

OCR Report to Centres

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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

Introduction

As in previous series, many candidates performed at a very high level, demonstrating great linguistic skill, and there were very few candidates inappropriately entered for the examination. The most successful candidates used a wide range of structures and also demonstrated good research skills in the topic discussion.

Role-plays

Use of Stimulus

Although most centres have realised the importance of this grid to the overall mark, there are still instances of candidates speaking for the allotted time with very little reference to the stimulus text. Candidates need to be precise with the detail of the text, even though a particular wording is very rarely required. Credit is given for conveying the idea, and there are often many different ways in which the same idea can be expressed. Where candidates lose marks, it is often due to a lack of detail.

Task A

The scenario was understood well by candidates, and the theme clearly appealed to many. Several candidates struggled to find an appropriate word for 'shelters', even though the French was given as part of the task. Centres are advised to make candidates aware that unusual vocabulary that is not separately glossed is likely to be given as part of the task on the candidate's sheet. Candidates did not always know the correct word for 'bird', but gave a type of bird or the more general word of *animaux*. Both of these were accepted as in keeping with conveying the idea.

Task B

Some candidates ignored the first key point, starting off with the fact that the inn dates back to the 17th century. There is little redundant material in the role plays, and candidates should be trained to say everything that is there. Many candidates did not know *légumes*, and guessed based on the English word. Giving some examples of types of vegetable would have been a more successful strategy. A lack of detail cost some candidates, such as not mentioning that the table for two was on the terrace, or not mentioning the quality of the cakes.

Task C

A minority of candidates did not seem to realise that the word *stage* was given to them, and could not be credited for referring to it as a *course*. Many found succinct ways of expressing the idea that students needed to have completed a year of university study, although some confused this with a *lycée*. The concept of the en suite bathroom was dealt with much better this series than on previous occasions. Candidates also handled the price well, although some encountered difficulty with the date. Centres are advised to practise numbers in a date format.

Task D

This role play was attempted by most centres, and many candidates handled the selling role well, managing to sound enthusiastic about their suggestion of a cruise. Some candidates missed out the key points about boats having many facilities and guests hardly needing to leave the boat, even though these were clearly signalled by one of the bullet points. Again, centres are

reminded of the need to train candidates to say everything that is there. When speaking of the additional services, many candidates explained the champagne breakfast well, often using simple linguistic devices such as *avec*.

Task E

This role play was only used by a small number of centres. The ideas were fairly accessible to candidates although some were let down by vocabulary lapses, such as using *chambre* for exhibition hall, despite the frequency with which exhibitions occur in this paper. Full detail of opening times was not always given, and this was not always picked up by teacher-examiners.

Task F

Candidates seemed to find the ideas presented by the role play accessible and usually started very positively. A significant minority missed out the key point relating to UK Models not being an agency, and few teacher-examiners challenged this. However, the most successful teacher-examiners did use question prompts relating to the advantages and disadvantages of modelling where their candidate only gave a single answer.

Response to Examiner

Almost all candidates managed to complete the role plays within the six minutes allowed. Some continue to find it difficult to make a link between the initial questions and the main transactional part. It is very helpful to candidates when teacher-examiners help them with this link by asking if they have a suggestion. The most successful candidates then took a few seconds to introduce the company or venue, before starting to give the information from the stimulus sheet. It also offered an opportunity for them to show initiative and imagination.

Centres are reminded that candidates should try to demonstrate initiative and imagination throughout the role play, and not just when answering the extension questions at the end. Many able candidates give the 15 key points in a very perfunctory manner, before spending several minutes on the extension questions. A better strategy for gaining the highest marks is to introduce during the transactional part extra details that are not in the stimulus text and/or to express opinions, thus making the conversation sound rather more natural.

The quality of the answers to the extension questions was higher than in some previous series, with fewer candidates offering a single sentence in response to each question. Some teacher-examiners ask follow-up questions, which can be helpful for some candidates, especially if they have already successfully conveyed the information in the stimulus text. It is not necessary, however, to keep asking questions to make the time up to five minutes for an able candidate who has conveyed all the key points and shown initiative. It is acceptable to stop before 5 minutes have passed.

Quality of Language

The quality of language has improved over the course of the specification so far. Although there is still a full range of performances, there are few candidates whose grasp of grammar does not allow them to fulfil the task successfully. Although there were clearly some native speaker entries, candidates are, of course, judged at AS standard and perfection is not required to achieve full marks.

The improvement in the handling of the opening questions by candidates has continued, and centres are to be congratulated on their work on this aspect. Questions that require the candidates to change *son / sa* to *votre* still continue to cause difficulties and, similarly, some candidates do not realise the need to adapt *pourrait lui être utile* when speaking directly to the teacher-examiner.

This year, some of the most common vocabulary errors related to items that occur quite frequently on role plays, such as room or station. There has been little change over the years in the common errors for structures – subject-verb agreements, a lack of an infinitive following a modal verb, tense errors and incorrect modals such as *nous pouve*.

Examining

Most teacher-examiners prepare the role plays well and are well versed in how to play their part. Key strategies which are useful to candidates include giving prompts to elicit more if a candidate has not given all the information and guiding the candidate through to complete the role play in the same order as the text and bullet points. Although it can be completed in any order, it is easier for teacher and candidate if the obvious order is followed. Examiners still hear examples of candidates being interrupted with another question whilst giving key information or a teacher asking every question, even when the candidate has already given the information that answers it. Although the role play states that the areas in bold must be explored with each candidate, this does not mean that the question should be asked if the candidate has already answered it, otherwise this leads to confusion and hesitation where the candidate is searching for non-existent material to supplement the answer already given.

It is crucial that teacher-examiners realise that the questions on the examiner's sheet are phrased in English in such a way as not to give away any key vocabulary that the candidates need to be credited with a key point. Some teacher-examiners chose to rephrase questions, meaning that the targeted answer was not given. For example, teachers who rephrased the question about the website in role play D to 'How do I get further information?' have already given part of the required answer. It is important to keep to the carefully-chosen wording to avoid this sort of situation. Candidates cannot be credited for vocabulary fed to them by the examiner, although it is understood that teachers sometimes choose to give an item of vocabulary to allow a candidate who is struggling to move on.

Although rare, there are still instances of examiners asking two questions at once, such as "What are the boats like? Is there much to do?" Candidates have a tendency to answer only the second question and so it is not usually a successful tactic.

Most centres observed the time limit of 5 – 6 minutes. Where there is time left over, in many cases this could be usefully employed to pick up points from the text which were not mentioned earlier. Some centres allowed the role-play to extend beyond 6 minutes, although this seemed to happen less frequently this summer. Assessment stops at 6 minutes, whether the role-play and the extension questions have been completed or not.

