

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

The Paper was generally found to be accessible to candidates and of a similar level of difficulty to the 2006 examination. This year, candidates were instructed to attempt all three sections of the test. This seemed to be well understood by candidates and there were very few who could not attempt some of the questions on the last section. A range of question types is used on the test and there is an incline of difficulty on the Paper. The French heard gradually increases in terms of length and density. The questions move from the identification of short factual information to the need to understand and identify opinions, explanations and narrated accounts in different tenses.

New Centres should note that even in questions requiring a short written response in French, the questions are prepared so as to restrict the amount of French which candidates have to produce. This remains a test of comprehension and Examiners do not expect complete sentences in response to questions. Inaccuracies of language are tolerated provided that the message is clearly communicated. If the answers sound and read like French, Examiners are instructed to accept the responses.

The candidature increased yet again this year. Although the full range of performance was seen, the number of high scoring candidates was particularly pleasing. Many candidates scored above half marks and such work showed evidence of good levels of attainment in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

Most candidates had been well prepared in Centres and were well aware of the demands of the examination. There were, however, some incidences of candidates ticking more than one box on the opening multiple choice exercise or not ticking the correct number of boxes on **Question 10**. Likewise, on **Section 1 Exercise 2**, candidates occasionally ticked more than the required six statements. Candidates should be reminded to read all rubrics with care.

Finally, candidates should be reminded to work in dark blue or black pen, never pencil, and to cross out clearly answers which they do not want to be considered. They should avoid writing over an earlier answer when correcting as this can make it difficult for the Examiner to see clearly which they consider their final attempt.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations of a factual nature. Candidates generally performed well on this exercise, with many scoring seven or eight marks. **Questions 6-8** were very well done.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-15

Candidates again fared quite well on this exercise. They were required to tick boxes and write in numbers. Candidates heard an announcement for a sports/adventure holiday and questions tested sporting activities, dates, times, games facilities and prices. **Questions 9, 11 and 13** were well done, but on **Question 10** some ticked only one box and on **Question 14** many were not able to give a correct number, eg some wrote 2,65 which was inaccurate. On the last question, some weaker candidates tried to write in a phone number rather than the time the phone information was available.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Candidates usually approached this exercise well. They heard four young people talk about what they did during the holidays. Candidates had to identify six correct statements out of twelve. Examiners reported that there did not seem to be any pattern of errors apart from option **b** which proved to be a frequently chosen incorrect answer. The full range of marks was scored on this exercise with many candidates achieving scores of four marks or more.

Exercise 2 Questions 17-21

In this exercise, candidates heard the first part of an interview with a young Greek girl, Iléana, talking about her life and interests. Candidates had to correct one incorrect detail in each of five statements in French. Candidates understood the exercise type well and made a good attempt at it. In **Question 17** an acceptable spelling of *médecin* was usually offered. *Docteur* was obviously accepted as a valid answer. In **Question 18** the required concept was that of being alone. *Drôle* was often given incorrectly and some also offered *sœur*. Candidates fared well on **Question 19** and were nearly always able to identify shopping. The required concept of heat was also usually correctly identified on **Question 20**, but many were unable to spell *chaleur* correctly. The last question was a good discriminator in that those who were able to identify past and present narrative could identify the correct sport, *volley*, rather than *natation* which was also mentioned.

Exercise 2 Questions 22-26

The second part of the interview was heard by candidates who then had to respond with short answers in French. Many managed to identify *à la maison/chez elle* on **Question 22** and were able to mention the fact that Iléana could read/talk in several languages on the next question. Incorrect reference to a specific language failed to score the mark. Likewise, on **Question 24** most were able to identify the fact that speaking languages resulted in better communication. On **Question 25**, candidates needed to refer to the teachers being available to help their students. **Question 26** proved difficult for many. The majority were not familiar with the verb *gaspiller* and they found it difficult to render the idea of not wasting electricity or water.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

Candidates heard an interview with a young author about her first book and her life in an area of Paris. Candidates generally did better on the last three questions rather than on the first three, but there was no pattern of incorrect answers.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

