

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/01
Speaking

Key messages

For Teacher/examiners

- Keep to the timings prescribed for the examination (see below) and, if necessary and appropriate, interrupt the Topic Presentation if it overruns significantly.
- Prompt candidates to ask questions during/at the end of each conversation section – but answer briefly.
- Cover a range of topics in the General Conversation, some in depth; vary questions and topics from one candidate to another; be prepared to identify and follow the interests and passions of the candidate (not your own) keeping your own contributions to a minimum.
- create as natural a conversation as possible, interact with the candidate and avoid lists of pre-prepared questions, especially those which elicit a one-word or purely factual answer.

For candidates

- Make sure that the presentation is not just factual, but contains ideas and opinions and also allows further discussion in the Topic Conversation.
- Ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections and make every effort to ask more than one question on the topic(s) under discussion in order to be awarded maximum marks.
- Remember that the Topic Presentation must make clear reference to a francophone culture or society. This should be more than a passing reference and candidates who live in a francophone country and who speak about an aspect of their own culture must make it clear beyond doubt to which country they are referring.

General comments

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

The way in which an Examiner asks a question can make a huge difference to how a candidate is able to respond. Examiners need to be aware that very long, complex questions or closed questions often prompt short answers, sometimes just yes or no, whereas open questions such as *Comment ?* or *Pourquoi ?* allow a candidate the freedom to answer at much greater length and in greater depth.

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

Administration

Recordings this year were mainly clear, though there are still a few cases of faulty recording equipment and of the microphone favouring the Examiner rather than the candidate. There were a small number of cases where recorded material was unplayable or where the recording had not been transferred correctly or where the original recording was inaudible. Examiners must check the equipment before using it and ensure that the microphone favours the candidate without losing the Examiner's own contribution.

Please ensure that all recording material (including CD and cassette cases) is labelled with details of the Centre, syllabus, and candidates, listed with their names and candidate numbers in the order of recording. Where a Centre has candidates at both A and AS level, they should be recorded on separate CDs or

cassettes. If using cassettes, only ONE candidate should be recorded per side of a 60 minute cassette and a maximum of TWO candidates per side of a 90 minute cassette. It is very disruptive to candidates for the Examiner to have to turn over a cassette in the middle of an examination - with the inevitable result that parts of the conversation are lost.

Centres are reminded that the sample of recordings they send should represent candidates throughout the range of the entry, from highest to lowest. There were one or two cases this session where there were significant gaps in the range, which impaired the moderation process.

There were a number of clerical errors, either in the addition of marks or in transcribing them to the MS1/electronic mark sheet. This should be checked carefully before submission, and all paperwork enclosed with the recordings. For the size of sample needed, please see the details in the syllabus.

Centres are reminded that for moderation, in addition to the recordings, they need to send the Working Mark Sheet, the MS1/copy of electronic mark sheet, the Attendance Sheet and any other relevant paperwork.

Format of the examination

There are 3 distinct parts to the speaking test:

- Presentation – to last 3 to 3½ minutes;
- Topic Conversation – to last 7 to 8 minutes;
- General Conversation – to last 8 to 9 minutes.

In order to be fair to all candidates across the world, these timings should be observed – where examinations are too short, candidates are not given opportunities to show what they can do, and where conversations are over-extended, an element of fatigue creeps in and candidates sometimes struggle to maintain their level of language. Examiners must also remember that the longer their own contributions, the less time candidates have to develop their ideas. Responses to questions asked by candidates should be kept brief.

Presentation (3 to 3½ minutes)

In this part of the examination, the candidate gives a **single** presentation, lasting about three minutes, on a specific topic of his or her choice, taken from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus. This is the only prepared part of the examination and the only part for which candidates are able to choose what they want to talk about.

The topic list gives candidates a very wide choice – the most popular this year, at both A and AS Levels, were *Le sport*, *La famille (française)*, *La cuisine française*, *L'immigration*, *Le tourisme*, *Les médias (sociaux)* and *La pollution*. There were a number of the usual favourites, such as drugs, unemployment, marriage, leisure, racism and immigration, some dealing with culture or politics in a French-speaking country, personal interests such as film or music. There were very few topical presentations this session. Some of the most interesting presentations managed to relate their chosen topic to a whole range of social and political issues.

For the most part, candidates were clearly aware of the need, stated in the syllabus, that the presentation **must** demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. Where this is not the case, candidates will have their mark for *Content/Presentation* halved (see Speaking Test mark scheme).

Since the topic is chosen beforehand, candidates have usually researched quite widely, and have had to select and structure their material to fit into 3 to 3½ minutes – additional material which cannot not be included in the actual presentation because of the time constraint may well prove very useful in the topic conversation section. In general, candidates had no problem speaking for the required time and many were able to give full and interesting presentations. Where candidates speak for longer than the prescribed time, it is the responsibility of the Examiner to move the candidate on to the Topic Conversation.

Candidates would be well advised to steer clear of very factual subjects – the mark scheme criteria for the *Content/Presentation* element makes it clear that in order to score well, the presentation should contain not just factual points, but ideas and opinions. Candidates need to think carefully before making their final choice and consider whether it will be possible to develop and expand their chosen topic.

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

Topic Conversation (7 to 8 minutes)

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

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

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

Examiners should note that it is helpful both to candidates and Moderators to signal the end of the Topic Conversation and the beginning of the General Conversation.

General Conversation (8 to 9 minutes)

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

This section is intended to be a conversation between Examiner and candidate, so it is not appropriate for the Examiner to ask a series of unrelated questions, to which the candidate responds with a prepared answer, after which the Examiner moves on to the next question on the list. Examiners must display sensitivity in asking questions about topics of a personal nature e.g. religion and personal relationships, and should try to keep their questions general rather than moving inappropriately into personal areas.

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

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

Assessment

The greatest causes of difference were where marks had been awarded for asking questions where none had actually been asked or where topics did not relate to a francophone country. Some Examiners also found it difficult to establish an acceptable level for *Comprehension/Responsiveness, Accuracy* and *Feel for the Language*, while others found it tricky to differentiate between the bands for *Pronunciation/Intonation*.

Where candidates ask questions during the course of conversation, this should clearly be rewarded, but Examiners must remember to prompt candidates in both conversation sections – the mark scheme gives the criteria for awarding marks for this element of the examination and these marks should be awarded

regardless of whether questions are spontaneous or prompted, provided that they are relevant to the topic under discussion.

