

GCE
French

Advanced GCE **A2 H475**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H075**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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F701 French Speaking

General Comments:

The standard of candidates was generally good, with very few candidates inappropriately entered. As is often the case, many of the topic discussions involved subjects that had been individually chosen and researched, and the candidates displayed genuine enthusiasm. These discussions are usually particularly interesting to listen to. Many candidates tackled the role-plays well and made an attempt to demonstrate initiative and imagination as well as conveying the key points.

Centres are reminded that the recording should not be stopped or paused once a candidate's exam has started unless there is an emergency such as a fire alarm.

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 mark sheets 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, mark sheets and topic forms) needs 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 as this causes difficulties for examiners trying to retrieve them.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Role plays

Use of Stimulus

It is vitally important that candidates understand the importance of using the stimulus material, as it is worth half of the marks for the role play. Some candidates with a high linguistic ability make only very sketchy reference to the text, and this has a negative impact on their mark. The layout of the role play should make it very clear which segments fit with which bullet points, and candidates should be trained to say all the information, as there is very little redundant material. Some teacher-examiners asked their candidate if there was anything else they wanted to say, and this gave an opportunity to say anything that had been missed. Candidates only very rarely need to supply an exact wording, and examiners are looking for the idea from the text to be expressed.

Task A

The Lefton College role play provided a few difficulties, as some candidates were not able to supply an appropriate word for 'subjects'. The prices gave problems for some candidates who did not know how to express 'pounds' in French, or who struggled with £500, often pronouncing

it as *cent cinq*. Most candidates coped well with the verb *s'inscrire* and spotted that it was supplied and that there was no need to find a word to express the idea.

Task B

The familiar topic of transport nevertheless gave some vocabulary issues, although more successful candidates found very appropriate alternatives where they did not know a word, such as helmet or fluorescent. *Deuxième main* was sometimes offered for second hand, while other candidates simply worked round the idea, such as *qui ont déjà été utilisés*. Candidates should be trained to focus on detail, for example up to 600 calories an hour.

Task C

In the Radio Luna role play some candidates had problems with the idea of 'listeners', and 'sense of humour' proved tricky for many. However, many candidates were at ease with the work experience scenario and were able to convey ideas relating to ideal candidates and the conditions for interns very well. Some took the opportunity to use a subjunctive: linguistic initiative is always credited.

Task D

The amateur theatrical world seemed to interest many candidates and this showed up particularly in the extension questions. Expressions to do with age give particular difficulties, such as 'more than 14 years old'. Several candidates gave only a few details relating to auditions, and it is here that an alert teacher-examiner can make a big difference to their candidates' chances by prompting for missed details. The pronunciation of *eau* could not always be credited.

Task E

Candidates grasped the subject matter of the Action at Christmas role play well, and were able to explain competently how the charity worked and what the expectations were. The segment about Hélène gave a few difficulties, but some candidates successfully used dates, although some were unable to convey 'Belgian'. There were some particularly good ways found for expressing ideas when an individual piece of vocabulary was not known.

Task F

The topic of tourism is familiar to candidates and most had no difficulty with the structures such as prices, advice and what there is to see and do. A few struggled with *médecin / médecine / médicaments*, but most candidates were able to convey the ideas without problem. 'Roadworks' was not universally known, but most candidates were able to find alternatives such as *problèmes de circulation*.

Response to Examiner

Examiners tend to find the same issues most years. Candidates must show initiative and imagination throughout to get into the top band. Many centres still focus initiative and imagination only on the extension questions, although an increasing number are encouraging candidates to show more creativity during the transactional part. The most successful candidates throw themselves into the role and give a very convincing performance in trying to persuade the teacher-examiner to visit a particular museum, or that Classy Cycles is the shop for them. This may involve adding extra details, or a frequent reference back to the teacher-examiner about their circumstances.

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 candidate is just prompted with *vas-y alors* or similar. Some centres choose to ask the extension questions during the main transactional part, and this is rarely advantageous to candidates. Sometimes it leads to the teacher forgetting where they had got to in the role play and missing out details, and the answers are nearly always shorter and less extended than when they are left to the end, as the teacher-examiner does not know how much time they can afford to give to the extension at that stage.

Most candidates take the opportunity to include more complex language in the extension questions, but a significant minority of candidates only offer one brief sentence in reply to each question, eschewing the opportunity to speak at length, and show ideas and linguistic ability. Many teacher-examiners ask follow-up questions which can be very helpful, and give some candidates a further opportunity to show what they can do unprepared. Sometimes, it would be better to spend the time ensuring that candidates have covered all the stimulus material in cases where key ideas have been missed out or were not expressed well first time.

Quality of Language

It is rare for candidates to be given a very low mark for quality of language, as most are appropriately entered. However, there was nevertheless quite a range of performance.

The opening questions continue to give difficulties, especially those that involve talking about the teacher-examiner's son or daughter. This manipulation is required every year, and centres are advised to work further on this aspect. A significant number of candidates continue to refer to *son fils* or *sa fille*.

As every year, there were cases of invented cognates, such as *burner* and *pounds*, and cognates that were not used by candidates when they could have been, such as *amputation*. Not all candidates took the opportunity to show their linguistic ability in the extension questions, and although examiners do not expect the same range of structures as in the topic discussion, this does not mean that ambition is not rewarded and appreciated. Candidates should be encouraged to take every opportunity to show their learning.

Examining

Although examining has improved since the specification began, the same issues still tend to occur, and some teacher-examiners could improve their candidates' marks by making small changes. The most common problem is inadvertently (or sometimes deliberately?) giving away key vocabulary. 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 not to use 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 'Can you buy helmets there?' The best examining technique uses vaguer questions when prompting for missed information, such as 'Is there anything else to see?' or 'Are there any other qualities they want?'

Topic discussion

Choice of Topics

As is usual, a wide range of topics was offered by candidates. Many appeared to have chosen an area of personal interest, and such discussions were often particularly successful. Religion and immigration have been heard several times this year, probably due to news stories, and it is important that centres are familiar with the list of AS topics in the specification, as some of the choices made were A2 topics, which affected the mark which could be awarded in Grid D.

