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GCSE 1525
GCSE 3525

FRENCH

REPORT ON COMPONENTS
TAKEN IN JUNE 2000



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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FRENCH

General Certificate of Secondary Education 1525

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1525 – French

General Introduction

Examiners were pleased to observe excellent performances at all levels in this year's examination. The papers set were comparable in difficulty with those in previous years and the level of candidate performance remained pleasingly high in general.

For the most part candidates and their Centres chose the appropriate tier of entry in each skill, which enabled individuals to perform to the best of their ability. For a few candidates, however, the choice of Foundation Tier, though no doubt erring on the side of caution, may have restricted the potential to score more points. This was noticeable particularly in Reading and Listening. Candidates can mix Foundation and Higher Tiers in different skills if that suits their performance profile. In the Short Course examination the majority of candidates opted for Foundation Tier in all components.

Writing Coursework continues its trend of popularity and is an indication of the positive influence of the syllabus on the work being done in Centres. It should be stressed that every effort is made to ensure that the two options are comparable. Perusal of the statistics for 2000 against those of 1999 shows that this change has had little impact on achievement. The report on this component will give more detailed feedback and information.

The use (or mis-use!) of dictionaries continues and it is evident that a substantial proportion of candidates do not benefit from their availability in examinations at this level. Centres may already be aware that QCA has decided that dictionaries will not be allowed in the revised specifications due for first examination in Summer 2003.

The draft specification and sample papers for 2003 are available on the OCR website and a programme of in-service training is being offered by OCR. It is hoped that all Centres will take advantage of this.

The remainder of this report consists of more detailed reports on the individual components and a statement of statistical results and threshold marks.

Finally, teachers should be aware that a revised specification for this subject is in preparation for teaching from September 2001, with the first examination in Summer 2003. Final details will be available in the period November 2000 – February 2001. There is a range of introductory courses in many locations given in the OCR Training booklet.

French: Listening
1525/01

General Comments

Examiners were generally pleased with the performance of candidates in this year's listening comprehension test. Basic items such as numbers and times are well known and vocabulary in topic areas such as food and leisure activities has clearly been well practised by teachers.

Each section contained items which the majority of correctly entered candidates handled well but also more demanding questions which only the very best in the appropriate tier answered correctly. Section 2 (common on both Foundation and Higher Tiers) was well answered and performance in the gist-comprehension exercise (Ex.2) was particularly pleasing.

Virtually all candidates answered in the appropriate language. Centres should note that the exercise requiring answers in English is always the first on Section 2 and the last on Section 3. Rubrics were well understood and candidates seem to have been correctly advised to study the example which always precedes every exercise.

Some candidates persist in writing in pencil while some waste time erasing answers written in pencil and writing over them in pen. All candidates should be reminded to write in blue ink and to make any changes to their answers quite clearly. In those exercises where individual letters are to be written in boxes (e.g. Section 1 Ex. 2) candidates should use upper-case letters as shown in the example and they should never write one letter on top of another as it leads to possible ambiguity.

Where answers in French are required (e.g. Section 1, Ex. 5 or Section 3, Ex. 3) candidates should be reminded that short answers are perfectly acceptable and that numbers are better written in figures than in words. Examiners in fact reported that candidates have improved in this respect this year.

The widespread difficulty that candidates experienced on Section 2, Q.5 reinforces the need for them to be made fully familiar with the sounds of the French alphabet.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

The opening exercise is designed to be straightforward, with short French phrases delivered at a steady pace. All candidates performed well on the first three questions. On Q.4 a few took *neuf heures trente* to be "9:15" and on Q.5 the occasional candidates selected the car or the train for *avion*.

Exercise 2:

Exercise 2 was very well answered. In most of these questions, candidates were given at least two chances to hear confirmation of the correct answer (e.g. *vélo* and *bicyclette* in Q.6, *natation* and *piscine* in Q.7 etc.) and it is a useful teaching

point to coach candidates to listen for such clues. Q.10 proved the most difficult question here, as the word *lecture* is not generally known (although there was the additional clue of *livres*) and not all were able to pick out the clues of *cheval* and *équitation* in Q.12.

Exercise 3 proved to be slightly more demanding. This exercise tested comprehension of common foods and drinks. Nearly all candidates successfully identified the foods (*poisson, poulet, fromage*) but only the better candidates showed comprehension of the drinks (*vin, lait, thé*).

The incline of difficulty became steeper in Exercise 4, where common weather expressions were tested. The speed of delivery was still approximately the same, but two or three of these items caused problems for some candidates. Some may have found the icons a little confusing (those for G and H for example) but all feature in the icon syllabus published with the examination. On Q.16 *soleil* was usually identified and most knew *neige* (Q.19) but *vents* (Q.17), *froid* (Q.18) and *brouillard* (Q.20) tended to pose problems. It would be advisable for teachers to revise common weather expressions regularly with students, as this topic does occur quite frequently in both reading and listening.

As in previous years the final exercise, in which answers in French were required, proved the most difficult and a number of candidates scored very low marks here. For the most part the correct age was picked out on Q.21. Some made errors here attempting to write (in a small space) the number in words and only writing *quarante*. As mentioned in the preamble, candidates must be told to express such numbers in figures. On Q.22 many omitted to include the number of daughters (2), which was essential for the award of the mark. There were, predictably, a very large number of different spellings of *boulangerie* (Q.24); as always when answers in French are required, the mark is awarded if small errors of spelling do not impede comprehension (thus renderings such as *boulengeri, bolangerie, boulangie* were acceptable whereas *boulgarie, poulangerie* and *langerie* were not. On Q.24, the phrase *ma femme* was sometimes rendered as *ma famille* and some thought the phrase *qui m'aident* was a name and offered answers such as *ma femme Kimed*; examiners were instructed, however, to ignore attempts at rendering this particular phrase. Q.25 was well answered by most, but problems were experienced in rendering the phrases *je vais à la pêche* (for which *pêche* alone was quite sufficient) and *je parle avec mes amis* (again the single word *amis* was adequate). Candidates could, as an alternative, have offered *je vais au café* (or simply *café*) but an answer such as *je fais du café* would obviously not have been credited as it gives an incorrect concept.

Section 2

Although as expected there was a wide range of performance on this section, all candidates managed to score marks, even though the material is designed to test Grades D and C. As mentioned in the opening comments, examiners were impressed with the general standards shown on this section.

On the first exercise, most showed comprehension of *une chambre pour deux personnes* on Q.1. It should be noted that for the award of the second mark, correct rendering of *either avec douche* or *au rez-de-chaussée* was acceptable, although invalidation could still occur with the inclusion of incorrect material

such as "with a balcony". Candidates must be warned of the dangers of guessing and the penalties of including wrong details with a correct answer. Q.3 was answered well and many candidates successfully picked out the negative in the phrase *nous ne prendrons pas le dîner* on Q.4 and consequently did not include it in their answer. Any inappropriate addition, however, such as "breakfast for one" or "breakfast in the room" or even "a small breakfast" resulted in the mark being withheld. Only those who had practised the sounds of the French alphabet were successful in rendering the name in Q.5, the most common error, predictably, being in the rendering of the French vowel "i".

Exercise 2 was the gist comprehension exercise, which is now becoming a fairly common feature on this section. Candidates performed well here and seem to have been well prepared for exercises of this type in which the words for the place of work are not heard but the answers are gained by surmising the details provided. Qs.6-8 were answered well, Qs. 9-11 less so. Q.11 was probably the most taxing, not many picking up the clues provided by *rayons*, *caisse* and *vendeuse*.

Exercise 3 provided a challenge for Foundation Tier candidates, although most were successful on the first two multiple-choice items. In most cases, candidates successfully linked *voiture* in the text with *auto* on the paper (Q.13). Qs.14 and 15 were more demanding. On the latter, only the better candidates made the association between *de bonne heure* on the paper and *en avance* on the recording.

