

# FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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Paper 0520/12

Listening

## Key Messages

- The performance on this paper was in line with the performance seen in previous years.
- Centres should remind candidates to write clearly in blue or black pen. Candidates must not write first in pencil and then overwrite answers in pen. This can make answers very difficult to read.
- Candidates must cross out any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- The poor handwriting on some scripts made answers hard to read. If an answer cannot be deciphered, a mark cannot be awarded.
- Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is a danger that extra distorting details will be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.
- Candidates must be reminded to indicate the correct number of ticks in multiple choice and box ticking exercises. In a few Centres, candidates often ticked an incorrect number of boxes in **Question 16**.

## General Comments

The demand of this paper was found to be similar to that of previous papers. It was slightly more accessible in **Section 3** than in some previous series. The candidature overall performed very well in the first two sections of the paper. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section and weaker candidates were successful on a few questions in each of the two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the demands and structure of the paper. Although rubrics were usually well understood, some candidates were unsure as to the correct number of boxes to be ticked in multiple choice exercises and, in particular, in **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

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

It is clear that candidates in many Centres appreciate the need to write as briefly and clearly as possible and understand that they are not required to write their answers in full sentences. Brief answers are preferable in order to reduce the risk that the candidate will include extra, distorting material which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Numbers can be written as words or numerals. Candidates need to remember not to answer or infer from general knowledge. Extra details which are not heard on the recording will probably invalidate an answer.

The listening paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clearly conveyed. If the answer sounds and reads like French it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous.

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

There were many examples of poor handwriting during this session, which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly and not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen. Please remind all candidates that should they wish to make a second attempt at an answer they should cross out their first attempt very clearly. Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Section 1**

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 1–8**

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple choice questions with visual options. Candidates usually performed well in this opening exercise, which is intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. Candidates generally understood the rubric well and the visuals caused no problems of interpretation. The extracts were straightforward and short.

The vocabulary areas tested were numbers, times, food, transport, leisure activities and weather. Nearly all candidates answered **Questions 1 and 2** correctly. Candidates fared slightly less well on **Question 3** through misunderstanding the vocabulary item *gymnase*. They were not always confident when identifying the time in **Question 4**: *à midi et demi*. The remaining four questions in this exercise were done well by the majority of candidates.

#### **Exercise 2 Questions 9–15**

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured a telephone conversation between a tourist and an employee in a tourist office. Candidates generally performed well on the exercise.

A number of candidates struggled to identify *300* for **Question 9**. In **Question 10** some were unfamiliar with the word *épicerie*.

### **Section 2**

#### **Exercise 1 Question 16**

Performance on this exercise was good and continues to improve. There were still, however, cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only. Candidates should be reminded to use a consistent method of indicating the six correct answers, either six ticks or six crosses, and not to mix the two as this can become confusing. Six of the twelve boxes should be left blank.

Candidates heard four young people talking about life in Montreal. The topic area was found to be very accessible to candidates. No particular pattern of incorrectly ticked boxes could be seen by Examiners. Many candidates scored at least four marks in this exercise.

#### **Exercise 2 Questions 17–21**

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Seybou who talked about his life and work in Mali. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). The requirements of the exercise were well understood. The missing words were lexically frequent items from the core vocabulary of the defined content. The exercise represented a step up in the incline of difficulty of the test and the extract heard was longer than that heard in the previous exercise.

**Question 17** required candidates to identify the word *infirmier* and this was often not known despite it being a fairly frequent lexical item. Although the spelling was often inaccurate, good numbers were successful in identifying and communicating the word *intéressant* in **Question 18**. For **Question 19**, many wrote *auto* instead of *moto*. **Question 20** was better done and many made good attempts at *nager* or *piscine*. In **Question 21**, many were unable to identify the word *Europe* and guessed instead at answers such as *Mali / Maroc / New York*.

### Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

In the first part of this exercise candidates heard an interview with Hadja who talked about her life and work in Mali. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions.

Candidates were often able to identify the word *banque* in **Question 22** and could make an acceptable attempt at *ennuyeux* in **Question 23**. For **Question 24** a number found it difficult to produce an acceptable spelling of *salair*. The very last question in this section proved demanding for many candidates, and only the best were able to identify and convey *rire de tout*. The verb *rire* was clearly not well known.

### Section 3

#### Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates coped well with this multiple choice exercise. Candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section and had to be able to follow a narrative that featured different time frames and in which feelings and opinions were expressed. Candidates understood the rubrics well. It is worth reminding candidates to use the longer reading time available at the beginning of this exercise, and the time available in the pauses, to read the question and options very carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give candidates an overall plan of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

Candidates heard an interview with a young voluntary worker, Raoul. **Question 29** proved testing for many candidates. A frequent incorrect answer in this question was option A *dans un restaurant* (the correct answer was option D *dans de différentes maisons*).

#### Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

This was a very appropriate final exercise and, as intended, the most demanding on the paper, including questions to challenge the most able candidates. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates. The performance on this exercise was, again, very much in line with the standard of work seen last year.

Candidates heard an interview with H el ene, a singer. This was a very appropriate final exercise and, as intended, the most demanding on the paper, including questions to challenge the most able candidates. Some very accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates.

**Question 32** provided an easy start to the exercise and most candidates were able to identify with whom H el ene lived. Some did not read the interrogative adverb properly and instead of saying with whom she lived, they went on to write where she lived. **Question 33** proved more challenging. Some reference was needed to the fact that H el ene found it difficult to motivate herself. Candidates were more successful on **Question 34** and many were able to identify the key concept of a competition. In **Question 35**, some mistakenly identified H el ene's first record as being *bon* and did not appreciate that she said the opposite, *ce n' tait pas bon, ...c' tait moyen*. Answers using *pas bon* or *moyen* scored the mark. In **Question 36**, only the best candidates understood that H el ene's first record had enabled her to become famous. For, **Question 37** the concept of travel was required and high numbers were able to gain the mark. *Chance* was sufficient to score the mark in **Question 38**. Weaker candidates often added extra distorting material such as *elle aime la chance*, or *elle aide la chance*. In **Question 39**, candidates were often able to identify *publicit *. In the final question, **Question 40**, candidates heard *je n'ai pas envie de me marier en ce moment*. The question was worded in such a way as to enable candidates to answer briefly. Answers featuring part of the verb *se marier* or the noun *mariage* were adequate to gain the mark. Some candidates wrote *elle est trop jeune*, which though a harmless addition to an otherwise correct answer, did not answer the question by itself. Weaker candidates often wrote answers which featured *le maire*.

# FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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Paper 0520/22  
Reading

## Key Messages

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

- write brief and focused answers to comprehension questions, in particular in **Section 3**
- check that their intended answer is clear, in particular when they change an answer
- ensure that they have answered all questions.

## General Comments

This was the first Reading paper to follow the revised syllabus format. Candidates dealt confidently with the variety of exercise types and all appeared to have sufficient time to complete the paper. A full range of performance was noted and the paper offered appropriate challenge and a gradient of difficulty. The standard of presentation and legibility was generally high.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 1–5**

Scores were high for this opening exercise and full marks were common. Where there were errors they were usually for **Question 1** and/or **Question 4**. Sometimes for **Question 1** the illustration C (a sports stadium) was chosen in place of D (a beach). For **Question 4**, *cerises* was generally correctly identified but *fraises* was sometimes the incorrect choice.

#### **Exercise 2 Questions 6–10**

Again scores for this exercise were generally high and full marks were common. If there was an error it was for **Question 8** with B (a tennis racket) the incorrect choice, probably because of confusion between *physique* and *éducation physique*.

#### **Exercise 3 Questions 11–15**

This final exercise in **Section 1** was generally well understood. **Question 14** proved the most difficult where the vocabulary item *mignons* needed to be matched with *adorables*.

### **Section 2**

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 16–20**

This is a new exercise type for the Reading paper. Candidates were required to read a short text, in this case a factual account of the opening of a new supermarket. In order to demonstrate comprehension of the text candidates then completed statements in French, choosing words from a list.

For **Question 16**, the appropriate word was *mois*. Some chose *début* which completed the sentence grammatically but contradicted the information given in the text. In **Question 17**, *prix* was the correct choice. The tempting wrong answer was *choix* which again completed the statement logically but which did not show understanding of the text. For **Question 18**, the choice of *ouvert* was straightforward but some candidates picked *fermé*, presumably not understanding *même le dimanche* in the text. For **Question 19** it was a matter

of matching *promotions* with *offres spéciales*. The final question requiring *cuisiner* was almost always correctly answered.

### Exercise 2 Questions 21–30

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended text in the form of an email from Stéphane to Pierre on the subject of summer holidays. This was a straightforward text on a familiar topic and the majority of candidates coped well with the task: questions in French requiring answers in French. It should be remembered that long answers in the form of complete sentences are not needed. The space on the paper allocated to the answer for each question should be amply sufficient.

The correct answer to **Question 21** needed to include *dans le sud*. Some candidates only managed *appartement*. **Questions 22–24** were well done. **Question 25** caused some problems. Examiners were looking for an indication that Stéphane did not find the walks interesting. Some candidates produced answers such as *Stéphane n'est pas intéressant*, which could not score. **Questions 26–30** caused few problems.