Obesity, cinema, alcohol and tourism remain common, although examiners enjoy hearing the individual angle that many candidates find. Candidates occasionally still do not link their topic sufficiently to France or a French-speaking country. Eating disorders, health and the internet/social media continue to be the most likely to suffer from a lack of reference to France. 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. Conversely, a topic may be titled ‘La religion en France’, but the candidate spends their time talking about the veil in schools, which is permissible under education. 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

It is important that candidates do show evidence of research, despite the importance of ideas and opinions. Very factual topics with few ideas will be limited in this band, but so will topics where the candidate has many opinions but little substance. Candidates who have lived in France should be particularly aware that their topic needs to be more than anecdotal.

The markscheme credits developed ideas and opinions, which should be backed up by factual information. Many candidates will give a block of factual information and express opinions at the end. 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.

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. A small number of centres cut topics short, but it is more common for topics to be over-length. There is no benefit to candidates in doing this as examiners stop listening and assessing at exactly ten minutes.

Although there was the inevitable over-use of pre-prepared material in some cases, many candidates were able to use their preparation flexibly and show off their knowledge without responding to a set list of questions. Although a few candidates were allowed to speak at excessive length without interruption, in the majority of cases there was a genuine discussion, with the teacher-examiner seeking clarification or taking a different direction as appropriate.

Language

Centres seem to realise the importance of candidates demonstrating the structures that they have learned throughout the course, and most candidates do take the opportunity to use a range of vocabulary and structures. Some topics lend themselves to extensive topic-specific vocabulary more than others, and it is important that this is secure when used.

Agreements continue to be an area for development for at AS, and genders are sometimes a little vague or changeable. However, almost all candidates cope with the demands of the level.

Pronunciation

The difficulty in producing a convincing French accent one year beyond GCSE is acknowledged by examiners, and a real attempt at sounding French is sought rather than perfection, as previously. Candidates should aim at being secure on the pronunciation of individual sounds as well as giving an attempt at the difficult French 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.

The excessive use of pre-prepared material is often accompanied by poor pronunciation, especially the sounding of silent letters.

Examining

Examining is a demanding role, and most coped well with listening to responses and thinking of interesting questions that would show candidates off.

Most candidates use pre-prepared material to some degree, but many teacher-examiners will ask questions that the candidate clearly weren't expecting, and it is a good idea to hold back some possible 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.

As previously mentioned, the topic discussion is limited to 10 minutes, and this is enough time for examiners to make a judgement about candidates.

F702 French Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments:

In this session, candidates completed Task 4 better than previously, both in the effective manner in which they transferred the content of the message and in the language they used to do it. Tasks 3 and 6 performed as expected and produced a full range of marks. The outcome of some of the non-verbal tasks, especially Task 1 and Task 5B, was disappointing. In Task 1, some candidates used words from the list at random; what they wrote did not make sense. In Task 5B, the equivalent they selected was not the same part of speech. More practice and greater concentration on the content of the texts – spoken or written – should improve performance. In Task 7, candidates must concentrate on answering the questions precisely. Irrelevant material cannot be given credit. Time would be well spent checking language accuracy. Fewer questions were left unanswered than in previous sessions. Finally, candidates should ensure they use in their answer the same language as in the question. The only exception is in Task 4 where an English text needs to be put into French.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1 – Task 1

Candidates are reminded that they must show understanding of the text. From the list of words they can choose from, several would make sense but only one reflects the meaning of the text. Candidates generally found this task demanding.

Q1 (a) Those who had studied the media AS sub-topic area had no difficulty in identifying *révéler* as the alternative to *publier*. Many of the others selected *trouver* which made sense but did not reflect the meaning of the text.

Q1 (b) Candidates needed to understand *se sentir coupable* in the text to be able to link it to *avoir une mauvaise conscience*. Many chose *santé* as the missing word, probably because they were familiar with expressions such as *bonne santé* or *mauvaise santé*.

Q1 (c) Understanding of a large section of the text was required here. Many expected an adjective or a noun and chose *extrêmes* or *journalières* (even though the feminine form should have guarded them against the latter). The correct answer *se donner* was seldom given.

Q1 (d) This was one of the better answered questions. A verb in the infinitive was needed and most correctly chose *se placer*. A few selected *s'amuser*, a possible and grammatically correct alternative which however did not match the text.

Q1 (e) The correct word (*sensation*) was frequently identified; a few chose *reaction*. If they had thought of the meaning that their choice implied, they would have rejected it.

Q1 (f) The best answered question. Nearly all candidates could link *rapides* and *accélération*.

Q1 (g) The answer (*suer*) is not a very common word yet many correctly identified it as the synonym of *transpirer* in the text.

Q1 (h) Those who had already used *extrêmes* in Q(c) tended to use *réelles* here. The text (*mais pas autant qu'un...*) implied a comparison in intensity which *réelles* did not convey. This should have alerted them to reconsider their choice in answer to Q(c).

Q1 (i) Those who answered from experience wrote *journalières*. The only answer that showed understanding of the text was *réelles*. Many chose *force* possibly because they thought the intensity of physical activities mattered even though a noun did not fit in the sentence.

Q1 (j) This was a difficult question which required an ability to infer meaning. The better candidates correctly selected *conduite*; the others guessed.

Question 2– Task 2

This is quite a demanding test-type but candidates coped with it well, often scoring highly. A few did not tick any box for some questions. Candidates should also remember that if they change their minds, corrections must be clear.

Q2 (a) This a demanding question. Candidates had to make the link between *gérer leur emploi du temps* and *mieux s'organiser*. Éric was a common incorrect answer.

Q2 (b) This question was well answered, especially as Éric was the only person to mention professional enhancements.

Q2 (c) Similarly, Inès was the only person to mention working and studying at the same time, so this was another accessible question.

Q2 (d) This was more demanding. Some incorrectly chose Inès because she too mentioned keeping contact with others. Only Luc mentioned working with others.

Q2 (e) Nearly all candidates successfully linked Luc to the cost effectiveness of on-line courses.

Q2 (f) The link between *pas très motivants* and *ennuyeux* was successfully made by most.

Q2 (g) Both Luc and Inès mentioned teachers, so both were selected by candidates. Those who concentrated on details noticed that only Luc referred to the 'daily' nature of contacts with teachers.

Q2 (h) Inference and/or detailed understanding was needed (use of *néanmoins* and implications of *tout* in Inès's utterance). Many chose Eric, perhaps in a wish to distribute answers more evenly.

