

FRENCH (US)

Paper 0528/13

Listening

Key messages

- Most candidates were aware of the need to write clearly in blue or black ink and not to write answers first in pencil and then overwrite in pen. New Centres should remind candidates to write clearly and to cross out any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Answers are marked on the basis of communication and comprehension. Accuracy is only taken into account should the message become ambiguous. Where the mis-spelling of a word means another French word with a different meaning is produced, communication is affected. Candidates should therefore be reminded that careless spelling mistakes can affect their final mark.
- Centres need to remind candidates to try to be as concise as possible. Full sentences are not required. Indeed, overlong answers often include extra material which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- It remains important that all candidates have the opportunity to practise past papers and become familiar with the examination rubrics and structure.

General comments

Candidates seemed familiar with the structure of the paper and the required response types in all three sections. The exercises discriminated appropriately and the choice of topics was found to be accessible.

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. Longer extracts featured a variety of register, and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary tested in the first two sections of the test is drawn from the Defined Content.

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. Brief answers are possible and, in fact, desirable. As the Listening paper aims to test comprehension, inaccuracies in written French (e.g. incorrect spellings or verb endings) are normally tolerated provided the message conveyed is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French, it will be accepted, provided that the message is unambiguous. However, where candidates add extra information which distorts an otherwise valid answer (and therefore 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 details of which only one is correct or heard on the recording, the mark cannot be awarded, as the Examiner is being required to make the choice which should have been made by the candidate. Candidates should not answer from general knowledge and 'infer' what may not in fact be stated on the recording. The inclusion of extra incorrect material can prevent the mark from being awarded. Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and that there is not a period of reading time before the examination starts. It is helpful to point out to candidates new to the paper that they will hear everything twice and to familiarise them with when the pauses occur in the different exercises.

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. This opening exercise is intended to give candidates a confident start to the paper. The extracts were straightforward and short, and the vocabulary areas tested (prices, time, shopping, furniture, food and places etc.) were familiar to candidates. **Question 8** proved to be the most challenging. Some candidates clearly confused *portefeuille* with *portable* and chose option A instead of the correct option C. Candidates understood that only one box should be ticked.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates heard an announcement for a young people's festival and were mostly required to show their understanding of the extract by selecting one out of three visual options. Candidates generally coped well with the number *vingt-huit* on **Question 9** – they should be reminded that numbers can be given as a figure and do not need to be written out in full. Answers to **Questions 10-12** were frequently correct. Some were less sure on **Question 13** (*cirque*) and **Question 14** (*feu d'artifice*). **Questions 15** and **16** were often answered correctly.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates heard four young people talking on the topic of cinema. Questions tested specific facts and some opinions. The topic area was within the experience of candidates. Incorrect options were fairly evenly distributed when they occurred, but option **k** was quite popular.

New Centres should remind candidates that on this exercise six boxes only should be ticked. A combination of ticks for true statements and crosses for false statements should not be used as this can cause confusion.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In the first part of this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Vishwa, a young Indian girl who had spent time studying in France and living with a French family. Candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements by supplying the correct word(s). The requirements of the exercise were well understood. On **Question 18** the word *écrivain* was required and appeared in various forms in candidates' answers. A wide number of spellings were accepted as conveying the idea, including *écrivin*, *écrivain*, *écrivat(t)*, to cite just a few, and this meant that many did gain the mark, despite inaccuracies. Answers featuring recognisable attempts at the verb *écrire* were also accepted. On **Question 19** many successfully identified *libre(s)*. Incorrect answers sometimes featured the misheard *livre* (for *libre*). On **Question 20** many candidates answered correctly with *chat(s)*. Examiners also accepted the answer *d'chat*, as well as spellings such as *cha* (on the 'sounds like' principle). Incorrect answers often featured the word *chien(s)*, which was heard on the recording in connection to India and not France, underlining the need for careful reading of the question. Candidates also fared quite well on **Question 21**. On **Question 22**, there were many incorrect renderings of *fruits de mer* which made this the most challenging question in this part of the exercise. Spellings such as *frites de mer* and *fruits de mère/maire* were unacceptable as they introduced incorrect concepts.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

