

FRENCH

<p>Paper 0520/12 Listening</p>
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Key messages

- The performance of candidates on this paper was slightly better than the performance seen in March 2017, with candidates scoring very well on the first two sections of the paper. As intended, the last section was found to be more challenging but a good number of candidates managed to score quite good marks on this section. The examination was accessible to candidates.
- Candidates need to write clearly in blue or black pen. Some candidates write answers first in pencil and then overwrite answers in pen making answers difficult to read. Candidates should cross out any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Poor handwriting was also apparent this March making some scripts hard to read.
- Most candidates appreciated the need to write as briefly as possible.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.
- It is important that candidates are reminded of the need to indicate the correct number of ticks in multiple choice and box ticking exercises. In a few cases, candidates ticked an incorrect number of boxes on **Question 16**.

General comments

The paper was attempted well by candidates and it was generally in line in terms of the demands made in previous sessions. The candidature overall performed very well on the first two sections of the paper with the majority going on to attempt the final section. Even weaker candidates were successful on a few questions in each of the last two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the demands and structure of the paper and rubrics were usually well understood. As last year, however, there were incidents of some candidates ticking too many or too few boxes on **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. The examined topics and contexts were found to be accessible to all candidates.

As in March 2017, the French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting the candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations. Longer extracts featured a variety of register and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary which is tested in the first two sections of the test was drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the Defined Content.

This year, it was clear that candidates in many centres had appreciated the need to write as briefly and clearly as possible and that full sentences were not required in response. Brief answers are preferable on this paper as candidates do not run the risk of extra distorting material being added which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Candidates should also not answer or infer from general knowledge as they run the risk of adding extra material which is not on the recording and this will invalidate an otherwise correct answer. There were cases of poor handwriting during this session which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers whether they were brief or long. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly and not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen. Please remind all candidates that, if they wish to make a second attempt at an answer, they should cross out their first attempt very clearly. Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

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

Candidates need to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers so as to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–8

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple-choice questions with visual options. Candidates generally performed well on this opening exercise which is intended to give them a confident start to the paper. The extracts were straightforward and short and the vocabulary areas tested numbers, days of the week, places, musical instruments, weather and clothing. Rubrics were generally well understood by candidates.

Nearly all candidates answered **Question 1** and **Question 2** correctly. **Questions 3** and **4** were done very well by candidates. The most difficult item of vocabulary tested on the exercise proved to be on **Question 5** with a fair proportion of candidates showing that they were not familiar with the word *batterie* with many opting instead for the picture of the motorbike. **Questions 6** and **8** were also quite well done but on **Question 7** *il va faire très beau* was not always well understood.

Exercise 2 Questions 9–15

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured information about a chocolate factory in Switzerland. Questions tested months, souvenirs, ticketing information, drinks, places and prices. Candidates generally performed well on this exercise. On **Question 9**, some did not recognise *décembre* and answered *juin* or *septembre*. **Question 10** was usually well attempted with most candidates able to recognise *étudiants*. Good numbers went on to answer **Questions 11** and **12** correctly. The last three questions on this exercise were answered very well by candidates.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Performance on this exercise was quite good and continues to improve as many candidates are now accustomed to the exercise type and its requirements. There were still, however, cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only. Candidates should be reminded to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but can cause confusion when used together. Candidates should not attempt to put a tick and a cross in all boxes. Six of the twelve boxes need to be left blank.

Candidates heard four young people talking about the topic of leisure activities. As in March 2017, candidates found this topic area and associated vocabulary to be familiar and made good attempts at the exercise with even the weakest candidates often scoring at least 2 marks. Good numbers scored between 4 and 6 marks. The most common incorrect answer seen was on the extract featuring Guillaume with many missing the negative in *les choses les plus simples qui ne coûtent rien* and choosing option **(j)** rather than the last option **(l)**. On the last extract heard, some failed to match the French heard, *je lis un bon livre*, with the synonym *la lecture* on the question paper.

Exercise 2 Questions 17–21

In this exercise, candidates heard two interviews with Léo, who practised running in his spare time and who worked in a sports shop. In the first part of the interview, candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they were clearly familiar. The missing words were all items which appear in the vocabulary lists of the Defined Content. The exercise represented a step up in the incline of difficulty of the test and the extract heard was longer than that heard in the previous exercise.

Question 17, which required candidates to identify the word *directeur* was found challenging by weaker candidates who, having heard *de bons conseils sur le matériel sportif*, sometimes just wrote *sportif*.