### Section 3

#### Exercise 1 Questions 31–35

For this exercise, candidates had to read a longer text about Thierry who had worked as a volunteer abroad. Candidates had to identify which statements were true and which were false according to the information provided in the text, and provide a correction for the false statements. The rubric stated that two of the statements were true and three false and this guidance was generally adhered to by candidates.

**Question 32** was quite often ticked as **FAUX** and **Question 33** as **VRAI**. **Question 31** was well corrected by many – the most common incorrect answer included *il a eu un gros choc*. **Question 33** proved to be the most challenging – many failed to define the moment at which Thierry was able to choose, and just lifted *c'est à ce moment...* and many tried to use *savait* rather than some form of *choisir*. **Question 34** was probably the one where more candidates were able to score, though some invalidated an answer by adding *aussi*.

#### Exercise 2 Questions 36–42

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper and some candidates found it very challenging. Even though they were able to locate the correct part of the text from which to answer a question, they were often not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response, or they were unable to manipulate their answer sufficiently to give an acceptably clear response. Candidates should bear in mind that if a single line of space is provided for candidates to write in, the expected answer will not be three or four lines long.

The majority of candidates attempted answers to all questions in this final exercise, even though faulty French and/or invalidations meant that their answers did not always score.

**Question 36** was generally accessible although answers were sometimes invalidated by the addition of *malheureusement*. **Question 37** proved to be the most difficult question in the exercise. Many opted for *Karine a vite montré...* or chose the section of text about her parents putting her into the gym club. **Questions 38** and **39** were generally well done. **Question 40** could have been adequately answered very briefly (e.g. *six mois*). Candidates who attempted longer answers frequently invalidated their answer by, for example, the addition of *plus tard*. Some candidates confused *mois* and *moins*. For some candidates, the answer to **Question 41** provided their only mark in this exercise. **Question 42** was another question that could have been answered very briefly (e.g. *ses blessures*). The most common wrong answers involved Karine having to devote herself to studies.

# FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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Paper 0520/03  
Speaking

## Key Messages

- Candidates who performed well in the Role plays were concise and kept to the cues on the cards. Good Examiners did not create or change cues and tasks.
- Many Examiners did not observe the correct timings for the exam. In many of the tests listened to by Moderators, conversation sections (Topic conversations in particular) were very short. In some cases, a conversation section was missed out.
- In the General conversation section, Centres usually remembered to include questions which would elicit past and future tenses from candidates. This was often not the case in the Topic conversation and as a result downward adjustment of marks was necessary (tense usage is essential if candidates are to score more than 6 marks for language).
- The breadth of topic coverage was often too wide in the General conversation section. Centres should aim to cover only two or three topics in this section with each candidate, and should aim to cover each topic in some depth.
- The best performances at all levels of ability occurred in Centres where there had not been over preparation and where spontaneous and natural conversations were allowed to develop. In such Centres, candidates were given the opportunity to respond not just to straightforward questions, but also to unexpected ones. This enabled them to develop their answers and give ideas and opinions.
- The quality of recordings was usually good and samples arrived promptly.

## General Comments

This first March series for the new specification used a new slightly extended mark scheme but the format of the Speaking test was as in previous examination series.

Centres are reminded that while Examiners should be granted access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' notes booklet/Role play cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted, so that they can prepare the Role plays, **it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the contents of these materials remain confidential and are not shared with candidates.** The Teachers' notes booklet and Role play cards must be returned to the Centre's secure storage facility whenever preparation is not taking place and after each session of examining. Once started, the Speaking tests should be completed as soon as possible within the Centre – there should not be a long interval between different groups taking the Speaking test within a Centre. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the Teachers' notes booklet and Role play cards must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period.

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

Centres are reminded to make a clear transition between the Topic conversation and the General conversation. This transition should be in French.

The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out in the Teachers' notes booklet and all Centres are strongly advised to read through a the specimen copy/a past copy of these well in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties.



### **Clerical checks**

In the vast majority of Centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently. It is essential that all clerical work is checked carefully so as to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. On the working mark sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate must be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked.

### **Sample size**

Centres generally understood the requirements relating to the sample size and samples were nearly always correct. New Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed.

### **Recording quality**

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality and Centres are thanked for this. Most Centres submitted digital recordings which were very clear and easy to access. A reminder that all recording equipment should be checked prior to the live exams to ensure it is in good working order. Centres are asked to not to stick labels on CDs and to only write on the surface of the CD with a CD-friendly pen.

