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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/11
Listening

General comments

This paper was found to be accessible to candidates and to be of a similar level of difficulty to the November 2009 paper. The topics and vocabulary tested were well within the learning experience of the candidature. Candidates understood that they needed to attempt all three sections of the test and only a few did not go on to attempt the final section of the paper.

The French heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and the emphasis of the questions moved from targeting candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces to requiring them to identify opinions and understand and identify explanations within narrated accounts in different tenses.

Candidates had usually been well prepared for the test and had often understood that, where questions required a written answer in French, a lengthy response was not required. It was clear from the work of better candidates that shorter more concise answers were often more successful, possibly because they resulted from more time spent listening and processing the required information.

The following comments are intended to ensure that the good practice observed by Examiners in the vast majority of Centres is passed on:

- When answering in French, full sentences do not need to be written. Single words or short phrases are frequently all that is required (see specific comments below on the different exercises).
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- Numbers may be written as figures.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This opening exercise was, as intended, accessible to all candidates. Candidates often did very well on these questions which were deliberately set to test familiar vocabulary and give candidates a confident start to the test. Short extracts of factual information were heard and vocabulary areas such as food, prices, furniture, clothing, shopping and places were tested. The first four questions were well done. On **Question 5**, quite a few candidates were not familiar with the word *jupe*. **Question 6** was well done. On **Question 7,**

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le canapé was not well known. *Centre commercial* was usually well known in **Question 8,** but on this last question some candidates opted for B (picture of a car park) rather than A.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates coped very well with this exercise, for which they usually had to indicate their response by ticking one of three boxes. Candidates heard a short extract about an activity holiday based in a youth hostel. Questions tested ages, times, sporting activities, free time activities, geographical location and methods of making a booking. **Questions 9** (requiring the number 14 to be written) and **10** (requiring one of *midi/douze heures/12 heures/12* to be written) were usually well done. *Après-midi* was a common response for candidates who did not score for **Question 10**. On **Question 13**, weaker candidates often gave B (beach) rather than A (forest) as the location of the youth hostel.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

This exercise featured four young people talking about their home lives and household tasks. It proved very accessible to candidates and whatever their local environment or experience of life, they were generally familiar with the vocabulary areas of household tasks and daily routine.

Weaker candidates sometimes invalidated some of their answers by indicating too many choices. It is important to remind candidates that on this exercise they must not indicate more than 6 statements as being true.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of the exercise, candidates heard an interview with Aurélie who talked about the weather in Martinique. Candidates had to correct one incorrect detail in each of five statements. Candidates approached this exercise well and scored good marks here. On **Question 18** many identified *vent* correctly. If the spelling *vont* was given, the mark was not awarded. There were many renderings of *nourriture* on **Question 19,** most of which were acceptable, and on **Question 20** good numbers identified *télé* or *météo* (both of which were acceptable). **Question 21** was usually correct although there were a few responses such as *maisons/magasins.* The answer *école(s)* did not need to have an article but Centres need to be aware that if an attempt at an article is included and candidates elide words incorrectly, then they will not gain the mark. This principle applies throughout the exam. Consequently, answers such as *lesecoles, lécole* did not gain the mark. **Question 22** was approached well and many were able to render *électricité* in an acceptable way.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The final part of the exercise featured Elise talking about storms on her island, Mayotte. Candidates were required to give short written responses to the questions. On **Question 23**, many correctly answered *pluie* and attempts to render *fortes* were ignored. **Question 24** was found to be more challenging and only the more able indicated the concepts of *fermer les fenêtres* or *attacher les meubles,* either of which was acceptable. Candidates opting for the second answer sometimes found it difficult to spell *meubles*. This was one of the answers which did require an attempt at an appropriate verb in order to convey the correct message. On **Question 25**, many were able to write *sortir* or express the idea that people had to stay indoors which was acceptable. **Question 26** proved more challenging: again, a full sentence was not required to score the mark and Examiners looked for the words *maison moderne*. The most difficult question on this exercise was found to be **Question 27** which required candidates to identify the idea of floods.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

Candidates heard an interview with a French footballer and had to demonstrate their understanding by responding to multiple choice questions. Candidates generally scored better on the last three questions than on the first three. At this level, candidates need to be able to understand the sequence of actions in a narrative account so a clear understanding of tense will help them to identify the order in which actions take place. Candidates also need to be aware that, at this level, questions will be set to identify attitudes or emotions. It is well worth spending time in class helping students acquire adjectives to describe moods/feelings and then matching them to synonyms. On **Question 30,** *ravi* did not seem to be well known.

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Exercise 2 Questions 34-42

This final exercise required candidates to write short answers in French and was found to be suitably challenging at this stage of the examination. An interview with Martine, a young pharmacist, was heard and questions required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of both factual information and opinions in a variety of tenses. Long answers were not required and candidates should be encouraged to be as concise as possible in order not to confuse or distort answers by adding extra detail which may be incorrect and/or surplus to the required concept.

On **Question 34**, the single word *stage* was adequate to score the mark. Renderings such as *étage/*éstage did not gain the mark. If candidates wrote that Martine worked at a hospital, this was acceptable, but if candidates continued that she worked as a doctor, this extra incorrect material invalidated their answer. **Question 35** was well done and was an accessible mark for all candidates as all that was needed was the word *mère.* Alternative acceptable answers made reference to the fact that Martine had grown up in a pharmacy or that her mother was a pharmacist. Again, on **Question 36**, reference to *médicaments* was all that was required to gain the mark. Many were successful on this question. Some candidates need to be reminded of the difference between the words *médecin* and *médicaments.* **Question 37** was perhaps the most challenging on the paper, but the best candidates could identify the required concepts: firstly that Martine gave advice to her clients or they received advice from her; and secondly that they consulted her/saw her **before** seeing the doctor. Candidates were generally more successful on **Question 38** and were able to identify that science was progressing or that there were new medicines/drugs. **Question 40** was answered even more successfully with a good number able to say that Martine went out or dined with friends. Incorrect answers stated that she had friends who were pharmacists: this information was indeed heard in the extract but the question asked *Que…?* not *Qui…?.* Candidates need to focus carefully on which interrogative adverb is used in the question. On **Question 41**, many identified the idea of responsibility and then did not go on to express the complete concept of **being** or **having** responsibility. Some alternative good answers expressed the idea that Martine was a person who liked responsibility or that she liked the idea of having employees or being the boss. On the last question, many candidates were able to identify *un rôle social*. The correct answer needed a verb to complete the concept and the most frequent correct answer was *elle joue un rôle social.*

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/21
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, candidates coped well with the requirements of this paper – presentation and legibility were usually good, and candidates showed no signs of pressure of time. It is worth noting that candidates who finish the paper in good time could profitably read through their answers again in order to eliminate any careless omissions. Candidates had been thoroughly prepared to cope with the type of questions and almost all attempted all sections of the paper.

This paper is marked electronically, so it is particularly important that candidates observe the rubrics about how and where they should answer questions. For example, in the first exercise of *Section 3*, candidates must tick one of the *Vrai/Faux* boxes to indicate whether they think each statement is true or false. Where they have decided that the answer is *Faux*, they should write the correction of the sentence in the space given, on the line below. Where there is no tick in either box, the mark cannot be awarded for that element of the task. Throughout the paper, where candidates are undecided about an answer and make more than one attempt at it, they must make it clear which is to be taken as their final decision, or no mark can be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates handled these discrete questions with ease. For **Question 3** (which required candidates to say what could be bought in a *Pâtisserie*), D (a picture of a ham) was occasionally chosen instead of the correct C (a picture of a cake). For **Question 4** (which required candidates to identify what activity was forbidden by the sign *Pique-nique interdit*), A (a picture of someone swimming) was sometimes chosen instead of C (a picture of people having a picnic).

Exercice 2 Questions 6-10

The questions in this matching task were well answered. For **Question 7**, (which required candidates to link *Je dois acheter des timbres* and *la poste* (answer B)), A (*la gare*) was sometimes offered as the answer.

Exercice 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were given a short text to read followed by 5 multiple choice questions. The text took the form of an email from Max, who was arranging a meeting with a friend. Again, these questions tended to be very well answered. For **Question 13**, some did not make the connection between *spaghettis* and *pâtes* (answer C), instead giving *de la salade* (A) as their answer.

