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# FOREIGN LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0520/01

Listening

## General comments

The candidature for this year's examination was very similar to last year's. Overall, the paper was found to be more accessible than last year's. This was due to several factors:

- Careful vetting at the preparation stage in order to reduce the amount of written French that candidates must produce in the examination. Candidates often find the Listening examination stressful in that they are expected to listen, read and write simultaneously. It is possible to display comprehension via short responses and questions were therefore phrased in such a way as to make short answers in French entirely appropriate.
- All multiple choice listening questions have been written so that choices are short and clear in order to lessen the candidate's need to read and retain written material whilst listening for their answer.
- For answers written in French, Examiners are still instructed to accept inaccurate French provided that the message is clear. If in doubt, teachers may find the following guidelines helpful. If the answer sounds like French and reads like French, then it is acceptable, provided of course that it conveys a clear message.

It is always the concern of CIE that questions are as accessible as possible to the full range of candidates. It was therefore gratifying to see good numbers of high scoring candidates who showed very competent levels in both specific and general comprehension tasks. Weaker candidates, as intended, scored the majority of their marks on the opening exercises. The final exercises proved sufficiently demanding and a very fair test for the more able candidates. Some extremely good performances from such candidates were reported by all Examiners.

Most candidates had been well prepared in Centres and were familiar with the requirements of the examination. A small number, however, ticked more than one box in **Section 1 Exercise 1** and on **Section 2 Exercise 1** a few ticked more than the required six boxes.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 1-8**

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations of a short factual nature. The question type used was multiple choice. Overall, candidates made relatively few errors in this straightforward opening exercise.

#### **Exercise 2 Questions 9-16**

Candidates generally performed very competently on this exercise. They were required to tick boxes and complete brief notes (often one word or a number) on the topic of tourist activities in Arcachon. Candidates coped well on the first three questions, but on **Question 12** the number was frequently given incorrectly. Likewise, candidates sometimes struggled to give the correct day on **Question 16**.

## Section 2

### Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates generally performed well on this exercise and the vast majority ticked the correct number of boxes. Candidates heard four young people talking about the subject of school and the advantages/disadvantages of being a boarder. Candidates often incorrectly chose *e* as one of the *vrai* statements, (they heard *J'aimerais étudier l'histoire du cinéma*). As last year, it was pleasing to see high scores on this exercise from the majority of candidates.

### Exercise 2 Questions 18-25

This exercise was based on the topic of work. Candidates heard an account from a young French person, Stéphane, about his job working in the Tourist Office in Nice. The exercise required very short answers to be given in French.

Most candidates identified the *office de tourisme* in **Question 18**. In **Question 19** most realised that the work consisted of talking on the telephone or giving information to tourists. Weaker candidates wrote *enseignement* instead of *renseignements*. This invalidated the answer. **Question 20** was well attempted, but many wrote *moins* instead of *mois*. On **Question 21** candidates generally understood the concept of *le contact avec le public* and that Stéphane was originally from Nice. On **Question 22** candidates correctly identified *informatique*, but did not always identify *patience* and weaker candidates rendered this as *impatience*, which could not score. On **Question 23** some failed to score the mark by offering *entendre* instead of *attendre*. Most, however, were able to identify the notion that the job was tiring. **Question 24** was well done by candidates and many were successful in identifying *Italie*. On **Question 25** candidates needed to make reference to the fact that languages were crucial in order to do the job or that all the employees had a good knowledge of languages.

## Section 3

### Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

This exercise tested both specific and general comprehension skills. Candidates heard an interview with a young French surfer. As last year, this exercise was well attempted by candidates and many were able to score 4 or 5 marks. On **Question 28** some seemed unfamiliar with *détendue* which appeared in one of the possible answers. Other questions, however, did not reveal a particular pattern of incorrect answers.