Qs.16-19 required answers in French. In most cases Qs.16-18 seem to have been understood. There was a high proportion of correct answers for Q.16 but the rendering of *parfum* (Q.17) caused problems. As with other target language questions, the principle of accepting an answer which looks or sounds right to a French person was followed here. A surprising number, however, failed to offer an acceptable spelling of *frites* (Q.18 (a)) – spellings such as *fritz*, *frie*, *friettes* etc, were rejected. In a similar way, renderings of *eau minérale* (Q.18(b)) were often unacceptable. Q.19 was certainly the most demanding on the paper; very few gave the concept of a poor crossing (the single word *mauvaise* would have been sufficient) and most lost the mark by rendering *malade* and overlooking the fact that Valérie was not ill during the crossing. It is quite likely that the interrogative *comment* was not understood. As pointed out in last year's report, it is important that candidates be made aware of the meaning and use of all common question words in French.

Section 3

This section provided a fair test of grades B, A and A*. A full range of marks was evident, but very low marks were not too common as for the most part those attempting this section were genuine Higher tier candidates.

Exercise of the true/false type (Exercise 1) can be difficult in listening, but marks were generally good here, most achieving at least 5 out of 9 but only a few gaining maximum marks. The opening question proved easy but for Qs.2 and 3 the information came rather quickly and these proved more difficult for many. Candidates recovered on the next three questions, however, and many scored all three marks. Q.7 was probably the most difficult, where precise understanding

of *construit au bord de la plage entre mer et montagne* was required. Q.9 also proved difficult to all but the best candidates – here comprehension of *en bonne santé* was required.

The first part of Exercise 2 required brief answers in French. Examiners were instructed to be fairly lenient in their marking of candidates' French but to penalise the inclusion of incorrect material. Thus English spelling of *université* and *industrie* were accepted on Q.10 and Q.12 but the rendering of *traductrice* as *actrice* (Q.12) was clearly not acceptable. Many had problems on Q.11, by rendering *langues* as *long*, *lang* or *l'anglais*. On Q.13 a simple answer such as (*acheter*) *une voiture* was sufficient but it was very common for the mark to be lost through writing *gagner beaucoup d'argent*. As so often, also, candidates failed to hear the negative in the phrase *je ne pense pas à me marier* and incorrectly offered this as an answer. Q.14 proved very difficult indeed. Again mishearing of the negatives (e.g. *je n'ai pas besoin d'argent*) was a source of error, but ignorance of the word *bonheur* (very often rendered as *de bonne heure*) was very common indeed.

The five multiple-choice questions which followed were reasonably well answered. Again failure to distinguish negatives (e.g. *je n'ai pas envie* in Q.16) led to a number of incorrect answers (in this case, the selection of *tout de suite*) showing how important it is for teachers to give candidates plenty of practice in the skill of recognising negatives. A fair number seem to have been familiar with *partout* (Q.17) and Q.18 was generally quite well answered. Q.19, on the other hand, proved very difficult, most being unable to cope with the higher level language and skill in dealing with the phrases *être utile à l'humanité / faire quelque chose pour la société*.

Exercise 3 was a test of opinions and as such was a true Grade A test. Although the subject matter was perhaps a little unfamiliar (the single European currency) the language of opinions was not too demanding. However, many candidates scored no more than 2 correct answers out of 6 and only the every best scored 5 or 6.

The difficulty of the exercise lay in the fact that candidates were not able to rely on hearing a key word. This was gist comprehension of opinions, a demanding but extremely useful language exercise and one in which Higher Tier candidates should be given plenty of practice. The easiest questions were Qs.20, 24 and 25 and Q.22 was got by some who spotted the similarity between *du bon et du mauvais* on the paper and *du pour et du contre* on the recording.

Exercise 4, in which questions and answers were in English, was not very well answered and it is possible that some candidates were tiring by this stage of the exam and had found the preceding exercise very taxing. Nonetheless, the best candidates scored well here. On Q.26 many candidates rendered *billets de banque* but too many guessed with "bank cards". Examiners were surprised at the large number who appeared not to know *permis de conduire* on this same question. Surprisingly many candidates rendered *vingt-six* as "16" (Q.27) but in any case it was necessary to render *moins de* here for the award of the mark. Centres should give candidates plenty of practice in recognising reinforcers with numbers such as *environ*, *plus de*, *moins de* etc. Q.28, for which, a number of different answers were acceptable, was well answered. The final question,

however, was found very difficult. Candidates were required here to convey the concept of competition from other sources or comprehension of the phrase *victime de son succès*. Because of the word "disappear" in the question, large numbers guessed that the card was easily lost or stolen.

French: Reading
1525/02

General Comments

The papers presented a fair test of the syllabus at all levels and examiners were able to observe a full range of performance. Centres are now familiar with the range of test types presented in the papers and candidates appear to be well prepared for the test. Examiners reported rare instances of candidates answering in the wrong language or failing to obey rubrics. Candidates would be well advised, however, to study both rubrics and examples carefully so that, for example, they are aware that a name or a letter could be used twice. (e.g. Section 1 Exercise 2 Q.10).

Candidates were generally entered for the correct tier though there were cases of candidates scoring high marks on the Foundation Tier paper who might well have benefited from tackling the Higher Tier. There were fewer weak or very weak scripts presented. Candidates at both tiers seemed to have adequate time to complete the papers in the time available. Centres should remind candidates, however, to enter their name and candidate number clearly on the front of the paper, to answer in pen (not pencil) and not to use correcting fluid. Some candidates seem to take insufficient care in writing a single letter in a box. Examiners take trouble to decipher a candidate's intentions but candidates may lose marks unnecessarily in such circumstances. It is hard to understand those candidates who leave answer boxes blank when they have nothing to lose by making a guess at the answer.

There is evidence that more candidates can now work out meanings with the help of a dictionary though there are still some howlers. (e.g. Section 2 Exercise 3 Q16).

The papers seem to have been well received by centres and none of the topics or test types was considered to be unfair to candidates.

Points of advice to future candidates:

- Write name and candidate number clearly on the front of the paper.
- Answer all questions.
- Read the rubric carefully and follow it.
- If an answer requires a single letter write only one and write it clearly.
- In open-ended answers write brief, relevant answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Generally these presented no great difficulty though it must be said that the days of the week were not universally known and there are still those who confuse *boucherie* and *boulangerie*.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

The topic of food is normally very familiar and such was proved in the performance of candidates on this exercise. The only item to cause difficulty was Q.10, probably because of a reluctance to use the name *Pierre* twice, in spite of the instruction in the rubric. A few candidates ignored the rubric entirely and simply named the items in French.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-18

This exercise usually produced high scores. Centres are now more familiar with the standard icons and the potentially troublesome *auberge de jeunesse* was relegated to the example.

Exercise 4 Questions 19-24

This is another familiar topic and answers to Qs.19-21 were usually correct. Accuracy deteriorated in Qs.22-24 and performance varied.

Exercise 5 Questions 25-30

Differentiation was becoming more evident at this stage. In Q.26 *robinet* was not generally understood as being linked to *eau*. Other vocabulary difficulties were *interdits*, *accueillis*, and *alimentation*. Those candidates who could make judicious use of their dictionary did well. The most difficult items seemed to be Q.26 and Q.30.

There were candidates who used a cross rather than a circle as instructed. This made it impossible for markers to know what they intended.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was usually well done although some candidates reversed F (Q.3) and E (Q.5).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-15

Well done on the whole although common errors were *travaille* for Q.7, *anglais* for Q.9 and *déjeuner* for Q.11. There were fewer candidates than in previous years who ignored the rubric and produced their own words.

Exercise 3 Questions 16-19

As the final exercise this discriminated well by requiring candidates to extract items of information from a longer text.

Q.16 This question required the understanding of *élève appliqué* and the mark scheme allowed many possibilities (e.g. hard-working, painstaking, etc). A substantial minority of candidates answered "wall-lamp pupil" which shows that

they are more inclined to follow a misunderstood dictionary entry rather than common sense.

Q.17 was not difficult for the attentive reader. Candidates must beware of adding incorrect or invented distorting information to an otherwise correct answer. e.g. "He wore fashionable shoes".

Q18 The simple answer here was "useful" but some candidates answered "useless" and others allowed their own feeling to dominate (e.g. "They do your head in.")

Q.19 This was a summary question for the last paragraph of the text and was generally well answered.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This exercise differentiated well and all correct responses were few.

Q.6 was often answered as *Yves* and Q7 *Gérard*.

Q.3 was found difficult either because of the difficulty of the word *hébergé* or because of a failure to connect *patron* and *vigneron*.

