

GCE

French

Advanced GCE **A2 H475**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H075**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F701 French Speaking

Introduction

Examiners were very pleased with the standard of entries, with very few candidates inappropriately entered. It is always interesting to listen to topic discussions where the subjects are individually chosen and researched, as the candidates often display genuine enthusiasm. Many candidates tackled the role-plays well and made an attempt to demonstrate initiative and imagination as well as conveying the key points.

Role-plays

Use of Stimulus

It is crucial that centres understand the importance of using the stimulus material well, as half of the marks are awarded for this category. Centres have three days to prepare the material, and some centres were very well prepared indeed, despite needing to prepare all six role-plays. Candidates should be trained to say all the information, and the layout of the role-play should make it obvious which part fits with which bullet point. There is very little redundant material. Some teacher-examiners asked their candidate if there was anything else they wanted to say, and this gave a candidate the opportunity to say anything that had been missed.

Task A

A surprising number of candidates did not know the French for 'Scotland, and a few struggled with the date 1860. 'Belt' gave unexpected difficulty, but there were some very pleasing renditions of key points 4-7. Candidates had little trouble with how to buy the tickets, but many offered *permettez* and *occupées* inappropriately when giving advice on travel. Some could not convey 'disabled', despite its frequency in role-plays, but there were some good renditions of KP12 and 13 using words that conveyed the same idea.

Task B

Candidates and teacher-examiners seemed to enjoy this role-play. Although a number found conveying that Goodtimes was twenty years old difficult, there were some good choices made for 'safe environment' such as *sans danger*. The age '80' gave many candidates problems, with *vingt-quatre* frequently being offered. Most managed selection process, although a few used *process*, which could obviously not be accepted. Candidates found several acceptable ways of expressing 'fortnightly', although 'drinks' gave some problems with *boires* a common mistake.

Task C

The name Dandecott's gave a few pronunciation issues, but most candidates coped well with the role-play. *Deuxième main* was sometimes offered for second hand, which was a shame as other candidates who did not know the expression found elegant ways of getting the idea across. A few candidates tripped up on *livraison*, which was surprising as it was given on the candidate's sheet. Those who didn't know *jour férié* were often able to find suitable alternatives such as *vacances nationales*.

Task D

This role-play should have been accessible, but candidates and teacher tended to miss items out. This role-play was done by most centres, and so less successful examining tended to show up, particularly relating to the Kindle and holidays. The most effective teacher-examiners made sure that nothing was missed out. Most candidates knew *télécharger*, and *écran*, but 'light' gave difficulties, with many offering *lit*.

Task E

The Bellaron Agency proved accessible to most, and there were many good attempts at it. Vocabulary that caused problems included 'office', 'employers' and 'discount', although many realised that 'list' conveyed the same idea in this context as 'database'. The role-play was only attempted by larger centres because of its place in the randomisation order.

Task F

Candidates who lost marks on this role-play often did so for missing out ideas. For example, key point 2 required two different adjectives for 'beautiful' and 'spectacular'. Similarly, several candidates said that the waterfall was just outside Middleton-in-Teesdale, without stating that it is a historic town. 'Benches' was frequently not known, but many used suitable alternatives such as *chaises*. It was disappointing how often *rester* was used for 'rest'.

Response to Examiner

Most candidates were able to complete the task within the six minutes allowed, and centres are reminded that examiners stop listening and assessing at six minutes. There is still a minority of centres where the teacher-examiner does not read out the introduction, and the bemused candidate is just prompted with *vas-y alors*. Most candidates do make a suitable link between the questions and the transactional part, but it can be very helpful for teachers to prompt if needed.

Candidates must show initiative and imagination throughout to get into the top band. Many centres still focus the initiative and imagination only in the extension questions. At its least sophisticated, imagination can be shown by indication that the candidate or a family member has used the product, or visited the attraction. However, the most successful candidates really play the role and make frequent reference back to the interlocutor's situation, or add in details which are not mentioned in the text, for example items that might be for sale in the gift shop.

The extension questions are approached in many different ways by candidates. Many take the opportunity to show off the complex structures that they have learnt. It is disappointing when an otherwise good candidate only offers one brief sentence in reply to each question, as they provide an opportunity to speak at length, show ideas and linguistic ability. Teacher-examiner's additional questions are often helpful in forcing a candidate to expand on their ideas, but in some cases, the time would be rather better spent ensuring that candidates have covered all the stimulus material.

Quality of Language

As is always the case, examiners heard a full range of performances, although there are very few candidates awarded a mark at the bottom of the grid.

The opening questions were a little disappointing this summer after several years of rising standards. Those where it is necessary to manipulate a pronoun or possessive adjective tend to cause the most difficulties (usually *son*, *sa* and *ses*) and centres are advised to work further on this aspect. Many candidates referred to *son mari* in role-play A. This is such a frequent feature of role plays that centres are advised to work on it.

Faux amis did not cause as many problems this year, but there was much use of invented cognates such as ‘benches’, ‘pounds’ and ‘provider’. Although examiners do not expect the same range of structures as in the topic discussion, that does not mean that ambition is not rewarded and appreciated.

Examining

Although examining has improved since the specification began, some teacher-examiners could improve their candidates’ marks by making small changes. The prompts in the examiner’s sheet are written in a specific way so that no vocabulary is given away that is needed in a key point. Unfortunately, some teacher-examiners choose to ignore the prompts and make up their own questions. This frequently loses marks for their candidates. For example, they may ask if there is somewhere they can get further information from when the prompt asks if there is a website. If the key point is ‘The website gives further information about...’ then the candidate has lost half a mark. *Le site web* is already given on the candidate’s sheet, so markers are crediting the idea of further information.

This is even more marked when teacher-examiners ask yes/no questions such as ‘Is it closed on bank holidays?’

Some centres still choose to ask the extension questions during the main transactional part. There is no benefit to candidates in doing this, and centres where this happens usually have candidates who give shorter answers to the extension questions, which is not in their interests. There is also not the scope to ask follow up questions at a stage in the role-play when the teacher-examiner does not know how much time they have left.

Topic Discussion

Choice of Topics

As is usual, a wide range of topics were offered by candidates. Many appeared to have chosen an area of personal interest, and such discussions were often particularly successful. Family has been unusually popular for a second year, probably due to the news stories surrounding the subject, and it is good to hear candidates choose topical subjects. Obesity, cinema, alcohol and tourism remain common, although examiners enjoy hearing the individual angle that many candidates find. Regrettably, there are still instances of candidates choosing topics from the A2 list - nuclear energy, politics or immigration being the most common this year - or topics which are not adequately related to France or a French-speaking country. Eating disorders, health and the internet/social media are most likely to suffer from a lack of reference to France. Some candidates offered a topic relating to French language issues, which was allowable only if related to an AS topic, such as the use of language on social media sites. It is the actual content of the discussion, rather than merely the title that examiners consider when deciding if a topic is inappropriate. Some candidates talking about education in France actually spend much of their time speaking about education in England. Comparisons can be made, but it is vital that reference to a non-French-speaking country is not extended. Films or books can be offered, as long as the themes relate to one or more AS topics. Centres are welcome to seek advice if unsure as to whether a topic is suitable or not.

Ideas, Opinions and Relevance

The markscheme credits developed ideas and opinions, which should be backed up by factual information. Many candidates clearly find it easier to answer a number of factual questions and then express opinions. However, the most successful candidates will often express opinions throughout, making use of their factual material to support their argument. When done well, this is a most successful strategy.