Question 18 was better attempted with high numbers correctly identifying *enfants*. **Question 19** proved

more difficult with candidates often not recognising the word *heures*. Incorrect answers of *semaine* and *weekend* were frequently seen by Examiners. On **Question 20**, *stress* was well identified by candidates but on **Question 21** only the better candidates were able to give an acceptable spelling of the word *nombreux*. This proved to be the hardest question in this exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

The second part of this exercise featured a continuation of the interview with Léo. Questions required short answers in French. Candidates usually did less well on this second part of the exercise and showed that on some words they had misheard the key items for comprehension. On **Question 22**, the key concept to convey was that of understanding what the salespersons always give to customers. Many weaker candidates did not hear *ils donnent toujours de bons conseils sur le matériel sportif* and just wrote *matériel sportif* rather than *conseils*. **Question 23** was better attempted with good numbers being able to identify *spécialiste*. On **Question 24**, *vêtements* was usually well known. On the last question of the exercise, **Question 25**, better candidates were able to identify the word *s'entraîner*. For this question, it is worth noting that Examiners did not insist on the reflexive pronoun before the verb and the noun *entraînement* was also equally acceptable as an answer.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates heard an interview with Sylvie, a young woman talking about her voluntary work as a fire-fighter. The question type used was multiple choice with written options. Questions tested not just specific factual information but also gist understanding over the longer extract. Candidates needed to identify attitudes and emotions in some questions and be able to understand a narrative which, in places, depended upon them understanding a sequence of events. The exercise discriminated well across the candidature and a full range of performance was seen with many candidates scoring 3 or 4 marks. Candidates generally made quite a good attempt at this exercise and even weaker candidates were usually able to score 1 or 2 marks. Candidates did quite well on the first three questions but found **Questions 29** and **30** more difficult. The last question was better attempted by most candidates. On incorrectly answered questions there was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers. Options in the answers were deliberately expressed in accessible language with fairly short options so as to lessen the need for excessive reading whilst listening. Candidates need to be reminded to make careful use of the reading time before the extract is heard. **If candidates wish to choose a different option from the one first chosen they should remember to cross out the option first chosen.** If two ticks are visible, a mark will not be awarded, even if one of those answers is correct.

Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

This was found to be a suitably demanding and appropriately challenging exercise at this stage of the paper. Very few candidates did not attempt this exercise. Even the weaker candidates made commendable efforts to follow the extract and answer at least some questions and consequently were able to score some marks.

Candidates heard an interview with André, who talked about winning money in a competition and the effect that his win had had upon his life. There was a good mix of harder and more accessible questions on this last exercise. Most candidates scored at least 1 or 2 marks if they attempted the exercise with some questions only being successfully answered by the most able, as intended.

On **Question 32**, quite good numbers were able to identify that he had won a lot of money and were able to give an acceptable spelling of *beaucoup*. Weaker candidates often just wrote *compétition*, showing the need to read the question carefully. On **Question 33**, candidates performed less well. The better candidates correctly identified *peur* but incorrect answers such as *père* were sometimes seen. On **Question 34**, candidates heard *j'ai réussi à garder le secret pendant plusieurs semaines*. The question deliberately used the wording *gardé le secret* to help candidates identify *plusieurs semaines* and the interrogative *combien* did not appear to have been taken into account as some responses just stated *journal*. **Question 35** was usually attempted quite well but some invalidated their answers by adding details about asking for money and did not see that the wording of the question stated *au début*. On **Question 36**, good numbers were able to identify that André decided to pay for the studies of his children and most were able to give an acceptable spelling of the two key elements *payer* and *études*. On **Question 37**, Examiners assessed answers for the concept of the parents wanting to live nearer to André. The minimal response *plus près* was awarded the mark but incorrect answers often stated that the parents wanted to live with André. Only the best candidates were successful here and included the comparative which was needed to score the mark. The next question, **Question 38**, was very well attempted with good numbers being able to identify that André was shocked. Again, the noun or an attempt at the verb was acceptable as an answer. **Question 39** however was a

discriminating test of accurate listening and was the most challenging on the paper. Candidates were required to identify *urgent*. Many instead wrote *argent* with only the very best listeners scoring the mark here. The final question was done very well by candidates and was a good end to the test for them with many successfully identifying that he had won *une caméra*.

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<p>Paper 0520/22 Reading</p>
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Key messages

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

- select carefully only that information from the text that answers the question, in particular in the last two exercises,
- answer all the questions, especially the non-verbal ones,
- remember that the questions follow the order of the text, especially in **Section 2, Exercise 2**.

General comments

Candidates appeared to have sufficient time to complete the paper, and almost all candidates were appropriately entered for the examination. Where candidates change their mind about an answer, it is important that they make it clear which tick is to be regarded as their final answer.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

This exercise proved accessible to almost all candidates, with no questions unattempted. **Question 2** (*fauteuil*) was not universally known, with **B** and **D** frequently chosen in place of **C**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–10

Again, scores for this exercise were generally high and full marks were common. Some candidates had difficulty with **Question 7**, with **E** being selected rather than **F**.

