

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/01
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 Test for candidates to give their profile at the beginning of the Test and does not qualify for marks.
- If the candidate's Topic Presentation is not related to a francophone country or society, the mark for Content/Presentation must be halved. Many Examiners seemed unaware of this.

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 to which country they are referring. Many topics were borderline in this respect. If the Topic Presentation is not related to a francophone country or society, the mark for Content/Presentation will be halved.
- 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.
- A number of candidates asked rhetorical questions in the Topic Presentation. 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 examination 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 completely audible and the candidate distant and hard to hear. This issue was not necessarily related to social distancing in the examination room or conducting the Test remotely.
- Please choose a room which is quiet and where candidates are not distracted by external noise. Every year there are centres with excessive background noise.
- Only the Examiner and the candidate should be present during the examination. 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.
- There are always centres which submit their moderation samples long after the deadline has passed and a considerable time after the examination was carried out.

Submit for Assessment

- The vast majority of centres had no difficulty in successfully uploading paperwork and recordings.
- A few centres uploaded the recordings, but sent the paperwork by post or sent paperwork and recordings by post. *Submit or Assessment* should be used to upload all the exam-related files: recordings and paperwork.

Paperwork

- There are always a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transferring the total mark to *Submit for Assessment*. These should be checked carefully before submission. For the size of sample needed, please see the details on the *Cambridge International* website in the *Samples Database*.
- Centres are reminded that for moderation, in addition to the recordings, they need to send the Working Mark Sheet, a copy of the MS1 (computer mark sheet or equivalent), and any other relevant paperwork.

Application of Mark Scheme

- There were some 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.
- The Mark Scheme makes no provision for awarding half marks. Half marks should not be awarded under any circumstances.
- 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.
- Where a centre engages two Examiners to examine the same syllabus, Examiners must have an internal moderation (standardise their marks) before submitting them to CIE for moderation and provide evidence of standardisation having taken place. Guidance on this can be found on the *Cambridge International* website (search for 'internal moderation').

Format of the examination

There are 3 distinct parts to the Speaking Test:

1. Presentation – (3–3.5 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.

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.

Presentation (3 to 3.5 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 session 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 *Le temps libre, La technologie, L'égalité des sexes/des chances, Les medias/réseaux sociaux, Le conflit des générations, Le sport, La famille, Le tourisme, L'environnement, La vie urbaine/rurale, L'école* and *La pollution*. More unusual topics included *Le clônage, L'art-thérapie, Le sexisme et la langue française, Le mariage précoce, L'intelligence artificielle* and *L'ordre publique et la loi en France*. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues. It was noticeable once again that the link to a francophone country increasingly borderline.

For the most part, candidates were clearly aware of the need, stated in the syllabus, that the presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country

where the target language is spoken. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for *Content/Presentation* halved (see Speaking Test mark scheme) by the Examiner.

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 3.5 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.

Increasingly, candidates spend time giving dictionary definitions of very familiar topics at the expense of expressing their own ideas and opinions.

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

A few candidates this session 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.

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. However, 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.

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! 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.

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 if candidates forget to ask questions – 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, regardless of the size of the entry. 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. (See guidance on internal moderation on the *Cambridge International* website.)

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. The inclusion of additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) 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 (total for **parts a** and **b** combined) 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

The paper was of a comparable standard to that of previous years, generating 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 a large number 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 were able to relate.

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 problem, partly because of very poor or quirky handwriting and partly because of ambiguous and messy crossings-out and insertions.

There were few signs of undue time pressure, with most candidates managing to attempt all questions, although some answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Most of the questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary, but some candidates still neglect the simple answer and look to over-complicate things by attempting structures which they cannot handle, producing answers so confused that they 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 and/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 significantly from the overall impression for the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **3(a)** *Le commerce électronique a-t-il évolué en France en 2019...*; **4(c)** *Le client peut-il être tout de*

même pénalisé...; **4(d) Les livreurs peuvent-ils aggraver la situation...** . Answers beginning with *parce que*, *en*, *si* etc. are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished in recent years, 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. 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.