Exercice 4 Question 16

Candidates were asked to write a short message to their French friend, giving 3 pieces of information: **(a)** how they are travelling to town, **(b)** what they are buying, and **(c)** what they are doing afterwards. There are 3 marks available for communication (1 mark for each element of the message) and 2 marks for the language used. The points of information are cued by a short French stimulus supported by an illustration and the correct interpretation of the illustrations is important, as is indicated in the rubric. Those parts which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

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Candidates should be advised that there is nothing to be gained from expanding their answers to this exercise. There are no additional marks to be gained by adding to the required information and any time spent adding such embellishment, which is ignored by the Examiner, could be allocated more profitably to *Sections 2* and **3**. The most successful answers are those which manage to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately – e.g. an answer such as *Je prends le train pour acheter des CD. Après, je vais jouer au tennis* is awarded the full 5 marks.

This writing task was generally well tackled and scores of 4 or 5 marks were common. Most candidates could communicate the 3 tasks – incorrect spellings were tolerated (e.g. *tenis*) provided that the meaning was clear. All tenses were accepted for communication.

As far as the mark for language is concerned, candidates are required to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses in order to score the 2 marks available. *Pour acheter,* as in the example above, was credited as an example of correct verb usage. Past tenses were accepted as possible for the first 2 tasks.

Section 2

Exercice 1 Questions 17-24

In this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended passage of French and answer questions on it, also in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. The text took the form of an email from Eric about preparations for his mother's birthday. Often, a one or two word answer was all that was needed (e.g. for **Question 17**, *sortir,* for **Question 19(a)**, *gateau* or *surprise*), but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was tolerated unless it was contradictory. The quality of written French is considered only for the purposes of communication. Incorrect pronouns and possessive adjectives were ignored.

Question 18 asked why Sunday was a special day and many candidates correctly answered that it was the birthday of Eric's mother. Some invalidated their answer by the addition of *et son père* or by saying *l'anniversaire de ses parents*. Most candidates showed good comprehension of the text and scored between 8 and 10 marks.

Exercice 2 Question 25

This writing task seemed well within the experience of all candidates. In their piece of writing they were asked to complete 4 tasks: **(a)** to describe the activities they like to do after school, **(b)** to say why they like them, **(c)** to say with whom they do these activities, and **(d)** to say what they are going to do this evening after school. 10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks are available for language.

The majority of candidates were able to score well for communication. Most candidates attempted to write something for each task, and found plenty to say. A small number of candidates seemed to have misread the question and instead of talking about activities after school, they talked about what they did in school time, but credit was still given for reasons why candidates liked the activities, and for the person or people with whom they did them. Some omitted the last task. Most candidates offered many and varied things they liked doing, together with the friends and family members who joined them. There were some candidates who worked their way through a list of what they did each day after school, but many candidates were able to give a variety of activities, together with interesting reasons and justifications. Studying and revising for examinations were common activities mentioned.

In terms of the mark for language, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate and understandable French. The most successful candidates wrote simply and clearly, using a range of vocabulary and structures. They avoided attempts to convey over-complicated ideas for which they did not have sufficient command of the language. Weaker answers were often repetitive and relied heavily on lists.

Candidates should be advised to check carefully the accuracy of their writing, in particular the verbs they use in their piece. In general there was encouragingly accurate use of common verbs in the perfect tense and verbs followed by an infinitive.

Candidates should avoid writing too much. There is no gain to be had from producing an overlong essay, and the time could perhaps be more profitably spent on checking their work and on subsequent exercises in *Section 3*.

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Section 3

In this section, Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer.

Exercice 1 Questions 26-31

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are required to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given. Examiners do not accept merely the negative version of the original statement for the award of a mark. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true. While it is still sometimes possible to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is therefore important that candidates are trained to answer succinctly as the longer the answer the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

Most candidates scored very well for correctly identifying the true and false statements. A few thought that **Question 27** was false and some thought that **Question 30** was true. Candidates were generally very successful in their corrections of the incorrect statements, and those who chose to lift answers direct from the text were very accurate in their selections – there were very few invalidations caused by the addition of extra material.

Exercice 2 Questions 32-40

In this, the very last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. Questions always appear in text order. The subject matter of the text was generally well understood, and candidates usually managed to locate the area of text within which the answer was contained. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' unselectively from the text may contain additional information or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates need to be prepared to rephrase their answer to make sure that they are using the correct person of the verb, or correct pronouns and possessive adjectives.

For **Question 32** (Why does Gabrielle not want to talk about her family?), the answer is in the first sentence – simply, *sa famille est / était très pauvre* or *elle veut cacher ses origines*. Some candidates thought the answer was contained in the next sentence – e.g. ...*à l'âge de 12 ans elle perd sa mère,* or *son père décide de partir seul en Amérique*. **Question 33** was usually well-answered with *dans un internat,* though some candidates invalidated this answer by the addition of …*où la discipline.* The majority of candidates correctly chose *vendeuse* as their answer for **Question 34** though a number offered *chanteuse*. **Questions 35**, **36** and **37** were generally answered well, and many managed an appropriate response to **Question 38**, giving *cheveux courts* – some candidates had difficulties using *maigreur* or *maigre*. Both parts of **Question 39** were usually well done, though some thought the answer for **(ii)** was the death of Arthur Capel (which was actually the answer for **Question 40:** what pushes Coco Chanel to work even harder?). *Elle se jette plus que jamais dans son* travail or *elle lance son premier parfum* were common wrong answers to **Question 40**.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/22
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, candidates coped well with the requirements of this paper – presentation and legibility were usually good, and candidates showed no signs of pressure of time. It is worth noting that candidates who finish the paper in good time could profitably read through their answers again in order to eliminate any careless omissions. Candidates had been thoroughly prepared to cope with the type of questions and almost all attempted all sections of the paper.

This paper is marked electronically, so it is particularly important that candidates observe the rubrics about how and where they should answer questions. For example, in the first exercise of *Section 3*, candidates must tick one of the *Vrai/Faux* boxes to indicate whether they think each statement is true or false. Where they have decided that the answer is *Faux*, they should write the correction of the sentence in the space given, on the line below. Where there is no tick in either box, the mark cannot be awarded for that element of the task. Throughout the paper, where candidates are undecided about an answer and make more than one attempt at it, they must make it clear which is to be taken as their final decision, or no mark can be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates handled these discrete questions with ease. **Question 3** (which required candidates to link *Marché à 200 mètres* with a picture of a market) was sometimes incorrectly answered.

Exercice 2 Questions 6-10

The questions in this matching task were well answered. Candidates sometimes reversed the answers to **Question 7** (which required candidates to link *Je vais faire les courses* and *au supermarché*) and **Question 9** (which required candidates to link *Je veux me promener* with *au jardin public*).

Exercice 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were given a short text to read followed by 5 multiple choice questions. The text took the form of an email from Christophe, who was recuperating at home after a bicycle accident. Again, these questions tended to be well answered. For **Question 11** some were tempted by answer B (…*à l'hôpital*) because of the reference to injury, but Christophe writes *Je suis à la maison aujourd'hui*. For **Question 13** some offered A (…*est très malade*) rather than C (…*est un peu blessé*). C was the correct answer because Christophe writes *Je n'ai rien de grave mais j'ai mal au dos*. For **Question 15** some could not make the connection between *Je ne sais pas quoi faire* in the text and answer A (…*s'ennuie*) opting instead for answer C (…*s'endort*).

Exercice 4 Question 16

Candidates were asked to write a short message to their French friend, giving 3 pieces of information: **(a)** with whom they are in town, **(b)** what they are buying, and **(c)** how they are returning home. There are 3 marks available for communication (1 mark for each element of the message) and 2 marks for the language used. The points of information are cued by a short French stimulus supported by an illustration and the correct interpretation of the illustrations is important, as is indicated in the rubric. Those parts which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

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Candidates should be advised that there is nothing to be gained from expanding their answers to this exercise. There are no additional marks to be gained by adding to the required information and any time spent adding such embellishment, which is ignored by the Examiner, could be allocated more profitably to *Sections 2* and **3**. The most successful answers are those which manage to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately – e.g. an answer such as *Je suis en ville avec mes amis pour acheter / j'achète des baskets. Je rentre / je vais rentrer en autobus* is awarded the full 5 marks.