Examiners reported on the appalling spelling of copied names, in particular *Gérard* and *Françoise*. Candidates were not penalised for this.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates appear to be more aware now of how to tackle writing answers in French. The French is not expected to be grammatically accurate but it must be understandable. A large section "lifted" from the text is unlikely to provide an unambiguous answer and those who try to pack in as much information as possible are more likely to invalidate their answer by distortion. The best answers are succinct and make a single point clearly. Complete sentences are not demanded.

Q.9 *Qui?* was often misunderstood and the answer was given as "Biarritz". "Bernard" was also a frequent incorrect answer. "Bernard's tante" was allowed.

Q.10 "Camping" was usually mentioned somewhere and got the mark though there were examples of distorting additions referring to "work".

Q.11 Usually correct.

Q.12 Few candidates were able to draw the appropriate conclusion here. This was an intentionally difficult question designed to test that higher comprehension skill.

Q.13 Usually correct.

Q.14, Q.15 These questions were not undemanding and required thought and understanding of the text to make the correct choices.

Exercise 3 Questions 17-25

This is a testing exercise, appropriate at this level. Grammatical understanding can be a great help to matching the parts. The full range of scores on this exercise showed the range of ability of the candidates. Qs.17 and 18 were usually correct.

Exercise 4 Questions 26-29

This was an exercise requiring the candidate to formulate answers in English. Some had difficulty in restricting what they wrote to what they needed to understand. As with open-ended answers in French, the best answers were brief

and accurate. Those who tried to fit in too much often ended up invalidating their answer.

Q.26 was usually correct but sometimes the inclusion of "whispering" in the answer invalidated it.

Q.27 Again distortion was evident in additions such as "every day", "world", "places".

Q.28 Many candidates failed to answer this question well by misunderstanding *au moins* ("a month", "or less") or by clumsily or vaguely trying to express something about "culture", often leading to invalidating additions.

Q.29 Many candidates answered this question well though once again irrelevant additions took their toll.

**French: Speaking (Internal Assessment)
1525/03**

General Comments

As last year, it is pleasing to report that Centres were generally familiar with the administrative requirements and that teacher/examiners had conducted the test in a professional and efficient way.

It was pleasing to note that moderators reported fewer clerical errors than last year. In cases where marks had to be amended due to such errors in Centres, the work had to be returned for checking. Should this occur, it is vital that work is returned to moderators as speedily as possible so as to avoid delays. Centres are reminded that all work should be checked carefully prior to despatch so as to ensure that candidates receive the correct mark.

The quality of recordings was usually good and there were only a few cases of intrusive background noise. A few Centres did not announce names and/or numbers and some did not label tapes, which made moderation very difficult. Samples were usually well complied – it is appreciated how much time and effort Centres had put into this to ensure representative Centre samples. Some samples sent a helpful covering letter explaining the composition of the sample, which was much appreciated by moderators.

The standard of internal moderation in Centres was usually good. Centres can standardise before or after examining but should one group of candidates' marks be out of line with the marks given to other candidates, these must be brought in line by the Centre before sending materials to the moderator. Should changes be made, these changes must be entered by the Centre on the MS1. The moderation procedure relies on consistency of the application of the marking criteria in Centres. Regrettably, several Centres did report a few cases of poor internal moderation. This resulted in work being returned for further internal moderation, delaying final moderation. Overall, when adjustments were made to Centre marks, these were small adjustments.

Generally the standard of examining was good. Many teacher/examiners worked hard and used a variety of questioning techniques to elicit the best from candidates. There was however less querying of dubious pronunciation than last year in the role plays, which resulted in over-marking in such cases. Anglicised

pronunciation should always be queried. There were fewer cases this year of examiners disadvantaging candidates by failing to test for past, present and future time frames in the General Conversation but this still remains a problem in a few Centres.

The examination gave candidates of all the abilities opportunity to perform well and there was a wide range of achievement across Foundation and Higher Tiers. The tiers of entry were usually appropriate, and moderators reported generally that there were fewer over-optimistic Higher Tier entries. The examination itself had a good incline of difficulty across the three role plays and was seen to be appropriate and fair. Visuals were well understood by candidates, as were the instructions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Moderators reported that candidates had performed equally well across the cards, each one presenting easier and harder tasks. They were judged to be at an appropriate level of difficulty for the G, F, E candidates; they were usually marked fairly in Centres but a little leniently in cases of poor pronunciation. Centres are also reminded that if an item of vocabulary is given by the teacher/examiner, 0 (zero) should be awarded.

On Card One, most tasks were well attempted. Chicken, peas and ice cream were well known but there were many examples of poor pronunciation of *toilettes* and many found it difficult to formulate a question or use intonation to make their query.

On Card Two, the pronunciation of *tente* caused problems as it was frequently anglicised which resulted in no mark being awarded. The second, third and fourth tasks were well done, but some candidates experienced difficulties with // *y a une piscine?*

On Card Three, candidates were again aware of the correct lexical item but pronunciation was often incorrect. Many weaker candidates confused *deux* and *dix*, *heurre* was frequently mispronounced – but unfortunately often not queried by teacher/examiners. **250** proved difficult for some but all completed the last task well.

On Card Four, mispronunciation of *train* (often resembling the Spanish) were frequent and a **return ticket** was sometimes rendered as *un returner ticket* – which scored no marks, and often with English pronunciation. The third, fourth and fifth tasks were very well done.

On Card Five, *station* or *gare* were equally acceptable. Candidates were more familiar with *en voiture* than in the past but the fourth task was very poorly done and pronounced by many as “loin” in English. Task Five caused no problems.

Section 2

Again, the cards were found to be equally balanced and a fair test at the D, C level. Not all tasks required full sentences, short utterances if appropriate could score 2 marks. There was however an increased tendency to over-mark tasks in which a tense inaccuracy such as *Je réservé* or *A quelle heure fermé/fermez l'hôtel* occurred.

In tasks in which candidates do use a subject verb accord, the time frame should be appropriate and accurate for a mark of 2 to be awarded. Likewise, incorrect pronunciation can impede communication and should be queried but not fed by the teacher/examiner. Candidates overall coped well with the task which involved responding to an unprepared situation.

On Card One, candidates often failed to give a correct time frame but described room requirements well. Most communicated the notion of the hotel closing but again the time frame caused some problems on Task Three. Most were however able to cope quite well on Task Four, usually formulating an appropriate question but not always very accurately. Candidates coped well with the last task.

On Card Two, weaker candidates found Task One difficult, sometimes wanting to go to the wrong country of *anglais*. Most were able to say when they wanted to go, answers such as *demain matin* or *aujourd'hui, à quatre heures* were quite appropriate for a mark of 2. The third task proved to be the most difficult – weaker candidates merely read the cue on the card – a simple *il y a des places?* was more than adequate for a mark of 2. The formulation of the question proved difficult for weaker candidates on Task Four but nearly all candidates managed the last task well.

On Card Three, anglicised mispronunciation of *changer* was frequent on the first task. On Task Two, there was some confusion over *ouvert* and *ouvre* when used in a question formulation, and on Task Three some candidates gave answers such as *cinquante pounds*, which could have been queried. Tasks Four and Five were usually well attempted.

On Card Four, most were able to say where they worked (Task One) and say which days they worked. Despite being able to give an amount of money for Task Three, some candidates could often not finish the task with an appropriate rendering of **per hour/per day** to complete the message. On Task Four some suggested times were given but other appropriate times were also accepted. The opinion in the last task was usually tackled quite well by candidates. Most chose *c'est fatigant* or *c'est ennuyeux*, but other more interesting opinions were also offered.

On Card Five the problem of an appropriate time frame was again heard despite the use of **normalement** and many *J'ai regardé* responses were heard (maximum mark 1 point). Opinions were quite well handled and Tasks Three and Four were also approached quite well. One activity was adequate on Task Four. Task Five proved hard for some candidates – partial achievement was frequent with responses such as *Je (me) couché à 11 heures*, which showed the need to discriminate between the time frames in oral/aural skills.