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 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, 90–100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40–50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit 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 in recent years, 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 made them quite difficult to read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was often successfully negotiated by stronger candidates, but answers from weaker candidates sometimes appeared to be chosen largely at random, bearing no grammatical or semantic relationship to the given word in the question.

- In **Item (a)**, the search for a plural verb to replace *conviennent* led some to opt for *permettent* (or less probably *considérablement*).
- In **Item (b)**, *chez moi* was often correctly chosen to replace *à domicile*.
- In **Item (c)**, the ending no doubt tempted many towards *encombrants* for *pesants*, which in addition to changing the meaning would have led to *colis pesants et lourds*.
- **Item (d)**, was perhaps predictably the most successfully handled, sharing the *où* with the prompt.
- In **Item (e)**, the ending of *envahissant* caused some to choose *encombrants*, *pendant* or *avant*.

Question 2

There were a small number of very good answers to this question from the very strongest candidates, but as usual the task proved very demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures, or who failed to observe the basic rules of agreement.

In **Item 2(a)**, some understood the requirement for a transformation into the passive, but many were happy just to invert the word order to produce *L'envoi direct de cadeaux facilite l'e-commerce*.

In **Item 2(b)**, the *après avoir* (or *après que*) construction was unknown to the many, who frequently offered *après (de) prendre mon temps*.

Item 2(c) required the indirect object pronoun *me* to be manipulated twice in the transfer to reported speech, which very often resulted in *le* or *se*. Some of those who managed this sometimes made the plural verbs singular for some reason.

Item 2(d) was better handled, although some omitted the *pouvoir* or unnecessarily altered *posés* to *imposés* or *causés* (see General comments **Question 2** section).

In **Item 2(e)** a fair number of candidates recognised the need for a subjunctive after *sans que*, but relatively few were able to find the correct form after *on*.

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.

Item 3(a) offered candidates the opportunity to get off to a good start by pointing to record sales in 2019 (*Il a dépassé/franchi le seuil/généré...*) and by predicting further growth in the future (*Il va continuer à croître/grandir/devenir plus important...*), without 'lifting' *dépassement* or *croissance*.

Item 3(b) saw some confusion over the meaning of *location* as opposed to *un local*, added to by the suggestion that *aménagement* means management. Successful candidates here realised that the question was essentially asking for verbs to replace the nouns *location*, *aménagement*, *embauche* and *remunération* but some failed to finish the job by leaving a redundant and invalidating *de* in the process: *louer/aménager d'un local* etc.

In **Item 3(c)**, a similarly redundant *de (installer d'un magasin)* again suggested a lack of comprehension but many successfully expressed the benefits of being accessible to customers anywhere in the world, and in unlimited numbers. There was some confusion here between *commerçants* and *acheteurs*, as with the idea that *réception illimitée* referred to internet reception.

Item 3(d) was often successfully handled by candidates who pointed out the attractions of being able to order at any time of the day or night and without having to make a journey to the shops. Many then went on to appreciate the fact that you do not have to carry heavy parcels home or wait in a queue at the till.

Item 3(e) frequently generated both marks for stronger candidates who found straightforward ways of expressing the further advantages of being able to have presents sent directly to friends and of avoiding intrusive assistants, without 'lifting' *envoi* for the first mark or *interventions* for the second, although there was some confusion again over *vendeuses* and *acheteuses*.

Question 4

Item 4(a): successful candidates here pointed to the impact of e-commerce on the market share of traditional shops, often sensibly using straightforward verbs such as *baissier/tomber/chuter/diminuer*, with the occasional *dimunier* or *dismunir*. They then went on to use *fermer* or *disparaître* to score the second mark, with the occasional *disparer/disparaïsser*.

In **Item 4(b)**, *essayer* and *vérifier* could not score the mark, but candidates generally appeared to understand the benefits of shopping traditionally. A residual *de* sometimes cost the mark in *vérifier de la qualité*.

