without further elaboration and moving on. Others made one or two points several times over or got bogged down in unnecessary definitions and scored poorly.

Most candidates made points relating to resistance/disease/climate, the reduced need for insecticides, the increased yield, the nutritional benefits and the fight against famine. The risks were less well identified,

although the destruction of nature, the unleashing of unpredictable chain reactions and the consequences for other plants were often mentioned.

The overall standard of the personal responses in **Part (b)** was generally rather less imaginative than in Part (a) with candidates offering little that was personal or original, usually relying on simply reproducing points made in the texts.

### Quality of language

The quality of language over the paper as a whole varied considerably: a small number found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, but the best candidates wrote with impressive fluency and accuracy, making their points in correct, idiomatic French which was a pleasure to read. Verb endings were common sources of error, in particular the confusion of infinitives with past participles, and there were particular problems with the third person plural, where the idea that the plural of '*il pollue*' is '*ils pollues*' was disturbingly common.

In many cases, agreements of adjectives with nouns and of verbs with their subjects appeared random.

Negatives caused particular problems: *personne* has been mentioned earlier, but it was very rare indeed to find the ubiquitous *aucun* correctly handled. In very many scripts, *ne* was more commonly omitted than included as part of any negative, resulting in some very confusing answers: *on a plus besoin d'insecticides*. Attempting to use the construction *ne ... que* without including the *ne* does not aid comprehension. Neither, on the other hand, does the addition of a superfluous *pas*: *Personne n'a pas été tué par ces aliments* or *Il n'y a pas eu aucun problème*.

The existence of *dont* (except as a misspelling of *donc*) was apparently unknown to virtually all candidates, variations on the theme of *la nourriture que l'homme a besoin de* being particularly common. The distinction between *qui* and *ce qui* (or indeed *ceux qui*) was similarly widely ignored: *on peut modifier les OGM qui permet de déterminer la taille*.

*En* was regularly inserted unnecessarily and incorrectly: *Il y en a des plantes qui ... ; nous en avons besoin d'aliments OGM ; on s'en sert d'OGM*. The constructions *avoir besoin de* and *se servir de* proved problematic.

Homophones were often confused: *ces/c'est/ses ; et/est ; ce/se/ceux ; on/ont ; sa/ça ; son/sont ; face/fasse*. In many scripts these appeared interchangeable, resulting in such phrases as *ont ces pas (on ne sait pas) ; sa va fer (ça va faire)*.

# FRENCH

Paper 9716/03

Essay

The standard of work submitted varied greatly. The best essays moved from a succinct introduction that targeted the specifics of the title set, through a range of clearly structured and exemplified points, then arrived at a balanced and unambiguous conclusion. Weaker essays related to the general topic chosen, but not to the question set, and the conclusions were often bland and sometimes contradicted the thrust of the argument put forward in the body of the essay.

The very best essays were characterised by a very high level of accuracy, an extensive lexis and confident use of a wide range of complex sentence patterns and idiomatic structures. Good candidates who were not quite excellent nonetheless demonstrated quite a sound grasp of grammar and made a positive attempt to use a variety of vocabulary and structures. Though only a relatively small proportion of the essays received displayed little evidence of grammatical awareness, there were quite a lot that contained frequent errors of an elementary nature and which relied on a narrow range of vocabulary and the frequent repetition of common words. Areas of particular weakness reported by Examiners included:

