

FRENCH

Paper 9716/01
Speaking

Key messages

For teachers/examiners:

- Keep to the timings prescribed for the examination (see below).
- Prompt candidates to ask questions during/at the end of each conversation section but keep your own answers brief. A candidate cannot qualify for marks while the examiner is speaking.
- More than one question per section is required for candidates to qualify for full marks under *Seeking Information/Opinions* and examiners should be prepared to prompt candidates for several questions to enable them to have access to the full range of marks.
- Candidates' questions should relate to the topic under discussion. Please see the Mark Scheme.
- Cover a range of topics (not just a single topic) in the General Conversation, some in depth, vary questions and topics from one candidate to another, be prepared to identify and follow the interests and passions of the candidate (not your own), and keep your own contributions to a minimum.
- Create as natural a conversation as possible, interact with the candidate and avoid lists of pre-prepared questions, especially those which elicit one-word or purely factual answers.
- Avoid topics of a highly personal or sensitive nature.
- Ask questions at an appropriate level and avoid IGCSE-type questions except as openers to fuller discussion.
- Ask questions clearly and concisely. Elaborate and/or unclear questions tend to confuse and unnerve candidates.
- It is the examiner's responsibility to introduce the candidate at the beginning of the examination, not the candidate's.
- It is not helpful to use '*Maintenant, présente-toi...*' as an opener for the General Conversation, as this tends to restrict discussion to a very narrow range of subjects. (It is not a requirement of the examination for candidates to give their profile at the beginning. It does not qualify for marks and takes up valuable time.)
- If the candidate's Topic Presentation is not related to a francophone country or society, the mark for Content/Presentation must be halved.

For candidates:

- Make sure that the presentation is not just factual but contains ideas and opinions and also allows further discussion in the Topic Conversation.
- Make sure that the Topic Presentation lasts the prescribed 3 – 3½ minutes.
- Ask questions of the examiner in both conversation sections and make every effort to ask more than one question on the topic or topics under discussion in order to qualify for the full range of marks under *Seeking Information/Opinions*. Make sure your questions are relevant to the topic under discussion.
- Remember that the Topic Presentation must make clear reference to a francophone culture or society: *The presentation must demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken.* This must be more than a passing reference, and candidates who live in a francophone country and who speak about an aspect of their own culture must make it clear beyond doubt the country to which they are referring.
- Candidates are advised that it is better not to ask the examiner direct questions during the Topic Presentation, as they disrupt the flow of the Presentation and do not count towards *Seeking Information/Opinions* in the conversation sections.
- Rhetorical questions are not a requirement of the Test, but they may constitute, if desired, an appropriate part of the Presentation. However, candidates should be aware that they do not count towards *Seeking Information/Opinions* in the conversation sections.

- It is not in the spirit of the Test that candidates ask their teacher/examiner for key (or indeed *any*) vocabulary.

General comments

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

The way in which an Examiner asks a question can make a huge difference to how a candidate is able to respond. Examiners need to be aware that:

- Very long, complex questions tend to unnerve candidates and rarely facilitate discussion.
- Closed questions usually elicit short answers, sometimes just yes or no, and should be avoided unless they are intended to open the way for a deeper discussion.
- Open questions such as *Comment?* or *Pourquoi?* are more likely to allow a candidate the freedom to answer at much greater length and in greater depth.

The examination should be a conversation, which can only be achieved by engaging with and responding to what the candidate says, not by asking a series of entirely unrelated questions with no follow-up. Going through a list of pre-prepared questions rarely results in a natural conversation and is not in the spirit of the examination.

Administration

Recordings

- Recordings this year were mainly clear, though there are still examples of faulty recording equipment. Examiners must check the equipment before using it and ensure that the microphone favours the candidate without losing the examiner's own contribution. There were a number of centres where the examiner was loud and clear, whereas the candidate(s) distant and hard to hear.
- Please choose a room which is quiet and where candidates are not distracted by external noise. Every year there are centres where there is excessive background noise.
- Only the examiner and the candidate should be present during the Test. If a third person is required to be present, for example a carer, permission must be obtained in advance from Cambridge Assessment.
- Centres should keep a copy of the recording(s) in case a second copy is required by the moderator or a broader range of marks is requested.
- Where centres use digital recording software, each candidate's file must be saved individually, as .mp files, and finalised correctly, so that each candidate's examination can be accessed for moderation. Files should be identified using precise candidate details (see the paragraph below) rather than just 'number 1, 2' etc.
- Centres are reminded that the sample of recordings they submit should represent candidates throughout the range of the entry, from highest to lowest. For the size of sample needed, please see the details in the syllabus booklet.
- There are always centres which submit their moderation samples long after the deadline has passed and a considerable time after the exams were carried out. Such late submissions cause considerable delays in the moderation process and can even delay issuing results.

Submit for Assessment

- The vast majority of centres had no difficulty in successfully uploading paperwork and recordings.
- Some centres save sound files in formats other than .mp files and Working Mark Sheets in formats which cannot be opened.
- Centres must make sure that sound files and Working Mark Sheets are uploaded at the same time.

Paperwork

- There were a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transferring the total mark to *Submit for Assessment*. These processes should be checked carefully before submission.
- Centres are reminded that for moderation, in addition to the recordings, they need to submit the Working Mark Sheet and the total mark for each candidate.

Application of Mark Scheme

- 1 There were irregularities in the application of the Mark Scheme. Several centres awarded marks out of 10 for *Providing* and/or *Seeking Opinions*, when the maximum is 5; others awarded marks for *Seeking Opinions*, even when the candidate had not asked any questions.
- 2 The Mark Scheme makes no provision for awarding half marks. Half marks should not be awarded under any circumstances.
- 3 Many examiners do not halve the mark for *Presentation/Content* if the candidate's topic is not demonstrably and unequivocally related to a francophone country.
- 4 Where a centre engages two examiners to examine the same syllabus, examiners must standardise marks before submitting them to CIE for moderation and provide evidence of standardisation having taken place.

Format of the examination

There are 3 distinct parts to the Speaking Test:

- 1 Presentation – (3 – 3½ minutes).
- 2 Topic Conversation – (7 – 8 minutes).
- 3 General Conversation – (8 – 9 minutes).

The Speaking Test should last no more than 20 minutes and no less than 18 minutes in total.

In order to be fair to all candidates across the world, these timings should be observed – where examinations are too short, candidates are not given opportunities to show what they can do, and where conversations are over-extended, an element of fatigue creeps in and candidates sometimes struggle to maintain their concentration and level of language. Both tendencies were evident this series.

Examiners must also remember that the longer they spend on their own contributions, the less time candidates have to develop their ideas. Responses to questions asked by candidates should be kept brief. Some examiners regard the speaking exam as a platform for their own ideas and an opportunity to display their own command of the language.

Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)

In this part of the examination, the candidate gives a **single** presentation on a specific topic of his or her choice, taken from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus booklet. This is the only prepared part of the examination and the only part for which candidates are able to choose what they want to talk about. There were a number of cases this series where candidates spoke on more than one topic. The topic list gives candidates a very wide choice – the most popular this year, at both A and AS Levels, were *La technologie*, *L'égalité des sexes/des chances*, *Les medias/réseaux sociaux*, *Le conflit des générations*, *Le sport*, *La famille*, *Le tourisme*, *L'environnement*. More unusual topics included *La mortalité en France*, *SAPE (Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Elégantes)*, *Le prêt-à-jeter*, *Le système judiciaire au Canada*. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues. The best topics are usually those the candidate feels most passionate about.

Most candidates did relate their topics to a francophone country. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for *Content/Presentation* halved by the examiner (see Speaking Test mark scheme).

Since the topic is chosen beforehand, candidates have usually researched quite widely, and have to select and structure their material to fit into 3 to 3½ minutes – additional material which cannot be included in the actual presentation because of the time constraint may well prove very useful in the topic conversation

section. In general, candidates had no problem speaking for the required time and many were able to give full and interesting presentations.

Candidates would be well advised to steer clear of very factual subjects e.g. *La famille* and *Le sport*. The mark scheme criteria for the *Content/Presentation* element makes it clear that in order to qualify for the full range of marks, the presentation should contain not just factual points, but ideas and opinions. Candidates need to think carefully before making their final choice and consider whether it will be possible to develop and expand their chosen topic. Sport and family, though popular choices, are often the least successful for that reason.

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

A few candidates this series gave Topic Presentations which were far too short. On the other hand, if a candidate goes over time, it is the Examiner's responsibility to draw the Presentation to a close after 3½ minutes. This did not always happen.

Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)

In this section, candidates have the chance to expand on what they have already said and develop ideas and opinions expressed briefly during the presentation. Examiners need to avoid asking questions which encourage candidates to repeat the material already offered – their aim should be to ask more probing questions in order to give candidates opportunities to expand on their original statements and then respond to what the candidate says. There are not necessarily 'right' answers either here or in the General Conversation section and it is in the nature of a genuine conversation that those taking part may not agree with opinions expressed. In fact, differences of opinion can create lively debate (if handled sensitively and purposefully by the examiner) and can give candidates the opportunity to defend their point of view.

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

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

There were a significant number of exams this series where the candidate asked no questions in the Topic Conversation and/or was not prompted to by the examiner, but did ask questions in the General conversation and/or was prompted to by the examiner.

Examiners should note that they must indicate the end of the Topic Conversation and the beginning of the General Conversation.

General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)

The General Conversation is the most spontaneous section of the examination. Candidates will have prepared their own choice of topic for the Topic Presentation (to be continued in the Topic Conversation), but here they do not know what the examiner will choose to discuss (and it is the examiner who chooses, not the candidate). Clearly the areas of discussion will be those studied during the course, but there seemed to be fewer varied and in-depth discussions this series. In a centre with a number of candidates, candidates should not all be asked to talk about the same list of subjects – themes should be varied from candidate to candidate and should on no account return to the original subject of the presentation.