### Exercise 2 Questions 32-39

This final exercise, targeted at the most able candidates, was seen to be fair and accessible and there were some very good performances noted by Examiners. It was pleasing to see that candidates appreciated the fact that full sentences were not required to score the mark. **Questions 32** and **33** were well answered, with candidates able to correctly identify that initially students wrote to each other and then trips followed on. Incorrect answers from weaker candidates featured the use of *décrire* instead of *écrire*. On **Question 34** synonyms of *chaleureux* and *gentils* were acceptable and Examiners reported that the spelling of these words had improved. On **Question 35** some confused *matière scolaire* with *matériel scolaire* and failed to score the mark. Specific references to *cahiers* and *livres* were sufficient to gain the mark. On **Question 36** candidates were expected to mention the *fusion des noms des 2 villages* to gain the mark. On **Question 37** most were able to identify both the financial and cultural aims of the project and most were able to score at least one mark by identifying *marché* on **Question 38**. *Repas* was, however, difficult for some who wrote incorrectly *repart*, *ropa* or *repos*. Such answers did not gain the mark as a different meaning was conveyed. On **Question 39** the word *vélo* was adequate to gain the mark and proved to be an easy last question with which to finish the examination.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paper 0520/02</b> <b>Reading and Writing</b></p>
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**General comments**

Overall, the standard of the paper was judged to be similar to last year. The general performance of the candidates was very good, especially in **Sections 1** and **2** where many candidates scored full or almost full marks. In **Section 3** the performance was much more varied with a complete spread of marks.

Most candidates attempted **Section 3** and gained marks in this section. However, Examiners commented that in some Centres, candidates who scored very highly in **Sections 1** and **2**, and who could have gone on to gain marks on **Section 3**, did not attempt the final section.

Candidates were, on the whole, extremely well prepared for the examination.

**Comments on specific questions****Section 1****Exercise 1 Questions 1-5**

**Questions 1** and **3** were usually correct. **Question 2** caused problems for some candidates who did not understand *alimentation* and opted for C or D. In **Question 4** a substantial number of candidates did not know *balayer* and in **Question 5**, B was often incorrectly chosen.

**Exercise 2 Questions 6-10**

Many candidates scored full marks. For some candidates, opening times of 8 am to 5 pm did not constitute a full day and they opted for *faux* in **Question 7**. **Question 9** also caused occasional problems, probably because candidates did not read the text/question carefully enough.

**Exercise 3 Questions 11-15**

This exercise proved to be very accessible to candidates, with many scoring full marks.

**Exercise 4 Question 16**

Occasional confusion about the requirements of the task (e.g. use of imperative to create a set of instructions, use of tense) was treated sympathetically by Examiners. Most candidates performed well, scoring 3 marks for communication and at least 1 for accuracy. It is worth noting that the spelling of *croissants* caused some problems.

**Section 2****Exercise 1 Questions 17-25**

Most candidates coped extremely well with this exercise, with even weaker ones able to manoeuvre their way round the text to answer the questions. At this stage in the paper, Examiners took a relaxed approach to the use of possessives and this allowed candidates to score more marks than they would otherwise have done. **Question 17** was often the only question answered incorrectly – even some quite strong candidates thought Eléonore was currently in Paris. In **Question 25** *on part ensemble au cours le matin* was often given by candidates, but with no mention of Antoine. This was judged to be too unspecific to score the mark, though it was acceptable as part of a fuller answer.

## Exercise 2 Question 26

Candidates had a lot to say about the different *fêtes* celebrated in their country and seemed to enjoy writing on this topic. Examiners, in turn, found it interesting to read the accounts of how candidates spent these special days. Occasionally, candidates relied too heavily on lists of food and drink, but in general scores for communication were good. Rubric errors were rare and answers were generally of the required length.

Examiners reported problems with the spelling of *beaucoup*, *parce que*, *nous mangeons* and *je préfère*. Some candidates fail to use accents on verbs and hence lost out on marks for accuracy.

## Section 3

### Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

On the whole, candidates understood the text and coped reasonably well with the questions. A few candidates appeared to disregard (or maybe did not understand) the rubric and provided a 'corrected' version of a statement, even when they had declared it to be *vrai*. This did not affect their marks. Some candidates only attempted the *vrai/faux* element of the exercise and made no attempt to correct the *faux* statements.