A list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction'). The Examiner and not the candidate must introduce the candidate by name and number and also provide the Role play card number. The recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number\_candidate number\_syllabus number\_component number. The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file.

CDs must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a barcode) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge. In the very few cases of extra recordings being required, Centres were quick to respond and provide new copies of recordings.

### **Duration of tests/missing elements**

There were, in this examination series, many cases of very short conversation sections. Where conversations are short or missing, candidates will be disadvantaged. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, each candidate must be allowed the full examination time of five minutes per conversation section.

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

Some Centres required no adjustment or only small adjustments to their marks to bring them in line with the agreed standard. There were, however, some large adjustments to marks in Centres. This was often a result of generous marking in the conversation sections. In some Centres, marks only required adjusting over part of the mark range: this was because marking was generous or harsh over just part of the mark range in the Centre.

In the Role plays, some Examiners did not realise that a short response, if appropriate, can earn a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task, Examiners may split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be awarded for that task is 1. If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and not 3 is appropriate. Examiners are reminded that poor pronunciation should be queried, especially if it prevents clear communication of a task. If pronunciation of a key element of a task is not clear, a mark of 3 is not appropriate.

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

Impression marks were usually awarded fairly in Centres but were a little generous in some Centres when pronunciation was not good and impeded successful communication.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### ***Role plays***

The Role play section was usually conducted well in Centres. Examiners usually kept to the given cues, prompting where necessary and encouraging candidates to work for the marks. Examiners who did veer away from the script and changed the tasks, or who were not fully prepared, made this section of the test harder for the candidates.

Examiners in Centres generally prompted candidates when necessary but there are still cases of a need to prompt when candidates miss tasks. Examiners must keep to the script provided, not change the tasks, and must encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. If only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. Centres are reminded that two-part tasks are split into (i) and (ii) in order to help candidates remember to attempt both parts of the tasks where necessary.

Candidates should be reminded that it is always important to listen to the Examiner as on all the Role play A situations there is a task which requires them to listen and choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. Likewise, there is always one task which requires responding to an unexpected question on the B Role plays. Examiners are reminded not to change the cues in the scripts so as to ensure that the level of difficulty in the task remains the same for all candidates. Extra tasks should not be added by the Examiner.

#### **A Role plays**

The A Role plays were found to be of equal difficulty. They posed similar challenges to the 2014 situations and were a fair test at this level. New Centres should note that the A Role plays are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All of the A Role play situations featured a task which required a question to be asked and a task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner (these options must not be changed by the Examiner). Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least 1 mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded. If it can be done naturally and sympathetically, Examiners should feel free to query pronunciation in the Role plays in cases where mispronunciation renders the message unclear. Examiners should introduce the A Role play and start the conversation off. English should not be used to introduce the test.

#### ***At a station buffet***

Candidates approached this Role play well. Task 1 was straightforward but many mispronounced *Je veux* or *sandwich*. A variety of sandwiches were asked for on the next task. Task 3 required candidates to make a choice from the options offered by the Examiner and most managed this with ease. Most were able to request a drink – brand names of drinks were accepted as well as things such as *café*. The last task was done well.

#### ***At a theatre***

Again, this was found to be straightforward by candidates. In the first task many mispronounced *billets* but were able to get their message across. Task 2 required candidates to choose from two options and those who listened well coped without any problems. For Task 3, a number was required: sometimes those opting for *deux* mispronounced the number which led to ambiguity. For Task 4, Centres should note that giving their age was not always done well by candidates. Candidates who chose to offer a conjugated verb and used *je suis* instead of *j'ai* scored 2 marks for the task. The last task was well done.

#### ***In a sports shop***

The first task was generally approached well, though there were some poor pronunciations of *chaussures de sport*. For Task 2 many were able to give *le tennis, le cricket, le foot* or equivalent. In Task 3, candidates were less successful in giving their shoe size, with some struggling to give a correct number. However nearly all were successful on choosing *blanc* or *noir* in Task 4. The last task was well done.



## **B Role plays**

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

### *At a hotel*

Most were able to say that they needed to change their room. A variety of problems were given on the next task, such as the room being dirty, or that there was no heating, no hot water or that there was a lot of noise. Examiners were usually able to prompt for a second problem if necessary. For Task 3, most were able to give their bad opinion of the hotel, but some forgot to express their displeasure. In such cases the maximum mark awarded could only be 1. On Task 4, nearly all were able to give a reasonable time in response to the unexpected question. The last task was occasionally missed out by candidates. Where this was the case, the task could have been prompted by Examiners.