This writing task was generally well tackled and scores of 4 or 5 marks were common. Most candidates could communicate the 3 tasks – the spelling of *chaussures* caused some difficulties for task **(b)**, but spelling errors were tolerated provided that the word began with the correct phonetic sound. Other clothing purchases were not credited.

As far as the mark for language is concerned, candidates are required to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses in order to score the 2 marks available. The first person of *acheter* caused some problems: there was a tendency to omit the accent, which was tolerated, but the *j'* needed to be correct for the mark to be awarded. Past tenses were accepted as possible for the first 2 tasks.

Section 2

Exercice 1 Questions 17-24

In this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended passage in French and answer questions on it, also in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. The text took the form of an email from Carole about her holiday in Bretagne. Often, a one or two word answer was all that was needed (e.g. for **Question 18**, *famille,* for **Question 19**, *père*), but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was tolerated unless it was contradictory. The quality of written French is considered only for the purposes of communication. Incorrect pronouns and possessive adjectives were ignored. Most candidates showed good comprehension of the text and scored between 8 and 10 marks.

Questions 17 to **20** were generally correctly answered. For **Question 21**, 2 pieces of information were required, *partager une chambre* and *loin de la mer*. Sometimes candidates added an incorrect answer – *la maison était confortable* (which is not an *inconvénient*) – or misspelt the key words – *lion* instead of *loin* and *mère* instead of *mer*. Incorrect spellings are tolerated provided that the message is clear and that the candidate's rendering of the answer does not give a different French word with another meaning. Candidates usually answered **Questions 22** to **24** correctly though in some cases the answer given for **Question 23** (What was the weather like during their stay?) was *le climat en Bretagne ne me plaît pas* (not accepted), rather than that it rained a lot and was too cold to go out.

Exercice 2 Question 25

This writing task seemed well within the experience of all candidates. In their piece of writing they were asked to complete 4 tasks: **(a)** to describe their town or village, **(b)** to describe what there is to see and do nearby, **(c)** to say what they do not like about their town or village and why, and **(d)** to say where they would like to live if they could choose. 10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks are available for language.

The majority of candidates were able to score well for communication. Most candidates attempted to write something for each task, and found plenty to say. A small number of candidates seemed to have misread the question and wrote about their house, rather than the town/village they lived in, and about routine activities in the home, rather than what was available to see and do nearby, but credit was given for the remaining tasks where possible. Noise and pollution figured strongly in answer **(c)** as did crime and violence. For **(d)**, correct use of *Je voudrais habiter...* was refreshingly common.

In terms of the mark for language, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate and understandable French. The most successful candidates wrote simply and clearly, using a range of vocabulary and structures. They avoided attempts to convey over-complicated ideas for which they did not have sufficient command of the language. Weaker answers were often repetitive and relied heavily on lists.

Candidates should be advised to check carefully the accuracy of their writing, in particular the verbs they use in their piece. In general there was encouragingly accurate use of common verbs in the perfect tense and verbs followed by an infinitive.

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Candidates should avoid writing too much. There is no gain to be had from producing an overlong essay, and the time could perhaps be more profitably spent on checking their work and on subsequent exercises in *Section 3*.

Section 3

In this section, Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer.

Exercice 1 Questions 26-31

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are required to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given. Examiners do not accept merely the negative version of the original statement for the award of a mark. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true. While it is still sometimes possible to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is therefore important that candidates are trained to answer succinctly as the longer the answer the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

Most candidates scored very well for correctly identifying the true and false statements. For **Question 26**, most candidates realised that the correction was to be found in the sentences *Ce sport occupe la première place dans ma vie quotidienne. C'est ce qui compte avant tout pour moi.* Either of these possibilities was acceptable, providing that the change was made from *ma vie* to *sa vie*, or from *pour moi* to *pour elle* (*c'est le sport qui compte avant tout pour elle)*. For **Question 27** it was important to show in the correction that Emilie spent her time on both activities – studying and kayaking. Similarly, in **Question 29** candidates needed to understand that strength was also necessary or that more than one 'quality' was required. **Question 31** was usually correctly answered with the sentence carefully selected from the text, *elle termine seulement en septième position* – some candidates were misled by mention of the Olympic Games in the previous sentence and said that Emilie had been selected, rather than giving her result.

Exercice 2 Questions 32-39

In this, the very last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. Questions always appear in text order. The subject matter of the text was generally well understood, and candidates usually managed to locate the area of text within which the answer was contained. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' unselectively from the text may contain additional information or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates need to be prepared to rephrase their answer to make sure that they are using the correct person of the verb, or correct pronouns and possessive adjectives.

In **Question 32**, use of *je*, or *ma* in the answer was not accepted. Tense was important when saying why *Monsieur Martin* became a teacher: some candidates did not understand the difference between saying *il a un excellent professeur* and *il a eu un excellent professeur*. For **Question 33**, many candidates understood that study of the past helped students... *de mieux comprendre le monde actuel.* The retention of *donc* at the beginning of the answer distorted and was therefore treated as an invalidation. Candidates generally understood **Question 34** and many provided a satisfactory answer along the lines of *permettait de se préparer à la profession*. Many coped well with **Question 35** – the most common wrong answer referred to *une formation pratique* which is what the students wished for, not what they did in class. **Questions 36** and **37** proved more difficult, as candidates thought the answers were to do with Monsieur Martin's students thinking him severe, or thinking they had received *un enseignement satisfaisant*. Many candidates were able to score for **Questions 38** and **39**. In answers to **Question 38** sometimes the incorrect pronoun (*je*) or possessive adjective (*mes/tes*) was retained. The most common wrong answer for **Question 39** (which asked candidates to say how they know that Monsieur Martin doesn't regret his choice of career) was *il devienne de plus en plus difficile à exercer*.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/23
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, candidates coped very well with the requirements of this paper and showed commendable knowledge and understanding of the French tested at this level. Presentation and legibility were usually good, and candidates showed no signs of pressure of time. Candidates had been thoroughly prepared to cope with the type of questions and almost all attempted all sections of the paper.

Questions were answered in the spaces provided and the candidates' intentions were made clear if they changed an answer. This was particularly welcome as the paper is marked electronically.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates handled these discrete questions with ease. The one item of vocabulary which was not universally known was *parapluie* in **Question 5** where C (a jacket/anorak) was sometimes chosen.

Exercice 2 Questions 6-10

The questions in this matching task were well answered, in particular **Questions 7, 8** and **9**. The answers to **Questions 6** (which required candidates to link *Je cherche le camping* and *un plan de la ville*) and **10** (which required candidates to link *Je dois prendre le car* and *un ticket*) were reversed by some candidates.

Exercice 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates were given a short text to read followed by 5 multiple choice questions. The text took the form of an email from Caroline, who was on holiday at a friend's house. Again, these questions tended to be very well answered. The one item to present occasional difficulty was **Question 11**, where the requirement was to link *…Sarah qui habite pas loin de Bordeaux* in the text with *Sarah habite près de Bordeaux* in the question.

Exercice 4 Question 16

Candidates were asked to write a short message to their French friend, giving 3 pieces of information: **(a)** with whom they are in town, **(b)** what they are buying, and **(c)** what they are doing afterwards. There are 3 marks available for communication (1 mark for each element of the message) and 2 marks for the language used. The points of information are cued by a short French stimulus supported by an illustration. The correct interpretation of the illustrations is important, as is indicated in the rubric. So, for example, a response such as *J'achète une* jupe **(b)** or *Je vais au cinema* **(c)** would not receive credit for communication. Those parts which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Candidates should be advised that there is nothing to be gained from expanding their answers to this exercise. There are no additional marks to be gained by adding to the required information and any time spent adding such embellishment, which is ignored by the Examiner, could be allocated more profitably to *Sections 2* and **3**. The most successful answers are those which manage to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately – e.g. an answer such as *Je suis en ville avec Pierre pour acheter/j'achète un pantalon. Après, nous allons au café* is awarded the full 5 marks.

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This writing task was generally well tackled and scores of 5 marks were common. Most candidates could communicate the 3 tasks – incorrect spellings were tolerated provided that the meaning was clear. All tenses were accepted for communication.

As far as the mark for language is concerned, candidates are required to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses in order to score the 2 marks available. *Pour acheter,* as in the example above, was credited as an example of correct verb usage. Past tenses were acceptable as possible for the first 2 tasks.

