

FRENCH

Paper 0685/01

Listening

Key messages

- Performance on this Listening paper was of a higher standard than last year and candidates showed very good levels of both specific and general understanding.
- Most candidates were aware of the need to write their answers clearly. Answers must be written in blue or black ink. New Centres should remind candidates not to first write their answers in pencil and then overwrite these in ink as this can make answers difficult to read.
- When deciding on the mark to award, Examiners will normally consider everything the candidate has written in an answer. It is therefore vital that candidates clearly cross out any material they do not wish Examiners to consider when they are marking.
- All candidates should be given the chance to attempt past papers before they take the Listening examination in order that they are familiar with the rubric requirements. Most candidates ticked the correct numbers of boxes on box ticking exercises, but some ticked too many or too few.
- Answers are marked on the basis of whether they communicate the message. Inaccuracies in the use of French are only taken into account if the message becomes ambiguous.
- Answers to questions requiring a response in French should be kept brief. New Centres should note that full sentences are not required. Furthermore, the inclusion of detail which is extra to the requirements of a question may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

General comments

This year's Listening paper made very similar demands to that of 2010. Examiners reported that the candidature performed very well and at a higher standard than in 2010. Candidates had generally been well prepared for the Listening paper and seemed familiar with the structure of the examination and the required response types in all three sections. The exercises discriminated appropriately and candidates from all parts of the globe found the topic areas tested to be accessible.

Candidates were instructed to attempt all three sections of the test and nearly all candidates managed to attempt at least some questions in the final and most demanding exercise. The French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, as well as opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations.

New Centres should note that where questions require written responses in French, these responses do not need to be written in the form of full sentences. Questions are set in such a way as to make brief answers possible. The Listening paper aims to test comprehension and, therefore, inaccuracies in written French (e.g. incorrect spellings, verb endings) are tolerated provided the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted provided the message is unambiguous. However, where candidates add extra information, which distorts an otherwise valid answer, invalidates it or places the Examiner in the position of having to pick out the correct answer from amongst the information given, the mark cannot be awarded. So, for example, if a candidate offers two elements or details of which one only is correct, the mark cannot be awarded, as the Examiner is being required to make the choice which should have been made by the candidate. Centres should remind candidates to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully and not to add extra details to answers which might distort an otherwise correct response. Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple choice questions with visual options. Candidates performed very well on this straightforward opening exercise, intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. The vocabulary areas tested (e.g. numbers, time, food, types of TV programme, places in the bus station and shops) did not seem to pose any particular problems. **Question 6** (testing *les verres*) proved to be the most challenging, with many choosing option A (*les assiettes*) as their answer.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an announcement for a holiday centre and were mostly required to show their understanding of the extract by selecting one out of three visual options. **Question 10** required candidates to write a month of the year and **Question 16** required a number (which could be provided in words or digits). Questions tested numbers, months, accommodation details, and tourist/leisure activities. Candidates encountered few difficulties and **Questions 9, 10, 11, 12** and **13** posed few problems. Some candidates found **Question 14** (*aller à la pêche*) more challenging. **Question 16** proved to be by far the most difficult on this exercise, with candidates showing partial comprehension of the required number (e.g. 600 or 80) or splitting it incorrectly (e.g. 60.80). Many candidates need to revise larger numbers with care.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Each year, performance on this type of exercise improves as candidates become accustomed to the requirements. Although the candidature has increased, Examiners reported fewer cases of candidates ticking an incorrect number of boxes. A very small number of candidates chose to use a somewhat confusing system of both ticks and crosses to indicate which statements they believed to be true. Candidates should be reminded to use a consistent method: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together. Candidates heard four young people talking about how they preferred to communicate, e.g. via letters, mobile phones and/or computers. Candidates clearly felt very much at ease with this topic area and large numbers did well on this exercise. Full marks were often scored and it was rare for candidates to score less than four marks on this exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard a short interview with Angélique about her life on the *Ile de la Réunion*. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they are familiar. The missing words were lexically frequent words that would be met by students at an early stage of their learning, and candidates usually did well on the exercise. On **Question 18**, the rendering of *mer* as *mère* did not gain the mark as, even though the two words may sound the same, the word *mère* has another meaning in French. Other answers such as *Réunion* and *côte* were acceptable. **Question 19** required the answer *hôpital* to gain the mark. Answers which split the word incorrectly (e.g. *lop ital*) did not score the mark on the basis that incorrect word splits indicate incomplete comprehension. This is a general marking principle which is applied throughout the paper. **Question 20** specified *surtout* and required candidates to listen carefully for the correct answer (*calme*). Some candidates incorrectly offered *montagne*, which was heard shortly before the correct answer, or *vivre*. **Question 21** was answered well and large numbers identified the concept of sport/sporting activities. On **Question 22**, the answers *vivre/habiter*, *froid* and *climat* all gained the mark. Some candidates had problems spelling *froid*. Answers such as *frois*, *froit* could gain the mark on the 'sounds like' principle as these attempts mean nothing else in French. Weaker candidates frequently offered the word *monument* on this last question.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The second part of this exercise featured another interview, this time with Marie who also talked about her life on the island. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French to the questions. While the interview featured language in different time frames, candidates could answer correctly without having to manipulate tenses. Marks were usually high on this exercise and Examiners again marked for message rather than accuracy. On **Question 23** there was a wide range of acceptable spellings for *Suisse*