### *Organising a party*

On the first task, some mistakenly understood that Alex was organising the party. In such cases only 1 mark was given (for the initial greeting) as the task was not fulfilled. For Task 2, most were able to give a date. Answers such as *trois* or *mardi* only gained 1 mark as they were incomplete. On the next task, some did not convey their enthusiasm with a comment such as *Super / Fantastique / Génial*, which meant the task was incomplete (there were two parts to it). In addition, some did not use the correct time frame (a present or a future tense was expected here). The next task was approached well by many candidates who were able to say what they had organised in the way of activities. Football, cricket, eating, dancing/music and in some cases fireworks were popular. The last task required candidates to use an interrogative adverb and a question form. One task on B Role plays requires a question to be asked appropriately and practice in using a variety of interrogative forms is excellent examination preparation.

### *Phoning a lost property office*

Most were able to approach Task 1 well but the pronunciation of *j'ai laissé* was often poor. For Task 2, many were able to score 3 marks by giving an appropriate time in response to the unexpected question. Candidates were fairly successful in describing their phone, often using make, colour and size. For Task 4, candidates were required to give some kind of reaction which conveyed that they were happy. Again, some missed this task out and went straight on to the second part of the task which was fairly well done. Some were not able to phrase a correct question on the last task, which required them to ask about the opening hours.

## **Topic presentation and conversation**

The standard of work heard in this section covered a wide range of performance.

The whole section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last for a full five minutes. Moderators reported that this was frequently not the case and that after the presentation part of this section some Examiners passed straight on to the General conversation and others conducted very brief Topic conversations. (The 1-2 minute presentation should be followed up by a conversation on this same topic for the remainder of this five minute section.) Where there was no Topic conversation or only a very brief one, candidates were disadvantaged. Presentation times (maximum two minutes) were usually adhered to by candidates. Examiners are reminded not to ask questions too early during the presentation time but to feel free to interrupt the candidate at the two minute point.

While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Questions should instead arise spontaneously as the conversation develops in a natural way. In this section of the test, it is important that examining focuses on the candidate's topic and that Examiners ask a variety of questions to test both past

and future tenses. Centres should note that Table C of the new mark scheme makes clear reference to the need for candidates to use past and future tenses accurately in order for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded for language. Centres should note that this section of the test was frequently so brief, featuring no opportunity for candidates to use a variety of tenses, that marks had to be adjusted downwards by moderators.

Centres generally understood the need to avoid 'Myself' as a suitable topic in this section of the test. New Centres should note that this is not a suitable topic for this section of the exam as it can become too much like the General conversation and leave little material to explore in the final section of the examination.

Candidates had usually prepared themselves well for the presentation part of the test and were enthusiastic about their chosen topic. Many introduced what they were going to talk about and then made good use of their 1-2 minutes to communicate a range of messages. Better candidates were able to do so in a range of tenses and made good use of a variety of structures and relevant vocabulary. A wide range of topics was heard by Moderators. Many candidates chose *mes vacances, mon école, le sport, mes ambitions, mes loisirs* and many did themselves justice on these topics. There were also some interesting presentations on celebrations and festivals, future plans, food, school and India. The latter often proved an interesting and very appropriate topic, but Examiners are reminded of the need to avoid too many questions which require precise geographical or statistical knowledge. It is better instead to ask candidates to say what they find most interesting/like/dislike, etc. about their country/another country and why. As ever, the best performances in this section were those which developed into a natural conversation and in which candidates could express not just factual information in response to straightforward questions but also give their opinions and feelings about the topic.

Many Examiners adopted good examining practice and clearly indicated the end of this section of the test to candidates with a phrase such as '*Maintenant on passe à la conversation générale*'.

### **General conversation**

This final section of the test was, on the whole, administered more consistently by Examiners. Consequently, opportunities for candidates to use a variety of tenses were usually greater than in the Topic conversation. Many Examiners included questions in different tenses on each of the two or three topics examined, rather than leaving such questions until the final topic, and this approach is to be encouraged. Centres are reminded that if there is no evidence that candidates are able to work in past and future tenses the language mark will be limited to a maximum of 6.

The aim should be to cover no more than two or three topics with each candidate in this final section and to cover each topic in some depth. It is also important to remember to cover different topics with different candidates. If using the same topic with different candidates, Examiners must try to ask different questions. A few Centres made use of the same questions in the same order on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: this approach is not acceptable and must be avoided. It is common practice in classrooms to make use of banks of questions, but reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test produces stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and which, at worst, do not seem to develop beyond a series of pre-learnt mini presentations testing memory rather than conversational ability. Once in the examination room, it is far better if the Examiner listens to what the candidate is saying and responds as spontaneously as possible. The best examining heard this series featured such an approach.