Section 3

Moderators reported that fewer inappropriately entered candidates for this section of the test than last year, but there were still candidates for whom this section was a real struggle. Candidates should be able to narrate events in a past time frame on topics such as travel, food and drink, leisure activities, weather, meeting people, accidents, and special occasions to do themselves justice at this level. As last year, appropriately entered candidates for the Higher Tier were at least able to give a good framework to the story and give the necessary points, responding where necessary to factual questions, explaining points and giving options where necessary. The best accounts featured a variety of tenses and structure such as dependent and perfect infinitives at a good pace, with a pleasing use of adverbial time phrases to link the different sections of the story line. Teacher/examiners usually examined well, and played their role by asking questions where necessary. There were cases of over-questioning and also a lack of questioning; neither of which help candidates.

Generally, the cards were accessible – each had, as last year, easier sections such as food/drink, which candidates approached with confidence, but each card also presented more challenges for the more able candidates. Generally, all candidates cope well with the first person narrative, but encounter difficulties when moving to the second person singular or first person plural. The use of 'on' was hardly in evidence and this could be a useful teaching point to stress to candidates aiming for the best performances.

The sections of the cards found most difficult by candidates this year were:

Card One: *Avant le concert, le concert commence*

Card Two: *L'accident, l'arrivée du medecin*

Card Three: *À Angers, À Poitiers*

Card Four: *Plus tard, L'arrivée du medecin*

Card Five: Going to the mountains (poor link from *l'arrivée*) and *Le lendemain*

Generally, most candidates were able to give impressions quite well.

Presentation and Discussion

There was evidence of individual preparation by candidates, but regrettably one or two Centres presented a variety of topics across the Centre but not across teaching groups. Such "accounts" featured the same questioning and in the worst case identical introductions.

Most candidates, however, made a good choice of topics well matched to their linguistic abilities. Centres generally examined this section sympathetically, pitching questions at an appropriate level in the Discussion section, and they also encouraged the more able candidates to express and justify opinions. Candidates were not required to use a variety of time frames in this section of the test, in order to achieve high marks. A full range of performance was heard – most initial expositions were delivered well. As last year, the performance in the exposition phase was better than in the discussion. A hallmark of the better performances was the ability of the candidates to move away from factual

questioning of a very predictable nature to a more spontaneous and open-ended type of questioning.

The best performances heard, from candidates of all abilities, were on topics in which they had a genuine interest.

General Conversation

There was this year a reminder in the teacher's instructions booklet (placed above the topic choices) of the importance of testing time frames in this section of the test. This may not be appropriate for weaker candidates but for candidates aiming to score at least 8 for communication, it is vital to put questions that will enable candidates to answer appropriately and thus have access to the higher mark bands. Centres are reminded that there is no stipulation that each topic should feature all three time frames – they can feature in just one topic. This was less of a problem than last year, but still remains an area of concern as a failure to ask such questions can disadvantage candidates. Good practice in certain Centres features the insertion of past and future on candidates' mark sheets and ticks placed along side as a checklist.

Moderators reported a full range of performance in this section of the exam, and performances across the cards/choices of topic were equal. No one card appeared to have more difficult topics than another, there were, pleasingly, no cases of topic crossover with the Presentation topic. Cases of overlong examining were rare.

This section of the test remains an excellent means of differentiation. This is due in large part to efficient and sympathetic examining. Such examining encourages candidates of all abilities to feel confident and give of their best.

French: Speaking (External Assessment)

1525/04

General Comments

It was extremely encouraging to see how well prepared the majority of the candidates were for all sections of the Speaking tests. The role play cards, in all sections, appeared to have been accessible for the majority of candidates and the visual element in the Section 2 role play did not seem to deter candidates.

It was evident that teacher/examiners felt more comfortable with the examination and there was less correction of the candidates during the tests. There was an increased awareness of the time constraints of the test and less incidence this year of tests, which were over long.

In the Presentation and Discussion sections, it was good to hear some original topics from the candidates and it was good to note that advice given last year concerning the choice of topic matter had been taken on board.

In the General Conversation section of the test, teacher/examiners were even more aware of the criterion of different time frames and encouraged candidates to use past, present and future time frames.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1 Role Plays

The cards were seen to be balanced and accessible although each card proved to have an area of difficulty. The less able candidate was hampered by pronunciation as well as by lack of knowledge, often either failing to attempt an answer or producing a very garbled response.

Teacher/examiners should not hesitate to "nudge for elucidation". Often a candidate will give an ambiguous or partially correct answer which can perfectly correctly be "nudged" for full communication. It is only when the required lexical item is **given** by the teacher/examiner that no mark may be awarded.

In Card One the majority of candidates coped well with the first task although some found the pronunciation of *francs* difficult. The responses in the next three tasks were generally communicated clearly although there was the occasional mispronunciation of *poulet* and *petits pois*. The fourth task did not prove to be at all problematic but the final task produced a large number of anglicised responses, which could not be rewarded.

In Card Two, the pronunciation of *tente* proved to be too difficult for the weakest of candidates but the number of people was clearly communicated by the majority of candidates in Task Two. There was evidence of poor pronunciation of *nuît* in Task Three but Task Four was completed by all except the very weakest candidates. The final task proved to be the least accessible with many candidates struggling over an appropriate way of asking a question.

In Card Three, the first two tasks were clearly communicated by the majority of the candidates. Task Three proved to be the least accessible with pronunciation of *beurre* tending to become *bière*. It was pleasing to see that a large number of candidates were comfortable with the number in Task Four and Task Five was accessible to all but the very weakest candidates.

In Card Four, the first task proved inaccessible to some who were only able to produce an English pronunciation of *train*. Again, for some candidates, there were problems in the completion of the second task, where the vocabulary was unknown. The final three tasks were well completed by the vast majority of the candidates.

In Card Five the first task was successfully completed with candidates either asking for *la gare* or *la station* which were both accepted. There was some confusion with the second and third tasks but most candidates adopted a minimalist approach and communicated sufficient information. It was the pronunciation of *loin* in the fourth task which made this task apparently the most difficult for candidates. The final task was extremely accessible.

Section 2 Role Plays

Again, this year, the vast majority of candidates were willing to attempt this section of the test and were able to score some marks. It is clearly in the candidates' interest to gain as many marks as possible and they should be encouraged to take this part of the Speaking test. Each card appeared to have its own area of difficulty but the cards were deemed to be fair and even in difficulty.

It is again permissible to "nudge for elucidation" in this section of the test and it is also permissible to award full marks for a short answer that clearly fulfils the criteria. This is especially true of the "unprepared" question in each of the role plays in this section.

In the first card there were some very good answers in the first two tasks although some candidates used an inappropriate tense in the first task and could not be awarded the full two marks. In the third task the candidates correctly interpreted the icon but sometimes were unable to give a correct version of *ferme* often saying *fermé* in its place. The fourth task was generally well completed and the final task produced some minimal answers, which were correct and were awarded full marks.

In the second card, some candidates were unaware of their location and struggled with the first task. The responses were generally very good in the second task and where they were not forthcoming the teacher/examiners were excellent in encouraging an appropriate response. In the third task candidates often attempted an answer, but the weakest of the candidates resorted to reading the French cue from the card. Where candidates had absorbed the rubric the fourth task was well completed and the fifth task produced some very good responses.

In Card Three there were some excellent responses to the first task but there was also some poor pronunciation of *changer*. In the second task the icon was again clearly understood but some candidates were unable to correctly pronounce *ouvre*. There was some hesitation over *livres* in the response to the third task and some candidates produced an anglicised pronunciation of *pasport* in Task Four. In the final task most candidates responded appropriately with some teacher/examiners making the task more accessible by asking.....*pour combien de jours?* In this instance, where a lexical item, which could be used in the answer, had been provided, only one mark could be awarded.

In Card Four many candidates were able to fully complete the first task but, surprisingly, many seemed to struggle with naming the day(s) on which they worked. Again teacher/examiners were able to "nudge for elucidation" and the candidate was able to score full marks. In the third task, some candidates mispronounced *gagne*, preferring the incorrect *gagné*. In the fourth task some candidates who have part-time jobs gave their actual hours of work. The final task was answered extremely well.

In Card Five, candidates generally answered the first task well, although some made an error of time frame, *J'ai regardé la télé*. Tasks Two and Three were completed well and the fourth task produced some good answers from the majority of candidates and some excellent answers from the more able. In the final task, there were again some very good answers, some of which did not contain the reflexive verb, proving that the candidate had been listening to the teacher/examiner's prompt.