This final section required candidates to write short answers in French and (as intended) was found to be the most demanding section of the Paper. The candidates heard a French person, Nicolas, talking about his trip to India to visit a school which was receiving assistance through a twinning organisation in France. The extract heard required candidates not only to follow the order of events, but also to identify reasons for actions and explanations of ideas and opinions. As last year, although weaker candidates found this exercise very demanding, more able candidates responded well to the greater challenge of the questions which allowed them to show their worth at this level. On **Question 33** the word *programme* was sometimes offered instead of *progrès*, but many managed to correctly convey the idea of meeting the pupils. On **Question 34** many misheard *Inde* and, likewise, many did not appreciate that Nicolas had finished his studies. On **Question 35**, candidates fared better and realised that this school had been created in memory of his father. In **Question 36**, candidates needed to express the concept of an increase either in the size of the school or the numbers attending and only the more able answered this correctly. On **Question 37**, surprisingly, the word *eau* was not well known and many misheard *eau potable* and tried to convey ideas of mobile phones or tables. **Questions 38** and **39** were well answered, but on **Question 40** some failed to include the concept of **paying** for the transport to school for the students. Some mentioned *pharmacie* in response to this question rather than in response to the last question.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In this session, as in June, all candidates were expected to attempt all sections of the paper and there were very few candidates who did not do so, with the majority scoring marks in all three sections. Examiners agreed that candidates appeared to have had sufficient time to complete the paper and it presented a similar challenge to that of previous sessions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1 Questions 1-5

In the majority of cases, all the questions were correctly answered, though **Question 5** caused some difficulties and was often answered with B, and sometimes with C.

Exercice 2 Questions 6-10

Candidates generally scored well again in this exercise: the only difficulty encountered was **Question 10** where a number of candidates chose *Faux* as their answer.

Exercice 3 Questions 11-15

Candidates did not find this as straightforward as in some previous examples, and although many scored full marks, a number of candidates offered either A or F as an answer to **Question 14**, and D as the answer to **Question 15**. There may have been some doubt for candidates over the meaning of *dehors*.

Exercice 4 Question 16

Most candidates understood the tasks, but there was considerable variation in how well they were able to express these in appropriate language. *Avion* did not appear a well-known item of vocabulary; *dix heures et demie* rarely appeared with the final *-e*, and was sometimes given as *midi*, adding confusion to the time stated; many were unsure about *métro* and opted to use *train*, but Examiners took a lenient view and allowed this. Credit was given for the present tense, the future, immediate future, and conditional tenses, but candidates were expected to be able to write *j'arrive/j'arriverai* rather than *je arrive/je arriverai*. Most of the candidates who attempted this question scored for some elements, but many did not manage the language necessary to score full marks.

Section 2

Exercice 1 Questions 17-25

The majority of candidates scored very well on this exercise, being able to locate the correct parts of the text for their answers and showing a generally good level of comprehension. There was often some difficulty over the correct pronoun or possessive adjective needed, but Examiners were lenient except where use of the wrong pronoun caused confusion; for example in **Question 17** *s'inviter* did not score. **Question 21** required an answer using *le mois dernier* and was sometimes invalidated by the addition of a month, or by reference to *pour l'anniversaire de Sophie*. **Question 24** needed either *une vingtaine* or an answer rephrasing this, rather than simply *vingt*. *Bougies* was sometimes not known and appeared as an answer to both **Question 24** and as something to be eaten in **Question 25**.

Exercice 2 Question 26

Only a very small minority of candidates did not attempt this question, and most were able to score very well. In regions of the world where candidates did not usually receive pocket money, answers which explained this and talked about working to earn money scored equal credit. Some candidates interpreted **(c)** very liberally, imagining that they were talking about lottery winnings, and choosing to buy cars and houses, and to travel abroad, with many also laudably wishing to donate money to those less well off than themselves. All candidates were able to offer answers as to how they obtained their money and who from, and what they spent it on – the most popular option being their mobile phone, and in fact many would have spent a windfall on upgrading their mobile phone to something more fashionable! In some cases, candidates omitted to provide an answer for **(c)** at all and were consequently unable to score full marks for communication. Most candidates scored well for accuracy, albeit with the use of relatively simple vocabulary, and it was pleasing to see from many candidates correct usage of *beaucoup d'argent* and *mes parents me donnent...* Correct forms of *obtenir* and *recevoir* were not, however, well-known.

Section 3

Exercice 1 Questions 27-32

As in previous years, a few candidates ticked the *Vrai/Faux* boxes but made no attempt to write any justifications. Candidates should perhaps be made aware that if they decide the correct answer is *Vrai*, and tick that, they do not need to write anything, and no marks are awarded for a sentence in that case.