This section is intended to be a conversation between examiner and candidate, so it is not appropriate for the examiner to ask a series of unrelated questions, to which the candidate responds with a prepared answer, after which the examiner moves on to the next question on the list! This amounts to malpractice in fact and can endanger the results of the candidates. Examiners should display sensitivity in asking questions about topics of a personal nature i.e. religion and personal relationships and should try to keep their questions general rather than moving inappropriately into personal areas. Examiners should not regard the examination as a platform for imposing their own views on the candidates.

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

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

A significant number of examiners only covered one topic in this section. Many examiners asked very basic questions which were not appropriate to this level.

Seeking Information and Opinions

This section is a summary of what has already been noted above, as this component of the Mark Scheme is often misunderstood and/or misapplied.

- Marks are awarded for this component in each conversation section of the speaking examination.
- To qualify for marks in *Seeking Information and Opinions* candidates must ask the examiner questions.
- If the candidate does not ask questions or asks only one, it is the examiner's responsibility to prompt them.
- If the candidate does not ask questions, no marks can be awarded in this component.
- If the candidate only asks one question, the maximum mark possible is 3.
- Questions must be relevant to the topic under discussion.

Assessment

The greatest causes of difference were where marks had been awarded for asking questions where none had actually been asked or where Topic Presentations did not relate to a francophone country, in which case the mark for Content/Presentation must be halved.

A handful of examiners also found it difficult to establish an acceptable level for *Comprehension/Responsiveness, Accuracy and Feel for the Language*, while others found it tricky to differentiate between the bands for *Pronunciation/Intonation*.

In rare cases, examiners misapplied the mark scheme, most frequently by awarding marks out of 10 for those categories like *Pronunciation/Intonation* and *Seeking Opinions* which carry a maximum of 5 marks.

Examiners at centres with a large entry of able candidates should be aware that marks may be bunched and that it may be impossible to differentiate between candidates to a greater degree than the Mark Scheme allows.

Where candidates ask questions to elicit clarification or obtain information during the course of conversation, they should clearly be rewarded, but examiners must remember to prompt candidates in both conversation sections – the mark scheme gives the criteria for awarding marks for this element of the examination and these marks should be awarded regardless of whether questions are spontaneous or prompted, provided that they are relevant to the topic under discussion. A significant number of candidates this session had prepared questions which were not relevant.

Centres are reminded that, except in extenuating circumstances, they should engage only one examiner per syllabus if at all possible. In cases where the engagement of two or more examiners on the same syllabus is unavoidable, the Examiners must co-ordinate with each other to establish an agreed standard and submit evidence of standardisation with the Moderation Sample.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/21
Reading and Writing 21

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words specified in the question. The inclusion of additional words or the omission of necessary words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should **not** begin the answer by writing out the question. Answers beginning with (for example) *Parce que* are quite acceptable.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the word limit is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

There were a number of good scripts from able candidates who handled the various tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, but the level of linguistic competence and knowledge of some candidates at the other end of the range was simply over-stretched by what was being asked of them.

The topic was one to which candidates in general appeared able to relate well.

Stronger candidates usually appeared familiar with the format of the paper and knew how to set about tackling the different types of question. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they simply copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

Illegibility remains a significant and growing problem, partly because of very poor or quirky handwriting and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and insertions.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, even though some answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Many questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary, but some candidates still neglect the simple answer and attempt using structures which they cannot handle, often producing answers that cannot be rewarded. Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question or part question (indicated either in the body of the question or in square brackets) as an indication of the number of points to be made.

Many candidates still feel the need to incorporate the words of the question as an unnecessary preamble to the answer, which not only wastes time for both candidate and examiner, but also potentially introduces linguistic errors which can detract from the overall impression for the Quality of Language mark – e.g. (3d) *Utiliser sa trottinette revient-il moins cher...;* (4d) *Certains locataires faisaient-ils preuve....* Answers beginning with *parce que*, *en* etc. are quite in order and generally preferable.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, it is encouraging to note that simply copying items from the text has diminished lately, with more candidates understanding how to 'work' the text to avoid 'lifting', but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' items directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks at this level. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way.

(even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym) 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.

Candidates who adopt the policy of replacing nouns with verbs where appropriate sometimes nevertheless invalidate their answer by including the *de* from the text – e.g. when attempting to rephrase *le maintien d'une bonne forme physique* they write *Il's maintiennent d'une bonne forme physique*, which does not demonstrate full comprehension and so invalidates. There were several other instances which cost the mark: **3(c) adoption/adopter d'une manière de vivre; 3(d) port/porter d'un casque; 4(a) obtention/obtenir d'un permis; connaissance/connaître du Code; 4(c) rechargement/recharger des batteries; 4(e) emprunt/emprunter d'une route.**

The paper ties the questions (and therefore the answers) to specific paragraphs (or occasionally to specific lines) in the texts. Candidates who find themselves writing the same answer for two questions need to pause for thought.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for 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. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are more than likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement. **Candidates should not attempt to cut corners by omitting the prompt at the start of their answers.**

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing.

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

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are still unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the subject. In some cases, this resulted in candidates simply using up virtually a third of the number of words allowed, literally pointlessly, before they started. The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the 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 required in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay or a vehicle for personal opinions.

Other candidates made the same point several times or went into unnecessary detail.

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?*

The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind, but other scripts were littered with crossings-out, which did little to improve standards of presentation and legibility.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a reasonably straightforward first exercise, although answers bearing little or no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question were regularly offered by weaker candidates. Candidates can often help themselves to narrow down the choice by identifying the part of speech involved.

- In **Item (a)**, candidates often correctly homed in on *à peu près* but many then lost the mark by including a superfluous *d'* from the text, thereby infringing the 'footprint' principle (see **General Comments** above).
- In **Item (b)**, a fair number found *comporte* for *comprend*, but others were tempted by another word that began with *com-* (*composé*).
- **Item (c)** produced a good number of correct answers, although *conçue* was also frequently offered.
- In **Item (d)**, both *chez* and *dans* earned the mark. One can only imagine that *permit* was offered for *parmi*, because it bore a resemblance of sorts.
- **Item (e)** again saw the invalidation of a very large number of marks on the 'footprint' principle through the omission of *donner* and/or *à*.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but the task proved beyond the range of candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

The weakest candidates appeared to see this as an exercise in simply re-arranging the order of the words of the original, with no regard for sense.

In **Item 2(a)**, a large number made the mistake of not altering the verb-ending in the transfer to reported speech or produced *sente*. There was some uncertainty over the reflexive pronoun too.

In **Item 2(b)**, a good number set about the transfer into the passive in the right way, but fewer saw any need to make *encouragée* agree.

Item 2(c) saw more able candidates identifying the need for a subjunctive following *il est essential que*, although not all managed to form it correctly.

In **Item 2(d)** a number of candidates attempted to create an *après de* + infinitive construction or to write *après je la plie*. Others seemed to think that *la plie* was a noun or that *avant* is a conjugated form of *avoir*.

In **Item 2(e)** the correct form of the negative eluded many. Others simply swapped the position of *ma trottinette* and *personne* or wrote *personne ne gêne ma trottinette*.

Question 3

There was a tendency among weaker candidates simply to seize on a word in the question and to write out the sentence from the text which contained it or something similar, in the hope of including the answer somewhere along the way. Questions are usually specifically designed to prevent this.

In **Item 3(a)**, simple phrases such as *On utilise le guidon/on tourne la roue de devant* and *on pousse/se propulse avec le pied/sur le sol/par terre* scored both marks without the need for detailed descriptions of the mechanics involved.

In **Item 3(b)**, the ability to move around town quickly and to keep in shape were well understood for two of the three marks. The third mark was more often lost by candidates who did not understand *portefeuille* or its relevance here, or who confused things with *sa contribution à l'économie*.

In **Item 3(c)**, more able candidates often scored all three marks. Others tended to quote irrelevant chunks of the third paragraph or invented new vocabulary (*détrimeuter*, *malagréable*) in an attempt to avoid 'lifting'.

Item 3(d) was successfully handled by candidates who saw the easy way of avoiding 'lifting' by using verbs to express *port* and *conduite*, although some offered *se comporter* or invented *prudentement*. A good

number pointed to the advantage of being able to fold the scooter for storage but some did not go on to mention why this saved money, as required by the question.

Item 3(e) saw stronger candidates earning the first mark by making the point that a motor increases the top speed, but some confused 30 km as referring to speed rather than range/distance for the second mark. *Un parcours plat* was not widely understood, but some found effective ways of expressing the need for *le bon entretien de la surface: une route/surface en bon état/bien entretenue/qui n'est pas abîmée/ou il n'y a pas beaucoup de trous*.

Question 4

In **Item 4(a)**, *formation* was widely misunderstood, but the second mark was often scored by those who realised that *permis* was a noun. Stronger candidates understood the desirability of knowledge of *le Code de la route* and expressed it with an appropriate verb (*connaître/étudier/apprendre*).

In **Item 4(b)**, there was a good deal of irrelevant material offered (*catégorie, statut, anarchique, danser*) before arriving at the relatively straightforward *Elles réduisent les embouteillages/le nombre de voitures* and *Elles causent des accidents/mettent le public en danger*.

In **Item 4(c)**, *mise à disposition* was often thought to mean being disposed of and *location* was interpreted as where the scooters were left/to be located. *Elles rechargent les batteries* offered a simple way of earning the third mark.

In **Item 4(d)**, the first two marks were most readily scored by the use of the verbs *abandonner* and *endommager/vandaliser*. The idea that the scooters were deliberately thrown off bridges into the river below was not understood by some who thought that they were hidden underneath the bridges or that vandals spent their time fishing them out.