such as *Suisse*, *Swis(s)*, *Siusse*. Many candidates opted for *les Alpes* which was also accepted. On **Question 24**, many experienced difficulty in spelling *grillade*. Spellings such as *griade* and *griade* were accepted, as was the alternative answer *plage*. Most were successful on this question. The answers to **Question 25** indicated a clear need for revision of items of clothing. The mark scheme was very tight on the spelling of *manteau*: the principle of ‘sounds like’ was applied, providing that the alternative spelling meant nothing else in French. Answers beginning with *men/mon/man* were accepted as were answers ending in *taud/taut/to*. A variety of unusual spellings were seen here but frequently candidates managed to get the message across. **Question 26** (*journaliste*) was usually well answered. **Question 27** was the most demanding of **Sections 1** and **2**. It required candidates to understand that it was necessary to **leave for university** studies (e.g. *partir pour l’université*). Answers such as *partir pour études* did not convey the complete idea and, indeed, distorted the meaning of the French heard. Alternative correct answers featured the concept of ‘no university’ or ‘no school of journalism’ on the island.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

The extract featured a longer interview with a Canadian singer who had been born and brought up in Algeria. Candidates coped well with the multiple choice exercise which required candidates to be able to follow a narrative which relied on tenses and in which opinions and feelings were expressed. This was a slightly more demanding exercise than the previous one as it required careful listening to the whole extract rather than simply selecting individual words. **Questions 28, 29, 31, 32** and **33** proved straightforward for many candidates with only **Question 30** posing more of a challenge. Candidates who went on to score good marks in the following exercise frequently scored full marks on this exercise. It was also noticeable that weaker candidates, who were unable to offer many answers in the last exercise on this section, could still gain two or three marks on this multiple choice exercise. Examiners could not discern a pattern of incorrect answers on any one particular question.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-43

Candidates heard an interview with a Parisian bookshop owner, Patrick, who talked about his work routine and the demands of his job. The interview included 2 pauses and candidates clearly had enough time in which to respond to the questions, which required them to write short answers in French. It was also clear that many had been well trained to answer briefly and not to put the Examiner in the position of having to choose the correct answer from amongst a wealth of extra detail. A few candidates did write very long answers which included a rephrasing of the question. This must have affected their capacity to listen and reflect and made the whole process more complicated than necessary for them. Candidates should be reminded not to make their answers too long and also not to include extra details in their answers, or inferences that are not heard on the recording. The inclusion of such extra detail can sometimes invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

This final exercise was intended to be the most demanding on the paper and included questions that were suitably challenging for the more able candidates. However many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (though **Questions 38, 40** and **42** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Deliberately, some very accessible questions were also included and these were successfully answered by a good proportion of the candidates

On **Question 34**, most successfully picked out *tourisme*. Incorrect answers often featured *office de tourisme*. **Question 35** was not answered well, as many candidates invalidated their answers with extra incorrect details such as *généraliste* and Patrick’s love of books. The word *Paris* alone was sufficient to score the mark. The word *rayon* was not always well known and attempts to render it sometimes invalidated otherwise correct answers. On **Question 36**, most candidates were able to correctly identify the concept of the long hours not being a problem or that the time passed quickly. Some invalidated their answers with an inappropriate inclusion of *énorme* or incorrect times. Reference to work hours alone was insufficient to gain the mark as this did not explain what Patrick thought about them: candidates need to answer the question rather than simply jot down any associated detail. On **Question 37**, most selected the concept of contacting the customers rather than that of dealing with orders. Either concept was accepted. On **Question 38**, candidates needed to convey the idea of *ranger les livres*, which many coped with quite well. Some then went on to invalidate their answers by adding *sur les étages*. *Ranger les livres* alone was sufficient to gain the mark. The inclusion of the word *livres* invalidated answers as *libre* means something else in French. On **Question 39**, candidates who simply wrote, *télévision* gained the mark and this question was usually well-answered by candidates. The addition of extra words, e.g. attempts at rendering *émission*, could sometimes invalidate answers. On **Question 40**, there were many good answers using *acheter/faire/offrir un cadeau*.

An attempt at an appropriate verb was needed in order to communicate the whole concept. Candidates needed to go beyond *un cadeau* in order to gain the mark. Weaker responses to the question showed that candidates had misheard *cadeau* as *gâteau*. Most made a good attempt at *presse professionnelle*.