For **Question 27** the correction looked for was that climbing requires such concentration that *on ne peut penser à rien d'autre* or *Non, Catherine oubliait tous ses problèmes...*, whereas some candidates thought that the false element lay in Catherine's age and tried to correct by lifting the first sentence of the text. **Question 28** needed some mention of the requirement for *souplesse* or *l'équilibre* – *légèreté* on its own was not enough. **Question 29** was *Vrai* and the correction for **Question 30** required *le manqué d'oxygène*, with or without additional reference to headaches, and the difficulty of moving and breathing. **Question 31** was often incorrectly answered with *l'été prochain*, whereas the answer Examiners were looking for was how long it would take Catherine to reach the summit – *au moins trois semaines/un minimum de trois semaines*. **Question 32** was *Vrai*.

Exercice 1 Questions 33-40

This exercise differentiated well – those candidates who clearly understood the passage and were able to select exactly the right parts of the text for an appropriate answer scored well; those candidates who just lifted long sentences from the text in the hope that the answer would be in there somewhere and Examiners would award credit for it did less well. The answer to **Question 33** was *quarante/40% des enfants sont (trop) gros* but if the answer included *aux États-Unis où...* or *...mais l'obésité augmente...* this correct answer was invalidated. Some gave a definition of obesity. For **Question 34**, two elements were needed: the problem of obesity + the town itself, and many candidates omitted the reference to the town. Many candidates chose instead that Michel Boiry was a specialist in obesity and overweight. Both parts of **Question 35** were answered correctly by almost all candidates – *on mange mal* and *on ne bouge pas* – though some candidates thought this was a reference to parental responsibility. Many also managed correct answers to **Questions 36** and **37**, that the solution to the problem was *demandeur aux enfants d'éduquer leurs parents...* and that *les parents écoutent leurs enfants...* For **Question 38** there was a choice of two out of three possible answers: that schools were selected; teachers agreed to follow nutritional courses; the school canteen menu was carefully controlled. Many candidates were able to score at least one mark, but the second was harder to achieve. **Question 39** asked for specific changes in the food – *les fruits et les légumes ont remplacé les frites et les gateaux*, or some rephrasing of this idea. For **Question 40** there were two possible answers: either that Doctor Boiry's programme had been a success, or that the town had halved its fat consumption. Many candidates copied the whole of the second sentence of the last paragraph, rather than selecting the appropriate detail, and thereby failed to score.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core and an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in 2006, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Generally, the standard of work produced by candidates in the examination was similar to that heard last year. In the majority of Centres, tests were conducted appropriately: Examiners were familiar with the test requirements and the mark scheme which enabled them to ask questions at an appropriate level, giving candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do. However, it is of serious concern that in some Centres, Examiners seemed unfamiliar with the requirements of the examination, disadvantaging candidates who were not given the opportunity to fulfil the descriptions in the mark scheme.

In addition, Moderators reported an increased number of cases of very poor clerical work in Centres. It is essential that Centres put in place procedures to check all totals on working mark sheets and ensure that all totals are then correctly transferred to the MS1 computer printed mark sheet. Centres are reminded that it remains the responsibility of the Centre to enter all marks correctly on both the working mark sheet and the MS1 mark sheet. Half marks are never used.

Duration of tests/missing elements

Centres are reminded that where sections/elements of the Speaking test are omitted or sections are very short, candidates are not able to do themselves justice.

When examining the Role plays, Examiners are reminded of the need to stick to the set tasks and ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to attempt all parts of the set tasks. Marks cannot be awarded for tasks which are not attempted or for alternative tasks inserted by the Examiner. Centres are allowed to open the Teachers' Notes Booklet four days before the examination in order to prepare for the examination. (This booklet must remain in the Centre in secure conditions and the contents must not be divulged to candidates.)

Examiners must ensure that all three sections of the test are attempted – two Role plays, a Topic/discussion and a General conversation on at least two or three of the Defined Content topics – and must not award marks for sections of the test which are not attempted. It is not acceptable to merge the separate conversation sections into one, nor is it acceptable to merely ask two or three unrelated questions in the General conversation section. This approach denies candidates the opportunity to develop their responses and gain access to the higher bands of the mark scheme. In addition, Examiners are reminded that if candidates are not asked questions which allow them to show that they can convey past and future meaning, they cannot gain marks of more than six for linguistic content in the Topic and General conversation sections. It is acknowledged that weaker candidates may sometimes find it difficult to produce sustained work in different tenses, but if the questioning is at an appropriate simple and factual level it is possible to fulfil the timing requirements and for candidates to show what they know and can do. The role of the Examiner remains vital in providing opportunities for the candidates to work for the marks.