Section 3 Role Plays

It was pleasing to see that only a very small minority of teacher/examiners did not interact with the candidate in this role play. The cards were seen to be balanced and fair, and it seemed that Centres had entered candidates for this tier of the examination correctly. Within that candidature, however, there were many candidates who were unable to cope with expressing themselves in the past and used a combination of past and present tenses.

In the first card the candidates coped successfully with the whole role play, but especially well with the notion of the concert itself and with the eating and drinking episodes contained in the outline. If there was any area of difficulty, it was with the episode before the concert and the *difficile de bouger* prompt. The most able candidates coped well with these elements.

In the second card there was some familiar vocabulary to start the role play and the majority of candidates coped well with the first third of the prompts. There was some difficulty in expressing the cause of the accident and some confusion about the exact reason for going to hospital. Candidates were able to use their imagination and develop the notion due largely to the questioning from the teacher/examiner. The final part of the role play was well completed by the majority of candidates.

In Card Three the candidates coped well with the journey and the activities on board ship. A significant number of candidates did not mention the details of activities on the beach but were generally prompted to do so by the teacher/examiner. The most able gave some very imaginative accounts of activities in Angers and Poitiers but the less able gave a less full rendering of the visit and did not add in any imaginative detail.

In Card Four the more able gave an excellent account of the situation while the less able were confused by the setting and left out significant details. Again the interaction of the teacher/examiner was vital in drawing out the detail required. There was some confusion in some candidates about the exact nature of the illness and the most able coped with the notion of *payer un peu plus* at the end of this card.

In Card Five candidates again coped well with the initial icons and with the plane flight and the activities undertaken on board the plane. The majority of candidates coped with the skiing section, which followed, but again some questioning from the teacher/examiner elicited more detail. The meal was well described and the most able gave a flowing account of the birthday celebrations and the presents received. Among the less able candidates, this section was almost completely ignored.

Presentation and Discussion

In the third year of the examination, there were many excellent presentation and discussion sections from candidates. This section of the test is an ideal means for a candidate to talk about something which has personal interest and about which they can talk freely. It was encouraging to see that there were very few presentations, which were not followed by discussion with the teacher/examiner.

The vast majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the minute-long Presentation phase of this section and very few were over long. There were fewer instances of Presentations that appeared to be "read" and in these cases the intonation and pronunciation suffered during the Presentation phase. Among some of the less able candidates the Presentation phase was very short and showed little, if any, signs of preparation and Discussion, despite the best efforts of the teacher/examiner, was at best two or three short responses.

The questions from the teacher/examiner elicited more information and opinions from the candidates and allowed the candidates to access the higher marks. As teacher/examiners progressed from the closed questions to more open-ended questions, the more able candidates grew in confidence.

It was encouraging to see just how prepared teacher/examiners were for this section of the examination. There was a good response to the topic presented by the candidates and it was possible to hear notes being made during the presentation by the teacher/examiner.

General Conversation

The good practice of last year continued into this year and only in an extremely few cases were the topics at the bottom of the role play card not adhered to. Again there was only a handful of candidates who were not asked to discuss three topics and generally the teacher/examiners conducted this section of the test in a sympathetic and encouraging way.

The good practice of starting with "closed" questioning and progressing to "open ended" questioning was obvious in the majority of Centres. In this way candidates grew in confidence and were able to achieve their potential through the skilful examining. Only in a minority of cases did teacher/examiners slavishly follow all the questions, asked in exactly the same order and ignore what the candidate was saying in response.

Generally speaking, teacher/examiners had absorbed the advice from last year's report and had included opportunities for their candidates to demonstrate knowledge of past, present and future time frames. But there were still a very few teacher/examiners who had not heeded this advice and whose candidates were not able to access the higher mark bands in this section of the exam. **It is vital that the teacher/examiner does encourage the use of past, present and future time frames in this section of the test.**

French: Writing
1525/05

General Comments

The general impression of examiners was that the vast majority of candidates were entered for the tier appropriate to their ability. It was thought that a small proportion of Foundation Tier candidates were so successful that they might have been able to meet the challenge of the Higher Tier paper. Rubrics regarding length of answers in Sections 2 and 3 were largely respected; there were far fewer very long answers, especially at Section 3. The use of the dictionary remains a great problem of some. Knowing how to use the dictionary is essential; its mere availability cannot replace the process of learning and committing to memory vocabulary and structures.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Q.1 Candidates largely confined their answers to items suggested by the pictures. As a result they were more successful than candidates in previous years who had taken the pictures as mere examples. All items of food and clothing were also accepted. The dictionary was generally well-used.

Q.2 The majority of candidates had few problems determining what was required by the visual clues. However, uncertainty about English spellings caused a number of students to look up 'hover', thus providing *planer/planeur* rather than *aspirateur*. The dictionary was just as unhelpful to those who looked up 'vacuum' and found *le vide*.

Some candidates did find difficulty in following the sequence of the message; they simply tried to find a word to match the picture, which led them to give inappropriate answers e.g. *quelquefois je fais la cuisine pour mes vêtements*.

In the case of the two people pictured, items (v) and (viii), any word referring to a member of the family or to an acquaintance was accepted, provided that the first was female and the second male.

The final tasks provided the most challenge; a verb and a noun were expected for one mark in each of the last two items e.g. *J'aime faire les courses, Je lave la voiture*.

In the final item there was again some evidence of faulty dictionary use e.g. *Je propre la voiture*.

Q.3 Complete sentences are expected for each task for the award of 2 marks. Candidates who use note form or who do not use appropriate verb forms can still achieve 1 mark. The question was well handled by the majority of C/D candidates, who were able to convey a fairly coherent portrait of the person chosen. Some chose to write about themselves, such answers were acceptable. However, there were some rather predictable errors especially amongst the E/F/G candidates. In the first task about the person's age, *être* was commonly used. Mis-copying of *cheveux* was quite frequent in answers to the second task, particularly common was *chevaux*. The third task was quite often answered with an adjective describing physique rather than character. *Passe-temps* in the

fourth task was thought by some to refer to the weather e.g. *il préfère le soleil*. In the final tasks, *travail/école*, it was not unusual to see *elle va à l'école en bus*. Some revealed a lack of knowledge of possessive adjectives; sentences beginning *elle cheveux, il passe-temps* were all too common. A few weak candidates were unable to sustain correct use of the personal pronoun, some sentences beginning *je* others *elle*.

Section 2

Both questions were popular with candidates; there seemed to be an approximate 50% take up for each. The questions were considered to offer a similar degree of challenge, requiring the range of tense use expected for success at grade C level.

It is vital, however, that candidates read carefully the details of question tasks. In the case of both of the options, there were a significant few who, recognising some familiar details in the rubric, produced an answer which did not address the essential points e.g. an account solely about the previous year's visit to Grenoble or about last Christmas. Such responses rarely incorporated references to the future. These candidates often received a low score, despite the fact that the overall quality of French was quite good.

As has been the case in the previous two years of the examination, at Foundation Tier, there were many blank pages. For a significant proportion of the Foundation Tier entry, this section is considered to be beyond their capabilities and is left unanswered. This is unfortunate, as marks can be gained for partial answers and the additional marks might alter the eventual points total.

Q.1 There were many successful responses from both Foundation and Higher Tier candidates. However, as has been mentioned above, attention to the detail of the tasks is vital. The tasks are designed to give the opportunity to display knowledge of a range of tense. Even amongst those who were confining themselves to the point, there were a significant number who confused ***vous allez voyager*** with ***vous avez voyagé*** in the first task. It was clear from a number of scripts that some candidates have a shaky knowledge of prepositions, exposed here both in the means of transport e.g. *dans le train, sur l'avion...* and in the timing of the journey *...sur mardi...à le soir...* Moreover, confusion existed in some minds over the appropriate noun *voyage/journée* and the relevant verb *voyager/travailler*. Some forfeited a mark here as they omitted reference to ***quand***.

Responses to the second tasks were largely successful, as the well known ***je voudrais*** was sufficient to establish some measure of communication. A variety of activities other than those suggested by the brochure were accepted, even ***je voudrais aller à la plage***; it is after all not a test of geography.