With certain topics that are also on the GCSE specification, it is important that they are treated in a way where the answers are clearly above GCSE. For example, some candidates choosing education will have a rather trite discussion as to their opinion on school uniform. The standard looked for is one year beyond GCSE, therefore candidates need to demonstrate that their language and ability to discuss is superior to that of a GCSE candidate.

It is important that candidates do show evidence of research. Very factual topics with few ideas will be limited in this band, but so will topics where the candidate has many opinions but has little substance to them.

Fluency, Spontaneity, Responsiveness

Most candidates had prepared appropriately for the topic discussion and had sufficient material to be able to answer questions for 9-10 minutes. However, there were a small number of centres where the discussion routinely lapsed into general conversation after 6-8 minutes. It is important that candidates understand the length of the discussion and prepare adequately for it.

Unfortunately, the excessive use of prepared material was prevalent again this series. Examiners fully expect candidates to prepare for an examination, and there is no problem where candidates use prepared material flexibly, and are able to change tack when challenged by the teacher-examiner. However, some teacher-examiners are content to let the candidate deliver a series of paragraphs in answer to questions they are clearly expecting. Examiners have already heard the candidate speak in the role play and it is easy to notice a large difference in the delivery of the two sections, often accompanied by much better language. Centres are reminded that it should not be a presentation or a series of mini-presentations, and it should be a genuine discussion.

Language

It is important that candidates take the opportunity to demonstrate the grammar and structures that they have learned as part of the course, and most candidates show an impressive range of tenses and structures.

Agreements are often an area for development for at AS, candidates perhaps regarding them as an issue relating to writing and not always appreciating the differences they make in speech. There seemed to be fewer weaker performances this year, and most candidates proved that they were able to meet the linguistic demands of the level.

Pronunciation

A convincing French accent is very difficult to acquire, and examiners are not unreasonable in the standard that is required, recognising this fact. A real attempt at sounding French is sought rather than perfection, and this includes being secure on the pronunciation of individual sounds as well as an attempt at intonation. The same sounds cause difficulty every year – words such as important, alcool, campagne. It is particularly important that candidates ensure they can pronounce topic-specific words.

Candidates who recited chunks or material often had poor pronunciation and especially intonation.

Examining

There were not many instances of aggressive questioning this summer, and most teacher-examiners coped well with the demanding job of listening to the candidate and thinking of interesting questions to ask.

Some candidates using pre-prepared material were asked questions that they clearly weren't expecting, and teacher-examiners are to be congratulated on having the foresight to hold back some of their questions when practising with candidates. Some centres have one teacher practise, and another conduct the exams, and this is another way of making sure the exam is fresh and not over-rehearsed.

10 minutes is the time limit for the discussion, and it is sufficient time for examiners to make decisions about the candidate. Teacher-examiners do need to keep an eye on the clock and avoiding asking more questions if the discussion has already lasted more than about 9 minutes. The two elements of the test are timed independently and any time not used in the role play cannot be carried over to the discussion. Examiners stop listening at exactly 10 minutes.

Administrative matters

Examiners are aware of the pressures that teachers face, and it is most appreciated that the vast majority of centres upload or post their recordings promptly, and that working marksheets are completed and sent with the topic forms. Please be aware that CDs can break in the post and it is important that appropriate packing is used to minimise the risk.

Most centres use the correct code for the entry they require: 01 for the Repository, 02 for CDs and 03 for visiting examiners. A majority of centres are now using the Repository, and teachers are reminded that the paperwork (attendance register, marksheets and topic forms) need to be either sent to the examiner through the post, or scanned and uploaded to the Repository at the same time as the recordings. The postal option is currently administratively a little easier for examiners, but either option is completely acceptable.

Centres can use any reasonable file type, MP3 and WMA being the most common. File sizes vary tremendously between centres, ranging from 3MB to 24MB. Smaller file sizes are much quicker for centres to upload and for examiners to download, and are preferred if possible. Centres are reminded not to zip files prior to uploading them.

F702 French Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments:

With a range of familiar topics, the paper performed and discriminated well. Apart from a few who had been incorrectly entered, candidates were well-prepared and responded well to all the tasks within the allocated time.

Performance on the listening tasks was slightly better than last year, particularly for Task 3. There was also an improvement in the way candidates responded to Tâche 6 with far fewer questions left unanswered. Tâche 7 was the most successfully attempted to date, possibly because candidates could relate to the subject matter: the use of mobile phones. Tâche 4, with a less formal style than previously, proved more challenging since incorrect use of tenses also affected communication. This is an area which provides scope for improvement.

On the practical side, for Tâche 7 candidates should refrain from writing well in excess of the recommended word limit, as this leads to an increase in language errors. This also has an impact on the use of additional pages: they should be kept to a minimum. The last page of the question paper provides ample additional space, should it be needed. This feature should be brought to candidates' attention. Candidates are strongly advised to allow 5 to 10 minutes for checking. They must ensure that their handwriting is legible, because the unreadable cannot be given marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1 - Tâche 1

This opening task was generally well answered. Candidates are familiar with this test type and there was evidence that some had developed their own strategies to cope with it (e.g. transcription of text, translation of options, crossing out of definitely incorrect options).

- (a) This was one of the more accessible questions. Most candidates successfully linked *beaucoup d'énergie* in the text and option B. A few candidates chose *camarades* possibly because of the similarity between *mammies* – as in the title – and *amies*.
- (b) This was well answered too since *disponibles* is a generally well-known word which fitted *elles ont du temps libre* in the text. Some candidates chose *courageuses* possibly because it was a likely quality required from the child minders.
- (c) Most candidates successfully linked *pour rester en contact avec les gens* with option C. Some candidates selected option A (*sénilité*) perhaps because they thought this condition was likely to apply to *des femmes de 50 ans ou plus*.
- (d) This was another generally well-answered question linking *ont besoin d'argent* and *pour augmenter leurs revenus*.
- (e) The beginning of the sentence (*Il y a quatre ans*) clearly cued the relevant section of the text. Candidates who were unfamiliar with *licenciée* could not exploit this clue and chose randomly one of the three options.
- (f) The most popular incorrect answer was *voulait* from those who did not link *fallait* in the text and option A (*devait*).

- (g) Another very well-answered question because candidates are familiar with the verb *surfer*. A few latched on the word *journal* and incorrectly chose option B.
- (h) Most answered this question correctly, though a few were tempted by option B (*de la détente*) which made good sense but was not mentioned in the text.
- (i) The most accessible question because the text gave two hints leading to option A. Most candidates understood at least one of them and gave the correct answer. A few felt that *patience* was the required quality.
- (j) This was the most demanding question in this task because candidates had to infer meaning from the text. The most able managed this.

Question No.2 – Tâche 2

This task on a practical advantage of sport was more demanding and differentiated well. To complete this comprehension task, candidate could also take advantage of grammatical markers to lead them to the right answer. It is therefore surprising that some candidates should use, for example, nouns when verbs are clearly required.

- (a) This question required understanding of the text (*deux fois plus qu'il y a 50 ans*) and transposing it from present to past practice. The better candidates managed the latter; others merely transcribed the text.
- (b) This proved demanding for many: either they did not understand *par désir d'aller au-delà de ses limites* or they did not know the word *défi*. A popular choice was *besoin*, possibly because they felt it was plausible.
- (c) Linking *anti-stress* and *se détendre* was accessible to most.
- (d) Most candidates identified the correct adverb although a few selected *lentement* instead of *régulièrement*.
- (e) Most correctly identified that a verb was required here; several selected *combattre* rather than *empêcher*. The verb *prévenir* was demanding but *augmente les chances de survie* provided another clue – which did not match *combattre*.
- (f) This was correctly answered by most candidates.
- (g) Those who had incorrectly chosen *combattre* in Q(e) wrote *empêcher*. It made sense but the text clearly referred to *la lutte*, thus removing *empêcher* from the equation.
- (h) A successfully answered question. A few candidates chose *maigrir*. The meaning of the text had escaped them; they should also have read the end of the sentence.
- (i) This was another questions most candidates answered correctly. A few chose *réelle*.
- (j) This was a little less successful with candidates hesitating between *potentielle* (the correct answer), *réelle* and *mentale*.