In **Item 4(c)**, some seemed to think it was the companies who were returning goods to the customer, and there was much easily avoidable 'lifting' of *reprise* and *remboursement*. Relatively few pointed to the time wasted by customers in the process of sending unwanted goods back, but rather more understood the possibility of having to pay carriage charges to do so.

In **Item 4(d)**, *disposition* was sometimes interpreted as disposing of the purchases, *livreurs* were occasionally people who worked in bookshops, and *les articles* were sometimes what you read in newspapers. But delays in delivery and items arriving at inconvenient times were often well expressed to score the second and third marks, apart from by those who attempted to press *inconvenients* into service as an adjective.

In **Item 4(e)**, difficulties in opening/using internet sites were often successfully identified as limiting factors for Claudette and others, but the risk was sometimes thought to be that of thieves divulging her card number on the internet rather than Claudette having done so herself.

In **Item 4(f)**, Claudette's willingness to hand her card to waiters in restaurants was correctly mentioned by many as being illogical, given her fears, even if there was the occasional suggestion that *un serveur* referred to an internet server, and the frequent unnecessary lifting of *vol*.

Question 5

Question 5a asked candidates to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of on-line shopping, 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. Some wasted a significant number of words on a definition of e-commerce, generally copied directly from the text. 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 identified 14 rewardable points, of which most candidates managed a reasonable number, with the most efficient reaching the maximum of 10. The weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

The most commonly identified points in favour of e-commerce included the ability to set up a business anywhere, for it to be open 24/7 to an unlimited number of customer world-wide who can buy unpressurised and at the leisure. Low set-up and running costs meaning low prices were also mentioned.

Common disadvantages included the lack of opportunity to try on articles or check their quality, delays in delivery and the possibility of theft.

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 significant reduction of the quality of language mark.

The **Personal Response (Question 5(b))** was less intended to ask candidates to make a choice between working at weekends or during the holidays, but most candidates focused sensibly enough on the wish to earn money, gain work experience for their c.v., meet new people and help them. Many assumed it would be a clothes shop which would relate to their interest in fashion. Reasons given for not accepting the job generally included a dislike of having to deal with awkward customers or demanding bosses, the need to concentrate on school studies or to find time for relaxation.

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 whatsoever. Whether or not they appeared in the texts, words regularly changed their spelling and/or gender from one line of the answer to the next. Given that there are rarely signs of undue time pressure, one can only urge candidates to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written.

There appears to be a 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 *la boutique* becoming *les boutiques*, and the plural of *il achète* becoming *ils achètes*.

Incorrect verb forms were prevalent, with some unable conjugate even very common verbs in the present indicative, e.g. *faire (ils faient)*, *avoir (ils avont)*, *pouvoir (ils peuvent)*.

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 often 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 selected at random. Even the most common words were misspelled: *mauvet*, *éder*, *assé*, *tros*.

Personal pronouns and adjectives in general would repay further study, as would the constructions following some common verbs; *aider*, *demander*, *permettre*, *obliger* etc.

The above section inevitably focuses on linguistic weaknesses which prevented a large number of candidates from satisfactorily expressing answers which one suspected they may actually have known. But many were able to transmit the required information and opinions using French which, although sometimes flawed, communicated effectively.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. The inclusion of additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (copy/cut and paste) 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 (total for **parts (a) and (b)** combined) is ignored. Candidates should not write a general introduction.
- In **Question 5(b)**, 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

Overall, the texts were felt to be of an appropriate level and approachable by the overwhelming majority. The subject matter appeared to be one with which candidates were generally able to engage.

The paper was of similar overall difficulty to previous years and produced the usual wide range of marks. 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 (and growing) problem, partly because of very poor or quirky handwriting (notably the letters *r* and *s* appearing identical on the end of words) 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**.