Centres are reminded that, except in extenuating circumstances, they should engage only one Examiner per syllabus, regardless of the size of the entry. In cases where the engagement of two or more Examiners on the same syllabus is unavoidable, the Examiners must co-ordinate with each other to establish an agreed standard. **All** Centres are asked to advise CIE, using form NOE, about the Examiners they intend to employ (by 1st April for the June session and 1st October for the November session).

In rare cases, Examiners misapplied the mark scheme, e.g. by awarding marks out of 10 for *Pronunciation/Intonation* and *Seeking Opinions* which carry a maximum of 5 marks.

In Centres with a number of candidates, Examiners were generally able to establish a logical rank order and appropriate marking pitch, but, CIE recognises that this is more difficult to achieve where Centres only have one or two candidates.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (cut/copy and paste) from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (total for parts **(a)** and **(b)**) combined is ignored.
- In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to offer some brief relevant ideas of their own, without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

There were some first-rate scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, and, whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them, there were elements which were accessible to nearly all.

The topic generally appeared to be one to which candidates could relate.

The majority of candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the format of the paper and the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

Quite a lot of answers were unduly lengthy, with candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible: sometimes the answers were longer than the whole paragraph of the text to which they referred. **The practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time**, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark. There were also significant numbers of other candidates who tried to incorporate the words of the question as an introduction to every answer, often losing credit for Quality of Language in the process: e.g. *Qu'est-ce qui pousse certaines mères à retourner au travail est que ... 3(b)* or *Comment les enfants dont la mère travaille sont-ils désavantagés est parce que ... 4(a)*. Answers beginning with *Parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

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

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text has diminished very considerably in recent sessions, but remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' answers unaltered from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. Candidates should therefore try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs, or infinitives into finite verbs) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2 is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for the sake of it. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining the essential elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement.

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

In **Question 5**, candidates should realize the importance of the word limit clearly set out in the rubric of a total of 140 words for both sections. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary will not be able to receive any of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a very marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some Centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

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

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are unnecessarily afraid of being penalized for not introducing the topic (not doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste a significant proportion of the available words on this for no reward: for example: *Dans les deux textes, le sujet principal est les mères et le travail. Il y a deux points de vue: qu'il est meilleur pour une mère de travailler et le contraire.* This uses up over 20% of the already quite tight word limit without reward. From the very outset, candidates need to make the first point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/résumé of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est ?* The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

In general, candidates who keep their answers reasonably short and straightforward and concentrate on doing the simple things efficiently tend to score better than those who demonstrate a desire to impress with over-elaborate phrasing and overambitious vocabulary.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This proved a relatively straightforward first exercise which enabled most candidates to get off to a good start. *Quasiment* was correctly identified by the vast majority for **(a)**, as was *souhaité* for **(e)**. *Mises* was commonly offered on its own for *présentées* in **(b)**, but was rendered meaningless without the inclusion of *en avant*. Occasionally, candidates focused on the search for a feminine plural past participle rather than on meaning and offered *interrogées* here. *Renoncer* was often offered for *dévouer* in **(c)**, again presumably as much as anything on the basis that it was an infinitive, whilst the inclusion of *se* before *consacrer* would have resulted in *se se consacrer*. *Sans réserve* was quite often thought to have a financial sense, giving rise to *manque de revenus* in **(d)**, where *pleinement* and *totalement* were both equally acceptable as correct answers.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual the task proved very demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a): many candidates did not remove the *s* on *difficiles*, writing *il est difficiles*. Others lost the mark by altering *ces* to *ses*.

Item 2(b): the very straightforward transformation into indirect speech was managed by most, but the gender of Marlène's children changed. There was no need to change the tense.

Item 2(c): the success rate here tended to vary greatly from Centre to Centre. In some, the need for the subjunctive was widely appreciated and correctly handled. In others, it did not seem to be known. Candidates should be discouraged from making unnecessary changes in this exercise – e.g. *soit capable* to *puisse* or *le cerveau* to *son cerveau*.

Item 2(d): the transformation to the passive defeated quite a number, whilst others who successfully manipulated the verb spoiled things by omitting *les* before *trois quarts*.

Item 2(e): this proved the most challenging of the manipulations, with few other than the strongest managing *lui a permis* (*l'a* or *s'a permis(e)* being the most frequent incorrect versions). *Permit* was also common as the past participle.

Question 3

Item 3(a): The need here was to state that more mothers returned to work soon after the birth of their child and that fewer stayed at home. Most managed the first mark, although some went too far by stating that all/most mothers now returned to work. Fewer scored the second mark by not offering an alternative to *au foyer*.

Item 3(b): There were four points to be made here: the attraction of an additional salary; the desire not to waste their training; the wish for financial independence; the lack of other income in case of a separation/divorce. Nearly all candidates scored at least one, with the fourth being the easiest. Better candidates saw the simplest way of avoiding 'lifting' was by reworking the nouns *attrait*, *volonté* and *désir* as verbs.

Item 3(c): Perhaps confused by the complex syntax of the verbs in both clauses of the question, a good number of candidates suggested that a lot of mothers who give up work would have preferred to stay at home to look after their baby and that giving up work would have allowed them to do so. Or that they wanted to keep the baby with them at work. Others thought that the tense of the question referred to what would happen in the future when the child reached the age of three. It was not difficult to avoid the common 'lift' of the phrase *reprendre le travail*.

Item 3(d) saw a good number of candidates identifying the need to manage the family at the same time as contributing to its finances.

Item 3(e) proved a good discriminator, rewarding those who found other ways of expressing *travailler en mode multitâche* (e.g. *faire plusieurs tâches à la fois / en même temps / simultanément*) and *autonomie* (*indépendance / être autonome / se débrouiller toute seule*). Many candidates focused on the women's feelings of inadequacy rather than on Wonder Woman's capability.

Item 3(f): Most candidates found the adjective *coupable*, but fewer were able to express *peine* in their own words. The notion of founding her own business/becoming her own boss was very successfully identified.

Question 4

Marks here were often somewhat higher than on **Question 3**.

Item 4(a) offered three straightforward marks to those who avoided 'lifting' by transforming the nouns *participation*, *alimentation* and *réussite* into verbs, even if some went too far by suggesting malnutrition/starvation.

Item 4(b): Candidates were for the most part successful in stating that a mother's return to work had little if any impact on the happiness, behaviour or health of the child, although *Les enfants qui ont décidé de repartir travailler quelques mois après leur naissance sont en pleine forme* was taking things too far.

Item 4(c) saw stronger candidates finding alternatives to *jongler* (*concilier/combiner/alterner* etc. but not *balancer*). Most managed to manipulate *dans un contexte professionnel* (*au travail, professionnalisme* etc.).

