

# FRENCH

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**Paper 8682/01**  
**Speaking**

## General comments

### **Recording and administration**

This year, the majority of examinations were well-conducted, by Examiners doing their best for their candidates: almost all recordings were clearly audible, and accompanying paperwork was generally clear and accurate.

Examiners should make sure that they introduce each candidate audibly at the beginning of each examination, and should spot-check the recordings for audibility before despatching the sample. Although recordings should favour candidates, since their voices are often quieter than those of Examiners, it is also important to be able to hear the questions the Examiner asks, in order to assess the level of comprehension shown by the candidate. Recordings should be made at normal speed on cassette, or in audio format on a CD, and samples should be sent together with a copy of the Working Mark Sheet, with a mark entered in each column, according to the criteria set out in the mark scheme. Moderators can then see how marks were awarded and can offer more precise advice on the allocation of marks. Addition of marks should be carefully checked, and the Moderator copy of the Mark Sheet (MS1), or of the final marks submitted electronically should be sent with the sample. It is important for cassettes and CDs to be labelled with the Centre, syllabus and candidate details and packaged carefully as each year some cassettes and CDs arrive too damaged to be heard.

Please remember that all telephones should be turned off before recording starts and that disruption should be minimised.

### **Conduct of the examination: timing and format**

Examiners need to be aware of the timings for the examination, as set out in the syllabus. Candidates should be allowed about 3 minutes uninterrupted time to talk on their chosen topic, but Examiners should be prepared to interrupt and begin asking questions where the speech shows no sign of finishing after about 3½ minutes. This does not mean asking a single question and then telling candidates to continue with their prepared material: Examiners should aim to explore the material of the topic in greater depth and give candidates opportunities to develop and expand on what they have said. Questions should be asking for more than just a repetition of the facts the candidate has already detailed.

The Topic Conversation should last about 7 to 8 minutes, and should deal with the same topic as that chosen by the candidate for his/her presentation. At the end of this section, the Examiner should signal the change to General Conversation – for example, *maintenant parlons d'autre chose...*

This final section should last some 8 to 9 minutes and should deal with different topics from that chosen by the candidate for the Presentation. Examiners should aim to discuss perhaps 3 or 4 different topics in some depth, with questions which extend the candidates and allow them to express their own ideas and opinions.

In the interests of fairness to all candidates, it is important to try to keep to these timings – very short examinations do not allow candidates enough time to express themselves at any length, and very long examinations may considerably disadvantage candidates – they show signs of fatigue and they cannot maintain their original control of language, tending to become less accurate, which adversely affects their overall assessment.

### **Presentation**

Candidates tended to choose general topic areas from the syllabus, with the most popular areas being Sport, Food and drink, Travel and tourism, and Family: there was also some support for the environment, and young people. Some candidates took a very general approach, and tried to deal superficially with a very wide area – for example, *La France* – its geography, transport systems, educational structure, sport, *cuisine*, all in 3 minutes – a very tall order. Candidates would be well-advised to choose one particular aspect of a topic area which is of personal interest to them, or of which they have some experience, so that they are able to offer some personal ideas and opinions. Some candidates chose very individual topics, and were able to show their personal interest and the quality of their research.

Candidates need to think about how to structure their presentation so that they can outline the main points in 3 minutes and go on to develop this outline during the topic conversation. This examination is not intended as a memory test: pronunciation and intonation often suffer when candidates over-rehearse and are determined to jam as much material into the presentation as possible. It is better to save the extra material and make use of it in conversation.

The majority were aware of the need for their topic to reflect their knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the language is spoken – as an official/accepted common language, not just as a subject studied in School. All candidates should be reminded of this requirement before they begin their preparation, since, if there is no clear connection established, the mark for content/presentation will be halved. Candidates in a francophone environment need to be particularly aware of this, since with a very general topic area it may be taken for granted that they are referring to francophone culture or society – they often need to reinforce the connection.

### **Topic Conversation**

When beginning their questions, Examiners should try to make sure that their questions do not just ask for a repetition of the same material – “open” questions will give them the opportunity to probe a little, and extend the candidate, to show what he/she can do. There should certainly be unexpected questions – under the criteria in the mark scheme for Comprehension and Responsiveness, for a score of 9 to 10, “responses should be natural and spontaneous even to unexpected questions”, and candidates should be “able to present and defend a point of view in discussion.” Where responses rely heavily on prepared material, a candidate is unlikely to score a mark for comprehension and responsiveness above the 5 to 6 of the “Satisfactory” box. Of course candidates will have practised their oral examination beforehand, hopefully with a view to being able to use and manipulate the material they have researched, in order to answer questions asked in different ways – the aim of the Examiner is to give a candidate the opportunity to take part in a conversation, so questions will not necessarily have a “right” or “wrong” answer, they will be intended to provide openings for the candidate to join in a discussion.

Candidates are required to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections: when preparing for the examination they need to be reminded of this, and that there are 5 marks available for this skill in each conversation section. In the examination, where no questions arise in the course of conversation, Examiners must prompt candidates to ask something, so that they have the chance to work for the marks – there is no penalty if a question is prompted, but there is no excuse for candidates to say they have no questions to ask when prompted.

At the end of this section, Examiners should warn candidates that they are now moving on to General Conversation.

### **General Conversation**

In this section, which should last about 8 or 9 minutes, candidates and Examiners must be prepared to engage in a conversation. Clearly, this section may begin with one or two straightforward questions in order to establish an area of interest to talk about, but it is better to develop perhaps 3 or 4 topic areas in depth, rather than ask a series of unrelated questions to which candidates offer answers prepared during their course of study. Examiners need to be ready to react to what candidates say, and perhaps lead topics in new and less expected directions.

Whatever topic candidates choose for their presentation, the General Conversation section will explore different areas, so that candidates are given the chance to show that they can deal with a range of areas of interest, and use a variety of vocabulary. Candidates should not all be asked the same series of questions –

topics should be varied between candidates so that those who follow the first do not know what to expect and have to show that they understand and can react to what the Examiner is asking them.

Question techniques are important, here: long, complicated questions often give candidates few opportunities to respond with anything other than yes or no. Short, “open” questions offer openings to express ideas and opinions. Questions need to go beyond the basic level used for example at IGCSE: it is not appropriate, at this level, to ask candidates the date of their birthday, or the names of their siblings – unless the Examiner is aiming to develop the conversation in the area of family dynamics/relationships - an Examiner might ask a candidate about the weather, but only with the idea of moving on, perhaps to environmental effects on weather, global weather cycles, carbon footprint and so on. Each examination will tend to be different, as it follows up what candidates say, rather than trying to fit all into the strait-jacket of pre-prepared questions.

If candidates have not asked any questions of the Examiner in this section, Examiners must prompt them to do so – they are expected to ask questions in **both** conversation sections, and this is a skill which can be practised beforehand – they should try to vary the style and format of questions, rather than just sticking to the simple... *et vous monsieur/madame, qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?* To score high marks for asking questions, they need to be able to ask accurate, relevant questions, using a range of question forms.

### Assessment

It is often difficult for Centres marking in isolation to establish the correct pitch for their marking, but overall, assessment was generally close to the agreed standard: for more than a third of the Centres entering, no adjustment was needed to their marks, and for over half the Centres entering, adjustments were only needed to part of the range.

When awarding marks, Examiners need to remember that the Presentation must make reference to francophone culture or society, or the mark for content/presentation must be halved, and that where candidate do not ask questions in one or other of the conversation sections, a zero should be recorded in the final column for that section – but Examiners should, in any case, prompt for questions.

As long as the assessment follows the criteria in the mark scheme consistently, it is possible to make the necessary adjustments and give advice for more accurate assessment in future.

The vast majority of Centres, from all areas of the world, made every effort to observe the format and advice given about this examination, and Examiners conducted very professional examinations, doing their best for their candidates. Centres and candidates alike should be congratulated for their efforts.

# FRENCH

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Paper 8682/21  
Reading and Writing

## General comments

The paper was felt to be similar to those of recent years in its level of difficulty and accessibility to a range of candidates. There was sufficient challenge to enable the most able to shine, without overwhelming candidates at the lower end of the scale.

The general topic (the benefits and dangers of sport) appeared to one with which candidates felt comfortable and familiar. This actually sometimes proved a problem in that some candidates preferred to give their own opinions of what they thought the texts ought to have said, rather than what they actually did say. A notable example of this was **Question 3(b)**, where candidates expressed what is probably the orthodox view that sport reduces violence and delinquency, ignoring the contrary evidence of the text. See also **3(d)** below.