Topic discussion

Choice of Topics

A wide range of topics were presented by candidates. Eating disorders, food, transport, tourism, drugs and alcohol continue to be amongst the most common, and it is particularly welcome when candidates find interesting angles to take on familiar topics. Fortunately, there has been a reduction in the number of centres offering topics from the A2 specification or topics which are not adequately related to France or a French-speaking country. It is the actual content of the discussion, rather than merely the title, that examiners consider when deciding if a topic is inappropriate. 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

Where candidates have chosen a topic that is of genuine interest to them, it often shows in the ideas and opinions they have. Ideally, candidates will express ideas throughout, backing this up with the research they have undertaken to justify their thoughts. Some teacher-examiners probe further to get their candidates to explain themselves fully and argue their case. This is almost always a successful strategy where the candidate has the linguistic ability to cope with it. Some candidates have very few opinions on the subject they have researched, not going beyond the factual or, conversely, have sweeping opinions which they are unable to back with any statistics or research. Centres should encourage their candidates to have both and to balance them. It is important that candidates are asked questions that give them access to the higher reaches of the mark scheme as they cannot achieve the highest levels in this grid unless given the opportunity to show developed opinions.

Fluency, Spontaneity, Responsiveness

Most candidates had prepared well for the topic and were able to speak fluently for 9 – 10 minutes and there were fewer instances of topics being stopped significantly before 9 minutes had elapsed. Candidates generally understood the teacher-examiners well, although re-phrasing or repetition was sometimes sought.

The over-use of pre-prepared material continues to cause problems. It is fully expected that candidates will prepare in advance for the examination, and their candidate topic form should give the teacher a good idea of the sort of questions that the candidate has prepared for. The flexible use of such material is not a problem, but where preparation is taken to extremes, and particularly where the teacher-examiner appears to be complicit, this cannot be awarded the same mark as a candidate who is responding spontaneously to questions. In the worst examples, teacher-examiners merely read from a list of questions and there was no attempt to pick up on the last thing the candidate had said, or to probe further. However, examiners also encountered examples where the entire discussion seemed scripted, even including the teacher-examiner's interjections. Candidates must be given the opportunity to respond to questions they are not expecting. Examiners have already heard how the candidate speaks during the role play, and it is usually clear when a candidate is reciting prepared material, both from the intonation and from the stark contrast with the quality of language and delivery in the role play section.

Language

As in previous years, the quality of language was generally higher during this section of the test, as candidates have had an opportunity to prepare for the discussion before the day itself. Whilst there were still isolated examples of complex language being used in a somewhat forced way, there were many more examples of subjunctives, passives and difficult tenses being used very naturally.

There was some good topic specific vocabulary provided by candidates, and most candidates were secure on gender and agreements relating to such vocabulary. Able candidates sometimes made basic slips such as *de les*, but this rarely detracted from the high level of linguistic competence displayed.

Pronunciation

Most candidates find it easier to produce the individual sounds than to mimic French intonation. Nasals continue to be the area of greatest difficulty, particularly words such as *principal* and *important*. Teachers are advised to ensure that candidates are secure on the pronunciation of words that are central to the subject of the topic, such as *alcool* or *femmes*. In a minority of cases, the accent is so anglicised that it makes the candidate difficult to understand. Silent endings such as *-ent* were sometimes pronounced, particularly when reciting pre-learnt material.

Examining

Conducting oral examinations is a demanding task and the majority of teacher-examiners take great care to find a range of interesting questions that will enable their candidates to demonstrate what they have learned over the course. It is important that candidates are given a balance of questions that seek factual responses and ones that seek a more personal answer. Most examiners were sensitive to the differing needs of their candidates and were helpful towards those who were nervous. It is not normally productive to pursue a line of questioning that the candidate does not seem to understand or have the knowledge to answer.

It now appears to be completely understood by centres that there is no presentation for the topic discussion. It is intended to be a genuine discussion in which the candidate plays a more important part. Helpful strategies employed by teacher-examiners include picking up the last thing that the candidate has said and either exploring it further or asking a different question leading from that. Less helpful strategies included interrupting the candidate too frequently, every few words in the worst examples, or, conversely, allowing candidates to deliver pre-prepared monologues. Had the teacher interrupted these to refocus the discussion, they could have saved their candidate from being penalised. Timing of discussions was generally better this year, with fewer over-length conversations. Centres are reminded that if the role play finishes early, the time gained cannot be transferred to the topic, as the two elements are timed separately. Where discussions were over-length, they often were timed at around 12 minutes, indicating possible confusion with the A2 specification.

Administrative matters

Most centres take great care to ensure that the administrative requirements are met. The majority of recordings were received or uploaded in good time, and most centres remembered to complete working marksheets and topic forms for all candidates, which is greatly appreciated.

A large number of centres are now using the Repository, and teachers are reminded that the paperwork (marksheets and topic forms) need either to be sent to the examiner through the post, or scanned and uploaded to the Repository at the same time as the recordings.

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

As in previous years, there were some outstanding performances where candidates displayed detailed and gist comprehension as well as an ability to write elegantly and accurately. Some candidates were well-prepared for the paper (e.g. key words underlined in texts and/or questions, plans for the last task, grammatical structure to be used). The area which showed encouraging improvement was Task 6, traditionally the most demanding task in the paper. Fashion, the theme of Task 7, seemed to inspire candidates who produced lengthy personal responses, at times to the chagrin of Examiners who had to read pages of handwriting very difficult to decipher. Generally, the paper discriminated well and produced the full range of marks.

Task 1

This was a good start to the paper with overall marks providing a good indicator of candidates' performance for the paper as a whole. Very few candidates ticked more than ten boxes; if they do change their mind, candidates must clearly erase or cross out earlier ticks.

- a Generally well answered as the first sentence of the recording matched the first statement of the task.
- b A more demanding question which required linking *émissions éducatives* with *les programmes ... qui ont de la substance* and *qui m'apprennent quelque chose de nouveau*.
- c Two of the speakers mentioned news programmes; one stated plainly she found them boring, the other that she was partial to them. Candidates had to understand her full statement to work this out, which was challenging for some.
- d A very well answered question. Most candidates could link *tous les jours* and *mon quotidien*.
- e Another generally well-answered question; *me réveiller* was successfully linked with *le matin* on the one hand and *n'importe quoi* with *pas de préférence* on the other.
- f This proved quite challenging for a number of candidates, possibly because they were unfamiliar with the expression *se tenir au courant de*. Others thought *quelque chose de nouveau* was the same as *les nouvelles*.
- g Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- h Candidates had to infer meaning here because *voiture* was not mentioned; *en allant au boulot* and *les bouchons* provided clues many were able to identify.
- i The better candidates could link *les informations pratiques* and *éviter les bouchons*.
- j This question was generally well answered.