Q2 (i) Candidates were generally able to link *remplacer* and *substituts*. A few selected Inès, possibly because she mentioned university, which they associated with *cours classiques*.

Q2 (j) As Inès was the only one to mention *université*, this question was well answered.

Question 3 - Task 3

This task, with its mixture of accessible questions and questions requiring detailed and careful understanding, discriminated well.

Q3 (a) This was an accessible starter question. A few candidates cited the places given in the question. They should have realised that these places could not receive any credit.

Q3 (b) The two marks were discrete, so nearly all candidates managed to score at least one of them, typically the 2nd mark. Explaining why the advice was given proved easier than describing what the advice was.

Q3 (c) Some candidates gave plausible reasons why Autumn and Christmas were mentioned but as these were not in the text they could not gain any credit. The idea of ‘recruitment’ was elusive and some simply mentioned Christmas (holidays) without saying that it was the peak period.

Q3 (d) Most candidates scored full marks. The exceptions were when candidates left a word in French (e.g. *dynamique*).

Q3 (e) Few candidates successfully conveyed the idea that students should prioritise job vacancies with accommodation attached. In the second part, some wrote that it was difficult to stay in the resort rather than to find accommodation in it. Many kept the French word *station* for ‘resort’; this was confusing.

Q3 (f) A generally well-answered question; the ‘risk’ element was not always conveyed. Some of the reasons given to explain the risk were rather fanciful and far away from the different work schedules mentioned in the text. Mishearing *horaire* for *horreur* might explain this.

Q3 (g) The concept of a ‘perk’ had generally been grasped but the second part of the answer often lacked precision: the idea of ‘on some services’, an important qualifier, was often omitted. There was also occasional confusion over ‘employer’ and ‘employee’.

Q3 (h) This usually well-answered question was occasionally spoilt by saying the same thing twice: ie ‘(job) offers and jobs’.

Question 4 - Task 4

The standard this year was higher than in the past, possibly because the subject matter was close to the candidates’ heart. Many expressed the statements in clear sections, as on the question paper, rather than as a continuous message – a perfectly acceptable approach.

Communication

For the first statement, many employed various strategies to explain taking a ‘gap’ year. Occasionally, the length of the gap was omitted and some mistook *bac* for *fac*.

The second component was more challenging but a less than correct sequence of tenses did not hinder communication, so only incorrect renderings (e.g. *entendre de* or *écouter* instead of *entendre*; *postes* or *métiers* instead of *boulots*) had an impact on the outcome.

The third component was the most successfully transmitted. The idea of availability was usually correctly rendered but some were a little vague as to the length of this availability.

In the fourth statement many forgot to say that the CV was attached. Many used alternatives for CV, not realising that the same abbreviation was also used in French. This led to approximate rather than accurate rendering.

The outcome of the last statement of the message was good because most somehow managed to express ‘hope’ and ‘knowledge’. A few did not know the difference between *étranges* and *étranger / étrangères* and this had an impact on the outcome.

Quality of Language

Generally, the quality of language was an improvement on previous sessions. Some made good use of vocabulary they heard in Task 3.

Candidates successfully coped with:

- Present (*j'ai l'intention de* ; *vous pouvez voir* ; *j'espère*) and perfect tenses (*j'ai entendu* ; *j'ai déjà travaillé*)
- conditional (*ce serait parfait*) and future (*sera un avantage*)
- Vocabulary : *sabatique*; *gamme*; *disponible*; *la saison hivernale*; *hôtellerie*; *connaissance*;

There is scope for improvement in the following areas:

- Sequence of tenses after reported speech (... *qui disait que vous aviez*)
- *Avant de* + infinitive (*avant je commence* was common)
- use the relative pronouns (*j'ai entendu un programme qui disait que vous aviez...*)
- Use of indicative after *espérer* (many used the subjunctive: *j'espère ... soit un avantage*)
- Agreement of adjectives
- Vocabulary : *inclus / ci-joint*; *plusieurs* ; *étranger*

Question 5 - Task 5

Section A: Candidates had to select the best explanation of words, rather than synonyms for these words, to show understanding of the passage.

Q5 (a) Most candidates correctly identified *enthousiasme*.

Q5 (b) Few understood the idea of people flooding to view exhibitions, so few chose the correct answer *foule*. Many chose *richesse* because *affluence* looked like 'affluent' or *importance* which is like 'influence'.

Q5 (c) The ability to infer meaning was tested in this question, but confusion over the meaning of modal verb hampered some candidates who chose *voudrait* rather than *pourrait*.

Q5 (d) This was quite successful as candidates could link *certes* to *certainement*, which led them correctly to select *bien sûr*.

Q5 (e) Most correctly identified *instantané* as the correct answer.

Section B: This was a more demanding exercise.

Q5 (f) Most candidates read *occasionne* as a noun, and linking 'occasion' and 'events' in English gave *événements* as their answer – even though a plural word could not be right. Careful reading would have shown that *occasionne* was a verb. Few made this distinction.

Q5 (g) This was a good discriminator.

Q5 (h) Here *envoie* and *partage* were equally popular. In this context, the latter was not acceptable. Some chose *communiquer* even though the verb was in the infinitive.

Q5 (i) This was a demanding question of this section. Many chose adverbs but few correctly identified *sans relâche*.

Q5 (j) Candidates were not familiar with the verb *classer*, so often incorrectly chose *amasse*.

Question 6 - Task 6

As a whole, the questions set on the theme of a move to the country discriminated well.

Q6 (a) Most managed to score at least one point, generally (ii). In point (i), many who had understood *bouchons* but did not know *embouteillages* managed to paraphrase. Point (iii) was the most demanding and occasionally language interfered with communication.

Q6 (b) This was generally correctly answered; a number of candidates omitted to mention *Paris / la région parisienne*” when they used *quitter* rather than *partir*.

Q6 (c) Candidates were able to explain why people wanted to move away from the Paris region.

Q6 (d) Candidates scored at least one of the two available marks. A loose rendering of *trentenaires* was allowed. Some mentioned the children but forgot the jobs.

Q6 (e) Some were able to manipulate the information given in the text to express the difference in salaries correctly. Many invalidated their answer by stating percentages which in fact applied only to nurses.

