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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**



FRENCH

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Grade thresholds taken for Syllabus 9716 (French) in the November 2005 examination.

| | maximum mark available | minimum mark required for grade: | | |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|----|----|
| | | A | B | E |
| Component 1 | 100 | 78 | 68 | 46 |
| Component 2 | 70 | 47 | 42 | 24 |
| Component 3 | 40 | 32 | 28 | 17 |
| Component 4 | 75 | 50 | 46 | 34 |

The thresholds (minimum marks) for Grades C and D are normally set by dividing the mark range between the B and the E thresholds into three. For example, if the difference between the B and the E threshold is 24 marks, the C threshold is set 8 marks below the B threshold and the D threshold is set another 8 marks down. If dividing the interval by three results in a fraction of a mark, then the threshold is normally rounded down.

Grade Thresholds are published for all GCE A/AS and IGCSE subjects where a corresponding mark scheme is available.

Boundaries for 8670 and 8682 AS Level are lower than for the A Level syllabus.

Papers 8682/01 and 9716/01
Speaking

General comments

Centres are to be congratulated on their efforts to cope with the requirements of this examination. Commendable efforts were made in the face of power cuts and inadequate equipment to give candidates every chance to do well. Generally, Centres and candidates alike have made a good attempt at this level of examination.

Before beginning this examination, Examiners should familiarise themselves thoroughly with its requirements by reading the component description in the syllabus booklet together with the mark scheme, and should take careful note of the timings.

Poor recordings were in the minority, though some tapes suffered from background noise. Centres need to make sure that a quiet place is available for recording, where examinations will not be disturbed by external noise. Tape recorders should be tried out beforehand to make sure that recordings will be audible. Examiner and candidate should both be clearly audible, so it is important to consider the appropriate position of the microphone – it should slightly favour candidates, whose voices tend to be quieter than those of Examiners.

Since the examination should last approximately 20 minutes, only two candidates should be recorded per side of a 90 minute cassette, and only one candidate per side of a 60 minute cassette – it is disruptive and disturbing to a candidate to turn over a cassette in mid-examination, and parts of the examination are lost in the process.

Once a candidate's examination has begun, the cassette should not be paused or stopped – it should run without interruption until the end of that candidate's examination.

Labelling of samples was generally good, although Moderators still receive cassettes with no information at all written on labels. It is important to label each cassette and box with details of the Centre, the syllabus, and which candidates have been recorded on which side – this makes the task of the Moderator considerably easier. Samples were generally well chosen to cover the range, but Examiners should note that it is preferable to spread the sample as evenly as possible throughout the range, rather than sending the work of two candidates on the same mark.

The correct paperwork was generally submitted, though in a number of cases the Moderator's copy of the MS1 was not included. Moderators were therefore unable to check the transcription of marks. There were also a number of clerical errors in both addition and transcription of marks this year. Centres are responsible for this and should ensure that marks are checked before the final submission, and that Working mark sheets and the Moderator copy of the MS1 are included with the cassettes, together with any other relevant paperwork.

Topic presentation

There was a good variety of topics chosen by candidates, most connected in some way with francophone culture, but it is noticeable that candidates who choose a global topic such as *Energie, La drogue, Les jeunes, L'environnement*, frequently fail to relate this in any way to francophone culture, and their content mark must then be halved. Candidates would be better advised to choose one aspect of such a topic which *can* be related to contemporary society either in France or in another francophone culture, rather than trying to deal with such a broad topic in 3 to 3½ minutes.

Candidates should not be permitted to continue with their presentation for more than 3½ minutes and Examiners should be prepared to interrupt them at this point and begin asking questions. Candidates frequently end their presentations with a question to the Examiner, which is one way of ensuring that they remember to ask a question! They should, however, be discouraged from sprinkling questions throughout their presentation, and Examiners in such cases should restrict any response on their part. There are no criteria for rewarding questions during the presentation – these **only** appear in the criteria for the conversation sections – and the structure of the examination is altered by such extension of the presentation, often leaving little time for the Examiner to direct and develop the topic conversation.

A few topics this year were of a rather basic level: candidates need to ensure that they are not merely relating a series of events (e.g. *Mes vacances*) but are offering ideas and opinions and sufficient material for subsequent discussion.

Conversation sections

In the conversation sections, many Examiners achieved a very natural conversational style, while allowing candidates every opportunity to express and defend points of view. It must be remembered that the role of the Examiner is to draw candidates out and enable them to express themselves, and that therefore conversational topics should be tailored according to the interests of each individual candidate. More than one topic area should be covered in the general conversation section, and this should be different from that chosen by the candidate for his/her presentation. The aim should be a genuine conversation and discussion, not merely a series of questions answered by the candidate with prepared material. Examiners need to be prepared to interact with the candidate and facilitate the development of topics. In some cases, fewer subject areas should be touched on, but those that are embarked on should be explored in much greater depth. In Centres where there are a small number of candidates, candidates should not all be offered the same topics for discussion, since they will all have different areas of interest. It is perfectly acceptable to change topics if a candidate has little real interest in it. Examiners should not be looking for factual information which would not be within the knowledge of candidates, nor necessarily for agreement with their own ideas.