Candidates heard an interview with a young German girl who had also lived and studied in France. Candidates were required to give short written responses in French. Full sentences were not required and a few words were often enough to be able to express the correct concept. On **Question 23**, candidates needed to identify *note(s)* and *français* to convey the required concept. Some added in *mauvaises*, which, as it had been correctly heard in the recording, was acceptable. Answers featuring *notre* did not gain the mark. **Question 24** tested a comparison and was presented as a sentence with a blank to avoid the need for candidates to write a long answer. The required answer (*moins proche*) was accessible. Mis-spellings such as *mois* and *moi* distorted meaning by introducing other concepts. The spelling *moïn* was tolerated. Candidates would benefit from practice at communicating comparatives. On **Question 25**, candidates needed to identify *journée scolaire*. Other correct answers referred to school being long or school hours being long. In **Question 26** weaker candidates often opted for the time at which people ate in Germany: they may not have read the question carefully as both answers had to refer to France. Some found it hard to render the word *chaud* – distortions such as *chou* did not gain the mark. As intended, the final question on this exercise proved to be one of the most challenging on this section of the paper and a suitable step up

towards the final section of the paper. **Question 27** required candidates to identify and compare the concept of getting on with the French family. The question had been phrased so as to avoid the need for a candidate to have to produce a negative in his/her answer. Where candidates included the negative, it was tolerated. Correct answers to this question featured an attempt to render the reflexive verb *s'entendre* plus *la famille*. Answers in the first person such as *m'entendre/m'entends avec la famille* were accepted. The verb *attendre* was often used and was not accepted, neither was *mentendre* written as a single word, and sometimes also rendered as *montondre*.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

The extract featured a longer interview with Reza, a photographer, talking about his work. The interview included different time frames and feelings and opinions were expressed. In this exercise, candidates had to listen to and process more information than in the previous section. There was no particular pattern of incorrect responses in this exercise, but on **Question 33**, candidates often chose option C, probably because they heard *on pouvait se déplacer facilement* on the recording. Candidates needed to appreciate the difference between the present tense of *pouvoir* in the question and the past tense they heard on the recording, which was then reinforced with *ce n'est plus le cas*.

It is worth reminding candidates to make effective use of the reading time available at the beginning of this exercise and to read the questions and options carefully. Reading the questions will also help to give candidates an overview of the content of the recording and help them to sequence the information which they will hear.

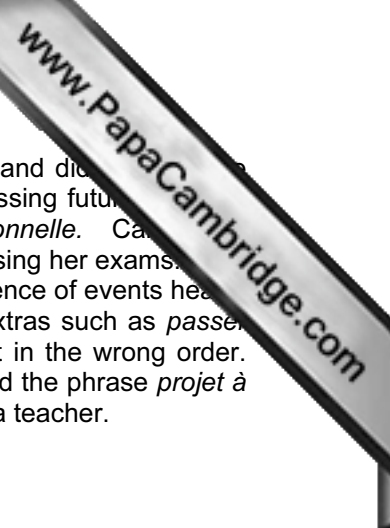
Exercise 2 Questions 34-41

Candidates heard an interview with a young female fire-fighter, Christine. 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. Deliberately, some more accessible questions were also included to help maintain concentration and motivation.

Candidates were required to write their answers in French. The language required in the answers featured vocabulary which was in the Defined Content. Many of the questions could be answered briefly and also without a verb (though **Questions 39(b), 40** and **41** did need an attempt at an appropriate verb (see below)). Candidates do not have to write in full sentences. Most candidates had been well trained and understood the need to write as concisely as possible but there were still examples of very long answers, some of which featured several crossings out and were difficult to read. Answers in which candidates have merely tried to transcribe as much as possible of the material they hear will rarely be successful. If an Examiner is put in the position of having to try to locate the correct answer in the midst of extra irrelevant material (in some cases several contradictory statements) which distorts the correct answer, the mark will not be awarded. Candidates should be advised not to include in their answers personal inferences which do not feature on the recording as these may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.