Q6 (f) A question which required careful reading and manipulation of the text. Many did not notice the negative and, over-relying on the wording of the text, wrote the opposite of what was expected. This affected point (i) less than the other two points.

Q6 (g) The relevant section of the text was understood by candidates but occasionally their performance was hampered by their inability to manipulate the passive form. Some did not complete their sentence (e.g. *Son entreprise lui a proposé un transfert au sein.*)

Q6 (h) Most candidates gave the right answer though expressing the comparative correctly was challenging for some (e.g. *avec les mêmes opportunités comme en Paris*).

Q6 (i) From the three possible answers most gave at least one – often that Magali now had more leisure time. To express the changes, many used vocabulary such as *seulement / maintenant / avant* to good effect.

Quality of Language

Many adopted a minimalist approach. Brief answers can suffice to answer comprehension questions but they do not allow candidates to show they can use complex language accurately. Candidates should allow extra time to check that basic grammatical rules have been applied (e.g. agreements of adjectives as in Q6 (a) or past participles as in Q6 (b), verb endings - especially 3rd person plural – as in Q6 (d)). More practice is needed on how to form the comparative and the passive. Some candidates showed they could use pronouns (e.g. *son entreprise lui a offert un transfert; elle l'envisage avec optimisme.*)

Question 7 - Task 7

Q7 (a) This task produced a full range of marks. A few candidates seemed unfamiliar with the task and gave a personal response to the question in spite of the rubric. Many others included irrelevant material and wasted a lot of words re-wording the first paragraph. Some parts of the text were not understood - e.g. some candidates thought that drinking energy drinks on their own made you drunk (point 7); that *ralentir la sensation d'ivresse* (point 8) meant increasing your drunkenness; that sugar and caffeine had a serious effect on children's concentration when the text referred to the effects of high concentration of sugar and caffeine in the drinks (point 6).

Points 1, 2, 5, 9, 10 and 12 were most frequently correctly rendered. Although most mentioned points 3 and 4, significant details were omitted so that credit could not be given. Point 6 was occasionally misunderstood, as was point 7, more frequently. Point 8 was usually omitted and point 11 was often either incomplete or incorrectly rendered.

Q7 (b) The topic was familiar to candidates and many wrote at length; quality did not always match quantity. Candidates had to address both questions and those who did not lost two marks.

Some briefly dealt with the first question (awareness of risks) and quickly moved on to expressing their views as to how things could be improved. Others dwelt longer on the first question. Opinion was divided as to whether young people were aware of the risks. Some said that young people were taught about nutrition at school, at home and in the media, so they should know. Some said they were unaware, as was clearly proven by the success of fast-food chains like McDonald and the high incidence of obesity in the world today. Others said they knew but did not care, to appear adult, out of sheer obstinacy or simply because they felt that nothing bad could happen to them as they felt young and invincible. A number of candidates mis-read the question and concentrated on eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse which did not really answer the question.

As for remedial suggestions, the measures included government legislation, fines and taxes on food and drink manufacturers, as well as bans on advertising or at the very least warning notices on packaging, as with cigarettes. It was also suggested that programmes on nutrition would help and that school and parents had a part to play in raising awareness. Some thought that the situation was hopeless and any action was a waste of time as people would ignore advice anyway.

As most had studied the topic in class, candidates were not short of ideas, so they tended to write a lot which in some cases had a detrimental effect on the quality of the language they used.

Quality of Language

In 7a, some candidates tried to use a variety of vocabulary, tenses and complex structures and manipulated well the language borrowed from the text; others just lifted phrases which did not always fit with what they were trying to say. Generally, the language in 7b was better, with many candidates understanding the need to extend themselves. At times, inaccurately learnt phrases spoilt or distorted the idea that they were attempting to express. Very often accuracy was less secure than range, particularly in the relatively straightforward, basic aspects of grammar. It was not uncommon to see serious errors left uncorrected, often in otherwise good scripts (e.g. *ils ont* for *ils sont / avaient* for *étaient / son* for *leur / peut* for *peuvent* or verbs left in the infinitive).

A few examples of good language:

- Subjunctive (e.g. *il se peut qu'on puisse encourager les jeunes à... ; il est possible que les publicités soient utiles pour promouvoir un régime plus équilibré*)
- Linking words and phrases (*il faut aussi souligner le fait que / ajoutons que / il ne faut pas oublier que / on ne peut nier que...*).
- Present participle (e.g. *en essayant de limiter...*)
- Use and position of pronouns (e.g. *ils ne voudraient pas les décourager ; il ne faut pas leur demander l'impossible*)
- Sequence of tenses (e.g. *Moi j'aurais dû consommer des nourritures et des boissons plus saines, parce que si j'avais mangé ces choses, je serai probablement plus mince.*)
- Idiomatic language (e.g. *Il va de soi qu'on ne doit pas manger n'importe quoi si on veut garder la forme*)

Areas where improvement could be made:

- Use of object pronouns (using *les* for *leur* and vice versa)
- Use of the passive (using *avoir* instead of *être* as an auxiliary)
- Verbs – leaving them in the infinitive or using incorrect endings
- Agreement of adjectives

- Anglicism (e.g. *je pense qu'il y aurait avoir une loi ; ce qu'il y a besoin de...*)
- Difference between *à cause de*, *parce que*, *car*

Finally, candidates could improve their work with training in essay planning; this would help them structure and order their ideas logically.

F703 French Speaking

General Comments:

The steady rise in the standard of candidates' performance on this paper continues. Many candidates produced excellent performances characterised by extensive research of personal topics as well as fluent and accurate speech. In both the Discussion of Article and the Topic Conversations, subject knowledge was invariably impressive, as candidates learn to exploit digital resources with growing confidence. Occasionally, a discrepancy manifested itself between the two parts of the test. In the Discussion of Article, a small number of candidates struggled both to pinpoint the necessary information and to express themselves coherently; when moving to the Topic Conversation, however, the same candidates displayed a range of sophisticated vocabulary and complex structures - an astonishing disconnect. Whilst repeated practice of structures lies at the heart of language acquisition - and the Topic Conversation is, after all, a wonderful opportunity to show off what has been taught and learned - it is not intended that candidates pre-learn a script to be delivered in language reminiscent of a formal address. In cases of this sort, not only is there little spontaneity but also, quite often, insufficient challenge.