Section 2

Exercice 1 Questions 17-25

In this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended passage of French and answer questions on it, also in French. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the text. The text took the form of an email from Adrien whose family is moving to Australia. Often, a one or two word answer was all that was needed (e.g. for **Question 17**, *guitare,* for **Question 18**, *chansons*), but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was tolerated unless it was contradictory. The quality of written French is considered only for the purposes of communication. Incorrect pronouns and possessive adjectives were ignored. Most candidates showed good comprehension of the text and scored between 8 and 10 marks.

In **Question 17** the majority of candidates could identify playing the guitar as the free time activity. A few invalidated this answer by implying that Adrien also did school work in his spare time. **Questions 18-22** were well answered, as was **Question 24**. In answer to **Question 23** most candidates seemed to be familiar with the idea of living in an *internat* or being an *interne.* A minority of answers were invalidated by reference to the *Internet*. The answer to **Question 25** was the most difficult for candidates to express in French but the mark scheme was tolerant of language and the key information of 'meeting' and 'friends' was rewarded.

Exercice 2 Question 26

This writing task seemed well within the experience of all candidates. In their piece of writing they were asked to complete 4 tasks: **(a)** where they go on holiday and when, **(b)** how they travel and why, **(c)** what they like to do on holiday, and **(d)** what they are going to do during the next school holidays and why. 10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks are available for language.

The majority of candidates were able to score well for communication. There were many interesting accounts of holidays spent and dreamed of. Candidates attempted to write something for each task, and found plenty to say. Occasionally task **(b)** was omitted. Some candidates referred in **(a)**, **(b)** and **(c)** to a specific holiday, perhaps in the past. This was accepted.

In terms of the mark for language, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate and understandable French. The most successful candidates wrote simply and clearly, using a range of vocabulary and structures. They avoided attempts to convey over-complicated ideas for which they did not have sufficient command of the language.

Candidates should be advised to check carefully the accuracy of their writing, in particular the verbs they use in their piece. In general there was encouragingly accurate use of common verbs in the perfect tense and verbs followed by an infinitive.

Candidates should avoid writing too much. There is no gain to be had from producing an overlong essay, and the time could perhaps be more profitably spent on checking their work and on subsequent exercises in *Section 3*.

Section 3

In this section, Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer.

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Exercice 1 Questions 27-32

For **Exercise 1**, candidates are required to read an extended passage in French, decide which of the given French statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in French, using the material from the text and in the style of the example given. Examiners do not accept merely the negative version of the original statement for the award of a mark. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true. While it is still sometimes possible to lift answers from the text, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is therefore important that candidates are trained to answer succinctly as the longer the answer the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer. Candidates need to be able to move from first to third person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

Question 27 was generally easily recognised as a 'false' statement. The correction could be made in one of two ways. The most common answer referred to *quand elle était petite* as the age when Simone discovered manga. Equally acceptable was to correct the statement by saying what Simone did at age 15, e.g. *elle a suivi des cours de japonais à l'âge de 15 ans.* It was not acceptable to 'lift' a whole sentence from the text such as *Simone se rappelle encore les premiers mangas qu'elle a vus à la television quand elle était petite et qui l'avaient tellement impressionnée.* Such an answer does not demonstrate that a candidate has understood the text or the question. The statement in **Question 28** was usually correctly identified as 'true'. For **Question 29**, a judicious selection from the text provided a correct answer, e.g. *c'est surtout grâce aux lettres de ses correspondants japonais qu'elle a appris cette langue.* **Question 30** was usually successfully identified as 'false' and successfully corrected. For **Question 31**, the easiest way to correct the false statement was to make a selective 'lift' e.g. *le plus dur c'est de traduire l'humour.*

Exercice 2 Questions 33-40

In this, the very last exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended text in French, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in French. Questions always appear in text order. The subject matter of the text was generally well understood, and candidates usually managed to locate the area of text within which the answer was contained. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' unselectively from the text may contain additional information or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates need to be prepared to rephrase their answer to make sure that they are using the correct person of the verb, or correct pronouns and possessive adjectives.

Many candidates scored full, or nearly full, marks. For **Question 33**, nearly all candidates identified *un documentaire émouvant* as the motivational influence on Elizabeth. **Question 34** proved to be the most difficult question on the paper. Although the question may have been understood, framing a clear answer was challenging. The simplest may have been *pour se rassurer.* Candidates generally seem unwilling to offer such succinct answers though and frequently offered more, which was more likely to be unclear or ambiguous. Full sentence answers are not demanded. Again, the most successful answers to **Question 35** were brief, e.g. *les bruits de la forêt.* Candidates who went so far as to copy out from the text *Elizabeth est tellement fatiguée qu'elle s'endort tout de suite malgré les bruits incroyables de la forêt tropicale* did not demonstrate comprehension of the question and the text and were not credited with the mark. Candidates are advised to note the amount of space available for the answer. If that space is greatly exceeded, the answer is likely to be inappropriate. **Question 36** and **Question 37** could both be answered using selective 'lifts' from the text (*les volontaires font chaque jour un travail différent* and *il y a une véritable harmonie*). In **Question 38** the word *accueillants* appeared to be well known. **Question 39(a)** was one of the more challenging questions: the brief answer *les volontaires* was acceptable. For **(b)**, the two marks were awarded for the ideas of *on revient changé/avec une vision différente* and *on revient avec des amitiés très fortes.* The presence of a verb was required in at least one of the parts in order to show comprehension. For the final question, either the idea of *c'est le retour à Paris* or *son séjour était trop court* was required. There was a high level of success on this question.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03
Speaking

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed the Core curriculum or the Extended curriculum. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in previous years, the full range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Candidate performance

Overall, the standard of work produced by candidates was perceived to be in line with that produced last year. Candidates had usually been well prepared for the test and, once again, there were some good examples of work from candidates across the range.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where it was clear that oral work was a regular part of classroom activity and where candidates were familiar with the requirements of the Speaking test. In such Centres, the Examiner conducting the test had prepared the Role plays well, enabling candidates to show that they could communicate in a variety of everyday situations. Candidates gained marks by following their cues and answering concisely. They were aware of the need to respond to unexpected questions on one task in each role play. The Examiner managed a smooth transition to the conversation sections and then pitched questions at a level appropriate to the candidate, while bearing in mind the descriptors of the mark scheme. Conversations were natural and candidates were given the opportunity to work in a variety of tenses, using a range of structures and vocabulary and covering a selection of different topics across both conversation sections.

In general, Examiners were aware of the need for spontaneity and conversations featured both predictable and unexpected questions. Candidates were given the opportunity show that they could respond to questions on topics with which they may have been familiar, but which they had not over prepared. A few Centres need to work towards achieving greater spontaneity in the test room. The use of question banks is of course useful during the learning process. Then, once vocabulary and structures have been acquired, candidates should be encouraged to move gradually away from predictable banks of questions. If the same banks of questions which have been used in class are used in the test room there is little opportunity for spontaneous conversation. A more effective approach is for Examiners to keep eye contact with candidates, listen to what they have to say and respond accordingly.

Conduct of the test

From the evidence heard on the recorded samples, many Examiners are clearly at ease in their role and familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE French Speaking test. The role of the conducting Examiner remains crucial in terms of putting the candidate at ease and enabling him/her to work for the available marks. The following list of comments is intended to help all Examiners to elicit the best possible performance from their candidates:

- **Preparation time**

The best examples of examining were in Centres which had clearly made good use of the 4 days available for preparation by the Examiner. During this time, Examiners had become familiar with the instructions, the paperwork, the Role play situations and their role in them. As a result, they followed the Role play cues/script provided in the Teachers' Notes booklet and did not confuse candidates by omitting one or more of the prescribed tasks and/or inserting extra tasks.

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- **Timings**

On the whole, the stipulated timings were observed. It is helpful to candidates to know before the test that each of the two conversation sections will last for 5 minutes. Examiners should then keep to these timings in the test. In the Topic presentation, it is always good practice to stop a candidate after they have presented for 2 minutes and to start to ask questions.

- **Transition between different sections of the Speaking test**

Many Examiners made it clear to candidates when they were moving from one section of the test to the next section. This helps put candidates at their ease. Such 'links' should be in French rather than in English.

- **Questioning technique**

There were many examples of patient and encouraging examining. In such cases, questions were rephrased, where necessary, giving candidates the chance to work for the available marks. Examiners are reminded that questions to elicit different tenses must be asked in both of the conversation sections.