It is helpful to both candidates and Moderators if Examiners signal the end of the topic conversation section and the beginning of the general conversation section. Prompting for questions at the end of each conversation section where none has occurred naturally during the course of conversation is also important, since it allows candidates to score marks they would otherwise have missed out on. Where candidates do not ask questions, even after prompting, a zero must be recorded in the final column of the working mark sheet for that particular section. Marks cannot be awarded if no questions are asked, so it is vital that candidates be given the opportunity to do so.

Examiners should remember that they are conducting an examination, rather than a lesson. The only language used should be French and candidates should neither be corrected nor told at the end of the examination about the errors they have made!

Assessment was conscientiously done and the criteria were generally consistently applied. The majority of Centres completed working mark sheets correctly and entered a mark for each element in the columns of the working mark sheet. Moderators appreciate how difficult it is for Examiners in small Centres to find the appropriate marking pitch since, with few candidates, there is often little possibility for meaningful comparisons. As long as assessment follows the criteria in the mark scheme and is consistent, moderation can make any adjustment necessary to fit with international standards.

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| <p>Papers 8682/02 and 9716/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p> |
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General comments

There was a full range of performance on this paper. The best candidates gave full and accurate answers in fluent French whilst weaker candidates found difficulty in re-formulating information from their available vocabulary and grammar. There were, however, significantly fewer very weak candidates who found the task of comprehension of the texts and accuracy in written French too demanding.

In **Questions 3** and **4**, where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time repeating the question as part of the answer. No marks can be gained in this way and a good deal of time is lost.

Candidates should not copy extended sections verbatim from the text in answer to comprehension questions. The rubric clearly states that candidates should not copy word for word from the text. They may use material from the passage in their answers but in such a way as to show understanding of the text. Copying wholesale from the text does not demonstrate comprehension. The candidate must re-use the material from the text in some way. Even quite small changes will show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language. The candidate may extend the quoted material or include a short phrase of two or three words in a sentence. Merely copying a phrase or sentence as an answer will not score any marks.

Quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers to questions. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If individual questions score zero for content, the final mark for language will be adjusted accordingly. The mark scheme gives more details on the way in which the balance of credit for language and content is achieved.

Question 5 carries 20 marks and it is important that candidates approach it correctly. It consists of two tasks: firstly a summary of specific points made from the original texts in 90 to 100 words and secondly a personal response to the text in 40 to 50 words. A general essay written in response to the first part is likely to get a low mark as it is unlikely to make the specific points required.

It is important that candidates observe the word limit, for only limited latitude is allowed beyond that figure. Candidates will not be awarded content marks if they make the points after 140 words. No introduction to the task is necessary.

The same five point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4 and 5**. This means that candidates must maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the paper if they are to score high marks overall. The categories for quality of language are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 5 Very good | Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order). |
| 4 Good | Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures. |
| 3 Sound | Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions. |
| 2 Below average | Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions often incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives. |
| 1-0 Poor | Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated errors. |

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was very well answered. Few candidates found difficulty in matching the definitions to a word in the text. **(a)**, **(b)** and **(c)** were generally correct. Where mistakes did occur they usually resulted from a failure to follow the rubric which stated *trouvez le mot* and some candidates copied a phrase instead of a single word. **(d)** and **(e)** attracted most of these mistakes and were answered with phrases such as *familles plutôt aisées* instead of *aisées* or, in item **(e)**, *se voit exclue* instead of *exclue*. In **(d)** some candidates thought *d'écart* or *populaires* were the correct words. There was some evidence of poor copying from the text with *élistes* given for *élitistes* and *aissés* for *aisées*. Despite this, minor spelling errors were tolerated.

Question 2

The question proved to be very difficult and only the best candidates scored very well. It is however set as a test of grammatical knowledge, accuracy and competence. Candidates are required to re-arrange the words of the sentences and change the grammar accordingly. It does not necessarily ask for candidates to change vocabulary or to omit part of the sentence.

(a) was generally well done and was re-worked in several different ways. However, where candidates began with *c'est la diversité et l'intensité des loisirs entre copains qui* they often failed to make the verb plural (*caractérisent*) or if they started *c'est par la diversité* etc., they failed to make the verb reflexive.

(b) required the use of the passive and therefore a feminine agreement which made it difficult for most candidates.

(c) needed the use of the subjunctive after *il est possible que* and this proved to be too difficult for many candidates.

(d) was well done mainly because *un quart* can be followed by a singular or a plural verb depending on its precise meaning. Both were accepted.

(e) was generally well done although many candidates confused *ce qui* with *ceux qui* and this often resulted in a plural verb: *les revenus ne sont pas toujours ce qui constituent*. Sometimes candidates failed to include *toujours*.