In **Item 4(d)**, a fair number of candidates managed to express the idea of working from home at least once a week when the children were at school.

Item 4(e) *Les pères devraient aider leurs femmes à faire des crises de nerfs and être plus compréhensifs à la suppression de la mère* were improbable as answers. The suggestion that husbands should try to reduce *l'écart entre les sexes* produced some interpretations which were no doubt not exactly what the author of the text had anticipated. The distinction between being *compréhensible* and *compréhensif* was not understood by some.

Question 5

This question asked the candidates to summarise the pros and cons of mothers of young children returning to work, and then to express a personal view of the role that fathers should play. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction. The mark scheme for the **Summary** identified 15 rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed perhaps 7, 8 or 9, with some reaching 10 or more.

The pros most frequently mentioned concerned a second salary, the desire to take advantage of qualifications, and financial independence, particularly after a divorce. The most commonly identified cons were the difficulty of balancing home and work (resulting in pressure and feelings of guilt), and the children's lack of participation in sports, healthy eating and academic success. Even so, the idea of earning one's own salary was quite commonly suggested as a means of avoiding divorce. Some candidates got side-tracked into irrelevant statements about what employers or fathers could do to help.

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

Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts.

The **Personal Response** gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Weaker candidates tended to seek refuge in the text and offered very little else, resulting in some rather derivative responses: *Les pères doivent consacrer du temps aux enfants et aux tâches ménagères et soutenir leur femme*. More ambitious candidates were often rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or slant of their own: *Dieu créa le père pour être le pilier de la famille. Il doit trouver de la nourriture et assurer un logement, prêter une oreille attentive à son enfant et lui enseigner les bonnes valeurs morales. En même temps, il doit remplir son rôle d'époux et faire en sorte que sa vie conjugale soit en rose*.

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to poor. The very weakest found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form. Some routinely ignored even the need to indicate plurals by adding an s (*les mère, les père and les enfant*), and mistakes in adjectival agreement and subject-verb concord were surprisingly common across the ability range: *les mère a diminués ; les pères doit ; le père doivent ; le manque d'argent les encouragent ; la capacité les aident*. Verbs (even entirely regular ones) were as usual by far the most common sources of error: the plural of *la mère travaille* was frequently thought to be *les mères travailles* or *les mères travaillent*.

New words were coined, often with English lurking not far beneath the surface: *s'indépendancer ; divider ; dédiquer ; involvurer ; convéniente ; maintandre ; l'heursité ; le gagnance ; attraiter ; solver*. There was some creative spelling – *bébéciteur (babysitter) ; touletemp ; tujurs ; faire fasse(nt) à ; acose de ; malhalaise*. Other words were commonly distorted or mis-spelled: *dimunition ; une basse ; effect ; aspet ; revenues ; horraire ; avantage*.

Constructions with certain common verbs caused problems: *permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, laisser, souhaiter* and *préférer*. Incorrect prepositions appeared after *dépendre* and *participer* in particular.

The choice of the verb *travaille* or the noun *travail* (often *travails*) was almost as often wrong as right, as was the distinction between *leur* and *leurs*, or *son / sa / ses*. There sometimes appeared no difference between *eux(-mêmes)* and *elles(-mêmes)*, which caused confusion.

There was further confusion between *sa* and *ça*, *c'est / ces / ses*, *ce / se / ceux / ceux-là* (*sa c'est*, *cela* which very commonly appeared with a plural verb, no doubt influenced by *ceux-là*).

The omission of *ne* as the first part of a negative reversed the sense of a number of sentences: *les père devraient plus s'absenter ; il est plus à la mode que seul le père travaille*.

Regarder (après) for 'to look after' and *occuper* for *s'occuper de* caused problems, as did the construction with *dont* (*les enfants dont (often donc) leurs mères travaillent*). Very few managed two acute accents on *elle a créé*, and only stronger candidates seemed at ease with the use of the conditional of the modal verbs in **Questions 4(d), 4(e) and 5(b)**: (*elles/ils pourraient* and *ils devraient*).

That said, the linguistic ability of most candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

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In **Question 5**, candidates should realize the importance of the word limit clearly set out in the rubric of a total of 140 words for both sections. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary will not be able to receive any of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a very marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some Centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

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

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are unnecessarily afraid of being penalized for not introducing the topic (not doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste a significant proportion of the available words on this for no reward: for example: *Dans les deux textes, le sujet principal est les mères et le travail. Il y a deux points de vue: qu'il est meilleur pour une mère de travailler et le contraire.* This uses up over 20% of the already quite tight word limit without reward. From the very outset, candidates need to make the first point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/résumé of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est ?* The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

In general, candidates who keep their answers reasonably short and straightforward and concentrate on doing the simple things efficiently tend to score better than those who demonstrate a desire to impress with over-elaborate phrasing and overambitious vocabulary.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This proved a relatively straightforward first exercise which enabled most candidates to get off to a good start. *Quasiment* was correctly identified by the vast majority for **(a)**, as was *souhaité* for **(e)**. *Mises* was commonly offered on its own for *présentées* in **(b)**, but was rendered meaningless without the inclusion of *en avant*. Occasionally, candidates focused on the search for a feminine plural past participle rather than on meaning and offered *interrogées* here. *Renoncer* was often offered for *dévouer* in **(c)**, again presumably as much as anything on the basis that it was an infinitive, whilst the inclusion of *se* before *consacrer* would have resulted in *se se consacrer*. *Sans réserve* was quite often thought to have a financial sense, giving rise to *manque de revenus* in **(d)**, where *pleinement* and *totalement* were both equally acceptable as correct answers.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual the task proved very demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a): many candidates did not remove the *s* on *difficiles*, writing *il est difficiles*. Others lost the mark by altering *ces* to *ses*.

Item 2(b): the very straightforward transformation into indirect speech was managed by most, but the gender of Marlène's children changed. There was no need to change the tense.

Item 2(c): the success rate here tended to vary greatly from Centre to Centre. In some, the need for the subjunctive was widely appreciated and correctly handled. In others, it did not seem to be known. Candidates should be discouraged from making unnecessary changes in this exercise – e.g. *soit capable* to *puisse* or *le cerveau* to *son cerveau*.

Item 2(d): the transformation to the passive defeated quite a number, whilst others who successfully manipulated the verb spoiled things by omitting *les* before *trois quarts*.

Item 2(e): this proved the most challenging of the manipulations, with few other than the strongest managing *lui a permis* (*l'a* or *s'a permis(e)* being the most frequent incorrect versions). *Permit* was also common as the past participle.