- **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

The recorded sample should be selected to represent the full spread of performance in the Centre. This enables the Moderator to check that the application of the scheme is fair and accurate throughout the Centre's mark range. The recorded sample should be selected to represent the whole Centre. Where more than one Examiner is used, the sample should, wherever possible, include examples from each Examiner. Centres should not select and submit a full recorded sample per Examiner.

Recording quality had generally improved, largely thanks to the more widespread use of digital technology. It is nevertheless extremely important to check the position of microphones and the quality of the recording, both during the tests (between candidates) and before samples are despatched to CIE. The best quality recordings were produced in small rooms in which phones had been switched off and which were not situated close to noisy areas.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Most Centres included the cover sheet for the sample. This is provided in the Teachers' Notes booklet and should be completed in the Centre and submitted, with the recorded sample and other paperwork, for moderation by CIE.

- **Internal moderation**

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by CIE to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by the different Examiners in the Centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to CIE. Details of the Centre's Internal moderation procedures must also be sent to CIE, as specified on the 'Cover sheet for moderation sample'.

- **Clerical errors**

Moderators noted fewer cases of clerical errors this year. Some did still occur and Centres are reminded to check all additions and transcriptions with great care.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

The mark scheme was well understood in many Centres. Where Centres required large downward adjustments to their marks this was often as a result of issues related to the way in which the Speaking test was conducted. Examiners are reminded that they should cue all tasks as specified in the Role plays, that no section of the test should be omitted, that they should keep to the stipulated timings of 5 minutes per conversation section, and that they should give candidates the opportunity to respond in a range of tenses and to unexpected as well as predictable questions in both conversation sections.

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Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation. Where the stipulated tasks are changed or omitted and/or extra tasks are added this will confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. Candidates should be trained to include a greeting and thanks where appropriate. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of three. Although, full sentences with a conjugated verb are often not required to complete a task, should a verb be used by the candidate it must be correct for a mark of 3 to be appropriate. If the verb is incorrect, the maximum mark that can be awarded for the task is 2. Dubious pronunciation should be queried as communication may be affected when pronunciation is unclear. Candidates are allowed to self-correct but cannot be given marks if the Examiner completes the task for them.

A Role Plays

As in 2009, the A Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Minimum Core Vocabulary (areas A, B and C). Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even weaker candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task.

Phoning a camp site

This was generally well done by candidates. Some candidates stated that they wanted to make a reservation instead of saying that they had a reservation. The pronunciation of *réservation* was sometimes unclear. Other tasks were well done and nearly all made a good attempt at asking the question on the last task.

At the railway station

Again, candidates had clearly practised similar situations and coped well. Task 4 required candidates to specify what kind of ticket they required and many knew *aller-retour/aller simple.* For Task 5, many candidates were able to ask at what time the train would arrive. Some candidates needed more practice on how to ask for a time.

Buying food for a picnic

In Task 1, some candidates immediately stated what they would like to buy. Candidates should be reminded that the first task of each Role play always requires a rephrasing of the rubric. Nearly all candidates could ask for fruit and a drink. Brand names of drinks were acceptable given the international nature of the test. The pronunciation of *jus* requires further practice. In Task 5, some candidates omitted to thank the grocer: this meant the task was not completed and a mark of 1 became appropriate. All candidates coped well with asking for a price.

B Role Plays

As always, the B Role plays were more demanding in that they required candidates to respond spontaneously to an unexpected question, provide a reaction to a situation, and operate in a tense other than the present. These Role plays differentiated well across the candidature, but sympathetic examining made it possible for all candidates to score marks. The tasks were perceived to be of equal difficulty across the three situations, with each card having its easier and more difficult tasks.

Phoning a friend to announce a late arrival

Most candidates were able to say why they were phoning. Not all candidates were able to offer an apology on Task 2. Well-prepared Examiners, who were following the script provided, supported their candidates on Task 4 by waiting for a question. Examiners are reminded of the need for careful prompting as those who asked candidates where the meeting would be, completed the task for them and prevented them from scoring. The last task was well done.

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Organising a party

Nearly all candidates managed to convey what had already been organised (Task 2) and how many friends had been invited (Task 3). On Task 4, candidates often found it difficult to convey their enthusiasm and this is an area which teachers could practise in class with simple expressions such as *bonne idée/je veux bien*. In Task 5, candidates were nearly always able to communicate the message of their question.

Ringing the dentist to arrange an appointment

Again, some candidates did not say why they were phoning but went straight into Task 2. Many were able to say **how** they had broken their tooth. **When** was sometimes omitted. Careful prompting by the Examiner reminded candidates to complete both elements of the task. Reflexive verbs were not always well known. Nearly all candidates were able to give their nationality for Task 3. For Task 4, some found it difficult to express that they were pleased or happy: this is another reaction which can be built into classroom practice. Most made a good attempt at phrasing an appropriate question on the last task.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

This section was usually well conducted in Centres with Examiners keeping to the stipulated timing of 5 minutes for the whole section (including 1-2 minutes of presentation by the candidate). A good range of topics was covered in Centres. As in 2009 there were accounts of life in other countries, celebrations, school life, future plans and sport. Many spoke of the importance of education and there were also some interesting reflections upon the role of technology in the lives of young people, and, in some countries, upon local health issues. Candidates had usually made themselves familiar with the appropriate range of vocabulary and structures and there were very few cases of candidates who seemed unprepared. Questioning should encourage candidates to respond in a natural and spontaneous way by requiring them to manipulate the material they have prepared rather than merely repeat the substance of their presentation. The best examining enabled candidates to express opinions and feelings on their chosen topic, using a range of tenses and structures.

Examiners are reminded of the importance of indicating to candidates that the Topic conversation has finished and the General conversation is about to begin.

General Conversation

Examiners were generally aware of the need to cover 2 or 3 different topics in this section of the test, though it may be necessary to cover more topics with weaker candidates who will not be able to answer in as much depth. There were many examples of good, connected, questioning which allowed candidates to develop answers in a range of tenses. Where questioning moved abruptly from topic to topic this was often confusing for candidates. Examiners should aim to ask a series of connected questions on one topic before moving on to another topic.

In order to award marks in the Satisfactory band or above, the candidate must show that s/he can use past and future tenses accurately. It is not sufficient for Examiners to ask questions to elicit past and future tenses if the candidate cannot use these tenses successfully in his/her reply. It is useful to practice adverbs of time in class as familiarity with these will help candidates identify the time frame in which they should be operating.

Questions should invite candidates to talk. Where questioning restricts candidates to short or 'yes'/'no' responses, they will not have the opportunity to use the range of structures necessary for access to the higher bands.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/41
Continuous Writing

General comments

Examiners found much to commend in the performance of many candidates. The best were capable of using complex language and a wide and varied vocabulary, with only a minimal incidence of error. A large proportion presented answers which were relevant and largely accurate giving a true reflection of their abilities.

From the evidence seen, many candidates are clearly familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE French Continuous Writing paper. Some candidates did not make the most of the opportunities this paper offers to show their command of the language to its best advantage. In many cases, improved examination technique and presentation would have enabled such candidates to achieve higher marks. It is with these candidates in mind that Examiners offer the following pointers, aimed at improving examination performance:

1 When a choice of questions is offered, candidates should select the question they consider to be the best suited to their knowledge of French. This may not always be the one they find the most interesting. Then they should prepare in brief a plan of their answer in accordance with the set tasks. As the recommended length is 140 words, they should plan to spread the answer fairly evenly over the tasks set out in the rubric. If they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two tasks they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks. If they cover all the points in 100 words they might be reduced to padding out the ending to reach 140 words, so they should look to identify the areas where they can expand their response with examples. Examiners will not mark anything which occurs outside the word count. Where candidates write answers which are shorter than 130-140 words they are likely to restrict their chances of gaining the maximum mark available for language.

2 Candidates should remember that the rubric is not a rough guide but that it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. They should read the question carefully and keep to these tasks, avoiding irrelevance. If the tasks require a certain tense then they should stick to that tense and not drift into inappropriate tenses.

3 Candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay attention especially to verb forms. Good spelling gains marks, incorrect spelling does not. Adjectives should agree. Accents should be clear and unambiguous. Candidates should take their time. The time allowed for the paper is normally ample. When they have finished they should make full use of the time left to check their work for errors.