- common disregard of gender and number agreement, e.g. *les qualifications acquises est, des cérémonies religieuse, la meilleur solution, les valeurs sont grandement négligé, la mentalité des jeunes deviennent pire, ces derniers sont mauvaise*
- confusion between *ce* and *se*, *ces* and *c'est*, *ces* and *ceux*
- extensive overuse of *cela* (and of the more colloquial *ça* which was usually inappropriate in a formal written language context)
- overuse of the noun *chose* which was used instead of *situation, objet, affaires* etc.
- widespread gender errors in the use of such nouns as *valeur, paragraphe, manque, caractère, problème,*
- past participle forms, e.g. *mit, définit, acquérit, prit* and especially past participle agreement, e.g. *ils ont construits des hôpitaux, l'éducation ne s'est pas amélioré, ce qui a permise aux pays en voie de développement*
- confusion over *il y a* which often appeared as *ils y a, il en a, ils y en a* or *il en a*
- failure to use the relative pronoun *dont*, e.g. *les choses qu'ils ont besoin de, les nécessités qu'ils ont besoin*
- anglicisms of which some quite common examples were *définitivement* (=definitely), *éventuellement*(=eventually), *consister de, mettre de l'emphase sur, abilités* and *boissons alcooliques*.
- constant switching, often within the same sentence, between the 3rd person *on* and the 1st person plural *nous*
- the use of words belonging to an inappropriate register, e.g. *truc, boulot*

## Question 1

This was the most popular title. The best scripts kept to the required focus on the question of communication and effort to communicate on the part of teenagers. Equally, they considered not only parents but also the broader spectrum of adults. The weaker scripts neglected the communication issue and often limited themselves to detailing the various areas which engender conflict between teenagers and their parents.

The starting point for many was the average teenager's lack of communication skills. Excessive shyness was also mentioned especially when expressing emotional needs. Others took the line that most teenagers are guilty of not making enough time to achieve communication with their parents, allowing themselves rather to be sucked into their own little universe with its own peculiar set of values dominated by a certain enslavement to technological gadgets, to fashion and to certain types of music. They argued that such teenagers fail to understand their parents and do not take on board that the latter only have their best interests at heart and that many would be prepared to make compromises if only their children would engage in rational discussion. Some expressed the view that teenagers are too demanding and expect to be provided with the latest technological innovations and the latest in fashion, with scant regard for the cost



involved and their parents' means. Similarly, they expect to be allowed personal freedoms to do their chosen activities without appreciating the dangers and pitfalls involved, which again only reinforces the communications barrier between them and their parents. The point was also made that young people do make their needs known but that they go about it in the wrong way: they misbehave at school, they run away from home, they wear deliberately provocative clothes and flout the rules laid down by their parents or teachers.

However, as some more comprehensive essays pointed out, there are young people who *are* at great pains to make their needs felt and who are very sensitive to their parents' susceptibilities, with the result that, whatever the frustrations involved, they do all they can not to offend or hurt them by making demands which, for whatever reason, they know they would find it difficult or impossible to accede to. In essays which lacked the focus and balance of the better essays, candidates often stated that teenagers are completely blameless and that the fault lies squarely with the older generation who cannot or will not understand their needs. Parents who are unable to adapt to new trends and ideas and at those who nurture a misguided view of their role, leading them either to be over-authoritative and unbending or over-protective, were criticised. A common theme was professional and/or social commitments which mean that parents have no time for their children, many trying to compensate materially in the form of money and/or gifts, when what the children really crave is attention, affection and understanding. Not the least barrier to effective communication, some maintained, is the failure on the part of many adults to give sufficient credit to young peoples' intelligence and sense of responsibility.

## Question 2

This question, though not commonly chosen, produced some very good and balanced essays well exemplified by informed illustrations from French, British and American television. However, a certain proportion of those who opted for it simply wrote about the blessing and evils of television in general and had clearly not understood the meaning of the term *télé-réalité*. On the positive side, it was suggested that reality television allows us to live experiences which we would otherwise not have the chance to encounter and that it gives us an insight into the psychology of others, which can be an enriching and educational experience: not least, we are made aware of errors of judgement made by participants, thereby putting us on our guard lest we make the same mistakes. Some made the point that certain reality television shows foster and encourage tolerance since they bring together individuals from vastly different social and ethnic backgrounds, with different values, who have to work hard to bond and build bridges and to prevent potential sources of tension coming to the surface and threatening the harmonious existence of the group. Candidates argued that reality television programmes enable tabou subjects to be aired and prejudices to be broken down, notably in cases when one of more members of the group belongs, for example, to a recognizable ethnic, religious or sexual minority. Programmes which provide a platform for aspiring singers or other talented individuals to make a bid to make their dreams come true were also discussed. The point was made that participants and spectators are made keenly aware of the importance of hard work since the competition is so ferocious to win the votes necessary to stay in the competition from week to week, and the participants also learn to take criticism and, with the exception of the eventual victor, to accept failure.