Question 3

Candidates should remember that they must not copy extended sections from the text and even phrases should be manipulated in some way, either by using different vocabulary or creating new sentences. Copying from the text with no manipulation will not gain marks for content. Candidates should also note the line reference given in the question for the answers are largely drawn from these lines.

(a) proved to be quite difficult. *Uniformisation des loisirs* was clearly explained as *tous les jeunes s'amuse de la même façon* or *les loisirs pratiqués par la jeunesse française se ressemblent de plus en plus*. Some candidates wrongly felt that it meant that all leisure activities were becoming the same. The second part of the question *démocratisation des loisirs* required the idea that all activities were available to everyone and not restricted to a specific class. Some candidates felt that there was some directive from the state as to the activities that people could do.

(b) was well answered and candidates clearly understood that *les plus jeunes* played sport and listened to music whilst *les plus âgés sortent ensemble*. However, candidates should have been aware that there were four marks available and that other answers were possible including the frequency and variety of activities for older teenagers. A number of candidates failed to score because they missed out the *plus* from *jeunes* and *âgés*, clearly indicating that the difference was between young and old people rather than between younger and older teenagers.

(c) was again well answered. Most candidates offered dances and concerts as examples but could also have chosen exhibitions, theatre and cinema. The second part of the question required an explanation of *extérieur* which most candidates identified correctly as being away from the home. However, others thought it meant an elitist activity, activities performed by people from other countries or religious celebrations. This question required candidates to manipulate the text by changing the vocabulary or by using phrases in sentences. Simply copying the phrases with no re-working did not score marks.

(d) proved to be a very difficult question and there was a great deal of lifting sections from the text in the hope of finding the correct answer. Most candidates made the point that less expensive leisure activities depended on family traditions or values but failed to find a second point based on the influence of class or friends. Even where *habitudes* was attempted it was rarely linked to where they were acquired.

(e) was quite well answered. Candidates realised that rich people had plenty of money to send their children to holiday camps and that poor people received financial help from the state. A second mark was gained for stating that the middle class did not have enough money to send their children to holiday camps and did not receive any financial help. Some candidates failed to re-state the second part of the answer about the middle class. A number of candidates thought wrongly that the rich and the poor were sent to different camps or were sent to the same holiday camps but segregated. Others stated that both rich and poor received financial assistance from the state.

Question 4

The text was within the scope of the candidates who generally scored well.

(a) was generally well answered. It was important to define clearly *catégories sociales* and *confondues*. Many candidates answered *toutes les classes sociales sans exception* or *toutes les classes sociales y compris les riches, la classe moyenne et les pauvres* which scored full marks. Some candidates added references to the audio visual revolution which was not required.

(b) proved to be quite a difficult question with few candidates gaining the full three marks. Again an explanation of a quotation taken from the text was needed. The fact that television has made a major impact on people or that there were more and more viewers was managed by most candidates but only the best went on to say that this represented a change from the past and that this process was quickening.

(c) was not well answered and few candidates scored full marks. The first mark for the percentage of salary allocated to cultural activities was generally well done. Few however stated that this percentage referred to all salaries and therefore the amount spent varied according to the size of the person's income which in turn led to inequality in access to cultural activities. The inability to work out 3.5% of the salaries given led to some bizarre figures and some candidates thought that 200 000 people earned less than 10 000 euros.

(d) was well answered although candidates had to re-formulate their answers into sentences or by re-wording the text. Where candidates merely copied *la profession, le niveau scolaire, le type d'habitat et les habitudes prises dans l'enfance* without any manipulation, no marks were awarded.

For (e) candidates scored well. Many made the points that interests are developed in childhood and are continued into adulthood. Occasionally candidates mentioned the influence of parents on childhood habits whilst other candidates gave a personal view that if a child had not experienced a particular cultural activity then as an adult it was unlikely that they would want to try it.

Question 5

The main thrust of the exercise is to get candidates to concentrate on the main issues of the text. Candidates should write a summary of 90 to 100 words which can gain 10 content marks and a personal response of 40 to 50 words which attracts a maximum of five marks.

The summary should include points made in the two texts. In this examination they should find points in the texts relating to (a) *les raisons de la diversité* and (b) *le rôle de l'argent et du statut social* and should not exceed 100 words.

The personal response *Que pensez-vous des idées présentées dans ces deux textes?* should not exceed 50 words.

Because of the limited number of words available for the summary, no introduction is required. Candidates should not waste words on generalities but concentrate instead on finding at least ten different points from the two texts that answer the question. General essays on young people's leisure activities and the desire for the latest technology did not score well because they did not answer the question.

In the first part of the summary *les raisons de la diversité* candidates could have mentioned age, gender, indoor or outdoor activities, social class, differences in holidays, money, childhood habits, family traditions, school performance, where they live and influence of friends. In the second part *le rôle de l'argent* candidates could have included activities for the élite, salaries, family habits, jobs and help from the state.

The personal response gives the candidate the opportunity to express their feelings on the subject and this is the place for general reflections.