4 Within the limits on content imposed by the set tasks, the paper is an exercise in free composition so candidates should write that which they are confident is correct French and avoid what they do not know. They should be encouraged to present their best French to the Examiner.

5 Presentation is very important. If the Examiner cannot read what the candidate has written no marks can be awarded. Handwriting must always be legible.

6 Some candidates tend to include long lists of proper nouns such as place names or personal names. This practice is to be discouraged as the mark scheme does not allow the award of accuracy ticks to such lists and they can take up a significant proportion of the word allocation. In addition, lists of nouns, such as food items accompanied by simple articles, gain little credit.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) The most influential person in my life

This option attracted fewer candidates than **1(b)** but some interesting answers were received.

The pen-portrait format seemed to be a familiar one, and most candidates made a genuine attempt to address the tasks set. Most chose to write about a parent, girls usually opting for their mother, boys their father. Some chose their older brother or sister, others a close friend or even a teacher, while a minority wrote about a celebrity from sport or show business.

The 'description of the person' required present tenses. Most gave a physical description, detailing age, height and appearance. Some added characteristics, such as kindness or a sense of humour. The subjects described were good company, they liked to laugh and shared activities with the candidate such as games, walks and outings. Their interests included music, sports or reading. Simple phrases such as *il a les cheveux blonds* proved to be problematic and the feminine agreement of adjectives was often missed when describing women or girls.

Admirable qualities and ways in which the subject influenced the writer tended to merge but Examiners were usually able to award the two available communication marks. The person was a good role model because of his/her generosity, honesty or his/her caring or protective nature. Good friends or older siblings had what was perceived to be a mature attitude to school work. They also had a capacity for enjoying life and success in certain fields such as sport, which the candidate hoped to emulate. Candidates of more limited ability did not always have the language skills to express more abstract concepts and were more successful when they attempted more modest statements about their subject. Negative qualities were not so well expressed and were sometimes omitted altogether. A friend or sibling was too chatty or lazy or maybe shy. Parents were too strict at times or prone to anger. Often they were too busy working to spend enough time with their children. Those who said the subject was a paragon and had no faults at all were awarded the communication mark.

Influence was expressed in a variety of ways. Firstly the person was an example of what the candidate most admired so they were an inspiration, as mentioned earlier. Then again, a parent or older sibling could help with homework and advice with personal matters, although only the better candidates knew *conseils* or could use *aider à* with an infinitive. Girls especially valued a confidante, someone to listen when they were sad or had problems, someone to show understanding and say a kind word. Boys valued companionship from friends and practical help from parents such as driving lessons or money. The best candidates were able to say the subject had made them happier, more confident or even a better person.

Future plans to spend time with the person were expressed appropriately by a future tense or more often the verb *vouloir* and an infinitive. Candidates would go out with the friend to a disco or a sporting event. They would arrange outings with a parent or more regularly they would organise a party in their honour. This was familiar ground and candidates were able to use more concrete vocabulary. Some chose to write what they would do for rather than with the person. To show their regard for their role model they would work hard to achieve a successful career and try to follow their example. More mundanely, some would be more helpful around the house. Some had already exceeded the 140 word limit before they addressed this final task and forfeited a mark for communication.

Question 1(b) A thank you letter

This was the more popular choice. The informal letter proved a familiar format and the question enabled candidates to revisit topic areas they knew such as parties and shopping. Most coped well with the letter conventions and began and ended their letter appropriately.

All began by thanking the uncle/aunt for the money. Some did this with a simple *merci pour l'argent* while others attempted *je te remercie de l'argent que tu m'as envoyé* with varying success. Most addressed the recipient of the letter appropriately as *tu*. *Vous* was also accepted. In both cases it was important for candidates to use the chosen form of address consistently. Others quite properly addressed remarks to both an uncle and an aunt collectively.

Saying what they did with the money (*ce que vous avez fait*) required candidates to use past tenses in their response. A number misread the stimulus as *ce que vous allez faire* and wrote in future tenses. Where this task was addressed in future tenses, the mark for communication could not be awarded. The commonest response was *j'ai acheté…* with a desirable item, usually something quite grand such as a new television, a

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computer, a bicycle or a set of video games. Girls often spent the money on clothes. Almost none decided to save the money!

What candidates did for their birthday was again familiar territory for most, and candidates scored well for language and communication. Most gave an account of a party with family and friends, others wrote of a meal at a restaurant. Again a minority mistakenly wrote in the future. Candidates liked the birthday mainly because they spent the day with friends and near ones doing what they enjoyed doing. Also, of course, because they received presents! Expressing events using past tenses was a challenge for some and verbal errors were frequent. The use of object pronouns caused difficulties and some struggled to say *on m'a donné des cadeaux*.

The final task for candidates was to say they wished to stay with the uncle/aunt and to say why. This did require a future time frame and better candidates were able to say *je voudrais faire un séjour chez toi/vous* and give a reason. Some suggested a day out instead of a stay which seemed to suggest they were confusing *séjour* with *jour*. Reasons given included shared activities as in *on pourrait faire les magasins ensemble/faire une promenade/aller au match de foot*. Others said it would be nice to see their uncle/aunt to talk together. The more ambitious candidates tried to say it was a long time since they had seen each other or that they were missing their uncle/aunt, which proved difficult. Candidates who try to address the tasks at their own linguistic level are more likely to achieve accurate communication than those who attempt to express more abstract ideas using structures that are complex and which they cannot manipulate accurately.

Question 2 A school trip

Most candidates recognised the need to relate a school trip involving a stay away from home. Nearly all attempted past tenses and used them with varying success. A minority mistook the task to be a trip planned in the future and used future tenses.

Usually, candidates began by describing the journey. They said how they travelled (road, train or plane), what they did en route, where they went and how long it took. Travel was often said to be tiring and boring, the words *ennuyeux* and *fatigant* occurring frequently. Candidates were able to use the *nous* form successfully and those aware of popular usage occasionally employed *on* instead. Next, candidates described the accommodation, which was usually a hotel or a hostel. They wrote about sharing rooms, meals and facilities. This was acceptable although no communication marks were gained for simply describing the hotel when it did not relate to the task *ce que vous avez fait*.

The activities normally took up the remainder of the answer. Many went to a winter sports centre. They loved the skiing but often they or a friend had an accident and broke a leg. Many were unable to say *il s'est cassé la jambe*. Others spent the whole time at a beach, enjoying swimming, windsurfing and relaxing in the sun. Reflexive verbs were often mishandled and, in particular, candidates had difficulty with the verbs *se bronzer* or *se reposer*. The most common school trips involved cultural or educational visits. Candidates visited cities, especially Paris. They saw museums and galleries, churches and cathedrals. Most said how interesting it was although not all could spell *intéressant*. Some admitted to finding the experience rather boring. Others described a stay in the mountains. They went on long walks – many had problems spelling *randonnée*. They sometimes camped in the hills. They liked the views but found walking hard work. In some cases, candidates included lengthy lists of the places they had visited, often involving non-French words. This practice is to be discouraged as the mark scheme does not reward lists of proper nouns. Some related unfortunate incidents which occurred during the stay (the spelling of *malheureusement* proved difficult for many candidates). These incidents included embarrassing moments for teachers and *professeur* was also often misspelled. Candidates got lost. Keys were lost and then found. People fell ill. All the typical events of a school trip which cause great anxiety to teachers and offer great amusement to students.

Reactions were mostly positive. *Je me suis bien amusé* scored regularly for communication of a reaction, as did *c'était amusant…* and *j'étais heureux/déçu….* A number of candidates continue to render 'I was happy' as *j'étais joli*.

There was plenty for candidates to say on the topic and most were able to use the full 140 words as recommended.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/42
Continuous Writing

General comments

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From the evidence seen, many candidates are clearly familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE French Continuous Writing paper. Some candidates did not make the most of the opportunities this paper offers to show their command of the language to its best advantage. In many cases, improved examination technique and presentation would have enabled such candidates to achieve higher marks. It is with these candidates in mind that Examiners offer the following pointers, aimed at improving examination performance:

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) A new leisure centre

This option attracted fewer candidates than **1(b)** but the standard of answers was comparable. Most candidates understood what a *centre de loisirs* was and a tolerant view was taken by Examiners when candidates mentioned facilities which might not be commonly found at a leisure centre.