Exercise 3 Questions 11–15

This exercise was accessible for candidates, **Questions 11, 12** and **15** proving the most challenging for some candidates. There was no particular pattern where an incorrect answer was selected.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 16–20

For this exercise, candidates completed statements in French, choosing words from a list. Some candidates appeared to make use only of perceived meaning of the option words and the text, and did not use the grammatical markers in the sentences to assist with narrowing down their options. However, where candidates did choose an incorrect response, it was more frequently than usual the distractor intended for that question, indicating that more candidates were making use of the grammatical markers. **Question 18** proved the most straightforward.

Exercise 2 Questions 21–30

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended text in the form of a blog from Sandrine on the subject of a recent holiday experience. The text was mostly straightforward and the vocabulary was familiar. Most candidates were able to cope with the demands of the task. Although long answers are not required, and often only a few words would answer the question, many candidates chose to copy a couple of sentences from the text for each question. For this exercise, extraneous material and incorrect tenses are often ignored as long as they do not in some way invalidate the candidate's correct response.

Some candidates lost a mark by writing *cheveux* instead of *chevaux* in one or other of **Questions 21** or **25**. They were not penalised for a repeated error. However, the majority of candidates performed very well on this exercise. Some candidates omitted *ans* for **Question 22**. **Questions 27** to **29** seemed to cause a few problems, with some candidates unable to identify the section of the text where the answers were located and mixing up the answers between the questions.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 31–35

In **Section 3**, examiners are expecting a higher level of attention to detail and for candidates to be more selective of the information they take from the reading texts when correcting the false statements. Candidates are reminded that they should not merely write the opposite of the statement and need to look for the alternative information.

Many candidates were able to identify successfully the false statements, although **Question 31** was the most frequently incorrect. With the justification for **Question 32**, candidates sometimes lost marks by mismatching information from the text with a sentence start taken from the question. Many candidates were able to write suitable justifications for **Questions 33** and **34** using carefully selected material from the text.

Exercise 2 Questions 36–42

This final exercise was intended to be the most challenging part of the paper. Where candidates lost marks, it was often through writing too much and including information that was not necessary to answer the question. A minority did not attempt some questions, especially **Questions 38** and **39**.

Very few candidates were successful for **Question 36**, with most incorrectly deciding that surprise was the first reaction. Inappropriate copying from the text cost marks in **Question 39**.

Some candidates showed an ability to manipulate for **Question 40** and there was good use made of the text in **Question 42** in many cases.

Very few candidates achieved full marks, and the questions seem to have discriminated appropriately.

In **Section 3**, more emphasis is placed on understanding of the question as well as the text, and merely locating the answer is not sufficient if what is written by the candidate does not actually answer the question posed.

FRENCH

<p>Paper 0520/03 Speaking</p>

Key messages

- The standard of performance heard was similar to that of March 2017.
- Many tests were too short and many centres did not observe the stipulated timings of the test. There were cases of missing Topic conversations which resulted in reductions to centres' marks.
- Centres usually remembered to include questions in the General Conversation section which would elicit past and future tenses from candidates. This was, however, often not the case in the Topic Conversation. This also resulted in reductions to the marks. Such tense usage is essential if candidates are to score more than 6 marks for Language.
- Centres are reminded not to change the cues in the role play tasks and not to add extra tasks.
- The best performances at all levels of ability were in centres where there had **not** been over preparation of work and in which spontaneous and natural conversations could develop.
- Centres should aim to cover only two or three topics in the General Conversation section with each candidate. In many centres too many topics were covered too briefly.
- The quality of recordings was usually good and samples arrived promptly.

General comments

The format of the test was as last year.

Centres were usually well aware that there were three sections to the test. The Role Play section was conducted correctly in most centres. Examiners usually followed the cues correctly, prompting where necessary and encouraging candidates to work for the marks. Examiners who did veer away from the script and changed the tasks or who did not prepare fully sometimes made this section of the test harder for the candidates.

There were, in this session, many cases of very short tests in the conversation sections. **If conversation sections are short, this will adversely affect candidates' marks.** In such cases, candidates are not given the opportunity to develop their ideas and use a range of structures and tenses. It is in the interest of fairness to make sure that each candidate is given the full examination time of 5 minutes for **each** of their two conversation sections.

Examiners may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order for the Examiner to prepare for his/her role. The contents of these materials are **confidential** and must not be shared with candidates. The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the materials must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period.

Candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area. Candidates must not choose their own role play card.

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

Centres are reminded to make a clear transition between the Topic conversation and the General conversation. This transition should be in French. The links between the different parts of the test should **not** be in English.

The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out in the Teachers' Notes booklet and all centres are advised to read through these in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties. Centres should note that there are also examples of marked speaking tests on the Teacher Support website, in the Teaching Materials area of the 0520 IGCSE French pages, which can aid Examiner preparation.