In **Item 4(e)**, a good number identified the banning of the riding of scooters on pavements, and the likely consequence of breaking the rule. Negatives proved more problematic for the second mark: *elle interdit stationner sans gêner* or *elle interdit de ne pas gêner*, or with *le passage des piétons* being interpreted as a pedestrian passageway rather than as pedestrians passing by. The third mark was missed by candidates who assumed that 50 k/h was; somewhat improbably, the top speed of a motorised scooter, rather than the top speed permitted for any vehicle on the road on which it is travelling.

Question 5

Question 5a asked candidates to summarise the arguments for and against the use of *trottinettes*, as presented in the texts.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction. As usual, a good number simply wasted a significant number of words at the start. A number of others produced general essays giving their own opinions, whether or not these related to any of the points that had been made in either text.

The mark scheme specified many rewardable points, which stronger candidates managed to accumulate efficiently and succinctly enough. The weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping seemingly randomly to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified points in favour included the ability to get from place to place more quickly, the benefits for physical and mental health due to the exercise involved, and the relative cheapness.

Commonly mentioned points against included the risk of collisions and other accidents caused by inexperienced users, and the dangers of pedestrians tripping over scooters which had been left on pavements.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in a reduction of the quality of language mark.

The **Personal Response (5b)**, which asked for possible measures to combat vandalism in society, was interpreted by some as referring only to preventing *trottinettes* being vandalised. Others rather vaguely suggested more laws against it and more severe punishments or greater use of surveillance cameras.

More interesting responses sometimes pointed to a lack of worthwhile activities and opportunities available to young people, and a sense of envy and frustration caused by social and economic disadvantage.

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from good to very poor. The very strongest candidates wrote fluently and accurately, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a commendable control of structure. The weakest struggled with the rudiments of the language, finding it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) – the nuts and bolts of the language – appeared largely random in many scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements at all. One can only urge candidates to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written. But the problem may in some cases be much deeper than this: *ils leurs m'est à disposition; il mère n'éterai pa content*.

There appears to be an increasing tendency even amongst those who do appreciate the need for agreements to confuse how to make nouns and adjectives plural with how to make verbs plural: for example the plural of *le casque* becoming *les casquent*, and the plural of *elle cause* becoming *elles causes*.

Incorrect verb forms were prevalent, even with very common verbs in the present indicative, e.g. *faire, tenir, prendre, pouvoir*.

The use of the infinitive (–er) ending – or indeed anything else that sounded vaguely similar – seemed interchangeable with the past participle (–é) in some scripts.

The approach to spelling was in some cases phonetic or idiosyncratic, e.g. *on/ont, son/sont, ces/ses/c'est, ce/se, mes/mais/met, sa/ça, et/est, qu'en/quand* often seemed to be completely interchangeable. Even some of the most common words were misspelled: *mammant (maman), hôt (haut), assé, dais (des), tros/t.*

Personal pronouns and adjectives were among the most common sources of error as well as the constructions following some common verbs: *interdire, aider, demander, permettre, obliger, laisser, persuader, essayer* etc.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses which prevented candidates from satisfactorily expressing answers which one suspected they may actually have understood. But stronger candidates were nevertheless often able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, even if sometimes flawed, communicated effectively enough to be comprehensible to a sympathetic reader and to enable their answers to be rewarded.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/22
Reading and Writing 22

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. The inclusion of additional words (or the omission of necessary words) invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) items unaltered from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should **not** begin the answer by writing out the question. Answers beginning with (for example) *Parce que* are quite acceptable.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of the word limit is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.
- In **Question 5b**, candidates should be encouraged to venture some brief relevant ideas of their own without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

As usual, there were some very good scripts from able and well-prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was severely challenged by what was being asked of them.

Illegibility remains a significant problem, partly because of very poor or quirky handwriting and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and minute insertions.

There are still occasional problems caused by candidates writing drafts in pencil and then writing over them in ink. This can make scripts largely unmarkable when they are scanned.

Most candidates appeared familiar with the format of the paper and knew how to set about tackling the different types of question. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied items unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

Most candidates attempted all questions, although quite a lot of answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Many questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary, but some candidates still neglect the simple answer and attempt structures which they cannot handle, producing answers that cannot be rewarded. Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question or part question (indicated either in the body of the question or in square brackets) as an indication of the number of points to be made.

Many candidates still feel the need to incorporate the words of the question as an unnecessary preamble to the answer, which not only wastes time for both candidate and marker, but also potentially introduces linguistic errors which can detract from the overall impression for the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **(3a)** *Un client peut-il choisir... ; (3c) Les sites offrent-ils... ; (4a) Ces sites diminuent-ils... . (4c) M. Conchard doute-t-il... (4d) D'autres patrons trompent-ils...* Answers beginning with *parce que*, *en* etc. are quite in order and generally preferable.

The paper ties the questions (and therefore the answers) to specific paragraphs (or occasionally to specific lines) in the texts. Candidates who find themselves writing the same answer for two questions need to pause for thought.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished in recent series, with more candidates understanding how to ‘work’ the text to avoid ‘lifting’, but it remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply ‘lifting’ items directly from the text, even if they may include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks at this level. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. They should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complication. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs or finding a simple synonym 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.

Candidates who adopt the policy of replacing nouns with verbs where appropriate sometimes nevertheless invalidate their answer by including the *de* from the text – e.g. in **3(a)** when attempting to rephrase *la planification de voyages*, they write *Il planifient de voyages*, which does not demonstrate full comprehension and so invalidates. There were several other instances which cost the mark: **3(b)** *verification/vérifier de la qualité...*; *prise/prendre de décisions...* **3(d)** *gain/gagner de visibilité...*; *renforcement/renforcer de...* ; **4(b)** *sabotage/saboter de l'établissement...* ; *diminution/diminuer du score...* ; *adoption/adopter d'une fausse...* **4(c)** *anéantissement/anéantir de sa...* ; *fermeture/fermer de son....* .

In **Question 1**, candidates nowadays appear more aware of need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the ‘footprint’ of the word or words which they are replacing.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining as many elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are more than likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement. **Candidates should not attempt to cut corners by omitting the prompt at the start of their answers.**

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections, a suggested 90 – 100 words for the Summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40 – 50 words for the Personal Response. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.**

Although there has been a marked improvement in this respect recently, candidates from some Centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that many good answers to the **Personal Response** cannot be awarded any marks since the overall word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are still unnecessarily afraid of being penalised for not introducing the topic. Some candidates wasted up to a third of the available words by defining terms at the start, re-phrasing the question or stating what they intend to do in their summary: *Les deux textes presentaient des arguments pour et contre l'usage des sites d'avis clients et dans les paragraphes suivant on décrivait ses arguments.* *Dans le Texte 1, il y a des arguments qui proposent l'usage de ces sites d'avis et quelques-uns de ces arguments disent que...* The word limit is already quite tight to achieve ten points and, from the outset, candidates need to make a relevant 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 required in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay or a vehicle for personal opinions.

Other candidates make the same point several times or go into unnecessary detail.

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?*

The most successful candidates often show clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind, but other scripts are littered with crossings-out, which do little to improve standards of presentation and legibility.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a reasonably friendly first exercise, even if answers from weaker candidates sometimes appeared to be chosen largely at random and bore no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question. It sometimes seems that the weakest candidates base their choices on matching the first or last letter of the prompt word. Candidates would be better advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved.

- **Item (a)** was the most often correct, helped no doubt by matching the present participles, although the occasional addition of *en* to the answer infringed the ‘footprint’ principle.
- In **Item (b)**, *écrits* was often thought to be a noun (as elsewhere in the Paper), leading to numerous *commentaires* and *notes*.
- **Item (c)** was the least successfully answered, *du moins* usually being replaced by *en plus (de), précédents* or *de première main*, or accompanied by the unnecessary addition of *théoriquement*.
- In **Item (d)**, *en plus* featured again, whilst the omission of *par* also cost the mark.
- **Item (e)** was often correct, although a large number added à at the beginning or *comme la peste* at the end.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question from the very strongest candidates, but it proved quite demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

In **Item 2(a)**, the need for the passive was spotted by most, but many had problems with forming the past participle of *offrir* (*offri, offré*) or by omitted the agreement.

In **Item 2(b)**, the past participle was again a problem (*lit, li, lis, lut*), but also unfamiliarity with the *après avoir* construction.

In **Item 2(c)**, the pronouns caused problems for some candidates. Less predictable was the appearance of *font* or *fiennent*.

Item 2(d) saw more able candidates identifying the need for a subjunctive following *il se peut que*, with an encouraging number also managing to form it correctly.

Item 2(e) caused problems for some candidates who did not understand the need for *de* to become à, but even those who did, often missed the agreement on *faciles*. Some opted for *facilement appréciables/appréciés*, but then also missed the agreement.

Question 3

In **Item 3(a)**, most candidates identified the fact that the sites are designed for people planning visits to hotels and restaurants, although some thought they were targeted at the establishments rather than the customers. Attempts to avoid lifting *planification* sometimes led to the unrewardable *planner*. For the second mark, candidates needed to make it clear that contributors are supposed to have visited the establishment in person, whilst the use of stars and scores enables potential new customers to make choices at a glance without necessarily reading the comments.

In **Item 3(b)**, the many successful candidates found the simple solution of replacing the nouns *verification* and *prise* by corresponding verbs, providing they remembered to adjust the following *de* (see General Comments). Some thought *claires* was synonymous with *éclairées* in this context.

In **Item 3(c)**, candidates generally understood the benefits of having a large number of views to consider but attempts to express *leur mise à jour régulière* with *ils les mettent tous les jours* were not rewarded.

In **Item 3(d)**, candidates often pointed to the increase in profile, reputation and clientèle, successfully using verbs to replace the abstract nouns of the text, as suggested by the wording of the question: *Qu'est-ce que les sites...aident à faire?* This often helped to avoid 'lifting', even if the invention of some new verbs (see Quality of Language) resulted in some loss of marks.