Full guidance for the conduct of the test can be found in the Teacher's Notes Booklet. Examiners must prepare prior to the test and ensure that they are familiar with the requirements so as to be fair to candidates. For teachers new to the IGCSE French Speaking test or those who feel they need a refresher course, a Speaking Test Training Handbook is available from CIE Publications

Administration

As stated above, it is regrettable to see a growing number of clerical errors. Centres are reminded that they must check all clerical work before submitting paperwork to Cambridge.

Quality of recording

This was excellent in many Centres where Examiners had clearly organised their tests very professionally in advance of the tests. There was however, regrettably, an increased number of cases in which the tests had been very poorly recorded and cassettes were either inaudible or blank. Page 5 of the Teachers' Notes booklet clearly states that 'Before the cassette is despatched, spot checks must be made to ensure every candidate is clearly audible'. It is therefore unacceptable to submit a recorded sample which cannot be verified because it is inaudible, or has failed to record, without first seeking advice from CIE as to how to proceed.

Centres are reminded to check all recording equipment a few weeks prior to the test in the room where the tests will be conducted. This will help Examiners to place the microphone to advantage the candidates rather than the Examiner and to check that there is not too much of an echo. On the day before the test it is also advisable to check all equipment again. When making up the sample it is also vital to check that this is clear as judgements cannot be made fairly if Moderators cannot hear. Centres are also reminded that the Examiner should announce the name and number of each candidate and ensure that these numbers and names match the labelling on the sample.

Sample size and range

Centres generally submitted the correct sample size, but the sample did not always feature samples of work from the full mark range. Moderation adjustments, if required, are made to bring marking in line with the agreed standard. It is therefore essential for Moderators to hear the work across the full range of candidates in order to be fair to all candidates.

Application of the mark scheme

Examiners usually applied the mark scheme consistently and many Centres required no or only small adjustments to their marks in order to bring them in line with the agreed standard. Where larger adjustments were required, it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- Failure to complete all tasks in the Role plays
- Short and/or missing Topic conversation and/or General conversation sections
- Lack of questions to elicit a variety of tenses in the conversation sections.

Centres with more than one Examiner usually marked consistently across different Examiners. Such Centres are reminded to seek prior permission from CIE if more than one Examiner is to examine in a Centre. In such cases internal agreement and moderation of marks must take place before sending the sample to CIE to ensure a common application of the marking scheme in the Centre. One sample of tapes should then cover all Examiners in the Centre.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Examiners should ensure that they do not miss out or change any tasks, nor should they add extra tasks which can confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. If only one part of a task is completed then only one mark should be awarded.

Role Plays A

As in 2006, the A Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Generally, candidates found them to be accessible and there were many examples of full marks with even weaker candidates able to score at least 1 mark per task. Short answers, if appropriate, could gain 3 marks. In longer responses requiring a conjugation of a verb, this had to be correct for a mark of 3 to be awarded.

At the hotel

Candidates attempting this card made a good confident start to the examination. Mostly tasks were well done though on the second task some candidates gave only one date and consequently did not complete the task. Pleasingly, nearly all candidates could ask an appropriate question on the last task.

At the theatre

Again, this card was well approached by candidates. All were able to ask for tickets though weaker candidates frequently pronounced *tickets* incorrectly. Some chose to use *le prix* instead of *c'est combien* on task 4 which was quite acceptable. As with the hotel situation, most were well able to phrase a correct question for the last task.

In a clothes shop

Some candidates did not ask for a jacket as instructed in the rubric. Please remind candidates to read the setting with care. Some also did not convey a size on the third task or gave an English word such as medium. Most were well able to ask the price. Generally this card was well done.

Role Plays B

The B Role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses and to explain, excuse or justify as appropriate. Candidates should be reminded to attempt all parts of the task. These Role plays differentiated well across the candidature, but it was not beyond even the weakest candidates to score some marks when the examining was sympathetic. Moderators again reported that the cards were well balanced in terms of difficulty.

At the Lost Property office

Most were well able to describe the lost bag, but were less sure of how to give the destination of the train and sometimes omitted either the day or the time. Most could say they had lost the bag using a perfect tense, but were less secure on saying when they would return to their own country. Some were also not able to phrase a relevant question about the opening times of the office.