Question 41. Answers such as *presse officielle/presque officielle* were not accepted. **Question 42** was demanding and targeted the best candidates. To gain the mark here, candidates needed to be able to convey the concept that Patrick adapted to the customer or his/her needs. The idea offered by some of *adapter les clients* was misleading and not accepted. There was sometimes confusion between *boissons* and *besoins*. **Question 43** proved to be a very accessible final question for those candidates who correctly identified the concept of liberty and answered briefly. Some assumed that Patrick had too much responsibility which was the opposite of what was heard on the recording. A few thought that the answer to the final question was *librairie*. However, candidates generally did well on this final question.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/2
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

- Performance on this Reading and Directed Writing paper was of a higher standard than last year.
- To maximise their chances of success, candidates need to have a thorough knowledge of question words, beyond *qui* and *pourquoi*. Candidates need to make sure they read questions carefully and identify whether the question is asking *qui* or *qu'est-ce que*, *où* or *quand*, *comment* or *pourquoi*.
- Answers should be brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**.
- In order to do themselves justice in **Section 3**, candidates need to be familiar with personal pronouns (subject and object) and possessive adjectives in the third person singular and plural.
- If an answer or part of an answer has been crossed out, it must be made as clear as possible what the Examiner is to mark.
- When candidates finish the paper, they should read it through again and check that they have answered every question and made any corrections needed.

General comments

In general, candidates had been well prepared for the paper: they seemed aware of how to approach the various exercises and appeared to have no problems completing them in the time allowed.

Where questions require written answers in French, once they have read the text carefully, candidates need to look closely at what each question is asking them, and also at how much space has been allowed for their answer. Usually a single line will be provided for their answer, indicating that the answer can be given briefly, without the need to copy 3 or 4 lines of text. It is better to think a little rather than writing the first answer that comes to mind, and then perhaps having to cross it out – it can be difficult for Examiners to award marks where it is not clear what the candidate's final answer is intended to be.

It is good practice for candidates to read through their work once again after they have finished the examination. This is the moment to check that all the questions have been answered, and make any corrections, particularly to answers to the writing exercises, for example:

- subject and verb agreements;
- possessive adjectives, particularly in **Section 3**, and adjective agreements in general;
- words mis-copied from the texts or instructions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates handled these discrete items with ease. **Questions 1** and **5** were the only questions to occasionally present some difficulty. In **Question 1** *confiture* was not always well known (candidates often opted for the picture of butter instead). In **Question 5** sometimes answer **C** (picture of knees) was chosen instead of answer **A** (picture of feet).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Again, very well answered, with almost all candidates getting **Questions 6-8** correct. Candidates sometimes reversed the answers to **Questions 9** (*chez le coiffeur*) and **10** (*à la charcuterie*).

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Candidates had to read a short piece of text (an email from Justine to her friend proposing a meeting) and answer the multiple choice questions. Maximum marks were achieved by most candidates. In **Question 11** which asked candidates to choose at which time Justine was going to leave the Sports Centre, a number of candidates were confused by the mention of the *cours de natation à 10h...* and offered **A** (10 heures) as the answer instead of **C** (12 heures).

Exercise 4 Question 16

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were asked to write a short email to a French friend and provide 3 pieces of information, based on the pictures given:

- (a) which day they would be arriving (1 for *lundi* shown on the diary page);
- (b) the means of transport they would use (train, though *métro* and references to *SNCF* were also accepted);
- (c) where they would meet (kiosk).

Most candidates were able to provide the information for (a) and (b) and score at least 2 of the 3 communication marks, but a number found it difficult to express their intention for (c). A wide variety of attempts at (c) were accepted in the mark scheme. Perhaps the simplest formulation was *J'arrive lundi, par le train. Je te vois/rencontre devant le kiosque*. Any shop, eating place or possible meeting place on a station was accepted for the third communication mark. The spelling of *magasin* caused problems for some candidates: *magasine/magazin* were accepted but not *magazine* which has a different meaning in French.

In order to score the 2 marks available for language, candidates had to produce 2 correct verbs in appropriate tenses. Those parts of the answer which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward of language. For (a) and (b), many chose some form of immediate future (*je vais venir, je vais arriver*); those who chose to use *rencontrer* in (c) often had difficulties with the spelling and sometimes confused it with *raconter*; those who used the past tense for (c) could not score the mark for language, as the prompts clearly referred to future time. (Tense was not considered when awarding the communication marks.)

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text (an email from Christine to a friend to say she has been given permission by her parents to hold a party at her home) and answer questions on it, in French. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the text. Often, a 1 or 2 word answer was all that was needed, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was tolerated. The quality of written French was considered only for the purposes of communication.

The majority of candidates found this exercise very accessible and scores of between 8 and 10 out of 10 were common. **Questions 17** and **18** were very straightforward and most candidates scored both marks. **Question 19(b)** needed the idea that **uninvited** guests had come in, so *des gens* on its own did not score. For **Question 19(c)**, some candidates were distracted by *...Mes parents ont donc très peur que cela arrive chez nous...* and did not see the answer in the previous paragraph, namely that the parents had to call the police. Most candidates scored well on the remaining questions, with the only stumbling block being **Question 24**, where some answered simply with *CD*, which was misleading, and it was clear that a number of candidates did not understand the meaning of *le tien*, giving that as their answer. There were a few misspellings of *lecteur CD* but the meaning was still clear and therefore the mark was awarded.