Item 3(e) was misunderstood by some candidates who got things the wrong way round by suggesting that customers trusted traditional advertising more than the sites, or who did not explain that the sites could do good as well as harm.

In **Item 3(f)**, *les attentent* and *les atteintes* both confused things for some, but candidates often found straightforward ways of earning the first mark: *comprendre/écouter/prendre en compte ce que les clients veulent*. The double negative implied in *déconseile* was challenging for some, but a good number understood the advice not to filter out/suppress all negative comments. The third mark was frequently earned by the use of *tricher/mentir* or *tromper*,

Question 4

In **Item 4(a)**, candidates often successfully identified the tendency to concentrate on details which were *mineurs/peu importants/quelconques* (but not *insignifiants*) and on personal preferences, even if not all saw the need to make *concentrent* reflexive. The third mark required candidates to indicate that the comments were never positive/always negative.

In **Item 4(b)**, some candidates who understood the aim of unscrupulous competitors could not earn the credit by inventing a new verb (*sabotager*) but the reduction of the average score was often well expressed, as was the use of a false identity.

In **Item 4(c)**, candidates were often successful in mentioning the coincidence of the date of the supposed visit with the establishment's closure for the holidays. Many went on to express the aim of destroying the owner's reputation, but *bâtir* was surprisingly often confused with *battre*, bringing with it suggestions of physical violence against the owner. This idea was reinforced by the suggestion that *la fermeture forcée* would be brought about by the use of force.

In **Item 4(d)**, successful candidates found ways of avoiding lifting *avis élogieux (commentaires positifs/favorables/flatteurs)* to express the idea of owners writing favourable reports on their own establishments or persuading friends to do it for them. The use of verbs to replace *filtrage* and *rélégation* was seized on by a good number, whilst others successfully turned the sentence round with *Ils mettent des/les commentaires positifs en tête de liste* or similar.

In **Item 4(e)**, *fictifs* was not always understood or satisfactorily expressed for the first mark, but candidates who answered with an active verb (e.g. *payer...*) as required by the wording of the question, usually scored the second mark.

Question 5

Question 5a asked candidates to summarise the benefits and dangers for proprietors and their customers, as presented in the texts.

Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

The mark scheme identified 14 rewardable points, of which candidates could score up to a maximum of 10. A good number achieved the maximum, and many scored highly, knowing how to select material carefully and economically in this exercise. Some candidates simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified benefits to customers included enabling them to make informed choices about the best places to stay or eat, giving a wide range of trustworthy, up-to-date opinions based on first-hand experience. The establishments themselves can grow in reputation and popularity and attract increasing numbers of customers by understanding their expectations.

Potential disadvantages regularly identified included reviewers focusing on minor issues or their own personal preferences, or making a point of being negative about everything. More sinister are proprietors who hide behind the mask of anonymity to post fake reviews, either praising their own establishment or damning those of their competitors, or getting friends or even commercial companies to do the job for them. Alternatively, some proprietors cheat by filtering negative comments or hiding them at the bottom of the list.

There is no specific penalty for 'lifting' in this exercise as far as content is concerned, but excessive reliance on the language contained in the text is liable to be penalised in a reduction of the Quality of Language mark. Those who simply resort to presenting a list in the form of bullet points using nouns without introductory verbs are also unlikely to score more than a bare minimum as far as the language mark is concerned.

The **Personal Response (5b)** asked what qualities candidates would like to be known for amongst their friends. Assuming they had not already exceeded the word limit, candidates usually produced a list of desirable attributes: kindness, generosity, loyalty, honesty, dependability, being a good listener, someone who will do anything for family and friends. The best added brief reasons why the attributes they selected were important. Some candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about the importance of reputation to a hotel or restaurant, or about the qualities which they would like their friends to display.

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to very poor. The strongest candidates wrote fluently and accurately, demonstrating a broad and flexible range of vocabulary and a robust control of structure. The very weakest struggled with the rudiments of the language, finding it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form.

Agreements of adjectives with their nouns and verbs with their subjects (and even the process of making nouns plural) – the nuts and bolts of the language – were the most common source of errors. Words regularly changed their spelling and/or gender from one line of the answer to the next. One can only urge candidates to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written. But it could be that the problem may in some cases be much deeper than this: *S'as devien faciles*.

There appears to be an increasing tendency even amongst those who do appreciate the need for agreements to confuse how to make nouns and adjectives plural with how to make verbs plural: for example the plural of *l'attente* becoming *les attentent*, and the plural of *il apprécie* becoming *ils apprécies*.

Incorrect verb forms were common, even in the case of some very frequently used verbs such as *prendre*, *faire*, *venir*, *tenir*, *pouvoir* in the present indicative.

The use of the infinitive (–er) ending – or indeed anything else that sounded vaguely similar – seemed interchangeable with the past participle (–é) in some scripts.

The approach to spelling was in some cases phonetic (e.g. *cher/chaire*), even with very common words, e.g. *peu/peut/peur*, *mes/mais/met*, *on/ont*, *son/sont*, *soi/sois/soit*, *ces/ses/c'est/sait*, *sa/ça*, *ce/ceux qui*, all of which often seemed to be selected at random.

Adverbs caused problems: *indépendamment*, *conséquemment*, *vivement*, and other new words were also much in evidence, often heavily influenced by English: *insignifiants*, *calculations*. This was particularly evident in non-existent verbs such as *damager*, *gainer*, *attracter*, *attraire*, *renforcer*, *sélectionner*, *régler*, *filtrer*, *vérifier*, *expériencer*, *disminuir*.

Time spent in studying vocabulary in lexical groups might be time well spent, whilst emphatic pronouns, and indeed pronouns in general, would certainly repay further study, as would constructions following certain common verbs: *permettre*, *interdire*, *aider*, *laisser*, *demande*, *obliger* etc.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses, but the majority of candidates were able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, although sometimes flawed, was nevertheless generally comprehensible to a sympathetic reader. The cohort also included some very strong candidates who displayed an ability to write French which was both virtually free from error and commendably idiomatic and convincing.

FRENCH

**Paper 9716/23
Reading and Writing 23**

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/31
Essay 31

Key messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read all the questions carefully, make a judicious selection and then take sufficient time to plan their essays before starting to write. They should then write logical, well-illustrated answers on the precise question set. Candidates should use the introduction to show their understanding of the essay title with all its elements and the conclusion to show their considered final judgement of the issues they have discussed. Structure and use of paragraphs are also key factors in enabling both clarity of thought and logical progression through an argument to be shown. In order to attain high marks for language, candidates should be able to demonstrate command of accurate and idiomatic French which shows complexity both in grammatical structure and vocabulary.

General comments

The overall standard of this candidates was similar to that in previous years: there were a good number of high-standards scripts, but most were in the adequate to poor bands. It was clear that most candidates had understood the rubric for the paper and although many essays were of the correct length, there were also some very short answers. Although some candidates were able to express their ideas effectively and introduced the topic clearly in the opening paragraph, arguments were often limited to general statements, with little development and few examples. Most of the candidates did attempt a plan but it was often written in English and was very short, in list form and sketchy in content. Many essays had no introduction, at times merely starting with *oui/non* or *je suis d'accord*. Some essays ended abruptly without a conclusion, and it was quite rare for candidates to consider both sides of the arguments. Many scripts did not follow the format of an essay, with a clear introduction, paragraphs and a conclusion. Others used a series of learned phrases as a framework for their essay such as: *D'une part, beaucoup de gens affirment que.... d'autre part, d'autres insistent que*. Many found it hard to sustain this level of language and the disparity often highlighted their lack of grammatical awareness. Several candidates wrote alternative words or spellings in brackets which impeded comprehension. Content marks reflected the level of discussion, structure and sophistication of the argument.

The quality of language varied considerably across the cohort, and there were a number of essays where the language mark was in the good or very good bands. There were a fair number of weak scripts which had frequent errors in the use of basic grammar e.g., verb endings, agreements, spellings, vocabulary, and register. There was at times a considerable degree of interference from English and/or Spanish which significantly affected the communication of ideas. Some candidates demonstrated so little grammatical, structural or idiomatic awareness that their essays were rendered largely incomprehensible. Better scripts were clearly expressed, using accurate grammar and a range of structures.

Candidates who planned their essays carefully, defined the terms of the question and wrote a logical and persuasive argument, before arriving at a balanced conclusion, were most successful. In demonstrating familiarity with a range of linguistic structures and idioms they were able to convince the reader with the coherence and relevance of their arguments.

Among a number of common errors, the following were seen:

There were many spelling and gender errors, including in words provided in the questions: *le mère, le peirre/le pare, la fils, le famille*

Spelling errors and anglicised spellings: *technology, plusieurs de, beaucoup des, gouvernement, environnement, sur ligne, l'impacte, je d'accord, c'est signifie, la plus part, l'innovation technologie/ les nouvelles technologiques*

Confusion between: *comme/comment; tenir/avoir; par/pour; grâce à/à cause de/parce que/ car*

Nouns used without articles and verbs used without a subject pronoun: *Est important parce que...*

Use of accent on à in the perfect tense: *l'éducation à été ...; le monde à changé.*

Missed infinitive in two-verb structures: *ça peut transformé; ça peut être utilisait...*

Incorrect use of negatives: *c'est pas, c'est n'est*

Incorrect word order: *ils aussi pensent; une spécifique structure*

Use of *faire* for *rendre*: *les nouvelles technologies fait les élèves paresseux*

Incorrect use of preposition after common verbs.

Comparisons: *différent que; les mêmes ...comme*

Overuse of *chose/choses; personnes/gens; beaucoup*

Confusion between: *ces/ses/c'est; ça/sa; son/sont; ce/ceux; mais/mes/met*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La famille « typique » n'existe pas. Êtes-vous d'accord?