Inviting a friend to stay

Some candidates (and some Examiners) confused who was inviting whom, sometimes due to poor Examiner preparation. The last two tasks were better done than the first two. Pleasingly, most were able to ask a relevant question on the fourth task. Weaker candidates found it difficult to work in a future tense in the second task, but this could have been avoided as the dates alone would have sufficed.

Phoning a friend to announce a late arrival

Again, the latter tasks on this Role play were coped with better than the initial tasks. Some failed to say that they had phoned a mechanic (despite the relevant vocabulary being supplied) and did not indicate what s/he would do in a future time frame. Task 3 only needed a short response but, again, only the better candidates did this task well. The last two tasks were generally well done.

Topic Conversation

As last year, Moderators reported hearing a very wide range of performance on this section. If candidates had been well guided as to their choice of topic and it was handled well by the Examiner then the Moderator had a pleasant listen. Centres are reminded that candidates should not talk for more than a minute or two uninterrupted and that they should then be questioned in a spontaneous way by the Examiner so as to prompt a genuine conversation. Candidates usually chose topics appropriate to their linguistic ability but some chose 'Myself' which is not recommended as it can often pre-empt the General Conversation section. There were some interesting accounts of life in other countries and being at school in different systems. There were also good accounts of interests and pastimes and holiday activities. Future plans and ambitions were also well represented. Some candidates gave moving accounts of the problems faced by their country. It was heartening to hear the optimism of candidates in such cases. The role of the Examiner in this section is to ensure that questions are differentiated for candidates according to their individual ability and that questions to test different tenses and opinions are asked. Candidates had usually been diligent in the preparation of their topic and many were able to talk for the required time and answer questions on their chosen topic. Regrettably, some candidates had not prepared a topic which meant that no marks could be awarded for that element of the test.

General Conversation

It was helpful that so many Examiners indicated the transition from the Topic conversation section to the General conversation. Most Examiners pitched the questions at the correct level of difficulty for the candidates, but some failed to cover enough topics and/or did not ask questions which would elicit tenses. Many candidates were able to talk in an engaging and spontaneous way on a variety of topics and were often able to make interesting comparisons re lifestyles in different countries. It was pleasing to hear more able candidates giving opinions and justifying these using a variety of tenses and structures. It was clear that in the majority of cases, teachers and candidates had worked hard prior to the examination and had made the learning process a worthwhile experience.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04 Continuous Writing
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General comments

Examiners again commend the enthusiasm and application displayed by large numbers of candidates in this component. Many showed a wide knowledge of French vocabulary and structures which they were able to convey in a variety of contexts. While some did struggle with parts of the Paper, there were few inappropriate entries this session and the overall performance compared well with past years. That said, there is room for improvement in the usual areas.

As ever, Examiners commented on the number of errors with basics such as verb forms, object pronouns, the spelling of everyday words and agreements. Many of these appear to be due to carelessness, as when repeated nouns appear with different spellings or genders or when the letter writer addresses the reader alternately as *tu* and *vous*. Candidates should be reminded to check their work thoroughly in search of such inconsistencies for they can be costly. Again, a number of candidates were over ambitious in their choice of structures. The old advice for those attempting free composition: 'if you cannot say it, say something else' still applies.

Communication marks are awarded specifically to each of the tasks detailed on the Question Paper. It is not intended that candidates should merely write a 'general letter to a pen friend' in **1(a)** for instance, omitting the directed tasks. Full marks for Communication cannot be earned if one or more of these tasks are omitted. For the mark to be awarded, tasks must be expressed clearly with an appropriate verb in an appropriate form so one cannot overstress the importance of accuracy in the handling of verbs.

Comprehension of the rubric was generally very good this session and the majority of candidates tackled the questions appropriately. The incidence of irrelevant material was quite rare. It was particularly gratifying to note that candidates did observe the 140 word limit very well and there were few excessively long pieces.

Presentation was slightly improved on recent years, but there were still a number of barely legible scripts. Examiners are lenient up to a point with ambiguous handwriting, but there are limits. There seems to be a growing incidence of minuscule writing. The Question Paper offers ample space for over 140 words of average handwriting so there is no excuse for this practice.