For the most part, timings were applied scrupulously, with many teacher-examiners announcing - half way through examining the Article - that they were moving to *des questions plus générales* to show that they were aware of the specification's recommendation.

Discussion of Article

Most teacher-examiners had prepared the texts carefully in advance and were thus able to stretch able candidates appropriately. Unlike in some previous years, no text appeared overwhelmingly popular; all were chosen with equal frequency. There were, this year, more very good and outstanding candidates who demonstrated their excellence in a full understanding of the Articles as well as in their ability to move the discussion beyond the text, thus gaining access to marks in the top band.

In recent years there has been evidence that some candidates use their preparation time to write out summaries of the various paragraphs of the article they have been given; they then proceed to read out these summaries to the teacher-examiner 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 sometimes 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.

Topic Conversation

Generally, this year, candidates chose an adventurous range of topics and there was a welcome increase in the number of candidates who based their Topic Conversations on books. However, *L'environnement*, *La délinquance juvenile*, *L'euthanasie*, *L'immigration et le racisme*, *L'énergie nucléaire* remain firm favourites for many. It is fair to say that the above do genuinely reflect what is most prominent in our daily press.

The stronger candidates used the wealth of information they had unearthed in their research to support their ideas and opinions, whereas the weaker ones tended to allow the discussion to be facts-driven.

The issue of ‘scripted’ material aside, another problem is the use - occasionally abuse - of the supporting A4 sheet of notes which candidates are allowed to bring into the examination room. It is emphasised that notes means precisely that (for example, headings, bullet points, a date or a statistic to jog the memory), and that candidates should not type or write out whole sentences in small print from which they then proceed to read during the conversation. Visiting Examiners once again reported this to be an occasional problem.

Language

Most pleasingly, almost all candidates made a genuine attempt to extend their range of language: there was plenty of appropriate use of the subjunctive, the conditional, *si* clauses, relative pronouns etc. and much evidence of semi-technical, topic-specific vocabulary.

Most frequent errors, in no particular order:

Confusion between *il est* and *il y a*
Les personnes for *les gens*
Assez beaucoup
Confusion of *mal/mauvais* and *mieux/meilleur*
Use of *ses* for *leur(s)*
Singular subject + plural verb (and vice versa)

Pronunciation

Pronunciation has seen dramatic improvements in recent years, and this year was no exception. Some candidates, sometimes whole centres, had clearly worked on their pronunciation and, more noticeably still, their intonation. The latter remains an important target, as it is a key indicator of fluency and, in particular, spontaneity.

Generally speaking, pronunciation was very good, but it is a pity that repeated references in this report appear to have done little to improve the delivery of the following: *ils, elles, filles, femmes, pays, environnement, dix, gouvernement*, the English sound ‘sh’ for the French –*tion* ending.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Text A

Most candidates coped well with the ideas in this text. They were able to explain in their own words the failures of the French prison system, failures not uncommon across the international community. Most knew the key word *récidive* in the first paragraph, showing that they fully appreciated the damage done by *le surpeuplement* to the State’s avowed emphasis upon its *programmes de réinsertion*. Other criticisms of the system included the *conditions sanitaires inacceptables* as well as the *condition délabrée des locaux*; whilst many found suitable explanations of the former, the latter expression foxed some who recognised neither *délabrée* nor *locaux*. The final paragraph, detailing some of the consequences of overcrowding in prison, required a degree of re-phrasing if candidates were to avoid simply reading out sections of the text. However, the vocabulary of this paragraph presented few difficulties and most candidates successfully found ways to analyse the impact of inadequacies whenever prisoners were not properly prepared for their release. The general questions were frequently well answered, with most candidates familiar with the topic-specific vocabulary around the problems of and solutions to crime and delinquency. When it came to dealing with persistent offenders, some candidates

appealed for more draconian measures than those currently in vogue. Ideas included *la nécessité de construire davantage de prisons* as well as *la réintroduction de la peine de mort!*

Text B

As far as comprehension was concerned, the first paragraph posed few problems. Candidates showed themselves familiar not only with the vocabulary but also with the concept of free movement of people across Europe. They also knew a lot about the discussion of immigration quotas resulting from this policy. A few got themselves into a bit of a tangle with the second paragraph, not that the words themselves appeared to be unrecognised; rather, it was the logic of the ideas. This was perhaps a little surprising since the key phrase, *un manque de moyens*, was further explained in the final sentence of the paragraph. Almost all paraphrased the third paragraph effectively, with many referring to the inevitable frustrations of meeting the conditions for claiming state benefits: viz. proof of a permanent address and a job. Very similar conditions - and frustrations - pertain to the schooling of Roms children. Candidates understood this parallel and, for the most part, described accurately and in detail the mechanisms that complicate Roms' compliance with the legal requirement in France. The political issues opened up in the final paragraph and potentially exploited in the general questions revealed a wide range of opinions amongst candidates; not all could explain why les Roms have become, for successive French governments of varying persuasion, *une cible* or indeed *un péril*. Those candidates who were able to relate the themes of this text to work done in the classroom over the two years of the A Level course produced fascinating insights into current French political debate. It is often when an article's main function as 'stimulus for discussion' is successful that the highest marks are gained; it is under such circumstances that the candidate can most easily demonstrate initiative and take a lead.

Text C

This article worked well with most candidates who were given it, environmental issues remaining a popular and familiar topic across centres generally. The specifics of water pollution did not appear to worry candidates who, most of the time, took in their stride topic-specific terms such as *l'impudeur*, *relever des contaminations bactériologiques*, *une forte teneur en..., des zones granitiques, des zones céréalières, chargée en pesticides, l'irrigation massive, une pollution récidiviste, des déversements*, as well as the relevance of the various minerals highlighted in the survey. In cases of doubt, they successfully used contextual clues to explain meanings whenever a technical term resisted paraphrase. Surprisingly, it was the significance of the word *bassin* in *Bassin parisien* that caused most hesitation whenever a teacher/examiner chose to explore its relevance as part of the suggested Q3. Similarly, in Q4, *dénoncer* caused a few candidates to stumble. The general questions returned most candidates to their comfort zone, as they expressed their support for the idea of a *Journée mondiale de l'eau* and the rights of citizens to clean water. In addition, many broadened the discussion to include comment on growing concerns about relative water scarcity across the planet, especially in the context of global warming and the rise in both temperatures and sea levels.

