

FRENCH

Paper 8682/01
Speaking

Key messages

For Teachers/Examiners:

- keep to the timings for the examination;
- signal the change for the topic conversation to the general conversation
- prompt candidates to ask questions – but answer them briefly.

For candidates:

- remember that the presentation should make clear reference to francophone culture or society;
- make sure that the presentation is not just factual, but contains ideas and opinions as well;
- ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections, and make every effort to ask more than one question on the topic or topics under discussion.

General comments

It is important for Examiners to remember that this examination is an opportunity for candidates to show what they have learnt and a chance for them to express and develop their ideas and opinions. Examiners should see their role as providing this opportunity.

The type of question asked by an Examiner can make a huge difference to how a candidate is able to make use of this opportunity – Examiners need to be aware that very long complex questions often prompt short answers, sometimes just yes or no, whereas open questions such as *Comment?* or *Pourquoi?* may allow a candidate to answer at much greater length.

Factual information is not the only thing required in an answer, and Examiners should beware of focusing too closely on what they see as the “correct” answer to a question, rather than listening to what a candidate is actually saying, and reacting and responding accordingly. The aim should be a conversation, which can only be achieved by engaging with what the candidate says, not by asking a series of entirely unrelated questions, which can usually be answered by the candidate with pre-prepared material.

Administration

Recordings this year were generally clearer, though a number presented problems because of the recording system chosen. Where Centres make use of digital recording software, each candidate’s file must be saved individually, as .mp3, and finalised correctly, so that each candidate’s examination can be accessed for moderation. Files should be identified using precise candidate details rather than just “number 1, 2” etc.

Please ensure that all recording material (including CD and cassette cases) is labelled with details of the Centre, syllabus, and candidates, listed with their names and candidate numbers in the order of recording. Where a Centre has candidates at both A and AS they should be recorded on separate CDs or cassettes. If using cassettes, only ONE candidate should be recorded per side of a 60 minute cassette, and a maximum of TWO candidates per side of a 90 minute cassette. It is very disruptive to be obliged to turn a cassette in the middle of an examination, and parts of the conversation are inevitably lost.

Care should also be taken with the packaging of recorded material – CDs are not unbreakable and there have been a few cases of inadequately packaged CDs so damaged in transit that it has been impossible to listen to candidates.

There were a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transcribing them to the MS1 - this should be checked carefully before submission, and all paperwork enclosed with the recordings. For the size of sample needed, please see the details in the syllabus booklet.

Format of the examination

There are 3 distinct parts to the speaking test:

- Presentation – to last 3 to 3½ minutes;
- Topic conversation – to last 7 to 8 minutes;
- General conversation – to last 8 to 9 minutes.

In order to be fair to all candidates, these timings should be observed – where examinations are too short, candidates are not given opportunities to show what they can do, and where conversations are over-extended, an element of fatigue creeps in and candidates sometimes struggle to maintain their level of language. Examiners must also remember that the longer their own contributions, the less time candidates have to develop their ideas. Responses to questions asked by candidates should be kept brief.

Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)

In this part of the examination, the candidate gives a **single** presentation, lasting about three minutes, on a specific topic of his or her choice, taken from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus booklet. This is the only prepared part of the examination, and the only part for which candidates are able to choose what they want to talk about.

The topic list gives candidates a very wide choice – the most popular this year, at both A and AS Levels, were *Sport, Loisirs, Les médias, Education, Les jeunes, Famille* and *Pollution*. There were a number of the usual favourites, such as drugs, unemployment, marriage, violence in society, discrimination, racism and immigration, some dealing with culture or politics in a French speaking country, personal interests such as art or music, as well as topical presentations on the French Presidential elections. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues.

For the most part, candidates were clearly aware of the need, stated in the syllabus, that the presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for Content/Presentation halved (see Speaking test mark scheme).

Since the topic is chosen beforehand, candidates have usually researched quite widely, and have to select and structure their material to fit into 3 to 3½ minutes – additional material which cannot not be included in the actual presentation because of the time constraint may well prove very useful in the topic conversation section. In general, candidates had no problem speaking for the required time, and many were able to give full and interesting presentations.

Candidates would be well advised to steer clear of very factual subjects – the mark scheme criteria for the content/presentation element makes it clear that in order to score well, the presentation should contain not just factual points but ideas and opinions. Candidates need to think carefully before making their final choice, and consider whether it will be possible to develop and open out their chosen topic.

Candidates only present ONE topic, and the topic conversation which follows will seek to develop that same topic.

Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)

In this section, candidates have the chance to expand on what they have already said, and develop ideas and opinions expressed briefly during the presentation. Examiners need to beware of merely asking questions which allow a repetition of the same material already offered – their aim should be to ask more probing questions in order to give candidates opportunities to expand on their original statements, and then respond to what the candidate says. There are not necessarily “right” answers either here or in the general conversation section, and it is in the nature of a genuine conversation that those taking part may not agree with opinions expressed.

At both A and AS Level, questions should go beyond the sort of questions appropriate at IGCSE Level; candidates need to be able to show that they are capable of taking part in a mature conversation. In some cases, candidates were not able to offer much development, or sustain the level of language used in their presentation, but many were successful in expressing additional ideas and seeking the opinions of the Examiner.

In each conversation section there are 5 marks available for questions candidates ask of the Examiner. Candidates should aim to ask more than one question, and Examiners must prompt them to do so. Examiners should make sure that they do not spend too long on their own answers to candidates' questions, thereby depriving candidates of valuable time.