Clerical checks and sample size

In the vast majority of centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently. It is essential that all clerical work is checked very carefully so as to ensure that candidates receive the correct mark. On the Working Mark Sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the Working Mark Sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked. Centres generally understood the requirements of the sample size well and samples were nearly always correct.

Recording quality

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality. Most centres submitted digital recordings which were very clear and this eased access to the sample. Please check all recording equipment prior to the live exams. **Also, please remember to avoid sticking labels on CDs** and do not write on the surface of the CD without using a CD friendly pen.

Please ensure that each candidate's recording is labelled with the candidate name and number on the box for the CD and that **the sound file is correctly labelled**. There were, this year, many cases of incorrectly labelled sound files. It is essential that the following convention for labelling is used, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. **The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file and saved as an .mp3 file.**

A list of the featured recordings should also be submitted with each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named Recording introduction). The Examiner and **not** the candidate must introduce the candidate by name and number and the Role Play Card number.

CDs must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the centre name and a bar-code) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Examiners in centres generally prompted candidates when necessary but there are still cases of a need to prompt when candidates miss tasks. **Examiners must keep to the script provided, not change the tasks and encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task.** If only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. Two-part tasks are split into **(i)** and **(ii)** on the Candidate Role Play cards. This helps candidates to remember to attempt both parts of the tasks where necessary.

Candidates are also reminded that it is important to listen to the Examiner as on all the Role Play A situations, there is a task which requires them to choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. Likewise, there is always one task which requires responding to an unexpected question on the Role Play B.

Poor pronunciation should be queried, especially if it prevents clear communication of a task. If pronunciation of a key element is not clear, a mark of 3 is **not** appropriate. If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and **not** 3 is appropriate.

Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate in many tasks and, in such cases, a mark of 3 can be awarded.

Role Play A

The A role plays were found to be of equal difficulty, accessible to candidates and very similar in difficulty to the March 2017 role plays. They were a fair test at this level of the test and many candidates performed very well on them and made a confident start to the test. The A role plays are designed to be easier than the B role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All of the A role play situations featured a task which required a question to be asked and one task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner.

Candidates generally found the tasks to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least 1 mark on each task. Centres had usually trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Examiners should introduce the Role Play and start the conversation off. English should **not** be used to introduce the role plays. Generally, candidates had been well prepared for the A role plays.

Buying postcards

This Role Play was approached quite well by candidates. Task 1 was usually well done although pronunciation of *cartes postales* was difficult for some candidates. On the second task, nearly all candidates were able to give an appropriate number. On Task 3, *timbres* was poorly pronounced. On Task 4, nearly all candidates listened well to the two options and chose appropriately. Candidates were well prepared to phrase an appropriate question to ask the price and were generally successful on the last task.

On a bus

On the first task, some candidates did not state that they wanted to go to town and instead stated that they wanted to go to a particular place. Candidates need to be reminded to read the rubric carefully as the first task always requires some reformulation of the rubric. Most were able to give their age on the next task. Some Examiners made the task of choosing from alternatives difficult for candidates as the options were not read out. When the script was adhered to, candidates found the task approachable and were quite successful. Nearly all were able to say how many tickets they required, but the pronunciation of *tickets* was not good. The last task was well done.

Ordering a pizza

Candidates approached this Role Play well. Nearly all were able to say they wanted a pizza, but on Task 2 some candidates did not receive the correct cue from the Examiner as to where they wanted to sit and some seemed unfamiliar with *à l'intérieur*. The third task was usually well done but some candidates chose a different kind of pizza which was not the set task. On Task 4, nearly all were able to ask for a drink. On the last task nearly all were able to formulate an appropriate question.

Role Play B

The B role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, express pleasure and give and justify opinions. As last year, the level of challenge was found to be balanced across the role plays. They differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score a mark on most tasks when the Examiner kept closely to the script. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to consider likely questions in the 15 minutes preparation time, immediately prior to the Speaking test, and to listen carefully in the examination room. It must be noted also that there is always one task which will require candidates to react in some way. This reaction, such as expressing disappointment or pleasure should be verbal and not just an exclamation. Candidates should be prepared to give a positive or negative opinion about something. It is also well worth remembering that one task on B role plays requires the candidate to ask one appropriate question and candidates also need to be aware of this in their preparation time. They need to recognise that the rubrics *Posez une question* or *Demandez* appear on all role plays every session and require a question to be formulated. Practice in using a variety of interrogative forms is excellent examination preparation.