There were few signs of undue time pressure, with most candidates managing to attempt all questions, although quite a lot of answers in **Questions 3 and 4** were unnecessarily lengthy. Most of the questions on this paper could be answered in short sentences containing straightforward grammar and vocabulary, but some candidates still neglect the simple answer and look to over-complicate things by attempting structures which they cannot handle, producing answers so verbose or confused that they 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 and/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 significantly from the overall impression for the Quality of Language mark – e.g. **4(a)** *Des vegans militants auraient-ils endommagé des boucheries...* ; **4(b)** *La viande présente-t-elle un intérêt...* ; **4(b)** *Les Français évitent-ils...* . Answers beginning with *parce que*, *en* etc. are quite in order and generally preferable.

Candidates would also do well to look at the number of marks awarded for each question (indicated in square brackets) as a guide to the number of points to be made.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, it is encouraging to note that copying wholesale from the text has diminished in recent years, 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. 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.

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 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 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, 90–100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40–50 words for the response. **Material beyond the word limit 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 in recent years, 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 (perhaps because of different practices in other subjects). Candidates routinely waste up to a third of the available words, literally pointlessly, by defining terms at the start, re-phrasing the question or stating what they intend to do in their summary. 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 made them quite difficult to read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a reasonably straightforward first exercise, but 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. Candidates are advised to narrow the choice down by identifying the part of speech involved.

- In **Item (a)**, *visites* was generally well recognised, although the inclusion of *les* sometimes infringed the 'footprint' principle (see above).
- In **Item (b)**, *impossible* would have been acceptable had it been plural.
- **Item (c)** produced a large number of correct identifications of *par contre* or even *mais*.
- In **Item (d)**, the *-ent* ending of *actuellement* prompted *comparativement*, *également*, *recent* or *frequents*.
- **Item (e)** was well done, with the occasional *accroître* which, although related in meaning, would not have fitted here.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question from the very strongest candidates, but as usual the task 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 transfer from the passive proved problematic for many who either did not see any need to remove the *-es* ending of *administré* or changed the tense.

In **Item 2(b)**, some candidates found the past participle of *interdire* difficult (*interdi*, *interdis*, *interdu*), with large numbers of others simply missing the need for the feminine plural agreement signposted by *familiales*.

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

Item 2(d) was well handled by those who remembered to alter the person of the verb and recognised the fact that the prompt dictated *que sa famille et elle*.

Item 2(e) caused its usual problems for candidates who did not understand the need for *de* to become *à*, but even those who did, often missed the agreement, making this the least successful item.

Question 3

In **Item 3(a)**, most candidates understood the principle of not eating meat, scoring a straightforward first mark. Many also pointed successfully to the difference between the two groups, although some suggested that it was only food that was involved or that vegans eat nothing at all.

In **Item 3(b)**, successful candidates found the simple solution of replacing the nouns *achat*, *port* and *utilisation* by corresponding verbs, although the use of *cuire* instead of *cuir* caused confusion, and some made no mention of cosmetics or beauty products.

In **Item 3(c)**, the idea of celebrities jumping on the vegetarian/vegan bandwagon to boost their own image or popularity was not understood by many. The second and third marks required an element of increase in the frequency of the appearance of articles in the press and of vegan products on supermarket shelves.

In **Item 3(d)**, most candidates successfully pointed to the objection to animals enduring cruelty or poor conditions, with rather fewer managing to avoid 'lifting' *abattage* by using *abattre* (rather than *abattager*, *abatter*, or *abatir*), or the simpler *tuer*. The third mark was often earned by a good number who satisfactorily paraphrased *espérance de vie supérieure*, without suggesting that it was the quality rather than the length of life that was the aim.

In **Item 3(e)**, most candidates identified the contribution to greenhouse gases, and went on to find simple verbs (*baisser/réduire:diminuer* and *substituer/remplacer/échanger*, or even *planter/manger plus de légumes*). Some who used *baisser* nevertheless invalidated their answer by including the *de* from *la baisse de la consommation* (so writing *baisser de la consommation*), which did not demonstrate full comprehension. Others unsuccessfully offered *les plantations* or *les végétations*.