The majority of candidates appeared well prepared and to know how to set about tackling the different types of questions. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts 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 2**, on the other hand, candidates should not 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 **Question 1**, candidates continue to invalidate 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. See **Comments on specific questions** below.

In **Question 5**, several Examiners reported a significant improvement in respecting the word limit this session, which is encouraging. However some candidates still wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, which meant that still too often 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, 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.**

If, on the other hand, the responses to **Question 5** are significantly below the word limit, the overall quality of language mark is reduced accordingly.

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.

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. Some 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 if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, and there was little evidence of undue time pressures.

As far as time is concerned however, one cannot help but imagine that it would be much better spent on checking the accuracy of the language of the answers than on pointlessly copying out the question in **Questions 3 and 4** as a preamble to the answer, or in trying to incorporate the words of the question as an introduction to every answer. Not only does this waste candidates' and Examiners' time, it also invites linguistic errors which detract from the overall impression for the quality of language mark. **It would help both candidates and Examiners if this practice could be discouraged.** For example, the first part of the answer to **Question 3(a)** does not need to be : *La motivation des parents qui encouragent leur enfant à pratiquer un sport est qu'ils veulent réduire son agressivité.* The mark is scored perfectly adequately by *Ils veulent réduire son agressivité* on its own.

Some candidates tend to write answers that are unnecessarily long, perhaps in the hope that they will incorporate an element of the answer somewhere. In reality, they often invalidate an otherwise correct answer by incorporating material which is incorrect.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

This exercise in vocabulary substitution was generally answered well. The greatest difficulty was experienced over **(a)** where *solution à* was regularly offered for *remédier à*, for no apparent reason other than that they both contained *à*. *Déterminer* was sometimes offered for *s'imposer* in **(e)**, as was *apaise* for *apparaît*. Some answers were unfortunately invalidated by the addition of extra words which meant that they did not fit into the 'footprint' (see **General Comments**): *de guérir (a)*, *pas forcément (d)*, *de dominer (e)*.

#### Question 2

Item 2**(a)** Many candidates did not make the necessary agreement in the transformation to the passive: *est encouragée*.

Item 2**(b)** There were two operations to perform here: to make the verb plural, and to adjust *sa* to *leur*, the first being more commonly handled correctly than the second. Sadly, a number of candidates went too far in making things plural by writing *aux prix* and *leurs santés futures*.

Item 2**(c)** This was well handled, although there was a tendency to make an unnecessary change to *les/des sports* or *un/le/du sport*.

Item 2**(d)** The subjunctive caused predictable difficulties here for many candidates who either didn't recognise the need for it or could not form it correctly: e.g. *que l'autre perdre/perdisse*. For reasons which are unclear, a large number of candidates originally wrote *perde*, only to change their minds and cross out the final *e*.

Item 2**(e)** This posed few problems for the majority of candidates, who realised the need for a second verb (*de choisir/qu'on choisisse etc.*) in the sentence in its modified form.

### Question 3

Item 3(a) Most candidates successfully identified the reason why parents encourage their child to take up a sport, and many went on to identify the opposite effect that can occur in practice. *Le sport encourage l'intimidation de l'autre* was often lifted and some attempts to re-phrase the idea distorted the meaning: *le sport intimide l'autre / rend l'autre personne timide*. A misunderstanding of *l'intimidation de l'autre* occasionally resulted in phrases such as *devenir plus intime avec l'autre*.

Item 3(b) also produced some misunderstanding (not least of *dans quelle mesure*) and contradiction (see **General Comments** above), but most candidates correctly identified the motivation of improving fighting skills.

Item 3(c): Most candidates expressed the idea of sport expending surplus energy, although quite a large number resorted to the easily avoidable 'lift' – *dépenser un excès d'énergie*. There was some confusion of 'sport' with 'fatigue' in the second part of the question as being responsible for either an increase or a decrease in aggression. Others then went on to confuse the role of sport and/or fatigue in either preventing or encouraging burglaries.

Item 3(d) Candidates were generally successful in identifying the power of sports to breed winners, but some clearly thought *les armes* were actual weapons to be used in street-fighting. Others thought that *les réflexes* referred to enabling participants to improve their speed of reaction or to become reflective practitioners of martial arts. But many fell into the trap again of giving what they thought ought to be the answer when the text was asserting that sport does not encourage (quite often *inculter*) human values, respect, cooperation. There was a very significant tendency to 'lift' here, even though the idea of *cooperation* for example is not difficult to express with a verb.

Item 3(e) was similarly vulnerable to easily avoidable lifts e.g. *se dope*, but most candidates identified the risks here and scored well. Some attributed the health risk to drug-taking rather than over-training.

### Question 4

Item 4(a) contained two straightforward elements, with most candidates finding simple ways of avoiding the lifts of *encourager la santé* and *promotion de la paix mondiale*.

In Item 4(b) the easiest way to score all three marks was to rephrase using verbs to replace the three nouns *contrôle*, *respect* and *acceptation*. Even so, not all candidates found acceptable turns of phrase: *contrôler le mental*; *accepter la perdre*; *respecter l'opponent*, etc.

Item 4(c) required the concepts of sport transcending geographical boundaries and revealing the similarities between people/nations, the meaning sometimes being obscured by lifting: ... *montre nos similarités que nos différences*. For the third element, many candidates pointed to the power of sport to reconcile, but suggested that it was useful while conflicts were in progress rather than having taken place in the past.

Item 4(d) was answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

In Item 4(e) the power of sport to provide moments of relief/distraction was often correctly identified, but it tended to be only the stronger candidates who found a way of expressing the concept of *sentiment d'appartenance* without resorting to the straight 'lift' or vagueness.

In Item 4(f) most candidates were successful in expressing the aim of promoting a peaceful world, but were insufficiently precise about reducing extreme poverty by 50%. Many candidates suggested that poverty should be reduced *jusqu'en 2015*.

### 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. Candidates need to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

Candidates were required to summarise '*les principaux dangers et bienfaits du sport tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ces deux textes*'. The mark scheme identified sixteen rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed to mention 8, 9 or 10. Of the dangers, the most usually mentioned were the

increase in aggression and the ability to fight, the desire to dominate/intimidate, the risk of extreme sports, over-training and performance-enhancing drugs. Of the advantages, the most commonly identified were the benefits to health, the development of respect for opponents and the ability to accept defeat with dignity, the promotion of fraternity and world peace, and a reduction in poverty. Candidates who wrote general essays or who latched onto one or two points early on (usually the promotion of world peace) and simply repeated them in different words scored few marks for this question.

The Personal Response (**5b**) gives candidates the chance to express their own ideas on the topic. A number of candidates did this with imagination and originality, but many did little other than recycle points made in the texts. Although there are few words in which to do so, this is an opportunity for candidates to venture something – an additional point or an arresting turn of phrase – to distinguish their answer from the mundane. At the same time, a specific question is asked – *le sport doit-il faire partie du programme scolaire obligatoire ?* – and candidates needed to remember to answer it. It would also be helpful if candidates indicated clearly where **5a** stopped and **5b** started.

### Quality of Language (Questions 3-5)

Verbs were by far the most common sources of error. The choice of whether to use a past participle or infinitive appeared to be largely random for quite many candidates: *le sport à contribuer a ...*, *le sport apprend a accepté la défaite* etc. Particularly concerning was the notion that plurals in the present tense are formed by adding an s to the singular: *ils se surentraînes*; *les parents cherches*; *les jeunes pratiques*, etc. 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 sport les aides/encourages* etc.

The constructions around the verbs *permettre*, *essayer*, *aider*, *encourager*, *apprendre*, *empêcher* and *réussir* proved to be quite problematic.

There was a tendency to spell words as they sound: *olieux de*, *né en moins*, *paraport à*, *s'avoir savouer vincue*, *ce faucaliser*, *briyante*, *des cartiés*, *des calités*, *puis ce que/ puisse que*, *pas dutou*, *divairses*, *mauvais pour la senter*, *ont risquent d'aggravé la santé* etc. *Ce*, *ces*, *c'est*, *se*, *ses* appeared virtually interchangeable in many scripts, as did *sa* and *ça*, and there was no discernible pattern to determine whether to use *ses/leur/leurs*, or to distinguish between *les* and *leur(s)* as object pronouns. *Que se sois* was also quite commonly found.

Candidates also sometimes fell into the trap of introducing unnecessary pronouns: *dont ils en ont besoin*; *ils y participent à ces programmes*.