Telephoning a lost property office

On Task 1, nearly all candidates greeted the employee appropriately and were able to say they had lost a jacket. Task 2 required the completion of two elements. Most said when they had lost the jacket but did not always say where the train was going. Destinations in France and India were accepted. Helpful Examiners split their cue into two parts and this helped weaker candidates to work for the marks. Some Examiners did

not cue for a missing part of the task which resulted in the candidate only partially completing the task. On Task 3, most were able to give an appropriate detail about the jacket in response to the unexpected question. On Task 4, some candidates were unsure as to the meaning of *déçu(e)*. Responses such as *Quel dommage* and *je suis déçu(e)* were appropriate and the stronger candidates were able to react and give a good reason why they wanted their jacket. Some said it was a present or they had things in the jacket which they needed. The last task required candidates to ask about the possibility of contacting the office the next day. Many were able to formulate a correct question but weaker candidates found it difficult to use a correct interrogative and conjugated verb.

In a phone repair shop

Candidates understood the situation and context but on Task 1 only a few were able to produce *faire réparer* and did not seem familiar with the difference between *réparer* and *faire réparer*. The next task required candidates to complete two elements. Candidates needed to say when and how they had broken the phone. Some Examiners did not repeat the cue if part of the response was missing which resulted in only partial completion of the task. Task 3 required an expression of pleasure to be made. Some missed this out and went straight to saying why they needed the phone. Generally, good attempts were made on this part of the task and many responses such as needing to contact parents, having lots of photos on their phone or needing it to listen to music were made. On Task 4, some found it difficult to formulate an appropriate question and suggested instead when they would come to the shop to get the phone. Candidates need to be reminded that every role play always has one task which requires them to ask a question. On the last task, many did not hear the *où* in the question. Candidates who said where or how they could be contacted were awarded the marks. Many found it difficult to produce a correctly conjugated verb here if they chose to answer using a verb.

Inviting a friend to stay

This role play was usually approached quite well but some candidates thought that they were being invited to stay with the French friend. On Task 1, nearly all greeted appropriately but found it hard to manipulate the direct object pronoun in *je voudrais t'inviter / je voudrais vous inviter*. Some repeated the *chez vous* or *votre pays* from the rubric which made the utterance confusing. Task 2 was done well and nearly all candidates understood the unexpected question and gave an appropriate date. Task 3 required an apology to be made rather than a list of excuses to be made. It is clear that many candidates still do not understand the cue *Faites vos excuses*. The second part of the task asked for a reason why the candidate did not like theme parks rather than just a statement saying they disliked them. Only the best candidates completed both parts of this task. Some Examiners did not stick to the script at this point in the role play and this made it difficult for candidates to get back on track and ask a question. Most, however, were able to ask if Justin(e) would like to visit the seaside. On the last task, good attempts were made and most were able to give two details about their plans.

Topic presentation/conversation

The standard of work heard in this section covered a wide range of performance and standards heard across the mark range were very much in line with those heard in the last session.

The whole section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last for a full 5 minutes. This was frequently **not** the case and, after the presentation part of this section, some Examiners passed straight on to the General conversation. **This therefore denied candidates the opportunity to converse on their chosen topic, which is a required part of the test, and this often disadvantaged them and resulted in reductions to marks in such centres.**

Presentation times (maximum 2 minutes) were usually well adhered to by candidates and many candidates had clearly prepared their topic thoroughly. Candidates should be reminded to speak clearly and not too fast. The presentation should be followed up by a conversation on this same topic for the remainder of this 5 minute section. Examiners are reminded to keep the questions in the Topic conversation firmly based on the subject of the presentation and to elicit different information from what has already been presented.

While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, **this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers** in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Questions should instead arise **spontaneously** as the conversation develops and in a natural way. **Good examining of this section was clearly focused on the candidate's topic and featured a variety of questions to test both past and future tenses.** Centres should note that Table C of the mark scheme makes clear reference to the need for

candidates to use past and future tenses accurately in order for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded for Language.

Candidates had usually prepared well for the presentation part of the test and were enthusiastic about their chosen topic. The better candidates conveyed a clear message in a range of tenses and made good use of a variety of structures and relevant vocabulary. In this examination session, a wide range of topics was heard by Moderators. Many candidates chose to talk about pollution and the environment, health, cooking, festivals and interests. Some also spoke about mobile phones and their own use of technology. Other popular presentations were on the following themes: *mon école, mes vacances, mes ambitions, mon pays*. Festivals remain a popular choice of topic with many giving interesting accounts of Diwali and other important religious festivals. Presentations on India were often very interesting and the topic was appropriate, but **Examiners are reminded of the need to avoid too many questions which require precise geographical or statistical knowledge**. It is better instead to ask candidates to say what they find most interesting/like/dislike, etc. about their country/another country and why.

As last year, the best performances in this section of the test were those which developed into a natural conversation and in which candidates could express not just factual information in response to straightforward questions but also develop and explain their opinions and feelings about the topic. Good examining practice was heard when Examiners clearly indicated the end of this section of the test to candidates with a phrase such as *'Maintenant, on passe à la conversation générale'*.