This was a popular question but tended to elicit answers that were quite limited in content and language. Some candidates simply described their own families, others merely listed different types of family. They were generally in agreement that there is no such thing as a typical family, although it was clear that some understood this to be the traditional nuclear family. Better responses talked about how societal change had resulted in different types of family. They mentioned single parent families, blended families where divorced people and their children came together and same-sex couples with or without children. They pointed out that changes to laws and attitudes meant that all these types of families were now accepted. Other candidates understood *typique* to mean behaviour within the family and in comparison to others. They explained that, in that sense, no family is completely typical as there are differences in culture, religion, and internal relationships. Some felt that being in a typical family meant feeling loved and supported. Weaker candidates often had difficulty organising their ideas and structuring their answer, leading to significant repetition.

Question 2

La première fonction de la prison est la punition, pas la rééducation. Qu'en pensez-vous?

Few candidates attempted this question and some found it hard to express their ideas. Overall, they agreed that the role of prisons should be to punish people for the crimes they had committed and to act as a deterrent. They felt that people should be deprived of their freedom and given the chance to reflect on their actions. They did also express the opinion that re-education should be a fundamental role of prison as it is important for criminals to re-integrate society and obtain jobs after release in order to prevent them from re-offending. The limitations of language were much in evidence in responses to this question.

Question 3

Les voyages à l'étranger: luxe ou nécessité?

This was a popular question and there were a number of interesting responses about the purpose of overseas travel. Many candidates defined the terms *luxe* and *nécessité* in order to make the distinction between the two. They understood luxury in two senses – expensive, five-star travel or something that brings pleasure but can only be done rarely. They explained that overseas travel was expensive because of the cost of travel, accommodation, subsistence and visas. This meant that it was often out of the reach of most

people and therefore a luxury. Some pointed out that these costs could be cut by using cheap airlines, camping and travelling off season. It was clear that travelling overseas was essential for some people. Examples were given of those fleeing wars and famines, people travelling for medical treatment, for work/study or for visiting family. Better responses pointed out the benefits of foreign travel on a personal level, including learning about new cultures, languages and countries which would bring a better understanding of the world. In this sense foreign travel was also seen as a necessity. Overall, candidates were able to put forward a range of relevant arguments with good illustrations.

Question 4

Le monde de l'éducation a été transformé positivement par les nouvelles technologies. Êtes-vous d'accord?

This was the most popular question and gave the candidates a chance to explore their own experience of the use of new technology in schools. The best answers explained how the new technologies have transformed education both in the classroom and at home. They mentioned the benefits of learning online during the Covid pandemic which prepared the way for greater exploitation of this method of learning. In addition, they referred to the benefits of being able to access resources outside lesson time to consolidate learning, complete homework, or for children who are unable to attend school due to illness. Within the classroom, the use of laptops, tablets and smartboards was seen to be a positive for teachers and candidates and the chance to use email to send homework or ask questions was seen as valuable. Some candidates did point out some negatives for the use of technology in education such as candidates plagiarising work or cheating in exams, accessing material outside the syllabus during lessons and giving the opportunity for cyberbullying. Overall, the candidates felt that the use of new technology in education had more positive than negative effects and they were able to illustrate their views using clear and relevant examples.

Question 5

*Les gens sont trop attachés à leur confort personnel pour se concentrer sur les dangers de la pollution.
Qu'en pensez-vous?*

Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Some wrote an essay on the dangers of pollution without paying much attention to *le confort personnel*. Better responses referred to the apathy of people who were seemingly unaware of or simply did not care enough about the environment to make changes which might have some beneficial effects such as driving electric cars, avoiding fast fashion and recycling. It was felt that people are lazy, living in their own little bubble, in a world where technology has made everything too easy. Changing habits would be hard but it was clear that governments needed to do more to make people aware that their actions on an everyday basis were having an impact on the environment. Overall, the responses to this question showed knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary but were somewhat limited in the range of ideas offered.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/32

Essay 32

Key messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read all the questions carefully, make a judicious selection and then take sufficient time to plan their essays before starting to write. They should then write logical, well-illustrated answers on the precise question set. Candidates should use the introduction to show their understanding of the essay title with all its elements and the conclusion to show their considered final judgement of the issues they have discussed. Structure and use of paragraphs are also key factors in enabling both clarity of thought and logical progression through an argument to be shown. In order to attain high marks for language, candidates should be able to demonstrate command of accurate and idiomatic French which shows complexity both in grammatical structure and vocabulary.

General comments

The overall standard of this group of candidates was similar to that in previous years. There was a wide range of ability demonstrated, from the very weak to the very good. Most of the answers fell into the middle range for both Language and Content elements. Candidates tended to make a limited number of points and general statements related to the title but then often also included material not directly relevant to the precise question. This was the case in **Question 4**, particularly, where candidates sometimes merely discussed the benefits and dangers of social media. Sometimes, they succeeded in making a wider range of points but with little development and few examples. Some candidates wrote very long personal and anecdotal responses to **Question 1** and **Question 4** which were inappropriate in a discursive style essay. Content marks reflected the level of discussion and sophistication of the argument.

Across the cohort as a whole, the quality of language varied considerably. There were significant inconsistencies in the use of basic grammar, including prepositions and agreements (singular/plural; masculine/feminine; subject/verb), use of accents, and interference from mother tongue. Spelling errors as well as poor punctuation were much in evidence, even in good scripts. There were also a number of scripts where candidates had made some last-minute changes to their work, but overlooked how these would impact on the rest of a sentence, in particular on adjectival and subject-verb agreements. The candidates' work was often well presented, although there were many examples of poor handwriting. Some candidates, due to insufficient planning, made excessive numbers of untidy revisions in the text of the essay, leading to lack of clarity and hindering the examiner's ability to follow the argument.

Planning is a key element when writing a discursive essay and some candidates appear to bypass this important phase, writing a cursory few words as their plan, or nothing at all. It is clear that there is a strong correlation between a careful plan and a structured and focused response, resulting in a higher content mark. Candidates who planned their essays carefully, defined the terms of the question and wrote a logical and persuasive argument, before arriving at a balanced conclusion, were, therefore, most successful. Some of the strongest candidates managed to produce the detailed, well informed and tightly argued response that scored a very high mark for content. Answers generally would have benefited from a wider range of clear and targeted examples. Those who were able to deploy a range of linguistic structures and idioms with accuracy and succinctness scored the highest for language.

Among a number of common errors, the following were seen:

Incorrect spelling of common words: *résaux, status, société, un individue, la plus part, environment, gouvernement, le stresse, l'aspet, deuxiement*

Incorrect vocabulary: *place* for *endroit*; *stage* for *stade*

Incomplete negatives : *on peut pas...*

Beaucoup des gens; des bonnes relations

C'est instead of il est: c'est clair que ...

Difficulties with relative pronouns : *qui/que; la façon que; la raison pourquoi;*

Confusion between: *ces/ses/c'est; ce/ceux.*

Overuse of *plusieurs, personnes, choses, beaucoup*

Misuse of pronouns : *le premier enfant pense que leur/leurs parents; les parents veulent que son/ses enfants*

Difficulty with structure : *les parents leur aident/leur encouragent*

Comparisons : *différent que; les mêmes ...comme;*

Confusion between *par/pour; comme/comment; enfin/afin; mes/mais; technologie/technologique; privilégié/privilège; pareils/appareils*

Confusing *car/parce que/à cause de*

Anglicised structures: *ils ne sont pas donné*

Incorrect use of plural verb after *cela*: *cela aident*

Incorrect use of preposition after common verbs: *encourager de; préférer de; écouter à leurs parents*

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Le premier enfant dans une famille bénéficie d'un statut privilégié. Êtes-vous d'accord ?

This was a very popular question and the subject clearly resonated with the candidates. Responses were generally personal in nature with candidates keen to share their own experience. Many felt that first born children do indeed have a privileged position within the family. They mentioned the fact that these children have the full and undivided attention of their parents until the next child arrives, they are given responsibility and freedom and they have new clothes and toys. In some cultures, it was clear that there were other more significant privileges such as being the sole heir, inheriting both money and family businesses, or perhaps being the only child in the family to be sent to school. Candidates also felt that younger children tended to look up to the eldest and that parents put a lot of trust in the eldest to take care of younger siblings. It was felt that with the privileges come at times unbearable pressures, where first born children are expected to take on adult responsibilities, to be successful at school and never make mistakes. Sometimes, the eldest could be the scapegoat for misbehaviour within the family and suffer the consequences. Responses were generally well balanced, with arguments supported by a good range of examples.

Question 2

Les caméras de surveillance : sécurité ou menace pour le public ?

This was a less popular question. Those who answered it were able to show both sides of the argument. They recognised that cameras do serve a useful purpose in making the streets safer. They act as a deterrent and then can help police to identify criminals. Some candidates argued that the use of cameras had become too widespread and was now threatening personal security in some instances e.g., when used in shops, toilets and commercial premises. It was also argued that shops were using cameras to assess customers' shopping habits in order to maximise profits by placing products strategically. People were not happy about being filmed without their consent. There were concerns expressed about who had access to the footage from cameras and how it would be used. There was genuine fear expressed about totalitarian regimes controlling the population. It was also felt that cameras could be hacked and images altered. The overall

conclusion was that cameras do have their uses in ensuring safety and controlling crime but they need to be used in a carefully monitored and regulated way.

Question 3

Faut-il arrêter de voyager pour protéger la planète ?