On **Question 34**, some invalidated their answer by writing *9 moins* instead of *9 mois*. **Question 35** proved to be one of the most difficult on the paper. *Espirit* was often missing or was incorrectly spelt. Renderings such as *esprite/espri/espri/espirt* were accepted. Answers to **Questions 36(i)** and **(ii)** were interchangeable. **Question 36(i)** only required the word *petite/petit* to score the mark and weaker candidates were often successful. Some candidates invalidated their answers by adding *très* or *trop* which distorted. On **Question 36(ii)** the required concept was *matériel lourd*. *Lourd* was not well known and some missed out *matériel*. Those who also chose to include the additional *à porter* often invalidated their answers by writing *apporter*. Candidates were more successful on **Question 37** which required the concept of *pleine (de) fumée*. The stem of the answer was provided in order to reduce the amount candidates had to write. The word *pleine* was often mis-spelt, but the mark scheme was tolerant on this point provided that another word such as *plaine/plan* was not produced. **Question 38** was the easiest on the exercise and required candidates to identify *minimum (de) force*. Candidates did not need to use the word *avoir* to gain the mark. Those who misheard this on the recording and answered *avant un minimum de force* did not score the mark. On **Question 39(a)**: *peur* was enough, by itself, to gain the mark. **Question 39(b)** provided an appropriate challenge for the best candidates who were able to render *savait quoi faire*. To be successful on this question, candidates did need to include an appropriate attempt at the verb *savoir*: renderings such as *savé/sais* were acceptable. **Question 40** was suitably challenging for this stage of the test. Examiners were looking for the concept of collective responsibility: *chacun/chaque pompier est responsable des autres*. The mark scheme allowed for various recognisable versions of *responsable* which often proved difficult to spell

accurately. Answers which did not include the notion of 'for others' were incomplete and did not merit a mark. On the final question, candidates needed to include an appropriate verb expressing future intention, such as *devenir* (but not *deviner*), *voudrait être*, *être*, *sera*, together with *professionnelle*. Candidates needed to read this question carefully as it asked what Christine wanted to do **after** passing her exams. This was a good test of listening which required candidates to think carefully about the sequence of events heard. Some invalidated their answers by including the required details but then adding in extras such as *passer des examens* or *travail volontaire*. Candidates often produced the correct events but in the wrong order. Some also mis-heard the recording and tried to render the last sentence (which included the phrase *projet à long terme*) as *devenir interne*. Other incorrect attempts featured the idea of becoming a teacher.



FRENCH (US)

Paper 0528/23
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

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

- keep their answers brief and focused, particularly in **Section 3**;
- avoid indiscriminate lifting in **Section 3**;
- read the essay question carefully and answer every part of it;
- allow time for reading through their answers to check that they have answered every question and have made any corrections needed;
- ensure that when they change an answer they do so in such a way as to make it clear what is their final answer and what the Examiner is to mark.

General comments

The paper proved accessible to candidates.

Levels of grammatical accuracy were not generally high, with verbs, genders, possessives and pronouns showing problems. Candidates should re-read what they have written once they have finished the paper, and correct simple errors such as words miscopied from the text (sometimes copied differently each time), and singular and plural verb agreements, for example, particularly in **Section 3** where such errors may mean that a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates scored well in this exercise and seemed familiar with all the items of vocabulary tested.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise tested the comprehension of items that Jean would take with him on holiday to the mountains, and was generally well done. Candidates usually scored the three marks available for **Questions 6-8**. Answers to **Questions 9** and **10** revealed some confusion as to the meaning of *imperméable*, *chaussures de marche* and *maillot de bain*.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

For this exercise, candidates read a short piece of text and answered a series of multiple choice questions. Again, this proved an accessible exercise. For **Question 11** candidates sometimes chose B rather than C.

Exercise 4 Question 16

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

- (a) where they are (*gare routière*, *station de bus*, *arrêt de bus* or *dans le bus* – all accepted);
(b) what they are buying (*magazine*, *livre*, *journal*, *programme* – all accepted):

- (c) what they are going to see (*concert, spectacle, festival de musique, groupe*, etc.) (all accepted).

Most candidates managed something appropriate for the first task although some candidates confused the issue by using *gare* (SNCF), which could not be accepted as it did not convey the correct message.

For the second task, the spelling of *magazine* was not widely known and there was much confusion with *magasin*. For the last task, a variety of 'shows' were accepted. *Discothèque* and *bande* were not rewarded.