Examiners should note, it is helpful both to candidates and Moderators to signal the end of the topic conversation and the beginning of the general conversation.

General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)

The general conversation is the most spontaneous section of the examination: candidates will have prepared their own choice of topic for the presentation, to be continued in the topic conversation, but here they do not know what the Examiner will choose to discuss (and it is the Examiner who chooses, not the candidate). Clearly the areas of discussion will be those studied during the course, and there were many varied and interesting discussions heard. In a Centre with a number of candidates, candidates should not all be asked to talk about the same list of subjects – themes should be varied from candidate to candidate, and should on no account return to the original subject of the presentation.

This section is intended to be a conversation between Examiner and candidate, so it is not appropriate for the Examiner to ask a series of unrelated questions, to which the candidate responds with a prepared answer, after which the Examiner moves on to the next question on the list!

Examiners should aim to discuss a minimum of 2 to 3 areas in **depth**, giving candidates opportunities to offer their own opinions and defend them in discussion. Although the section may begin with straightforward questions about family, interests, or future plans, which can, in themselves, be developed beyond the purely factual (questions asking "why?" or "how?"), candidates at both A and AS Level should be prepared for conversation to move on to current affairs and more abstract topics appropriate to this level of examination.

Examiners should try to keep their questions general, rather than moving into more personal areas.

Candidates should be prompted to ask questions of the Examiner, to give them the opportunity to score marks for this criterion, though Examiners should once again be wary of answering at too great a length.

Assessment

Across the vast majority of the entry, moderation saw marks either not adjusted at all, or adjusted by less than 10%. The greatest cause of difference was where marks had been awarded for asking questions where none had actually been asked.

Where candidates ask questions during the course of conversation, this should clearly be rewarded, but Examiners must remember to prompt candidates in both conversation sections – the mark scheme gives the criteria for awarding marks for this element of the examination, and these marks should be awarded regardless of whether questions are spontaneous or prompted, provided that these are relevant to the topic under discussion.

In Centres with a number of candidates, Examiners were able to establish a logical rank order and appropriate marking pitch, but this is more difficult to achieve where Centres only have one or two candidates. Examiners should be congratulated on their efforts to apply the criteria of the mark scheme so conscientiously.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) phrases unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (total for parts a and b combined) is ignored.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

The paper was felt to be a fair one, similar to those of recent years in its level of difficulty and accessibility to a good range of candidates, and on a topic which was of general interest and relevance to them. There were some strong performances at the top of the scale from candidates whose language skills enabled them to rise successfully to the challenges of the different exercises, but there were quite a number of weak candidates who seemed to be out of their depth at this level.

In **Question 1**, candidates should avoid invalidating otherwise correct answers by including additional and superfluous words. The word or words given as the answer need to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake.

In **Questions 3 and 4**. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. Candidates should therefore try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

In **Question 5**, there was a welcome improvement in respecting the word limit this session, which is encouraging. Some candidates still wrote answers in excess of the word limit however, sometimes by a large margin, which meant that still too often good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts. Candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, with 90-100 words recommended for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks.**

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preambule** polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and from the very outset, candidates need to make the points succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

Many of the best candidates showed signs of preliminary drafting of their summary, working systematically through the texts, listing points briefly in note form, and this certainly paid dividends - always assuming that candidates made it clear which was the draft and which was the version to be marked. A handful took note form a stage further by using bullet points to list the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark is likely to be reduced in **Question 5** if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This exercise in vocabulary substitution was relatively straightforward and better candidates scored highly, with **(a)** and **(c)** posing fewest problems. Even if they were unsure of the meaning, better candidates realised that they were looking for a future tense to replace *progressera* in **(b)** and a feminine past participle to replace *détaillée*.

Some answers to **(e)** were unfortunately invalidated by the omission of *à* before *proximité*. (see **General Comments**):

Question 2

Many candidates rose well to the challenges of this section, but the task proved demanding for candidates whose command of grammatical structures was unsure. Altering one part of the sentence usually requires consequential alterations to be made elsewhere and these were often missed.

Item 2(a): Candidates who could otherwise handle the transformation from the passive by the use of *on* often made the mistake of not removing the agreement on *établi*.

Item 2(b): Similarly, what was essentially a simple transformation to the active was often marred by leaving *leur stage pourront* or *pourra influencés*.

Item 2(c): Some candidates found the best way round by using *en* plus the present participle. Others produced something grammatically sound with *Les parents les aident à utiliser leurs contacts*, but the meaning was unfortunately changed in the process.

Item 2(d) was as well handled as any, with candidates clearly on the look-out for a subjunctive, but there were some unsuccessful attempts at forming it - e.g. *ils faissent/fissent*.

Item 2(e) saw candidates invalidating otherwise correct efforts by not adding the agreement to *retrouvée* or omitting any mention of *par certains élèves*.

Question 3

Item 3(a): There were five rewardable options here up to a maximum of four marks. Most candidates identified the target ages/levels of the *stages*, their length/timing and the wide range of opportunities. Candidates found the idea of *de rigueur* more difficult to understand or re-phrase.

Item 3(b) was generally well handled by candidates who found straightforward ways of rephrasing *faire un lien* (e.g. *relier/rapprocher*) and *se décideront pour telle ou telle profession* (e.g. *choisiront/feront le choix ...*).