This question attracted a good number of candidates. Most equated travel with tourism and particularly mass tourism. They explained the problems that it brings to the environment with pollution created by air travel and destruction of natural habitat to build hotels. Some drifted off into long explanations of the different types of pollution which were not always closely linked to the question. In general, it appeared to candidates that there were many reasons why it would be good to stop travelling to help the planet. However, in contrast, it was clear that travel brought great benefits in terms of our well-being and personal development as well as promoting greater understanding between nations and cultures. Many mentioned the fact that tourism has a positive effect on the economies of developing countries and created wealth that could be reinvested into helping the environment. A small number of candidates mentioned the idea of *le tourisme vert* which was a way of ensuring that travel would not damage the planet. The point was also made that fewer business trips were now made because of the use of video meetings, a post-Covid benefit which was helpful in the fight to protect the planet. Most candidates agreed that it was not possible or desirable to avoid travel but that we should all be more aware of the need to protect our environment. There were some clearly argued and thoughtful answers, well-illustrated with examples and statistics.

Question 4

Notre dépendance aux réseaux sociaux affecte sérieusement notre perception de la réalité. Êtes-vous d'accord ?

This was the most popular question, but answers tended to focus more on the pros and cons of social media platforms and less on the idea of the effect on our perception of reality. Some candidates did argue that an addiction to social media can lead to a distorted view of reality. They quoted examples of posts of digitally enhanced photos depicting perfect bodies and sites where influencers show their perfect lives in carefully chosen images. Being continuously exposed to this type of material could lead young people to feel unhappy about their own bodies and insecure in their own imperfect lives. The best scripts were able to point out the benefits of social media in allowing communication between people across the world and allowing up to the minute information on news items of concern to all, including pandemics, conflicts and natural disasters. In these cases, social media are a vital link to what is real in the world. It was clear to candidates that education in the use of social media was essential and that all young people should be taught to look critically at digital content. The best responses showed that social media can affect our perception of reality if we allow it to, but that we should recognise the value of this technological advance and use it in moderation.

Question 5

Les jeunes s'expriment haut et fort sur le sujet de la pollution mais leurs voix ne sont pas entendues. Pourquoi ?

Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Many wrote a general essay on pollution and made little reference to *les jeunes*. Better scripts used the example of Greta Thunberg as a young person whose voice is being heard and whose actions have had considerable effects around the world. Candidates gave a range of reasons why young people's voices might not be heard. Some felt that governments are too focused on other issues such as the economy, wars and conflicts, industrial progress to take the environment seriously. Others felt that world leaders tend to be older and therefore unlikely to be affected by the environmental challenges in the future, so less inclined to take account of what young people are saying. Other candidates felt that young people are not listened to because of their age and perceived lack of experience. There were some thoughtful and well-illustrated answers displaying a good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary and relevant statistics.

FRENCH

**Paper 9716/33
Essay 33**

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/41

Texts 41

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on **three separate texts**, including one text from **each section** of the examination paper.
- Encourage candidates to manage their time carefully in the examination room, so that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.

Candidates should:

- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them and **plan** their responses before they start to write.
- Commence responses to the passage-based **(a)** questions in **section 1** with a **brief** introduction, explaining what events have preceded the extract.
- Start essay questions with a **short** introductory paragraph which acknowledges and defines the question, and end with a conclusion which summarises the points made in the essay.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the texts and good understanding of the tasks. Communication was effective in responses to both the extract and the essay questions, and it was particularly pleasing to note that many candidates drafted essay plans before starting their answers. Equally, it was encouraging to note that candidates appeared to be successful in managing their time and there were fewer examples of rushed replies to the final question.

The passage-based questions were generally well dealt with, particularly so the Fran  oise Sagan novel, which is clearly popular.

The essay questions were generally well structured. Most candidates now commence with an introductory paragraph, demonstrating their understanding of the question and, in some cases, explaining how they intend to go about addressing it. There were several responses this series which started with lengthy, pre-learned introductions which bore little relation to the question, but which described the background to the work, the author's life or his/her literary output. Such extraneous commentaries **do not attract marks** and they waste valuable time which should be spent on answering the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – *Le Mariage de Figaro*, Beaumarchais

Many candidates attempted the passage-based question, but hardly any responses to the essay question.

(a) (i) The question was well answered by most candidates. The Count has made known to Suzanne his desire to claim his '*droit de seigneur*' before her marriage to Figaro, and Suzanne has reported this to her mistress. In typical fashion, Figaro treats the matter lightly. Suzanne is annoyed that her fian   can show so little concern for her, and the Countess is angry that Figaro appears to care nothing for her honour.

(ii) **Part (ii)** was also well handled. Figaro's response reveals his carefree, untroubled character, but also shows his cunning and ruthlessness: he has made his plans and is quite prepared to use the countess as bait to draw the Count away from his fiancée. He has no concerns about deceiving his master. His reply also reveals something of his rather misogynistic nature: the chauvinistic Figaro regards women as objects, mere assets to be used in pursuit of his aims.

(iii) There was some confusion when it came to comparing Figaro's plans with what happens in Act 5. Figaro proposes disguising Chérubin as Suzanne to deceive the Count and reveal his misdeeds to all. Subsequently, however, Chérubin's presence in the castle is almost discovered by the Count and he is forced to flee. Accordingly, it is the Countess who dresses as Suzanne for the rendezvous with the Count that evening. Suzanne, in turn, dresses as the Countess. The Count seeks vengeance when he sees Figaro paying court to a lady he believes to be his wife, but has to admit that he has been duped when the Countess reveals the truth. Having revealed that he still cares for the Countess, the Count and his wife are reconciled.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 1(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 2 – *Les jeux sont faits*, Jean-Paul Sartre

(a) The passage-based question was attempted by a minority per cent of candidates, most of whom demonstrated good knowledge of the text.

(i) **Part (i)** was well handled. The falling leaf frightens Ève because it reminds her of the ghosts who will be there watching the couple, and of the fate that awaits her and Pierre if they fail in their mission. They have been given just 24 hours to prove their complete love for each other – if they fail, they will return to the world of the dead. They have just had their first altercation in the park, which does not bode well for their future together.

(ii) Most candidates identified what Ève was proposing, though some were unable to recall who the young girl was. Ève suggests that she and Pierre fulfil a promise they had made just before they returned to the living. They will go and rescue the young daughter of a ghost who is being mistreated by her mother and her lover. They take the girl (Marie) to a refuge, where she is well cared for. The act is important because it demonstrates that Ève and Pierre are able to combine their forces and work towards a common aim, proving that they do have a chance of succeeding as a couple.

(iii) **Part (iii)** was also well answered. At the start of the extract, Pierre is angry. He has just learned that Ève is the wife of the secretary of the militia, against whom he has been plotting. He is also shocked by Ève's reaction to the falling leaf, but his mood softens as he understands the reasons for her fear. Although at first indifferent to Ève's proposal, he tenderly agrees to her request that they work together.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 2(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 3 – *Eugénie Grandet*, Honoré de Balzac

(a) A small proportion of candidates addressed the commentary question, and, on average, responses were a little light on detail.

(i) Ostensibly, the characters described in the extract come to Grandet's house on a regular basis as dinner guests, and to play cards with Eugénie and her mother. However, both the Cruchots and the des Grassins are keen to marry their nephew/son into Grandet wealth, and so they come primarily to ingratiate themselves with Grandet himself. Grandet tolerates them only because he intends to use them to the benefit of his financial affairs.

(ii) Cruchot, senior magistrate in Saumur's court, is an arrogant, wealthy young man, who has the prospect of becoming much richer when he inherits from his uncles. Social status is of great importance to him, and, with a certain cynicism, Balzac describes him adding 'de Bonfons' to his surname in order to enhance his social standing. He is not an admirable character. His application of the law depends on how he is addressed: he will favour the cases of those who use the title 'de Bonfons', but woe betide anyone who has the temerity to address him as Monsieur Cruchot.

(iii) From the extract we learn that, in contemporary French society, the sanctity of the home was closely guarded and that social visits were relatively formal affairs. Nonetheless, society was still motivated largely by gossip and tittle-tattle. Wealth, rather than age, guaranteed respect, and so the acquisition of wealth was of prime importance for most middle-class families. Inheritance and marriage were the principle means by which wealth was acquired and the unity of the wider family was all-important in the protection of that wealth.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 3(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 4 – Bonjour Tristesse, Françoise Sagan

Bonjour Tristesse was a popular text. The majority of candidates addressed either the passage-based or the essay question.

(a) There were some excellent responses to the commentary question.

(i) Cécile and Elsa are talking about Cécile's father, Raymond, and his relationship with Anne. Elsa had been the latest in a string of young lovers for Raymond, but she had been ousted on the arrival of Anne, an old friend of the family. Anne has brought discipline and respectability to the household, and she and Raymond have decided to marry. Though initially impressed by Anne's elegance and reserve, Cécile has come to see her as threat to the indulgent lifestyle she and her father lead, and so she plans to get rid of her.

(ii) In order to manipulate Elsa, Cécile plays on her self-esteem. She plays down her own ability to influence matters and stresses that only Elsa is strong enough to counteract Anne. Cécile tells Elsa that Raymond is a child who needs to be managed, and that, if Elsa fails to act, all three of them will suffer.

(iii) To stop the marriage, Cécile arranges for Elsa and Cyril, Cécile's boyfriend, to lie together in the woods. She takes her father for a walk where Raymond sees the couple. His jealousy is immediately aroused, and he declares that he is still capable of possessing Elsa. Anne later discovers Raymond and Elsa together at the villa. She leaves in tears and crashes her car.

(b) The essay question was also well dealt with. Cécile is ambivalent towards Anne: she constantly sways between admiration and hatred for her. She admires Anne's poise and calm, and secretly wants to emulate her self-assurance. But she also sees Anne as a threat to the comfortable, lifestyle that she and her father enjoyed before Anne's arrival, and she resents the discipline and the limits that Anne has placed on her behaviour. Though Cécile recognises her father's need for stability and respectability as he ages, she fears that Anne will steal her father from her. Ultimately, Cécile's baser instincts win the day, and she successfully plots Anne's downfall.

Section 2

Question 5 – Un Secret, Philippe Grimbert

Questions 5(a) and 5(b) were each addressed by a fairly small number of candidates. Both questions were efficiently handled, and candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of the text.