It would be unfair to candidates who answer succinctly in 140 words, if lengthy essays were allowed to score content marks without a word limit. Candidates who write more than 150 words are unlikely to score marks beyond this point. Similarly candidates who write fewer than 120 words cannot expect to score the full language mark.

The quality of language for this question is marked according to the language grid given earlier in the report. The quality of language was generally good but mistakes of gender, adjectives and plurals do occur. The *ne* of the negative is frequently omitted especially in *ne...que* but also in *ne...pas*. The infinitive often causes problems especially after *pouvoir* (e.g. *ne peuvent pas se permettent*). Nouns such as *famille* or *personne* are often followed by a masculine pronoun *il* as the subject of the following verb. There is some confusion over *ce qui* and *ceux qui* and the subjunctive always produces many mistakes.

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| Papers 8682/03 and 9716/03 |
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| Essay |
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General comments

Of the 40 marks available, 24 were awarded for language and 16 for content. At the top end, essays read well and candidates were able to call on plenty of relevant vocabulary and to make skilful use of idiomatic language. However, Examiners reported that they had encountered less work this year than in recent years that could be described as linguistically very good. At the lower end, rather more candidates than before struggled to write properly-formed sentences containing a main verb. Not least, punctuation was quite often used somewhat haphazardly, commas being made to do duty for full stops and vice versa. All of the common language errors listed in recent subject reports again figured prominently, while other widespread failings included:

- the misuse of *grâce à* in negative contexts;
- the overuse of the demonstrative adjectives *ce, cette* and *ces*;
- the injudicious use of such words conjunctions as *néanmoins, donc* and *en plus*, presumably in the hope that they would give some impression of structure;
- excessive recourse to words and phrases such as *on, chose* and *entre autres*, which was often indicative of difficulty in providing personal ideas and/or precise examples to support ideas put forward;
- paragraphs inappropriately introduced with words such as *puis, ensuite* and *aussi*;
- the use of *faux amis*, the two most frequent being *définitivement* and *éventuellement*;
- the clumsy, repeated use of the same word or phrase in close proximity.

As far as content was concerned, a pleasing feature of this year's work was that the vast majority of candidates attempted to structure their essays and to present their ideas, relevant or not, in what they felt was a logical sequence. However, the need to pay attention to the precise wording of the question is a message which has yet to be taken on board by a very large number of candidates, irrespective of their linguistic expertise. As a result, key phrases such as *risque de, Est-ce inévitable?, limite les horizons, se sont trompés de chemin* and *devraient réfléchir* were far too often ignored. Moreover, good introductions were in short supply. Candidates seemed to have been advised to insert the question at some stage in their introductions but very few did so in a convincing and elegant way. A large proportion simply tagged it on at the end, often using such phrases as *Alors on se demande si.....* or *Peut-on dire que.....?*, but without any relevance or obvious link to the rest of the introduction. Conclusions, on the other hand, tended to be fairly relevant to the essays the candidates had written but unfortunately not necessarily to the question set. A sizeable minority continue to indulge in a pithy but, alas, rarely apposite quotation as the last sentence of their essays.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Toute société perd ses valeurs. Dans quelle mesure ce phénomène se manifeste-t-il dans les pays francophones?

A very small number of candidates chose this question. The main failing among those who did was to present general ideas without actually relating them to *les pays francophones*. There was also some confusion as to the meaning of the word *valeurs*. Some interpreted it as being synonymous with *culture* and their essays consequently embraced such topics as language, music and dancing styles. Those who understood that there was a moral dimension to the question wrote about culture and traditions giving way to a global and general set of values geared to consumerism, which encourages selfish attitudes. The point was made in some of the best essays that the wishes of the individual have become more important than the welfare of the group and that societies have become vulnerable to the constant promotion of unhealthy ways of living by the media, e.g. smoking and alcohol consumption, since commercial considerations disregard morality. Some also examined the role of families in the new order. Never having had to look after younger siblings, the parents have poor parental skills. As a result, their offspring end up poorly controlled with no commitment to either church or state, and self-indulgence and delinquency become rife. The better essays tried to evaluate whether French speaking countries were protected in any way from these global developments and most concluded that they were as vulnerable as any other.

Question 2

Les jeunes risquent d'être corrompus par la publicité. Êtes-vous d'accord?

This was a very popular question. Unfortunately, a very large proportion of those who chose it, did not pay sufficient heed to the connotations of the word *corrompus* and, as a result, they focused exclusively or almost exclusively on the likelihood of young people being influenced by advertising. A number also became carried away and included irrelevant paragraphs on the media in general, although only a very small minority ignored advertising altogether, discussing instead solely the influence of films, newspapers and computer games on young people. A few strove to demonstrate that advertising is corrupt because it uses unfair means to influence vulnerable young people.