Text D

It was noticeable that candidates offered this text showed considerable familiarity with most of the issues explored: an increase in life expectancy, an ageing population, a decrease in birth rate, the breakdown of the traditional family unit with its attendant difficulties, increased emigration / immigration with the ensuing problems of integration. Candidates generally demonstrated good understanding of the detail, even if finding solutions proved as difficult for them as it currently is for European governments! The final paragraph's *mettre en place une gamme d'actions politiques*, with its lack of practical detail, had a depressingly familiar ring, although it was most heartening to see such a large percentage of candidates expressing pro-European sentiments in response to the suggested question *Que pensez-vous de l'Union européenne?* Occasionally, it was the case that candidates who were given this article had listed

one or more of these social issues as their chosen topics: centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that this sort of overlap does not occur.

Text E

If one of this year's articles was indeed more popular than others, then it was this one. Both candidates and, it appeared, their teacher-examiners enjoyed debating their widely varying views on the subject of whether or not France deserved to be judged so harshly in terms of its *points faibles*, especially *l'attitude de la population envers les étrangers*. Not only did this account for many naturally occurring exchanges - which was a good thing in itself - but it also contributed a sizeable amount of mirth. It was perhaps a text which, apart from the rank order of tourism-rich countries in the opening paragraph, contained fewer absolutes. So much depended upon personal opinion: Are France's *recettes du tourisme* really in decline? / Are other countries really becoming *plus compétitifs*? / Are prices in France really *trop chers pour les touristes étrangers*? / Can *la situation sanitaire* in France really be seen as *un point fort*? This degree of controversy encouraged explanation, justification, expression of opinion, and as such worked extremely well for most candidates.

Text F

In terms of candidates' natural preference, *les nouvelles technologies numériques* is a topic whose popularity has increased considerably over the lifetime of this specification and as the digital age progresses. Technical or scientific vocabulary in this text was readily understood or worked out in context. If there were any problems with comprehension, it was - rather than in the words themselves - in relation to the concept cited in the first paragraph: viz. that digital technology *a accéléré et brouillé la différence entre l'émetteur et le récepteur de l'information*. Many candidates, in response to suggested Q1, restricted their replies to the information contained in the first sentence of the text, though quite often they were able to redeem themselves in the way they answered suggested Q2, which covered the same material but in greater detail. Certainly, candidates' responses to suggested Q4 showed whether or not they had grasped the theme of the passage as a whole. In the more general conversation that followed, many elaborated their commitment to and faith in the future development of digital technologies, while acknowledging that there were issues of security that had to be resolved internationally.

F704 French Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments:

The overall standard of candidates' work was similar to that of last year. All candidates seemed familiar with the format of the paper and with the skills needed to undertake the tasks. However in Questions 2, 6 and 7 a few candidates went too far in avoiding the lifting of words from the stimulus material and thereby distorted the meaning. There was little evidence of candidates having run out of time. Rubric infringements were few: just a very small number of candidates answered Question 1 in French or Question 2 in English. Poor handwriting made it difficult to assess the work of some candidates, especially in Section C.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Many candidates showed good comprehension of the piece as a whole.

- (a) This item was well answered.
- (b) Almost all candidates gave the correct numeral.
- (c) The word *ailleurs* caused difficulty for a number of candidates, some of whom thought it meant 'outside'.
- (d) Many candidates scored the first mark, but fewer scored the second and third marks. The word *moitié* was sometimes misunderstood as 'majority' and *Asie* was occasionally rendered wrongly as 'asylum seekers'.
- (e) Some candidates quoted the law of 1905 rather than explaining how it affected the financing of this project. The word *mairie* was not always understood, some students rendering it as 'state' which was too vague.
- (f) This item was fairly well answered, although some candidates struggled to find an acceptable English term for *édifices*.
- (g) This item discriminated well. Careful listening of the recording made it clear that the issue was not 'avoiding the conflict between Israel and Palestine' but rather 'avoiding mention (or, more literally, intrusion) of the conflict between Israel and Palestine'.
- (h) This item was well answered.

Question No. 2

Despite the specialised nature of the subject matter, the gist of the recording was understood satisfactorily by many candidates. However a few candidates tried to transcribe lengthy sections of the report and thereby included irrelevant material in their answer. On the other hand some candidates made good use of the opportunities to manipulate the language in a straightforward and natural way, e.g. *pour éviter les infections* in part (j) and *le fait qu'il y ait beaucoup de produits* in part (b)(ii).

- (a) Most candidates answered both parts of the question correctly.
- (b) There were many correct answers here, although not all candidates seemed to know the adjective *sanitaire(s)*.
- (c) Most candidates identified *chirurgiens* as the key word, but some incorrect spellings such as *cirugeons* were not acceptable.
- (d) This item was fairly well answered. Those who tried to transcribe the word *gains* sometimes did so wrongly, e.g. *(les) gagnes*.
- (e) This item was well answered.
- (f) There were some good answers, but some candidates wrote *remplace* instead of *remplit*. A response beginning *En remplissant...* was not acceptable as an answer to the question *Que fait... ?*.
- (g) There were many correct responses here, with some candidates putting the idea successfully into their own words e.g. *Ils produisent un visage plus jeune*.
- (h) This item targeted a difficult section of the recording and was a good discriminator. Students who referred to chemicals – *il faut savoir utiliser le bon produit chimique* – could not be awarded full marks for this item because the question specified *connaissances anatomiques*.
- (i) This item was well answered.
- (j) Most candidates gave the correct answer.
- (k) This proved to be the most difficult item in Question 2. A number of candidates thought the speaker was comparing specialised with general medicine, while in part (ii) candidates sometimes mentioned money in their answer but did not make it clear which type of treatment was better remunerated.

Question No. 3

- (a) This item was well answered. The imperfect tense was not accepted because it conveyed a different meaning.
- (b) This item was well answered.
- (c) Candidates had to understand the first two sentences in order to reach the answer *après*. A number of candidates thought that one event caused the other and wrote inappropriate answers such as *à cause de*.
- (d) This item discriminated well. Some incorrect answers such as *habité avec les Algériens* were not precise enough to gain credit.
- (e) This was a difficult item. Some candidates wrote *amélioré* which, although grammatically correct, betrayed a misunderstanding of the text.
- (f) This item discriminated well. Any verb which conveyed the idea of ‘accepting’, ‘receiving’ or ‘welcoming’ was accepted.