General conversation

This final section of the test was, on the whole, dealt with more consistently than the Topic conversation section. Timings were usually appropriate but there were still instances of very short tests which were well under the stipulated 5 minutes for this section.

Centres usually covered an appropriate range of topics within the centre but often they tried to cover **too many topics too superficially** and did not give candidates the chance to go into depth on a topic. Only **two or three** topics should be covered in this section of the test. It is helpful on each of the two or three topics examined to include questions in different tenses. Centres are reminded that for a mark of more than 6 to be scored for Language, the candidate should be able to produce accurately conjugated examples of past and future tenses.

It is also important to remember to cover different topics with different candidates and, if using the same topic with different candidates, to try to use different questions. Generally, centres need to cover fewer topics and try to include a good range of questions which enable candidates to have access to the upper ends of the mark bands for Communication. **Questions which are very straightforward and which require simple short responses will not give candidates access to the upper mark bands for both Communication and Language.**

The best examining gave candidates logically related questions on a topic and featured open ended unexpected questions. This meant that candidates could try to develop their answers in a natural way. As in the Topic conversation, candidates need to be able to develop their answers, give and explain opinions and be able to respond to **unexpected** questions in order to gain high marks. It is common practice in classrooms to make use of banks of questions but over reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test can produce stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and are a test of memory rather than conversational ability.

Many candidates spoke on future plans, holidays, healthy lifestyle, the environment, their town/country, school, leisure activities, future plans, daily routine and their families. Some candidates not only communicated their message clearly but, as last year, were also able to do so in consistently accurate language. The best work in terms of language featured an accurate range of verbs in a variety of tenses and a range of appropriate vocabulary. Such work featured a range of longer more complex utterances and a sound use of structures such as *si* + imperfect + a conditional tense, *avant de* + infinitive, perfect infinitives, *depuis* and, occasionally, compound tenses.

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

FRENCH

Paper 0520/42
Writing

Key messages

- There was evidence of some improvement in the manipulation of verbs in both **Question 2** and **Question 3**.
- In **Question 2**, candidates did not always respond in the required tense: this is particularly important in the case of the final task.
- In **Question 3**, candidates should frame a response using the tense indicated in the task.
- The recommended word count for both **Question 2** and **Question 3** is not mandatory; candidates should not feel obliged to remove significant detail to meet the word count.
- Candidates aiming for the highest grades should make sure that they can use common vocabulary and structures accurately. In **Question 3**, to access the top bands for Other linguistic features, candidates must demonstrate that they can use the complex structures which are detailed in the specification.
- Candidates should always aim for a high standard of legibility and presentation: there was some improvement in this area this session.

General comments

The full ability range was represented. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

Question 1

As most centres are now aware, marks are awarded for each recognisable word which fits the context of the rubric, whether or not the item is one of those suggested by the pictures.

Question 2

Communication

A mark was awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information in order to gain a mark. Candidates are not required to provide the same amount of information for each task, however candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks. The most effective way of gaining full marks is to address each task in a new sentence and where possible to add extra relevant detail.

The word count is a recommendation and not an absolute requirement. If candidates write over 80 words, they should not indiscriminately remove parts of their response. The act of editing a piece on completion is quite difficult, especially if there is little time available. Some candidates crossed out details which were vital for the successful completion of the task.

Candidates are reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

Language

The published criteria offer a clear guide to what is expected. Candidates should use simple sentence structure, using appropriate verb forms, definite/indefinite articles, adjectives, time phrases and prepositional phrases.

Question 3 offered a choice of three options: a letter, a blog, a story line to be continued.

Candidates are advised to read all three options before making their choice. A close reading of the tasks within the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary, verb tenses and structures which will be needed in order to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Frequently the rubric provides key vocabulary. Candidates should always copy correctly key vocabulary items from the rubric and also look for clues of the gender of any significant nouns.

Communication: to gain the 2 marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the tasks using a tense which is appropriate. Candidates are strongly advised to answer each task in the tense used in the rubric. The use of a different tense will distort the meaning and invariably lead to the loss of marks. Whilst it is always a good idea to add an extra detail or opinion where possible, it must be remembered that excessive length often leads to error, repetition and irrelevance. Candidates should be advised to be selective when they are planning their responses.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs. The maximum mark of 8 is awarded for 18 verbs. If a candidate produces a 'correct' verb form which is in the 'wrong' tense for the task, there is no reward. There was some general improvement in the control of verbs and tenses this session and there were a number of instances of candidates who were able to maintain control of verbs beyond the number required for full marks.

Other linguistic features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The ablest candidates were able to demonstrate, among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses (e.g. *quand, si, parce que, car, qui*), object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions, (e.g. *donc, cependant*), strong negatives (*ne...jamais, ne...plus*), comparative/superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions (e.g. *depuis, pendant, pour*) and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. This session, there was less evidence of many of these structures, particularly object pronouns.