In order to score the two marks available for language, candidates had to use two correct verbs in appropriate tenses – Examiners accepted present, future and past tenses here, provided that the version of events offered showed some internal logic. Candidates tended to be successful with their use of *je vais* + infinitive. *J'achète* caused some problems for the language mark – although the present tense was accepted without an accent, *je achète* and *j'ai achete* were not. Care must be taken with the use of accents.

Candidates should take note that they do not need to write at great length here – **three brief sentences can score full marks**.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

For this exercise, candidates were asked to read a longer piece of text (in this instance, an email from Nancy about her new home) and answer the questions in French. The majority of candidates coped well with this exercise. Often a one or two word answer was sufficient, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was usually tolerated. The quality of the written French was considered only in terms of whether or not it communicated.

Questions 17, 18 and 19 were usually successfully answered. Some candidates became slightly confused as to where Nancy used to live and was now living when answering **Questions 20 and 21**. *Un appartement à Paris* were the two elements expected for **Question 20** and either *à la campagne* or *près d'une petite ville* for **Question 21**. Candidates who wrote *dans une petite ville* without any mention of *à la campagne* did not score the mark. **Questions 22 and 23** were very well answered. For **Question 24** *être dans une maison qu'elle ne connaît pas* was the expected answer and many candidates conveyed the message successfully. For **Question 25** candidates could either state that *Marjorie/son amie arrive dans deux semaines* or *passer les vacances avec Marjorie/son amie*. Ambiguous answers such as *elle arrive dans deux semaines* could not be rewarded as there was no indication of who *elle* was meant to be.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This writing task – a short essay of 80 to 90 words – was well within the experience of candidates. Candidates were asked to

- (a) describe what they do on their birthday;
- (b) say how they celebrate their friends' birthdays;
- (c) say what present they would like to receive in the future and why.

Ten marks were available for communication of the required elements and five marks were available for language.

Candidates found this essay very accessible and their essays were often lively and interesting. The emphasis for both (a) and (b) was on what they did. They were also rewarded for one reaction, e.g.: *c'est super* and mentioning their presents. Candidates should avoid repeating the same piece of information as it can only be credited once. Going to a restaurant/a disco/a cinema, swimming and shopping often appeared in both (a) and (b). (c) was usually well done with candidates indicating what they would like to receive, mainly a car, a cat or a new computer, and providing satisfactory justifications.

To achieve a high mark for language, candidates need to vary their choice of vocabulary and check the accuracy of the verb forms and tenses they use. Some candidates stuck to simple, repetitive language – there was much repetition of *je vais, je suis allé(e), je joue* – and others had clearly spent a lot of time writing very elaborate and well-practised language, full of idioms and elegant touches. There was some confusion between *gâteau* and *cadeau*.

Section 3

In this section, candidates are expected to show a more precise level of understanding of longer texts. It is no longer enough just to be able to locate the correct area of the text which will supply the answer looked for: candidates need to show that they have understood the text and have focused on precisely the details required for the answer. Candidates who lift indiscriminately do not demonstrate genuine comprehension and, therefore, cannot score the marks. The inclusion of unnecessary connectives such as *mais, alors, donc*, etc. will often result in the invalidation of an otherwise correct answer. Candidates would do well to be guided by the length of space allocated for an answer – if there is only one line shown, the answer is expected to fit in that space.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

In this exercise, having read the text, candidates have to make up their minds which of the given statements are *Vrai* and which are *Faux*, and they are told that two are *Vrai* and four are *Faux*. Having made their choice, they must then go on to correct the false ones in the style of the example given. There is no credit given for a version which just adds *...ne...pas...* to the original statement. Candidates had been well-trained to tick only four false statements and to only offer justifications to these.

For **Question 27**, which was false, candidates could select from the text that *ses parents la poussent à continuer ses études* or adapt the statement to *ils espèrent qu'elle continuera ses études*. Candidates who answered *ils espèrent qu'elle à continuer ses études...* did not score the mark as the message conveyed was ambiguous. **Question 28** was also false and candidates could choose either *les médecins lui interdisent de refaire du vélo* or *ils lui conseillent les sports d'eau* to correct the statement. For **Question 29** two answers were acceptable: *elle ne sait pas ce que c'est* or *une amie lui propose le bodyboard*, but without the *alors* after the verb. **Question 30** was true. **Question 31** was the fourth false statement and required *elle n'est (vraiment) pas enthousiasmée* as a correction. Candidates who provided justifications for the protagonist's lack of enthusiasm – *il n'y a pas de vagues et elle a froid dans l'eau* – were not penalised. **Question 32** was true and needed no correction.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

This final exercise was, as intended, the most demanding part of the paper. Even where candidates were able to locate the correct part of the text, they were not selective enough when choosing what was a relevant response to the question. It was often the case that where candidates chose to copy a chunk of text with the correct answer buried within it, the extra details they included rendered their answer invalid.