As usual, the need for *ce qui/que* rather than *qui/que* caused problems, as did the need to use *rendre* (*un adolescent agressif*). *Se servir de* and *servir à* were often not used correctly: *le sport est servi pour calmer les adolescents*.

That said, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best wrote with confidence and competence, producing idiomatic, authentic and accurate French of an impressive level.

# FRENCH

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The majority of candidates appeared well prepared and to know how to set about tackling the different types of questions. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts 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.

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#### Question 2

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Item 3(e) was similarly vulnerable to easily avoidable lifts e.g. *se dope*, but most candidates identified the risks here and scored well. Some attributed the health risk to drug-taking rather than over-training.

### Question 4

Item 4(a) contained two straightforward elements, with most candidates finding simple ways of avoiding the lifts of *encourager la santé* and *promotion de la paix mondiale*.

In Item 4(b) the easiest way to score all three marks was to rephrase using verbs to replace the three nouns *contrôle*, *respect* and *acceptation*. Even so, not all candidates found acceptable turns of phrase: *contrôler le mental*; *accepter la perdre*; *respecter l'opponent*, etc.

Item 4(c) required the concepts of sport transcending geographical boundaries and revealing the similarities between people/nations, the meaning sometimes being obscured by lifting: ... *montre nos similarités que nos différences*. For the third element, many candidates pointed to the power of sport to reconcile, but suggested that it was useful while conflicts were in progress rather than having taken place in the past.

Item 4(d) was answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

In Item 4(e) the power of sport to provide moments of relief/distraction was often correctly identified, but it tended to be only the stronger candidates who found a way of expressing the concept of *sentiment d'appartenance* without resorting to the straight 'lift' or vagueness.

In Item 4(f) most candidates were successful in expressing the aim of promoting a peaceful world, but were insufficiently precise about reducing extreme poverty by 50%. Many candidates suggested that poverty should be reduced *jusqu'en 2015*.

### 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. Candidates need to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

Candidates were required to summarise '*les principaux dangers et bienfaits du sport tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ces deux textes*'. The mark scheme identified sixteen rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed to mention 8, 9 or 10. Of the dangers, the most usually mentioned were the

increase in aggression and the ability to fight, the desire to dominate/intimidate, the risk of extreme sports, over-training and performance-enhancing drugs. Of the advantages, the most commonly identified were the benefits to health, the development of respect for opponents and the ability to accept defeat with dignity, the promotion of fraternity and world peace, and a reduction in poverty. Candidates who wrote general essays or who latched onto one or two points early on (usually the promotion of world peace) and simply repeated them in different words scored few marks for this question.

The Personal Response (**5b**) gives candidates the chance to express their own ideas on the topic. A number of candidates did this with imagination and originality, but many did little other than recycle points made in the texts. Although there are few words in which to do so, this is an opportunity for candidates to venture something – an additional point or an arresting turn of phrase – to distinguish their answer from the mundane. At the same time, a specific question is asked – *le sport doit-il faire partie du programme scolaire obligatoire ?* – and candidates needed to remember to answer it. It would also be helpful if candidates indicated clearly where **5a** stopped and **5b** started.

### Quality of Language (Questions 3-5)

Verbs were by far the most common sources of error. The choice of whether to use a past participle or infinitive appeared to be largely random for quite many candidates: *le sport à contribuer a ...*, *le sport apprend a accepté la défaite* etc. Particularly concerning was the notion that plurals in the present tense are formed by adding an s to the singular: *ils se surentraînes*; *les parents cherches*; *les jeunes pratiques*, etc. 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 sport les aides/encourages* etc.

The constructions around the verbs *permettre*, *essayer*, *aider*, *encourager*, *apprendre*, *empêcher* and *réussir* proved to be quite problematic.

There was a tendency to spell words as they sound: *olieux de*, *né en moins*, *paraport à*, *s'avoir savouer vincue*, *ce faucaliser*, *briyante*, *des cartiés*, *des calités*, *puis ce que/ puisse que*, *pas dutou*, *divairses*, *mauvais pour la senter*, *ont risquent d'aggravé la santé* etc. *Ce*, *ces*, *c'est*, *se*, *ses* appeared virtually interchangeable in many scripts, as did *sa* and *ça*, and there was no discernible pattern to determine whether to use *ses/leur/leurs*, or to distinguish between *les* and *leur(s)* as object pronouns. *Que se sois* was also quite commonly found.

Candidates also sometimes fell into the trap of introducing unnecessary pronouns: *dont ils en ont besoin*; *ils y participent à ces programmes*.

As usual, the need for *ce qui/que* rather than *qui/que* caused problems, as did the need to use *rendre* (*un adolescent agressif*). *Se servir de* and *servir à* were often not used correctly: *le sport est servi pour calmer les adolescents*.

That said, the linguistic ability of the majority of candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best wrote with confidence and competence, producing idiomatic, authentic and accurate French of an impressive level.

# FRENCH

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Paper 8682/23  
Reading and Writing

## General Comments

Most candidates responded well to the themes of this year's paper: the banking world and the different attitudes of men and women in this work environment.

It was pleasing to see that the large majority of candidates completed the paper and appeared to be under no time pressure. Many candidates had time to write a plan or a rough draft for **Question 5**, as sign of being well as coached in how to manage their examination time allowance. The word limit recommendation in **Question 5** was respected better this year on the whole but some candidates still ignored the specific brief and wrote up to twice over the word limit.

Similarly, in **Question 3 and 4** there was still a tendency for some candidates to write unnecessarily lengthy answers, which did not always address the questions or rephrased the same points again and again and increased the incidence of language mistakes. Candidates are reminded that often the best answers are the shortest ones: they go straight to the point and list all elements of the question within one phrase. For example: **Question 3 (a):** *la crise financière est due au fait qu'on prend trop de risques, (A) on est obsédé par le court terme, (B) on est en compétition pour avoir plus de pouvoir (C) et on veut des bonus énormes (D).*

It is very important for candidates to read very carefully the instructions given for each question, paying particular attention to the words in bold. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of how many ideas need to be included in the answer in order to gain full marks. Candidates must also stay within the paragraph indicated in the question, even if they feel another point can be made from further down the text.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

The purpose of this exercise is to find a word within the paragraph(s) indicated in the rubric, which is interchangeable with the ones listed from **(a)** through **(e)**. Consequently, in the case of nouns and adjectives the word in the exercise and the word in the text will have the same and verbs will be conjugated in the same form.

- (a)** The word *excessive* (text line 3) was not a possible answer because of its singular form in the text, yet it was the most commonly made mistake
- (b)** This question was successfully completed by most candidates.
- (c)** *Avancé* was the correct answer even though some candidates selected *établi* which was the answer for (e). In the text, the psychologists are stating a point without proof: the words *affirmé* and *avancé* belong to the lexical field of the 'unproven statement'.
- (d)** Posed little problem for the majority of candidates.
- (e)** As stated above, *avancé* was sometimes offered by candidates instead of the correct answer *établi*, which corresponds to *constaté*, both referring to facts scientifically proven. *Observé* was also chosen by quite a few candidates, but this word is found in line 23, in the last paragraph and the question asked for answers from the first two paragraphs.

## Question 2

Candidates are reminded that their answer **must** begin with the words in the brackets. All the words from the original statement have to be included as closely as possible and the sentence needs to be manipulated to fit its new beginning whilst retaining the same meaning. Candidates should refrain from 'importing' extra words as these change the meaning of the sentence and upset the grammatical harmony.

- (a) The main mistake here was the lack or misuse of the subjunctive (*est/soit/fusse/ait, etc.*).
- (b) A number of candidates spelled *agressive* the English way, with 2 g-s but this was tolerated as a minor spelling mistake. However, using *à cause de* instead of *par* was not accepted.
- (c) The beginning precluded the further use of *permettre*; therefore *sont permises, permettent, permisent* were not possible.
- (d) This question was answered correctly by the majority of candidates as it could be rendered with minimal manipulation, i.e. the introduction of *d'* before *imposer*.
- (e) *Doit* often was missed out or not used correctly and this changed the meaning of the original phrase.

## Question 3

To show clear evidence of understanding, it is expected that the candidates will rephrase the text to express their answers in their own words as stipulated in the rubric of question 3 and 4. Unfortunately many candidates still copied the text word for word in their responses (called a **lift**), thereby losing marks. The easiest technique to avoid a lift is to turn nouns into their corresponding verbs and vice versa when possible (see examples below). However, please note that after doing this, it is still essential to formulate a coherent answer.

Candidates should avoid including in their answer information extraneous to the text as well as offering answers from different paragraphs than the one(s) indicated in the question.