Questions which are very straightforward and which require simple short responses will not give candidates access to the upper mark bands for either communication or language. The best examining featured an announcement as to which topic was going to be discussed and then at the end of this topic, an indication as to which topic would be covered next. For each topic, the Examiner linked questions in a logical fashion, while following up interesting leads presented by the candidate and included some open ended questions such as *parle-moi de*. This allowed candidates to develop their answers in a natural way. As in the Topic conversation, candidates need to be able to develop their answers, give and explain opinions, and be able to respond to unexpected questions in order to gain high marks.

A wide range of candidate performance was heard by Moderators. A good number of candidates showed that they could communicate across a range of topics. Many spoke on holidays, future plans, the environment, their town/country, school, leisure activities, food and drink/healthy living, daily routine and their families. Some candidates not only communicated their message clearly but were also able to do so in accurate language showing a good control of a range of linguistic structures and lexis, and consistently correct use of tenses. In terms of language, the best work featured longer more complex utterances which

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made use of structures such as *si* + imperfect plus a conditional tense, *avant de* + infinitive, *depuis* and, occasionally, compound tenses.

It was clear from the work heard in many Centres that oral work has become central to foreign language learning activities in many IGCSE classrooms and that the Speaking examination is the culmination of much hard work. Many candidates heard by Moderators were enthusiastic about the relevance and importance of learning a foreign language and had enjoyed their experience of learning French.

# FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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Paper 0520/42

Writing

## Key Messages

- This session marked a significant change in the format of the Writing component. Candidates demonstrated in large measure that they were well prepared to manage the demands of the new structure.
- In the longer questions, candidates respected the guidelines about length, producing approximately 80 words for **Question 2** and for **Question 3** between 130–140 words.
- The most successful answers were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- Candidates aiming for the highest grades showed solid control of sentence structure, verb tenses and more complex linguistic structures.
- Work was generally very well-presented and always legible.

## General Comments

Work from the full ability range was seen in this first March entry. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the vast majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

**Question 1** allowed candidates to establish a solid basis for further success. Candidates should always try to give a full set of eight items even though only five correct/acceptably spelt nouns receive a mark. If candidates cannot recall the word for any items pictured, they are free to add the word for a different item provided that that item fits the context of the question.

Candidates should be reminded that they should write one item per line; candidates are also advised that they should not write their answers as labels beneath the pictures. As had been indicated in the sample papers, there is no requirement to include a definite/indefinite article.

**Question 2**, which up until 2014 featured on the Reading and Directed Writing paper, was assessed by the same criteria as previously. Candidates appeared to be comfortable with this type of question; they wrote simple sentences to effectively convey the details required.

It is a requirement that there be a verb for a piece of information to gain a mark. One mark is awarded for each relevant detail. Up to ten marks are awarded across the question; there is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each of the three tasks.

Candidates should be reminded that the maximum of ten marks cannot be accessed if they omit or do not successfully convey at least one detail for each of the tasks.

**Question 3** offered a choice of three options, each of which reflected the styles of writing required in past sessions: a letter, a report, a story line to be continued. Assessment of this question has changed quite significantly. There are ten marks for Communication, two marks for each of the specified tasks making up the question. Language marks are awarded in two categories: Verbs, 8 marks and Other Linguistic Features, 12 marks.

A crucial decision for candidates is: which question will allow me to best show the French that I know? This is particularly important given the method by which marks are awarded across the three categories. Candidates are advised, therefore, to read all three options before choosing which one to answer. A close reading of the tasks within the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary and structures which will be needed to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Communication: in order to gain the two marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the five tasks using the tense required by the task.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs up to a total of 18. Candidates must remember that each different form of a verb earns a tick. Repeated correct forms of a verb do not qualify for further ticks.

Other Linguistic Features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The ablest candidates will be able to demonstrate, among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses such as *quand...*, *si...*, *parce que...*, *car...*, *qui...*, *que...*, object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions, for example: *donc*, *cependant*, strong negatives: *ne...jamais*, *ne...plus*, comparative/superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions such as *depuis...*, *pendant...*, *pour...* and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity, common prepositions.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1: Ma valise**

The demands of this question were straightforward: candidates were required to give the French for eight of the items, represented in the pictures, which they would put in their suitcase to go on holiday.

The vast majority were able to gain at least three marks. The items which offered the greatest challenge were *chaussettes* and *chaussures*. Some phonetic spellings of these words did gain marks; however, those versions such as *chausser* and *chausseur* were discounted because they are words which have a different meaning. The French word for shirt, *chemise*, was also sometimes misspelt and appeared to suggest a school subject *chimie*.