**Questions 27** and **29** generally posed few problems. A number of candidates incorrectly identified **Question 28** as *faux*, giving *il s'est réveillé 2 jours plus tard à l'hôpital* as their answer. **Question 30** probably caused the most difficulties: *non, c'était dans sa tête* was a popular answer, but was not considered enough on its own, though it was acceptable as part of a fuller answer. Instead, Examiners were looking for something along the lines of *non, c'était parce qu'il n'avait plus envie de vivre* or *non, il avait plus mal psychologiquement*. Candidates did not always realise that the statement in **Question 31** was *vrai*. In **Question 32**, while *il a partagé son expérience avec tous ceux comme lui* was judged by Examiners to be acceptable as an answer, candidates often lifted *il a partagé son expérience avec tous ceux qui comme lui*, straight from the text. This failed to demonstrate understanding and could not score.

### Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

Most candidates understood the text and questions sufficiently to obtain a respectable score on this final exercise.

**Questions 35, 36,** and **38** were usually answered correctly. In **Question 33** most candidates were able to give the reason for Claude Lelouch's fame though quite a few thought he was an actor and some gave *Claude a grandi à Paris* as their answer. Although **Question 34** proved fairly accessible, weaker candidates could not explain why Claude's father had to hide and merely stated *il doit alors quitter la France*, which did not answer the question. **Question 37** proved more challenging and the inclusion of extra details, e.g. the idea that Claude *worked* in a cinema or that he went to the cinema *with his mother*, sometimes invalidated answers. In **Question 39** candidates were required to list two important things that happened to Claude when he was 18. They usually scored the first mark easily enough with *il a raté son bac*, but were then often unable to score the second mark. Sometimes, although the *caméra* was mentioned, faulty manipulation of the text meant it was unclear who was buying it for whom. In other cases, candidates were under the impression that Claude returned to school. **Question 40** was often correctly answered though a number of candidates lifted *son père en larmes le serre dans ses bras pour le reconforter*, which could not score. **Question 41** was again often correctly answered. Where candidates did not score it tended to be because they gave answers along the lines of *parce qu'il a plus appris par mes erreurs et mes réussites* instead of adapting the text and using the correct *ses*. Such answers were judged ambiguous and did not score.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paper 0520/03</b> <b>Speaking</b></p>
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**General comments**

This paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core and an Extended Curriculum course and, as in 2004, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Generally, the candidature displayed a very pleasing level of communication skills and the standard was in keeping with that heard last year. This was in no small part due to the many instances of efficient examining which were commented upon by nearly all Moderators this year. It is very pleasing at this stage in the history of the examination to hear how comfortable many Teacher/Examiners obviously feel with the format of the examination and the extent to which they are aware of how to elicit the best performance from their candidates. It was also pleasing to note the extent to which this professional approach was observed in Centres presenting candidates for the first time.

**Administration**

Although instances of clerical errors were reported by all Moderators, these seemed to be less in evidence than was the case last year. Centres are reminded that they should check carefully both the addition of marks for each candidate on the summary mark sheet and the transfer of the totals to the MS1 mark sheet. Centres are also reminded to insert the name of the examining teacher in the box provided for that purpose on the summary mark sheet. This will ensure that valuable feedback on how to improve the conduct and assessment of the test reaches the appropriate person.

**Quality of recording**

The quality of recording was good in most Centres. There were, however, several instances of very poor recordings which made moderation difficult. If Centres use integral microphones it is essential that the cassette recorder is positioned to favour the candidate and that recording levels are checked carefully prior to recording, in the room where the examination will take place. If external microphones are used, Centres should check that the recording levels for both speakers are equal as some candidates were very faint. In Centres with tiled floors, it is helpful to conduct tests in a room smaller than a classroom so as to reduce the amount of echo on tapes.

Examiners are reminded that they should introduce each candidate on the tape by announcing the candidate name, number and the number of the role play card being attempted. Candidates should not be required to introduce themselves.

There were, pleasingly, fewer cases of the tape being stopped between different sections of a candidate's test. Once the recording for a candidate has started, it should be continuous. Centres should also ensure that cassettes are correctly labelled.