- (a) Four pieces of information were required for full marks on this question. A number of candidates managed only one, generally point (A) (excessive risk taking); however, there were many who included all four points without lifting from the text. The most challenging point was (C), 'competing for power', with most candidates missing the competitive element. Just stating the presence of power (*il y a du pouvoir*) was not enough. For point (D) 'bonuses' also had to be clearly stated, 'money' or 'salaries' on their own did not score the mark.
- (b) To score the mark for point (A) on this question it was enough to offer *les hommes sont moins prudents et les femmes moins insouciantes*. Candidates managed to reverse the phrase and avoid the lift with more ease for point (C), with *les hommes sont plus agressifs*. Point (B) is a good illustration of how to avoid lifting by turning a noun phrase into an adjective: *instinct de protection* could be changed into an adjective such as *les femmes sont plus protectrices instinctivement*

When a question asks for a comparison, candidates must remember that they will need to refer to both elements, so describing men and women without *plus* or *moins* invalidated the answers.

- (c) This question was well answered in the majority of cases. Some candidates did not state that the psychological explanation (A) dated from a long time ago and wrote their answer in the present tense, which did not score any point as it showed misunderstanding of the reference to the past. Point (B) required some details regarding testosterone and also some statement of who had more or less, not just *c'est la quantité de testostérone*, which was deemed too vague.
- (d) *Facilités de conciliation et coopération*, could be rephrased using verb phrases such as: *peuvent concilier et coopérer*. Finding the answer in the text presented no difficulty for most candidates, but some candidates then went ahead and copied the text unaltered and therefore scored no points.
- (e) This question proved to be quite challenging: only a fairly small number of candidates scored the all three marks because the majority did not make the difference between employing more women overall in the companies (point A), and having the right number of women for the situation to be successful (point D). Most candidates understood the difference but found it difficult to avoid the

lift. *Positions de dirigeantes* and *plus hautes fonctions* (point B) was replaced by e.g. *comme directrices*, by only a handful of candidates.

#### Question 4

Candidates generally found this text more accessible, but lifts were also more common. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long answers and this worked against them by increasing the incidence of language mistakes.

- (a) This was a very straightforward question, with ample possibilities of expressing both points without lifting. Most candidates did well, although some mistook *une fois qu'* (as soon as) for just *une fois* (one time).
- (b) The vast majority of candidates spotted that one answer came from the word *horaires* in the text, but many did not explain why the 'hours' led Sandrine to quit her job. *À cause des horaires* all by itself is meaningless and scored no marks: it had to be explained that the hours were too long or not compatible with family life. The other parts of the question were much more clear-cut and were managed well by the candidates.
- (c) This question was also answered quite successfully, but a number of candidates could not avoid lifting *hautement qualifiée*, *position enviable* or *promotion assurée*. Some answers were too vague: just to say that the women were qualified was not enough, the emphasis had to be put on the high level of qualification. A model answer was: *parce qu'elles avaient beaucoup de diplômes (A) et occupaient un poste que beaucoup de personnes voulaient (B). En plus elles allaient revoir une nouvelle promotion (C).*
- (d) Not all candidates understood point (A), that France was proud of its amount of working mothers. The next three points were more manageable and easily expressed by most candidates. This question was most successful when candidates listed the points clearly, either using i, ii, iii, etc. or *premièrement*, *deuxièmement*, etc. It helped them find four clearly defined arguments and avoid confusion between point (B), mothers' interest for their children has taken first place in their life, and point (D) they want to spend time/educate their children.
- (e) In this question the points were quite straightforward and many candidates use their own words confidently. A common mistake was to use *perdent*, in an attempt to avoid writing *gaspillage*, which went too far, because the women did not lose their studies or their potential, only appeared to have wasted them (*gaspiller* was a good choice for using a verb in order to express the idea and avoid a lift).

#### Question 5

- (a) The mark scheme lists 13 points which could score points (7 advantages and 6 reasons to stay at home). The majority of candidates identified at least 7 or 8. Most candidates stayed within the confine of the two texts and refrained from expressing their own ideas in part (a).
- (b) It was very pleasing to find some responses which were clearly in favour or against the question asked. It was refreshing to see that very few candidates stayed in the 'safe' middle (*on peut reconnaître le rôle de mère si elle veut*). In this part of the paper it is possible for candidates to take a totally unilateral view as long as they bring the arguments to support their ideas. Most responses included illustrations to prove various and sometimes opposite points such as: *la mère est ce qu'il y a de meilleur pour les enfants* or *une femme doit utiliser sa tête au travail et son mari peut s'occuper des enfants* or even *il n'est pas si difficile d'être mère et de travailler quand il y a des crèches*.



### Quality of language

The language marks represent one quarter of the comprehension total (15 out of the potential 60 marks, for **Questions 3, 4 and 5**) and as such it is advisable for teachers to also focus on language accuracy when preparing student for the examination.

Most common mistakes were:

- Negatives in one part only: *l'entreprise aime pas*
- Incorrect or absent verb agreement: *les femmes sont vu*
- Verb endings: *elle les quittent, les mères préférés leurs enfants*
- Adjectives with verb endings: *elles sont permettent*
- Overuse of *y* and *en*: *les horaires y font des problèmes, elle en veut passer du temps*
- Many anglicisms: *les infants, ils sont obsessés, aggressive, c'est plus efficient*
- Use of *faire* instead of *rendre*: *les horaires font la vie de famille difficile*
- Gender confusion: *les hommes... elles veulent !*

# FRENCH

Paper 8682/31

Essay

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 5 titles, 24 of the 40 marks available being awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. The best essays submitted were fluent and well-structured, and their authors were at pains to keep the title in their sights throughout, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the material contained in that paragraph advanced their argument. Some less successful essays often had a beginning, a middle and an end but the opening paragraph was frequently a pre-learned, *passé-partout* piece that had no relevance to the title set, while the conclusion, rather than synthesising the arguments contained in the body of the essay, often failed to target the title and/or introduced elements that had not previously been referred to, let alone developed. Moreover, the focus of the material used in the body of the essay often strayed from the parameters laid down by the title: irrelevant material was fairly common and the recurrence of the exact wording of titles set in previous years reinforced the impression that candidates were simply reiterating material that they had used to write practice essays and that they were paying little heed to the specifics of the title on the question paper in front of them. While it is true that in a well-structured essay, the various stages of the argument are frequently (but by no means always) signposted by the use of fairly standard phrases of the sort *en revanche*, *par contre* and *toujours est-il que*, many candidates used such link phrases incorrectly: e.g. *par contre* and *en revanche* were often used inappropriately when the new paragraph did not introduce any counter-argument, while many of the links adduced were decidedly weak, witness *pour commencer*, *pour conclure*, *aussi*, *puis*, *ensuite* and even *et* and *mais*.

The linguistic quality of the best essays was such that they were a pleasure to read; mistakes were few and far between and they were characterised by an extensive vocabulary, a good sense of idiom and the confident use of complex sentence patterns. A substantial part of the work submitted demonstrated some degree of accuracy and the range of vocabulary and structures used was pleasing. However, expression was characterised by a certain awkwardness for some candidates, who tended to repeat the same words and phrases in close proximity. Not least, phrases and groups of words taken from the title were sometimes constantly invoked and, not infrequently, miscopied. Recurrent linguistic features noted by Examiners included:

- redundant use of the pronouns *y* and *en*, e.g. *il y en a beaucoup de centres*
- the injudicious use of the demonstrative adjectives and pronouns *ce/cette*, *ces* and *cela*. *Et cela* often figured in the middle of a sentence in place of *ce qui*
- the injudicious use of *entre autres*
- *sans doute* used when candidates clearly meant *sans aucun doute*
- *auparavant* used for *autrefois*, *dû à* for *en raison de*, *comparé à* for *par rapport à*, *concernant* for *en ce qui concerne* and *malgré que* for *même si*
- *renverser* used for *inverser* and *implémenter* for *mettre en place*
- the wrong gender frequently attributed to commonly used items such as *manque*, *espace*, *exode*, *mérite*, *diabète* and *mode de vie*
- the plural form of adjectives ending *-al* given as *-als*, e.g. *principals*, *familials*, *socials*, *environnementals*
- anglicisms of the sort *claustrophobique*, *individualistique*, *boissons alcooliques*, *dépendre sur*, *responsable pour*, *définitivement*(for *certainement*)
- common errors in prepositional use after certain verbs, e.g. *entraîner à des catastrophes*, *remédier la situation*, *nuire la santé*, *aider à quelqu'un*, *permettre quelqu'un*,
- *c'est ne pas* used for *ce n'est pas*
- confusion between *notre* and *nôtre*