Exercise 2 Question 25

This writing task was well within the experience of all candidates. Candidates were asked

- (a) to choose a singer, actor, or musician that they liked;
- (b) to describe this person;
- (c) to say why they liked him/her;
- (d) to say whether they would like the same career, together with why, or why not.

10 marks were available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks were available for language. Many candidates scored the maximum marks available and very few failed to attempt the question.

Candidates offered a wide range of favourite entertainers, from American stars such as Johnny Depp and Beyoncé to local singers and musicians. The topic clearly appealed, and a lot of responses were lively and full of personal reactions. Some candidates provided far more than the 10 points needed in order to score maximum marks for communication, giving many details of description, and some fascinating insights, including interesting attempts to say why they did, or did not want the same career. A few candidates, instead of choosing an actor, singer, or musician, chose a sports person instead, and some wrote in the first person, as if they **were** the actor or singer in question. Although such answers did not score marks for **(a)**, communication marks were awarded where details relevant to **(b)**, **(c)** and **(d)** were included. The majority of candidates dealt with all the parts of the question, though a few did not mention whether they would like the same career or not.

The language used ranged from very simple and basic language, with a number of errors, (for example confusion between *avoir* and *être*, adjective agreements, mis-spellings of *yeux*, *cheveux*), to varied and accurate writing expressing ideas and opinions in appropriate tenses and vocabulary.

Candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate and understandable French and should be advised to check carefully the accuracy of their writing. The most successful candidates wrote simply and clearly, and avoided attempts to convey over-complicated ideas for which they did not have sufficient command of the language. 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 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.

Exercise 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. Candidates are told that 2 of the sentences are *Vrai* and 4 are *Faux*. 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 correctly identified the *Vrai / Faux* statements, though sometimes after much indecision and crossing out. It was harder for many to provide corrections to the original statement. For **Question 26**, the simplest correction could be taken directly from the text (*Amadou a perdu la vue à l'âge de 15 ans*) and many candidates chose this. There were a number of confusing answers, suggesting that Amadou had been blind for 15 years, or from birth, and some which gave the second sentence of the paragraph *...Il est donc aveugle et ne voit plus rien depuis cet âge-là...*, which was not accepted. For **Question 27** the correction was simply that Mariam began singing when she was young, or that she sang at weddings. The most common incorrect answer here was *...Mariam adorait les chansons françaises qu'elle écoutait...* For **Question 28**, the correction was that Manu Chao heard Amadou & Mariam by chance, when he was travelling in Mali. Many answers were invalidated by the inclusion of additional details (*La France ne les découvre qu'en 2000... Manu Chao, un chanteur très connu en France depuis des années...*). The last false statement, **Question 31**, was perhaps the most successfully corrected. Most candidates understood that the important elements were *la joie de vivre* or *la (si) bonne musique*, rather than *...cette victoire sur le handicap*.

Exercise 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 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.

Comprehension of the text about a *grimpeur urbain* generally seemed to be quite good. For the first question, the answer needed was that Robert was interested in ...*des aventures en montagne / des histoires des grands alpinistes*. Most candidates understood this, and either piece of information was enough to score.

Question 35 was also straightforward. Robert made his first climb to get into his flat because he had forgotten his keys, so answers which conveyed either of these elements, or simply stated ...*il habite au 8ème étage*, scored the mark

For **Question 34**, candidates needed to understand what Robert was asked to do. The answer was that Robert was asked to climb the tallest building in the United States: *L'entreprise lui demande de faire l'escalade de l'immeuble le plus haut des Etats-Unis*. This was generally quite well done, although without *lui*, or some reference to Robert, it was sometimes unclear what the request actually was, or who was doing the climbing.

Question 35 was generally well answered. Candidates made it clear that Robert needed to study the building and imagine the climb. Some candidates invalidated their answer by the addition of ...*il accepte et réussit...* and others looked too far ahead in the text and provided answers which mentioned physical preparation and training (the question asked specifically about Robert's preparation for this project).

Question 36 asked for an explanation of the term *le grimpeur urbain*. Some candidates located this phrase in the text and copied the last sentence of the paragraph, without any explanation: *On appelle les gens qui font cela des «grimpeurs urbains»*. In fact, the answer appeared in the previous sentence ...*il se spécialise dans l'escalade des bâtiments situés au centre des villes*. The majority of candidates gave a good answer here, though some invalidated it by the addition of ...*A partir de ce jour-là...*

For **Question 37**, the simplest possible answer was (*la*) *peur* and many candidates scored here. Some equally acceptable answers added that although Robert was afraid, he managed to control his fear. Some candidates realised that fear was the emotion in question, but lifted ...*Robert / il ne connaît pas la peur...* ending up with the opposite meaning.