It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity and common prepositions. Without this they will not access the top most bands.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1: Vous visitez la campagne

This straightforward question provided candidates with an opportunity to establish a base for further success. The pictures gave clear guidance of what was required and candidates had little difficulty naming five items. For the most part, candidates used the words for the items illustrated. There were some additions to the list of possible answers: *abeille, alouette, bétail, étang, foin*.

The pictures presented no great difficulty but candidates were not always certain of the spellings of common words: *arbre, montagne, oiseau*. It should be noted that those who offered *eu, châteu, oiseu* for *eau, château, oiseau* received no reward for these faulty spellings.

Question 2: Ma fête préférée

Communication

Candidates were successful in conveying many relevant details. The individual tasks offered opportunities to give a range of information.

Occasionally marks were withheld if the spelling of important words was incorrect: most commonly this related to words ending in *-eau*, e.g. *cadeau, gâteau* (see **Question 1**) but both *couleur* and *lumière* were also frequently incorrectly spelt: *coleur, luminères*. There was also evidence of confusion over the meaning of the verb *gagner* which seemed to be used to convey the idea of 'to receive'.

In **Task 1**, the majority of candidates were able to identify their favourite festival. The most popular references were to *Holi*, *Diwali*, *Noël*. Numerous additional details were offered and were rewarded including dates (*le festival est en décembre*) and weather (*il fait froid*). It should be noted that if there is a French word for the festival mentioned, candidates were expected to use it in order to gain a mark.

For **Task 2**, candidates were required to state with whom they preferred to spend the festival. Additional marks were available for reasons.

Candidates were able to gain marks readily in **Task 3** when describing the many and varied activities they engage in during the festival (e.g. *nous chantons*). There was some evidence of more advanced vocabulary (*on échange des cadeaux, on lance des pétards*).

In **Task 4**, most candidates understood that they needed to say what they eat and drink at this festival. This required very familiar, accessible structures and vocabulary. There was some evidence of confusion between the noun *boisson* and the verb *boire*. There were some who chose to describe the food and drink available: a reminder that candidates should always respond directly to the question as posed.

Task 5 required reference to the plans for their next birthday: the task was framed in such a way as to allow candidates to gain additional marks for any relevant reasons. Candidates proposed a range of ideas for their next birthday.

Language

Most candidates could formulate sentences, a requirement for the award of marks for Communication. However, although the verb forms were not always secure, the intended meanings were conveyed effectively enough which meant that most candidates scored at least 3 marks. It is important that candidates remember to use the tense indicated in the task: this especially applies to the final task of this question. It is a regular requirement that candidates use an acceptable form of the future or conditional tense as is suggested by the wording of the task, e.g. *je vais aller au cinéma*. More candidates would have achieved 5 marks, if they had respected that rule.

Section 2

Candidates must look carefully at each of the three options: they should choose the question which they are best equipped to answer.

Question 3 (a) : La nouvelle année scolaire

This question attracted about 33% of candidates.

Communication

Task 1 required candidates to mention something which they did during the first day of the new school term. Some chose to mention academic matters, some mentioned sporting activities, whereas others referred to social activities or even their routine. All such details were rewarded. As most candidates gave more than one detail, the majority gained at least 1 mark here. However, two verbs caused problems for candidates: *rencontrer*, which was often misspelt or confused with *raconter* and the reflexive verb *se faire des amis*. *Faire des amis* is not acceptable.

Task 2, which invited a reaction to the events of the first day, was not always well handled: the verb used indicated that a past tense was required. Those who framed their response using a present tense (e.g. *je suis content parce qu'il y a une nouvelle piscine*) gained only 1 mark.

In **Task 3**, candidates had to give details of after school activities. Those who mentioned activities at the end of the school day were rewarded. There was some misunderstanding of the task: those who read this as a reference to what they will do at the end of the school year, were only partially rewarded.

In **Task 4**, the majority of candidates were able to convey some notion of what plans they have for next year. For the award of 2 marks, there needed to be some indication of the future, preferably with a future tense verb.

Candidates needed to identify a reason for their choice of activity in **Task 5**. As always, the marks for the reason were awarded even if the information about the activity was incoherent.

Verbs

It was possible to respond to this question using a range of very familiar verbs. Candidates who recognised the need for a verb in the past tense were not always careful in forming it. Common errors included the omission of the acute accent on the past participle of *-er* verbs, the omission of the auxiliary or the use of the wrong auxiliary.

Other linguistic features

The marks for the majority of candidates were drawn from the lower bands. The control of simple sentence structures, the spelling and gender of common nouns, e.g. school related vocabulary, and associated adjectives must be secure. There was some evidence of longer sequences of language using *qui, car, parce que* in the case of the latter. Candidates are expected to be familiar with the rules of elision.