Task 2

This task also provided good differentiation. Making good use of grammatical markers is important but candidates really need to understand the text to select the correct answers. A small number seemed to pick words at random.

- a There were many correct answers here. A number of candidates homed in on *impossible* in the text; they should have listened to the next sentence.
- b This was well-answered as most candidates knew that *une quantité minuscule* and *peu* were equivalent. A few selected *beaucoup*.
- c The best candidates knew that *poussière* was the French for “dust” and correctly selected *poudre* as an equivalent. The others chose *liquide*.
- d This was another good test of comprehension with many successful answers.
- e Most candidates could link *rien de plus simple* in the text and *pas compliqué*.
- f This was one of the more challenging questions. The majority of candidates realised a verb in the infinitive was needed here. There were four to choose from in the list, with *souffler* and *aspirer* the most popular. Those who had understood the text selected the correct one. *Aspiration* in the text gave a clear clue.
- g This was very successfully answered.
- h & i The two answers were interchangeable. Nearly all candidates got at least one correct answer. Occasionally *facile* was chosen although it did not fit grammatically.
- j As with f above, a verb was required. Many selected *adorer* possibly because of *amateurs*. The clue to the correct answer was at the end of the passage; better candidates successfully inferred that *rejeter* was the only possible option.

Task 3

The stimulus text on eco-tourism produced a fair outcome and some imaginative responses. With answers in English, knowledge of specific items of vocabulary is essential. One candidate answered in French and could not gain any marks.

- a Nearly all candidates scored at least one mark and many managed two. The third point was more demanding: candidates had to understand *échapper* and to provide a suitably strong rendering of *frénétique*. Some candidates went beyond the text (e.g. the stress of city life)
- b The word *champignon* was not recognised by many, so the image used by the speaker was lost on them. Similar sounding words (e.g. “champion / champagne / onions”) appeared quite frequently although they made little sense in the context.
- c A challenging question for those who did not know the two key items of vocabulary. The first (*sentiers*) was linked to *forestiers* which candidates recognised. So answers such as “forest rangers / centres / signs” were common. The second key word was *échelle*. Many understood *grimper*, so words such as “hill / rock / branch / rope” frequently appeared, as did “shell” because it sounds similar to the French *échelle*.
- d This was very well-answered.
- e This question was successful too. A number of candidates did not notice the plural in the question and only mentioned the lack of electricity.
- f The first part was answered well by most candidates. The second part (being able to make the most of nature around) was more difficult to grasp.

- g This was the most challenging question in this task. The time frame (*un instant*) provided the correct meaning of *voler*; the best candidates identified it. Many ignored *instant* and wrote about flying.
- h Knowledge of key vocabulary (*bruit; feuilles; vent; oiseaux, à côté; odeur; bois*) would have ensured success here. These words were not always known.
- i This question was usually well answered but the idea of climbing and descending was not always conveyed.
- j An accessible question. Occasionally some only gave the price and/or omitted the currency. A few could not identify the number.

Task 4

Candidates were able to put most of the ideas of the English stimulus into French. Some did so elegantly and accurately. Candidates could gain credit for partial communication of the points so the overall outcome of Grid H1 was satisfactory. When effective communication did not take place, it was due to language problems.

As for language (Grid C2), a few candidates tried to go beyond the minimum and to extend the range of vocabulary and structures. The majority chose to use relatively simple French that was fairly accurate. Some thought of paraphrasing the message (e.g. *je trouve ... intéressant* to avoid *je m'intéresse à...* or *les maisons ne sont pas dangereuses...* to avoid "safe"; *est-ce que nous devons avoir* to convey "to need"). Others went out of their way to introduce subjunctives (e.g. *Il faut que je sache si je pourrai faire la cuisine ; est-ce qu'il faut que nous ayons...*).

For communication, the following points were difficult for some:

- Unknown or misused vocabulary: accommodation, stays, safe; insurance, to cook, to provide, to confirm, regarding, fire, toilets, washing facilities
- I am interested in – *je m'intéresse à* was seldom seen
- You are offering – often given as a passive
- Will you be providing – the better candidates changed this round to 'will you provide'
- Have you taken – often written as a present tense, so not reflecting forward planning
- You have organised (often in the present tense) – as above.

Areas for improvement:

- Agreement of adjectives
- Verb endings
- English continuous tense (you are offering ; you will be providing) conveyed by an active verb in French (*vous offrez; vous fournirez*)
- Correct register (use of *tu / vous*)
- Use of personal pronouns (*pouvez-vous me dire*)
- Correct formation of the perfect tense (especially past participle of irregular verbs)
- Agreement of the past participle (... *les mesures que vous avez prises*)

Task 5

This test type had not been used in a French paper before; the majority coped well with it. It was a good test of understanding and produced the full range of marks.

The best answered questions were:

- g – the comparison was explicit in both question (4) and response (g)
- h – candidates could link *comparable* in (9) and *bonnes similitudes* in (h)

- i – *fatigue* (2) could be linked with *dormir* and *récupérer* in the reply (i)
- j – the logical last question (7) of an interview.

The following questions were frequently correctly answered:

- c – the comparison with other teams mentioned in (c) was developed in the answer (6) with the word *équipe* appearing in both. This was reinforced by the parallel between *points forts* and *avantages*.
- d – with the link between *pourquoi* (8) and *parce que* in the answer (d)

The others were more challenging and no clear pattern appeared. All the same, it was pleasing to see that many candidates score full marks.

Task 6

Candidates clearly engaged with the subject content of this task, which almost certainly helped their understanding and therefore their responses. They should remember to read questions carefully before answering.

- a Many candidates were able to produce an acceptable answer; copying the opening sentence of the text did not answer the question and could not receive credit.
- b Nearly all candidates scored one mark here but the second one was more elusive, either because they omitted to specify the type of message parents received or because they stated that the message came from the parents.
- c Some candidates clearly showed their understanding by explaining *l'appel* in their own words (e.g. *cocher le nom des présents*). In omitting *traditionnel*, many implied that the school had stopped registration altogether, which was not the case. The second part of the question was well answered, with nearly all candidates mentioning the use of more advanced technology or computers in the classrooms.
- d (i) The quality of response was patchy, even though *une absence temporaire* was a near-cognate. Many wrote about not having a valid reason for being absent.