Question 3

Item 3(a): The need here was to state that more mothers returned to work soon after the birth of their child and that fewer stayed at home. Most managed the first mark, although some went too far by stating that all/most mothers now returned to work. Fewer scored the second mark by not offering an alternative to *au foyer*.

Item 3(b): There were four points to be made here: the attraction of an additional salary; the desire not to waste their training; the wish for financial independence; the lack of other income in case of a separation/divorce. Nearly all candidates scored at least one, with the fourth being the easiest. Better candidates saw the simplest way of avoiding 'lifting' was by reworking the nouns *attrait*, *volonté* and *désir* as verbs.

Item 3(c): Perhaps confused by the complex syntax of the verbs in both clauses of the question, a good number of candidates suggested that a lot of mothers who give up work would have preferred to stay at home to look after their baby and that giving up work would have allowed them to do so. Or that they wanted to keep the baby with them at work. Others thought that the tense of the question referred to what would happen in the future when the child reached the age of three. It was not difficult to avoid the common 'lift' of the phrase *reprendre le travail*.

Item 3(d) saw a good number of candidates identifying the need to manage the family at the same time as contributing to its finances.

Item 3(e) proved a good discriminator, rewarding those who found other ways of expressing *travailler en mode multitâche* (e.g. *faire plusieurs tâches à la fois / en même temps / simultanément*) and *autonomie* (*indépendance / être autonome / se débrouiller toute seule*). Many candidates focused on the women's feelings of inadequacy rather than on Wonder Woman's capability.

Item 3(f): Most candidates found the adjective *coupable*, but fewer were able to express *peine* in their own words. The notion of founding her own business/becoming her own boss was very successfully identified.

Question 4

Marks here were often somewhat higher than on **Question 3**.

Item 4(a) offered three straightforward marks to those who avoided 'lifting' by transforming the nouns *participation*, *alimentation* and *réussite* into verbs, even if some went too far by suggesting malnutrition/starvation.

Item 4(b): Candidates were for the most part successful in stating that a mother's return to work had little if any impact on the happiness, behaviour or health of the child, although *Les enfants qui ont décidé de repartir travailler quelques mois après leur naissance sont en pleine forme* was taking things too far.

Item 4(c) saw stronger candidates finding alternatives to *jongler* (*concilier/combiner/alterner* etc. but not *balancer*). Most managed to manipulate *dans un contexte professionnel* (*au travail, professionnalisme* etc.).

In **Item 4(d)**, a fair number of candidates managed to express the idea of working from home at least once a week when the children were at school.

Item 4(e) *Les pères devraient aider leurs femmes à faire des crises de nerfs and être plus compréhensifs à la suppression de la mère* were improbable as answers. The suggestion that husbands should try to reduce *l'écart entre les sexes* produced some interpretations which were no doubt not exactly what the author of the text had anticipated. The distinction between being *compréhensible* and *compréhensif* was not understood by some.

Question 5

This question asked the candidates to summarise the pros and cons of mothers of young children returning to work, and then to express a personal view of the role that fathers should play. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction. The mark scheme for the **Summary** identified 15 rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed perhaps 7, 8 or 9, with some reaching 10 or more.

The pros most frequently mentioned concerned a second salary, the desire to take advantage of qualifications, and financial independence, particularly after a divorce. The most commonly identified cons were the difficulty of balancing home and work (resulting in pressure and feelings of guilt), and the children's lack of participation in sports, healthy eating and academic success. Even so, the idea of earning one's own salary was quite commonly suggested as a means of avoiding divorce. Some candidates got side-tracked into irrelevant statements about what employers or fathers could do to help.

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

Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts.

The **Personal Response** gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Weaker candidates tended to seek refuge in the text and offered very little else, resulting in some rather derivative responses: *Les pères doivent consacrer du temps aux enfants et aux tâches ménagères et soutenir leur femme*. More ambitious candidates were often rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or slant of their own: *Dieu créa le père pour être le pilier de la famille. Il doit trouver de la nourriture et assurer un logement, prêter une oreille attentive à son enfant et lui enseigner les bonnes valeurs morales. En même temps, il doit remplir son rôle d'époux et faire en sorte que sa vie conjugale soit en rose*.

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to poor. The very weakest found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form. Some routinely ignored even the need to indicate plurals by adding an s (*les mère, les père and les enfant*), and mistakes in adjectival agreement and subject-verb concord were surprisingly common across the ability range: *les mère a diminués ; les pères doit ; le père doivent ; le manque d'argent les encouragent ; la capacité les aident*. Verbs (even entirely regular ones) were as usual by far the most common sources of error: the plural of *la mère travaille* was frequently thought to be *les mères travailles* or *les mères travaillent*.

New words were coined, often with English lurking not far beneath the surface: *s'indépendancer ; divider ; dédiquer ; involvurer ; convéniente ; maintandre ; l'heursité ; le gagnance ; attraiter ; solver*. There was some creative spelling – *bébéciteur (babysitter) ; touletemp ; tujurs ; faire fasse(nt) à ; acose de ; malhalaise*. Other words were commonly distorted or mis-spelled: *dimunition ; une basse ; effect ; aspet ; revenues ; horraire ; avantage*.

Constructions with certain common verbs caused problems: *permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, laisser, souhaiter* and *préférer*. Incorrect prepositions appeared after *dépendre* and *participer* in particular.

The choice of the verb *travaille* or the noun *travail* (often *travails*) was almost as often wrong as right, as was the distinction between *leur* and *leurs*, or *son / sa / ses*. There sometimes appeared no difference between *eux(-mêmes)* and *elles(-mêmes)*, which caused confusion.

There was further confusion between *sa* and *ça*, *c'est / ces / ses*, *ce / se / ceux / ceux-là* (*sa c'est*, *cela* which very commonly appeared with a plural verb, no doubt influenced by *ceux-là*).

The omission of *ne* as the first part of a negative reversed the sense of a number of sentences: *les père devraient plus s'absenter ; il est plus à la mode que seul le père travaille*.

Regarder (après) for 'to look after' and *occuper* for *s'occuper de* caused problems, as did the construction with *dont* (*les enfants dont (often donc) leurs mères travaillent*). Very few managed two acute accents on *elle a créé*, and only stronger candidates seemed at ease with the use of the conditional of the modal verbs in **Questions 4(d), 4(e) and 5(b)**: (*elles/ils pourraient* and *ils devraient*).