Item 3(c) offered four possible answers up to a maximum of three marks and most candidates scored three marks. Some candidates provided they found ways around direct lifting of *faire des recherches électroniques; comment trouver une entreprise; préparer un CV*, etc.

Item 3(d): Candidates were often successful in identifying the points about dress code and working hours but less comfortable about the concept of hierarchy in the work-place.

Item 3(e) again offered five alternatives for the three marks and the first three of these (increased motivation, a clear idea of their future profession and greater independence) were relatively easily scored by a good number of candidates who found other simple ways of expressing *retrouvé leur motivation, devenus bien plus autonomes* etc. The ideas of establishing contacts and a possible apprenticeship or job offer were less commonly mentioned.

Question 4

Item 4(a) saw candidates identifying the problems of the *stagiaire* interrupting the work of the person responsible for supervising him/her, behaving badly and making mistakes. This was enough to score the three marks, but there was another less frequently mentioned possibility of it being a heavy responsibility.

Item 4(b) offered three relatively straightforward points about the *stagiaire* having little worthwhile to bring to the company and *vice versa*, the *stage* being too short, and the fact that the *stagiaires* often had not any idea about their future careers, making the whole exercise useless.

Item 4(c) Of the negative reactions of parents, the fact that they thought it ought to be the School's job to arrange the *stage* was often correctly identified, as was the additional cost, even if some candidates found it hard to avoid lifting *dépenses supplémentaires*. Some answers were too vague for the third mark for the idea of candidates learning more in School: *c'est une perte de temps*.

Item 4(d) offered four accessible marks to those who could make even small changes to the wording of the original – e.g. *passer/montrer des films; organiser des visites des entreprises; inviter les directeurs à venir parler aux élèves dans leur école*. Some mistook *organisées* to mean *organisations*, others struggled to understand *entretiens*.

Item 4(e) required candidates to find a way of expressing *durée de stage prolongée* and most managed something along the lines of *le stage doit être plus long*. The second available mark was also commonly scored, providing candidates used a past tense or gave some idea of the choice of career having already been made.

Question 5

This question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to reflect on them, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

A response which starts *Dans les deux textes, il y a beaucoup d'aspects positifs et négatifs du stage d'observation en entreprise. Dans le premier texte il y a les aspects positifs et dans le deuxième texte il y a les aspects négatifs. Dans le premier texte il y a beaucoup d'aspects positifs du stage d'observation en entreprise* simply uses up 53 words (i.e. over half of the word limit for the summary) for no reward.

Candidates were required to summarise *les aspects positifs et négatifs de stage d'observation en entreprise*. The mark scheme identified a generous 17 rewardable points up to a maximum of 10, which some achieved. Others scored poorly by writing general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore scored no marks. Still others latched onto one or two points early on and simply repeated them in different words.

The most commonly identified positive aspects included the help in settling on a future career, learning how a company works and how to write a CV, developing greater motivation and autonomy. The negative aspects often included the cost, the inadequate duration, the fact that the *stagiaire* contributed nothing worthwhile to the company and *vice versa*.

The Personal Response (5b) gives candidates the chance to express their own ideas on the topic, provided they are relevant. Better candidates recognised the fact that the question used the conditional and began their answers accordingly. The question did not ask candidates to say whether they thought the things were good things in general, but to choose the one or the type which would best suit them as individuals. *Je ne voudrais pas faire un stage* was unlikely to score highly. Some candidates responded with imagination and originality, but many did little other than recycle points made in the texts, often lifted directly from the text. Although there are few words in which to do so, this is an opportunity for candidates to venture something more personal – an additional point or an arresting turn of phrase - to go beyond the text itself and distinguish their answer from the mundane.

It would also be helpful if candidates indicated clearly where 5a stopped and 5b started.

Quality of Language (Questions 3-5)

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. There were some first-rate scripts from able candidates who wrote with commendable fluency, range and accuracy, whilst there were others at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them and who found it difficult to express their ideas coherently.

Verbs (even entirely regular ones) were by far the most common sources of mistakes, with erroneous endings or left simply as infinitives. Particularly concerning was the notion that plurals in the present tense are formed by adding an *s* to the singular: *Les parents n'aimes pas*. It was also not uncommon to find what was presumably intended to be an agreement with a preceding direct object in the present tense: *Le stage les aides/aident*.

A phonetic approach to grammar in general was a feature of many of the weaker candidates: *Il ne c'est rien/il ne ses rien; il sait habitué*. In fact *ces, c'est, s'est, sait, se, ce* and *ses* appeared virtually interchangeable in many scripts, as did *sa* and *ça* (*sa n'apporte rien*) and there appeared to be no discernible pattern to determine whether to use *ses/leur/leurs*. *On* and *ont* were also treated as interchangeable by many..

The constructions around the verbs *permettre, essayer, aider, encourager, empêcher* and *réussir*, caused many errors, with candidates frequently choosing one preposition in the first half of a sentence and another one in the second.

As usual, the need for *ce qui/que* rather than *qui/que* caused problems, and *ceux qui* and *ce qui* were frequently confused, as were *ceux-là* and *cela*.

All of which said, the linguistic ability of the better candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best wrote with real confidence and competence, demonstrating a secure mastery of the language and producing idiomatic, authentic and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) phrases unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (total for parts a and b combined) is ignored.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

This was felt to be a fair test, similar in level of difficulty to previous years, and one which produced a good spread of marks. There were some first-rate scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, and whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them, there were elements which were accessible to nearly all.

The topic was relevant to the experience of the candidates and one to which they appeared able to relate.