Among the more common points on the negative side, there figured the lack of privacy accorded to participants who are not always aware when they are being filmed. Moreover, when the series in question comes to an end, their new-found celebrity means that the media tend to pursue them relentlessly and pry into their private lives in the hope of coming up with something sensational. It may be too that certain among them will encounter psychological problems when they have to return to the *real* world, having been forced to live in a *cocon artificiel* for such a substantial period of time. It was argued that reality television encourages the voyeuristic streak in us, and sometimes voyeurism overlaps with sadism when watching participants made to perform stunts that make most ordinary mortals recoil with horror. Financial effects were cited, as thousands of people spend money in order to try to ensure that their favourite participant is not eliminated: some candidates went further and took the rather cynical line that voting is a waste of time anyway since the outcome has already been decided on commercial grounds by the television company concerned. Quite a lot of essays alighted on the argument that the young, who are often avid fans of such programmes which are usually broadcast at peak viewing times, find themselves exposed to the sort of language and overtly sexual content that could have a detrimental effect on their development. Last but not least, a contention that was again quite common was that reality television is fast taking a stranglehold on what is broadcast, squeezing out programmes of a more serious nature and thereby alienating more discerning viewers who like to watch more educational programmes such as documentaries and serious drama.

### Question 3

This title was fairly popular and the best scripts differentiated well between the concepts of values and qualifications. A fairly common problem, however, arose from the *thèse/antithèse/synthèse* approach which led to bland and even self-contradictory conclusions. The starting point for many was the importance of academic qualifications in a fiercely competitive society: the argument was that they alone enable an individual to obtain a good, well-paid job thereby ensuring his or her financial independence and the ability to bring up and provide for a family. Some better essays went further and made the additional point that academic qualifications ensure social mobility. For professional advancement, however, it was commonly argued that although academic qualifications do play a role, jobs require not only technical and academic knowledge but also the social skills necessary when one is working as part of a team and interacting with others: in short, a good education inculcates the values that make a person a better colleague. Numerous essays focussed on the idea of school as a microcosm of society where pupils learn to respect the values that prevail in any civilised society and also to be responsible for their own actions. Moreover, in order to be able to cope with the manifold situations that life confronts us with, academic qualifications are not enough: moral values and behavioural norms are essential. It is precisely those moral values and behavioural norms which prevent criminal activity: a highly qualified person with no values or scruples can represent a threat to society. Moreover, in a multi-ethnic society, it is essential to foster the values and norms that make for peaceful cohabitation. The best essays had examples of the sort of values that were deemed most important. These included good manners, self-discipline, punctuality, respect and sensitivity for others and for authority, compassion, honesty, generosity, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, patience, competitiveness, determination, perseverance, critical judgement, objectivity, a responsibility towards the environment and towards others, team spirit, tolerance, creativity and the importance of knowing how and when to compromise.