Question 38 asked very specifically ...*que faut-il faire pour réussir ce genre d'escalade?* and some candidates struggled to express the key idea in appropriate language, either with a noun (*la préparation mentale*) or using a verbal construction (*se préparer mentalement* or *se concentrer*)

Questions 39 and **40** were both answered well by many candidates. In **Question 39**, most referred to the fact that any mistake can be fatal, or to Robert's many accidents, though some invalidated this latter answer by including *d'ailleurs*. For **Question 40**, almost all candidates understood that for Robert, climbing was his life, and allowed him to live the dream, and a great many candidates managed to express this appropriately.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/03

Speaking

Key messages

- To score well in the Role plays, candidates need to be as concise as possible and to stick closely to the cues on their cards.
- Examiners in Centres can help their candidates by observing the time limits for each of the conversation sections, and by remembering to ask each candidate questions to elicit past and future tenses in each of the two conversation sections.
- Good performances in the conversation sections were typically those where candidates were given the opportunity to respond not just to straightforward questions, but also to unexpected ones, and where they were encouraged to expand upon their answers, giving and explaining their opinions.
- Some Centres needed to cover a wider range of topics in the General conversation section so as to ensure broader topic coverage across the candidates at their Centre.
- The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where there had not been over preparation of work and where the spontaneity of the examining could be heard.

General comments

The general standard of work heard by Moderators was very good. Many Examiners had clearly familiarised themselves with the requirements of the Speaking test and with the mark scheme. They understood how best to give their candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do. In the Role plays, candidates usually seemed to have made good use of the 15 minutes they are allowed to prepare the card assigned to them. Moderators reported that the most successful Role plays were those where Examiners moved the transactions along at a fairly brisk pace by keeping to the script provided. Centres are reminded that **teacher/Examiners** may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order to prepare the Role plays. The contents of these materials are confidential and must not be shared with candidates. The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, they must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area.

In the conversation sections it is essential that Examiners understand the requirements of the mark scheme in order that they ask the right sort of questions which will stretch candidates and give them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, if Examiners include unexpected questions and go beyond the straightforward then candidates will have the possibility of scoring in the Good band or above on scale (a), Comprehension/responsiveness. Likewise, to score a mark beyond 6 on scale (b), Linguistic content, candidates need to be able to answer questions which require them to use past and future tenses accurately. The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out on pages 8-13 of the Teachers' Notes booklet and all Centres are strongly advised to read through these well in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties. A French language version of these requirements also exists and is available on the Cambridge website.

• Clerical checks

In most Centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate. In some Centres, several clerical errors were found and corrected. Centres are required to check all clerical work carefully so as to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then for each candidate the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must

also be checked. On the MS1 mark sheet, the Centre must enter the total mark for each candidate as well as shading the lozenges.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Most Centres remembered to submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample, duly completed. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct before they despatch it to Cambridge.

- **Sample size and recording quality**

Centres complied well with the new sampling procedures. The increased sample size for larger Centres was particularly useful in the case of Centres with a wide range of marks. One or two Centres sent in very large samples: Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed.

A high proportion of the recordings received by Cambridge were of a high quality and Centres are thanked for this. The use of digital recording has enhanced the listening experience, but there were also some very clear recordings on cassettes. Whatever the method chosen for recording, if an external microphone is used, this should be positioned to favour the candidate.

- **Labelling and packaging of sample**

It is essential that all CDs/cassettes are clearly labelled. If the recorded sample is submitted on cassette, each cassette must be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings in order of play. If the recorded sample is submitted on CD, a list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. On the CD, the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. Each CD/cassette must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette/CD number, Centre number, Centre name, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction need only be made once, and can be saved as a separate file (named "recorded introduction") if Centres are submitting recordings on CD. Whether Centres are submitting recordings on cassette or CD, it is the Examiner who must introduce each recording by announcing the candidate number, candidate name and role play card number. This announcement must not be made by the candidate.

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

- **Internal moderation in Centres**

The vast majority of the Centres who had been given permission to use more than one Examiner had adopted a thoroughly professional approach to internal moderation and had carefully documented their procedures for achieving consistency.

Where more than one Examiner is used in a Centre, it is crucial that Moderators are able to check that all Examiners have adopted a uniform approach to the test and applied the mark scheme consistently. All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation. These guidelines explain the need for the marking of all Examiners in the Centre to be checked for consistency before a representative sample of recordings is chosen. **Centres new to internal moderation are reminded that if after checking the sample for a particular Examiner the decision is taken to adjust that Examiner's marks, that adjustment must then be applied to the marks of all the candidates who were examined by that Examiner, and not just to those candidates who happened to be in the sample checked.**

- **Duration of tests / missing elements**

Most Centres adhered to the stipulated timings, but a few Centres persist in going under or over the minutes prescribed for the Topic conversation **and/or** the General conversation test. Each of these must last for approximately five minutes. Where conversations are short, this is likely to disadvantage candidates as they will not have enough time to “warm up” and/or to show what they can do.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

As last year, some Examiners did not realise that a short response in the role plays, if appropriate, can earn a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task then Examiners are free to split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be awarded is 1. If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and not 3 is appropriate.