The majority of candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own (often lengthy) opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, and there were few signs of undue time pressures. That said, **the practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for both candidate and marker**, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text remains a common feature amongst the weakest candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' sections directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an attempt to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake.

In **Question 1**, candidates appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing, but some marks are still lost on this - see **Comments on specific questions** below.

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a very considerable improvement in this respect in recent sessions, too many candidates still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of not introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Désirable was usually identified with relative ease for **(a)**, if often without its accent. The necessary *à* was often missing before *pleine capacité* in order to fit the footprint of the original in **(b)**, the reverse being the case with the introduction of the unnecessary *a* before *conduit* in **(c)**. Item **(d)** was less well recognised, but **(e)** was successfully identified by candidates who were able to see the need to find a present participle if all else failed.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but the task proved demanding for candidates with a less-than-secure command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a) was well handled by those who could manage the passive as well as remember to adjust the agreement. Others attempted to keep the sentence in the active, resulting in incorrect answers.

Item 2(b) produced a large number of *Il est évidente que*. Others tied themselves up in knots by unnecessarily trying to replace the verb *présente*. The appearance of *la menace* rather than *une menace* suggested that some candidates had not really understood the sense of the text, whilst others produced something which may have looked plausible at first sight but actually failed to communicate the original idea: *la menace présentée par la consommation est excessive*.

In **Item 2(c)** many candidates had clearly been well trained to spot the need for a subjunctive, but quite a number then didn't score the mark by writing *nous mangeions*, suggesting that they knew a rule about needing keep the *g* soft but not how to implement it.

The tasks involved in **Item 2(d)** were straightforward enough in themselves, but candidates often did not read the task through to the end of the sentence and forgot to change *leurs* to *nos* (commonly *notre*). Some candidates saw challenges that were not there and introduced additional pronouns: *nous nous mettons en garde*.

In **Item 2(e)** the task of working out the meaning of the sentence and reorganising the words to express the same idea proved beyond some candidates – it was common to find most of the right words included but not always in the right order.

Question 3

Item 3(a) required careful reading of the text to realise that fishing to capacity was not in itself the *tragédie* mentioned, but that it was the disappearance of species which had already taken place. There was confusion between past and future consequences in the two parts of the question, and few mentioned the idea of the disappearance accelerating. Others went too far in claiming that all fish would disappear from the sea in a few years' time, or had already done so.

Item 3(b) was successfully handled by most candidates and scores of 3/3 were quite common. Some took things too far in stating that *Les grands prédateurs marins c'est eux qui produisent les œufs et aussi qui produisent les poissons*. Others mistook *pêcheurs* for *pêcheurs*.

Item 3(c) saw some candidates losing marks by not being sufficiently clear about whether the *ils* referred to the politicians or the writers. There were some rather vague answers about not enough being done to prevent over-fishing, but better candidates tended to score both marks here.

Item 3(d) saw a number of cases of lifting *abondance* by candidates who did not appear to know what it meant. The two other elements of the answer were also vulnerable to lifting, and it was commonly suggested that fish were polluting the sea.

Item 3(e): Most candidates mentioned the idea of quotas with the strongest going on to explain the concept. The lifting of *création* for the second mark could be easily avoided by using the verb *créer*, and better candidates again went on to explain the concept of *réserves marines*. Others were less successful with *des espaces pour la récréation artificielle des poisson* or *des quotas de pêches*.

Item 3(f): The first mark was again scored by the majority who avoided talking about *la location des poissons*, with fewer understanding what *congélation* involved.

Question 4

Marks on this question were generally somewhat higher than on **Question 3**.

Item 4(a) was generally well answered, although it was not always made clear what needed to be eaten, and the second and third elements were prone to lifting.

In **Item 4(b)**, some candidates overcomplicated the task of rephrasing or over-stated the case in doing so, suggesting that the two countries were the first two on both lists.

Item 4(c) The benefits to health of eating fish were generally identified, but a large number fell into the trap of claiming proven benefits for memory/intelligence – an example, one suspects, of candidates writing what they think the text ought to say rather than reading carefully what it did say.

Item 4(d) was well handled, although a number of candidates seemed to think that it was the fish that did not get fat.

In **Item 4(e)**, *étalages* was sometimes pressed into service without evidently being understood, but most mentioned the need for a low temperature. There was some irrelevance in the second element.

Item 4(f) was well answered.

Question 5

This Question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to express their own views on them, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of the report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

Candidates were required to summarise '*les dangers écologiques de la surpêche et les bienfaits du poisson pour la santé*' as presented in the two texts. The mark scheme identified 13 rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed around 7 or 8, with quite a few reaching 10. Most candidates managed to identify at least three or four dangers, but few included the threat to fishermen or the inability of nature to keep pace. The most usually mentioned benefits were 'improved life expectancy', 'lowering cholesterol' and 'ease of digestion'.

Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore no mark. Others veered off into irrelevance by focusing on politicians not listening to scientists or on cooking methods for fish.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which some candidates did with some imagination and originality – assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. The weaker candidates tend to seek refuge in the text and ventured very little, resulting in some unambitious and derivative responses, but others were rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or slant of their own.