## Question 1

This title, though it did produce some good responses, was chosen by only a small number of candidates. A common problem here was for candidates to deal too much in the abstract, without providing examples. The focus of the best essays was a series of points illustrating how money poisons and causes tensions among members of families and friends. Money fuels jealousy and resentment and becomes the source of rifts:





among examples cited, there figured disputes over a dead person's estate and the fierce competition to win scholarships, to secure promotion or a pay rise at work and to win sporting prizes. A recurring theme was that parents have to work harder and harder in order to earn the money necessary to make adequate provision for the needs of their family, resulting in children being starved of the requisite care and affection and, also, sometimes, in strained relations between husband and wife. The ever-increasing materialistic attitude of modern society exacerbates this scenario and, in extreme cases, is even the source of criminal acts whose consequences tear families apart. Some essays went on to put forward the counter-argument, notably that in well-off families where money is no object, this is a source of harmony and cohesion: there is no need for parents to work long hours, rather they can devote all their time to their family. Expensive family holidays are possible, where parents and children are able to pursue common leisure interests, thereby further cementing family bonds. Candidates were perhaps drawing on personal experience when they made the point that disputes between parents and children as to how much pocket money the latter should receive are another source of money-induced tension within the family fold. The example was also cited of arranged marriages based wholly or partly on monetary considerations which, it was alleged, often do not make for happy unions. Some essays looked beyond individuals and their entourage to argue that money makes for social divisions and tensions within society. The example was given of the divide that separates those who can afford private education and private medical treatment as opposed to those who have to make do with the state provision and, on a more topical note, it was argued that it is not least financial considerations that lie at the heart of the social unrest that has manifested itself in France in recent times in the form of mass demonstrations against proposed pension reforms. Quite a few essays argued quite relevantly that money is not the only guilty party and that there are other factors which stand in the way of harmonious human relationships: the finger was pointed at such things as racist attitudes, xenophobia, religious dogma and the media. However, only a few highlighted more positive aspects where money can be seen as a force for the good, bringing people together rather than renting them asunder - generosity, altruism and worldwide fund-raising to relieve suffering after natural disasters.

## Question 2

This was a popular title. However, many of the essays submitted were simply lists of the advantages and disadvantages of living in the country, often containing sweeping generalisations, and did not attempt, except sometimes in very superficial manner, to evaluate the quality of the life experienced by country dwellers. Many candidates, moreover, devoted a disproportionate amount of time to descriptions of *la vie urbaine* and in some rare cases, that was their sole focus since they had clearly misunderstood the meaning of the phrase *la vie rurale*. Balanced essays often made the point that everything depends on the character and aspirations of the individual: rural life is for some idyllic, for others monotonous. The natural beauty of rolling fields and verdant countryside acts as a lure for many but, equally, many are repelled by an outlook on life that they see as small-minded, insular and out of touch. Considerable emphasis was put, in many essays, on the fact that life in the country is hard: farmers work hard for little reward, unemployment tends to be high, and there is often a lack of public transport, shops and other facilities. A number focused on the word *paradis* and took the line that for an increasing number of people the ideal existence is one in which they enjoy all the advantages of living in the country but are able to maintain their links with urban communities for professional and recreational purposes. Others argued that what was once a paradise is fast losing its lure as the natural beauty and tranquillity of country life are destroyed by new housing developments and concomitant infrastructures such as supermarkets, mobile phone masts and new roads. Recurrent language errors encountered in essays on this topic included *en campagne*, *dans la campagne* and *à la ville*, the misuse of the noun *un urbaniste* to designate an urban dweller and misspellings of the sort *campaigne* and *campaniard*.

## Question 3

The most popular of the titles, it was perhaps not surprisingly the one which generated the weakest submissions. Many were happy to conclude that man was his own worst enemy even when their essays had centred on environmental problems beyond an individual's control. Other essays were limited to the subject of food, some offering long and detailed but irrelevant advice about healthy diets. Others virulently condemned fast food chains as the true enemy, neglecting to point out considerations of personal choice and responsibility. The best pieces were marked by a broad scope of considerations involving life-style: aspects that came under scrutiny included man's eating habits, his propensity for drinking alcohol and smoking, his use of illicit substances for recreational purposes, his excessively sedentary lifestyle, his failure to respect considerations of basic hygiene, lack of sleep, his overweening ambition and fiercely competitive nature which induce stress, over-reliance on medication, the self-imposed extreme diets and so-called remedies to prevent ageing dictated by vanity, the practice of sunbathing, the pursuit of dangerous pastimes and, not least, habits and activities that pollute the environment and thereby indirectly pose a threat to the health. Balanced essays often went on to say that more and more people are becoming increasingly aware

of prescriptions for healthy living and are adapting their lifestyles accordingly. Some picked up on *pire ennemi* and made the point that there are other enemies at work which are beyond the control of the individual: among those cited, there figured poverty, hereditary factors, natural disasters, pandemics, advertising campaigns advising us to eat and drink unwisely, lack of government directives and funding, and other people, for example those who smoke in the presence of others. Common lexical pitfalls that many who tackled this essay fell into were the use of *fast-food* to designate what is eaten rather than the place where the food is sold and the use of *nourritures* for *aliments*. *Le cholestérol* was often referred to as a disease, *maladies cardiovasculaires* was abbreviated to *le cardiovasculaire* and *la cigarette* was made to do duty for *le tabac* or *les cigarettes*.

#### Question 4

Though this title generated some good answers, a common shortcoming was to fail to adopt the forward-looking perspective called for by the title and simply to provide a survey of current legislation and the reality of the current situation where entrenched attitudes still prevail. Those who avoided this pitfall acknowledged that a lot has been achieved by dint of legislation in various domains but usually argued that there are insurmountable barriers which mean that the utopian ideal of equality of opportunity will never be attained. Prime among these is a person's birth lot: a child born into a poor family is immediately at an insuperable disadvantage to a child born into a wealthy family and that disadvantage is compounded if he happens to be born in a Third World country. Karl Marx was quoted in order to make the point that in order to ensure equality of opportunity it is essential that there should be an equal distribution of wealth, which, in practical terms, is quite impossible. Biological differences also stand in the way of equal opportunities: there are some jobs that will never be open to women simply because they are not strong enough and, moreover, the fact that it is a woman's lot to bear children means that, despite all the legislation in place and despite all the examples of women who have made it to the top, she will always be at a disadvantage in the workplace compared with her male colleagues. Similarly, in the case of handicapped people, though legislation exists in some countries to ensure that firms employ a certain percentage of people with physical handicaps, there are obvious limitations to what they can do, which means that, as far as they are concerned, they can never be on an equal footing with their able-bodied counterparts. Mandela and Obama were held up as symbols of hope that we are moving towards a world where the colour of one's skin will not be a determining factor in a person's advancement in whatever domain but again, the point was made that entrenched attitudes both here and in other areas (e.g. sexuality, age, sex) will be extremely difficult if not impossible to overcome. Moreover, there are and, in a free world, there will continue to be movements and organisations devoted to preaching values that go completely counter to the ideal of equality of opportunity.

#### Question 5

As on every occasion in recent years when essays on the environment have been set, quite a few candidates paid no heed to the specifics of the title and simply launched into an exhaustive exposition of the parlous state of the environment often backed up by statistical material and information about various legislation and protocols. References to possible changes of life-style, if they were in evidence at all, were limited to *le tri sélectif* and leaving the car at home when going to the local shops. The best essays marked themselves out by their sustained focus on ways of life that need to be rethought if headway is going to be made in the fight against the plethora of environmental scourges. Man's quintessential laziness was put under the spotlight as were his leisure-time and holiday activities, for example, his predilection for travel by aircraft to exotic destinations, his love of water sports which destroy the natural habitats of marine life and his pursuit of a whole range of activities which are sources of noise pollution. His eating habits were also examined, including his high consumption of fish, leading to depletion of fish stocks and also his love of meat which requires the large-scale cattle and sheep breeding that is a major source of methane gas. The need to switch to organic products was stressed, thereby ensuring a reduction in the amount of fertilisers and pesticides used. The feature of man's life-style which was most frequently alighted on was his record in the matter of energy usage: the need for far greater energy consciousness and for a wholesale switch to renewable forms of energy was reiterated again and again. The point was also commonly made that one of the main aims shaping most people's lives is economic gain with a view to raising their living standards. It was argued that man needs completely to rethink his priorities and to start putting the environment before economic gain even if it means a decline in his standard of living. Some essays took the perfectly valid line that, in many of these areas, small gestures rather than a complete change of lifestyle will go a long way to remedying many of the ecological problems that beset us: examples that were cited included the use of low-energy light bulbs, not leaving electrical appliances in stand-by mode, cycling short distances rather than using the car and making full and proper use of recycling bins. Others argued that there are domains other than individual lifestyle in which action is urgently needed: governmental initiatives and funding are needed, for example, to build eco-towns, to provide good public transport systems, to reward people who recycle, to reforest affected areas, to develop new eco-friendly technologies and to launch campaigns to make people

aware of the issues involved and what is at stake. Rich nations need to offer help to developing nations in the form of both money and expertise in order to help them reduce their emissions: international conferences are not enough, concrete action is needed. Not least, industry needs to put into effect a raft of measures to ensure that the impact of its activities on the environment is kept to a minimum.