That said, the linguistic ability of most candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French which was a pleasure to read.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In **Question 1**, the word or words chosen as the answer must be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question. Including additional words invalidates the answer.
- In **Question 2**, candidates are required to manipulate the sentence grammatically, not to alter its vocabulary or meaning unnecessarily.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not simply 'lift' (cut/copy and paste) from the text. They need to manipulate the text in some way, re-phrasing by using different vocabulary or structures.
- In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates should not copy out the question as a preamble to their answer.
- In **Question 5**, any material in excess of 150 (total for parts **(a)** and **(b)** combined) is ignored.
- In **Question 5(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to offer some brief relevant ideas of their own, without confining themselves to the material contained in the text.

General comments

There were some first-rate scripts from able and well prepared candidates who handled all the tasks with commendable fluency and accuracy, and, whilst there were some at the other end of the range whose level of linguistic competence was over-stretched by what was being asked of them, there were elements which were accessible to nearly all.

The topic generally appeared to be one to which candidates could relate.

The majority of candidates knew how to set about tackling the different types of question, revealing a good level of familiarity with the format of the paper and the required tasks. Where candidates scored consistently poorly, it was often because they copied phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**.

Quite a lot of answers were unduly lengthy, with candidates perhaps attempting to strike lucky by casting the net as widely as possible: sometimes the answers were longer than the whole paragraph of the text to which they referred. **The practice of copying out the question in Questions 3 and 4 as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time**, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which detract greatly from the overall impression for the quality of language mark. There were also significant numbers of other candidates who tried to incorporate the words of the question as an introduction to every answer, often losing credit for Quality of Language in the process: *Pourquoi les parents trouvent-ils cette période difficile est parce que ... 4(a)* or *Qu'est-ce qui provoque le sentiment d'impuissance chez les parents est que ... 4(d)*. Answers beginning with *Parce que* are quite in order, indeed usually preferable.

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

In **Questions 3 and 4**, copying wholesale from the text has diminished very considerably in recent sessions, but remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' answers unaltered from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. Candidates should therefore try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. There is an encouraging trend for the stronger candidates to understand how to do this quite simply, avoiding unnecessary over-complications. Even quite small changes (e.g. transforming nouns into verbs, or infinitives into finite verbs) or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2 is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for the sake of it. Candidates should therefore aim to make the minimum changes necessary, whilst retaining the essential elements of the original as possible. They need to be aware, however, that alterations made to one part of the sentence are likely to have grammatical implications elsewhere, particularly in matters of agreement.

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

In **Question 5**, candidates should realize the importance of the word limit clearly set out in the rubric of a total of 140 words for both sections. **Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the Summary will not be able to receive any of the 5 marks available for their Personal Response.** Although there has been a very marked improvement in this respect in recent sessions, candidates from some Centres still write answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin, meaning that too many good answers to the Personal Response cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded before it starts.

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

These limits are such that **candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble**, however polished. It appears that candidates are unnecessarily afraid of being penalized for not introducing the topic (not doubt because of different practices in other subjects), but it is easy to waste a significant proportion of the available words on this for no reward. From the very outset, candidates need to make the first point as succinctly as possible and move on to the other nine. It is a summary/*résumé* of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est ?* The most successful candidates often showed clear evidence of planning and editing their material with the word limit in mind.

In general, candidates who keep their answers reasonably short and straightforward and concentrate on doing the simple things efficiently tend to score better than those who demonstrate a desire to impress with over-elaborate phrasing and overambitious vocabulary.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This proved a relatively straightforward first exercise which enabled most candidates to get off to a good start. *Développer* was correctly identified by the vast majority as part of the correct answer for **(a)**, but some did not include the necessary *se*. *Poser* was usually correctly offered for **(b)**, but some were tempted by *établit* which, although similar in meaning as an infinitive, did not work grammatically here. Most recognized *d'aujourd'hui* as a substitute for *de nos jours* in **(c)**, but some again omitted the necessary *de*. *Bien sûr* was well found for *évidemment* in **(d)**. A good number found *comprend* for *apprécie* in **(e)**, whilst others offered *transmettre* or *présenter* – if all else failed, looking for a third person singular verb would at least have narrowed the search.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual the task proved very demanding for candidates with an inadequate command of grammatical structures.

Item 2(a): The transformation to the active was successfully achieved by a good number but some were let down by an incorrect choice of pronoun e.g. *leurs enfants leur/s'aiment*.

Item 2(b): The reverse transformation to the passive and the consequent agreement were generally similarly well handled by the stronger candidates, even if the tense was occasionally altered unnecessarily and *établit(e)* and *établise* were not uncommon.

Item 2(c): A similar fate befell *transmis* (*transmit* ; *transmetté*) here.

Item 2(d): This was the least well-handled manipulation (into indirect speech), with only a few candidates managing the correct pronouns: *se regarder* was commonly offered (occasionally *lui regarder* and *se parler*).

Item 2(e): Quite a pleasing number of the stronger candidates recognized the need for a subjunctive here, even if fewer were able to produce the correct form *aient*. Some candidates omitted to alter de *barrières claires* to des *barrières claires* once *besoin* had gone.

Question 3

Item 3(a): This question was well answered by candidates who found acceptable synonyms for *conflicts* – e.g. *disputes*, *affrontements*, *désaccords*, *tensions*. *Création* was commonly re-worked using the verb *créer* (as suggested by the question), as was *perte* rather less commonly with *perdre*. A few candidates thought that it is the lack of barriers that creates conflicts.

Item 3(b): Stronger candidates correctly identified three of the mistakes said to be commonly made by parents (not carrying out threatened punishments; not sending out the same messages; allowing themselves to be manipulated.) Weaker candidates suggested that it was parents who did not respect the rules, or 'lifted' *laisser faire* and *transmettre le même message* / *présenter un front uni* from the text.

Item 3(c): By asking *Qu'est-ce que tous le jeunes doivent faire ...?* the question pushed candidates down the path of using verbs rather than the nouns of the text, a path which many were happy to follow with *éviter*, *bien travailler à l'école*, *participer* and (slightly less commonly) *respecter*. Some were fortunate to get away with *respecter des autres* and *éviter du risque* from the text.

Item 3(d): *Des bras de fer* was sometimes interpreted as beating children with iron bars or even less probably *battre avec le bra d'une personne*. *Éviter de crier* was, on occasion, rendered as *ne pleurez pas*. A very easy second mark was scored by finding an alternative to *dialoguer*.

Item 3(e): Most candidates indicated the need for parents to listen to their children more often. Many then went on to indicate that *ils se concentrent sur leurs propres préoccupations* or similar. Some did not fully grasp the idea of *une abondance de biens matériels*, suggesting that this meant *beaucoup de matériels* or *des biens choses*.