**Duration of tests/missing elements**

There were some instances of overlong examinations. No candidate should be examined for more than 15 minutes as where tests last for longer than this the result is often candidate and Examiner fatigue. 15 minutes provides Moderators with sufficient material to assess performance.

Care should be taken to ensure that no section of the test is omitted. Each candidate's speaking test must consist of the following: two Role plays, a Topic/Discussion (approximately 5 minutes) and a General conversation (also approximately 5 minutes). Moderators reported that some Centres had disadvantaged candidates by omitting the General conversation section. When conducting the Role plays, Examiners must give candidates the opportunity to attempt all parts of each task. In many cases there will be two or more parts to a task and marks cannot be awarded for elements that are not attempted. It is for this reason that Examiners are required to prepare their roles in the Role plays prior to the examination. Although candidates must not know in advance which questions they will be asked in the conversation sections of the test, Teacher/Examiners will find it useful to build up banks of questions to avoid 'drying up' on the day. In the most successful speaking tests, it was clear that the Examiner was listening to what the candidate had to say and that the conversation was a natural and spontaneous development of topics which the candidate had encountered throughout their course of learning.

### **Application of the mark scheme**

Generally, marking in Centres was close to the agreed standard and where adjustments were necessary, they were usually small. Centres requiring larger adjustments usually fell into one of the following categories:

- Short Topic/Discussion and or General conversation sections.
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the Role plays.
- Failure to give candidates the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames in the Topic/Discussion and General conversation sections. Candidates who do not show they can do this cannot score more than 6 marks for linguistic content.

In Centres where more than one Examiner was used, the marking was usually consistent across Examiners, but in a few Centres there was not a consistent standard between Examiners. Centres are reminded that where more than one Examiner is to be used, permission must be sought from the Product Manager prior to each examination session. In Centres of two or more Examiners, internal moderation must take place and a common standard of marking should be applied to all candidates. The sample submitted for moderation needs to cover the work of all Examiners.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Role Plays A**

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Marks can only be awarded for completion of the tasks set by CIE so it is vital that Examiners stick to the tasks specified in the Teacher's Notes booklet and on the Role play cards. If only one part of a task is completed, only one mark can be awarded. Candidates should be reminded to look out for tasks which include the requirement to greet or thank.

As last year, 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 the vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Generally, candidates found them accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark per task.

#### *At the campsite*

Candidates coped well with this Role play although in Task 2 some were not given the opportunity to state both when they wanted to visit and for how many nights. Candidates had been well trained to formulate the required question on the last task.

#### *At the restaurant*

The first two tasks were well done, but some candidates did not perceive the difference between *plat principal* and *légume*. Again, candidates seemed comfortable when having to ask a question in the last task.

#### *At the post office*

*Timbres* was generally not well pronounced, but the other tasks were well done apart from the last one. Candidates asking the price coped well, but those asking how long it would take were less successful.

## Role Plays B

The **B** Role plays were more demanding in that they required candidates to use different tenses and to explain and justify where necessary. Candidates found them accessible, with even the weaker ones able to gain marks when led through the tasks in a sympathetic manner by the Examiner.

### *Talking with a doctor*

Initially, some candidates tried to give too much detail on the first task requiring them to explain the accident they had had. On the second task they managed to give details of what was the matter with them, but found it less easy to give details of the accident in Task 3. Many incorrectly conjugated the reflexive verbs *se casser* and *se blesser*. There were, however, some good examples of present participles used in this task by more able candidates. Weaker candidates found it difficult to formulate an appropriate question on the last task.

### *Enquiring about a holiday job*

Candidates were clearly able to give personal details and to explain the reason for their call. Some found it difficult, however, to talk about what they did last year and to explain why they had liked the job. It is an important teaching point, and one well worth emphasising in class, that at this level candidates should be able to explain their likes and dislikes. Most coped well with saying when they would be free and there were some good reasons given for wanting to work.

### *Phoning a friend*

Candidates approached the first two tasks well and were usually able to give a good array of excuses for their tardy arrival. They were less successful in suggesting that their friend should meet up with them in town. They dealt successfully with the last two tasks.