Those who understood the title correctly highlighted two areas of possible corruption. One was the encouragement to take up unhealthy lifestyles involving smoking and alcohol consumption, which often led to an analysis of the possible undesirable consequences if a young person's perceived needs were beyond his or her means: shoplifting, stealing from parents, prostitution and even muggings or murders. The other aspect, often shrewdly analysed, was the insidious corruption of the minds of teenagers:

- because consumer advertising often runs counter to the general cultural values of traditional societies, it encourages young people to rebel against the authority and the moral values of the family;
- advertising alters the way boys look at girls, promoting the perception of women as sex objects;
- girls start adopting dress codes which blur the demarcation line between morally upright young women and those of dubious morality;
- stereotyping in advertising messages robs the developing young people of their ability to think for themselves;
- advertising even jeopardises young people's futures by making them adopt superficial values rather than values that they will need to survive in real life, and leaves them the slaves of consumerism and greed, forever prone to getting into debt.

Many candidates also pointed out that advertising can be a power for good, for instance, when it is used to disseminate information about health (AIDS and the dangers of smoking were extensively used as examples) and other social ills such as drink driving, and that this can, to some extent, mitigate the corrupting effects.

Question 3

On voyage de plus en plus et on abîme les endroits que l'on visite. Est-ce inévitable?

This was another popular question but, unfortunately, a large proportion of those who elected to answer it totally ignored *Est-ce inévitable?* They contented themselves with simply discussing the given statement, generally agreeing with it and providing examples to reinforce the points that there are far more tourists than in the past and that they do indeed ruin the places they visit.

Of those who did take on board the fact that the title required them to consider possible solutions, quite a lot struggled with the word *inévitabile* and fell into the trap of writing double negatives. *Inévitable* and *évitable* were quite often used instead of *impossible* and *possible*, thereby giving rise to sentences with meanings opposite to the ones intended, e.g. *il est inévitable d'empêcher la pollution des lieux visités* or *il est toutefois évitable qu'on n'abîme pas les endroits* or *il est inévitable de protéger les endroits*. Most candidates did not resent the tourists. On the contrary, many pointed out that without tourism, their country would be worse off, even in terms of the quality of the environment. Moreover, tourists are not the only ones who pollute and spoil nature: economic progress and the local population are also at fault. It is also generally true that greater efforts are made to conserve the natural environment and the quality of the beaches than would otherwise be the case, because of the need for the country to remain attractive to tourists. Notwithstanding, it was acknowledged that many tourists do behave badly. The principal factors cited were ignorance of the consequences of their actions such as, for instance, uprooting rare plants or damaging corals when diving, and the bad habits that ensue when people slip into holiday mode, dropping litter and being noisy, being the most frequent examples given.

Remedies to overcome ignorance included better information packs, to be given out by travel agencies and airport authorities, in order to raise awareness of local environmental issues. Bad habits were often deplored. Some candidates, however, felt that individuals behaving badly became a problem to be tackled only in cases of mass invasion by tourists, in which case restricting the numbers was the sole solution – a very impractical one in a country whose economy depended on the expansion of tourism. Others felt that installing more litter bins would limit the damage and that fines should be imposed on those who failed to use the bins provided. Once again, many acknowledged that this strategy might be counter-productive and drive tourists away, a result which would be worse for the country in the long run. Overall, the consensus seemed to be that damage to the environment of the visited areas is inevitable and that it is the necessary price to be paid for enhanced economic development and a higher standard of living.

Question 4

L'école limite les horizons des jeunes. Êtes-vous d'accord?

Although popular, this title did not produce a very high proportion of good answers, in spite of valid points being made in the majority of the essays of those who chose it. Many were clearly unsure about how to interpret *les horizons*, with the result that the words were frequently ignored altogether.

Limiter regularly prompted a list of what candidates felt were the restrictions imposed on them by rules and regulations, such as insistence upon uniform, or by lack of time for leisure pursuits or by lack of availability in schools of some less academic disciplines such as Art and Music. Better candidates acknowledged that schools do limit pupils' behaviour but that this is done with a purpose. If unchecked, young people are liable to make mistakes they are likely to regret later on. Strict discipline should avoid this. Stopping young people from doing exactly as they please limits their bad behaviour rather than their horizons since it ensures that their options for the future remain intact. Some put forward the argument that non-attendance at school is the factor that limits young people's potential for success in today's society in which education is no longer just a luxury but a necessity. With this in mind, however, it was also recognised that some children are not very able academically and that schools do limit their opportunities as they often do not offer a syllabus adapted to their needs. Their years at school would be more productively used if they were taught practical skills relevant to their future employment. Nonetheless, it was generally felt that as schools are a microcosm of the society in which pupils will have to function later on, they contribute greatly to the ability of the adults of the future to cooperate and to live together amicably. Better educated citizens develop a greater ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, which enables democracy to flourish. Schools are also the best place to learn that our actions have consequences, a lesson not always learnt at home. Schools also dissipate the illusion that the world is perfect. In short, they broaden pupils' horizons in the sense that they are an opening on reality. The main purpose of schools may well be the promotion of academic achievement but that focus, whilst limited, is not limiting for the pupils themselves since the acquisition of formal qualifications is the key which opens doors and provides opportunities. Overall, there was a lot of confusion in this regard, as candidates failed to grasp the distinction between *limited* and *limiting*.