Question 4

Item 4(a): The first two marks here were most easily scored by using the verbs *confronter* and *remettre en question*. Some of the other answers were too vague here: *ils se comportent mal* ; *ils ne comprennent plus leur enfant* ; *ils ont de mauvaises habitudes*.

Item 4(b): Almost all candidates scored the straightforward mark for *éditeurs*, but many did not manage to avoid lifting *il ne se passe rien* or *n'aurait pas manqué une phase*.

Item 4(c): Misreading *intérêt* as *Internet* was not uncommon. The question again suggested the verbs *s'intéresser*, *analyser*, *intervenir* and *s'inquiéter* as the most obvious ways of avoiding lifting and thereby earning the mark.

Item 4(d): Some of the many rewardable answers here involved the simple transformation of *leur influence diminue* into *la diminution de leur influence*. *Diminution* quite often appeared as *dimunition* or *diminuation*. Many candidates also successfully indicated that most adolescents did in fact feel they needed their parents, even if their parents didn't believe it.

Item 4(e): Candidates often found the easiest way of scoring a mark here by changing the present tense in *doutant d'eux-mêmes* to the infinitive in line with the question. Others made sensible use of verbs such as *paniquer, s'effrayer, douter de leurs capacités*, and found suitable alternatives to *renoncer*, e.g. *abandonner, désertier*.

Question 5

This question asked candidates to summarise the advice to parents as far as their relationship with their adolescent children is concerned, and then to express a personal view of the ways in which adolescents can contribute to family harmony. Being concise is part of the task. See **General Comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction. The mark scheme for the **Summary** identified 15 rewardable points of which a good number of candidates managed perhaps 7, 8 or 9, with some reaching 10 or more.

The most commonly identified points were the need for parents to set barriers; to apply threatened punishments; to keep a united front; to establish a dialogue; to establish visual contact; to keep calm; to have confidence in their children.

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

Candidates who scored fewest marks of all included those who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts.

The **Personal Response** gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which some candidates did with imagination and originality, assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. Some concentrated simply on children pulling their weight in household chores and being willing to spend time talking to their parents. Others stressed the need for children to understand the pressures on parents. More ambitious candidates were often rewarded for introducing a relevant idea or slant of their own, or an arresting turn of phrase: *la cacophonie familiale peut se transformer en harmonie*.

Quality of Language

The quality of language varied from excellent to poor. The very weakest sometimes found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form. Agreements were routinely ignored by some and errors in subject-verb concord were common. Verbs were as usual by far the most common sources of error, the plural of *le parent menace* being sometimes *les parents menaces*.

New verbs were coined, often with English lurking not far beneath the surface: *obtenir* ; *participer* ; *involver* ; *attempter* ; *hesiter* ; *prevenir* ; *resolver* ; *provider* ; *expecter* ; *disrupter* ; *enforcer*. Nouns and adjectives sometimes fared no better: *léniants* ; *criticale* ; *la strictesse* ; *les requirements* ; *le relationship* ; *la certainté* ; *consistent* (in the English sense). *Aider environ la maison* (to help around the house); *c'est tout environ communication* (it's all about communication); *dans ordre participer* (in order to participate) did little to enhance the overall impression.

Constructions with certain common verbs caused their usual problems: *permettre, aider, encourager, empêcher, laisser, and préférer*. Pronouns (particularly the distinction between *les* and *leur(s)*, *le/la* and *lui* and *se*) were common sources of error.

That said, the linguistic ability of most candidates certainly enabled them to transmit the required facts and opinions effectively, whilst the very best candidates wrote commendably idiomatic, fluent and accurate French.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/31

Essay

Key Messages

- Choose the title with which you feel most comfortable and on which you can write a relevant, well-illustrated essay.
- Plan your response carefully, using an introduction to show understanding of the elements of the title chosen and a conclusion to show a considered final judgement of the issues discussed.
- Aim to use accurate and idiomatic French, which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary.

General Comments

Good and very good scripts this year were not as numerous as in previous years and there was a noticeable increase in the number of weak scripts. Essays mainly fell into the “average” category, with some quality at the better end but a good deal of poor grammar and very basic and often irrelevant content lower down.

With regard to content, many candidates did not address the specific title of the essays, writing essays on the umbrella topic instead. What is required is some analysis of all the elements given in the title and then to address them and their relationship to each other. Often candidates made a few relevant points surrounded by irrelevance.

The structure of essays continues to be problematic for many candidates. Although it is apparent from rough work that quite a few candidates work on a plan before embarking on their essays, even they can sometimes lapse into a stream of consciousness outpouring of circular argument, repetition and self-contradiction. Some offer a pre-prepared introduction onto which is tacked a repetition of the words of the topic set; at the end of this they ask a question that does not refer to the question on the paper. Others, who follow the path of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, often omit to produce a considered, balanced conclusion rather using the concluding paragraph to introduce a new point or to ask a new question. The very best and most relevant offerings are those which support their arguments with apt illustration and exemplification.

As far as quality of language is concerned, there were some impressive essays where grammatical accuracy and an impressive range of structures and lexis made for a high level of fluency. However, in much of the work submitted, grammatical accuracy was poor. This affected mainly noun-adjective and subject-verb agreements. Many of these errors could be avoided by thorough checking. Sentences lacking a main verb were quite common, usually consisting of an initial subject followed by a relative clause leading to a full stop. Inappropriate register was also fairly common (*ça, boulot, mec, truc, bosser, chiant* and *emmerder*). There was also a large number of errors incurred by miscopying of words given in the titles, e.g. *réseaux, menace, sonore, l'oisir, les jeunes perdre / perdrent leurs idéaux*. More positively, pre-learned essay phrases were used sparingly and by and large appropriately, and some candidates did have grammar on their minds, one candidate opening “*Sur un plan purement subjonctif.....*”.

Question 1

En ce qui concerne les rapports humains, les réseaux sociaux comme Facebook ou Twitter font plus de mal que de bien. Etes-vous d'accord ?

This was the most popular question. Unfortunately, however, many candidates missed the key phrase *en ce qui concerne les rapports humains*. The principal theme of the bulk of the essays submitted was the positive and negative aspects of social networking sites and, very often, of the Internet in general. Long sections included accounts of Internet shopping, the educational value of the Internet and, not least, social ills, such as paedophilia, identity theft and other forms of fraud, attributable in large part to cyber activity.