In the Conversation sections, marking tended to be generous in some Centres, as marks were awarded in the higher bands when there was no evidence that candidates could respond in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions or that they could communicate accurately in past and future tenses. Many Centres were successful in applying the mark scheme fairly and consistently and marked in line with the agreed standard. New Centres were sometimes a little harsh in the application of the mark scheme in the middle and/or at the bottom of their mark ranges and, in such cases, marks were increased to bring them in line with the agreed standard.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Centres should encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task, as presented on the Role play cards: if only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. In 2012, two-part tasks will be split into (i) and (ii) on the Role play cards. Overlong answers are not to be encouraged as marks are only awarded for the stipulated tasks and any extra information given by the candidate may affect the clarity of the message. Candidates should be reminded to listen carefully to the Examiner, especially where they are required to choose from options provided by the Examiner (A Role plays) and before they “respond to the question appropriately” type of cue (B Role plays). Examiners are reminded not to change the cues as by doing so, they are likely to increase the difficulty of the Role play for their candidates.

A Role plays

As in 2010, 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 from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All cards featured one task which required a question to be asked and one task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner. Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres had trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate and in such cases a mark of 3 can be awarded.

At the restaurant

Candidates performed well on this Role play. On the first task some candidates thought that they already had a reservation rather than that they were making one. All could ask for food (any appropriate food item was accepted). Given the international nature of many drinks, brand names were accepted when given in a French way. Those who chose to give *jus*, frequently mispronounced the word. The last task, requiring a question, was usually well done although many seemed unaware as to the plural nature of *les toilettes*.

At the theatre

Again, candidates performed well on this Role play. On Task 4, some Examiners changed the prompt to a specific day, but most candidates were still able to correctly choose one of the options offered. Examiners are reminded that where the instruction *Dites:...* appears, they should use the wording provided in the Teachers' Notes Booklet.

At the market

Some candidates combined Tasks 1 and 2. This was acceptable. On Task 3, poor pronunciation sometimes made the candidate's choice of price ambiguous. Nearly all candidates could ask an appropriate question about the price.

B Role plays

The B Role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, give an opinion, apologise or express pleasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the Role plays. They differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score marks on most tasks thanks, often, to skilful examining. It was crucial for Examiners to know their own role and to stick to the set tasks. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to consider likely questions in the 15 minutes they are given, immediately prior to the Speaking test, in which to prepare the Role plays, and to listen carefully in the examination room.

Phoning about a lost key

Candidates were usually able to outline the situation in the first task. They were also quite successful in saying where and when they lost the key. Many, however, forgot to apologise on Task 4 and for some the message became confused on the last task when *son arrivée* was not reformulated in order to ask at what time the owner would arrive.

Exchanging a pair of trousers

Candidates were usually successful in outlining that they had a problem and many could use the perfect tense correctly to explain when they had bought the trousers. Many could say why they wanted to change the trousers and said they did not like the colour or that they were too big or small. Candidates fared less well on Task 4 and only a few knew *cabine d'essayage* although they could of course have completed the task successfully by asking to try on the trousers (the verb *essayer* was given on the Role play card). Most completed the last task quite well.

At the airport

Again, many could outline the situation and had prepared well for Task 2. The 'unknown' question (Task 3) often needed to be repeated by the Examiner, but was then well done by a good number of candidates. Candidates sometimes omitted expressing their pleasure and should be reminded to look out for such cues in their preparation time. Many could say when they would arrive. On the last task, candidates needed to ask a question about the meeting, such as where? or when? Some candidates were a little more imaginative and asked good questions about what the friend would be wearing. One candidate had clearly used her preparation time in an imaginative way and said she would be wearing a flower!

Topic presentation & conversation

Moderators were generally impressed with the high standard of work heard in this section. The whole section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last about five minutes. Although timings were usually good, in some Centres, candidates were allowed to carry on presenting their topic for up to three minutes. This is not good practice as it restricts not only the time available for the follow-up conversation, but also the material available for discussion. Candidates must not be allowed to carry on presenting their topic for more than one to two minutes. While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Rather questions should arise spontaneously as the conversation develops. Examiners were usually aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses.

A good range of topics was evident this year in this section. These were sometimes the expected ones, such as *les vacances, mes projets d'avenir, mon école, le sport, mes loisirs*. As last year, food and health and environment proved popular as did new technology and associated leisure activities. This year, some interesting topics on future plans were presented and discussed. Some topic choices continue to be ambitious and go beyond the syllabus in terms of issues and maturity, for example topics on AIDS or global warming. This is perfectly acceptable provided that the candidate has the linguistic maturity to cope.

Some candidates spoke in a very interesting way about their schooling in different countries and their education and ambitions were important to them.

Moderators reported very few cases of Centres allowing candidates to present "Myself" as their topic. Centres should note that candidates should not be allowed to choose this as their topic as if they do so it leaves little material to explore in the General conversation section. It is not within the spirit of the syllabus for all candidates in a Centre to present the same topic.

As last year, candidates had usually prepared their topics well and most were presented at a good pace. The best performances came from candidates who, in their preparation, had equipped themselves with appropriate vocabulary and structures and were able to sustain the level of performance they produced in their presentation in the follow-up conversation. Candidates who were able to go beyond the factual and express their opinions and present explanations scored well. As always, the best performances were elicited when the Examiner listened carefully and questions arose spontaneously out of the discussion.