Question No.3 - Task 3

With its mix of accessible and more demanding questions, this task provided very good differentiation. Candidates are reminded that answering in French is not acceptable, as clearly stated in the instructions preceding the task.

- (a) This was a very accessible starter question. A few however did not read it carefully enough and, mistaking 'who' for 'what', gave answers such as 'films', 'cinema' or a film festival.
- (b) Many candidates simply translated the whole sentence instead of listening for the title of the exhibition. Words such as 'visit' or 'a view' did not belong to the title of the exhibition. A few had not read the question properly and referred to the place where it was held (*l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris*) variously rendered into English.
- (c) From the three points required here most managed to score at least one, usually that Paris had featured in over 800 films, although some omitted the latter part of the answer. The second answer hinged on understanding *lors de tournages faits à Paris*. The word *tournage* was not familiar but *faits à Paris* was and led many to the correct answer. A few tried to put *lors de tournages* into English, making little sense in the process and others just made wild guesses. As for the third answer, leaving *décor* unchanged was not allowed as it did not prove candidates had genuinely understood the text. The more able candidates showed good understanding.
- (d) This was designed to be one of the most accessible questions in this task. All candidates understood *costumes* but few knew *affiches*. Many wrote 'scripts', 'props' or 'files'.
- (e) Most candidates correctly identified Paris as the 'city of love and freedom' though a few wrote about "death and freedom", confusing *l'amour* with *la mort*. Rare were those who understood that it also was the city of 'silent movies'. Most candidates didn't qualify 'cinema' or used an incorrect adjective, such as 'old' or 'modern'.
- (f) With several possible ways of scoring two marks, this was with Q(a), the most successful part of this task. Words such as *exemplaires*, *gratuits* or the number (25,000) caused problems but this usually did not deprive candidates of the marks.
- (g) The first part of the answer was well answered, apart from those who wrote about discovering films; the second part proved more demanding: many thought that Paris was to be explored by watching or showing films shot there or by visiting film sites.
- (h) This question was aimed at the more able candidates. Many successfully conveyed the first part of the answer – although rendering *quartier* proved too much of a hurdle for a few – but the latter part produced inventive or insufficient responses from all but the best who also appreciated that a past tense was needed when writing about actors' activities.

Question No.4 - Tâche 4

This written task provided a follow up from the previous exercise; it was assessed for conveying specific information satisfactorily and for the quality of language used in the process. Although some of the vocabulary was common to both, a few items proved demanding for candidates, in particular the following:

- a report (frequently given as *un report*)
- to hear about (often *entendre (parler) de*)
- an exhibition (usually left in English)
- the reporter (*le rapporteur*)
- fast (*vitement, rapide*)
- catch (left as *attraper* rather than *comprendre*)
- to take place (*prendre place* rather than *avoir lieu*)
- love (*aimer* left without intensifier)
- to visit (*visiter* instead of *rendre visite*)
- your place (literally translated as *votre endroit*)

Candidates managed to communicate at least 50% of the message correctly in their own words. Marks cannot be awarded when incorrect usage changes meaning. Those who did better had paid careful attention to the following:

- tenses (e.g. past tense in point 4; conditional or future in point 7)
- prepositions (point 2: *à Paris* not *sur Paris*; point 8 *venir* not *venir de*)
- vocabulary (points 1 and 8 *prochain* / *dernier* correctly used)

There was a correlation between Communication and Language marks, the latter generally slightly lower than the former.

Phrasing questions and position of adjectives were more successfully attempted than in previous years. Many examples of highly competent language were reported by Examiners.

Areas for improvement include:

- use of tenses (tendency to mix up imperfect and conditional – e.g. *pouvais* / *pourrais*; *adorais* / *adorerais*)
- Formation of tenses – especially to render English continuous form
- Verb endings (too many 3rd person ending with 1st person subject)
- Use of future after *quand* (only achieved by the strongest candidates)
- Use of *tu* / *vous* consistently
- Use of reflexive verbs – especially in the imperative (*ne t'inquiète pas*)
- Agreement of adjectives (e.g. *la semaine dernier* occurred too often)

Candidates are advised to make time to check that basic grammatical rules have been applied (agreement of genders and verb endings).

Question No.5 - Tâche 5

Two different test types were set on the text and the second one (matching headings and paragraphs) proved more successful than the first (finding the exact equivalent).

In Section A, Q(a) and Q(c) were the best answered. For the other questions, many candidates correctly identified the right area of the text but added extraneous words or omitted words from the text in their answers so that what they wrote was not an exact equivalent. For example, in Q(d) many wrote *des reproches* whereas the exact equivalent was *reproches* only. Similarly in Q(c) many only wrote *fondements nutritionnels* instead of *les fondements nutritionnels*. Q(e) was aimed at the best candidates. Some found it very demanding possibly because of the negative form in the question equivalent to a verb with a negative meaning but not in the negative in the text (*n'oublie pas* / *se souvient*).

Candidates are advised not to leave blanks in this type of exercise.

In section B, the most accessible question was Q(f), followed by Q(g) but generally, candidates did very well. Occasionally Q(h) and Q(j) were given the wrong way round, possibly because they both related to people and therefore finer understanding of details was required.

Q(j) was the most demanding question. Some candidates were tempted by option E (possibly linking *citoyen* and *français*).

Question No.6 - Tâche 6

This question on the problems students encounter to find affordable accommodation and the consequent need to find a job to make ends meet seemed to appeal to candidates as it was a plight they themselves may soon have to face. The range of questions on the text discriminated well and fewer questions were left unanswered than in previous years.

- (a) This first question proved demanding, possibly because candidates had to take in and process all the information given in the first paragraph. Many gave a plausible answer that went beyond the text (e.g. *les étudiants n'ont pas assez d'argent pour financer leurs études*); others did not refer to students (*ils* or *les jeunes*) and in some cases, the idea of 'needing' was omitted.
- (b) This was a very good discriminator; the stronger candidates were able to manipulate the subjunctive in the text from the first person (*que j'aie pu trouver*) to the third person (*qu'il ait pu trouver*); many managed to give an explanation in line with the gist of the text but a few latched on the cost of the flat without drawing any conclusion.
- (c) This was a very accessible question and most candidates managed to score two marks. All scored at least one. Some seemed to think that *être au chômage* applies to anyone not working. Conveying the idea of the possibility of the father losing his job proved too demanding for a few candidates.
- (d) This was a demanding question. Candidates who paid careful attention to tenses did well: one of the two points related to what Stéphane had already done to finance his studies and the other to what he would have to do next. Many used a past tense for both which deprived them of the second mark.
- (e) This was a very accessible question; most candidates successfully showed they had understood why Stéphane was happy, even if they did not express it faultlessly.
- (f) This was another accessible question: most candidates managed to explain that Sophie wanted to be independent. A few chose to use the more complex option of saying she did not think sharing was for her.
- (g) This was also accessible but many candidates found using the verb *suffir* with the appropriate pronoun demanding; answers such as: *sa bourse n'est pas suffit* or *...ne se suffit pas* were ambiguous or did not communicate. Many avoided using *suffir* altogether and met with a good measure of success (e.g. *sa bourse n'est pas assez*).
- (h) Most candidates managed to score at least one mark for this question; correct use of language proved a hurdle for some.
- (i) The mark scheme allowed five different ways of scoring two marks; most candidates found at least one of them. Some searched the text elsewhere than in Alain Lafon's words or invented their own plausible response. Those who had read the question carefully could identify at least two of the reasons he had given. A few candidates wrote: *les étudiants ne devraient pas déboursier plus d'une centaine d'euros*. This was indeed mentioned by Alain Lafon but not as a reason to explain why students look for a job. Candidates must read the question carefully before answering it.
- (j) The great majority had understood and found a variety of ways to convey the negative effect on studies. Many relied on the text to write: *ce n'est pas compatible avec...*
- (k) The last question was quite demanding and it differentiated well. At one end of the scale candidates did not understand *les stages non rémunérés* and gave an answer that was exactly the opposite of the expected one; at the other end candidates showed excellent understanding of the concepts put forward in the text.