- (g) There were many correct answers, but the spurious word *stabile* was not acceptable and some candidates showed a misunderstanding of *loin de* when they wrote *avec instabilité*.

Question No. 4

This non-verbal task was well tackled except for part (a) which attracted some wrong answers such as *troubles*.

Question No. 5

Most candidates scored at least 3 out of the 4 marks. The most commonly missed correct statement was (f).

Question No. 6

As well as testing comprehension of gist and detail from the reading passage, this question provided ample opportunities for candidates to show their grammatical knowledge. It was therefore a good discriminator.

- (a) This item was fairly well answered, although some candidates did not understand *colonnes* in its newspaper context.
- (b) This was a testing item; some candidates clearly misunderstood the use of *sortir* in the phrase ...*est sortie des traditionnels secteurs de contestation*.
- (c) This item discriminated well. It was important to refer to the State in the second part of the answer and not all candidates did so.
- (d) Most candidates realised that phrases lifted directly from the text such as *salaires trop bas* did not answer the question and were therefore unacceptable. Some candidates thought wrongly that the reference to *allocation chômage* was about reducing unemployment.
- (e) Some candidates did not take account of the adverb *immédiatement* in the question and therefore mentioned the political reforms as well as or instead of the lifting of the state of emergency.
- (f) Candidates had to re-express the idea of *sans dire un mot...* as a main clause and many struggled with this.

Question No. 7

As with Question 6, candidates' responses to this question varied widely in terms of communication and quality of language.

- (a) Most candidates understood that the first part of the passage was about Germany abandoning nuclear power, but those who chose to express the time frame sometimes had difficulty doing so: neither *par 2022* nor *en 2022* was an acceptable alternative for *d'ici à 2022*.
- (b) The correct answer to part (i) proved to be elusive, perhaps because candidates did not know the expression *pannes de courant*. In the second part, it was important to express

the extreme nature of the adjective *inabordable*; those candidates who merely wrote that *l'électricité coûtera cher* did not score the mark.

- (c) This item was well answered, with most candidates latching on correctly to the word *objectifs* in the text.
- (d) This item was fairly well answered, although some candidates seemed to misunderstand the point about Germany importing electricity from France.
- (e) This item was a good discriminator. For the first point not all candidates made the necessary reference to coal.
- (f) Although this was a ‘two from three’ question, relatively few candidates scored both available marks. The phrase *de plus en plus de voix s'élevant contre...* proved to be difficult and some candidates thought that the French were opposed to the German decision.

Question No. 8

- (a) Most candidates found a correct synonym for *néanmoins*.
- (b) Only a few candidates managed to give an appropriate equivalent of *parvienne à*.
- (c) While most candidates understood that *pareille* was the opposite of *différente*, only a few took account of the expression *loin de* and included *très* or a similar intensifier in their answer.
- (d) Many candidates showed understanding of *actuels*, although some thought it meant ‘actual’ or ‘real’.
- (e) This was one of the hardest items on the paper. Most candidates wrote *prévoient* or *prédisent*, neither of which was acceptable as an equivalent of *préconisent*.
- (f) This item proved to be difficult, with many candidates linking *aborder* inappropriately to *(in)abordable* from an earlier stimulus passage.

Question No. 9

- (a) Many candidates gave a correct answer, although some appeared to have misunderstood *indispensable* in the text and wrote *utiliser le nucléaire* or similar.
- (b) Most candidates filled the gap correctly, although a few omitted the essential element of the comparative *qu'*.
- (c) As with part (a), a number of candidates misunderstood the text and, although what they wrote made sense in itself, it conveyed a different meaning from the text and therefore could not be accepted.

Question No. 10

This transfer of meaning task was rather more successfully tackled than its equivalent last year. Among the words and phrases which were most successfully rendered were:

- *selon eux*
- *la facture d'électricité*
- *pas intégré dans les prix*
- *la crainte*

Common errors were:

- ‘increased’ for *peu élevé*
- omission of ‘so’ for *si*
- ‘demanteling’ or other spurious words for *démantèlement*
- ‘centres’ for *centrales*
- ‘disposal’ for *retraitement*
- ‘in other words’ for *en outre*

Section B Quality of Language

Most candidates were able to use the common verb tenses correctly and use a reasonable variety of sentence patterns. However many made errors with adjectival agreements, confusion between the verb endings -é and -er and the omission of the plural -s on nouns. Relatively few candidates went out of their way to use complex structures beyond the basic requirements of the task.

Section C: Extended writing task

As usual, the extended writing task produced a wide range of responses. Those at the top end displayed a thorough understanding of the topic in hand and the ability to develop and justify their reaction to it in a coherent and convincing manner. Most candidates stayed within or just above the recommended word count; it was not necessarily an advantage to write more. Irrelevance was an issue with some responses, where candidates appeared to be determined to reuse material they had used previously in a different context. At the lower end of the attainment range, some candidates relied on making broad statements with little or no reference to the culture of a target language community or country; in a few cases persistent lexical and grammatical errors impeded communication significantly.

Relevance and Points of View

Most candidates attempted to include evidence and examples from a target language community or country, but in some responses these amounted to little more than raw and often unhelpfully precise statistics, not always linked directly to the chosen title. Candidates for future examination series are reminded that the Relevance and Points of View mark is capped at 4 where there is no relevant target language evidence at all. At the top end of the scale, a few candidates managed to produce truly imaginative and original responses, skilfully integrating pertinent examples and evidence into their writing but never losing sight of the title.