Not all were capable of giving a reason, a task which does not necessarily require ***parce que/car...*** Inevitably the Higher Tier candidates were a little more adept at offering a range of explanations, often in a style which reflected the greater variety of language at their disposal e.g. *parce que cela me plaît... parce que je l'ai déjà fait et je l'ai trouvé sensationnel...* Students tend to use a rather narrow range of adjectives to describe their attitudes/opinions, *intéressant, ennuyeux, barbant, amusant, utile* being amongst the most popular. For some reason this year there were many incorrect versions, *ennuyeuseuse*, blindly

copied from the dictionary and more significantly *ennuyant* and *amusement*, the latter being frequent.

A reference to an activity during last year's holiday was enough to gain 2 marks in the fourth task; it did not need to be one of those in the brochure. However, the verb did need to be a recognisable attempt at the perfect tense. Too many offer *je visité...je allé... je joué...* Whatever their tier entry, candidates must be able to write correctly in the perfect tense if they are to gain grades above D. Although the final task was omitted by some of the weaker candidates, it was pleasing to note that a high proportion of candidates could formulate a question. To qualify for 2 marks, candidates had to use one of the three recognisable forms of the interrogative i.e. inversion, an interrogative adverb/adjective or a statement followed by a question mark; only in the latter case was the question mark essential for the award of 2 marks.

Q.2 For those who recognise the tense required, this proved to be an easy start. For those needing to search the dictionary for vocabulary for festive food, an immediate problem faced them i.e. *La Turquie*.

The second task, although omitted by a significant minority, provided the opportunity for comments such as *j'aime bien l'ambiance...j'aime être avec ma famille...* as well as more selfish thoughts...*j'aime recevoir les cadeaux*.

It was expected that candidates would make some attempt at the notion of the future; many did ...*j'espère visiter...on va voyager...j'ai l'intention de rester...nous irons...* There were many references to *mes grandparents* (sic). As with the first task of the first question, *vous allez passer* became *vous avez passé* in the minds of some candidates.

Conclusions were also leapt to in the fourth task; such responses as *je voudrais un ordinateur et un VTT* were quite frequent. Those who correctly stated *j'ai acheté...* often went on to refer to the eventual recipient. It was disappointing, however, to see so many mis-copyings of *cadeaux*.

Again there were many appropriately asked questions, including some which were legitimate adaptations of the tasks of the question, e.g. *Où vas-tu passer Noël? ... Qu'est-ce que tu as acheté?...*

Section 3

There was a marginal preference for the second question.

Q.1 While there were some well thought out answers to this question, including a number of refreshing accounts which challenged the concept, there were also many rather ordinary accounts from candidates who largely confined themselves to the present tense descriptions of their eating habits and their favourite sports. *Régime* was misunderstood by a significant number who thought that it referred to 'routine'.

The more successful candidates were those who could explain the reasons for having a healthy life-style using a variety of tense and more complex structures in the process.

One student talking of dance explained *si je ne la faisais pas je ne serais pas du tout en forme...* Others offered variously... *parce qu'on peut faire face aux maladies... on peut prendre plaisir à la vie... à l'avenir, j'espère que tout le monde fera du sport... il y aura une génération qui sera en bonne forme... si on ne mange pas assez de fruits on aura la peau terne...* Such candidates made proficient use of adverbs of time and manner *d'habitude, normalement, de temps en temps, heureusement*, which further enhanced their accounts.

There are 6 marks available for quality of language, too many students are far too repetitive in their use of simple, familiar vocabulary to qualify for more than 2 of these marks; they need to develop the confidence to use a wider range of vocabulary and structure.

Q.2 There were many coherent accounts of experience in the workplace. The best answers came from those students who were able to express their feelings and explain why they felt as they did. Their work revealed a range of tense and variety of complex structure which was both effective and pleasing. A number of examiners noted, however, that there were few who used the imperfect tense when describing their daily work routine. Not all wrote approvingly of their experiences, frequent complaints included *mon patron était désagréable, la journée était très longue, le salaire n'était pas très bon, je ne le ferais pas à l'avenir...* A good proportion went on to comment on how the experience might influence their decision about what to do in the future.

Less successful were those who tediously described the routine of getting up, getting ready, travelling to work and carrying out their duties, all punctuated with detailed timings and concluding *c'était fatigant* with little else by way of impressions.

As with many collective nouns, students assume that they require a plural verb, this was certainly the case with *le personnel*, even some of the abler students wrote *le personnel étaient sympa...*

Conclusion

A significant proportion of the candidates lack a measure of security when handling partitive articles, adjectives, prepositions and verb forms; an improvement in control of these aspects of language would make a considerable difference to the outcome. Although there was a marked improvement in terms of length of response in Sections 2 and 3, there are still far too many students who begin their letters/accounts with well rehearsed sentences about matters not particularly relevant to the subject matter e.g. *merci de ta lettre que j'ai reçue il y a une semaine, je m'excuse etc* There is often a great contrast between the accuracy of these statements and the original use of language required by the details of the tasks. Candidates should be advised that these pre-learnt comments do not attract high marks.

French: Written Coursework 1525/06

General Comments

The overall quality of the coursework presented for moderation was broadly similar to last year. The entry showed an increase of approximately 10%.

The two previous reports on the 1998 and 1999 examination give a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all aspects of coursework.

Those teachers who had taken the trouble to read and thoroughly digest the content of each of these two reports, as well as the guidance booklet, were at a distinct advantage in the setting of suitable tasks, advising their candidates, applying the assessment criteria and carrying out the administrative procedures.

Moderators were again extremely appreciative of the meticulous care many Centres had taken to ensure that the moderation process went as smoothly as possible. Careful internal moderation had clearly taken place to provide a single and reliable order of merit. A compilation of imaginative and differentiated tasks appropriate for each of the three grade ranges was enclosed with the samples of work. On the assessment forms each Area of Experience (A to E) was clearly stated and candidates had written out the full task specification before responding to the task. Work was well set out and cross referenced with very thoughtful and helpful teacher comments setting out the context in which the assessment was made. The three titles on the two cover sheets and the pieces of coursework were all in the same order. All source details including specific page numbers of textbooks and photocopies of materials used were enclosed.

Originality and imagination were the hallmark of the best assignments in which candidates displayed a very high level of refinement, precision and accuracy. At the other end of the ability range, the weakest candidates were often able to produce coherent pieces of work with appropriate teacher encouragement and guidance.

Despite the advice in previous reports many candidates were still losing marks through typing errors.

Comments on Individual Sections

Coursework Tasks

A number of Centres were still setting tasks in English, which is contrary to National Curriculum principles.

The titles themselves were often vague, and all-embracing – *Moi et ma famille, Ma maison, Mon collègue*.

At D/C grade range it would be much more helpful to ask for specific details in sub-tasks introduced by bullet points:

Ecrivez un article d'environ 100 mots en Français sur votre collègue

Donnez les détails suivants:

- *Depuis combien d'années vous êtes au collègue*
- *Une description du collègue (le bâtiment, l'uniforme, la journée scolaire)*
- *Quelle matière vous aimez le plus et pourquoi*
- *Un voyage scolaire que vous avez fait*
- *Quand vous allez quitter l'école*

Such a task specification should encourage candidates to make appropriate use of paragraphs and provide a structure to the response. It should also guide candidates to use three different time frames and to express an opinion. The framework should elicit a more individual approach and a further advantage is that the inevitable long list of subjects studied should be avoided.

At B/A grade range task specifications should have more substance than, for example. "*Mes Vacances*";

Vous avez passé des vacances à l'étranger. Ecrivez un reportage d'environ 150 mots en français

- *Expliquez où vous êtes allé*
- *Donnez vos réactions et vos impressions du pays*
- *Dites si vous préférez les vacances en Grande Bretagne ou les vacances à l'étranger*
- *Donnez les raisons de votre choix*

This type of task specification should encourage candidates' creative use of language and expression of their own ideas, attitudes and opinions. There should be ample scope for candidates to justify their own points of view. Whilst bearing the above principles in mind, teachers can, of course, be much more adventurous in their approach. Far too many Centres set exceedingly banal topics. Authenticity seems to have disappeared completely. What used to be a genuine account of, for example, work experience, turned up as a fairly rigid exercise on dates, times, travel arrangements, activities at work and an opinion about the experience, with each candidate following exactly the same format – and this at B/A level. Many teachers seem to feel that giving freer rein to individuality and creativity will inevitably mean loss of control and quality. It is the teacher who can arouse and stimulate the candidate's imagination by tasks which kindle individual interests, but which are nevertheless rigorous in requirements and challenging. Much more use could have been made of computer graphics and unexpected immediate issues. Across all levels there was still a distinct lack of humour, cheerfulness and colour.