General conversation

Most Centres had clearly understood the need to cover at least two or three topics from the syllabus in the General conversation section. New Centres usually conducted this section of the test well. A few Centres made use of the same questions on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: this approach must be avoided. While it is good practice to help candidates in class by using banks of questions, over reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test often produces stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and which, at worst, do not seem to develop beyond a series of mini presentations. Once in the examination room, it is far better if the Examiner listens to what the candidate is saying and responds as spontaneously as possible. The descriptors in the Mark scheme make it very clear that there should be the opportunity for candidates to respond to both straightforward and unexpected questions in both conversation sections.

As usual, a very wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. This year, there were larger numbers of candidates achieving high marks in the General conversation section. Such candidates were clearly used to responding to open questions which required them to express their ideas wherever possible and to develop their answers in a spontaneous way. The language used by candidates in such performances was often very impressive, displaying very good control of tenses and use of subordination, as well as a wide range of structures and appropriate vocabulary.

The nature of this candidature is truly international. It remains fascinating to hear candidates from all over the world relating their everyday experiences, their hopes and their aspirations, and to hear how much they all have in common with each other! The quality of the performances produced in this examination clearly demonstrates the importance accorded to the skill of communicating via the spoken word in many IGCSE classrooms.

FRENCH

Paper 0685/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should follow the rubric closely.
- Candidates should make full use of the time allowed.
- Candidates should aim to write between 130 and 140 words as stipulated.
- Candidates should write what they know to be French and avoid attempting to use language with which they are unfamiliar.
- Candidates should avoid excessive reliance on certain words and phrases.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

The standard of response to this year's paper was high. It is to those who perhaps do not do justice to their potential through faulty examination techniques that these key messages are addressed.

The rubric directs candidates to address certain tasks. Marks for communication are awarded for the completion of each of these tasks and the omission of any of them will affect the total mark for each question. The form of the question often invites a certain phrasing in the answer, for example *Que voudriez-vous faire...?* would suggest an answer beginning *Je voudrais...* followed by an infinitive. A question expressed in a past tense would require a response in a past tense. Normally a candidate offers an expansion to his/her response to the stimulus, and this must be relevant. A number of this year's scripts included irrelevant material or 'padding' which gained little reward.

The time allowed to write two pieces of continuous French is normally adequate. There should be time for candidates to plan their answers and to compose each sentence carefully, paying particular attention to verbal constructions and the agreement of adjectives and past participles. They should then take the time to revise their answers in order to eliminate unnecessary errors. A number of fluent answers were submitted which 'read well' but which were let down by elementary mistakes, such as the misspelling of everyday words, errors of gender and missed adjectival agreements.

The length of an answer is important. Candidates should count the number of words they use and aim always to write between 130 and 140 words. Where answers are shorter than this, the number of marks gained for language is automatically affected. An answer which exceeds the word limit of 140 words runs the risk of a communication mark being lost when it falls outside the limit. This year a number of scripts did not score the maximum number of communication marks available for this reason.

Free or guided composition offers candidates the chance to show off their French to its best advantage. The best candidates wrote fluently, employing subordinate clauses, a variety of verbal structures and object pronouns and a richness of vocabulary and idiom, while keeping the incidence of error to a minimum. Average candidates should also endeavour to use a certain complexity of language, but at the same time stay within their limitations and not try to express over ambitious concepts which their knowledge of French cannot convey. Pre-learned phrases should be employed only when their use is apt for the context and not 'forced in' without regard for meaning. Those of a more modest range were still able to score quite well for language if they kept to simple structures.

While many presented work with only minor incidence of repetition, some did overuse certain words and phrases to the detriment of their performance. Examiners may reduce the general impression mark for an answer if this is the case.

The quality of presentation is slowly improving but some answers were barely legible. Examiners do not reward what they cannot read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) A visit to a *parc d'attractions*

This question proved to be a popular choice. Most were familiar with the concept of a day at an amusement park and they tackled the question with enthusiasm. A minority did not know what a *parc d'attractions* was, but no penalty was incurred provided they wrote about a visit to a park of some kind.

Past tenses were required to respond to the first task, and most were able to say they went to a park with friends and enjoyed various activities. These included playing games and feasting on fast food. Although 'going on rides' proved difficult to express, most candidates were able to express a wide range of other activities.

The majority expressed a liking for *parcs* and offered a variety of reasons. They were *amusant* or *rigolo*. A visit gave friends the chance to have a good time together, although a few said they disliked them because they were dangerous or frightening.

Given the choice between a day out with friends or with the family, most, unsurprisingly, would opt for friends. Few were unable to score a communication mark for *Je préfère sortir avec mes amis/ma famille*. Parents were strict and would probably disapprove. A day out with friends offered more freedom. They were the same age and had more in common. These ideas were usually well expressed. Those at boarding schools would sometimes relish the chance of a day out with their families as they saw their friends every day.