Quality of Language

Overall, the quality of language was better than in previous years. Generally candidates wrote full sentences; some made an effort to extend their answers, but most kept language simple. There were fewer examples of wholesale lifting from the text.

Candidates should make better use of the text and/or language from the questions, especially genders. For example, referring to Stéphane as '*elle*' was very common yet several questions clearly referred to Stéphane as '*il*'.

The following areas were generally handled well:

- *avoir besoin de*
- *après avoir* + past participle
- comparisons (e.g. *le moins cher*)
- transposing direct speech to reported speech

Areas where there is scope for improvement:

- agreements (e.g. *les résidences sont pleine*)
- prepositions (e.g. use of *de* instead of *pour* to express in order to)
- possessive adjectives (e.g. *son mère / sa père / ses boulot*)
- verb endings (e.g. *ils trouve / ils doive / ils cherchent / ils pourrait*)
- omission of *que* after *après* (e.g. *ce qui lui reste après elle a...*)
- negative placement with compound tenses.

Question No.7 - Tâche 7

The recommended length (200 to 300 words) applies to the combined questions (a) and (b). Numerous examples of excessive length were reported this year for both questions. This often had a negative impact on the quality of language and on the purposefulness of the response.

- (a) The aim of this task is to provide a summary of relevant information. This year many candidates seemed altogether to disregard the set question and merely to paraphrase the whole text, whether relevant or not. Some very able candidates either answered the questions without any reference to the text or gave their opinion on the text. It is therefore important to ensure all fully understand the true requirements of the task.

The vast majority of candidates scored at least 5 marks. From the 12 available points shown in the markscheme 2, 6, 7 and 10 were generally found by all. Many expressed either point 1 or point 3. Point 8 was nearly always mentioned but some lost the mark by not being precise enough and just mentioning school. Point 11 was frequently made. The most demanding were point 4 (frequently candidates only referred to unlimited SMS), point 5 (the idea of having to pay a lot was usually omitted) and point 12 (most tended to mention text-neck without an appropriate explanation – e.g. referring to general mobile use as opposed to texting).

- (b) Mobile phones and texting clearly struck a sympathetic chord with most candidates. They were very eager to express their opinions, so they responded enthusiastically and at length. Excessive length frequently led to points being laboured or repeated. The best answers had been carefully planned, so they were balanced, written in well-developed paragraphs showing a progression of ideas. Such essays were invariably a pleasure to read and showed a real sense of purpose. Others grouped ideas into two sections (one for advantages, the other for disadvantages) then poured them on paper rather randomly, often as lists of things one can do with a mobile phone, drifted into lengthy anecdotes and repeated themselves. General all-purpose introductions and conclusions which merely repeat points already made should be avoided.

Most addressed both parts of the question though some lost two marks because they did not say whether or not they were addicted to texting.

The less adventurous repeated points made in the stimulus text with anecdotes to make them more personal. Nearly all mentioned the advantages of being able to communicate in a variety of situations and many said their phone was like a mini computer that allowed them to do such a range of different things that it had become a basic necessity. In the process, many candidates admitted that they would not be able to survive without their mobiles even though they could be driven mad by their peers' constant use of texting, including during a face to face conversation. Some of the more interesting points mentioned by candidates included: the dangers associated with cyber-bullying; the pressure for young people to have the latest models; the fact that SMS are being replaced by social medias or voice recognition systems; mobiles used as a fashion accessory and the possibility of being mugged for it; addicts preferring virtual contact to real contact; problems with radioactivity and no-one being sure of future health risks; in a historical context mobiles are no different from the TV and planes when they first came in.

Quality of language

Language was often more idiomatic and accurate in Q(7b) where candidates could choose what they wanted to say, than in Q(7a) where the content was prescribed and they did not always have the flexibility of language needed for the task. This year, fewer candidates tried to use over complex sentences they were unable to handle and there were fewer pre-learned chunks which they were determined to get in to the essay no matter what.

Generally, candidates displayed a sound awareness of language and ensured they varied structures and vocabulary, although a few tended to use English words when they did not know the French, adding an accent here and there to make them look more authentic. Some of the work displayed a truly outstanding command of the language.

The following were pleasing to see:

- link words or phrases to enhance the essay, strengthen arguments or give a real sense of progression (e.g. *d'un côté / en outre / de plus / cependant // quant à / que penser de..? / il serait facile de.../ en fin de compte / malgré tout*)
- use of *ce qui / ce que*
- constructions with *si* + imperfect clauses followed by conditional (and even some *si* + pluperfect clauses followed by conditional perfect)
- confident use of the subjunctive
- correct use and formation of the passive

As a rule, it would be very beneficial for candidates to set aside 5 or 10 minutes just to go over their answers. This would allow them to concentrate on the following areas:

- adjectival agreements (frequently missing)
- verb forms (verbs were often left in the infinitive or used with an incorrect ending)
- use of prepositions - especially the translation of the English 'to'.
- use of possessive adjectives
- use of perfect / imperfect tenses
- common forms of auxiliary verbs (e.g mixing *il a* and *il est* ; writing *ils est* for *ils sont*, *et* for *est* ; confusing *que j'aie* and *que j'aile*)
- personal pronouns (subject pronouns occasionally used instead possessive adjective or disjunctive pronoun)

F703 French Speaking

As far as the stimulus texts (Articles) were concerned, the majority of candidates found the themes familiar and, encouragingly, seized the opportunity to develop their ideas on: racial discrimination (Society / integration and exclusion / race); changes in reading habits over time (Science and Technology / change - impacts on habits and education); future energy sources (Environment / alternative energy sources); medicine tomorrow (Science and Technology / medical progress - impacts on health care, lifestyles, ethics); the consequences of unemployment (Society / unemployment / consequences); Franco-German cooperation since WW2 (Culture / influence and impacts of historical events on contemporary society). Very few candidates this year failed to grasp the bare bones of the text they were offered. The ability to understand the key points, paraphrase successfully and develop ideas expansively marked out the stronger candidates from those who relied on reading directly from the passage and from those who often showed a high degree of dependence on the teacher-examiner's questions to maintain the flow.

For the most part Topics were carefully chosen and well researched, with many conscientious and capable candidates absorbing an impressive amount of material with a view to justifying and exemplifying their ideas and opinions, while demonstrating an ability to respond to the teacher-examiner's line of questioning spontaneously and flexibly. Most worrying was the proportion of interviews in which material had been rote-learned - albeit, overall, at a small minority of Centres; in these cases, the discrepancy between Article and Topic Discussion became even greater.