Question 5

Il faut mesurer le progrès économique selon les dégâts que l'on fait à notre planète. Discutez

Candidates who selected this very popular question generally displayed a good knowledge of environmental issues: there were many extensive accounts of the various types of pollution inflicted on the planet by the unrelenting march of economic progress, and many essays contained heart-felt appeals for the rescue of *notre chère planète bleue*. Occasionally, some of the examples used to illustrate the consequences of pollution were indicative of a lack of understanding of their causes: tsunamis and avian flu, for example, figured in quite a number of essays.

However, the majority of candidates failed to link their material on the topic of environmental damage to the specific question at hand. The words *mesurer.....selon* were largely ignored. *Mesurer*, if noticed, was often understood as *it is necessary to limit* and *selon* was taken to mean *because of*.

Those who had understood the full import of the title pointed out that so-called progress is not advantageous if it pollutes the environment, since eventually the standard of living will go down because of deteriorating air quality, contamination of water and land, ugly surroundings, disappearing territories and extremes of weather. Wealth is no comfort when one loses one's family and friends through unavoidable health hazards or catastrophes. It was asked whether we were really progressing or simply amassing worthless tokens of so-called economic development which would prove very expensive in the end if our environment was so damaged that it could no longer sustain life as we know it. It was also noted that it is easier for developed countries than for others to curb the damage done to the environment by expanding the tertiary sector whilst limiting the expansion of polluting industries, as this option is not available to the developing world. It was generally agreed that development should be evaluated by taking into account not just the monetary wealth produced by economic growth but also by factoring into the equation the negative consequences which can hardly be regarded as making progress towards a better world. It was generally felt, however, that such an assessment was highly unlikely to gain favour in high places, as short-term gain far outweighed long-term perspectives in the eyes of industrialists, shareholders or politicians.

Question 6

Les scientifiques et les médecins se sont trompés de chemin. Ils devraient réfléchir à la moralité de leurs activités. Discutez.

This question was not as popular as the previous four. Although both scientists and doctors were named in the title, many candidates limited themselves to various medical developments of the recent past. Euthanasia, cloning, abortion, contraception and organ transplants were widely discussed, as was the use of laboratory animals for research purposes. Many condemned the practice of abortion, animal experiments and cloning outright, but options varied on the other issues. When mentioned, scientists were often presented as thoughtless, selfish monsters, interested only in their own research and showing no concern for the possible misuses of the technology they developed. Doctors, on the whole, received a better press, but few candidates went beyond the stage of merely approving or disapproving of the discoveries and advances they outlined. Some essays pointed out that occasionally there could be unforeseen positive outcomes to technologies that were generally disapproved of. GM foods were quite commonly discussed in this regard. Some more thoughtful candidates reflected that researchers often had good intentions but that the use made of their discoveries was not always the one they envisaged. Most candidates equated morality with positive outcomes for humanity, although some brought in religious considerations especially when discussing the taking or giving of life. Most used relevant examples but failed to focus their answers on the idea that morality should guide the direction of new research or the development of new technologies.

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General comments

There was a very wide range of performance. A number of extremely able candidates produced answers of a consistently high standard, showing both a detailed knowledge of the texts studied and a level of literary commentary which was sophisticated in both content and style. Around the borderline between Grades A and B, Examiners often found inconsistency in the quality of the three answers. It was not uncommon to find two essays of clear Grade A quality but a third which fell well below that standard. A significant number of candidates answered only two questions, which often disqualified them from reaching even a Grade E mark. Somewhat to the surprise of the Examiners, there was a resurgence of cases where candidates answered two questions on the same text. It should be made clear to them that only one of the marks awarded will count towards their total, so this practice is self-defeating.

Once again, many candidates who had clearly gained a thorough knowledge of a particular text let themselves down by failing to address the question set. Past reports have consistently drawn attention to the self-penalisation of candidates who either ignore the question and present their own agenda, or make a passing reference or two to the question, usually in the first and last paragraphs, but signally fail to address it in the main body of their answer.

The message that essays of excessive length are awarded a maximum score of 17 appears to have got home in most cases. Conversely, the problem of pre-learned material remains. Derivative material still appears in a form which is obviously ill-digested by the candidate, and often in stark contrast to the candidate's own style of writing. Furthermore, it is often irrelevant, particularly in the opening paragraph of an essay, where a succinct introduction relating to the essay title is more convincing than a general paragraph about the author or work which has manifestly been learned by heart or copied from the text. It must again be pointed out that lengthy quotation from the text is seldom of significant merit.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Andr  Gide: *La Porte  troite*

This text was chosen by many Centres. The quality of answers did not always reflect the subtlety and ambiguity of Gide's narrative, which many candidates did not fully grasp. Those who took a wholly censorious or wholly indulgent view of the characters and were seeing the text in inappropriately 'black and white' terms, could not be awarded high marks.