(ii) This question was usually well answered, often with both points combined in the answer to part 1. A few candidates used the present tense and a few others implied they were missing more than one lesson (e.g. *l'élève n'aime pas les cours*).
- e Many candidates scored two out of the three marks available for this question. The reference to cost was frequently omitted. Some forfeited a mark by omitting *par l'élève* in part (iii) or by duplicating information (e.g. *avec les lettres il y avait des délais* in (i) and *les messages sont plus rapides* in (ii))
- f This was almost always correctly answered.
- g The best candidates were able to infer meaning and to answer this question correctly. Many referred to the experiment, rather than to the evaluation of its outcome. A significant number of candidates did not attempt this question.
- h This was usually well answered. A few candidates mentioned calling the school instead of the son.

Quality of language

Answers were usually short and couched in simple language. Some candidates relied on lifting phrases from the text while a few really made an effort to write complex sentences in their own words; they were rewarded accordingly. Candidates should endeavour to exclude from their answers information that is not required by the question.

Some examples of good practice:

- *Le lycée informe les parents en leur envoyant un message par SMS.*
- *Il envoie un SMS aux parents pour qu'ils puissent régulariser l'absence de leur enfant.*
- *La manière dont ils identifient qui est absent pour l'appel.*
- *C'est quand un élève sèche un cours.*
- *Il a appelé Nicholas pour lui demander où il était.*

Areas for improvement:

- Verb endings (singular ending with plural subject and vice versa was common)
- Formation of perfect tense with the correct auxiliary
- Use of prepositions (*de* was often used instead of *à* and vice versa)
- Possessive adjectives
- Article contracted forms (use of *des* not *de les*; use of *aux* not *à les*)
- Use of *vite* as an adjective or of *rapide* as an adverb

Task 7

The stimulus text was generally understood and provided a good springboard for candidates to express their views on fashion, which they tended to do at length. They should remember it is possible to score highly whilst remaining within the recommended word limit.

- a A small minority did not produce a summary of the relevant sections of the stimulus in their own words. Consequently, they only mentioned a small number of the key points and expressed their own views instead of keeping this for Q7b.

Most candidates could convey half the points. They also wrote extensively about the influence of the media and celebrities. The last four points were seldom conveyed. Some candidates remained very close to the text, occasionally lifting sections they had not fully understood; in doing so they occasionally omitted vital elements, thus making their answer meaningless. Many tried to use their own words, to good effect.

- b Everyone had something to say about fashion. The best answers were well-structured and concise, yet showed depth and imagination. Some candidates had obviously learned an introductory paragraph by heart; they were unable to sustain the quality when they switched to answering the question. Many repeated in their conclusion points they made earlier on.

Many relevant aspects of the subject were covered, such as:

- shopping for clothes as a social activity
- the role of fashion in forging and keeping friendships
- other things are more interesting and important than fashion
- the influence of the media / the fashion industry
- pressure to be slim and health-related issues
- inappropriate / sexy clothes for young children
- peer pressure and parents' involvement
- clothes and excessive spending
- related problems e.g. racketeering, bullying, isolation, discrimination
- the benefit of school uniforms

- economic issues – fashion as a provider of jobs
- exploitation of workers in third world countries
- the effect of fashion on the environment.

Quality of language

Language varied according to the ability of the candidates. Some were well-prepared in terms of grammatical accuracy; many wrote a lot, to the detriment of quality. As ever, agreements and verb forms suffered most. Had candidates written less and allowed time to check their work, the outcome would have been better for them.

The more able showed their competence in handling less common grammatical structures and vocabulary. Others struggled with basic grammar, especially the use of the perfect tense and irregular verbs. Nevertheless, there were some good attempts at improving the range: a lot of subjunctives (often successful), conditionals, passives, pronouns, etc. It would be good to see more expressions for cause / effect and consequence used, as well as more unusual connectives (e.g. *par contre, en outre, par ailleurs, d'autre part*). The better scripts had an impressive range of linking words and expressions that gave the piece a structure and helped ideas flow, thus enhancing progression and reasoning. Such pieces were a pleasure to read.

Candidates should beware of pre-learnt phrases. Often inaccurately remembered and mis-used, such expressions reduced ideas to a very artificial level and at times made the reasoning difficult to follow.

Some examples of good use of language:

- C'est une situation qui est compréhensible mais que je trouve triste.
- Actuellement, la mode peut poser des problèmes auxquels la société devrait faire face peut-être en réduisant son influence dans les médias
- Pour combattre ce problème, il vaudrait mieux que toutes les écoles aient un uniforme.
- J'aurais tendance à penser qu'à l'heure actuelle la liberté est vraiment importante...'
- Si j'avais assez d'argent, je n'achèterais que des vêtements à la mode.
- Si on achetait tous les vêtements à la mode, on n'aurait jamais d'argent.

Some areas of concern:

- absence of adjectival agreements
- verbs left in the infinitive as if by default
- confusion between *est* and *et*
- use of *de les / à les* instead of *des / aux*
- confusion between adverbs and adjectives
- pronominal verbs (e.g. to feel good given as *sentir bon* rather than *se sentir bien*)
- *de* or *à* used instead of *pour* when trying to express 'in order to'

F703 French Speaking

By and large, candidates found the themes of the texts familiar and the language accessible. They appeared keen to develop their ideas on the themes introduced: the influence of the internet on learning in the digital age, Interpol's appeal to the public to use modern technology in helping to catch criminals, the French government's efforts to reduce road deaths, large-scale desalination initiatives to provide drinking water, the problems facing those attempting to take the first step up Paris's property ladder and, finally, genetic research into the ageing process and the likelihood of living to be 100. As always, an ability to identify the main ideas of a text and a willingness to paraphrase successfully and expansively develop points of view were the differentiating factors between candidates.

In recent years, there has been a narrowing in the range of topics that candidates have opted to explore; that trend continued this summer, with environmental issues and aspects of race, immigration, criminal activity, unemployment and the rise of *Le Front National* in France heading the popularity stakes. There was also widespread treatment of the French elections, whilst a smallish number of candidates welcomed the opportunities offered by the Science/Technology option, producing very well researched discussion on genetics (including solutions to food production), stem cell developments, euthanasia, etc.

Administration was mostly thorough, though centres are reminded that they need to send both the working mark sheet and the candidate topic form: sometimes just one of these two documents was included in the pack sent to specialist markers.