Level Entry

(a) Word count

Many Centres still failed to check the number of words used and entered a piece of work at the wrong level. When moderated the piece has to be assessed at a lower level, often invalidating the order of merit, which will lead to a request for reassessment, alternatively several other candidates may have their marks reduced as a consequence which may cause injustices.

English names and figures do not form part of the word count. In letters the word count starts with the salutation.

(b) Type of Language

(i) GFE grade range

At the upper end there will be a series of short simple sentences on familiar topics. They will consist of subject, verb, sometimes object plus possibly time/place references. Some of the sentences may be linked with *et*.

(ii) DC grade range.

The sentences will be linked, the ideas structured and opinions will be expressed. At the upper end there is likely to be a range of tenses.

Je voulais aller en France donc j'ai quitté la maison à 8h. Une heure plus tard j'ai pris le train pour voyager à Douvres....

The vocabulary and language structures will be drawn from the Defined Content.

(iii) BA grade range

The sentences will consist of longer sequences of sustained and coherent language and they will often contain a subordinate clause or another verbal construction. Candidates will make use of a wider range of vocabulary than what is in the Defined Content, grammar and structures will be drawn from all three sections.

Puisque ma famille avait décidé de faire une excursion en France nous nous sommes mis en route de bonne heure. Une fois arrivés à la gare, nous avons pris le train et après un voyage interminable nous sommes enfin arrivés à Douvres, où le bateau nous attendait.

Source material and teacher assistance.

This has been fully discussed in the 1999 Report. Unfortunately it was still obvious that in some Centres work from the majority of candidates, or from the candidates in one or more teaching groups, was based heavily on common source material. This resulted in extreme cases in some candidates producing almost identical pieces of work. Moderators disregard the common elements and make a judgement on what is left, which very often amounts to a very basic response to the title. Clearly the marks will have to be reduced. Centres should therefore consider very carefully whether it is in the best interest of their candidates to supply them with 'help sheets' or model answers. In all cases such items should be declared as source material and should be sent to the moderator with the sample. Brainstorming has the same effect and discourages candidates from making a personal response.

Teachers should make it clear to their pupils from the start how they can best make use of any sources to produce a piece of work which is really their own.

Centres are again reminded that their candidates must be instructed to acknowledge copied material by enclosing it in quotation marks as a matter of routine at the time of writing. It is impossible to carry out this operation retrospectively months after the piece has been written.

Candidates may, of course, adapt material, manipulate the language, and develop the content.

It is perhaps worth repeating the potential danger of setting a letter of application task to more able candidates. This year, as in previous years, the vast majority of candidates simply copied out quantities of text, substituted short phrases or closely followed a model. Such responses were down-graded to GFE grade range during the moderation process.

A few candidates, however, were able to personalise their letters by relating the application to previous/present experience, highlighting personal qualities, competencies and interests and drawing attention to their future aspirations. They were also able to justify why they felt that were suitable for the post.

Application of the Assessment Criteria

(a) Content

At GFE level almost all of the content must be reasonably coherent for the award of 2 marks. Partial accomplishment of the task or an increased measure of incoherence will reduce the mark to 1.

At D/C grade range an essential element of the task should be to elicit personal opinions. For full marks to be awarded the content must be relevant to the task and be coherent. Lower marks should be awarded if the message is obscured by ambiguities or omissions.

At B/A grade range candidates must demonstrate their ability to communicate clearly feelings, attitudes and reasons and to justify ideas and points of view. A simple '*c'était fantastique*' does not fulfil this requirement.

Candidates should only be awarded full marks for content if they answer the question relevantly and if they communicate the subject matter in a clear and connected manner. The marks should be reduced if there is overlong scene setting or other "padding". There must be a clear response in attitude/feelings to what they are writing about. Minor irrelevance may be tolerated but the overall impression must be of a confident and purposeful piece of writing.

(b) Presentation.

At D/C grade range a letter should contain all features of etiquette: a town or village in the country of origin, the date and a satisfactory attempt at a salutation and valediction.

At GFE grade range it is expected that at least two of these features will be present in a letter. However, in post cards, omissions may be ignored as the only essential feature required in real life is the date.

Teachers should be mindful that writing in appropriate paragraphs should be a characteristic feature of the CD grade range and if paragraphs are lacking then the presentation mark should not be awarded.

(c) Accuracy, quality of language.

At D/C grade range if there is only very limited verbal use, then the restricted range must briefly and reasonably be taken into account and 1 mark should be awarded rather than 2 even though the verb forms are correct.

At B/A grade range the marks for quality of language tended to be over-generous in many Centres. Marks should be awarded for a wider range of vocabulary and idiom and more complex structures; subordinating conjunctions beyond those listed in the Defined Content e.g. *tandis que, lorsque, puisque, aussitôt que, dès que*; present participles; perfect infinitives; infinitives used after *pour, sans, au lieu de, avant de, sur le point de, en train de*; a greater variety of tense usage to include the pluperfect, conditional and conditional perfect; direct speech; indirect speech questions; indirect commands; inversion after direct speech and *peut-être*; contrast of tenses; use of perfect tense for reaction; *que/comme/quel* in

exclamations; negatives and idioms other than the standard ones – *nulle part, en avoir marre, faire la grasse matinée*. This list is not prescriptive nor exhaustive but is merely a guide to language enhancement.

If the language does not rise above the routine 'safe' French usually produced at D/C grade range, then no marks should be awarded.

Administration

It was disappointing to note that there was again a significant number of arithmetical and transcription errors. Some of these errors occurred as a result of internal moderations, when marks were changed on the coversheets but not on the MSI. Once again requests to check the rest of the coursework marks resulted in the form usually being returned without any further errors being detected. It is essential that Centres accept their responsibility for carrying out this further check as negligence to do so may well mean that candidates receive an inappropriate grade. Approximately 50% of errors found by moderators were in the candidates' favour. Centres may well bear this in mind in future and appoint an independent checker to verify that the marks on the MS1 are correct before it is despatched.

Most Centres did their utmost to meet deadlines and there was a prompt response to request for additional information or material. One of the most successful and gratifying aspects of this year's moderation process had been the willingness of Centres to help moderators to reach a fair decision about their candidates' performance.

The lack of effective internal moderation again led to a reassessment of some candidates' marks in a number of Centres. Most Centres were grateful that moderators allowed them to take steps to avoid some of their candidates being disadvantaged. It is fully recognised, however, that reassessment is an onerous task and moderators consider carefully any other available option before they make such a request.

Centres seemed to be aware of the requirement to submit 3 pieces of work each on a different area of experience and infringement was rare.

The concept that at Grade C and above candidates must show evidence of an ability to use present, past and future time frames without ambiguity was not widely appreciated. Occasionally further samples had to be requested to provide the necessary evidence.

During the Programme of Study (PoS) pupils should produce different types of written language. All candidates in a few teaching group submitted the same three identical types of writing e.g. three formal letters, three personal responses – *Moi et ma famille, Ma ville, Mon collègue*. This suggested that there had been very little variety of writing activities and moderators occasionally had to ask for evidence that candidates had in fact been engaged on some other different types of writing activities during the PoS.

On the coversheet teachers must indicate the level of help and advice they have provided in presentation and planning and must comment briefly on the work

and the basis for the assessment given. Some Centres simply wrote "as per OCR guidelines". This is not helpful as the parameters set down are fairly broad and Centres need to be more explicit.

Occasionally Centres indicated that they were not sure that the work assessed was solely that of the candidate concerned. Such work should not be submitted, as it is the Centre's responsibility to be satisfied that there has been no contravention of this regulation. Sufficient work should take place under direct supervision to allow the teachers concerned to authenticate each candidate's work with confidence.

There is no need for teachers to copy out the same information on each candidate's coversheets. One overall statement with details of an individual teacher's or Centre's 'modus operandi' will suffice.

Centres should send all documentation in candidate order with samples and forms WMS 151 and 152 attached together with a paper clip or in an open ended plastic folder. Plastic wallets are difficult to handle and are not popular with moderators.

Conclusion

Very many candidates had prepared and written their coursework with obvious interest and care and there can now be no doubt of the motivating influence of the coursework component.