- (a) Most candidates succeeded in identifying the circumstances surrounding this particular visit by J r me to Alissa. In attempting to answer the first question, relatively few saw the importance of Alissa's communications since their last encounter, whereby J r me is encouraged to think that his faith in their relationship might still triumph over disappointing experience. The question invited candidates to reflect on the confusing nature of the signals sent out by Alissa, and also on J r me's own self-doubt and inability to take the initiative. Many, however, did not get much beyond a paraphrase of the extract. The second question was generally better answered, but a surprising number of the weaker candidates thought that Alissa was making an effort to impress J r me by dressing in this way. The quality of answers to the third question divided, as in (i) above, along the lines of sensitive analysis or confused paraphrase.
- (b) The essay question was attempted by a large number of candidates, few of whom established that it would be appropriate to point out that the aunt's perception of what is and is not *raisonnable* is grotesquely narrow. These candidates tended to seek to justify the use of the word, referring to Alissa's dutiful behaviour towards her father and sister, as well as to her virtuous life. The mark scheme includes a category which gives a measure of credit for textual knowledge but refers to a 'simple level' of understanding and to a 'black and white' approach. To rise above this mark band, candidates had to show that what was reasonable according to Tante Plantier's simplistic point of view should be seen by the reader as a negative factor: the rationalisation by Alissa of her fears about sex, which led ultimately to her self-destruction.

Question 2

Molière: *Les Femmes savantes*

- (a) Molière remains a popular choice. Answers on this text tend to benefit from an awareness of sufficient background information to enable the candidate to understand why the women behave as they do. That said, knowledge of the phenomenon known as *préciosité* is of relatively little value unless the candidate understands that the women portrayed by Molière are bogus précieuses, and that it is the discrepancy between the image they are attempting to project and the reality of their incompetence which is the author's target. Thus, answers which simply described their preoccupation with science in this context could not score well without reference to the inappropriateness of a pseudo-scientific response to the servant's accident. Many felt that the women were unkind and unhelpful. Such answers often missed the point by failing to show that the women demonstrate a loss of touch with reality and a mechanical reaction which is comically out of place. The second question prompted a wide variety of more or less relevant responses, only the best of which pointed out the clumsiness of Trissotin's overworked metaphor. In answer to the third question, many candidates were content to paraphrase the ensuing scene. Good answers focused rather on the *pourquoi* aspect by pointing not only to the disproportionate nature of the women's reaction but also to their inability to assess the literary quality of Trissotin's poem.
- (b) Answers on the role of Martine were generally sound, but more ink flowed in the direction of paraphrase than of analysis. Candidates had a good understanding of the contrasting characters. The point was not to write three character studies but to focus on the details of their behaviour as displayed when Martine intervenes. Only a handful of essays dealt with the crucial aspect of the disproportionate outrage displayed by Philaminte when Martine gets her grammar wrong. Much was made of Chrysale's sudden change of heart over standing up to Philaminte, whilst relatively few essays showed how he lets Martine do the talking in the confrontation over Henriette's marriage. Again, candidates all too often chose to endow Martine with the title *porte-parole de Molière* with regard to her views on male and female roles. What was wanted in this essay was an indication of the absurdly reactionary nature of Chrysale's views, as he mechanically agrees with everything she says, all of which adds up to a preposterously crude idea of marriage in the context of the 17th century *salon*. It is almost always a mistake to embark on the *porte-parole de Molière* theme unless the message is one which would appeal to the *honnête homme* in Molière's audience.

Question 3

Jean Anouilh: *Becket*

- (a) The introduction of this text in 2005 has attracted a modest number of Centres so far. All but the weakest candidates were able to explain the situation as required by the first question. As to the second, those who were conversant with the king's dispute with the Church produced fuller answers than those who were not. Those who took the opportunity to explain how the news of the Archbishop's death prompted differing reactions with far-reaching implications for the relationship between Becket and Henri were suitably rewarded. The third question offered candidates the opportunity to show how the king signally fails to anticipate any of the difficulties which will arise between him and Becket as a result of this idea. The irony of his self-congratulation was generally well understood.
- (b) Relatively few candidates opted for this question in preference to the commentary. Answers generally showed a fair understanding of the reasons for the breakdown of the relationship. Much was written about Becket's convictions, and it was mostly well argued and knowledgeable. In some cases, the answer was more like a character study of Becket rather than an answer to the question. Candidates could have placed more emphasis on the King's false assumptions, notably that Becket would be 'his' man in any further dispute with the Church.

Question 4

Honoré Balzac: *Le Père Goriot*

- (a) Balzac no longer seems to attract a significant number of Centres. Answers varied greatly in quality, ranging from the purely narrative with only superficial comment, to the perceptive and detailed. The better answers made the point that Delphine's experience and selfishness, driven by ambition, made her the stronger partner in this relationship. Candidates tended to be more aware of Eugène's concern about Goriot than his naïve willingness to believe in her sudden change of heart. Madame de Restaud's determination to buy extravagant clothes was generally understood, but some candidates failed to point out the callousness of her decision to send a messenger to collect the required money from Goriot. The last part of the question produced some unexpectedly indulgent comments on Delphine. Either the word *pitié* was misinterpreted by some candidates, or they could not bring themselves to condemn her outrageous vanity and egotism as forcefully as Balzac might have wished.
- (b) The key phrase in the question was *il se trompait encore*. Candidates readily commented on Goriot's failure to realise that he was being exploited, but most answers provided too little detailed evidence. A thorough reading of the text yields a substantial number of instances of Goriot's misguided generosity. Again, there are plenty of examples of his speaking about his daughters in terms which betray his idealised perception of them. A structured appraisal of these examples were needed for a better than average mark.