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. Some found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, with verbs being far the most common sources of error: particularly concerning again was the wide-spread notion that the plural of *il pêche* is *ils pêches*. By a reverse process the plural of *poisson* was occasionally written as *poissonnt*, presumably on the model of a plural verb ending. Examples of incorrect verb forms and agreements include: *on dois mangé*; *ils son critiqué*; *la capacité de la nature ait dépassait*; *ils disparèces*. The phonetic approach to spelling sometimes posed challenges for the reader: *haut de la de la limite*; *toutes les fassons*. This also extended to a tendency to spell even very basic words as they sound: *ce/se/ceux* were apparently interchangeable in some scripts, as were *si* and *ci*, *on* and *ont*, *son* and *sont*.

That said, the linguistic ability of most candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates should be aware that simply altering one element of the sentence may not be sufficient and that they may need to make consequential alterations elsewhere.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) phrases unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (total for parts a and b combined) is ignored.

General comments

This paper was felt to be a very fair test, similar to those of recent years in its level of difficulty and accessibility, and on a topic (children being paid for carrying out household tasks) which was of general interest and relevance to candidates. The cohort contained a couple of relatively weak performances but others ranged from the competent to the very good. The majority of candidates clearly knew how to set about the various challenges and demonstrated the language skills be able to rise to them.

Apart from the odd comprehension question omitted apparently through inadvertence, all candidates completed all questions and there was no evidence of undue time pressure.

In **Question 1**, candidates should avoid invalidating otherwise correct answers by including additional and superfluous words. The word or words given as the answer need to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 2**, candidates need to be aware of the fact that they will usually have to make consequential adjustments (agreements etc.) to incorporate the new start to the sentence.

In **Questions 3 and 4**. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer **sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte**. Candidates should therefore try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

In **Question 5**, a significant proportion of the cohort wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a very large margin, which meant that good answers to the Personal Response could not be awarded any marks since the word limit had been exceeded before it started. Candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, with 90-100 words recommended for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks.**

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that there is an ingrained fear (perhaps from the requirements of other subjects) of not introducing the topic, but it is easy to waste 20% or more of the available words on this for no reward. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points, and from the very outset, candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used. They should go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This exercise in vocabulary substitution was relatively straightforward and better candidates scored full marks. Others might have improved their score by narrowing down the search by focusing on the part of speech suggested by the original, even if they were unsure of the meaning. Some answers were unfortunately invalidated by the redundant inclusion of *n'* before *excluent* in (c) and *le* before *taux* in (e) (see **General Comments**).

Question 2

The strongest candidates rose very well to the challenges of this section, but the task proved as demanding as usual for those whose command of grammatical structures was shaky. The weaker candidates got into a tangle from the outset in (c) for example: *Cette règle a plus d'un an qu'Isabelle a instauré* or *Cette règle a instauré par Isabelle fait plus d'un*. Others started along the right lines but did not follow things through by making consequential adjustments – e.g. *son fils et elle sont très satisfaits* (d). Virtually without exception the agreement was overlooked on *instaurée* in (c), despite the very clear *cette règle* a couple of words earlier. *Verra* sometimes appeared as *vera* in (b), where *L'enfant sera vu comme une preuve d'amour* was touching but sadly unrewardable. Item (a) was generally well handled, although *lui aider* appeared on occasion. The need for a subjunctive was usually recognised in (e), but a number spoiled things with *savient* or *sache*.

Question 3

Item 3(a) saw most candidates getting off to a successful start in pointing out that money has to be earned through effort and that children can learn this by receiving payment for undertaking household tasks. Those who failed to score both marks here did so through being vague or by straying into areas other than those presented in the first paragraph, as required by the question.

Item 3(b) was generally well handled by candidates who found straightforward ways of avoiding the 'lifts' by rephrasing *L'argent ne coule pas à flots* (*L'argent ne pousse pas aux arbres* was a neat way of doing so); *sur simple demande*; and *familles n'ont pas les mêmes revenus*.

Item 3(c) offered three quite straightforward marks for pointing out the possible dangers of children being given too much money. Most managed to do so by making minor adjustments to the texts, but there was occasional loss of marks by the relatively easily avoidable lifting of *l'infantilisation se prolonge*; *tout leur est dû*; and *produire des enfants gâtés*.

Item 3(d). Candidates were often successful in identifying the points about allowing children to manage their own budget and not interfering in how they spend their money, but the notion of *épargner* proved predictably more difficult.

Item 3(e) held few fears for the stronger candidates. Others missed the points about reducing tensions in the family or increasing maturity.

Question 4

Item 4(a) was well handled with a good proportion of candidates scoring all four marks. Where marks were lost, it was generally because candidates could not find other ways of expressing *ne sont pas favorables* or *participation aux efforts collectifs*.

Item 4(b) again saw better candidates scoring both marks with little apparent difficulty, but others resorted to lifting *rester centrés sur eux-mêmes*.

Item 4(c) The idea that *la vie ne se limite pas au confort personnel* was distorted by some: *un minimum de plaisir ; la vie n'est pas limité par leurs confort personnel ; la vie n'est pas limiter au des possession de sois même*. But most found ways of other satisfactory way of expressing *la satisfaction immédiate des désirs* and *on n'en a pas ... envie*.

Item 4(d) asked *qu'apprendront-ils à faire*, therefore requiring verbs as answers. Those who recognised this scored the marks simply by converting nouns into infinitives: *gestion* to *gérer/contrôler* etc. ; *appréciation* to *apprécier* ; *prise* to *prendre*. Others expressed the idea that money would enable them to pay for their education, for which there was no basis in the text.

Item 4(e) required candidates to find a way of expressing *garder les plus jeunes* and *aider dans leurs devoirs*, which the majority managed to do successfully. The idea that these were tasks which would be paid if undertaken in somebody else's house proved more elusive.