## Topic/Discussion

It made for interesting listening to hear such a wide range of topics from candidates. This section of the examination gives the chance to candidates to prepare vocabulary and structures in advance and is intended to give them a confident start to the conversation sections. Teacher/Examiners should advise candidates not to choose "Myself" as a topic as it can become far too general and leave little to be exploited in the General conversation section. Generally, candidates chose topics appropriate to their level of linguistic ability. Some very good performances were heard on "Life in other countries". Such topics enable candidates to compare and contrast past and present experiences to great effect. Likewise, "Holidays" proved to be a rich source of conversation as did "Life in an International School". The best performances were to be found in Centres where a natural and spontaneous conversation took place after the initial presentation of the topic. There were many instances of good examining which enabled candidates to work in different tenses and to give and justify their opinions. Candidates across the range performed well when the questions were pitched at a level of difficulty appropriate to their ability.

Examiners are reminded that Moderators find it useful, (as do candidates) to be told when this section of the test is over and when the examination is moving into the General conversation section.

## General Conversation

As in the Topic/Discussion section a wide range of performance was heard. Examiners should aim to cover at least two topics in this section of the test. These should be different for different candidates and should be chosen by the Examiner so as not to overlap with the Topic/Discussion section. Examiners should remember to ask questions which enable candidates to expand upon information and use a variety of tenses and structures. Closed questioning techniques which elicit *oui/non* responses are best avoided in favour of questions such as *parle-moi de...*

Moderators reported many instances of natural conversations with candidates of all levels of ability. There were some mature, fluent and fascinating accounts of life as experienced by a truly international candidature and it was heartening to hear the importance given to learning a foreign language by so many young people.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paper 0520/04</b> <b>Continuous Writing</b></p>
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**General comments**

The performance of large numbers of candidates continues to impress Examiners favourably. Inappropriate entries were generally infrequent and the majority of the scripts received were of the expected standard. A number of outstanding papers were submitted and most candidates were competent in the language and had the linguistic skills to cope with the tasks required. A minority struggled to express themselves at all coherently in French.

As ever, candidates should be reminded of the importance of linguistic accuracy. Many marks were lost, even by able candidates, due to careless spelling and basic errors of grammar. The highest marks for language were awarded to those who not only displayed a rich and varied vocabulary, but were also able to sustain a sequence of correct French containing a range of structures.

An ability to use appropriate tenses is assessed in the paper. Present and future are normally required in **Question 1** where a letter or an article is frequently set. Perfect or imperfect tenses are needed for the narrative set in the past in **Question 2** and a minority of the best candidates sometimes opted to employ the more literary past historic, although no extra marks were awarded for this tense. More able candidates were rewarded for the appropriate use of the pluperfect and the conditional. Varied use of infinitives and present participles was a feature of the best scripts.

Many candidates had clearly been well trained for the task of writing both formal and informal letters. They observed the letter etiquette well and were able to begin and end their letter with appropriate formalities. In a minority of cases, excessively long introductions were used which contained little information germane to the tasks set. Where the inclusion of such "extra" material caused the letter to stretch beyond the word limit of 140 words, this often resulted in a loss of Communication Marks. Wordy descriptions of the family's health and enquiries after news of the intended recipient's nearest and dearest, when not specifically mentioned in the rubric, are unlikely to score well.

Examiners stress time and again the importance of completing the tasks set within the limit of 140 words. This year many wrote at such length that not only did Examiners have to ignore several sections when assessing Language Marks, but also any Communication Marks contained in those sections were lost. On the other hand it was a pity that a few candidates were so concise in handling the elements required by the rubric that their answers were well short of the word limit and a number of potential marks for language were sacrificed.

In terms of the assessment of effective communication, the tasks set out in the rubric are requirements, not suggestions. Specific marks are allocated for specific tasks. A minority of candidates, often quite able, concentrated too much on one or two elements and ignored others. For instance, a number wrote in great detail about their houses in **Question 1 (a)**, but omitted to mention their neighbourhood. In **Question 2** some gave many facts relating to how the narrator made contact with his/her group, but forfeited two marks for omitting to give any reactions.