Question No. 11: This question on measures to facilitate integration was a popular choice. The best answers got to grips with the question straightaway, rather than devoting considerable time to giving a history of the French colonies and the dates when different waves of immigrants arrived in France. An opening sentence like *On parle beaucoup en ce moment au sujet de l'intégration et de l'exclusion* enabled the candidate to launch straight into the question. Many

candidates mentioned *laïcité* and the ruling on wearing the burqa; this was successful when candidates explained how this ruling, meant to discourage racism, was actually having the opposite effect. Some mentioned the *CV anonyme*. Linking poor housing to a lack of integration was effective when couched in terms such as: *Cette forte pénurie d'installations a rendu plus difficile l'insertion de ces migrants dans la société de l'Hexagone*. However some candidates relied too much on general impressions of the problems faced by immigrants and were unable to specify any measures that had been introduced; little credit could be given for vague references to French-speaking society such as *J'ai lu dans le Monde que...* or *Dans beaucoup de grandes villes françaises....* Detailed unemployment figures were rarely appropriate in response to this title.

Question No. 12: A fair number of candidates chose this question, which was a letter expressing opinions on CCTV cameras in a pedestrian zone. It was relatively easy for candidates to give the pros and the cons, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion. However, there was often not enough factual evidence, or the evidence given was relevant but not well linked to the subject, e.g. youth unemployment, racial problems. It worked better when some evidence was also given to do with crime figures, or other measures tried out to reduce crime. A good approach was to write from the point of view of a resident of a ZUP, making reference to some of the social problems facing her locality, and how cameras would help alleviate these. Less successful outcomes quite often drifted to discussing prison conditions, which was not always relevant.

Question No. 13: This question on the importance of reducing consumption in order to protect the environment was the most popular choice in Section C. Successful essays were those that centred on the question – reducing consumption, and whether this was realistic. Many mentioned rubbish, recycling, avoiding use of cars, saving energy and so on. If a link was made to the question, these worked well. If the link was not made, the essay became a list of paragraphs about ways to protect the environment. It was common to refer to nuclear and renewable energy – and, to a lesser extent, bio products. This sometimes seemed superfluous to the question. However, some linked it quite well by saying that use of renewable energy allowed people to consume the same amount without damaging the environment further. Equally, when recycling was mentioned, it seemed to fit better when candidates mentioned that this could limit the effects of over-consumption. Some candidates tackled the second part of the question by saying that it may not be realistic in the modern world to expect people to reduce consumption. It was useful to mention this before they moved on to suggesting other ways to protect the environment, as it made what followed seem less superfluous. Frequent mention was made of *les panneaux solaires* as a way of reducing one's carbon footprint. A succinct sentence such as *Les panneaux solaires nous donnent la possibilité d'adapter la production d'énergie à nos besoins...* got to the crux of the matter. Occasionally, the emphasis was on saving money rather than protecting the environment. Others went adrift by discussing, for example, the habitats of various animals threatened by extinction.

Question No. 14: This task, which invited candidates to write a letter promoting a car-sharing scheme, was a fairly popular choice. While some candidates veered too much towards writing a discursive essay, others adopted a persuasive tone to good effect, such as the opening sentence: *Chers lecteurs, J'écris pour vous informer d'une mesure mise en place récemment, le co-voiturage, et j'espère qu'après avoir lu mon article, vous serez comme moi, plus enclins à l'utiliser ...* Some candidates struggled to find relevant facts to support their argument; however a good approach was to focus on a town known personally by the candidate and describe how car-sharing would make life better for the people in that town. Although the focus of the letter was meant to be environmental, it was fine for candidates to mention other advantages of car-sharing, such as saving money and promoting sociability.

Question No. 15: A few candidates chose this question, which focused on developments in information technology. Their responses tended to be rather superficial, with little or no specific evidence from a French-speaking country. One candidate discussed the application of IT in

medicine and gave appropriate examples from France. Another mentioned the use of Minitel in the late 20th century, which led to a slower start for France when the Internet became more available.

Question No. 16: This question on cloning was chosen by a small number of candidates. One good answer included a definition of *le clonage*, an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of cloning, and an explanation of France's position in the context of decisions at European level. Another mentioned previous contributions to medical science that France could be proud of, before going on to discuss cloning.

Question No. 17: A few candidates opted for this question on how French-speaking society is portrayed in a specific film or book. As always with a literary essay, there is the danger of telling the story rather than analysing and evaluating the work. But some responses avoided that pitfall and offered insightful thoughts on society as seen through the eyes of the writer or director.

Question No. 18: Only a small number of candidates chose this question, which was a letter about extending the vote to 16 year olds. One good response gave specific examples of ways in which French youngsters already contribute to politics before going on to argue that giving them the vote would enable them to make an even bigger contribution. With regard to apathy, one candidate suggested that young people might put adults to shame because so many adults fail to take part in elections. Another argued that young people tend to be idealistic and their involvement in politics might help to weaken the nation's support for extremist parties.

Structure and Analysis

The best answers were those that were easy to follow and kept on track in targeting the question asked. Often they consisted of an engaging introduction, a main body consisting of several logically sequenced paragraphs and a concise, clear conclusion. However examiners are open to different approaches especially where the chosen task is imaginative rather than discursive. Some candidates used appropriate linking words such as *d'abord*, *ensuite*, *de plus* and *pourtant* to help make the structure clearer, but the quality of analysis was sometimes rather superficial and simplistic. Fixed phrases and idioms such as *Réfléchissons d'abord sur les raisons...* and *// serait naïf de croire que...* were sometimes but not always used to good effect. Drawing the essay to a compelling conclusion was often quite difficult for candidates. One successful response to Question 13 finished with the statement that, as M. Hollande faces lots of difficulties at the moment, *l'environnement est presque oublié par rapport à ces fléaux*. And a response to Question 14 engaged the reader with the following persuasive ending: *Ces chiffres me choquent - donc il est absolument nécessaire que vous vous débarrassiez de votre diesel pour trouver une solution écologiste*, with a web address to contact.

Quality of Language

Stronger responses were characterised by the effective use of different verb tenses and a range of constructions such as *si* clauses, the passive, *en* + present participle, *dont*, *lequel*, *celui*, *ce qui* and so on. Even some candidates who performed poorly overall made a genuine attempt to vary their language. On the other hand, there were quite a few scripts with many basic errors – simple verb endings, adjectival agreements, spellings, and the use of prepositions with verbs such as *permettre* and *aider*. In some instances candidates would have benefited from writing less and taking time to check their work more carefully. Most candidates managed to use a reasonable amount of topic-specific vocabulary. However, amongst the Anglicisms which hindered communication were *efficient* (for *efficace*), *implémenter*, *prévenir*, *une incentive* and *sauver de l'argent*.

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