The brief response *ses explorations dans les régions polaires* scored the mark for **Question 33**. For **Question 34** *dans l'océan Pacifique* was sufficient to gain the mark. Answers to **Question 35** were often invalidated by the inclusion of *qui servira* before *à étudier la vie dans l'océan*. It is important to note that if a conjugated verb is used, a subject will usually be required. *Servira à étudier la vie dans l'océan* was therefore not credited. Candidates often lost the mark available for **Question 36** by adding *qui viennent polluer l'île* to the correct answer *emportés par la mer*. The mark was also lost if candidates chose to use *les déchets/ils* without *sont*.

Nettoyer l'île was sufficient to gain the mark for **Question 37**. This question was usually well answered. **Question 38** did not always seem to have been understood by candidates who listed *brosses à dents, morceaux de plastique, jambes de poupées* instead of the expected *ils ont trouvé un moyen de se servir (de la plupart) de ces objets*. **Question 39** also caused a few problems as even though candidates located the correct part of the text, they produced the full lift *en nettoyant il ne faut donc pas détruire ce nouvel équilibre* rather than the required answer *il ne faut pas détruire le nouvel équilibre*. **Question 40** posed similar problems as candidates lifted indiscriminately *cette liste va permettre aux scientifiques de commencer à étudier les conséquences de la pollution sur cette île* rather than the more concise answer *pour étudier les conséquences de la pollution sur cette île*. **Question 41** was in two parts. In (i) candidates needed to use a present participle or a verb in the future tense with a correct subject *en utilisant l'énergie solaire* or *ils vont créer une station qui fonctionne à l'énergie solaire*. For (ii) if candidates chose to use a possessive adjective, it had to be changed to *leurs* or *ses*. However, *toutes (les) constructions seront en bois* was perfectly acceptable as an answer.

FRENCH (US)

Paper 0528/03

Speaking

Key messages

- Examiners kept well to Role play scripts which in turn enabled candidates to stick closely to the cues on their cards. To score well in the Role plays, candidates need to be as concise as possible.
- Where conversation sections are too short or too long there is a risk that candidates will be disadvantaged.
- Candidates must show they can use past and future tenses consistently and accurately if they are to score more than six marks for Linguistic content (scale (b)).
- Centres should ensure that a wide range of topics is covered across their candidates in both the Topic and General conversation sections.
- The best performances at all levels of ability occur where conversations are allowed to develop in a natural way, and where candidates are given the opportunity to respond not just to straightforward questions but also to unexpected ones, and are encouraged to develop their answers and explain their opinions.

General comments

This paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed a Core Curriculum or an Extended Curriculum course.

Examiners had familiarised themselves with the requirements of the Speaking test and with the mark scheme, and seemed well aware of the need to give candidates the opportunity to show what they knew and could do. Candidates were aware of the demands of the test.

Role plays were conducted efficiently, with Examiners sticking closely to the cues 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.

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 six 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 explained in the Teachers' Notes booklet and all Centres must ensure they understand them well in advance of the test (e.g. by looking at a past copy of the booklet) so that they have plenty of time to contact Cambridge in order to clarify any uncertainties.

• Clerical checks

It is essential that all clerical work is checked with great care in the Centre 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. Centres using MS1 mark sheets to return marks to Cambridge must enter the total mark for each candidate in figures as well as shading the lozenges.

- **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

The Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample must be completed and sent with the other materials for Moderation. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct.

- **Sample size and recording quality**

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.

Centres submitting recorded samples are asked to ensure that CDs/cassettes are clearly labelled. If recordings are submitted on CD, the sound file for each candidate's recording must be saved as a separate file and named according to the following convention: Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. The box for the CD should be clearly labelled and a list of which candidates are on which CD and in which order should be enclosed for each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named 'introduction'). If the recorded sample is submitted on cassette, each cassette must be accompanied by a list of the featured recordings in order of play. At the start of each cassette there must be a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the cassette number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date.