Discussion of Article

As in previous years, many teacher-examiners chose to work systematically through the questions provided in the examiner booklet. Where they did depart from the sample questions suggested, candidates were often able to move advantageously away from the text, linking its subject matter to work they had done during the two years of their A level course; in some instances, this was enormously beneficial. Whilst candidates are encouraged to make notes on the card during the preparation time, these are best done in bullet-point form: this method removes the temptation simply to read back these notes when asked a question. Candidates are reminded that there is a significant reward for spontaneity of response. Another point that needs to be emphasised is that, in the interests of fairness, it is very important that examiners adhere to the timing (5–6 minutes) for this part of the test, and indeed for the Topic Discussion, as laid down in the syllabus specification: failure to do so also means that the next candidate who is outside preparing has too much or too little time to prepare.

Texte A (Apprendre... à l'époque d'Internet)

Comprehension of this article was rarely a problem. Most candidates responded well to it, especially those who spotted the target of the question asked and who limited their reply to the relevant section of the text. This was particularly evident in responses to the two questions *Selon le deuxième paragraphe, qu'est-ce qui inquiète les Français?* and *Selon le troisième paragraphe, qu'est-ce qui a changé avec l'introduction d'Internet?* Most candidates thought that, on balance, the impact of technology on education was a positive one, though they could also see the downside and felt that there was still a place for traditional pedagogical strategies such as learning by heart and reading.

Texte B (À vous d'attraper un criminel...)

Many candidates who were given this text showed themselves able to supply the main points and details that it contained and responded readily when they were asked to give their own opinions on such matters as the role of the police, the responsibility of individuals in helping the police solve crimes and track down known criminals, and the reasons for and ways of tackling the growing crime rate. The same candidates were capable of providing the details given in the third paragraph of the text about the success of the *Infra-Rouge* operation: some misunderstood *visé* and thought that 450 fugitives had been arrested, while others were guilty of not reading carefully enough the penultimate line of the paragraph and stated that 100 arrests had been made.

Texte C (Transports routiers – moins de morts que dans le passé)

This text generated some good discussions. As far as demonstrating comprehension is concerned, whenever there are numbers – even relatively straightforward ones – some candidates experience problems and this passage was no exception. Most candidates, however, were able to supply in French the numbers given in the text for the number of accidents in 2010 and 2011, as well as the percentages cited in the second paragraph. Similarly, most stated correctly that the objective of the President was to reduce the number of deaths on the roads in 2012 to 3000 (*réduire à 3000 le nombre de morts*), although a few rendered this as to reduce “by 3000”. When it came to their own ideas about the causes of road accidents and the relative efficacy of various measures that have been or could be used to bring the number down, many candidates were very forthcoming and showed themselves able to take the initiative in developing the topics raised, often moving beyond the material contained in the text.

Texte D (Londres boira de l'eau dessalée)

This text was well understood by most candidates who were given it. In the more general discussion that followed the comprehension questions, candidates happily expanded on various environmental problems and energy-saving measures, both domestic and industrial, recycling, renewable sources and green politics, often displaying a good command of technical vocabulary. Again, it was the figure given in the second paragraph (*320 000 mètres cube*) that upset a few, who believed that the water produced by the desalination plant in Israel was somehow transported to Paris. More marked here than in most of the other texts was a tendency on the part of some candidates to read out sections of the original text rather than attempting to paraphrase and to demonstrate comprehension by using their own words.

Texte E (Un premier logement à Paris c'est mission impossible)

The numbers in this text proved to be less problematic than those contained in other texts and most candidates were able to demonstrate good comprehension of the essential issues, even if some of the circumstantial detail was not as clear as it might have been. Well-trained candidates experienced few problems in explaining in their own words such items as *l'immobilier*, *abordable*, *familles monoparentales*, *célibataires*, *périphérie* and *les moins aisés*, while others were rather too happy just to read them out: they had perhaps understood but one could not be sure. Candidates raised and expanded on numerous other general issues: the advantages and disadvantages of living in the centre of large towns and cities, the tenant-v-owner debate, the first-time buyer crisis and the social problems prevalent in many suburban areas.

Texte F (Vivre vieux c'est dans les gênes)

The details of this text were well grasped and explained by the majority of those who were given it. Responses were often articulate and informed, both in terms of the medical and scientific issues involved and the problems entailed for both the individual and society if an increasing number of people live to be over 100. Having weighed up the pros and cons, most felt that joining the over-100 club was probably not a good idea.

Topic Discussion

Very few candidates this year failed to relate their personal topic sufficiently to France or French-speaking culture. The spirit of independent research abounded and shone through in the enthusiasm with which the bulk of candidates displayed their interest in their chosen subject. Perhaps the most important point to be stressed as far as the topic is concerned is the importance of the choice of subject. In particular, successful candidates will have considered whether their chosen subject gives sufficient scope for the expression of ideas, opinions and reactions. Subjects that are too factual in nature do make life very difficult for the examiner who, in order to be able to award high marks for the content of the discussion, will seek to go beyond the factual in order to assess the depth of the candidate's understanding of the field which he/she has investigated. This year, a small but growing number of candidates elected to talk about a cultural topic as opposed to a socio-political one. Some of the discussions heard on an author or a particular literary work, on a composer, on a cineast or a landmark film, or on a painter were very successful.

Some examples of individual topics chosen:

Le nucléaire – une bonne décision pour la France ?
Les énergies renouvelables – pas le moment de vaciller ?

L'air que nous respirons n'a jamais été plus pollué
La France fait-elle assez pour protéger son environnement ?

Les hydroliennes – l'énergie du futur ?

La pauvreté chez les jeunes en France
L'immigration et le Front National

À la défense de la burqa
La délinquance juvénile s'accroît en France

Les problèmes des prisons françaises
Les SDF

L'avenir des OGM ?
Le scandale de l'euthanasie

La médecine moderne et les greffes
La technologie du 21^{ème} siècle

La montée du FN
La guerre d'Algérie

L'impact de la résistance pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale
La légion étrangère

La Guyane – DOM du 21^{ème} siècle ?
Les conséquences de la colonisation

Les arts et les lettres en France
L'Académie Française

Many candidates used the language spontaneously and with ease, showing that they were accustomed to using French as the standard medium in classroom situations.

Grammar was generally acceptable. Errors in accuracy, particularly genders and agreements, are to be expected when speakers are spontaneous and responsive. The attempt to vary vocabulary and structures was once again impressive. Pronunciation, intonation, rhythm and pace of delivery were also of good quality.