Question 1(a) Letter of invitation to a French friend

The letter to a friend is a familiar format and one which was popular with candidates. Some high scoring answers were presented, as the tasks proved to be accessible and the language and the informal register were within the range of most.

A number of candidates encountered difficulty with the task of inviting the friend for a stay between specified dates. Surprisingly few could offer beginning and ending dates (e.g. *du 8 au 25 janvier*) and some reversed the prepositions as in *au 8 du 25 janvier*. Examiners were sympathetic to the generalised *pour les vacances de Pâques* etc. where the dates were implied. Similarly *viens le 5 janvier pour deux semaines* was acceptable. Many had difficulty in expressing the invitation itself. The anglicised *je te veux venir* was not accepted as a clear fulfilment of the task. Wise candidates stuck to the simpler *peux-tu venir?* or *je t'invite*.

Most were able to state the nature of the weather in their country. A simple present tense sufficed: *il fait beau/chaud/froid* or *il pleut*, though the future was also accepted. Some made it difficult for themselves and a straightforward Communication mark was lost. Many enlarged on the topic and gave the frequency of hot/cold, rain/sun as part of a varied climate which was of course accepted.

The clothing recommended depended largely on the weather already indicated. A cold spell required *des vêtements chauds/des pulls/des manteaux* etc. and a warm spell required *des vêtements légers/des shorts/des T shirts*. Many failed to spell *maillot de bain* correctly. A number of candidates did not recognise

il faut and answered *tu faut*. When faced with the unfamiliar, candidates would be well advised to simplify. *Apporte/Tu peux apporter beaucoup de shorts* etc. would have avoided the problem.

More originality occurred when it came to the projected activities. Many planned to take the friend to the beach or the pool to enjoy swimming. Others intended to go shopping or visiting tourist sites, the cinema or the theatre. Discos featured regularly as did parties and getting to know the writer's friends. Many boys tended to concentrate on sporting activities while others looked forward to spending a quiet Christmas at home listening to music or playing with playstations. It was pleasing that many prefaced the activity with phrases such as *si tu veux on pourrait* which showed comfort in the register as they were able to show a degree of *politesse* combined with pleasant informality.

Not all scored the Communication mark for the reason for the activity, which was a pity. Again, a simple comment such as *parce que je sais que tu aimes ça* or *parce que nous avons beaucoup de bons magasins* was sufficient.

There were relatively few short answers and usually the completion of the tasks was enough to fill 140 words. Not many exceeded the word limit either which maximised the Communication marks.

Candidates should be reminded that the use of *tu* to address a pen friend would be normal and that *vous* would be considered by young people in France as over formal or even unfriendly. No penalty was made for *vous* as it is grammatically correct, but inconsistencies in the use of *tu/vous* were not accepted.

While entertaining a French friend at home may not be strictly within the experience of many IGCSE candidates, most had no difficulty in imagining the event. The present tense was the natural tense for most statements which simplified the tasks somewhat, although the future and the conditional were used appropriately by the better candidates.

Question 1(b) The competition entry

Although attracting fewer takers than **(a)**, this question inspired some of the best answers. Strong candidates worked sensibly through the tasks in turn and gathered most if not all of the Communication marks. As with **(a)**, fulfilling each task properly was usually enough to generate 140 words without recourse to verbiage.

Most adopted the traditional formal letter format, beginning with *Monsieur/Madame* and ending *Agréez, Monsieur, l'expression* etc. although that was not a requirement. This time the formal *vous* was fitting but again candidates thoughtlessly varied between *tu* and *vous* losing a small number of marks.

The first task was easy. Examiners rewarded *j'habite...* or *je suis chinois* etc. or other ways of saying where they were from. Finding a reason for wanting to study in Paris produced an interesting range of responses. Some wanted to explore a new country. Others wanted to improve their French. Most of the reasons given were valid and appropriately expressed by such phrases as *parce que je voudrais/pourrais* followed by an infinitive. Some simply said *parce que j'aime/j'adore la France/le français*, which was quite acceptable.

Advantages of staying with a French family were usually well expressed. Candidates wished to practise their language skills, to enjoy family life *à la française*, to meet people, to relish French cuisine or simply to avoid expensive hotels.

Nearly all recognised *sorties* and expressed a desire to visit a variety of places. Some knew the names of several tourist attractions, which they had trouble in spelling (such as *les Champs Elysées*). Many wished to see the Eiffel Tower or Notre Dame while others opted for football matches, discos or restaurants. All were acceptable provided they were couched in such phrases as *je voudrais/pourrais/espère visiter/aller à...* etc.