Question 4

In **Item 4(a)**, most candidates produced a reasonable definition to earn the first mark, and a good number then successfully pointed to the nature of the vandalism in Paris, using finite verbs to express what the militants had done.

In **Item 4(b)**, some overlooked the *comment* in the question, which they then simply copied out as a statement. Most correctly mentioned the practice of serving meat and vegetables as one dish, to score the second mark.

In **Item 4(c)**, presented the problem of a potential double negative: *Il essaie de les dissuader de ne pas manger trop de viande*. Those candidates who saw the problem often reworded acceptably as *Il encourage/conseille...*. The use of *supprimer/exclure/éliminer* often earned the second mark, where the double negative was not re-penalised.

In **Item 4(d)**, the first two marks required candidates to point to the need to take supplements to replace the vitamins found in meat. Many who were unsure about *inclure* sensibly opted for *prendre/manger/consommer*. Replacing the nouns *reduction* and *degustation* by verbs (as prompted by the *faire* in the question) was the easiest way to score the third and fourth marks, although some scored neither by failing to finish the job by including the *de* from the text – *réduire de la consommation, déguster d'un bon rôti*.

In **Item 4(e)**, a fair number missed the point by stating that *les agriculteurs font de l'agriculture*, but those who were able to conjugate *entretenir* (and produced *campagnes* rather than *compagnes* or *compagnies*) scored the first mark. The second mark required mention of the fact that animal farming accounted for a large proportion *des revenus agricoles*. The possible consequences for animal farmers and for some of the traditional elements of French culture and cuisine/gastronomy were often successfully identified for the final two marks.

Question 5

Question 5(a) asked candidates to summarise the arguments for and against vegetarianism and veganism, 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 quite a number of candidates managed a high number, knowing how to select material carefully and economically in this exercise. The most efficient reached the maximum of 10, whilst the very weakest simply copied out verbatim chunks of the text, hoping to chance upon some rewardable material.

Some wasted valuable words by writing at some length about avoiding leather/wool/dairy products/circuses, others on describing acts of vandalism in Paris.

The most commonly identified arguments in favour included the refusal on moral/religious grounds to inflict suffering or slaughter, a healthier diet and longer life expectancy, benefits for the environment/reduction in

climate change and greenhouse gases. Some who mentioned hormones appeared to be more concerned that they are harmful to the animals, rather than to the humans who eat them.

Arguments against vegetarianism/veganism regularly included the loss of essential vitamins/proteins in the diet, the disappearance of French traditions and the loss of jobs/income for those who depend on animal farming/products for a living.

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 significant 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 (Question 5(b))** asked whether man's rights are greater than those of animals. A small number interpreted *l'homme* more literally than intended and wrote about gender inequality. Some introduced biblical/religious references to support their opinion. Others wrote thoughtful responses which acknowledged the rights but stressed that these brought with them responsibilities towards fellow creatures. Others stressed the fact that animals are sentient beings and that inflicting pain of any sort on them is wrong.

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 – appeared largely random in many scripts. Some candidates seemed to be unaware of the need to make any agreements whatsoever.

Frequently recurring words often suffered the most: *le viande, la viande, les végétales* (for *légumes*), *agricultural, les agricultures* for *les agriculteurs*, *les véganismes* for *les vegans*. Given that there are rarely signs of undue time pressure, one can only urge candidates to be much more systematic and rigorous over checking what they have written.

There appears to be a 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 *impossible* becoming *impossiblent*, and the plural of *il contribue* becoming *ils contribues*.

Incorrect verb forms often appeared, e.g. *peindre, accroître, disparaître* and *exclure*, while some were unable to conjugate even very common verbs such as *prendre, faire, venir, tenir, pouvoir, avoir* and *courir* in the present indicative, and *-ir* and *-re* verbs in general.

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 at best phonetic, even with very common words, e.g. *soi/sois/soit, peu/peut/peur, mes/mais, on/ont, son/sont, ces/ses/c'est, sa/ça, ce/ceux qui*, all of which often seemed to be selected at random.