### Question 4

The best scripts demonstrated a substantial knowledge of world affairs which was skilfully deployed. Not uncommon here, however, was confusion as to what constitutes *aid* which was confused with trade and/or technological advances such as the introduction of the Internet. One of the downsides of aid deemed to be the most serious was loss of sovereignty and excessive dependence on the providing country or countries. Galbraith's term *neo-colonialism* was quite often cited and its symptoms spelt out: the self-interested motives on the part of the providing nation which stipulates multiple conditions, often including the insistence that it enjoys highly preferential tariffs for materials and produce purchased from the Third World country in question and that certain equipment essential for development is purchased from its own national enterprises when, in fact, the same equipment is available much cheaper elsewhere. In many cases, other strings are attached, an example quoted in a number of essays being Chinese aid to African countries: not only do the beneficiaries have to agree to buy Chinese goods but they are also obliged to open their frontiers to Chinese companies and even to adopt the economic and political ideology dictated by Beijing. In other cases, in other parts of the world, countries benefiting from aid are forced to accept the installation of military bases belonging to the other country, for example in some Central American countries in receipt of aid from the USA. Candidates argued that, attracted by cheap labour and a government which does not interfere, the aid providers take advantage not only to offer pitiful wages to the employees of industries they set up to "help" the developing countries but they also flout safety regulations and national and international rules established for the protection of the environment. Some essays also focussed on the erosion of local traditions and customs that is entailed by virtue of the fact that the country providing aid imposes its own culture on the indigenous population. Drugs, prostitution, gambling and other such undesirable features of the so-called civilised world were cited. Unintended results were also highlighted: food aid not uncommonly fails to reach the intended beneficiaries but is used rather to reward those who support the often corrupt regime in power. Aid in the form of medical supplies is sold on the black market and the proceeds pocketed or used by unscrupulous rulers and other politicians to buy arms or narcotics. Sometimes, the country providing aid is not blameless, the most commonly cited example being the suggestion that, in return for oil, China gives military aid to Sudan which the Sudanese government puts at the disposal of the rebels who are responsible for the crisis in Darfur. Last but not least, countries in receipt of aid in the form of loans often get deeper and deeper into debt as they borrow money to finance the repayment of earlier loans, with obvious drastic consequences for their economy: as one candidate succinctly and elegantly put it *le remboursement des dettes provoque une véritable hémorragie financière*. However, notwithstanding all the problems caused, many essays went on to catalogue the positive features of aid when properly used. Medical aid enables hospitals to be built and ensures access to health care for millions of people who would otherwise enjoy no such access. Aid targeted at improving education means that it is possible to build much-needed schools and to make considerable inroads in the battle against illiteracy. Third World countries afflicted by natural disasters, such as Bangladesh, do not have the resources to help their own citizens and rely on the

help provided by the international community. Some candidates referred to the help afforded to which could develop and thrive after receipt of foreign aid.

### Question 5

The vast majority of candidates who tackled this question, albeit with minor reservations, concurred that there was a lot of truth in the statement that they were called upon to discuss. The better among them provided a whole range of points to explain why this was the case, while the content of weaker scripts tended to be limited to just one or two more obvious points including much repetition of the precise words used in the title. The advent of mass tourism and the allied wave of globalisation or americanisation, as some candidates preferred to call it, came under the spotlight as one of the major reasons why local musical, culinary, vestimentary and even linguistic heritages are fast being eroded by one all-consuming universal culture. The influence of the media and the Internet was also seen as a major factor in the spread of that culture. The point was made that the children of yesteryear did not have the Internet, video games, mobile phones, MP3 players, etc. and therefore had time to pursue interests of a cultural nature. Nowadays, however, the young tend to be slaves of technological innovation, leaving them with no time for things of the past. Many reject aspects of local culture for social reasons: whether it be in the sphere of music, food, dress or language, local traditions are no longer in vogue, having been swept aside by western imports. Put another way, the credo of the modern day young person is based not least on the need to appear trendy and fashionable, which for many means wearing western clothes, eating western food, listening and dancing to western music and even speaking English rather than local languages and dialects. The point was also made that the young are better educated nowadays than they were in the past, one of the consequences being that they no longer wish to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and forefathers and become traditional craftsmen. The role of parents too has moved with the times and modern day parents are simply too busy to have the time spent by their counterparts in previous decades and centuries relaying to their offspring the traditions and customs of their youth. Time that used to be spent *en famille*, particularly at meal times, during which cultural traditions were talked about and handed down is a thing of the past. Even at school, new technologically orientated disciplines take up a lot of time that, in the past, would have been devoted to pursuits of a cultural nature. All that being said, for want of anything more positive to offer, many essays were at pains to point out young people's contribution to local festivals of both a religious and a secular nature, and the obvious pleasure derived on such occasions by wearing local costume, performing traditional dances and singing traditional songs.