Sadly it is necessary to report a growing incidence of poor to bad presentation. Handwriting was on occasion so untidy as to be barely legible and marks were lost as a consequence: Examiners cannot award marks for what they cannot read. Increasing numbers of candidates chose to ignore the instructions on the question paper not to use correction fluid.

**Comments on specific questions****Question 1****(a)**      *The House Exchange*

This topic was usually well understood and some interesting and informative letters were presented. A minority of weaker candidates did not seem to grasp that a house exchange was involved (although the rubric seemed unambiguous – *faire un échange de maisons*). They thought they would be spending a holiday with the Peyre family. In fact they lost few marks for this as they were still able to score Communication Marks for writing about their homes, surroundings and other matters.

The required elements were relatively simple for this question and the correct tense for most statements was the present. The better candidates wrote in detail about their house and the neighbourhood. In nearly every case it seemed, the house was huge, containing dozens of rooms and the *quartier* was quiet and secluded. A simple sentence about each was enough to secure two Communication Marks and good descriptions gained a number of Language Marks. Some candidates did not understand *quartier* and thought it meant sleeping quarters. Others omitted to mention it and sacrificed a mark for Communication. Marks for nearby tourist attractions were easily accessible and the straightforward *il y a une piscine près de chez nous* or similar was sufficient for the Communication Mark. Most found plenty to say about this as it must be a commonly used task in preparation for the examination. The attractions were often close to the sea, but many also referred to museums and churches for the adults and *parcs d'attraction* for the children. Language tended to be somewhat repetitive on weaker scripts and *il y a* seemed to occur in nearly every statement. Better candidates were able to use a more varied range of idiom and were rewarded accordingly for Language. The weather in July seemed to be invariably hot and sunny all around the world. Again, a simple statement such as *fait/fera beau en juillet* would score the mark, but a surprising number had difficulty with the task. Responses to *ce qu'il faut apporter* usually recommended light clothing, sun cream, cameras and swimming gear. The more practical reminded the Peyres they would need passports, credit cards and cash. A number did not seem to recognise *il faut* and wrote *vous faut apporter* etc. As ever, a disappointingly high proportion had reached 140 words before they mentioned the last point and could not be awarded the Communication Mark.

Register was usually not a problem although it was clearly inappropriate to address the Peyre family as *tu* as many weaker candidates did. Examiners allowed both formal and informal etiquette in the prescription and the endings of the letter as it was not stated how well the writer knew the family.

The question proved to be a fair one as few were unable to find anything, however simple, to say about each task, and the best were able to show their knowledge and linguistic skills in detailing the charms of their homes, the potential holiday activities for the Peyre family and in some cases explaining in an interesting way the benefits of exchanging one's home for the holiday.

**(b)**      *The Holiday Job Application*

This option was more popular than **(a)**, perhaps because the subject had been practised by Centres in preparation for the Examination. Marks were of a similar quality in each test across the entry.

The quality of answers varied between the polished sophistication of an authentic looking job application, containing impressive use of etiquette and formal language, and the naive style of the teenager letter which was clearly inappropriate for the task. Lapses in register were common in all but the best scripts, but large numbers of marks were not usually lost on this account. However, no credit was given for the informal *Comment ça va?* or *Grosses bises* and such. Similarly, the use of the informal *tu* did not gain any reward.

As with (a) most were able to score quite highly for Communication for fairly simple statements, employing mainly present tenses. Most candidates were able to find two or more reasons for wanting the job as a *moniteur*. *Parce que j'aime les enfants* was a natural response and was almost universally used. The need for pocket money was regularly given although many could not handle the expression *avoir besoin*. Some expressed a desire to stay in France for a while, either for a holiday or to improve their French. Others were bored during the long vacation and wanted something to do to pass the time. Naturally, many made full use of the rubric to say why they thought they were capable of doing the job. They 'spoke good French' or other languages, they were *dynamique* or *sportif* and they had little brothers, sisters or cousins who had provided them with ample opportunity to learn how to look after the young. Many made much of their sporting interests and were experienced in organising games for children in or out of school. *Quand vous serez libre* seemed quite easy to say, but the future tense gave difficulty and many attempted but failed to say *du 1er juillet au 31 août* or similar. Examiners rewarded both dates and clock times for availability. As with (a) a number had used 140 words before they reached the last Communication Mark.