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, though 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 LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/23
Reading and Writing

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

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/31
Essay

Key messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read the questions carefully and take sufficient time to plan their essays before starting to write. They then need to create 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 important in order to demonstrate both clarity of thought and logical progression through an argument. In order to attain high marks for language, candidates should use accurate and idiomatic French which shows complexity both in grammatical structure and vocabulary.

General comments

It was clear that most candidates had understood the rubric for the paper and although most essays were of the recommended length, there were also some very short answers. Although many 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 short, in list form and sketchy in content. Many scripts showed a weakness in paragraphing, at times merely starting with *oui/non*. Content marks reflected the level of discussion, structure and sophistication of the argument.

The quality of language varied considerably across the cohort and a number of essays had the language mark in the good or very good bands. There were also 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 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. At the upper end, however, there were some responses which expressed ideas in clear and accurate French using 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. They were able to demonstrate familiarity with a range of linguistic structures and idioms and were able to convince the reader with the coherence and relevance of their arguments.

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

Spelling errors and anglicised spellings: *dangeureux, environment, government, essential, problem, example, le publique, beacoup, practiquer*.

Use of *comment* for *comme*; *pour* for *par*

Use of *grâce à* or *parce que* instead of *à cause de*

Use of *faire* for *rendre*:

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

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

Incorrect use of direct/indirect pronouns: *ils les donnent; ils leur/leurs encouragent*

Incorrect use of preposition after common verbs

Frequent use of *beaucoup des* with plural noun and *cela* with plural verb

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Les conseils des parents sont souvent inutiles ou démodés. Que pensez-vous de cette affirmation ?

Candidates were generally in agreement that parents offer useful advice to their children although they may not always wish to hear it. They were sure that parents wanted the best for their children and to protect them from harm. Ideas were often expressed in terms of personal anecdotes about home life and specific instances of advice offered. Candidates appeared to value their parents' experience of life which gave them the right to criticise and advise. Some did, however, raise the question of parents being out of touch because of their age and their lack of knowledge about the latest technology, and some felt they were being pressured into following career paths that were too traditional. Overall, candidates did have relevant comments to make but often struggled to organise their arguments in a coherent fashion.

Question 2

Le seul rôle des médias est d'influencer l'opinion publique. Discutez.

This was a very popular question. There was general agreement that the role of the media goes beyond merely influencing public opinion. Candidates mentioned that it was a means of communication, providing information for people, particularly during natural disasters and epidemics, and sharing news from across the world. Some were quite clear that media does also play an important part in influencing public opinion. They highlighted the role of advertising, of influencers on social media, as well as the biased and fake news disseminated by some platforms. Some mentioned the use of the media by politicians to influence voters at times of elections and by governments to promote their policies through newspaper articles and comments on twitter and Facebook. Candidates had relevant comment to make on this question and most came to the conclusion that the role of the media was multi-faceted.

Question 3

L'école devrait valoriser le mérite et l'effort de chaque élève plutôt que l'égalité elle-même. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Few candidates chose this question. They generally agreed that it is important to recognise and value each candidate's ability and effort because they felt that equality could prove to be a demotivating force. They made reference to examples in their schools of candidates being treated as a homogenous whole and not being seen as individuals with specific needs. They felt that equality meant treating everyone the same and that this did not take account of individual circumstances, such as providing special materials and putting on special classes for those who might need them. Equality was seen as a theory which, while ostensibly targeting fairness, did not always work out on a practical level.

Question 4

Pour profiter pleinement des loisirs, on doit pratiquer une activité sportive. Êtes-vous d'accord ?

Many candidates talked about the advantages of playing sport such as the benefits for health or for personal and social development. They considered that sport was a very good way to spend one's leisure time but they recognised that many people do not like sport or cannot do it for a variety of reasons including lack of money, lack of facilities or health problems. For these people, leisure time could usefully be spent on a range of other activities that also bring a sense of well-being. They gave examples of artistic and creative pursuits such as art and music classes and reading groups where people come together and enjoy developing their own interests. Candidates concluded that any activity that provides relaxation, stimulation and a break from work is as valid as playing a sport.