Section B

Question 5

Albert Camus: *La Peste*

- (a) Examiners once again found relatively little of high quality in candidates' work on this text. A substantial minority of those who wrote about Cottard sought to vindicate him, and may even have partly confused him with other characters. It seemed that a number of candidates did not realise that the quotation supplied by the question was from the text itself, and was from a source somewhat more reliable than Alissa's aunt (c.f. **Question 1 (b)**). Most were able to describe Cottard's involvement in the black market, and to explain his enthusiasm for the presence of the plague. The vital element of his complicity which many essays omitted was his negative attitude towards participation in the *formations sanitaires*. Candidates generally understood that Cottard became dependent on the plague, but not all went on to point out that he was unable to survive the announcement that its reign was over. Analogies with the Nazi collaborators in occupied France were fairly drawn, but it must again be stressed that candidates tend to attach excessive importance to this at the expense of a wider philosophical view.
- (b) This question was open to a variety of approaches, but could not be answered fully without substantial attention being paid to the attitude of the *concitoyens* as opposed to the named characters. Some candidates laboriously explored its very limited implications for the characters who were proactive in their response to the plague, rather than concentrating on those who saw it as a matter of personal inconvenience and who failed to respond positively. Many correctly pointed to Paneloux's role in encouraging passivity by telling his congregation to submit to the will of God. It seemed, however, that relatively few candidates had a clear perception of the *leitmotif* of consent as demonstrated by the behaviour of the anonymous citizens, with the result that many essays lacked a sense of direction which could have been gleaned from the narrative itself.

Question 6

Michel del Castillo: *Tanguy*

- (a) Very few Centres have opted for this text in its first appearance on the syllabus this year, and little can be usefully reported. Answers dealt satisfactorily with both aspects of the question, and the relative merits of these essays lay in the structuring of the response and the candidate's ability to demonstrate, particularly with reference to the concluding part of the novel, that faith triumphed over man's inhumanity to man.
- (b) Some candidates were well prepared for this question. Weaker answers were characterised by excessive narrative and insufficient comment. Thus, those who explained what effect the relationship had on the two characters were given more credit than those who simply described their experiences while together in the camp.

Question 7

Simone de Beauvoir: *Les Belles Images*

- (a) Candidates who chose this question had a good knowledge of the text and a broadly sound understanding of the characters. Some answers were confined to laboured descriptions of the lives of Laurence and Dominique. Better answers ranged more widely and focused on the themes of emptiness and isolation. There was appropriate reference to the suggestion of an improvement in Laurence's life and the glimmer of hope for her daughter. Examiners found in many essays a censorious tone with regard to the materialism and philandering depicted in the novel. Candidates should be advised that their views on these matters do not necessarily lend weight to literary criticism.
- (b) Answers were almost uniformly weak. Those who chose this question failed, with one or two honourable exceptions, to comprehend its meaning. There was little or no evidence of any awareness of the social background against which de Beauvoir was writing, and in some essays candidates saw no distinction between that decade and the present day, which led to misinterpretation on a grand scale. In most cases, the 'provocation' was seen in terms of the reprehensible nature of the characters' behaviour, rather than as a matter of social satire and feminist propaganda. Consequently, marks tended to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, heavily weighted at the lower end.

Question 8

Joseph Zobel: *La Rue Cases-Nègres*

The reappearance of this novel on the syllabus has clearly been welcomed by many Centres, as it has already attracted a great deal of interest and generated some of the best work in the scripts marked in this session. Indeed, many average or fairly weak candidates scored a higher mark on this text than on the others they studied.

- (a) A very popular choice does not prevent the really good answer from standing out. Many essays were stereotyped, and many candidates fell into the trap of writing laboured accounts of the narrative line. There was a tendency to get bogged down in descriptions of the living conditions, of M'man Tine, etc., etc., whereas the essay title clearly invited candidates to focus on the impact of José's life-changing encounters and experiences. Some answers never got as far as the crucial statements towards the end of the novel which are essential to a complete answer on this issue. The urge to recount often eclipsed the need to consider the author's 'message'.
- (b) The first two sentences in (a) above are relevant here. Many essays fell into the 'fair relevance and knowledge' category. They could have been higher if more attention had been devoted to the issue of education. Candidates had difficulty in restraining themselves from recounting scenes of the grim everyday lives of the labourers, which became repetitive and added nothing to the answer. Those who were selective and concise scored well.