Explaining why French was important to them was slightly more demanding and a minority omitted the task. Successful responses included to improve the chances of a good job, to enhance their travels, to secure good exam results or to get to know French relatives a little better.

As with **(a)**, the present tense was appropriate to most of the tasks and stronger candidates did not encounter any insuperable difficulties of language.

Question 2 A part time job

As has occurred in past years, many candidates who had coped adequately with the directed compositions in **Question 1** found the free, unstructured nature of **Question 2** rather more challenging. The rubric clearly told candidates to write about paid work which they undertook last year, thus obliging them to write in past tenses. This requirement was not always well observed as many narratives tended to drift into the present. *J'aime mon travail au café* was not appropriate either for Language or Communication. Failure to handle the demands of past tenses added to the need to create their own subject matter meant that in many cases marks for **Question 2** were lower than those achieved for **Question 1**.

While it is likely that only a minority had experienced paid employment personally, that did not prevent some very imaginative answers. Most were able to invent a plausible situation and found enough to say about their 'work' and their reactions to it. Again there were few short answers and most wrote roughly the recommended 140 words. Only a small minority failed to understand the rubric and mistakenly wrote about a journey as they took *travail* to mean travel.

The 'work' described varied widely. Some did 'serious work' such as helping in a bank, a lawyer's office or a school. Some worked as waiters, shop assistants, kitchen staff or mechanics, while others were babysitters or simply worked at home for pocket money. The notion of 'one's first day at work' was often well handled and stronger candidates wrote about initial nervousness as they faced up to a new challenge. Entering the spirit of the question they then went on to relate often amusing anecdotes about the embarrassment of a late arrival, accidents involving breakage of plates etc., encounters with unsympathetic colleagues and the need to do simple but unfamiliar tasks at a speed which defeated the *débutant(e)*. Some felt lonely and insecure, often the subject of ridicule as they did not know the routine of the workplace and had nobody to turn to. Having got through the initial stage, better candidates went on to give realistic details of the actual tasks they were required to do. It was a pity this aspect was overlooked or treated in only a cursory fashion by a large number. Some wrote of the interesting nature of their work. Others regarded the work as dull and repetitive and complained of the drudgery of unskilled labour and the meagreness of their pay. Average to weak candidates were more conservative in their approach. They tended to stick to prosaic details such as the number of hours and days they were at work, the wages, the geographical situation of the workplace etc. Their reactions tended to be simplistic as in *j'étais content et fatigué*. Expressing reactions in this 'list style' is normally rewarded by one Communication mark only.

All understood the need to express their reactions and most were able to score one or two Communication marks for doing so. These reactions were varied. The best were able to describe the transition from natural apprehension at first to an acceptance of or even a pleasure in the experience which was related not so much to the work itself as to friendships forged with colleagues. Many earnestly wrote of the life enhancing nature of the work experience. They felt grown up and more independent. They respected their parents even more for their fortitude, having endured the demands of working themselves. They learned the importance of work and the value of money. Many said that work was difficult at first but became easier. Relations with other members of staff were sometime frosty but warmed as time went by. Most, eventually enjoyed the experience and were sad to leave. Those who took a negative view were in the minority, but they made sensible comments about the boredom which casual employment can entail. They stressed the problems of working with unsympathetic adults, the long hours and early starts and the difficulty of the jobs they were expected to do. Some even walked out in disgust after the first day and went to join their friends on the beach! However, the majority stuck to the task and had no regrets. All were agreed on one thing: they welcomed the money.

Examiners commented that candidates often devoted too much space to abstract generalisations about young people working for money. Others spent too long explaining how they obtained the job rather than describing what the job entailed. It would have been preferable and no doubt easier for the candidate too, if they had simply related the events of the first hours at work as indicated in the rubric and said how they felt.

As stated above, marks were regularly lost due to an inability to use past tenses. Even the better candidates did not always distinguish between the perfect for completed actions and the imperfect which is used to describe past states or when expressing repeated actions, as was frequently the case with this particular topic. Candidates would benefit from a careful revision of these tenses and when to use them. While grammatical accuracy for this question seemed to show improvement on recent years, there were general weaknesses in such areas as the use of negatives, the agreement of past participles and adjectives and the use of object pronouns. Precision in such matters is the key to a high score for Language in this Paper.