Question 5

Les avancées scientifiques sont-elles la solution à tous les problèmes mondiaux ?

Candidates took a pragmatic view of this question. They were clear that scientific progress had greatly benefited society, particularly medical advances which were enabling people to live healthier and longer lives. They also mentioned the advances in communication through the development of computers and smartphones. They recognised, though, that progress in science has not solved all world problems, particularly, social problems. For them, poverty, homelessness, unemployment and mental health issues needed a different kind of approach, more caring than scientific. The conclusion, overall, was that scientific progress can only go some way to addressing the world's problems. Some problems are easier to fix with science than others. Candidates responded well to this question and there was a range of examples offered to illustrate the arguments.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/32
Essay

Key messages

In order to be successful on this paper, candidates need to read the questions carefully and take sufficient time to plan their essays before starting to write. They then need to create 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 important in order to demonstrate both clarity of thought and logical progression through an argument. In order to attain high marks for language, candidates should use accurate and idiomatic French which shows complexity both in grammatical structure and vocabulary.

General comments

Overall, candidates produced a pleasing level of work, with few very weak scripts and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, a number of impressive pieces of writing. The majority of candidates managed to communicate ideas on their chosen topics, according to their level of ability. Some showed an excellent command of the language and produced mature and thoughtful answers as well as an in-depth knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary. Some responses did not fully target the precise wording of the question, but there were few largely irrelevant essays.

The essays were mostly well structured, with an introduction, with paragraphs putting different points of view linked directly to the question, and a conclusion. Candidates made a genuine attempt to link paragraphs and to create a logical argument, but conclusions were often disappointing, merely restating what had gone before instead of presenting a considered opinion. Across the cohort as a whole, 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. Careless spelling errors were much in evidence even in good scripts. There were also a number of scripts where candidates had made, perhaps, last minute changes, but overlooked how these impacted on the rest of the sentence, in particular on adjectival and subject-verb agreements. Most candidates, however, managed to include a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Answers generally would have benefited from a wider range of clear and targeted examples.

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

Incorrect spelling of common words: *concluire, activitée, sociétée, deuxièment, menace, droge, un individue, la plus part, emploie, à fin, l'impacte, environment, gouvernement, development, hors (instead of or), le stresse.*

Spelling which impacted upon grammar: *ont fait/en fait* for *on fait*

Incorrect genders: *la problème, la groupe, la monde, la programme*

Incomplete negatives: *on peut pas...*

Agreement of *tel*, often left in the masculine singular form.

Use of *malgré que*

Incorrect use of *beaucoup*: *beaucoup des gens; beaucoup de l'argent*

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

Use of *grâce à* instead of *à cause de*

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

Overuse of *plusieurs, personnes, choses, beaucoup*

Incorrect use of direct/indirect pronouns: *ils les donnent*; *ils leur/leurs encouragent*

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

L'adolescence est la période la plus difficile de la vie. Discutez de cette affirmation.

This was by far the most popular question and there were many heartfelt responses detailing all the problems of adolescence. Most candidates agreed that the teenage years are the most challenging and provided many reasons why this might be so. They included references to physical changes, hormonal changes resulting in emotional upheavals and the stresses of school and home life. Peer pressure and the demands of social media were also mentioned as creating additional stress on young people. It was pointed out that the consequences could be devastating, with many teenagers falling prey to anorexia, depression and similar conditions. Some candidates mentioned the difficulties of being treated like a child but being expected to accept responsibility and make important decisions. Some also mentioned the difficulties encountered by young girls in some cultures where they may be expected to marry at a young age, before they have had a chance to enjoy their youth. In contrast, some candidates felt that young people have an easy life, free of responsibility beyond getting good grades at school, and can enjoy the discovery of new experiences. The best scripts compared adolescence with other stages in life. Being an adult was often considered to be far more difficult because of the many responsibilities such as earning a living, supporting a family, raising children and having to make important decisions alone. Some candidates made some very pertinent and mature comments about old age and the problems of loneliness, declining health and awareness of opportunities missed. Most candidates were able to judge that, despite its problems, adolescence was an important stage on the way to adulthood but that it might not be the most difficult period in life. Answers were usually detailed and well illustrated.