Opening paragraphs that were succinct and to the point stated the huge potential afforded by social networking sites, not least in terms of the benefits in the sphere of personal relationships, but also... Thereafter, a whole range of points were made.

First and foremost, it is now possible to make many new friends online among people whom otherwise we would never have encountered. There exist millions of married couples whose first meeting with their spouse was on a social networking site. Introverted people and those lacking in social confidence who are not comfortable with face to face interactions can thrive in an online environment. Such sites are a lifeline too for disabled people who are confined to their homes and whose possibilities for interacting with others would otherwise be extremely limited. Moreover, the opportunity people are afforded for sharing ideas, experiences, photographs, with people from different backgrounds, different religions or different cultures, is calculated to promote tolerance and social harmony. Relationships with family members and real-life friends also benefit from social networking sites. Work and study commitments mean that people lead very busy lives and are not free to meet or talk at the same time as those close or dear to them, so that posts and photos on Facebook or a similar site are the most convenient way of keeping in touch. In days gone by, keeping in touch with friends and family living abroad, either permanently or temporarily, would have been either very expensive in the case of the telephone or very slow and not altogether reliable in the case of the postal service, but today free of charge instantaneous contact is possible and, on some sites such as Skype, the interlocutors can even see one another. If contact has been lost with old school friends or former colleagues, several specialist sites are on hand to help users to trace them so that contact can be renewed. Other sorts of human contact are also facilitated. Politicians use Twitter and Facebook to bring them closer to their electors. Many idols of the stage and screen and of the sporting world, formerly only seen in magazines and on television, now make a point of having direct contact with their fans through social networking sites. It is increasingly common for companies and professional people such as teachers, doctors and lawyers to have an account on such a site in order to promote relations with their clients, candidates and patients.

However many contacts one has who are designated as “friends” on various sites, it has to be said that true friendship is more than the sum of updates and posts, whether verbal or in the form of photographs, and that such relationships pale into insignificance when compared with real life friendships. In other words, there are limitations to the benefits of social networking sites in the sphere of human relationships. More seriously, such sites often impact very negatively on their users’ relations with others. Compulsive social networkers have little time left for real-life personal interaction and this can have disastrous consequences for their relational skills: loss of confidence in their social abilities, narcissistic tendencies, introversion along with difficulty in opening up to others are all well-documented psychological problems resulting from excessive exposure to social networking sites. Young people are particularly at risk: an addiction to such sites as Facebook can result in minimal offline communication with their parents, skipping meals and neglecting schoolwork. It also works both ways: some children have been seriously neglected because of a parent’s compulsive social networking habits. Another well-documented phenomenon is the immense hurt caused to doting grandparents when suddenly their regular meetings with one and then another of their grandchildren, which have been one of their principal sources of happiness, come to an end because of the latter’s new found infatuation with Internet friends. The ease with which it is possible to ‘hook up’ with others on such sites and arrange meetings has been a factor in the break-up of relationships and marriages. The online environment can encourage pranksters, individuals seeking revenge for a wrong done to them, and, worst of all, trolls. An allied problem is cyber-bullying: an ever increasing number of media reports detail the cruel online intimidation and victimisation of often highly vulnerable individuals. Social networking sites can be a place for argument and conflict. Finally, such sites also breed suspicion and distrust in dealing with others for the simple reason that the networker can never be sure of the true identity of the so-called friend met on line, he or she has no way of knowing what sort of people might be lurking among those with whom they have regular online contact.

Question 2

La ville est l’endroit où les jeunes perdent leurs idéaux. Discutez de cette affirmation.

Not a popular choice, this question was also the least well done. The principal problem seemed to be the interpretation of the word *idéaux*. Most candidates clearly realised that the title referred to the city as a place where something is lost, hence a negative, and many proceeded to sing the praises of the country or the village as a place where one’s *idéaux* are preserved. This led either to a “beauty/purity of the country versus the evils of the city” debate or to rather abstract writing on the decline of religious and family values in modern life.

Those candidates who did interpret the question correctly often began by painting a picture of childhood in the sheltered world of early adolescence when the harsh realities of society have not yet intruded on the sheltered world of childhood. At that period of their lives many have an almost utopian view of the world, a world that is safe and secure, a world where people live in harmony with one another, where the good things of life are available on demand and plentiful and where serenity reigns. Two elements in particular are calculated to shatter that idealised world in which they live, notably exposure to media sources, in particular television, and, secondly, what they learn about the environment in which they live as they begin to discover the true nature of the place where they have been brought up. If that place is a town or city, they will soon discover harsh realities that will cause their idealised world to come tumbling down.

Towns and cities are usually the places where the crime rate is the highest. Police forces wage a constant battle against violent crime – armed robberies, muggings, kidnappings, murder, rape, arson – and crimes which, though they do not involve violence, are still of a serious nature – burglaries, car theft, fraud. Justice follows its course and those criminals who are convicted go to jail for an appropriate number of years. However, in jail, such is the environment that reigns, many become even more hardened criminals and as soon as they are released, they return to the towns and cities where their life of crime began and they reoffend. Young people quickly learn that they can never feel safe in urban areas.

Social problems are particularly rife in urban areas. In many cities of the world, there is a high level of unemployment and of homelessness. The victims have no option but to live on often benefits, on charity hand outs and on the proceeds of begging. Homeless people are forced to live on the streets or in hostels provided by the government or charitable organisations. Many take to alcohol in order to drown their sorrows; others resort to drugs, many of them becoming addicts who leave their used syringes in back streets. Drug addiction and prostitution often go hand in hand, young women resorting to selling sexual services in order to fuel their need for narcotics.

Environmental problems are especially accentuated in many towns and cities. Air pollution was almost always top of the list of threats to public health because of fumes from heavy traffic and industrial emissions. However, noise pollution is also a major issue: engine noise, noisy exhausts, road works, bars with loud music, ambulance and police sirens, trains and sometimes overhead aircraft, all contribute to insomnia, auditory problems and nervous disorders. There is also visual pollution. Giant neon signs and advertising hoardings, graffiti, ugly skyscrapers that keep out the light, and little by way of green spaces: all make for a panorama that is far from pleasing to the eye. People are soon forced to take on board that their “beautiful world” is not quite as beautiful as they had thought.

Problems of infrastructure are a great source of frustration in many urban areas. Many people are attracted to towns and cities in the hope that they will find employment but when they get there, they find that not only are jobs very hard to come by, but also that affordable housing is lacking. Hospitals cannot cope with the large influx of new arrivals, public transport systems are also stretched to the limits, schools are overcrowded, and possibilities for leisure activities are also somewhat limited, especially on a low income. This brings disillusionment.