F704 French Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments

The overall standard of candidates' work was similar to that of June 2011. Most candidates appeared to have had ample time in which to complete the paper; omissions were few and most Section C responses were of adequate length. Rubric infringements were few. Candidates are reminded not to give alternative answers as in such instances they will only gain the mark if both versions are correct. It is also important for candidates to show which sub-question each of their answers refers to when they write outside the designated space. Most candidates in this session appeared to understand that, where answers are required in the target language, it is not necessary to find synonyms for every word; what counts instead is their ability to answer the set question in as natural a way as possible, using words from the stimulus text or recording as appropriate. The hardest questions on the paper proved to be Q8, which required candidates to explain words or phrases found in the text, and Q9, a gap fill task. In the case of Q8, many candidates did not seem to be taking sufficient account of the context of the words in question. In Q9, some candidates lacked the necessary topic-specific vocabulary to give the required answer.

SECTION A

Task 1

Most candidates tackled this transfer of meaning task in an appropriate way and demonstrated a sound understanding of the recorded item. There was no need to write in whole sentences; often the clearest answers were short phrases that conveyed the required information concisely.

- a This question was well answered, with most candidates making the connection between “according to the organizers” on the question paper and *selon les organisateurs* on the recording. A few candidates mis-rendered *milliers* as “millions”.
- b The word *suppressions* caused widespread difficulty. Candidates needed to show they understood what it meant in the context by using a phrase such as “cuts in teaching jobs”.
- c This question was fairly well answered, although *une espèce* was not universally recognised.
- d Most candidates gave the correct information. A few were thrown astray by *commerçants*, not realising that here it referred to the shopkeepers.
- e This question was well answered.
- f On the whole, candidates coped well with this two-part question. Most showed understanding of *se faire entendre*, although some interpreted the verb *entendre* as if it meant “understand” which was not appropriate here. Most gave a correct answer in the second part.
- g This question caused widespread difficulty, mainly because many candidates did not realise that *toujours* can mean “still”. Some candidates did not take account of the imperfect tense form *étaient*.
- h As in part (g), it was adverbs that caused the greatest difficulty here – *trop* meaning “too much/many” and *encore* meaning “again”. For the phrase *dans la rue*, it was equally acceptable to give a literal rendering, e.g. “on the streets”, or to interpret the phrase in its context, e.g. “demonstrate”.

Task 2

Most candidates appeared to have grasped the gist of the recorded item and most were able to show comprehension of much of the detail. Most candidates used the key words in the question appropriately in order to locate their answer on the recording, e.g. *la première réaction* in Q2 (f) matched *au départ* on the recording. A few candidates transcribed unnecessarily long sections of the recording; this became a problem when they included incorrect material which sometimes invalidated their answer.

- a Most candidates homed in correctly on the phrase *une petite ville typique avec sa place...* which provided the answer to this question.
- b This proved to be quite a difficult question, as it tested comprehension of the whole sentence *Pourtant ... qui borde l'église*. Some candidates focused on the correct element of that sentence, i.e. *à la tête rasée*, but even then some mis-spellings of the word *rasée* betrayed a lack of comprehension.
- c Most candidates focused correctly on the word *discrets* for the first part of their answer. The second part was more problematic. Candidates could either transcribe the phrase *affichent une grande ouverture sur l'extérieur* or they could convey the meaning of that phrase in the single word *ouverts*. The danger with attempting a lengthy word-for-word transcription was that candidates could easily distort the meaning by the faulty transcription of a single item, e.g. *a fiche* (sic) instead of *affichent* or *à l'extérieur* instead of *sur l'extérieur*.
- d There were a good number of correct answers but some candidates focused inappropriately on the reference to cost. The verb *manquer* was often not recognised.
- e Candidates approached this question in different ways, some by writing a short paragraph and others by presenting their answer as three bullet points. Both approaches were satisfactory. On the whole the question was well tackled, with a good number scoring all three points.
- f Many candidates grasped the idea well but some did not recognise the word *secte* and wrote *secteur*, or similar, instead. Likewise many candidates did not know how to use *il s'agissait de*, although in most cases they were still able to get their message across.
- g Although the verb construction *chercher à plus* infinitive caused some difficulty, many candidates successfully conveyed the appropriate idea.
- h This two-part question was fairly well answered, with most candidates scoring at least one of the two points. Some misinterpreted *le local* as if it meant "local people".
- i This proved to be quite a challenging item. A number of candidates stopped short at the idea of *donner un avis favorable*, without going on to explain what that *avis* was about. The word *spacieux*, where candidates chose to use it, was often mis-spelt, with some versions such as *spatiaux* being deemed unacceptable because they conveyed the wrong idea.
- j This question was generally well answered.
- k Many candidates scored one mark for conveying the idea that "the temple attracted Parisians and English people". The word *Néerlandais* was often mistaken for *Irlandais*.
- l This question proved to be difficult, with many candidates apparently not seeing the link between *bien acceptés* in the question and *une véritable intégration* on the recording.

Answers beginning *Ils...* were generally unacceptable here because the subject of the question was *les bouddhistes* but the answer needed to refer to *les habitants*.

- m Most candidates successfully conveyed the idea that most of the visitors were not Buddhists. The second point was more elusive, especially as the word *paix* did not seem to be widely known. Wrong versions included *pays* and even *épée*. The verb construction *venir* plus infinitive was often confused with *venir de* plus infinitive.

Quality of Language, Section A

The standard of candidates' French in this question was very similar to that of the last series. The questions provided ample opportunities for candidates to show a grasp of verb tenses, endings and agreements and some were able to do so successfully. Good examples of the use of complex language by candidates included *Il leur a donné...* in part (i) and *Les habitants s'intéressent à ce qui se passe...* in part (l). Weaker performances tended to be characterised by basic errors such as random adjectival agreements and confusion between the verb endings *-er* and *-é*.

SECTION B

Task 3

This task proved to be the most accessible of the various tasks requiring linguistic manipulation on this paper. Many candidates showed comprehension of the text and chose words or phrases that were appropriate for the wording of the question.

- a This question was well answered. A few candidates wrote *ont été réduites* for the second gap, perhaps not realising that the word *pollution* was not included in the question.
- b This question was fairly well answered, with many candidates opting for the straightforward word *réintroduire*.
- c There were a good number of correct answers here. Some candidates chose appropriate verbs but put them into the perfect tense, which then conveyed the wrong meaning. A number of candidates wrote the past historic *dura* instead of the future *durera*.
- d Those who spotted the need for a passive construction here usually wrote an acceptable phrase, even if the ending on the past participle *aidés* was not always correct.
- e This question was well answered. Some candidates gave answers beginning with verbs such as *limiter* or *interdire*, which were not acceptable because they viewed the situation from the perspective of the authorities whereas the question focused on the actions of drivers.