Question 2

Le but des médias est de provoquer l'émotion plutôt que la réflexion. Qu'en pensez-vous?

This was a popular question. Many essays dealt mainly with the positive and negative aspects of the media without specific reference to the question. The power of advertising, the impact of social media and influencers were mentioned as ways in which the media exert influence on the public. Headline-grabbing stories and the dissemination of fake news were seen to be the media exploiting the emotions of the audience. It was generally felt that playing on the emotions was a clear way to keep the public interested and, therefore, to generate income for the media platform. Some candidates were able to make reference to ways in which the media can generate serious thought, quoting newspapers and TV channels which pride themselves on providing unbiased news and an opportunity for their audience to reflect on serious issues. Candidates were able to make some interesting and valid points about the media but closer attention to the terms of the question would have been beneficial.

Question 3

La discrimination positive est nécessaire dans la lutte pour l'égalité des chances. Êtes-vous d'accord?

Few candidates chose this question. There were some very perceptive and engaged responses that showed real understanding of the subject. Some candidates, however, discussed the need to reduce inequalities without any real grasp of what positive discrimination actually meant. It was clear to all that more needs to be done to enable people to live and work on an equal footing without feeling any discrimination. They referred to inequalities of opportunity for women, ethnic minority groups, the poor and underprivileged. There were two points of view offered. Some candidates suggested that positive discrimination would give a real boost to the chances of those suffering discrimination as there would be more opportunities for people to reach their full potential in school, in the workplace and in society generally. Other candidates felt that positive discrimination is in itself unfair as it is still discriminating against some groups. Most agreed that it should be one tool in the fight against inequality, working alongside clear legal policy and ongoing education to change ingrained attitudes. Some felt that positive discrimination had been acceptable in the past but that now it was unnecessary as we have come so far in creating equality of opportunity. Many answers were thoughtful and well argued.

Question 4

Les loisirs donnent autant de valeur à la vie que le travail. Discutez.

This was a popular question. The points made about the value leisure gives to life were sometimes made very eloquently but there was often little insight into the value that work gives to life, apart from providing money for food and housing. Some essays did mention those with a vocation e.g., doctors/lawyers, who loved their work and saw it as bringing with it status, feelings of self-worth and happiness. Candidates were able to offer a range of reasons why leisure activities bring value to one's life, including better physical and mental health, social contacts, a sense of wellbeing, relaxation, and a way of developing one's talents and creativity. Leisure activities were considered an essential part of life by all. Some candidates spent too long describing in detail what constitutes *les loisirs* and then omitting to consider the benefits of work. They ignored *autant de valeur* in the question and provided arguments that were one-sided and somewhat narrow. The best responses showed that a balance is needed in life and that both work and leisure could bring their own value to life.

Question 5

Les avancées scientifiques et médicales retardent la mort mais menacent la vie. Que pensez-vous de cette affirmation?

This question was attempted by few candidates. Those answering it were able to describe advances in medicine and science that can prolong life, citing examples such as production of vaccines, gene therapy, new scanning technology for detection of disease and treatments for a range of medical conditions. Some felt that progress can put people's lives at risk too. To illustrate this point, they referred to the development of advanced weapons used in war as well as nuclear bombs. They also considered the role of scientific progress in the growth of pollution and the acceleration of climate change which will inevitably have a detrimental effect on life. The best answers showed that medical and scientific progress should not be halted but that there were clear lines to be drawn both ethically and practically to ensure that progress does not create situations where lives are threatened rather than prolonged. There were some very mature and thoughtful responses to this question and candidates had good specialist vocabulary and detailed knowledge.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/33
Essay

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