Whether Centres are submitting samples on cassette or CD, the Examiner must introduce each candidate by name and number and announce the Role play card number. This introduction must not be made by the candidate.

Once the recorded sample has been carefully wrapped in protective packaging, it should be placed in an envelope with the moderation paperwork, for despatch to Cambridge. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a bar-code) should 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.

- **Duration of tests / missing elements**

Centres are reminded that where conversations are short or missing, candidates are not given the opportunity to work for marks. Where conversations are long, candidates become tired and this also affects performance.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

A short response in the Role plays, if appropriate, can earn a mark of three. 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 one. If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a maximum mark of two and not three is appropriate.

In order for marks to be awarded in the higher bands in the conversation sections, there must be evidence that candidates can respond in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions and that they can communicate consistently and accurately in past and future tenses.

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 one mark can be awarded.

Overlong answers are not to be encouraged as marks are only awarded for the set tasks. Indeed, should candidates (or Examiners) expand the set tasks, there is a danger that any extra material will distort meaning and detract from an otherwise correct answer. Candidates should be reminded that it is important to always listen to the Examiner as on all the A Role plays there is a task which requires them to listen and choose from two options offered by the Examiner, and on the B Role plays there is always one task which requires

them to respond to an unexpected question. Examiners are reminded not to change the cues in the Teachers' Notes booklet unnecessarily.

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.

A Role plays

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

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, or express pleasure. The level of challenge was balanced across the Role plays. It is important that Examiners know their own role and 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 of preparation time, immediately prior to the Speaking test, and to listen carefully in the examination room.

Topic presentation & conversation

This section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last about five minutes. The Topic presentation should last between one and two minutes. Candidates must not be allowed to present their prepared material for longer than two minutes. The remainder of the five minutes allotted to this section should consist of a spontaneous conversation with the candidate about his/her topic. Examiners should not start asking questions too early during the presentation time but must start asking questions once the candidate reaches the two minute point. 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. It is also important that the questions do not encourage the candidate merely to repeat information which has already been given in the presentation. Questions should instead arise spontaneously as the conversation develops in a natural way. Examiners were aware of the need to elicit both past and future tenses.

In general, a very wide range of topics is heard in this section of the test. It is not within the spirit of the syllabus for all candidates in a Centre to present the same topic. Literature is not part of the IGCSE syllabus, but should candidates wish to prepare a topic on a book or a film this is quite acceptable providing that their linguistic ability can keep pace with the ideas they wish to express.

New Centres should note that candidates should not be allowed to choose 'Myself' as their topic as if they do so it leaves little material to explore in the General conversation section.

The best performances always come from candidates who, in their preparation, have equipped themselves with appropriate vocabulary and structures and who are able to sustain the level of performance they produce in their presentation in the follow-up conversation. Candidates who are able to go beyond the factual and express their opinions and present explanations score well.

General conversation

Centres should aim to cover two or three topics from the syllabus with each candidate in the General conversation section. With most candidates, it is preferable for the Examiner to explore two or three topics in some depth rather than to cover a greater number superficially. Weaker candidates are the exception to this approach and with them it may be necessary to cover a larger number of topics in order to keep questioning at a level they can cope with. It is common practice in classrooms to make use of banks of questions when practising Speaking skills, but over reliance on such banks in the live examination often results in stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and which, at worst, do not seem to develop beyond a series of pre-learnt 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

state clearly that there should be the opportunity for candidates to respond to both straight and unexpected questions in both conversation sections.



FRENCH (US)

Paper 0528/43
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should follow the rubric closely.
- Candidates should plan their answers.
- Candidates should make full use of the time allowed.
- Candidates should aim to write between 130 and 140 words as directed.
- Candidates should write what they know to be French and avoid attempting to use language with which they are unfamiliar.
- Handwriting must be clearly legible.

General comments

The rubric is not a list of suggestions to be interpreted freely. Instead, it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. Candidates should keep closely to these stated tasks and avoid irrelevance. Material introduced which does not pertain to the subject is not credited for content or language. Normally a statement expressed using a finite verb is required for each task and candidates should use tenses as appropriate to the tasks set.