# FRENCH

Paper 8682/32

Essay

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 5 titles, 24 of the 40 marks available being awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. The best essays submitted were fluent and well-structured, and their authors were at pains to keep the title in their sights throughout, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the material contained in that paragraph advanced their argument. Some less successful essays often had a beginning, a middle and an end but the opening paragraph was frequently a pre-learned, *passé-partout* piece that had no relevance to the title set, while the conclusion, rather than synthesising the arguments contained in the body of the essay, often failed to target the title and/or introduced elements that had not previously been referred to, let alone developed. Moreover, the focus of the material used in the body of the essay often strayed from the parameters laid down by the title: irrelevant material was fairly common and the recurrence of the exact wording of titles set in previous years reinforced the impression that candidates were simply reiterating material that they had used to write practice essays and that they were paying little heed to the specifics of the title on the question paper in front of them. While it is true that in a well-structured essay, the various stages of the argument are frequently (but by no means always) signposted by the use of fairly standard phrases of the sort *en revanche*, *par contre* and *toujours est-il que*, many candidates used such link phrases incorrectly: e.g. *par contre* and *en revanche* were often used inappropriately when the new paragraph did not introduce any counter-argument, while many of the links adduced were decidedly weak, witness *pour commencer*, *pour conclure*, *aussi*, *puis*, *ensuite* and even *et* and *mais*.

The linguistic quality of the best essays was such that they were a pleasure to read; mistakes were few and far between and they were characterised by an extensive vocabulary, a good sense of idiom and the confident use of complex sentence patterns. A substantial part of the work submitted demonstrated some degree of accuracy and the range of vocabulary and structures used was pleasing. However, expression was characterised by a certain awkwardness for some candidates, who tended to repeat the same words and phrases in close proximity. Not least, phrases and groups of words taken from the title were sometimes constantly invoked and, not infrequently, miscopied. Recurrent linguistic features noted by Examiners included:

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- the injudicious use of the demonstrative adjectives and pronouns *ce/cette*, *ces* and *cela*. *Et cela* often figured in the middle of a sentence in place of *ce qui*
- the injudicious use of *entre autres*
- *sans doute* used when candidates clearly meant *sans aucun doute*
- *auparavant* used for *autrefois*, *dû à* for *en raison de*, *comparé à* for *par rapport à*, *concernant* for *en ce qui concerne* and *malgré que* for *même si*
- *renverser* used for *inverser* and *implémenter* for *mettre en place*
- the wrong gender frequently attributed to commonly used items such as *manque*, *espace*, *exode*, *mérite*, *diabète* and *mode de vie*
- the plural form of adjectives ending *-al* given as *-als*, e.g. *principals*, *familials*, *socials*, *environnementals*
- anglicisms of the sort *claustrophobique*, *individualistique*, *boissons alcooliques*, *dépendre sur*, *responsable pour*, *définitivement*(for *certainement*)
- common errors in prepositional use after certain verbs, e.g. *entraîner à des catastrophes*, *remédier la situation*, *nuire la santé*, *aider à quelqu'un*, *permettre quelqu'un*,
- *c'est ne pas* used for *ce n'est pas*
- confusion between *notre* and *nôtre*

## Question 1

This title, though it did produce some good responses, was chosen by only a small number of candidates. A common problem here was for candidates to deal too much in the abstract, without providing examples. The focus of the best essays was a series of points illustrating how money poisons and causes tensions among members of families and friends. Money fuels jealousy and resentment and becomes the source of rifts:

among examples cited, there figured disputes over a dead person's estate and the fierce competition to win scholarships, to secure promotion or a pay rise at work and to win sporting prizes. A recurring theme was that parents have to work harder and harder in order to earn the money necessary to make adequate provision for the needs of their family, resulting in children being starved of the requisite care and affection and, also, sometimes, in strained relations between husband and wife. The ever-increasing materialistic attitude of modern society exacerbates this scenario and, in extreme cases, is even the source of criminal acts whose consequences tear families apart. Some essays went on to put forward the counter-argument, notably that in well-off families where money is no object, this is a source of harmony and cohesion: there is no need for parents to work long hours, rather they can devote all their time to their family. Expensive family holidays are possible, where parents and children are able to pursue common leisure interests, thereby further cementing family bonds. Candidates were perhaps drawing on personal experience when they made the point that disputes between parents and children as to how much pocket money the latter should receive are another source of money-induced tension within the family fold. The example was also cited of arranged marriages based wholly or partly on monetary considerations which, it was alleged, often do not make for happy unions. Some essays looked beyond individuals and their entourage to argue that money makes for social divisions and tensions within society. The example was given of the divide that separates those who can afford private education and private medical treatment as opposed to those who have to make do with the state provision and, on a more topical note, it was argued that it is not least financial considerations that lie at the heart of the social unrest that has manifested itself in France in recent times in the form of mass demonstrations against proposed pension reforms. Quite a few essays argued quite relevantly that money is not the only guilty party and that there are other factors which stand in the way of harmonious human relationships: the finger was pointed at such things as racist attitudes, xenophobia, religious dogma and the media. However, only a few highlighted more positive aspects where money can be seen as a force for the good, bringing people together rather than renting them asunder - generosity, altruism and worldwide fund-raising to relieve suffering after natural disasters.

## Question 2

This was a popular title. However, many of the essays submitted were simply lists of the advantages and disadvantages of living in the country, often containing sweeping generalisations, and did not attempt, except sometimes in very superficial manner, to evaluate the quality of the life experienced by country dwellers. Many candidates, moreover, devoted a disproportionate amount of time to descriptions of *la vie urbaine* and in some rare cases, that was their sole focus since they had clearly misunderstood the meaning of the phrase *la vie rurale*. Balanced essays often made the point that everything depends on the character and aspirations of the individual: rural life is for some idyllic, for others monotonous. The natural beauty of rolling fields and verdant countryside acts as a lure for many but, equally, many are repelled by an outlook on life that they see as small-minded, insular and out of touch. Considerable emphasis was put, in many essays, on the fact that life in the country is hard: farmers work hard for little reward, unemployment tends to be high, and there is often a lack of public transport, shops and other facilities. A number focused on the word *paradis* and took the line that for an increasing number of people the ideal existence is one in which they enjoy all the advantages of living in the country but are able to maintain their links with urban communities for professional and recreational purposes. Others argued that what was once a paradise is fast losing its lure as the natural beauty and tranquillity of country life are destroyed by new housing developments and concomitant infrastructures such as supermarkets, mobile phone masts and new roads. Recurrent language errors encountered in essays on this topic included *en campagne*, *dans la campagne* and *à la ville*, the misuse of the noun *un urbaniste* to designate an urban dweller and misspellings of the sort *campaigne* and *campaniard*.