Plans for the coming weekend were normally expressed by *je voudrais...* and an infinitive, although those who put a simple future had full reward. Some wanted to go back to the amusement park. Others opted for the usual weekend activities such as the cinema, a *fête* or a disco. Some planned a sporting activity, though some encountered difficulty with expressions such as *jouer au football* or *faire de la natation*.

Question 1(b) Fashion and clothes

Unsurprisingly, many responses to this question came from girls. Interesting discussions on the topic of clothes and young people were a feature of the best answers, although those who took a more conservative approach were able to score well for language and content.

When asked to describe the clothes they had bought recently, most obtained the mark for communication by saying *j'ai acheté* with items of clothing and colours – *un T-shirt bleu, des baskets noires* et *une jolie jupe rouge*. Not all were able to make the correct adjectival agreements. Some related a day out shopping with friends or parents, an activity seemingly enjoyed by all.

Opinions of the clothes candidates wore at school varied. Some were free to wear what they chose and were obviously glad to dress as they pleased. The majority wore a school uniform, which they described in some detail. Some liked it, but the majority found it uncomfortable, 'horrible' or old fashioned. Some conceded that a uniform has the beneficial effect of making all students seem equal and it takes the stress out of choosing what to wear every day.

Most recognised what *vêtements de marque* were. Many said they liked designer clothes but they could not normally afford them (*ils sont trop chers*). The best candidates were able to make mature comments about quality and value for money and debate the pros and cons of practical, affordable clothes against the style and appeal of designer garments. The argument was sometimes made against spending large amounts on teenagers' clothes and against competition among the young in matters of dress. Candidates referred to friends who, unlike themselves, were bent on dressing up to show off their wealth. Care should be taken in reading the questions. Candidates were asked if they bought designer clothes and some overlooked the task and moved straight to giving opinions. Some used up a number of words in listing the names of shops, brands or fashion houses. There is no credit for the use of such proper nouns.

Given the chance to buy whatever clothes they wished, many said they would buy expensive fashion items although some (usually boys) would be happy to wear the T shirts, jeans and trainers they wear now. Some had difficulty in saying *Si j'avais beaucoup d'argent* and mistakenly used a present tense. The second part of the task was easier, being expressed by *je voudrais porter* or *je porterais* with whatever clothes they would wear.

Question 2 First day at a new school

Some very impressive answers were received.

Candidates wrote about first day angst. They were *nerveux* and *timide*. They were afraid, faced with the challenges of a new environment and a host of strange faces, students and staff. Some got lost in the enormous building or were punished for not knowing the rules. Others did not speak the language very well and had difficulty in understanding or communicating. Loneliness and vulnerability were expressed well. These negative feelings were often dispelled by their experiences during the day. The teachers were *sympa*. The lessons were not too hard. They enjoyed the break periods and joining in games. The day usually ended on a positive note, with feelings of relief and happiness. Life in the new school would not be so bad after all. Others were lonely and wretched throughout the day and expressed a desire to return to their old school, though only a few managed *mon ancienne école*.

Some candidates devoted much of the piece to a description of daily life at the new school. Others compared at length the school with their former school. The new place was bigger or stricter, studies were harder or easier, meals were preferable or not, similarly the uniform, which was thought to be quite important. Comparatives (*plus ... que*) were usually well handled although *meilleur que* proved elusive. The present tense was clearly an acceptable alternative tense to express these opinions, although better candidates used the imperfect tense quite effectively. Some wrote exclusively about school routine and omitted completely the task about the events of the first day which the rubric required (*comment s'est passé le jour de la rentrée scolaire*).

Relating the events of the first day required past tenses and for the majority of candidates this was not a difficulty. They arrived at school, sometimes unavoidably late, much to their embarrassment. Some were greeted by the head teacher no less and even taken on an escorted tour of the establishment. They were introduced to their classmates (a number did not know *présenter*). Some felt isolated at first when other candidates either stared at them or ignored them. Then they started lessons, they painted a picture, they did experiments, they worked hard. Teachers were sympathetic. At the *récré* (a well known item of vocabulary) they made friends. The reflexive element of *se faire des amis* was often omitted and *rencontrer* was regularly misspelled. Girls chatted. Boys joined in games of football. The ice was broken. Despite the homework and the rules, the food and the uniform, they looked forward to life in their new school. It was clearly an experience familiar to many.

While the 'narrative in the past' presented a challenge it also inspired the better candidates to show the full range of their linguistic skills. Those of more limited ability were usually able to write competently about their 'new school experience' in simpler language. Those who made little attempt were very few in number.

Weaker scripts were characterised by repetition and occasional irrelevance. The misspelling of common words such as *professeur*, *(mal)heureusement*, *élèves*, *aimable* and *beaucoup* was a regular feature. Even on above average scripts the gender of the narrator seemed to vary, according to the agreements of adjectives and past participles. Identical words were spelled inconsistently. Common verb forms were mishandled. If candidates of all levels of ability took more time at the end checking their work, a greater degree of accuracy would be achieved.