As candidates are free to offer the French word for something not represented in the pictures, other items of clothing, jewellery, travel documents, toiletries were all awarded a mark, as these are things which one would pack in suitcase to take on holiday.

#### **Question 2: Mon professeur préféré**

##### *Communication*

This proved to be a very accessible question; candidates were able to use familiar language and structures and often gained high marks.

Almost all candidates were able to identify their favourite teacher: *mon professeur préféré est Alain...*, *mon professeur préféré s'appelle Mme Delacour...*, and to mention the subject taught: *mon professeur préféré est mon professeur de maths...*, *il est le prof de biologie...* Many candidates gained a number of marks for their descriptions of the teacher, covering nationality: *il est Indien...*, age: *il a 26 ans...*, appearance: *il a les cheveux noirs et les yeux bruns...*, *elle est grande...*, *il a un nez pointu et un large cou...*, *il porte des lunettes...*, and character and interests: *elle est drôle...*, *elle est sportive...*, *il joue de la guitare...*

The second task invited candidates to explain why they liked the teacher and/or the subject. No marks were awarded for the simple statement of liking. The reasons offered included: *il est gentil et sympa...*, *ses cours sont intéressants...*, *il enseigne très bien...*, *nous comprenons bien...*, *elle m'aide beaucoup dans mes études...*, *il ne donne pas trop de devoirs...*, *il joue au basket avec nous...*, *nous regardons des films quelquefois...*, *elle est comme mon amie...*

The third task required candidates to say whether they would become a teacher and to give reasons. Marks were awarded for any statement which clearly conveyed what career candidates wished to pursue, whether or not they declared an interest in teaching: *je voudrais être enseignante...*, *je veux devenir professeur*, *j'aime les enfants...*, *je ne voudrais pas devenir professeur...*, *je voudrais devenir médecin...*, *je serai un professeur parce que j'aime les étudiants...*

There were frequent complimentary comments about teachers, with some candidates stating that their choice to become teachers themselves had been influenced by their appreciation of their teachers: *c'est un moyen de remercier mes professeurs...*

## Language

Candidates showed control of verbs, often constructing both simple and more complex sentences. The abler candidates often displayed a knowledge of quite sophisticated sentence structures and an assurance in the control of verbs, a level of achievement which was off the scale for measuring performance at this level.

### Question 3(a) Vous avez fait un séjour chez un(e) ami(e) français(e), Dominique.

This was by far the most popular question. The topic of travel is one which candidates enjoy writing about. There were some very full and informative letters.

The first task invited candidates to make a comment about the journey home after their stay in Paris. Candidates gained marks for both factual details and for opinions about the journey, provided that these were expressed using an acceptable form of a past tense, for example: *mon voyage de retour était très long...*, *il y avait un problème avec l'avion...*, *c'était très ennuyeux...*, *j'ai regardé un film...*, *j'ai dormi...* There was one concept about the journey which candidates found difficult to express: that was the idea of the plane being late/delayed. Often they tried to convey this notion using «*tard*»: *mon avion était tard pour deux heures*, rather than the idiomatic «*être en retard*» or «*avoir du retard*». Candidates regularly provided more than one piece of information and thus earned an extra two marks which were allocated for the last task.

For the second task, candidates needed to say what they had liked to do during their visit. Two marks were again awarded to any reference to an activity or an experience in an appropriate past tense. Some chose to express their pleasure using a pattern such as *j'ai aimé.../j'aimais...* Others gained the marks for a descriptive comment, e.g. *la cuisine était délicieuse...* Typical of the kinds of responses given were: *la Tour Eiffel était magnifique et belle...*, *j'ai aimé le musée du Louvre, c'était superbe...*, *j'ai aimé faire les courses...* Once again, candidates frequently gave more than one detail; this allowed them to earn the two marks allocated to the last task, if they had not already gained these marks for the first task.

In the third task, candidates had the opportunity to make a comparison between life in France and life at home. The two marks were awarded for any statement which suggested a difference; a comparative form of adjectives/adverbs was not required to earn the marks. There were some fascinating insights into the way young people view life in both France and in India: *ma ville est trop sale...*, *chez moi, il y a beaucoup de pollution et de circulation...*, *en France on peut respirer l'air pur...*, *en Inde il fait plus chaud...*, *la vie en France est très simple...*, *dans mon pays les gens ont beaucoup de problèmes...*, *dans mon pays toutes les personnes sont très heureuses...* Again, an additional piece of information about either country could have gained the two marks allocated to the final task.

The fourth task invited an explanation of why travel is important in the candidates' view. Very many made comments such as the following, which suggests that the young generation have a positive view of the future of international relations: *on peut apprendre la culture de gens différents...*, *on peut manger les plats délicieux...*, *on peut créer la paix dans le monde...*

As has been suggested, the two marks awarded for the last task could be earned for an additional detail given in the response to any of the four tasks, the only proviso being that the information given was in a tense appropriate to that task.