## Question 3

The most popular of the titles, it was perhaps not surprisingly the one which generated the weakest submissions. Many were happy to conclude that man was his own worst enemy even when their essays had centred on environmental problems beyond an individual's control. Other essays were limited to the subject of food, some offering long and detailed but irrelevant advice about healthy diets. Others virulently condemned fast food chains as the true enemy, neglecting to point out considerations of personal choice and responsibility. The best pieces were marked by a broad scope of considerations involving life-style: aspects that came under scrutiny included man's eating habits, his propensity for drinking alcohol and smoking, his use of illicit substances for recreational purposes, his excessively sedentary lifestyle, his failure to respect considerations of basic hygiene, lack of sleep, his overweening ambition and fiercely competitive nature which induce stress, over-reliance on medication, the self-imposed extreme diets and so-called remedies to prevent ageing dictated by vanity, the practice of sunbathing, the pursuit of dangerous pastimes and, not least, habits and activities that pollute the environment and thereby indirectly pose a threat to the health. Balanced essays often went on to say that more and more people are becoming increasingly aware

of prescriptions for healthy living and are adapting their lifestyles accordingly. Some picked up on *pire ennemi* and made the point that there are other enemies at work which are beyond the control of the individual: among those cited, there figured poverty, hereditary factors, natural disasters, pandemics, advertising campaigns advising us to eat and drink unwisely, lack of government directives and funding, and other people, for example those who smoke in the presence of others. Common lexical pitfalls that many who tackled this essay fell into were the use of *fast-food* to designate what is eaten rather than the place where the food is sold and the use of *nourritures* for *aliments*. *Le cholestérol* was often referred to as a disease, *maladies cardiovasculaires* was abbreviated to *le cardiovasculaire* and *la cigarette* was made to do duty for *le tabac* or *les cigarettes*.

#### Question 4

Though this title generated some good answers, a common shortcoming was to fail to adopt the forward-looking perspective called for by the title and simply to provide a survey of current legislation and the reality of the current situation where entrenched attitudes still prevail. Those who avoided this pitfall acknowledged that a lot has been achieved by dint of legislation in various domains but usually argued that there are insurmountable barriers which mean that the utopian ideal of equality of opportunity will never be attained. Prime among these is a person's birth lot: a child born into a poor family is immediately at an insuperable disadvantage to a child born into a wealthy family and that disadvantage is compounded if he happens to be born in a Third World country. Karl Marx was quoted in order to make the point that in order to ensure equality of opportunity it is essential that there should be an equal distribution of wealth, which, in practical terms, is quite impossible. Biological differences also stand in the way of equal opportunities: there are some jobs that will never be open to women simply because they are not strong enough and, moreover, the fact that it is a woman's lot to bear children means that, despite all the legislation in place and despite all the examples of women who have made it to the top, she will always be at a disadvantage in the workplace compared with her male colleagues. Similarly, in the case of handicapped people, though legislation exists in some countries to ensure that firms employ a certain percentage of people with physical handicaps, there are obvious limitations to what they can do, which means that, as far as they are concerned, they can never be on an equal footing with their able-bodied counterparts. Mandela and Obama were held up as symbols of hope that we are moving towards a world where the colour of one's skin will not be a determining factor in a person's advancement in whatever domain but again, the point was made that entrenched attitudes both here and in other areas (e.g. sexuality, age, sex) will be extremely difficult if not impossible to overcome. Moreover, there are and, in a free world, there will continue to be movements and organisations devoted to preaching values that go completely counter to the ideal of equality of opportunity.

#### Question 5

As on every occasion in recent years when essays on the environment have been set, quite a few candidates paid no heed to the specifics of the title and simply launched into an exhaustive exposition of the parlous state of the environment often backed up by statistical material and information about various legislation and protocols. References to possible changes of life-style, if they were in evidence at all, were limited to *le tri sélectif* and leaving the car at home when going to the local shops. The best essays marked themselves out by their sustained focus on ways of life that need to be rethought if headway is going to be made in the fight against the plethora of environmental scourges. Man's quintessential laziness was put under the spotlight as were his leisure-time and holiday activities, for example, his predilection for travel by aircraft to exotic destinations, his love of water sports which destroy the natural habitats of marine life and his pursuit of a whole range of activities which are sources of noise pollution. His eating habits were also examined, including his high consumption of fish, leading to depletion of fish stocks and also his love of meat which requires the large-scale cattle and sheep breeding that is a major source of methane gas. The need to switch to organic products was stressed, thereby ensuring a reduction in the amount of fertilisers and pesticides used. The feature of man's life-style which was most frequently alighted on was his record in the matter of energy usage: the need for far greater energy consciousness and for a wholesale switch to renewable forms of energy was reiterated again and again. The point was also commonly made that one of the main aims shaping most people's lives is economic gain with a view to raising their living standards. It was argued that man needs completely to rethink his priorities and to start putting the environment before economic gain even if it means a decline in his standard of living. Some essays took the perfectly valid line that, in many of these areas, small gestures rather than a complete change of lifestyle will go a long way to remedying many of the ecological problems that beset us: examples that were cited included the use of low-energy light bulbs, not leaving electrical appliances in stand-by mode, cycling short distances rather than using the car and making full and proper use of recycling bins. Others argued that there are domains other than individual lifestyle in which action is urgently needed: governmental initiatives and funding are needed, for example, to build eco-towns, to provide good public transport systems, to reward people who recycle, to reforest affected areas, to develop new eco-friendly technologies and to launch campaigns to make people

aware of the issues involved and what is at stake. Rich nations need to offer help to developing nations in the form of both money and expertise in order to help them reduce their emissions: international conferences are not enough, concrete action is needed. Not least, industry needs to put into effect a raft of measures to ensure that the impact of its activities on the environment is kept to a minimum.

# FRENCH

Paper 8682/33

Essay

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 5 titles, 24 of the 40 marks available being awarded for quality of language and 16 for content. The best essays submitted were fluent and well-structured, and their authors were at pains to keep the title in their sights throughout, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the material contained in that paragraph advanced their argument. Less successful essays often had a beginning, a middle and an end but the opening paragraph was not uncommonly a pre-learned, *passé-partout* piece that had little or no relevance to the title set, while the conclusion, rather than synthesising the arguments contained in the body of the essay, often failed to target the title and/or introduced elements that had not previously been referred to, let alone developed. Moreover, the focus of the material used in the body of the essay often strayed from the parameters laid down by the title: irrelevant and seemingly pre-learned material was fairly common. While in a well-structured essay, the various stages of the argument are frequently, but by no means always, signposted by the use of fairly standard phrases of the sort *en revanche*, *par contre* and *toujours est-il que*, many candidates used such phrases without heeding the logic of the essay. For example *par contre* and *en revanche* were often used inappropriately when the new paragraph did not introduce any counter-argument, while many of the links adduced were decidedly weak, witness *pour commencer*, *pour conclure*, *aussi*, *puis* and even *et* and *mais*.

The linguistic quality of the best essays was such that they were a pleasure to read; mistakes were few and far between and they were characterised by an extensive vocabulary, a good sense of idiom and the confident use of complex sentence patterns. At the other end of the spectrum frequent basic errors could be observed, vocabulary and structures were limited, and sentence patterns were consistently simple or pedestrian. In the middle ranges, the essays demonstrated some degree of accuracy and the range of vocabulary and structures used was quite pleasing. However, they were frequently characterised by a certain awkwardness as candidates tended to repeat the same words and phrases in close proximity. Not least, phrases and groups of words taken from the title were sometimes constantly invoked and, not infrequently, misquoted. Recurrent linguistic features noted included:

- mangled verb forms, e.g. *ils mortissent*(they die), *ils apparaitent*, *ils font*, *ils ditent*, *ils deviennent*, *ils prenent*, *ils conduient*
- the injudicious use of the demonstrative adjectives and pronouns *ce/cette*, *ces* and *cela*. *Et cela* often figured in the middle of a sentence in place of *ce qui*
- *parce que* used for *à cause de* and vice versa
- *auparavant* used for *autrefois*
- the wrong gender frequently attributed to commonly used items such as *manque*, *groupe*, *mérite*, *principe*, *couleur* and *mode de vie*
- the plural form of adjectives ending *-al* given as *-als*, e.g. *principals*, *environnementals*, *socials*
- anglicisms/invented words of the sort *unnaturalle*, *la appearance*, *chirurgie*, *le result*, *enchauffement*, *chimicales*, *à une étendue certaine*,
- common errors in prepositional use after certain verbs, e.g. *entraîner à des catastrophes*, *remédier la situation*, *nuire la santé*, *aider à quelqu'un*, *permettre quelqu'un*,
- *c'est ne pas* used for *ce n'est pas*
- repeated use within the same essay of the forms *à le/les* and *de le/les* plus noun.
- *beaucoup des* used for *beaucoup de*