Teachers too have been unstinting in their commitment to provide the support and guidance for their candidates during the learning process, yet have been able to assess the work objectively. Although this dual role which teachers play is difficult, most teachers were able to separate these differing functions successfully and deserve praise. It is fully recognised that without their tireless efforts, coursework would not be such a popular and successful option.

Although the grade boundaries for this component have remained constant since 1998, it is possible that they may be altered in future.

French: Listening (Short Course) 3525/01

See comments for 1525/01 (Full Course)

French: Reading (Short Course) 3525/02

General Comments

The exercises in the Short Course are largely taken from the full papers. The comments for 1525/02, therefore, are broadly applicable to the performance of candidates in the Short Course. Only differences are commented on below. Very few candidates tackled the Higher Tier paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section One

Exercise 1

Q.3 There was confusion between *à droite* and *tout droit* here, leading to a substantial number of candidates choosing C.

Q.4 Some confusion between *escalier* and *ascenseur*.

Q.5 Even more Short Course candidates than those taking the full course seemed to be unsure of the days of the week in French.

French: Speaking (Short Course) 3525/03

General Comments

The entry this year for the Short Course was very similar to last year's, as was the overall performance of candidates. Most candidates, as last year, were entered at the Foundation Tier.

The majority of Centres conducted the test well and were generally familiar with the assessment criteria. The assessment of candidates was usually rather generous due to a tendency to accept anglicised pronunciation in the role plays. In the General Conversation assessment was usually consistent, but again somewhat generous in most Centres.

Please see the Full Course report for further comments of a general nature which are also applicable to the Short Course.

Comments on Individual Questions

Role Plays

Section 1

Please see Full Course Report

Card 1 (see Full Course Card 1)

Card 2 (see Full Course Card 2)

Card 3 (see Full Course Card 4)

Section 2

Please see Full Course Report

Card 1 (see Full Course Card 1)

Card 2 (see Full Course Card 4)

Card 3 (see Full Course Card 5)

Section 3

Please see Full Course Report

Card 1 (see Full Course Card 1)

Card 2 (see Full Course Card 3)

Card 3 (see Full Course Card 5)

General Conversation

As last year, the range of performance varied from the very weak to competent. Such candidates could respond well to predictable questions especially when rephrased. Candidates coped a little better on Area D this year but performance on Area D topics was still inferior to the standard heard on Area B.

Please see the Full Course report for comments referring to the need to include questions which elicit the use of different time frames for candidates arriving at the higher mark bands in the General Conversation.

French: Speaking (Short Course) 3525/04

Section 1 Role Plays

In addition to the comments already made in the Full Course Report to Centres, candidates found the pronunciation of many key words very difficult. Candidates were willing to give their best, but struggled with *poulet*, *petits pois* and *toilettes* (as in the Full Course).

The Short Course candidates also struggled with the pronunciation of *train* and with the concept of a return ticket. In the last card there was confusion between *tente* and *trente* and also some poor pronunciation of *piscine* in the final task.

Section 2 Role Plays

In addition to the comments already made in the Full Course Report to Centres, candidates found the pronunciation of some key concepts beyond them and in some cases struggled with the interpretation of the icon.

The candidates found the notion of reserving a room difficult and found *l'hôtel ferme à.....* very difficult and only the most able succeeded here. Surprisingly they found the days of the week difficult but coped well with the times and also with opinions.

In the last card, the first task was again perceived as very difficult as was the icon, but again the opinion was well expressed by the majority of candidates.

Section 3 Role Plays

There were few candidates entered for the Higher Tier of the Short Course examination. The comments made in the Full Course report apply to the Short Course candidates.

Presentation and Discussion

The comments made in the Full Course report apply to the Short Course candidates.

General Conversation

While the comments made in the Full Course Report do apply to the Short Course candidates, there was a marked difference in performance, which not even the skilful examining of the teacher/examiners could avert.

The candidates' performance in the topic from Area B was nearly always better than the conversation elicited from Area D.

French: Writing (Short Course) 3525/05

General Comments

The overall standard of work on this course remains low. A very high proportion of Foundation Tier candidates either do not attempt Section 2 or write very little, even copying the stimulus. The number of Higher Tier candidates is minimal.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Q.1 The majority of candidates were able to gain some marks. In the first task, there were many who used a country rather than an adjective; provided that this was in French, a mark was awarded. The following two tasks were relatively easy marks. In the fourth task, as with the Full Course, many offered a physical description, including *joli*, which every year is misused. In the final tasks, again reflecting a similar item on the Full Course, some candidates offered a comment about the weather.

Q.2 Complete sentences are expected. A relatively small number of candidates were able to write effectively; most responding as in the first task with comments such as *ma maison grand*. A common misunderstanding was that the situation of the house was required *la maison est en ville*. Such answers were awarded 1 mark.

Some could identify the rooms of the house, usually in a simple list. However, very few could say where their bedrooms were, in answer to the third task. A fair attempt was made at giving the colour of the room, but again there were careless errors *ma chambre est blue*.

In the final task, lists rather than sentences identified some of the relevant items of furniture.

Section 2

A very large number of the Foundation Tier candidates did not attempt this section. Of those who did the majority found great difficulty in producing any coherent and relevant comments. Some appeared unprepared for this part of the examination.

For comments about the questions please see the Full Course report.

Section 3

There were few entries for this paper. None really demonstrated the control and range of language expected at this level.

**French: Written Coursework (Short Course)
3525/06**

See comments for 1525/06 (Full Course).

UCLES

French
(Syllabus Code:1525)

The percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Percentage in Grade	8.2	14.5	17.7	26.2	17.6	9.6	4.4	1.5	0.3
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	8.2	22.7	40.4	66.6	84.2	93.8	98.2	99.7	100

These statistics are correct at the time of publication.

The total entry for the examination was 53 295 candidates.

Short Course
(Syllabus Code:3525)

The percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Percentage in Grade	0.1	0.4	0.9	14.3	24.4	26.5	20.7	10.8	1.9
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	0.1	0.5	1.4	15.7	40.1	66.6	87.3	98.1	100

These statistics are correct at time of publication.

The total entry for the examination was 2 472 candidates.

GCSE Grade	Points
A*	30-32
A	26-29
B	22-25
C	18-21
D	14-17
E	10-13
F	6-9
G	2-5
U	0-1

Grades are by points aggregation, whatever the option route.

French 1525

Grade Threshold Marks

Candidates' performances were assessed in each of the components separately. Then, within each component, the minimum performance (the threshold mark) was determined by the grades appropriate to each tier.

Provided that a candidate's mark was at or above a grade threshold mark for that tier, the mark was converted to points. The points for all four components were then aggregated and this points total translated to a grade in accordance with the conversion table.

Grade	Points	Listening		Reading		Speaking Internal		Speaking External		Writing Paper		Writing CW
		F	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	
A*	8	N/A	45	N/A	43	N/A	143	N/A	143	N/A	46	43
A	7	N/A	38	N/A	35	N/A	138	N/A	138	N/A	39	40
B	6	N/A	29	N/A	27	N/A	133	N/A	133	N/A	29	32
C	5	38	21	37	19	29	128	29	128	38	19	24
D	4	31	16	31	13	23	121	23	121	31	12	20
E	3	24	13	25	10	17	117	17	117	25	8	16
F	2	18	N/A	19	N/A	11	N/A	11	N/A	19	N/A	12
G	1	12	N/A	13	N/A	5	N/A	5	N/A	13	N/A	8

Short Course 3525

Grade	Points	Listening		Reading		Speaking Internal		Speaking External		Writing Paper		Writing CW
		F	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	
A*	8	N/A	23	N/A	23	N/A	136	N/A	136	N/A	23	43
A	7	N/A	19	N/A	19	N/A	131	N/A	131	N/A	20	40
B	6	N/A	15	N/A	15	N/A	126	N/A	126	N/A	15	32
C	5	20	11	20	11	23	121	23	121	19	10	24
D	4	17	7	17	7	18	116	18	116	16	7	20
E	3	14	5	14	5	13	113	13	113	13	5	16
F	2	11	N/A	11	N/A	9	N/A	9	N/A	10	N/A	12
G	1	8	N/A	8	N/A	5	N/A	5	N/A	7	N/A	8