# FRENCH AND FRENCH LITERATURE

Paper 9716/04

Texts

## General comments

The spread of marks was very wide, with a small but significant number of candidates at or towards the top end, as well as a substantial number scoring very low marks. The work of the former was characterised by relevance to the question backed up by logical paragraphing and appropriate detail, and the latter by a lack of attention to the questions, sketchy knowledge and weak structure. More specifically, commentaries awarded high marks showed a good knowledge of the text and the particular issues raised by the passage, whereas those who earned few marks offered little more than paraphrase, with no reference to the question or evidence of sound textual knowledge.

Examiners reported an increase in rubric infringement. They even wondered whether all candidates understood that *soit ... soit* offers a choice, as some gave brief and often incoherent answers to more than three questions. Others attempted only two questions. A further obstacle to the award of good total marks was a tendency to spend too long on two questions and write very little on the third. As set out in the mark scheme, a maximum of 17 is awarded for an essay of excessive length, and some otherwise very good work had to be penalised in this way.

All questions were attempted, the most popular texts being *Le Nœud de vipères*, *Les Mains Sales*, *Vipère au poing* and *L'Étranger*. Few candidates answered the second question on *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or the second question on *Le Diable au corps*.

Centres are advised to address the following issues:

Many candidates waste time copying out the essay title, whereas a clear number and letter will suffice. The time spent by some candidates writing out their essays 'in rough' would be better spent on planning. Introductory remarks including biographical detail and praise of the author and/or work are not useful. Essays which are too long score a maximum of 17.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Mauriac: *Le Nœud de vipères*

- (a) Almost all candidates successfully identified the role of Marie in Louis's life. Some answers were only sketchy, indicating that his relationship with her was better than those he had with the other children. More detailed answers elaborated on her spontaneously affectionate gestures and his ability to respond to them. Candidates broadly understood that her demise removed the only potentially fruitful relationship between Louis and a member of his family. The second part of the question was less successfully handled. Only a minority of answers managed to focus on Louis's anti-clerical views, his refusal to subscribe to Catholic conventions, and the disapproval that such views generated in the society inhabited by the Fondaudège family. Many answers merely alluded to his feeling that divorce would be damaging for him professionally and financially, which amounted to little or no more than a paraphrase of the text. Conversely, most candidates understood that Isa had, in Louis's absence, assumed control of the children's moral and spiritual education, and that he was incapable of communicating with children anyway.

- (b) Answers to this question could be split, in general terms, into two types: those which focused on the details of Louis's youth and those which gave undue attention to the 'Rodolphe episode' at the expense of other, more relevant information. Most who attempted this question made references to the role of Louis's mother and his ungracious response to her, his solitary life devoted to study, and the consequent health problems, his interest in money, his hostility to Catholicism and his difficulty in forming relationships with women. Whilst it was appropriate to mention the role of Lisa, many candidates gave too little attention to the fact that her apparent love for him dispelled his lack of self-esteem, and his over-hasty conclusion that she did not marry him for love reinforced this negative feeling. Few answers alluded to his inability to 'abandon himself' or his sense of social inferiority. Only the best answers provided links between these elements of his youth and his character and behaviour as an adult.

### Question 2

Voltaire: *Candide*

- (a) Many answers were generally vague and lacking in detail. Competent commentaries explained where the characters were arriving from, why and how they needed to escape from there, and Candide's aim of rejoining Cunégonde and Cacambo in Venice. Weaker answers had the characters arriving from South America (thus ignoring the substantial passages dealing with France). By no means were all candidates able to identify, let alone discuss, the execution of Admiral Byng in the context of Voltaire's satire of blind patriotism and its negative effects. Very few pointed out the dismissive tone used to describe the snowy wastes of Canada as the cause of this war. There was some understanding of Voltaire's views on war, but the satirical attack on excessively zealous patriotism over an issue which was not remotely understood by the people witnessing the execution featured in very few essays. Answers to the third part of the question also tended to focus only on Candide's increasing sense of disillusionment, whereas those who considered his anticipation with regard to Cacambo's fidelity and his optimism about an eventual reunion with Cunégonde were able to give a more balanced account.
- (b) Candidates were able to give plenty of examples of saddening events in the story. Credit was given to those who succeeded in structuring the material thematically, as opposed to those who recounted in more or less random order a number of experiences which eroded Candide's confidence in Pangloss's Optimism. Many essays seemed to take the misfortunes at face value, as though the story were meant to be realistic. It was, of course, desirable to link these experiences to Voltaire's aim of discrediting the view that disasters and instances of man's inhumanity to man were part of an ultimately harmonious universal plan. With regard to the ending, many were able to see it only as a happy issue out of all the characters' sufferings, whereas an awareness of the element of compromise was evidence, in some scripts, of a more careful reading of the last chapter.