Discussion of Article

This year, markers got the distinct impression that there were more very good and excellent candidates - possibly because many had learned to go beyond the text, making it possible for marks in the top band to be awarded. Our impression was that none of the passages was inaccessible to appropriately prepared candidates; having said that, Articles A, B and E were most frequently chosen for them.

A proportion of teacher-examiners used no more and no less than the seven sample questions listed. Whilst there isn't necessarily anything wrong with such an option, may I offer the view that the most effective examiners tend to ask questions based on the last thing the candidate has said: anything that prompts fluently expressed ideas and opinions is likely to be most highly rewarded. Candidates performed at their best when the teacher-examiner skilfully asked pertinent questions on the main themes of the text, interspersed with questions designed to elicit opinion and, better still, justification of those opinions. Occasionally, teacher-examiners did their candidates a disservice by insisting on probing for the tiniest detail from the text; apart from highlighting omission, this leaves candidates with the impression that they have seriously misunderstood.

Many teacher-examiners chose to ask, as their first question, *De quoi s'agit-il dans cet article ?* This is absolutely fine but there were times when the candidate's answer covered some, most or all of the information targeted by the suggested questions in the examiner booklet - which were asked nonetheless! Teacher-examiners are advised to study the texts thoroughly in advance in order to ensure that this does not happen, both because it wastes very precious time and because it is often disconcerting to candidates who think that they have omitted or mangled some crucial piece of information and are being given a second chance to get it right.

It has become clear that some candidates use their preparation time to write out summaries of paragraphs of the article they have been given (Centres sometimes forward the stimulus cards themselves, along with the Working Mark Sheets); candidates then proceed to read out these summaries in response to the various questions asked. Not only does this go against the spirit of the oral examination - which seeks to assess spontaneous oral expression rather than measure reading ability - but it also means that candidates often fail to target the precise question they are asked. Of course candidates may make notes on their card but the practice of writing out whole sentences is one that Centres should vigorously discourage.

Text A

The majority of candidates coped well with this text, based as it was on anecdotes that would be familiar to most: qualified young people unable to gain relevant employment for a variety of reasons, race discrimination being one. A number of candidates failed to listen carefully to sample question one (when used) and conflated the answer with sample question two; they were then confused to be asked a question they thought that they had already answered! There was sometimes a degree of confusion about the sequence of employment stages: *lettres de candidature, entretiens, rendez-vous, offres d'emploi, (sur le point d')être embauchée*. In the fourth paragraph, the word *preuve* appeared not to have been generally known. The stronger candidates elaborated very fully the underlying causes of racism in society and, when challenged (sample question six), were often adamant in their refusal even to consider a change of name themselves. A number of teacher-examiners, linking their questions to the final two paragraphs of the text, explored advantageously the availability of proof in relation to *l'intention discriminatoire* and what could be done to improve this situation in France. In the general discussion that followed, as well as the issue of racial discrimination in the workplace, candidates invariably branched out into several other forms of social inequality. Many of these related themes gave rise to fascinating insights, admirably reflecting work done in the classroom over the two years of study. An article's main function as 'stimulus for discussion' is sometimes forgotten, but this is the place where the candidate can most easily demonstrate initiative and take a lead, thereby earning the highest marks.

Text B

This passage's focus upon the falling numbers of book readers provoked some interesting reactions. Perhaps a little worryingly, a surprising number of those taking an A Level language claimed in response to sample question five that they neither enjoyed reading for pleasure nor had time to read outside their exam syllabuses; this reaction appeared to confirm - indeed go beyond - the results of the survey itself. No-one disagreed with the premise that wide reading massively supported academic study.

No-one disputed the findings of the text's third paragraph viz. that the reader of *différents types de lecture* would most likely be rewarded with markedly superior results. In dissecting the final paragraph of the text, it became clear that it wasn't kindles that had contributed to the previous decade's reported decline in reading amongst young people, it was indeed the growing centrality of the internet in their lives as well as a devotion to electronic toys! Quite separately, sample question two - the difference between France and less well developed countries - proved too subtle for some: either they didn't understand the explanation suggested or they lacked the vocabulary to express their answer.

Text C

In an area of modern life where innovation moves so fast, it is not difficult to offer ecologically aware candidates a taste of eye-opening, barely credible initiatives across the globe. Candidates were fascinated rather than fazed by the details presented in this text, demonstrating good understanding of the various experiments described. In response to the open-ended sample question five, the stronger candidates broadened their observations and opinions,

encompassing the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of renewable energy, the perennial nuclear debate and the demands on world resources posed by emerging nations and the question of whether the latter can be expected to live up to the same ecological standards and aspirations as developed countries like our own.

Markers commented upon the impressive range of specialised vocabulary that many candidates were able to bring to this subject. In a few cases, candidates were unaware of the meanings - albeit not specifically targeted with a sample question - of *moquette* and *sol* in the second paragraph, thus limiting their ability to put into their own words the concept involved, as well as commenting on its efficacy and potential. It is always rewarding, however, for markers to witness candidates' attempts to support their ideas and opinions with untargeted detail from the article in question. Similarly, it wasn't always clear whether or not candidates had understood (*béton*) precisely where the Germans were stocking their solar power. Although the recycled use of waste material is an increasingly familiar phenomenon, it was by no means certain that all candidates knew exactly what the words *déchets*, *épluchures* and *engrais* meant; one or two thought that it was the chickens that were being burned! When asked about their own efforts to reduce their carbon footprint, candidates' standard reply - perhaps more frequent than might have been expected - was merely that they were keen to turn lights off.

Text D

This text was extremely well handled by many of those for whom teacher-examiners deemed it a good choice. Reflecting a level of depth studied during the A Level course, it was the moral and ethical ramifications of the cutting edge medical procedures that interested candidates most – and, of course, this was precisely the area (ideas and opinions) which would be most likely to lead them to the upper mark bands in terms of assessment. It is perhaps an irony that the more factually-based, seemingly 'easier' texts are in practice more difficult to develop than the apparently more 'difficult', philosophically focused ones!

Sample question one evoked quite a lot of description rather than an answer to the question *Pourquoi?* Whilst the third paragraph left many questions unanswered about how exactly the *opération à distance* procedure might be carried out, candidates were welcome to use their imagination... and no reasonable interpretation, including a healthy scepticism of the experiment's validity, would have been regarded as 'wrong' or inappropriate. Candidates always get the benefit of the doubt in such matters; it is the nature of 250 word texts of this kind that sometimes more is left out than made explicit. It is therefore less a 'reading comprehension' than a 'springboard for discussion'. Teacher-examiners who perhaps felt that *freins* was too obscure a word to risk in sample question four neatly paraphrased it with something like *problèmes* or *difficultés*. An excellent response!

Text E

Incorporating a different angle on the well-worn theme of *le chômage*, this was perhaps the most heavily used text of the six. Most candidates offered it performed well and there were some thoughtful and heartfelt answers to sample questions five and six. Rather than focus upon unemployment figures in general, it was the personal and psychological ramifications of dropping out of work that were being explored. Many candidates drew on experience of family members or acquaintances to support the series of assertions made in the text: the keys to understanding the thrust of the article lay in expressions like *le stress qui accompagne la recherché d'emploi*, the destruction of *l'équilibre... dans le couple*, the sapping of *la confiance en soi*, the concept of *la dévalorisation* - the entire experience proving *dur pour leur moral*.