Question 5

This question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to reflect on them, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

A response which starts *Dans le premier passage, l'auteur présente ses arguments pour prouver que récompenser les enfants pour leurs services a beaucoup de bienfaits* uses up over 20% of the recommended word limit for the summary for no reward. The particular candidate in question then went on to write 400+ words, 250+ of which had to be ignored.

Candidates were required to summarise *les arguments pour et contre la rémunération des enfants tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ces deux articles*. The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points up to a maximum of 10, of which the better candidates achieved a somewhat disappointing 6 or 7. In some cases, this was because they had used up the whole word limit before they made the remaining points or because they latched onto one or two points early on and simply repeated them in different words.

The most commonly identified positive aspects included the need for money to be earned, the reduction of stress levels in the family, the appreciation of the value of things, the management of budgets and the development of independence. Of the negative aspects, the importance of willing cooperation and of fulfilling one's duties towards other people, and the way in which payment can alter the relationship between parents and children were the most commonly identified.

The Personal Response (**5b**) invited candidates to offer some suggestions as to how household tasks could be reasonable attributed. It did not ask whether it was reasonable to pay children, which was the question that a number of candidates answered. This, combined with the fact that a significant proportion of candidates scored 0 because they had no words left, meant that scores on this element were generally not high.

Quality of Language (Questions 3-5)

Answers to specific questions in **sections 3** and **4** which score no mark for comprehension result in the deduction of one mark from the Quality of Language mark for that section. Answers scoring 0 on a four-mark comprehension question (e.g. **Question 3b** and **4a**) lose two Quality of Language marks.

The quality of language varied considerably but the better candidates wrote with commendable fluency, range and accuracy.

For the weaker candidates, verb forms (even very common ones: *ils font/faient* ; *ils veule*) and agreements were by far the most common sources of mistakes : *on reçois* ; *il resterons* ; *il sont*. Particularly concerning was the notion that plurals in the present tense are formed by adding an s to the singular : *ils restes* ; *les argument prennes/les enfants deviennes*

Basic agreements of nouns suffered the same fate, presumably through carelessness : *les enfant* ; *les parent* ; *des raison* ; *des initiative* ; *il y a plusieurs raison pour le fait que certain parents pense de récompenser leurs enfant*.

Leur and *leurs* appeared largely interchangeable, while *son mère*, *sa fils* and *sont argent* showed confusion about possessive adjectives in general.

A phonetic approach to spelling in general was a feature of the weaker candidates : *un peut* ; *eut (eux)* ; *se qu'il dépense* ; *tout leur ai donné* ; *les familles non pas beaucoup d'argent* ; *la maturité c'est amélioré* ; *il faut gagné* ; *il faut mérité*.

New words made their appearance in places : *inflicter* ; *un benefits* ; *expecter*.

All of which said, the better candidates wrote with confidence and competence, demonstrating a secure mastery of the language and producing idiomatic, authentic and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.



FRENCH

Paper 8682/31

Essay

A choice of 5 titles were set, 24 marks being awarded for language and 16 for content. The best essays submitted bore witness to a high level of fluency and grammatical awareness: their authors showed themselves able to deploy a wide range of vocabulary and structures with relatively few lapses. However, at the other end of the spectrum, a number of candidates struggled to express themselves intelligibly in the foreign language. As far as content was concerned, the best essays targeted the question set, were well structured and bore witness to some ability to develop arguments and draw conclusions. The very weak essays aside where severe linguistic problems impeded communication, a number of essays either followed their own agenda to a large degree and did not pay sufficient heed to the parameters laid down by the title or points made in them tended to be sketchy and unspecific.

Question 1

Only a small number of candidates chose this topic. A common starting point was the ever-growing demands made on people by work and family responsibilities which mean that leisure time is increasingly at a premium. That being the case, what time is available must not be squandered. Better essays proceeded to evaluate individual needs and the specific leisure activities suited to those needs and the benefit to be derived from them, but the majority took a less analytical approach and simply listed, often seemingly randomly, various everyday leisure activities that their authors enjoyed.

Question 2

This title was the choice of the large majority of candidates. Quite a lot of them focused solely on the negative influence exercised by the media on young people's behaviour. Points that were frequently mentioned included the pernicious effect of all the violence to which the young are exposed in the media, the bad influence of pop music video clips and pop songs where tobacco, alcohol, drugs and promiscuous sexual activity are depicted in a positive light, and the dietary excesses encouraged by the idolisation in the media of fashion models. In essays which did attempt to give a balanced response, the focus quite often strayed from the positive influence on the behaviour of young people to a general survey of the benefits of the Internet and other technology-based media.

Question 3

Again, only a small number of candidates chose this topic. Most took the line that despite endless international forums and protocols, still not enough is being done to ensure the protection of the environment. Individual ecological problems were highlighted, not least the phenomenon of global warming, and evidence was adduced to demonstrate that measures taken to combat them are insufficient. Some essays made a distinction between the poor record of developed countries in the matter of environmental protection and the position of developing countries which have far too many other problems to address to be able to afford the luxury of spending money on conservation.

Question 4

Of the small number of essays submitted on this topic, several failed to target the question. Those that did, focused on such issues as the insufficient means and facilities at universities' disposal to cater for the ever-increasing number of candidates and the consequences for the quality of the education they are able to offer, the lack of motivation of many candidates who are pressurised by their parents and teachers to go on to university when, in fact, they would be more suited to less academic and more vocational programmes offered by other institutions and, not least, the lack of job opportunities for university graduates.