As with (a) the question enabled the weaker candidates to score marks for both Communication and Language for using simple statements in the present tense (*j'aime, je suis, je parle, je veux*), while at the same time offering the stronger candidates the opportunity to show off their French in employing the appropriate language of formal letters and in relating their previous experience of child care, their academic progress and their attitude to the appointment in more complex language.

## Question 2

### *Abandoned at a Service Station*

As usual, the open ended nature of the narrative enabled gifted candidates to shine, but made demands on the least able candidates which they had difficulty in meeting. Marks were generally lower among weaker candidates for this question than for the letters in **Question 1** although better candidates frequently scored more highly for **Question 2**.

The need to "invent" their answers led some into unnecessarily complicated accounts which were difficult to sustain and sometimes difficult to comprehend. Weaker candidates should be encouraged to simplify their narratives and to ensure they know the perfect tense of common verbs.

The rubric should always be read with care before starting. This time the story should have begun from the point the stimulus ends, the instruction being to continue the narrative, yet many copied out the stimulus in full, wasting valuable time. Nearly all understood the narrator had been abandoned at a service station and needed to get back to his/her school group. However, a number improbably took *autocar* to be the narrator's car and inevitably this led them down the wrong track. In such cases, Examiners are as tolerant as they can be, but there are limits to the allowances which can be made.

Most began the story by expressing an initial reaction to being abandoned and scored a Communication Mark for *j'avais peur* or *j'étais choqué*, a feeling or emotion of some kind. A surprisingly small number expressed anger or annoyance with their teachers. They went on to relate events which led them back to their friends on the bus. Most were sensible and thought first about using the inevitable mobile phone to call the bus. Of course candidates had left their phone on the bus so attempts were made to use a public phone only their money was on the bus too. They were reduced to asking a stranger for help, only they did not know much French and more problems ensued. The chapter of misfortunes was told with relish and a touch of humour by the stronger candidates. Eventually, contact was made with the party through parents or the school and the wretched victims were reunited with their friends, but only after a long, miserable wait. Such stories in their simplest versions were within the compass of average to strong candidates who were able to handle past tenses, usually perfect and imperfect, effectively. Others wrote improbable accounts of walking for miles down empty roads, being taken in by kindly French people who fed them, gave them money, escorted them to their hotel or to the police station, all of which led to a happy outcome. Such accounts were excellent in the hands of the best linguists, but proved to be well beyond the powers of the less gifted who would have been wiser to simplify their answers.

Examiners again congratulate the gifted and well prepared candidates who were able to achieve a multitude of Language Marks for the correct use of a variety of tenses and infinitives, negative constructions, object, emphatic and relative pronouns, subordinate clauses with appropriate conjunctions and a rich and varied vocabulary. The best answers often contained effective use of indirect and occasionally direct speech and revealed the thoughts and feelings of the narrator when faced with the frightening situation. Less competent candidates tended to lose out for a failure to employ correct forms of the perfect tense, with faulty past participles being used and incorrect choice of auxiliary verbs. Some simply did not attempt past tenses and used the present throughout, thus losing marks both for Language and appropriate Communication.

Careless errors were rife on many scripts with inconsistent gender and spelling of nouns occurring frequently, even with words given in the rubric. Common words which regularly cost marks included *professeur*, *amis* (which tended to alternate with *amies*), *groupe*, *réponse* (often *response sic*), *rencontrer*, *chercher* (used for *trouver*) and *téléphoner* (*à*). Surprising gaps in vocabulary included police station and even policeman. The gender of the narrator varied frequently from masculine to feminine according to the agreements of adjectives and past participles. Candidates should be reminded that the time allowed for the paper is usually found to be ample and that time should always be made for a full and thorough revision of one's work.