Candidates are advised to prepare a brief plan of their answers under certain headings or paragraphs. As the recommended length is 140 words, they should plan to spread their answer fairly evenly over the 'bullet points' in the rubric. In **Question 1** in particular, if they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two points they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks within the word limit. If they cover all the points in 100 words or fewer then they may be reduced to 'padding out' their answer to reach 140 words, so they should look for areas where they can expand their answers with relevant examples before they start to write. Examiners do not mark for content or language anything which falls outside the word count. Short answers limit their own chances of accessing the maximum marks for language.

Once the plan is in place, candidates should compose each sentence carefully and pay particular attention to verb forms. They should remember that grammatical accuracy and correct spelling are essential to acquire marks for language. They should try to avoid too much repetition of certain words and structures. An over reliance on repeated items (such as *il y a* or possessive adjectives) tends to impair the overall quality of the piece and this may reduce the mark given for impression. Candidates should remember to stay within their limitations and to avoid over-complicated sentences which may expose weaknesses. Some candidates try to 'force in' certain phrases or idioms, regardless of the context. This has a detrimental effect on the quality of the answer which may be reflected in a reduced impression mark. Others cram in as many adjectives as they can, often gratuitously. This too should be discouraged as it is unnecessary and spoils the effect of the response.

When they have finished, candidates are advised to make full use of the time left to revise and check their work for careless errors which can be very costly. The time allowed is quite generous and is normally sufficient to allow for this. They should look closely at genders in particular, and the agreements of adjectives and past participles in the perfect tense of reflexive and *être* verbs. Accents should be clear and unambiguous.

Presentation is very important. Examiners do not reward French which they cannot read. Examiners will give the benefit of the doubt whenever they reasonably can, but there are limits and marks are often lost through illegible writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) *Un stage de cuisine*

Candidates sometimes made this question more difficult for themselves by creating unnecessary complications. The vocabulary required to answer the question was within the compass of most and the tasks were accessible for those who had only a modest range of grammatical structures, if they stayed within their limitations.

Most began their letter of application correctly with *Monsieur* or *Madame* and addressed the recipient using the formal *vous* throughout. A formal register was necessary for this kind of letter and no credit was given for *tutoiement* or informal usages such as *salut* or *bien à toi*.

The first task required candidates to introduce themselves and Examiners rewarded *je m'appelle* with a name. This was an easy communication mark but some did not think to include it. Candidates should take care to answer all parts of the task set out in the rubric. Reasons to apply for the course were varied. Most said how enthusiastic they were (*la cuisine c'est ma passion* etc.) or detailed their competence in the kitchen (they helped with the cooking at home). Others said they wanted to go to Paris and improve their French. Any sensible reason was rewarded.

Task (ii), when I wish to do the course, was not usually well handled. A communication mark was given for the straightforward *je voudrais faire ce stage* with a time. Examiners rewarded a general period of time (*en été, en juin, le mois prochain*) or specific dates (*du 12 au 28 juin*). Dates were not often well expressed and the muddled *au 2 du 15 septembre* was not rewarded. Marks were given for *tous les soirs, après les examens* or *pendant les vacances scolaires*. A number either overlooked the task or did not seem to understand *quand?*

Past tenses were required in task (iii) 'say you have already worked in the kitchen of a hotel'. Most were able to say *j'ai déjà travaillé dans une cuisine*, although a minority mistakenly thought travel was involved. Finding a positive aspect to the work experience in task (iv) was more demanding and some omitted the task altogether. Better candidates said they learned new cooking techniques or recipes. Or they were able to observe a chef in action. Others stressed the advantage of earning pocket money or said they enjoyed the company of the kitchen staff.

A wide range of reasons was given in support of their application in task (v). Some said they were passionate about cooking, while others said they were already experienced in the world of work. Others wrote of their personal qualities. They were polite, hard working, patient, good at working in a team and were of a pleasant disposition. They spoke several languages, including French. They were *un bon candidat* or even *le meilleur*.