Most began by saying what a good idea the new leisure centre was. There was not much for young people to do and the new centre was very necessary. Candidates then went on to list, as instructed, the leisure facilities which already existed, including swimming pools, parks, sports stadia, discotheques, skating rinks etc. The language required to express this task was straightforward and most scored a communication mark for simple statements such as: *il y a une piscine*, *nous avons des cafés* or *on peut aller au cinéma*.

Recent activities candidates had undertaken with friends required a response in past tenses. Where this task was addressed in present tenses, a mark for communication was forfeited. There was a wide variety of activities, many of which involved the use of the verb *faire* as in *moi et mes amis avons fait de la natation* or *j'ai fait une promenade à bicyclette avec mes copains*. Candidates should be reminded to read the question carefully: a number spent so much time listing the existing facilities in the first task that they overlooked this second task.

When asked to state the advantages and disadvantages of the new leisure centre, most candidates wrote in future tenses about a leisure centre which was at the planning stage. The conditional tense was equally acceptable (*s'il y avait un nouveau centre je jouerais au tennis*). Others assumed the centre was already built and up and running and as a consequence wrote in present tenses. Both interpretations were regarded as valid by Examiners. Advantages alluded to included the availability of more facilities: *il y aura une grande piscine/un nouveau terrain de foot*. Some mentioned the need to give young people something to do to keep them from bad habits. Others quoted the benefits of healthy exercise to keep young people fit. Others said it was good because it was near their home or that it would be a good way of getting to know other youngsters. Again some gave such a detailed response on advantages that they forgot to mention any disadvantages. Any sensible comments were rewarded for this task. Some said it was or would be too expensive. Others said increased traffic noise and crowded streets late at night would be a disadvantage.

'A new activity I would like to do' brought a varied response. Some used a future, others a conditional tense (as in *je jouerai(s) au badminton*). Some used the conditional or the present tense of *vouloir* as in *je voudrais/je veux apprendre la danse*. Both future and conditional tenses were acceptable but a past or present as in *je joue/j'ai joué au basket* was not considered to fulfil the task.

Most of the candidates who chose this option approached it with a degree of enthusiasm. The topic had a relevance to their own lives and they responded in a positive manner, giving interesting arguments.

Question 1(b) An outing to the cinema

This was the more popular option and most candidates were familiar with the 'letter to a friend' format. Almost all were able to begin the letter appropriately, addressing the friend informally and making brief, polite comments or enquiries about his/her well-being. This kind of introduction was credited, but a minority devoted a lengthy section of their answer to an account of their lives at home or at school which was unrelated to the tasks set out in the rubric. This practice is not rewarded by Examiners. It is usual for young people to address each other as *tu* in letters and this was the approach adopted by most candidates. *Vous* was also accepted. In both cases it was important for candidates to use the chosen form of address consistently.

Most recognised the requirement to write an account of a visit to the cinema. They were able to say where and when they went and with whom and what kind of film they saw. *Je suis allé au cinéma avec mon ami hier* was enough to secure the first communication mark. A further mark was available for giving another detail. This was awarded for a comment about the visit (e.g. *il y avait beaucoup de monde dans la salle*) or for a comment about the nature of the film (e.g. *c'était un film comique* or *nous avons vu un film d'amour*). Some candidates understood *une sortie que vous avez faite* to be a visit planned for the future.

Opinions of the film were quite easily conveyed by a simple statement in the past such as *j'ai aimé/je n'ai pas aimé le film*. Examiners also rewarded opinions in the present tense (e.g. *j'aime le film*) as the film may have been seen before by the writer and therefore the present was plausible. The communication mark could be gained by saying it was or was not a good film. When asked to write about the qualities of the film, better

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candidates chose to write a brief synopsis with more detailed opinions which was quite impressive. Others scored communication marks for a simpler response. Some enjoyed the film because it made them laugh or even cry. Others did not enjoy it because it was boring and lasted much too long. Candidates liked the actors. They enjoyed the special effects or admired the quality of the action scenes. They disliked the violence. Girls seemed to like romantic films, boys preferred horror films or police dramas, especially if they contained blood and gore, while all liked comedies. Opinions correctly expressed were rewarded in either past or present tenses. Interest was created when the candidate and his/her companions disagreed and various points of view were expressed.

The final task (a future outing) was usually well handled. Future tenses were employed *(j'irai en ville pour faire des courses*) or *aller* with an infinitive (*je vais faire du ski*) and many used *vouloir* with an infinitive (*je voudrais aller à la piscine*). While the future was an appropriate tense in the context, it was perfectly acceptable to use other tenses if the future time frame was evident, as in *samedi prochain on va à Paris* or *nous avons décidé de faire une promenade le week-end prochain*. Many said they would go to the cinema again, this time inviting the friend to join them.

As there was scope to expand on all the required tasks, most candidates had little difficulty in writing the recommended 140 words without recourse to padding or verbiage. Candidates should be reminded not to write at such length that the last task falls outside the word count and cannot be credited.

Question 2 A storm at a country house

The best seized the opportunity to write a dramatic account of a violent storm, causing havoc in the countryside. Some answers were a pleasure to read as candidates displayed the full range of their linguistic skills. Others found it harder to maintain the levels of competency they had achieved in **Question 1**, mainly because **Question 2** requires candidates to sustain a series of past tenses to convey their account. The perfect tenses of many common verbs were not well known and it was particularly noticeable that only the better candidates were able to use imperfect and pluperfect tenses correctly in a narrative context.

The inclusion of the words *pluie* and *vent violent* meant that most understood the need to relate events which occurred during a storm in the night at a country house and their reactions. Typical answers began with a brief lead-in to the story. Candidates were on holiday at a country house, usually with their family. The weather had been pleasant at first. Then they got down to the events of the night in question. Candidates should be reminded that little credit can be given for lengthy introductions which are only marginally relevant to the question/tasks as set. The rain was torrential and the wind caused extensive damage to property. Trees fell on their car or on the house. Animals perished. Windows were broken. The range of vocabulary and idioms shown by the best candidates was impressive. Where candidates of more modest ability kept to simple language, an effective account was well within their range. Candidates who address tasks at their own linguistic level are more likely to achieve accurate communication than those who attempt to say things for which they do not know the French (e.g. there was a power cut) or to express more abstract ideas using structures that are complex and which they cannot manipulate accurately.

Weather expressions were not always well handled. There were many examples of *il était froid/chaud* instead of *il faisait*…. Difficulties were encountered when it came to using the verb *pleuvoir*, to rain. Some thought *pluie* was part of a verb. Others thought *pleut* was a noun. Others confused *pleuvoir* with *pleurer* (to weep). It also proved difficult to say 'it was windy' (*il faisait du vent)*.

Attempts to solve the problems created by the storm were rather more successful and in some cases quite imaginative. Children left alone in the house telephoned their parents at the restaurant to come back at once. *Retourner* was commonly used instead of the correct *revenir* or *rentrer*. Father tried to mend or replace damaged windows and doors. Firemen and police were summoned. Mechanics came to repair the car, plumbers and electricians were called in. The problem of what to do when there is no power involved youngsters being deprived of TV and playstation (could there be a worse fate?) and being reduced to playing cards and even talking to their parents to kill the time until it stopped raining! Communication marks were awarded for solving problems which occurred during as well as after the storm. The family took shelter in unlikely places or barricaded the doors. Many candidates scored a mark for simply saying they shut all the windows.

Reactions were quite well expressed. At a basic level, most could say *j'étais* or *c'était* with a suitable adjective. Two marks were available here and it was enough to say *c'était affreux/horrible* or *j'étais surpris/triste*. *J'avais peur* proved difficult.

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Candidates should be reminded of the importance of re-reading what they have written in order to eliminate the avoidable errors in basic language which detract from the quality of their work. Examples to check for are the misuse of everyday words such as *joli* which was used to mean 'happy', *écouter* which was used for *entendre*, *regarder* for *voir*, *une vacance* for *des vacances*. Other common errors candidates should check their work for are the misuse of auxiliaries as in *j'ai allé*, adjectives and past participles not agreeing, and the confusion of plural and singular verb forms.

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FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/43
Continuous Writing

General comments

Examiners found much to commend in the performance of many candidates. The best were capable of using complex language and a wide and varied vocabulary, with only a minimal incidence of error. A large proportion presented answers which were relevant and largely accurate giving a true reflection of their abilities.