Stronger candidates showed that they had fully appreciated this emphasis, as well as noting the title of the article: ... *les conséquences*.

In the general conversation that followed, discussion broadened to include the reasons for a rise in the number of people suffering unemployment, the solutions currently proposed by Government, the likely future increase in industrial robotisation and the value of education in providing the flexible skills likely to be required for tomorrow's workplace.

Text F

Disappointingly perhaps, this was the text chosen least frequently by teacher-examiners. Those candidates who tackled it performed very well indeed. The Europe-related general questions were well received - candidates were almost all in favour! This was another of those texts that leads quickly away from the passage, providing access to lots of political issues - past, present and future. The whole concept of pan-European institutions with their range of social, political and economic deals is as topical and controversial as any in the Specification. There are few 'rights' or 'wrongs' in subject matter that crosses curriculum boundaries, where everything is a matter of opinion... and that's precisely where, in F703, the high marks reside.

Topic Conversation

The choice of topics changed little this year: crime, (capital) punishment, the prison system, euthanasia, genetic engineering, nuclear power / renewables, immigration / racism / juvenile delinquency were all as popular as ever. There was a welcome increase in the number of candidates who based their topic conversations on books; by and large, these avoided the narrative trap and were among the most interesting submissions.

The stronger candidates were able to use the wealth of information they had unearthed in their research to support their ideas, whereas the weaker ones invariably allowed the discussion to be facts-driven; in the latter case, a lack of justified opinion depresses the mark on Grid M (Development of Ideas). Also, candidates should be reminded that in a general discussion on capital punishment, for example, marks will be lost unless the candidate keeps the focus rigorously francocentric. Isolated interventions by the teacher-examiner are no more than glosses and like glosses they are likely to be discounted.

As in previous years, examiners came across a number of Centres where candidates had been trained to rote-learn substantial chunks of material that could be recited; many of these had clearly been rehearsed. Such complicity between candidate and teacher-examiner was in evidence in a mercifully small number of cases.

The issue of 'pre-learned material' aside, another problem is the interpretation of the rule whereby candidates are allowed to bring one A4 sheet of notes into the examination room. It is emphasised that notes means precisely that (headings, bullet points, a date or a statistic, for example, to jog their memory) and that candidates should emphatically not type or write out whole sentences in small print which they then proceed to read during the conversation. Visiting Examiners reported that this has occasionally been a problem in the Centres they have visited and there is evidence to suggest that it is not altogether an isolated phenomenon.

Language

A considerable number of candidates made a genuine attempt to extend their range of language: there was widespread excellent use of the subjunctive, the conditional, *si* clauses, relative pronouns etc. and more unusual vocabulary and idiom - all of which was very pleasing. Familiar persistent errors included incorrect forms of the 3rd person plural / confusion between *était* and *avait* and between *il y a* and *ils sont / de les*.

Pronunciation

Generally speaking, pronunciation was acceptable or better, but it is a pity that the following old favourites still appear so prevalent: *ils, filles, femmes, gouvernement, environnement, pays, dix*, the English sound 'sh' for the French *-tion* ending.

Some of the topics encountered this year:

Society

Exclusion / racism

- La qu'enelle
- Le racisme dans le foot
- Est-ce que la laïcité aide ou nuit à la France ?
- Le port du voile met-il en danger le principe de laïcité en France ?
- La discrimination est-elle un problème en France?
- Est-ce que le terme « égalité » dans la devise nationale est justifié?
- Les inégalités révélées dans les films « Indigènes » et « Intouchables » sont-elles toujours présentes dans la société actuelle ?
- La politique d'intégration française – succès ou échec?

- La maltraitance des personnes âgées
- Les SDF en France
- Est-ce que le rôle de la femme française a changé ?
- La discrimination à l'embauche devient-elle un problème croissant en France?
- La représentation des Françaises dans les entreprises en France.
- S'occupe-t-on assez en France du problème de la prostitution?
- Les Roms en France
- Les handicapés sont-ils bien-intégrés en France?
- La délinquance féminine en France

Law and order

- La surpopulation dans les prisons françaises
- Marseille et ses problèmes de crime
- Le rôle de la police dans la banlieue de Marseille
- Les prisons en France sont-elles la meilleure solution contre le crime ?
- La France a-t-elle eu raison d'abolir la peine de mort ?
- Est-ce que le système judiciaire français est efficace?
- Le piratage du net
- Les caméras de surveillance

Unemployment

- Les effets du chômage sur la France
- « Intouchables » et le chômage en France
- Le gouvernement français fait-il assez pour résoudre le problème du chômage ?
- Le fléau du chômage au Québec
- La lutte contre le chômage en France: un défi pour le gouvernement

Environment

- L'énergie renouvelable est-elle la meilleure solution pour la France ?
- L'énergie nucléaire est-elle la meilleure source d'énergie pour la France ?
- L'énergie éolienne en France
- Est-ce que la France devrait supprimer l'énergie nucléaire?
- Comment le système d'imposition peut protéger l'environnement en France

Science and technology

- Les transplantations en France
- L'euthanasie en France
- Le travail et l'influence de Louis Pasteur et son impact en France.
- Le don d'organes en France aujourd'hui

- Les produits OGM et les implications morales en France et dans les pays francophones
- Est-il bénéfique de dépenser autant d'argent sur les nouvelles technologies pour la santé en France ?
- Le 'boom' de la cigarette électronique en France
- La nouvelle technologie : son impact sur la société en France et au Maghreb
- Dans quel domaine la révolution numérique a-t-elle le plus grand impact sur la vie des Français ?
- Les Français, sont-ils prisonniers des réseaux sociaux?

Culture/politics

- L'impact de l'impressionnisme en France
- L'homosexualité dans les arts français
- Samuel Beckett - quelle influence avait-il sur le théâtre en France ?
- La résurgence de l'Occitan en France
- La distinction sociale dans *Boule de Suif*
- L'absurdisme dans *La Peste* et *L'Étranger*
- La place des graffiti dans la culture française
- L'art de la rue

- La montée du FN en France
- Quels sont les effets de l'extrême droite et de l'extrême gauche sur la scène politique en France ?
- Pourquoi François Hollande est-il le président soi-disant le moins populaire de la 5^{ème} République?
- Les impôts en France : est-ce qu'ils menacent l'économie française ?
- Les problèmes des allocations sociales en France

F704 French Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments

The range of attainment in this year's paper was similar to that of previous series. Most candidates seemed to have understood well the requirements of the different question types. Many showed familiarity with the vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at A2 level, even if they were not always able to maintain correct usage. A few candidates took the advice *Utilisez vos propres mots autant que possible* too literally and tried to find synonyms for key words such as *affiches* in Question 3 and *comportements (verts)* in Question 9, sometimes distorting the meaning in the process. This was unfortunate; the best approach to answering comprehension questions in the target language is to use appropriate words from the text but rephrase their response so that it is a natural answer to the question. There were some omissions of individual sub-questions, but on the whole candidates seemed to have ample time to complete the paper. Some Section C responses exceeded the recommended word count by a substantial margin. Rubric infringements were, thankfully, rare: a small number of candidates answered one or more sub-questions in the wrong language, for which no credit could be given, and a few candidates offered two or more answers to a given sub-question, in which case credit was gained only if both answers were correct. A very small number of candidates produced work that was difficult to read.

SECTION A

Task 1

Many candidates showed satisfactory overall comprehension of the recorded material. A few candidates attempted to transcribe too much of the recording, which led to two possible pitfalls: either they confused the message by including information that was not relevant to the question, or they made serious errors in their transcription which impeded communication.