Question 1(b) *Mes études*

The first task, 'when and where the candidate began his/her studies', proved to be quite demanding, partly because a number did not recognise the need for a past tense. A full communication mark was given for *j'ai commencé mes études* with a time and place. Some offered a year for 'when?' (*en 2002*). Others attempted to say 'when I was five' – *quand j'avais cinq ans* proved difficult. For 'where?' Examiners rewarded the name of an establishment as their first school, and *une école primaire* or *une petite école* with a location were also accepted.

Task (ii) invited the simple statement *j'aime étudier à mon école* which scored a communication mark. (*Je n'aime pas étudier à mon école* was also possible.) Instead candidates set about describing, often at length, their school, the buildings, the time-table, the uniform, the number of teachers, none of which was required by the task. Again candidates are reminded to keep to the tasks set out in the rubric.

The present tense was appropriate for explanations of why candidates enjoyed their studies. Their schools had many advantages. The teachers were excellent, being mostly kind and supportive. They had many friends. The school subjects were interesting. (*Intéressant* was often spelt incorrectly and/or did not agree with a plural noun.) The facilities (not *les facilités* in French) were superb. They included labs, libraries, playing fields and swimming pools. The *ambiance* was good. A number of marks were gained for fairly simple French here, but there were errors such as *beaucoup des salles* instead of *de salles* and a common failure to make adjectives agree with plural nouns. The mis-spelling of *professeur* and *étudier* (which was in the rubric) was common.

In task (iv) the communication mark was awarded for *je voudrais étudier* and a subject. Many candidates chose *les sciences* or *le commerce*. Reasons for their choice (task (v)) usually involved their love of a subject (*j'adore...*, *ma passion...* again) or the desire to follow a certain career. These two tasks were usually handled by candidates. Some omitted the subject(s) in task (iv), saying instead that they wanted to study at university or abroad. While no mark was gained in (iv) due to this misunderstanding, the reason given for going to university or abroad was given full credit in task (v).

Question 2 *Catastrophe au restaurant*

The standard of work in this question often fell below that achieved in **Question 1**. Candidates are given less guidance in **Question 2** and have to think more for themselves when it comes to content. There is added difficulty in that past tenses are required throughout. A number of candidates made the question more difficult for themselves by embarking on a fanciful or exotic anecdote which made unnecessarily heavy demands on their French. Wiser candidates took a more mundane, though often quite amusing approach and made maximum use of the French they knew relating to the everyday world instead of exposing their lack of knowledge through over-ambition.

The more successful responses usually began with the candidate's arrival at the restaurant. Mention was made of a table reservation which had been made previously. There followed a series of calamities, mostly minor. Firstly there was the long wait for a table (the said reservation having been lost or forgotten): *attendre pour une table* was a common error. To their disgust they were shown to a table near the toilets. The meal itself was inevitably unpleasant. There were further delays over the menu. The room was crowded and noisy. The waiters were rude. The tableware was dirty. The toilets were filthy. At last the choices were made and the meals were ordered. *Commander* was not well known. The wrong food items were served or their choices were unavailable. One felt some wrote from personal experience. The meal was of course awful. 'Hot meals' were served cold. 'Cold meals' were warm. Soup contained flies or human hairs. Salads contained snails or even cockroaches! The bill was astronomical. Credit cards or money had been lost or left at home. (Many attempted but few could spell *malheureusement*.) Some even found themselves in the kitchen washing up. Other catastrophic incidents included waiters spilling food and or wine over the wretched narrator's clothes and family members being violently sick as a result of the dreadful food. The narrator and his companion(s) had such a bad time of it that they vowed (as a last reaction) never to return to the restaurant or indeed never to dine out again. Home cooking was cheaper and much safer.

There was it seems a rich variety of material candidates could exploit to tell an interesting even humorous story using everyday vocabulary and grammatical structures. The rubric directed candidates to relate what happened in the restaurant so communication marks were not awarded for events which took place before or after leaving the restaurant.

Better candidates had the opportunity to display a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and structures and good control of verb forms, particularly tenses, with few errors. Weaker candidates confused past and present and had frequent difficulty in finding correct perfect tenses in a variety of persons. Use of the imperfect and pluperfect was often faulty. The mis-spelling of even everyday words was common, adjectives failed to agree with the nouns they described and the gender of the narrator varied from masculine to feminine in the course of the account. Again, Examiners stress that a careful and systematic revision of a narrative such as this should ensure that fewer marks are lost due to careless error.