### Question 3

Sartre: *Les Mains sales*

- (a) Credit for answers to the first part of the question depended on the amount of detail in the answers, as the situation was broadly familiar to most of those who had studied the text. Whilst some were able to offer little which could not be paraphrased from the passage, stronger responses pointed out not only the change of party policy which caused Hugo's refusal to rejoin it, but indicated what Hoederer had set out to do and why. There were many good answers on the subject of Olga's attitude, although most confined themselves to her emotions rather than commenting on her apparent inability to see Hugo's difficulty in accepting the terms of the ultimatum. The third part of the question was all too often limited to a critical perception of Hugo as obstinate and / or confused. What Examiners were looking for was his need and determination to define himself through one particular act, however ambiguous its motivation. Relatively few candidates saw the opportunity to demonstrate that Hoederer was right when he accused Hugo of clinging to a principle rather than moving on.
- (b) A surprisingly large number of answers failed to identify the character who uses the words of the play's title. Consequently, many essays did not focus on Hoederer, but attempted an interpretation based on the idea that involvement in terrorism dirties the characters' hands. A competent answer might well contrast Hugo's position with that of Hoederer, but for a good mark, the essay needed to concentrate on the issue of political expediency and the view that the end justifies the means.

Many essays sought to interpret the title by going through all the characters, in particular Georges and even Jessica. The best answers, on the other hand, concentrated on the Hoederer and their implications.

#### Question 4

Le Clézio: *Le Chercheur d'or*

- (a) Answers to this question were mostly competent. Candidates showed a good knowledge of Laure's attitude to her brother's departure, and the reasons for her reservations about the desirability of his long absence. They also provided, to a greater or lesser extent, relevant details about the events which ruined the family and made the narrator determined to provide them with the opportunity for a new and better life. The third part of the question produced a rather more varied response, but a pleasing number of answers identified the changes in the narrator's interpretation of treasure as being more important than his failure to find what he thought he wanted.
- (b) Candidates who chose to write about the role of Ouma were also generally well acquainted with the relevant material. Most essays referred appropriately to the ways in which she taught Alexis about living in the natural world, and to her influence on him as he gradually came to realise that all this was more important than buried treasure. Most answers stopped short of mentioning her disappearance at the end of the novel. They might usefully have taken the opportunity to allude to her continued presence in the narrator's imagination as he contemplates what new horizons she will inspire him to find.

#### Question 5

Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*

- (a) On the whole, candidates who offered answers on Roxane showed a good knowledge of the text. The principal discriminating factors here were essay structure versus random narrative, and the greater or lesser tendency to adopt a 'black and white' approach. It was essential, in order to provide a passable answer, to establish the importance of Roxane's *préciosité* and to understand how this highly significant socio-cultural factor in and around 1640 affected her attitudes and behaviour. If this was established, it was possible to explain her dismissal of Christian for failing to express himself adequately. Balanced answers made pleasing reference to the fact that she was very easily taken in by the play-acting, to her extraordinarily heroic (even melodramatic) journey through the battlefield, to her genuine remorse in the last act and the pathos of her withdrawal from society and her double loss. In order to score well on this question, it was necessary to explain and evaluate her behaviour in the light of both 17<sup>th</sup> century attitudes and the conventions of neo-Romantic drama. Those who criticised her behaviour merely on their own terms were not well rewarded.
- (b) Only one or two candidates attempted this question, and their answers were so insubstantial that it is not possible to draw any useful conclusions. Examiners were looking for a balanced account of the play's theatrical conventions – some of which perhaps strain our ability to 'suspend disbelief' – and the emotions expressed by the characters, which might be regarded as both plausible and involving.