- (a) This first item was generally well answered.
- (b) A number of candidates rendered *annonces* wrongly as 'notices' or 'announcements'.
- (c) This item was quite well answered, although not all candidates recognised the word *record*.
- (d) Some candidates did not understand *la vie chère*.
- (e) This item was generally well answered.
- (f) Most candidates gave the correct answer.
- (g) Almost all candidates showed understanding of the phrase *travaillent pour presque rien*. The word *clandestins* proved to be less familiar.
- (h) This item was a good discriminator as it tested comprehension of a fairly complex sentence. The word *preneur* caused some difficulty and the word *vacant* was sometimes mistaken for 'holidays'.

Task 2

This task was slightly more accessible than its equivalent in previous series, perhaps because of the generally familiar nature of the subject matter. However, candidates needed to listen attentively to understand the required points of detail.

- (a) There were many correct answers, but some candidates were confused by the verb phrase *les faire* and did not realise that the *les* referred back to *les prévisions*.
- (b) Almost all candidates scored both marking points.
- (c) Again, the success rate was high for both points.
- (d) Many candidates scored both points, although those who chose to specify the number of weather stations sometimes wrote the wrong number.
- (e) A surprisingly large number of candidates wrote *plus vieux* instead of *pluvieux*.
- (f) Most candidates showed good understanding of the relevant section of the recording.
- (g) This proved to be a fairly difficult item, mainly because the verb *s'évapore* was misunderstood and wrongly transcribed, e.g. *c'est vapeur*.
- (h) This item was fairly well answered.
- (i) Most candidates scored the second marking point, but some omitted *beaucoup* (or a similar intensifier) in the first part of their answer.
- (j) This item was a good discriminator as candidates had to show understanding of two fairly complex sentences. The words *ensoleillé* and *orages* were unfamiliar to some.
- (k) The marks for this sub-question ranged widely. Some candidates did not fully grasp the comparison between short- and long-term forecasting. A few candidates confused *fiable* with *faible* and conveyed the opposite of the correct meaning.

Quality of Language, Section A

Many candidates showed a reasonable grasp of French grammar and syntax. Although not all answers required whole sentences, those who took opportunities to do so tended to score higher marks for Quality of Language simply because they were able to demonstrate knowledge of a wider range of structures. Among the distinguishing features of high-scoring responses were:

- correct adjectival agreements in parts (cii), (di), (dii) and (h)
- correct verb endings, especially *garantit* and *empêchent*
- *élevées* rather than *élèves*
- correct use of complex structures e.g. *Il pourrait y avoir des orages*.

SECTION B

Task 3

Most candidates showed good comprehension of the stimulus text through their answers to these questions, even if they made errors with some individual words and phrases.

- (a) Most candidates scored both points.
- (b) The verb *boucler* caused widespread difficulty.
- (c) Many candidates struggled to find a suitable verb, such as *tenir* or *montrer*, to go with *affiches*. Some candidates did not include the essential information that the posters were supporting Sarkozy.
- (d) This item was well answered.
- (e) Many candidates gave the necessary information, but some chose to attempt a passive construction, e.g. *Ils avaient été invités...*, and ran into difficulties.
- (f) This item was generally well answered.
- (g) Many candidates coped well with this item, sometimes taking the opportunity to provide different verbs for each of the three activities mentioned. However, some tried to make *une poignée* into a verb, i.e. *Ils ont poigné...*, which resulted in a confused message.

Task 4

This multiple-choice task was fairly well answered, although very few candidates scored more than 6 out of the available 8 points. The items that were most frequently wrong were (a) and (d).

Task 5

- (a) Many candidates did not grasp the significance of *malgré* in the question and merely mentioned that Hollande greeted the crowd, which was not enough for the mark. Those who homed in on the appropriate phrase *sortir la tête* did not always understand it; some thought Hollande got out of the car.
- (b) Many candidates lifted *résonner* from the text, which did not make sense here.
- (c) Not all candidates showed understanding of the phrase *tout sourire*. Some homed in wrongly on the word *solennelle*, which was inappropriate in this context.
- (d) This proved to be a particularly difficult item, with many candidates lifting *éclater* inappropriately rather than providing a correct verb such as *lancer* or *crier*.
- (e) Many candidates coped well with this item, either by using a verbal construction meaning 'was going to' or by using an adjective such as *proche*.
- (f) This item was fairly well answered, although a few candidates thought that Édith Cresson belonged to the younger generation, perhaps because they had misunderstood the phrase *aux plus jeunes* at the end of the relevant sentence.
- (g) This item caused widespread difficulty, with many candidates not realising that the writer was referring to a previous ceremony.

Task 6

This transfer of meaning task posed many challenges and the marks were low compared with the equivalent task in previous series. Nevertheless, a few candidates produced a rendering which was both faithful to the original text and expressed in clear, idiomatic English. The phrase *a pris possession d'Internet* was often well translated and many candidates realised that *signaler* does not mean 'to signal' in this context. The words and phrases that caused the greatest difficulty were:

- *débordante* (often rendered as 'messy')
- *thématique* (often rendered as an adjective or left out altogether)
- *délaissée*
- *sensibilisation* (often rendered without a verb, e.g. 'the awareness')
- *auparavant*
- *visait* (often rendered as 'saw')
- *développement durable*

Task 7

- (a) There were many correct answers here, but also some inappropriate answers where candidates tried to lift the verb *disposer* from the text.
- (b) This item was well answered.
- (c) The difficulty here was to provide a verb which accompanied both *les commerces* and *(les) services*. Relatively few candidates did so successfully.
- (d) Almost all candidates provided a correct noun.
- (e) This item was well answered.

Task 8

This task proved to be difficult, as has been the case with similar tasks in previous series. Candidates needed to take account of the context of each word or phrase in the stimulus text; explanations such as *on s'en sert pour ouvrir une porte* for *clé* were not acceptable.

- (a) The main difficulty here was the requirement to provide an intransitive verb.
- (b) Not many candidates knew the meaning of *divertissant*.
- (c) The phrase *être acteur* in its broader, non-theatrical sense was unfamiliar to most candidates.
- (d) The word *désormais* was unfamiliar to many, but it was pleasing to see the synonym *dorénavant* on some scripts.
- (e) Most candidates wrote *importante* or *très importante*, which was not strong enough to convey the meaning of *clé* in this context.

Task 9

- (a) Many candidates scored both marks, although not all showed understanding of *inabordables*.
- (b) Many candidates scored all three marks.
- (c) This item was well answered, with many candidates providing their own verb.
- (d) This item was fairly well answered.
- (e) The complex sentence in the stimulus text proved difficult to understand for many candidates.
- (f) This item was well answered.
- (g) The text provided both positive and negative opinions and a number of candidates were able to convey the appropriate meaning by stating that, for example, it was 'fine as a topical subject but nothing more than that' or 'a great idea but...'
- (h) This item was challenging as candidates had to understand the *sans que...* clause in the last line of the text. Some candidates were confused by the word *forcément* and tried to include the notion of 'strength' in their answer.

Quality of Language, Section B

As in previous series, candidates' responses varied widely in terms of accuracy and complexity. It was pleasing to see scripts where a conscious effort had been made to use complex structures, even where a one- or two-word answer would have sufficed for comprehension. Among the features of high-scoring responses were:

Question 3

Good attempts at use of tenses and correct agreements: *ont voté, qu'il a reçu(e)(s); a bouclé ; ont tenu ; ont/avaient été invités, il les avait invités; il a accueilli.*

Question 5

a sorti la tête; ont chanté/chantaient; correct tense in part (e).