Task 4

Parts (a) and (c) were well answered but in part (b) many candidates did not manage to identify *obsolète* as the equivalent of *qui n'est plus courant*.

Task 5

Most candidates showed a fair grasp of the stimulus text. Some were able to select the required points of detail and make appropriate inferences. In a few instances candidates tried too hard to avoid lifting key words: a term like *particules fines* was best left as it was, rather than being replaced by a synonym or explanation each time.

- a This question was fairly well answered. Candidates could either use a short phrase such as *des émissions polluantes* or they could write a sentence beginning *Elle émet...* or similar.
- b Most candidates gave the correct answer here, showing that they had understood the link between *ont fait* in the question and *existent déjà* in the text.
- c This question was well answered, despite some linguistic confusion between *de* and *par* when referring to percentages.
- d This was a challenging question. Most candidates correctly specified *vidéosurveillance* but relatively few scored the second point, usually because they misunderstood *soit ... soit ...* and thought that the visual checks carried out by the police were part of the *vidéosurveillance*.
- e This question tested comprehension of quite a complex part of the text and as such many candidates found it difficult. In the first part, the lifting of the phrase *que les élus puissent réellement l'appliquer* was unacceptable because it was not clear what the pronoun *l'* referred to. A better answer was, for example, *que les élus puissent appliquer la mesure*. In the second part, some candidates managed to write a good explanation of the logic, i.e. that the mayors would not want to introduce a measure that would go down badly with their people. It was a pity that a few candidates tried to rephrase *poids lourds* and in doing so sometimes betrayed a lack of understanding, e.g. *des voitures avec un grand poids*.
- f The key element here was the reference to *particules*. Many candidates referred only to *cibler les véhicules*, which was not sufficient because that also applied to the earlier tax on CO₂ emissions.
- g This question was generally well answered.

Task 6

This non-verbal task was well answered, especially parts (a) and (b) which tested understanding of the words *inquiète* and *souhaite* in context.

Task 7

Despite the more challenging nature of the second stimulus text, to which this question related, on the whole candidates scored good marks for comprehension. As with Q5, there were plenty of opportunities for candidates to use their own words in a natural way.

- a There were many correct answers. The most frequent error here was *la* instead of *sa*.
- b This question was well answered, with most candidates managing to re-express the ideas in the sentence *J'ai redonnée ... défigurées* appropriately.
- c This question was generally well answered, despite occasional confusion between *reconnaître* and *connaître*. Some candidates wrote an inferred answer here, e.g. *C'est ce qui leur donne leur individualité*, and that was fine.
- d Most candidates answered this question well, showing that they had understood the link between *satisfaction* and *fier*.
- e This question was very well answered. Most candidates were able to rephrase the relevant sentence in the stimulus text, showing comprehension of the word *dont*.

- f Most candidates homed in on the right section of the text but the question specifically asked for negatives and answers such as *Il restait chez lui* were not acceptable.
- g The reference to *célibataire* proved to be a sticking point for many, who referred instead to jobs or social life. Those who identified the word correctly could score a mark for *trouver un(e) partenaire* or *trouver un(e) petit(e) ami(e)* as well as for the conventional *se marier*.

Task 8

As in previous series, this question type could be tackled in two ways: candidates could either write a word or phrase that fitted the grammatical context of the highlighted phrase or they could write an explanation on the lines of *Cela veut dire que ...*. The marks in this task were generally low; some candidates seemed to be treating the words in isolation rather than looking at them in their context.

- a The verb *s'apercevoir* was not widely known but some candidates found appropriate synonyms or near-synonyms such as *voit* or *remarque*.
- b There were very few correct answers here, despite the clue given by the context *quand on les ...*.
- c This was the most accessible of the five items in this task. Many candidates found a good way of expressing the idea of “making dreams come true”, such as *faire ce qu'il voulait faire* or *trouver la chose qu'il veut le plus*.
- d This was the least accessible item on the paper as a whole. A few candidates did well to realise that a clause with *quand*, such as *quand on le voit*, fitted the bill well.
- e This item was fairly well tackled, with many candidates managing to use the context *Il a pu ... la vie sociale* to find a suitable equivalent of the targeted phrase.

Task 9

This task proved to be fairly challenging for most candidates, especially as some of the items required a degree of inference.

- a A good number of candidates wrote a suitable adjective such as *certain* or *sûr*.
- b Most candidates showed good understanding of the relevant portion of text and included a negative in their answer.
- c This item proved difficult. Many candidates wrote a verb expressing pleasure, such as *aiment* or *adorent*, rather than acceptance, as was indicated by the text.
- d Many candidates appeared to realise that the requisite idea was gratitude, but they did not know the word *reconnaissant(s)*. An acceptable alternative was a phrase such as *pleins de gratitude*. A phrase beginning with a verb such as *experiment leur gratitude* was not acceptable because the gap was immediately preceded by the word *sont*.
- e There were many correct answers here, showing comprehension of *proches*, but also some incorrect answers such as *la société* for which there was no basis in the text.

Task 10

This transfer of meaning task presented a similar level of difficulty to the equivalent task in June 2011. A good number of candidates scored full, or nearly full, marks; such candidates not only conveyed the meaning of the French stimulus text faithfully but also wrote fluent and accurate English. A few candidates showed reasonable comprehension but their English was poor and introduced ambiguity. Candidates for future series are reminded that in this paper, and especially in a task of this type, they should never give alternative answers.

Words and phrases that were generally well handled included:

- *routinière* – often rendered appropriately by “common” instead of the more obvious “routine”
- *peu nombreux*
- *échec*

Common sources of error were:

- *celle des* – often omitted, which resulted in clumsy English
- *d’après* – often rendered as “after”
- *une quinzaine* – sometimes “fifty” or “a fortnight”
- *au plus* – often “or more”, perhaps because candidates read *ou* instead of *au*
- *mis à part* – often “taking into consideration” or similar

The mark scheme requires assessors to take account of the quality of candidates’ written English. Many scripts were good in this respect, but common errors included mis-spellings of “professor” and the misuse of a singular pronoun “it” referring back to the plural noun “transplants”.

Language, Section B

Candidates were assessed globally for the quality of their French in tasks 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9. As in previous series, candidates needed to be secure in their use of basic French in order to achieve a mark in the middle band. Examples of good mastery of the language which contributed to a mark in the top band were:

- the correct construction with *permettre*, e.g. *Il leur permet de...*
- the correct use of the reflexive, e.g. *Ils ont pu se réintégrer...*
- the correct use of *en*, e.g. *On en a besoin...*

but it must be remembered that markers award the quality of language mark globally, i.e. they do not tick specific items.