Question 5

This proved to be the least popular topic. Almost all of those who chose it interpreted *activités culturelles* meaning the way of life in a specific region of the world, for example, Haiti or Senegal. What they wrote was pertinent but occasionally they tended to wander from the essential focus and to detail environmental problems in their chosen areas and the measures being taken to combat them.



FRENCH

Paper 8682/32

Essay

General Comments

The overall standard was very similar to that in previous years. Better candidates wrote balanced and coherent essays using a range of expressions and idioms, and were, therefore, well rewarded. Linguistic knowledge in many cases was quite weak with candidates showing little knowledge basic grammar, had poorly structured arguments, written in inappropriate register and sometimes irrelevant. Candidates need to read the questions carefully and answer the question set, not merely refer to a topic area. A short plan outlining the argument to be used with points for and against the title will give candidates a chance to create a more logical and balanced answer. The majority of candidates observed the rubric concerning the number of words to be used.

Common errors included:

Spellings/genders of essential nouns: *manque, travail, professeur, manière, environnement, développement, gouvernement, monde, planète, chacun, groupe, rôle, exemple, innovation, téléphone, télévision, crime.*

Use of *ils* for *eux* and *soi* for *lui*.

Overuse of *les humains* and *les personnes*.

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Inaccurate and erratic use of double letters in words such as *développer, agressif, ressources*.

Inaccurate and careless use of accents including words used in the questions such as *développement, éducation, malgré, religion, société* and multiple examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences.

Confusion between/misuse of: *ces/ses, les/des, parce que/à cause de/ puisque/car, notre/nôtre, place/endroit, bon/bien, mauvais/mal, c'est que/ceux que, ceux qui/ce qui, ou/où, a/à, sa/ça* (overused instead of *cela*), *mieux/meilleur, leur/leurs*.

Failure to link a verb with its subject : *les examens nous aidons, cela les aident, le gouvernement devraient.*

Inclusion of *y* and *en* when not required.

Omission of *ne* especially with *que*.

Constructions: *un exemple d'utilisant trop. Des problèmes qu'on fait face à.*

Problems with the passive, using the infinitive instead of the past participle with être.

Use of *le/la média*.

Agreement of past tense with avoir – e.g. *ils ont essayés*.

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

About a third of the candidates, reflecting the full ability range, opted for this question. A common weakness was to spend time making unnecessarily long lists of leisure activities as a means of using up words. Many candidates failed to focus on the precise terms of the question not focusing on *une place de plus en plus importante*, and then proceeding to ignore *phénomène*, choosing rather to concentrate their attention on positive and negative aspects of certain activities. Candidates needed to define the terms of the question before launching in – for example, they needed to consider the nature of leisure and its place in our society today compared with previous times. Stronger candidates looked at possible reasons why people have more time available to indulge their interests, such as shorter working hours or even unemployment. They also looked at how leisure affects life, work, the family, the economy and the country. There was a general condemnation of the increasing amount of time spent, especially by young people, cloistered in a room in front of their computer cut off from real-life social interaction.

Question 2

This was the third most popular question. Most candidates felt that there is a general need to control the media (often referred to as *le média* or *la média*). They felt that the media has too much power and can create false stories and control the public view of events and people. There was condemnation of intrusion into the private lives of celebrities and those involved in police investigations. There was a general tendency to pay insufficient attention to *Jusqu'à quel point* and to focus more on why the control is needed. Popular means of implementing control were action by the government usually expressed in rather unspecific terms such as *Le gouvernement devrait imposer des lois plus strictes*, without further development of the idea, and more strictly applied parental control, particularly of the viewing habits of their children (often referred to as *leur enfants*). The question did create strong feelings in candidates but the arguments were often superficial and ideas for methods of control were usually in short supply. Better candidates mentioned the freedom of the press and the balance needed between allowing total freedom and having some measure of moderation. They were able to show the effects of the media in different countries of the world.

Question 3

This was not a popular question, only attracting a handful of candidates out of the total entry. There were two types of offerings; **(a)** those which looked at aspects of protecting the environment such as recycling, alternative sources of energy to fossil fuels, protection of endangered species, and **(b)** candidates who took *mondialisation* to mean a dangerously high and ever-growing increase of the world's population, and who proceeded to argue the effects of that on the environment. Candidates found it hard to link conservation with the growth of globalisation and used the question to talk about conservation and the environment in general terms.

Question 4

This was the most popular question. It was well done on the whole and attracted the full ability spectrum. Positive aspects of the technological revolution included rapid access to information and the amount of time saved, distance learning, more interesting lessons for candidates, candidates and teachers. On the down side candidates discussed the opportunity to cheat or to plagiarise, surreptitiously to waste time on computer games and on social networking in lesson time, possible damage to eyesight and to the quality of handwriting. Candidates were keen to point out that the Internet leads to laziness and an inability to internalise learning so that facts are regurgitated without having been absorbed. Overall, this question produced the best-structured answers. Candidates considered both halves of the question, explaining how technology had revolutionised education and then discussing the merits and pitfalls of that revolution.