There were a small number who misunderstood the question, writing about their journey to France for the first task and for the second task describing what they would like to do during their stay in France. In such instances, candidates did not gain marks; however, candidates who made this mistake were still able to earn marks for the remaining tasks.

### Question 3(b) Ma chambre

This question attracted about a quarter of the entry. A significant proportion of the candidates who chose this question had not fully understood the slant of the question: there were a number of candidates who wrote of what they would like to change in their bedroom.

The first task invited a description of what the candidate's bedroom was like before s/he changed it. A past tense was required in order to gain two marks. There were frequent complaints about the colour of the walls, uncomfortable beds, the lack of equipment: *ma chambre était nul...*, *il y avait un lit et un placard seulement...*, *il n'y avait pas de couleurs...*, *c'était impossible de rester dans ma chambre...*, *ma chambre*



*était sale...* Those candidates who gave more than one piece of information were able to gain the two marks allocated to the fifth task, provided that they used an appropriate verb in a past tense.

For the second task, candidates were asked to state one change that was made to their room, again a past tense was needed. This task presented something of a challenge as candidates did not know the verbs «décorer» and «peindre», but many were able to convey the correct idea using what they did know. Some candidates described how they changed the décor: *j'ai changé la couleur..., j'ai fait les murs en bleu..., j'ai changé les meubles...* Others reported what was bought: *j'ai acheté une grande télévision..., mon père a acheté un nouveau lit...* Some candidates wrote in the present tense and gained one mark for statements such as *maintenant les murs sont blancs..., maintenant il y a un placard pour mes vêtements...* An additional piece of information expressed using a past tense verb gained the two marks allocated to the fifth task.

In the third task, candidates had to give their friend's opinion of their new bedroom. This was generally done quite well: *ils aiment ma chambre parce que c'est grand..., elles pensent que ma chambre est super..., mon ami adore ma chambre..., elles ont dit «C'est super et très grand»..., elle a dit «Je voudrais une chambre comme elle»...*

The fourth task asked candidates to explain the importance of their bedroom: many were able to give at least two reasons, clearly this is an issue which is genuinely important to young people. Responses often began with an adaptation of the language used in the question: *ma chambre est importante pour moi parce que.../ car...* Amongst the reasons given were the following: *parce que j'étudie dans ma chambre..., je joue dans ma chambre chaque soir..., je téléphone à mon amie dans ma chambre..., je regarde mes films favoris..., mes amis jouent avec moi dans ma chambre..., parce que j'ai un lit confortable...*

As with **Question 3(a)**, the two marks allocated to the last task could be earned for an additional detail given in the response to any of the four tasks, the only proviso being that the information given was in a tense appropriate to that task.

### **Question 3(c) La fête surprise pour mon anniversaire**

A similar number of candidates chose this question as chose **3(b)**. Candidates were required to continue the story line provided.

The first task required candidates to say what they found on arriving home. As this was a story about a recent event, a past tense verb was required. Candidates variously mentioned: *il y avait tous mes amis..., toute ma famille était là..., j'ai vu tous mes amis et ma famille..., tout le monde a chanté..., tout le monde a dit «Bon anniversaire»...*

For the second task, a detail about what happened at the party was required. Candidates were often able to record more than one event as parties represent a familiar topic area. These details referred to presents, eating and drinking, singing and dancing. Many thus also gained the marks allocated to the third task: *mes amis m'ont donné des cadeaux..., on a pris beaucoup de photos..., nous avons joué au tennis dans le jardin..., j'ai coupé le gâteau d'anniversaire..., nous avons dansé..., nous avons regardé un film..., mon amie m'a donné une grande peluche..., j'ai bavardé avec mes amis...*

The two marks allocated in the third task could be gained either for another detail of what candidates found on going into their house or for information about what happened at the party.

The final two tasks, each worth two marks, required candidates to give reactions to what happened. Candidates gained these marks whenever they gave a reaction or an opinion in the course of the narrative; indeed, one candidate earned two marks for the very first statement: *j'avais peur...* fearing that there were burglars in the house. Candidates had few problems expressing how they felt about the situation. Amongst the other reactions to events, the following were seen: *j'étais très heureuse..., j'étais très content..., c'était génial..., c'était une grande surprise..., je n'oublierai jamais ce jour-là..., c'était très intéressant et drôle..., j'étais surpris..., j'étais ravi..., j'étais ému..., le gâteau était délicieux..., la boum était formidable...*