(a) Though the narrator admires his father's athleticism, he fears that his father, Maxime, despises him because of his own physical weakness. To compensate for the lack of affection from his father, the narrator invents an imaginary brother and spends much of his time with the family friend, Louise. It is from Louise that he learns of the family 'secret'. The narrator's relationship with his father continues to be distant during his teenage years. It is only Maxime's trauma at the death of the family pet dog that allows the narrator to tell his father that he is proud of him and of the family's Jewish heritage. At that point, for the very first time, the narrator and his father hug. Though his parents are now dead, the narrator recalls each of them with great affection.

(b) Louise is of vital importance to the narrator. Not only is she a source of comfort in his younger years, but it is from Louise that the narrator learns of the family's secret. It is through Louise that the narrator comes to understand his father's reluctance to talk about the past and show his emotions. Louise helps him to discover his own identity and to feel pride in his Jewish heritage.

Question 6 – *Petit Pays*, Gaël Faye

(a) *Petit Pays* appears to be well-liked by candidates and many attempted this question. The best answers summarised the idyllic and rather privileged lifestyle that Gaby had led in Burundi as a young boy, the adventures enjoyed with his gang of friends, his early experiences of unrest in the streets of Bujumbura and, ultimately, his enforced flight to France with his sister as inter-racial violence exploded. It is true that Gaby is nostalgic about his lost childhood in Burundi, and he feels ill-at-ease in France, but a fair percentage of candidates identified that Gaby is also driven by a desire to say goodbye properly to his native country.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 6(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 7 – *La Maison de Claudine*, Colette

(a) There were too few responses to **Question 7(a)** to allow for meaningful comment.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 7(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

Question 8 – *No et moi*, Delphine de Vigan

Delphine de Vigan's novel remains very popular and a large percentage of candidates addressed **Question 8(a)**.

(a) There were some very strong responses, detailing Lou's progression from an awkward, asocial young girl to the much more self-assured individual who appears at the end of the novel. The causes of Lou's growing confidence were well addressed by most candidates: her relationship with Lucas and the longed-for credibility that this gives her with her peers at school; her growing friendship with No and the maturity that comes as she copes with No's issues; her mother's rehabilitation and her renewed ability to show Lou the affection that she craves.

(b) There were too few responses to **Question 8(b)** to allow for meaningful comment.

FRENCH

Paper 9716/42

Texts 42

Key messages

Teachers should:

- Ensure that candidates are prepared to answer questions on **three separate texts**, including one text from **each section** of the examination paper.
- Encourage candidates to manage their time carefully in the examination room, so that equal weight is accorded to **three** questions.

Candidates should:

- Think carefully about what the question is asking of them and **plan** their responses before they start to write.
- Commence responses to the passage-based questions in **section 1** with a **brief** introduction, explaining what events have preceded the extract.
- Start essay questions with a **short** introductory paragraph which acknowledges and defines the question, and end with a conclusion which summarises the points made in the essay.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the texts and good understanding of the tasks. Communication was effective in responses to both the extract and the essay questions, and it was particularly pleasing to note that many candidates drafted essay plans before starting their answers. Equally, it was encouraging to note that candidates appeared to be successful in managing their time and there were fewer examples of rushed replies to the final question.

The passage-based questions were generally well dealt with, particularly so the Fran ois Sagan novel, which is clearly popular.

The essay questions were largely well structured. Most candidates now commence with an introductory paragraph, demonstrating their understanding of the question and, in some cases, explaining how they intend to go about addressing it. There were a numbers of responses this series which started with lengthy, pre-learned introductions which bore little relation to the question, but which described the background to the work, the author's life or his/her literary output. Such extraneous commentaries **do not attract marks** and they waste valuable time which should be spent on answering the question.

It was once again pleasing to see candidates arguing against the premise contained in the question – such an approach is to be highly encouraged, as long as the candidate's opinion is supported by relevant evidence from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1 – *Le Mariage de Figaro*, Beaumarchais

Many candidates attempted **Question 1**, with the passage-based question being about twice as popular as the essay.

(a) (i) The question was quite well answered, though relatively few candidates identified the chivalric allusions in the extract scene. In Chérubin's eyes, the ribbon is a token of his lady, a favour from la Comtesse to her knight...he is, after all, about to leave to join the Count's troops in Catalonia. Chérubin had stolen the ribbon from Suzanne and used it to bind a wound on his arm. He now claims that the ribbon has healing powers, partly because it has his blood on it, but principally because it has touched his lady. The ribbon affords Chérubin the opportunity to timidly express his devotion to the Countess and allows the Countess to flirt playfully with the page.

(ii) This was the least well-answered section in that many candidates chose to describe the relationship between the Countess and Chérubin without alluding to the humour contained in the extract, even though this was specifically required by the question. The comedy lies in the contrast between the exaggerated passion of Chérubin (the knight) and the light-hearted flirtation of the Countess (his lady). On his knees in supplication, Chérubin is in awe of the Countess and does not dare look into her eyes. The Countess enjoys Chérubin's attentions, but she toys with him, treating him as a naughty child and interrupting him as he attempts to kiss her.

(iii) The third part of the question was handled well by all candidates. On the arrival of the Count, the Countess sends Chérubin to hide in her 'cabinet'. Chérubin has no wish to be discovered alone in the Countess's presence: he is unwilling to jeopardise the Countess's good name, and he fears the Count, who has already banished him from the castle. Chérubin waits in the 'cabinet' until the Count and Countess leave when, encouraged by Suzanne, he escapes by leaping out of the window onto the gardens below.

(b) There was much storytelling in the responses to this question, though most candidates correctly identified the Countess as the key to the development of most of the play's intrigue. As a very human and likeable figure, she represents a contrast to the Count. The alternation between her distress at the Count's infidelities and her determination to regain his affections, along with the side-story of her attraction to Chérubin, are the factors that drive the plot. It is the Countess, aided by her maid, who hatches the plan to represent Suzanne at the tryst with the Count that evening. It is the Countess who writes to the Count to invite him to meet her, and who ensures that Figaro is unaware of her plan. In carrying out the plot and winning back the Count, the Countess ultimately proves herself to be smarter than both her husband and Figaro, and it is she who saves her maid's virtue and facilitates Figaro's marriage.

In answering this question, some candidates chose to focus exclusively on the Countess's role as a mouthpiece for Beaumarchais' views on the treatment of women in 18th century France. Though not irrelevant, this was not the key element of the Countess's contribution to the intrigue of the play.

Question 2 – *Les jeux sont faits*, Jean-Paul Sartre

Questions on the Sartre work were attempted by a fair number of candidates. The extract and the essay question were equally popular.

(a) Candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the text.

(i) **Part (i)** was well handled. As head of La Ligue, Pierre knows that his comrades are due to stage their insurrection that very evening. As a ghost, he had learned that the government was aware of these proposals and that the militia planned to ambush his comrades. Though he and Ève are barely an hour away from 'earning' their life together amongst the living, Pierre feels honour-bound to leave in order to re-establish his credibility and warn his friends.

(ii) There were some excellent responses to this question. The extract was clearly written as a film scenario. A series of fixed camera shots or close-ups emphasise the growing desperation of Ève and determination of Pierre (e.g. Ève on her knees in prayer, Pierre holding Ève by the shoulders, Ève's face in Pierre's hands). 'Stage directions' show the actors what feelings to portray ('*distraitemen*t', '*terreur résignée*', '*désespérément*'). Dialogue allows for the alternation of camera shots, and the exchanges between the pair become shorter as the scene progresses and the tension mounts.

(iii) **Part (iii)** was also well answered. Pierre goes to meet his comrades but is unable to convince them that they have been betrayed. He is persuaded to stay with his friends and join in the insurrection. He telephones Ève to explain that he cannot abandon his friends, but while on the phone he is shot and killed (again) by Lucien Derjeu. There were some very good attempts to incorporate the

meaning of the title of the work and the relevance of Sartrean existentialism into responses to this question.

(b) Answers to the essay question were less successful, perhaps because the interchanges between Ève and her sister are relatively few in the novel, and a detailed knowledge of the text was required to come up with a comprehensive answer. The relationship between the two sisters is almost one of mother and daughter, so desperate is Ève to protect Lucette from André's clutches. Though Ève and Lucette clearly love each other – and the younger sister is devastated by Ève's death – Lucette gradually falls under André's influence. Returning to the apartment as a ghost, Ève is horrified to find her sister in André's arms. She asks her father's ghost to help, but he is powerless to intervene. As she returns to life, Ève tells Lucette about André's infidelities, but Lucette refuses to believe her. Pierre's threatened violence further alienates Lucette. In desperation, Ève returns with a revolver and forces her sister to listen, insisting that she retrieve André's correspondence from the dresser. But she is interrupted by Pierre's telephone call and dies. As a ghost once again, Ève can only express resignation to her sister's choices and indifference to her fate.

Question 3 – *Eugénie Grandet*, Honoré de Balzac

Very few candidates addressed **Question 3(a)**, or **3(b)**.

(a) Responses to the passage-based question were somewhat weak.

(i) Few candidates were able to identify what was 'sadly comical' in the extract. As a miser, Grandet is a stock comic character, but the sadness arises from the fact that his wife and daughter are made to live in penury, despite his extreme wealth. Grandet tolerates his 'friends' (the Cruchots and the des Grassins) only because of the business advantages that they offer him. Mme Grandet's delight at winning a few coins at cards is ironic, given that she and her daughter are completely unaware of Grandet's accrued fortune.

(ii) There were a few more successful attempts at **part (ii)**. Eugénie and her mother have 'pure hearts' because Grandet keeps them isolated from the world around them. They know nothing of his business dealings and their only exposure to society is through weekly card games with the Cruchots and the des Grassins. Unpolluted by the desire for wealth and luxury, they remain able to laugh and experience joy and other human emotions.