There was evidence of a little more adventurous choice of adjectives: both *incroyable* and *inouvable* were seen in all three **Question 3** options.

Question 3 (b) : Les vacances à l'hôtel

This was the most popular choice with about 61% of candidates choosing this option. As candidates realised, it was possible to respond to each of the tasks in a straightforward way, using largely very familiar vocabulary and structures.

Communication

In **Task 1**, candidates were required to state when **and** where they stayed in a hotel. Candidates who conveyed only one of the required elements gained 1 mark. Candidates should remember that *j'ai habité un hôtel* or *j'ai visité un hôtel* are **not** appropriate in this context.

Task 2 invited a simple statement about what they did during the day. Some offered details about their routine, some made reference to typical holiday activities, whilst others wrote of more mundane activities. There were some candidates who were confused about the meaning of the word *journée* and who wrote of what they did during their journey. It is vital that all candidates know the meaning of this important word, just as they should know that *travail* and *travailler* relate to work and not travel.

In **Task 3**, most candidates were able to convey at least a simple statement about what they liked or did not like about the hotel. Marks were awarded for comments in both past and present tenses.

In **Task 4**, candidates needed to express a preference for either a hotel or a campsite for their future holiday. This was a relatively straightforward task requiring simple manipulation of the verb; the verb in the task indicated that candidates should use the conditional tense to convey their preference. Some candidates gained only 1 mark here because they did not use the appropriate tense or did not clearly state a preference.

A reason for the stated choice was expected in **Task 5** and, as with **Question 3(a)**, the marks for the reason were awarded even if the information about the activity was incoherent. Candidates gave positive and negative reasons for preferring a hotel. There were many candidates who preferred to go to a campsite.

Verbs

The performance here was generally not as good as in **Question 3(a)**. Candidates did find it quite easy to use a range of verbs to refer to their activities during their holiday at the hotel, but were less successful in managing the future and conditional tenses in the final tasks.

Some candidates did not choose the appropriate verb for the context, e.g. *j'ai habité l'hôtel, nous avons visité l'hôtel*. Neither of these are correct usages and although the verbs were correctly conjugated they were not rewarded. There was another idea which was often wrongly expressed: *j'ai joué du sport*. Candidates should know that the appropriate pattern is *j'ai fait du sport* or *j'ai joué au foot*.

Candidates who recognised the need for a verb in the past tense were not always careful: common errors included the omission of the acute accent on the past participle of *-er* verbs, the omission of the auxiliary or the use of the wrong auxiliary. Errors in the spelling of *visiter* are still common and these have an inevitable impact on the overall mark, e.g. *nous avons visté Dubai*.

Other linguistic features

There is some evidence to suggest that candidates showed a little more control of language generally in answers to this question. Control of basic vocabulary, gender, spelling, number is vital if they wish to progress beyond the lower bands: *ma chambre, mon lit, la nourriture, les repas*. A common problem encountered is with the noun *les vacances*: too many candidates think that it is a singular rather than a plural noun, that it is masculine rather than feminine. Errors of spelling are frequent too, e.g. *vancances*.

As with **Question 3(a)**, there was some evidence of a variety of sentence structures particularly when explaining the reason in **Task 5**.

Question 3 (c): Mon héros/héroïne

Approximately 6% of candidates attempted this option. It is expected that candidates recount a story prompted by the introduction in the rubric: few of those who chose this option were able to maintain the story as required to produce a coherent account.

Communication

There were a limited number of convincing accounts. Some chose to write of a fictional hero, e.g. Sherlock Holmes, Gandalf, but the majority opted for heroes/heroines from the realms of sport and popular music. In fact, the most convincing and coherent accounts came from those who chose the former.

In **Task 1**, candidates needed to give some details of this chance encounter. This was a fairly straightforward task.

Some detail explaining what happened next was expected in **Task 2**.

Unusually for this option, in **Task 3**, candidates could gain marks for a description of this person in the present tense. Most of those choosing this question gained marks here, sometimes for a physical description, sometimes for a comment about their character and sometimes for information about their work.

As is often the case in this question, **Task 4** invited candidates to say how they reacted to this meeting. This was a quite accessible task for the able candidates.

In **Task 5**, candidates needed to give an explanation of why they admire this person. This was occasionally a comment about their personality or a reference to their work. There was even approval of their charitable work.

Verbs

The few candidates who had wisely chosen this option demonstrated some consistent control of verbs in past tenses.

Other linguistic features

With the freedom to introduce the timescale and the activities they wish in recounting what happened, candidates have the chance to show off a good range of clause types, prepositional and adverbial phrases and adjectives with appropriate agreements.

There were opportunities to use clauses to communicate the sequence of events, and also to use object pronouns. These were however rare.

The types of problems mentioned in **Questions 3 (a) and (b)** were prevalent here too.