## Question 1

This was a popular choice but quite often the responses it generated were somewhat superficial, lacking both in breadth of focus and depth of analysis. The starting point for many was the deleterious effects of technology on relationships within the family: before the advent of technology, members of the family spent a lot of time together, chatting, eating, and playing games but that is no longer the case. The advent of labour-saving devices such as washing-up machines means that children no longer help their parents with everyday household chores, thereby again weakening the solidarity of the family unit. The time is now spent, particularly by the young but also, it was alleged, by their parents, alone at the computer screen or listening



to music on their Ipod. For many young people, their computer and their mobile phone become something of an obsession, to the point that they become trapped and isolated in a virtual world and neglect not only their parents and their siblings but also their friends. Their communication skills become stunted because the only communication they know is cyber communication. Moreover, the violence that they regularly encounter in computer games and in films that they watch on their computers and on television leads them to believe that such behaviour is normal and acceptable, an attitude which too frequently spills over into the way they comport themselves with others. The whole notion of friendship, it was argued, has been redefined since the advent of the Internet and mobile phones. People often have a wide circle of cyber friends met in chat rooms or on social network sites and with whom they share photographs and exchange e-mails and text messages. However, the quality of the friendship is often superficial and, self-evidently, cannot be as deep as friendships born of being together and sharing experiences. The Internet, moreover, breeds a culture of suspicion and distrust, which makes it harder to make real friends, since we are constantly made aware in the media of cases where the web has been used to deceive and hoodwink and to obtain personal details which are then used for fraudulent ends. In the worst scenarios, the Internet is used to induce young people into relationships which are perverted, to bully the vulnerable and to engineer extra-marital liaisons which often lead to the break-up of a previously stable marriage, witness the spate of celebrities whose widely publicised Internet encounters have been a source of huge embarrassment to both them and their unsuspecting families. Having listed the negative effects of technology on human relationships, balanced essays went on to point to more positive aspects. The pain of separation from loved ones and close friends is alleviated by the fact of being able to communicate with them instantaneously. At a professional level, video conferencing greatly reduces the need for people to be away from home for business reasons, with obvious benefits for their personal and family lives. Marriages may be broken because of Internet dalliances but they are also made. Not least, a few maintained, young people's mastery of technological gadgets and their parents' consequent reliance on them for assistance are factors which help put the young on an equal footing with their parents and make for a more relaxed, less authoritarian parent-child relationship.

## Question 2

This title elicited some good submissions but equally, a number were very narrow in their focus and/or lacked a clear structure. Perhaps not surprisingly, the aspects of urban life that came under closest scrutiny were the social problems which beset the young, notably drug addiction, violence, homelessness and unemployment. With regard to the former, the authorities were exhorted to provide the young with more leisure facilities, especially more sporting facilities, since, it was argued, this would occupy them and keep them away from temptations such as drugs and alcohol. Young people living in urban areas are too frequently the victim of violent crime (muggings, stabbings, rape, even murder), which underlines the need for more police to be deployed in inner-city areas. It should also be a number one priority to eliminate the shanty-towns and slum areas where, it was said, much of the crime originates. Homelessness among the young is an increasing problem: local authorities should take it upon themselves to build more low-cost accommodation that would be within the means of candidates living on grants and other young workers on low incomes. In order to tackle the high level of unemployment among young people, they need to work hand in hand with private enterprise to set up job creation schemes and also work experience opportunities. Some essays alighted on the problem of the high level of pollution in towns and cities which blights the existence of the young, exposing them to all manner of respiratory and other diseases and ultimately shortening their life expectancy. A whole raft of measures was proposed including the introduction of more pedestrian areas, taxes to discourage the use of vehicles in inner-city areas, the funding of more eco-friendly public transport such as trams, a complete ban on 4x4s in urban areas, the introduction of more municipal bike schemes and facilities to encourage the use of electric cars. The importance of educating the young to take care of the environment was also stressed. Some essays called for better educational provision – better schools, a wider choice of higher education opportunities, more and better grants for higher education candidates. Finally, a few candidates thought that it was the job of local authorities to intervene in the fight against obesity among the young. Suggestions included campaigns to ensure that the latter are better educated in the matter of dietary issues, a tax on fast-food to discourage excessive consumption and action to stop the proliferation of fast-food restaurants.

### Question 3

Candidates who chose this essay had not always fully grasped the meaning of the title. Some had clearly taken *la recherche* to be referring to scientific research to find ways of preventing people from falling ill while others, who had understood the meaning of the word *recherche*, confused *perfection physique* with *bonne santé*. The positive side of seeking after physical perfection was seen as people being motivated to take regular exercise, to participate in sporting activities, to adopt a healthy diet and to stop drinking and smoking. Physical perfection can breed self-confidence and be a source of pride, contributing to the feel-good factor that is an integral part of a balanced personality. However, the negative aspects were generally seen as outweighing the positives. The point was made that people pursue a false image of physical perfection brokered by the media and that they often compromise their health in the process: the finger was pointed not least at steroids, slimming pills and extreme diets whose side effects are not always known. Moreover, the quest for physical perfection too often becomes an obsession, leading to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and other psychological problems exemplified, in the eyes of several candidates, by Michael Jackson whose obsession with his physical appearance led him to have repeated plastic surgery. Some essays highlighted the financial implications of constantly trying to improve one's appearance, pointing to the cost of diet plans, cosmetics, plastic surgery and the like. Most concluded that for all manner of reasons, vanity should be held in check: better to be plump and happy than suffer all the trauma and problems that so often go hand in hand with the search for physical perfection!

### Question 4

Most of the candidates who tackled this question seemed to know what is meant by *discrimination positive*, though some of the examples they chose were not examples of the practice that they had usually correctly defined in the opening paragraph of their essays, witness:

“Prenons le cas d'un étudiant intelligent mais qui pour des raisons financières ou autrement, il manque le pouvoir de continuer son éducation. L'aide financière par l'école lui permet de compléter son éducation et obtient des qualifications nécessaires.”

The principal point made in favour of positive discrimination was the most obvious one, notably that it helps those from minorities who would otherwise have no chance of gaining access to the positions or benefits in question. It enables them to integrate and to contribute to society, as in the case of the men and women in France who benefit from the law requiring French companies to take on a certain percentage of physically handicapped employees. They are thereby helped to achieve their potential and even in some cases, it was argued, to exceed it. Positive discrimination was also seen as a means of helping to maintain social diversity within a community and of enabling that community to profit from the potential and experience of a minority group. In cases where women are given priority over men, it was seen as way of fighting against the mechanisms of masculine domination in a patriarchal society. However, the weight of opinion was negative. The point that recurred was that such a practice whose *raison d'être* is to ensure equality of opportunity is in fact a source of inequality since it overrides considerations of merit and thereby breeds resentment and concomitant tensions within a community. Moreover, it reinforces differences, stigmatising people and making them more aware that they are different and need help to attain the same privileges as “normal” people”. It also sends the wrong signal to those who benefit, giving them the idea that no effort is required on their part since doors will open automatically. Nor is it good for employers or, by extension, for the nation since it means that positions are not given to the best qualified candidates. Most essays concluded with an expression of support for the ideal of equality of opportunity but stressed the problems entailed in trying to create a society where all are equal.

### Question 5

As on every occasion in recent years when essays on the environment have been set, a number of candidates paid little or no heed to the specifics of the title and simply launched into an exposition of the parlous state of the environment often backed up by statistical material and information about various legislation and protocols. Those who did restrain their field of reference usually began by acknowledging the very serious harm being caused to the environment in a world where the number of cars on the roads is soaring and where international air traffic constantly reaches new records. However, it was argued, all is not lost since governments, manufacturers and users are all becoming increasingly aware of the magnitude of the problem. Already cars use lead free petrol and are fitted with catalytic converters. There is, moreover, an incentive to buy low-emission cars in many countries since they attract less road tax than those that pollute more. Even more significant is the fact that manufacturers have started to bring out hybrid cars which are yet more eco-friendly. In several developed countries, there are car sharing schemes in place in order to try to ensure that car journeys are kept to a minimum, and taxes similar to the one in operation in London

and whose aim is to deter drivers from using their cars in large agglomerations are becoming more widespread. Improvements to public transport are also a step in the right direction: not least, more and more towns and cities are introducing eco-friendly trams. As far as aircraft are concerned, new technologies are being developed all the time to improve engines and ensure that emissions are kept to a minimum, and governments across the world have introduced environmental taxes payable by all those who choose to travel by air. Clearly keen to present a balanced picture, many essays went on to review some of the many other areas of human activity which result in major damage to the environment. The main ones that came under the spotlight were manufacturing industry which is the source of toxic fumes and also of toxic waste that factories tip into rivers and the sea, the production of various forms of non-renewable energy, the destruction of forests to reclaim land for construction and cultivation, the careless disposal of unwanted electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, and a range of sources of noise and light pollution. Many concluded by agreeing with the statement that they had been asked to consider, others laid the blame firmly at the door of industry, while a few thought that it was impossible to say which of the many sources of pollution was the principal source of the scourge afflicting the planet.