Question 5

This question also attracted very few candidates, a relatively large proportion of whom had difficulty with the use of the Imperfect/Conditional tense sequences inevitably involved in any answer. Candidates tended to concentrate on what they would do as Culture Minister and devoted fewer words to the second part of the question about why certain things should be prioritised. The emphasis was on the preservation and promotion of various aspects of their country's cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations, such as its art, music, cuisine and minority language groups. Wider ranging answers considered also the part that the promotion and preservation of cultural activities could play in the development of the tourist industry, with its obvious economic benefits.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/33

Essay

General Comments

There was a range of ability in this group of candidates from weak to competent, with the biggest group in the middle area in the adequate region of the mark scheme. In a few cases candidates displayed little knowledge of the rudiments of grammatical structure, writing essays rendered incoherent by errors. In some cases, arguments were often poorly structured, as well as unfocused or containing irrelevant material. There were some good answers in which there was balance and structure with a range of expressions, structures and idioms. Good essays were written in inappropriate register and were based on the topic title rather than the question set. Candidates need to read the questions carefully and answer the question set not merely refer to a topic area. A short plan outlining the argument to be used with points for and against the title will give candidates a chance to create a more logical and balanced answer. The majority of candidates observed the rubric concerning the number of words to be used.

Common errors included:

Spellings/genders of essential nouns: *manque, travail, professeur, manière, élément, aspect, environnement, développement, gouvernement, monde, planète, groupe, rôle, exemple, innovation, crime, technologie, effet.*

Overuse of *les humains* and *les personnes*.

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Inaccurate and erratic use of double letters in words such as *développer, agressif, ressources*.

Inaccurate and careless use of accents including words used in the questions such as *éducation, médias, études, coûte, milieux* and multiple examples of candidates using one type of accent for all occurrences. In many cases accents were used entirely randomly on words such as *encourager, violence* and *néws*.

Confusion between/misuse of: *ces/ses, les/des, parce que/à cause de/ puisque/car, notre/nôtre, place/endroit, bon/bien, mauvais/mal, c'est que/ceux que, ceux qui/ce qui, ou/où, a/à, sa/ça* (overused instead of *cela*), *mieux/meilleur, leur/leurs*.

Omission of *ne* especially with *que*.

Use of *le/la média*.

Agreement of past tense with *avoir* – e.g. *ils ont essayés*.

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Comments on specific questions:

Question 1

This was not a popular question although overall it was well understood. Better candidates were keen to point out that long hours, stress at work and the fear of losing one's job all meant that work was often not a means to happiness. They tempered this view with the idea that it depended heavily on the individual's particular experience of work – whether it was interesting, whether it presented opportunities for development and a reasonable amount of leisure time. It was clear that work could bring great happiness to some. It was felt that money was the reward for work and this could contribute to one's happiness as it gave

spending power. Other candidates viewed the two aspects as totally incompatible as work could be poorly paid carried out in unsafe conditions and over very long periods of time. Overall, the view that a balance is needed between life and work for an individual to be happy.

Question 2

This was the most popular question. The question created strong feelings in candidates who recognised the role played by the media in the modern world. It was felt that the television had a bad effect on young people because it showed violent films creating aggressive tendencies and advertisements featuring very thin models which would have a bad effect on the psyche of young girls. This was a very common assertion – that the media's depiction of female models would lead to eating disorders in teenage girls. This was seen, perhaps surprisingly, as a major social problem. It was also a generally held view that dependence on the media would lead to laziness and obesity as well as a lack of face to face contact with other people. More able candidates were able to provide some balance to their arguments by showing the value of the media in the world, for example its role in supplying instant news coverage, the documentaries and educational programmes, the communication links between people across the world. There were many possibilities here and candidates answered this question according to their levels of knowledge and linguistic skill.

Question 3

This was the second most popular question although not attempted by many. It was thought that destroying our ecosystem was a very serious matter and that governments were taking a very short term view. Candidates referred to the deforestation, the development of industry in China and India and the resulting burden on our planet as being of very great concern. They felt that efforts at conservation were often half-hearted and token as the needs of a growing population and a desire for economic growth drove all decisions. The cost of conservation was seen as small compared to the cost of putting right a degrading planet in years to come. It was held that we owe it to future generations to protect sites of natural beauty and of benefit to man. Candidates made a real attempt to come to terms with the question and most answers were balanced.

Question 4

This was joint second most popular question. Overall, candidates understood the ramifications of the title and were able to provide some thoughts as to the importance of education in life. They pointed out the benefits of formal education in the early period of life in instilling not just knowledge of particular subjects but also social skills to enable people to function in everyday life in the world. They then focused on the importance of lifelong learning which would happen through various means such as reading books and newspapers, watching news broadcasts and documentaries, learning skills in a job, learning from other people, following courses. It was acknowledged by all that education does not stop at the end of formal schooling but continues as every day brings a new learning opportunity. Candidates felt that school and university put in place the skills to appreciate the world and continue learning through practice later on. This was a question that gave candidates a chance to express a view on a topic that they understood and to which they could relate. The good candidates expressed their views in a logical and balanced way with clear exemplification, weaker candidates described their thoughts in a more unstructured way.

Question 5

This question attracted very few candidates. Candidates generally preferred cinema to theatre because of the special effects, the ease of access without booking tickets, the cheaper price and the shorter time spent. The ability of the camera to show different angles, to emphasise details and to show the feelings of the characters were also mentioned as important features of the cinema. Some candidates mentioned the fact that eating is not allowed in the theatre and that the atmosphere is too formal. Others felt that the intimate experience in the theatre added to the enjoyment and gave opportunities to use the imagination. Overall this question gave scope for personal interpretation and point of view and answers reflected that.