#### Question 6

Bazin: *Vipère au poing*

- (a) Given that the quotation which provided the question was taken from the text, Examiners were surprised by the fact that a substantial proportion of candidates who chose to discuss it did not appear to understand the word *indispensable*. Probably for this reason, many essays were based on a different agenda which took no account of the issues raised by this key word. Such essays were inevitably awarded a mark consistent with the impression that the question had not been addressed. Relevant essays considered Brasse-Bouillon's increasing emotional dependency on his mother in terms of his obsession with outwitting her and taking vengeful action. The best answers also took account of the effect on this obsession on his psychological development, and successfully indicated that the significance of the remark lay not only in the narrative but in the long-term damage it did to the adolescent boy.

- (b) The structure of answers to this question was potentially provided by the quotation, and (not all) essays made constructive use of this. The discriminating factors were the accuracy of interpretation and the level of detail. The issue of faith was broadly and accurately understood to evoke hypocrisy and the use of religion as a weapon. The best answers did not confine themselves to Mme Rezeau, but gave appropriate attention to the tutors and to the boys' relationship with Rezeau. The issue of authority was mostly given relevant and accurate treatment by the candidates. The third issue was less well handled, as many saw it only in terms of a lack of parental affection and the consequent effect on the boys' mentality. A closer focus was needed here to show awareness that the pretence of affection and the distribution of favours, notably by Folcoche, was deployed as a means of winning loyalty in order, for example, to get information.

### Question 7

Camus: *L'Étranger*

- (a) Many candidates attempted this question, with widely differing results. There were many essays which dwelt at unnecessary length on the events in the first part of the story. What was required was an analysis of Meursault's version of events in the light of these facts, and a critique of the court's inability and refusal to accept these facts at face value. Ill-digested notes on *l'homme absurde* and/or Existentialism did not address the issue. Candidates who saw the point of this well-known quotation concentrated on Meursault's unwillingness to invent explanations which corresponded to, and therefore satisfied, conventional thinking. Likewise, it was appropriate to discuss religion in terms of Meursault's characteristic stance with regard to the expectation that he would, like all previous criminals in this situation, capitulate and satisfy the terms of reference of those who would judge him.
- (b) Few were inclined to disagree with the statement at issue. Those who did not just see it in black and white terms were able to impress Examiners by showing Meursault's capacity, albeit limited, for empathy of a sort. The majority of essays took a censorious line, particularly (and often at length) in connection with the funeral and Meursault's dealings with Marie. A more sophisticated response might have considered that the terms of reference of the quotation are those of the people who so comprehensively failed to cope with someone who simply did not share them, let alone express them in a comfortingly conventional manner. Love and friendship for Meursault may not have had the same resonance as for most people, but the candidates who shared the view that he was some kind of *monstre moral* simply missed the point. It was refreshing to read, just occasionally, that there was no evidence that Meursault never loved his mother, nor that he was entirely devoid of feelings.

### Question 8

Radiguet: *Le Diable au corps*

- (a) Candidates did not find it difficult to justify the appropriateness of the quotation in terms of the narrator's behaviour. There was, however, a widespread tendency to be highly critical of him and to convey the impression that Marthe was an innocent victim. The fact is that her *égoïsme* is also an issue, in that their activities and attitudes are shown to a large extent as being *à deux*. Good answers showed that Marthe connived with the narrator at times, rather than being manipulated by him. Weaker essays predictably took a narrative line in order to show that the narrator did as he pleased. This, however accurate, was a simple and superficial approach and did not receive the level of credit awarded to those who considered the couple's complicity.
- (b) Only one or two candidates attempted this question, and no useful conclusions can be drawn from their answers, which showed a very limited grasp of the issue. Examiners were looking for an understanding of the role of the author in showing the fallibility of the first-person account. The novel contains many examples of the author's critical view of the narrator's self-conscious play-acting, unreliable certainties, and ill-judged convictions, but attempts at this question generally failed to identify them.