Questions 7 and 8

Correct verb formation; preposition *à* in Question 7(e); feminine adjective in Question 8(e).

Question 9

Use of pronouns in part (a): *ils les préfèrent / ils les trouvent*; correct past participles *fondé, lancé, établi, créé.*

In addition, it was good to see examples of the candidate's own language, such as: *Ils gagnent de l'argent en travaillant; elle vise à encourager les comportements verts.*

SECTION C

As in previous series, the quality of candidates' responses to the extended writing task varied widely. The best results were achieved when candidates remained fully focused on the set question while backing up their points with well-chosen evidence from the French-speaking world. Essays were more frequently too long than too short; the former could be a problem because of a tendency to ramble and lose focus. At the lower end of the attainment range, candidates often made only perfunctory references to the French-speaking world, such as quoting very precise statistics without stating their significance.

In terms of structure, most candidates made sensible use of paragraphs. As in previous series, introductions were often of higher quality than conclusions, although some candidates wrote an introductory remark such as *À mon avis, c'est simple, qui pollue doit payer* which would work better as a conclusion. A few candidates used rhetorical questions effectively, e.g. *Quelles conclusions peut-on tirer de cette analyse ?*. The sequencing of ideas within paragraphs was often good, but sometimes candidates struggled to maintain a smooth, logical progression of ideas in their essay as a whole. In a few instances candidates presented evenly weighted arguments on both sides but then wrote a one-sided conclusion, leaving the reader confused. It was good when candidates used appropriate adverbs such as *donc, de plus* and *pourtant* to help the reader follow their train of thought. Essay plans were a welcome sight, even though they are not marked as such, and most candidates who wrote a plan seemed to stick to it fairly well.

The quality of candidates' French was not necessarily consistent with the quality of their ideas. It was good to see many positive attempts to use complex structures including different verb tenses, the subjunctive, *si* clauses and relative pronouns. However some candidates made excessive use of set phrases, such as: *il serait naïf de croire que...* and *on ne peut nier que la criminalité/le chômage/l'environnement soit un thème brûlant de l'actualité*. Many candidates made effective use of both general and topic-specific vocabulary, avoiding unnecessary repetition.

Some candidates gave the impression that they had not spent enough time checking their grammatical and orthographic accuracy. Among the most common errors were missed adjectival agreements and wrong verb endings, including confusion between *-é* and *-er*. Individual words were sometimes spelt in two or more different ways in the same essay. Common anglicisms included:

- *le gouvernement doit adresser le problème*
- *c'est une issue qui cause beaucoup de problèmes*
- *il faut essayer de prévenir*
- *le gouvernement doit promouvoir/providier*
- *on a besoin d'une incentive*
- *il faut charger les entreprises qui polluent.*

Question 10

This question on the pros and cons of the *bracelet électronique* was a popular option. Many candidates showed good knowledge of statistics regarding prisons and their problems, using terminology such as *la surpopulation, les écoles du crime* and *apprendre les ficelles du métier*. Sarkozy's *tolérance 0* and Christiane Taubira's *contrainte pénale* were occasionally mentioned. A number of candidates referred to specific prisons that they had read about, often quite successfully. However, factual information on *bracelets* was offered less often; instead many candidates made only vague references to allowing the criminal more freedom and continuing to be part of society. Some candidates mentioned *centres éducatifs fermés* and *le travail d'intérêt général* as alternatives. This was successful as long as it remained peripheral to the subject under discussion. A few candidates strayed too far from the focus of the question, for example

by describing the allegedly shocking conditions in French prisons and then going on to comment that these same prisons fail to stop *le récidivisme*.

Question 11

This question, which invited candidates to write a web page promoting participation in a cultural diversity project, was a fairly popular choice. The most successful responses found an appropriate balance between describing the work of the centre and explaining the background to its existence. They showed good knowledge of the facts and the problems, as well as constructive suggestions as to how integration could be achieved. They suggested activities that involved learning from different aspects of each others' cultures and developing mutual respect. Less strong were those responses which comprised little more than a list of possible social activities at the centre, with an assertion that the town should do all it can to help people from all cultures to be integrated. Equally inappropriate were purely discursive essays on integration, with only vague reference to the centre and little attempt to encourage others to go there.

Question 12

A fair number of candidates opted for this question on the principle of 'he who pollutes should pay'. At first glance it was an accessible question in which candidates could use information about different types of pollution in the French-speaking world and efforts to reduce pollution through taxation and penalty payments. Some candidates tackled the question successfully and developed a coherent argument based on evidence such as experiences with *Vélib*, *Autolib*, *écotaxe*, *pastille verte*, *circulation alternée* and *ZAPA*. However a disappointingly large number of candidates wrote in too general a fashion about pollution, perhaps describing its different forms and assessing its seriousness before going on to discuss possible measures for reducing it. Little credit could be given for factual evidence such as the amount of waste recycled or figures relating to air pollution unless an appropriate link was made to the title.

Question 13

This question, which invited candidates to write a letter to a newspaper expressing their reaction to a proposed nuclear power station, was the most popular option in Section C. It was often quite successfully done, with candidates showing good factual knowledge of both sides of the argument, as well as good knowledge of government initiatives. Relevant references to the French-speaking world included:

- *réduire de 75% à 50% la part du nucléaire dans la production d'électricité*
- *fermeture de la centrale de Fessenheim prévue pour 2016*
- *accident au site nucléaire de Marcoule*
- *23% d'énergie renouvelable d'ici 2020*
- *Ségolene Royale nouveau ministre de l'environnement*
- *le Grenelle l'environnement*

Some candidates strayed a little too far into other areas, such as providing employment for local people and promoting renewable energy sources. While mention of these aspects was certainly relevant, it was inappropriate to make them the focus of the letter. With regard to structure, some candidates made little effort to produce a letter rather than a discursive essay, but there were also some very strong responses where the persuasive tone kept the reader fully engaged. A good example of a suitable opening paragraph was: *Cher lecteur, Je croyais que le gouvernement de F. Hollande avait décidé de réduire la part du nucléaire, alors c'est avec très grande surprise que je viens d'apprendre la construction d'une nouvelle centrale dans notre région ...*

Question 14

A few candidates tackled this question on the likely impact of medical progress on future life expectancy. A sequence of ideas which worked well was:

- how life expectancy in France has changed over the last 100 years
- the eradication of diseases
- research into remaining diseases
- better understanding of viruses
- better understanding of how illnesses can be triggered
- effects of lifestyle on life expectancy
- inevitable effects of ageing on organs
- mutation of viruses and resistance to antibiotics
- likely impact of these factors on future life expectancy.

One or two candidates wrote about the problems that increased life expectancy would lead to. Some candidates struggled to find factual evidence from the French-speaking world to support their argument, while others did not make a satisfactory link between medical advances and increased life expectancy.

Question 15

The responses to this question, which invited candidates to write a magazine article promoting the study of technology, were few in number. They tended to be rather superficial, dealing generally with the use and importance of technology in today's society but doing little to encourage others to pursue technological studies.

Question 16

A small number of candidates chose this question, which required the analysis of an author's or playwright's techniques. A range of 19th and 20th century works was covered. Most responses showed excellent knowledge of the work in question, including direct quotations, but some focused too much on the narrative and not enough on analysis.

Question 17

Very few candidates chose this title on *la francophonie*. A good starting point was to give the objectives of *L'Organisation internationale de la francophonie*, accompanied by appropriate statistics, but this then needed to lead into a persuasive magazine article, and candidates generally found it difficult to achieve that combination.

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