(iii) There were some stronger responses to **part (iii)**. Charles Grandet is the visitor at the door. Eugénie's cousin, a wealthy dandy who looks down on his country cousins, has been sent to Saumur, ostensibly to pay a visit to his uncle's family. What he does not know, but which is confirmed by the letter he carries, is that his father has committed suicide, weighed down by a mountain of debt. In reality, Charles has been sent to be financially supported by his uncle. The news will devastate Charles.

(b) Some candidates seemed not to understand the meaning of 'milieu' and ignored the content of the question, simply summarising the plot of the novel. In Balzac's writing, the environment is fundamentally responsible for determining the actions and passions of his characters. Eugénie is entirely a product of her environment. Her father has isolated her from society; she lives in poverty; her only exposure to money is through the silver coin which her father 'gives' her each New Year's day; her only contact with other people is through mass at church on Sunday and the occasional round of cards with the Grandets' neighbours. As a result, she is naïve, generous, and very trusting. That naivety leaves her prey to the interests of other people. Charles, for instance, is an exciting breath of fresh air for her – she gives him her money, but he betrays her. De Bonfons, whom she eventually marries, only wants her for her money. Even in her widowhood, her lack of interest in the trappings of wealth leads her to donate much of her fortune to charity.

Question 4 – *Bonjour Tristesse*, Françoise Sagan

Bonjour Tristesse appears popular with candidates. A large proportion of candidates attempted **Question 4**, the majority opting for the passage-based question.

(a) This question was handled very well.

(i) Though initially fascinated by Anne's elegance and keen to impress her, Cécile soon adopts an attitude of hostility. Hitherto she and her father have lived an undisciplined, indulgent, rather

decadent life, but now Anne has attempted to impose some standards and controls: Anne tries to regulate Cécile's eating habits, insists that she study seriously for her Bac and seeks to inhibit the young girl's relationship with her boyfriend, Cyril. Cécile resents these limits on her freedom and resists, fearing that Anne is taking her father away from her and that they will never be able to enjoy their carefree lifestyle again.

(ii) Responses to **part (ii)** were somewhat less successful, and some candidates sought to describe the psychological aspects of the novel as a whole, rather than concentrating on what the extract shows. At this point, Cécile's ability to analyse her feelings surprises even herself and demonstrates a maturity well beyond her years. She expresses doubt and tries, but fails, to justify to herself her treatment of Anne. As if in a conversation with a psychoanalyst, she is able to see both sides of the argument and her contradictory feelings verge on split personality, as if two Céciles were talking.

(iii) **Part (iii)** was well answered and was a pleasing conclusion to a very satisfactory overall response in most instances. Encouragingly, most candidates gave a personal response to the question as to whether Cécile could be considered 'selfish and spoiled'. Most felt that she was selfish: spoiled by her father, and only concerned with her own happiness, Cécile plots against Anne, even involving her friends Cyril and Elsa in her plans. At no stage does she think of her father's feelings. Other candidates felt that Cécile's actions could be justified: she is young, after all, and the absence of discipline and guidance from her father has led to an inevitable lack of moral responsibility. Both approaches were equally valid.

(b) The responses to the passage-based question were also applicable in large part to the essay question. Cécile's life of luxury and her father's wealth have led her to become a self-absorbed, selfish and rather cynical individual. She admires her father's lifestyle and shares his a-moral approach to life. She is emotionally bankrupt and has no principles or objectives in her life. Anne's arrival, and the discipline and order that she introduces to the household, represent a threat to the comfortable existence Cécile has led hitherto. Cécile plots Anne's downfall in a cruel and calculated manner. Better answers highlighted that there is more than just cynicism and cruelty in the novel. This is also the tale of the psychological awakening and the coming to maturity of a selfish young girl. Now, Cécile is horrified by the thought that she has caused Anne's death and is haunted by the memory of Anne and what she has done – hence the title *Bonjour tristesse*.

Section 2

Question 5 – *Un Secret*, Philippe Grimbert

A fair proportion of candidates addressed the Grimbert novel, the majority opting for **Question 5(a)**.

(a) Many candidates merely retold the plot of the novel and ended with the unsupported conclusion that the book was clearly a memorial for Simon and Hannah. Occasional mention was made of the novel's concluding dedication to Simon: 'Ce livre serait sa tombe'. Better responses recounted the author's growing shock at the gradual revelation of the family's secret but concluded that the novel was not only written in memory of Simon and Hannah, but that it was also dedicated to the memory of the author's mother and father, Maxime and Tania, and to the millions of Jews who died during the Holocaust.

(b) Though fewer candidates addressed this question, there were some strong replies. The theme of the dog runs throughout the novel, from the author's discovery of the stuffed toy dog, which he names Sim, to his father's devastation when the family's real dog, Echo, is killed while out on a walk. The theme continues through to the end of the novel, when the author and his daughter discover a pet dog cemetery in the grounds of a nearby château belonging to the family of Pierre Laval, the man responsible for the deportation of Jews during the occupation of France. The small headstones remind Grimbert of a children's graveyard, and it is from that memory that his decision to write the novel grows.

Question 6 – *Petit Pays*, Gaël Faye

(a) Few candidates attempted these two questions. The best answers summarised the idyllic and rather privileged lifestyle that Gaby had led in Burundi as a young boy, the adventures enjoyed with his gang of friends and his enforced flight to France with his sister as inter-racial violence exploded. It is true that Gaby feels nostalgic about Burundi and is ill-at-ease in France, but his desire to return

is primarily stimulated by his need to say goodbye properly to his native country. A few candidates mentioned that Gaby also returns to collect the library of books that Mme Economopoulos has bequeathed to him. Most responses successfully identified the consequences of Gaby's decision to return. He is frustrated to find that his town and his friends have changed beyond all recognition. Though he has no clear idea what to do with his life next, the discovery of his prematurely aged and demented mother persuades him to stay and look after her.

(b) This question was quite well handled. Mme Economopoulos is an elderly Greek neighbour of Gaby's, who lives alone with her dachshunds, surrounded by her books. She is remarkably indulgent with Gaby and his friends as they come to sell her mangoes that they have stolen from her garden. She instils in Gaby her love of books, and they spend hours discussing the novels that they have read. Her library provides a means of escape for Gaby as the violence on the streets of Bujumbura surges. As Gaby leaves for France, Mme Economopoulos tears a poem from one of her books and gives it to him, explaining that he will understand its meaning later. The poem talks of a person's inability to forget his native land.

Quite a few candidates had clearly seen Eric Barbier's film of the book, as they described certain elements which appear in the film but not in the novel, such as the claim that Mme Economopoulos is a teacher at Gaby's school. Whilst the watching of cinematic versions of texts is to be encouraged, it is important that candidates also read the written version and are aware that questions are based solely on the content of the novel.

Question 7 – *La Maison de Claudine*, Colette

(a) These questions were attempted by a minority of candidates. Some good knowledge was shown, and some aptly chosen examples were given, but the fact that many struggled to give fully rounded responses is probably linked to the absence of a storyline around which answers can be constructed. The novel is essentially an ode to Colette's mother and a celebration of family life, but Claudine's memories and the passage of time are not represented in linear fashion. Though the novel starts with her earliest memories of her mother, her brothers and sister and the family home, it regularly leaps forward to address Claudine's later life, with her own children and her pets in her Paris home. The novel also looks backwards to events that Claudine could only have learned about through the tales of her mother or her father, such as Sidonie's first marriage and divorce. The only linear indicator of the passage of time is the ageing of her mother: young and belligerent at the start of the novel, Sidonie grows old, infirm and somewhat irascible towards the end.

(b) Once again, some good knowledge of the text was shown, but the challenge was to draw this knowledge together into an organised response. Claudine clearly adores her mother, whose vivacity and kindness are recalled throughout the work. Claudine remembers with affection her mother's laughter (which faded with age), her idiosyncrasies, her quarrels with her father, her love of animals, and her atheism, which Claudine mischievously contrasts with Sidonie's regular attendance at church. Sidonie in turn dotes on her daughter, as indeed she does on all her children. She misses them, the boys in particular, as they grow older and leave home ('Où sont les enfants?'). She is very protective of Claudine, her youngest child, fearing that she might be abducted at night, yet she allows her daughter a great deal of latitude – for example, letting her go out on political hustings at night with her father. Sidonie's devotion to her daughter shapes Claudine's feelings for her own children.

Question 8 – *No et moi*, Delphine de Vigan

Delphine de Vigan's novel remains very popular and a lot of candidates addressed one of the two questions, though **Question 8(a)** was almost 3 times more popular than 8(b).

(a) There were some very strong responses to this question, almost every one of which dealt with the three main protagonists – Lou, No and Lucas – and the impact that the lack of maternal affection had had on each. Quite a few answers included reference to Lou's father assuming the maternal role, as best as he was able. Some candidates referred additionally to the therapeutic effect that No's arrival in the Bertignac household had on Anouk, as if No in some way replaced the daughter she had lost. And the occasional response perceptively pointed out that Lou's maternal care for No was perhaps a reaction to the lack of affection that Lou received from her own mother.

(b) Some of the responses to **Question 8(b)** were a little vague, but others pointed out that Lucas is undeniably central to the novel's structure. He is the only individual at school whom Lou respects –

she admires his nonchalance and rebelliousness. In turn, he provides Lou with the credibility amongst her peers that she longs for. As 'opposites', they are attracted to each other. When Lou's attempts to introduce No to a normal family life fail, it is inevitable that Lou should bring No to Lucas's apartment. There they care for No together, and the relationship between Lou and Lucas strengthens. As Lou's mother returns to normality towards the end of the novel, Lucas becomes less important for Lou, and we learn that he is to rejoin his mother in Neuilly. Nevertheless, by then Lucas has been instrumental in establishing Lou's self-confidence and she is ready to face the future, supported by two parents who have returned to their more accustomed roles.

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There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.