From the evidence seen, many candidates are clearly familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE French Continuous Writing paper. Some candidates did not make the most of the opportunities this paper offers to show their command of the language to its best advantage. In many cases, improved examination technique and presentation would have enabled such candidates to achieve higher marks. It is with these candidates in mind that Examiners offer the following pointers, aimed at improving examination performance:

1 When a choice of questions is offered, candidates should select the question they consider to be the best suited to their knowledge of French. This may not always be the one they find the most interesting. Then they should prepare in brief a plan of their answer in accordance with the set tasks. As the recommended length is 140 words, they should plan to spread the answer fairly evenly over the tasks set out in the rubric. If they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two tasks they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks. If they cover all the points in 100 words they might be reduced to padding out the ending to reach 140 words, so they should look to identify the areas where they can expand their response with examples. Examiners will not mark anything which occurs outside the word count. Where candidates write answers which are shorter than 130-140 words they are likely to restrict their chances of gaining the maximum mark available for language.

2 Candidates should remember that the rubric is not a rough guide but that it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. They should read the question carefully and keep to these tasks, avoiding irrelevance. If the tasks require a certain tense then they should stick to that tense and not drift into inappropriate tenses.

3 Candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay attention especially to verb forms. Good spelling gains marks, incorrect spelling does not. Adjectives should agree. Accents should be clear and unambiguous. Candidates should take their time. The time allowed for the paper is normally ample. When they have finished they should make full use of the time left to check their work for errors.

4 Within the limits on content imposed by the set tasks, the paper is an exercise in free composition so candidates should write that which they are confident is correct French and avoid what they do not know. They should be encouraged to present their best French to the Examiner.

5 Presentation is very important. If the Examiner cannot read what the candidate has written no marks can be awarded. Handwriting must always be legible.

6 Some candidates tend to include long lists of proper nouns such as place names or personal names. This practice is to be discouraged as the mark scheme does not allow the award of accuracy ticks to such lists and they can take up a significant proportion of the word allocation. In addition, lists of nouns, such as food items accompanied by simple articles, gain little credit.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Healthy eating

This option was the more popular of the two. A large number of candidates had clearly prepared the topic of a healthy life style. Where they drew too heavily on earlier work there was a tendency to write generally about health issues and introduce sections about physical exercise, which were not pertinent, rather than address the tasks set out in the rubric, all of which related specifically to diet and healthy eating.

The first task was to state what kind of food candidates ate regularly. This could be answered by simply putting *je mange* with a food item, usually preceded by a partitive article as in *je mange de la salade* or *du poisson*. Another acceptable response was to say *chez nous on mange beaucoup de fruits* accompanied sometimes by *tous les jours*. A large number insisted they ate very healthily, some declaring themselves to be vegetarians. Some candidates wrote at great length, listing all the different food items they had at every meal. Such long lists of nouns did not accrue many language marks as they did not contain any complex structures. The practice sometimes led to an overlong answer in which the later tasks fell outside the word count and could not be credited.

The second task was also quite straightforward. Candidates were asked if they did the cooking and if so when. Marks were awarded for such statements as *je fais la cuisine pendant les vacances/tous les week-ends/tous les soirs* or for saying *je ne fais pas la cuisine chez nous* or *c'est maman qui fait la cuisine chez moi*. Some gave details of the dish or dishes they liked to prepare. A minority omitted the task altogether or misunderstood, saying, for instance, *j'aime la cuisine chinoise*.

The most commonly quoted dangers of a 'badly balanced diet' were that it would make you fat and unfit or prone to illness. Many candidates were able to say *obèse* or *trop gros*, but some put *trop grand* (too tall). The phrases *en forme* and *en bonne santé* were generally known but some used *mal* for 'ill' or 'illness'. Some were over ambitious in trying to write about heart disease and other specific illnesses without knowing the vocabulary necessary. Others said an excess of sugary products and fast-food was undesirable without saying why. The rubric asked for *dangers* (plural) and two marks were available for stating two or more dangers. Communication marks were forfeited when candidates wrote only about good eating habits, without mentioning the dangers of a badly balanced diet as required by the rubric.

The final task required candidates to say how they would seek to improve their eating habits in the future. Better candidates responded appropriately by giving answers in future tenses or with *vouloir* and an infinitive as in the question. They would eat even more of the fruit and vegetables they already ate regularly. They would cut out unhealthy options such as sweets, cakes and chips. They would stop eating at McDonald's. They would opt for home cooking. Again some did not refer to diet and said only that they would go jogging and do more sport. This was regarded as a harmless addition but on its own did not fulfil the task.

Question 1(b) School rules

This option attracted fewer candidates than **1(a)**.

When asked to detail the rules which were in force at their own school, stronger candidates were able to use *il faut* or *nous devons* with an infinitive. Weaker candidates wrote *les élèves devent* or *doisent*. The verb *avoir* was frequently used instead of *devoir* resulting in *nous avons (à) porter un uniforme*. Few could use *il est interdit de* or the equivalent. The rules most commonly mentioned were the compulsory wearing of a school uniform and rules applying to when and where candidates were allowed to eat. Being in class at certain times was mentioned as were the unpopular bans on make-up, jewellery and mobile phones. These restrictions often required negative expressions (as in *on ne peut pas*) which were not always well handled.

Most said they were in favour of rules in principle *(je suis pour/j'aime*) as they understood why it was desirable to have a uniform or to be punctual or polite etc. These rules existed for the good of the candidates and of the school. They had reservations about certain rules which they claimed impinged on their liberty or curbed their individuality. Some benefited by playing safer and saying something on the lines of: *je n'aime pas porter mon uniforme. C'est moche/laid/Ce n'est pas beau*. Many commended the school for its stance on smoking or bringing unhealthy food onto the premises. Rules concerning homework were also necessary to keep candidates up to scratch in their pursuit of a good job/a place at university.

The concept of changing existing rules proved challenging. Better candidates were able to say school life would be improved if they had more independence in the matter of dress. Rules compelling boys to wear shorts in winter were unpopular. Girls wanted to be free to wear cosmetics and to have options when it

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came to uniforms. Some said the rule forbidding talking in class was unreasonable. Others found that school began much too early in the day or that lessons were too long. Weaker candidates tended to omit this task or to address it only briefly.

As with **Question 1(a)** some candidates wrote at length about generalities and forfeited communication marks by neglecting the tasks set out in the rubric.

Question 2 Moving house

Although in general candidates scored less well on this more open task than they did in **Question 1**, some excellent responses were received which displayed good narrative skills and a varied range of vocabulary and structures.

Most began by stating the need to move house and their own reaction to this. Some were eager to move as they disliked their old house, it was too small or too far from their friends or school. They looked forward to life in town or, more often, in the country. Communication marks were awarded for relating the events on removal day. The old house was emptied and cleaned, belongings were put in boxes and furniture was loaded into a lorry. Better candidates were able to give a vivid account. Sometimes the language used to relate these everyday events was flawed: *prendre* was used for *mettre* and common words such as 'furniture' were not well known (*tables et chaises* would have been adequate). Last farewells were made and the long journey to the new home began. Some candidates passed over the events of the day to deal directly with the description of the new house. Candidates should be reminded that communication marks are awarded for each of the tasks set and where they omit a task in this way they will restrict the mark they can receive for communication.

Marks were awarded for reactions before, during and after the move. These included excitement (many different spellings of this word were provided), sadness and joy. Adjectives were often used incorrectly and agreements were missed or were faulty. The gender of the narrator was sometimes variable.

Opinions on life in the new home were mostly positive. Candidates were delighted and surprised to find what a big house it was. It had a pool and a large garden. Life would change for the better. They would have their own bedroom. They would be nearer to school. There were new friends to be made and the neighbours seemed nice. Some were still sad to have left the old house and they missed their friends. A number successfully made comparisons of the new house and the old one. The construction *plus… que* was well known and usually the new house was superior, particularly in size. Many anticipated with relish future activities such as playing football in the extensive garden or swimming in the pool. Various tenses could be employed here and Examiners rewarded past, present and even future and conditional tenses, according to the sense. Weaker candidates tended to rely on listing all the rooms in the house which did not require much variety of language and accrued few language marks.

While some were able to sustain a series of past tenses to relate the story others confused perfect and imperfect tenses. Errors were made with common regular or irregular verbs and auxiliaries and past participle agreements were frequently mishandled. Candidates should be reminded to think carefully when it comes to verbal constructions as they are the key to successful communication.

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