SECTION C

A good number of essays scored highly on all four criteria, making use of appropriate factual knowledge to present a convincing argument through the medium of accurate and ambitious French. Others were deficient in terms of content and/or language and, as in previous sessions, a number of candidates had a tendency to write about the broad topic area rather than address the question set. There were a few overlong essays but the majority stayed within the recommended word limit. Good presentation was even more important in Section C than in the listening and reading sections. In some cases, candidates’ legibility was inconsistent and repeated crossings out and arrows sometimes made it difficult for the reader to follow the thread of an argument. The writing of an initial plan can help to avoid this problem.

Relevance and points of view

Most candidates achieved one of two objectives: either they wrote a convincing answer to the question set or they demonstrated a good level of knowledge of the topic, supported by suitable examples from France or another French-speaking country. A number of candidates managed to combine both, in which case they were in line for a high mark for relevance and points of view. Where candidates choose to include statistical information, it is vital that they provide the necessary context, e.g. if a candidate states that xxx tonnes of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere, this is only meaningful if we know the timespan and the geographical area. A few candidates used material from Sections A and B of the paper, which was acceptable as long as its relevance was made explicit. Some candidates also used information from previous F704 papers, such as details of the 2005 riots and of the carbon tax which were covered in June 2011.

Structure and analysis

The best essays in terms of structure and analysis provided an introduction that was to the point and targeted the question, then included a selection of paragraphs for and against, following on from each other logically, and ended with a conclusion that referred back to what had been said and summed up, again targeting the question. As in previous series, the paragraphing was often good and most candidates displayed some ability to develop an argument. Linking words such as *en revanche* and *de plus* do not score marks in themselves but often indicate that a candidate has thought about the need to maintain a sense of logic. Introductory paragraphs were often suitably engaging. A good number of responses to the non-discursive tasks were appropriately persuasive. The main weaknesses of candidates' work in terms of structure and analysis tended to be either a lack of coherence between paragraphs or a thin conclusion.

Quality of language (accuracy and range)

There were some good efforts to use a variety of tenses, *si* clauses, *en plus* present participle, subjunctive expressions and other complex structures, even in weaker candidates' essays. However, even good candidates often made basic errors, particularly with verb endings and adjectival agreements. Prepositions were often not well used. Topic-specific vocabulary was often used appropriately, but Anglicisms and invented words seemed to be more prevalent this year than previously, as in the following examples:

- *sont une part de* (for *font partie de*)
- *issue* (for *question*)
- *préventer* (for *empêcher*)
- *sustainable* (for *durable*)
- *abilité* (for *compétence*)
- *effectif/ve* (for *efficace*)
- *provider* (for *fournir*)
- *concerner* (for *s'agir / inquiéter*)
- *protecter* (for *protéger*)
- *dommage* (for *dégâts*)

A frequently occurring error was the use of the feminine *Françaises* to refer to French people in general. Candidates should also avoid hyperbole, such as the use of *fantastique* when all that is meant is *utile* or *efficace*.

Question 11

This question, which invited candidates to decide whether integration was the responsibility of immigrants or the host population, was very popular. It was often successfully tackled, including much relevant information, often well used, and a well-balanced argument. The best candidates set out the ways in which immigrants needed to conform to the French way of life, giving the

reasons why, then explained the problems that they encountered, usually quoting much good evidence – the attitude of many natives, problems looking for work, housing problems, ghettos, *laïcité*, and including references to recent elections. Many reached the conclusion that the responsibility lay with the native French and the government just as much as with the immigrants. There were some good, well-expressed and well-balanced arguments and some good evaluation regarding the fairness or unfairness of the current situation. Where candidates scored less well in this question, it was often because they did not include sufficient reference to French-speaking society.

Question 12

A fair number of candidates opted for this question, which asked them to present an initiative designed to tackle unemployment in France. Responses to this question were on the whole less good than responses to Q11. Candidates usually set the scene well by explaining the nature of the problem and why it needed to be tackled but they were less successful in suggesting initiatives, or indeed, as the question specified, a single initiative. Those who did answer this part of the question often chose a fairly simple initiative, such as providing training or work experience for young people, or obliging firms to employ a certain number of young people per year. Many of the suggested initiatives involved the government spending money: a few candidates were wise enough to realise that *l'argent ne tombe pas du ciel*.

Question 13

This question, which asked candidates to explain what, in their view, was the most important aspect of environmental protection, proved to be very popular. Many found it hard to focus on the question. Some wrote about nuclear and/or renewable energy, often concluding that the use of renewable energy was the most important aspect of environmental protection, but struggled to maintain the link to the title. Stronger responses included not only an explanation of why these energies were important but also some discussion of other aspects of the topic which, in the view of the candidate, were less important. References to French-speaking society were sometimes rather perfunctory, with some candidates just quoting the number of nuclear power stations and/or wind turbines in France, but a few candidates managed to show convincing evidence of reading around the topic and there were some good references to the recent presidential election.

Question 14

Relatively few candidates attempted this question, which asked them to draft a web contribution persuading the inhabitants of a French town to recycle more of their waste. The better responses included an explanation of why recycling is so important, followed by detailed examples from a specific town or region in France. While there were some suitably convincing arguments promoting recycling, some candidates made deductive leaps, e.g. “we need to recycle more in order to prevent global warming”, without explaining why this was the case. For the second part of the question, a few candidates used good examples but all too often they made only vague comments such as *dans beaucoup de villes en France, il y a des centres de recyclage*. This task provided opportunities to use *si* clauses and imperative forms, which some candidates grasped effectively.

Question 15

The few candidates who tackled this question, which focused on the replacement of human beings by technology, generally did so effectively. Arguments were often well balanced and suitable examples were given. Some responses were rather too vague and did not include sufficient evidence from the French-speaking world.

Question 16

This question invited candidates to write a letter to a French higher education institution explaining why they would like to study science with them. Candidates approached the task in various ways: some used their own skills and abilities as a starting point, while others focused on the importance of science in today's society. Either approach was acceptable, as long as candidates answered the question set and used appropriate evidence from a French-speaking country.

Question 17

This question, which invited candidates to explain how the writer treated the main theme of her/his book or play, was chosen by a small minority of candidates but was generally well done. Most responses showed detailed knowledge of the relevant text and, in some cases, of the historical context which provided useful extra evidence. Weaker responses tended just to tell the story.

Question 18

A few candidates opted for this question, which invited them to write a promotional letter for a museum. Responses varied in quality: some used the obvious opportunity to show their knowledge of aspects of French culture and history, but others concentrated too much on superficial information such as opening times, prices and parking facilities.

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