Question 3

Les loisirs sont pour les riches. Qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?

This was a very popular question, which generated a significant number of thoughtful, well-constructed and cogently argued essays. On the other hand, there were many scripts which consisted of pre-prepared answers on the role and importance of leisure activities.

Good candidates went straight to the centre of the topic, stating that though in an ideal world, everybody would have a totally free choice in the matter of how to spend their leisure time, in reality, people's leisure activities are constrained by a number of factors, mainly financial and time pressures.

There are a number of leisure activities which either because of the very high initial outlay involved or because of the ongoing expenses incurred in pursuing them are the preserve of wealthier members of society. Quite apart from private jets, luxury yachts, collecting Old Masters or Fabergé eggs which belong to the fairy-tale world of the fabulously rich, there are other leisure pursuits which are less exclusive but which still necessitate an outlay which is beyond the means of most ordinary working people: golf, skiing, equestrian sports were among those most frequently quoted.

The point was made in many essays, however, that in recent times, we have witnessed the demerit of leisure activities. Governments have overseen programmes for building municipal sports centres, leisure centres, and centres for the elderly which offer a whole range of leisure possibilities to people of all ages. Municipal libraries mean that even the least well-off members of society have free access to books, CDs, DVDs and computers. Entry to museums and art galleries is now free in many countries of the world in order to ensure that access to the national heritage is not restricted. Television is also been a major factor in the democratisation process: sports fans can now watch major sporting events in the comfort of their own homes, often free of charge – Formula One races, World Cup football matches, Grand Slam tennis tournaments, major golf tournaments and athletics meetings are all covered by various channels eager to attract the highest possible number of viewers. The great range of interests catered for on television gives it universal appeal as a source of entertainment. More recently, the availability of computers has revolutionized the way we spend our leisure time. Foreign travel, once the preserve of the more wealthy members of society has likewise been revolutionized by the advent of low-cost airlines and package holidays. Changes in the working environment have also been an important factor: many enterprises have fully taken on board the link between stress and productivity, so that part of the package offered to employees is free recreational activities e.g. gymnasiums, personal trainers and company outings.

Time constraints still play an important part in shaping a person's leisure pursuits but in that area too there have been great changes. In the past, it was generally true to say that the richer you were, the more free time you could allow yourself to indulge your passions. However, those days are long since gone, for, today, the dynamics of the workplace have completely changed. To command the high salaries that they do, CEOs, City high-flyers, senior bankers etc. usually have to put in extremely long hours, while conditions for the lower paid workers, including the amount of time to be allowed for rest, are strictly controlled by law. As a result, in many areas, the workers enjoy more leisure time than their highly-paid bosses. Moreover, constantly reminded by the media that the link between health and stress is a very close one, people are fiercely protective of their leisure time: they are determined to take full advantage of the possibilities that our society has to offer. Some good essays concluded with the observation that we may still be a long way from the leisure society envisaged by Keynes back in the 1930s but, equally, we have moved away from the early 20th century view of leisure as an elitist preserve.

Question 4

Comment expliquez-vous le nombre toujours grandissant de conflits armés dans le monde?

Relatively few candidates opted for this title. However, it produced some of the best essays, the most impressive combining considered reflections on the nature of war and peace, with specific illustrations based on impressively detailed and accurate knowledge of both present and past conflicts. A number of candidates, however, were guilty of confusing war and social conflicts and more seriously, weak essays were marred by a dearth of exemplification and/or by flawed examples, e.g. attributing the Twin Towers attack to Gaddafi.

A starting point for some was the end of the Cold War in the mid-80s which brought optimism regarding prospects of world peace. However, sadly, that optimism was short-lived as subsequently there have been a number of major conflicts in many areas of the world. A prominent cause of war, identified by many essays, has been the desire of populations and/or foreign governments to overthrow tyrannical regimes, e.g. Libya, Iraq, Syria.

Territorial conflict and the preservation of national identity were identified as another major cause of bloodshed. Often cited was the Bosnian war in the 1990s or the conflict between Gaza and Israel, Power struggles within countries between rival ethnic groups have been another major source of bloodshed, e.g. the former Belgian Congo in Africa during the 1990s.

Many essays made the point that religion and war have gone hand in hand since time immemorial and, in recent times, the problem for western powers has been the combat against religious fanaticism which has been another important factor in the increasing amount of armed conflict in the world, e.g. the September 11 attacks in New York, ISIS.

A wide range of examples of other ongoing conflicts were variously cited, including the Islamist insurgency in Nigeria, the Somali Civil War, the conflict in the Central African Republic, the war in the Donbass region in Ukraine and ethnic violence in South Sudan. Some good essays concluded by stressing that the efforts of such agencies as the United Nations to ensure peace in the world are doomed to failure in a world where arms seem to be easily obtainable and where greed, the thirst for power and fanaticism are so prevalent.

Question 5

La pollution sonore et visuelle constitue une menace tout aussi importante que la pollution atmosphérique. À votre avis, dans quelle mesure est-ce vrai?

It was evident from many essays on this topic that candidates had made an in-depth study of the causes and effects of pollution: they drew a clear differentiation between the different types of pollution mentioned in the title, consolidated them with specific examples and drew an informed conclusion. Too many, however, used pre-prepared material in which types of pollution other than those referred to in the title figured prominently, in particular water pollution, and paid little or no heed to the specifics of the question. Moreover, there was a significant number of candidates whose understanding of visual pollution was limited, equating it with such things as girls dressed in clothes calculated to shock more conservative members of the community, or simply litter. Noise pollution was better understood though in some cases this was limited to the noise emanating from discotheques. Many candidates, although including examples, needed to address the issue of comparative impact which was key to the question.

Brief definitions of the phenomena referred to in the title were helpful. Noise pollution is the disturbing or excessive noise that may harm the activity or balance of human or animal life. The sources of outdoor noise pollution most commonly cited were machines used for road works and construction, along with transportation systems in the form of motor vehicles (noisy engines and exhausts, car horns and car radios), aircraft and trains. Other sources sometimes mentioned included amplified music coming from bars, the sirens used by the police and the emergency services, wind turbines and military sonar. Poor urban planning, some pointed out, may give rise to noise pollution since adjacent industrial and residential buildings can give rise to such pollution in residential areas.

Noise pollution has serious effects on both physical and psychological health. Chronic exposure to loud noise may cause hearing loss and it also responsible for high stress levels, hypertension, tinnitus and sleep disturbances. Noise can also have a detrimental effect on wild animals, e.g. increasing the risk of death by changing the delicate balance in predator or prey detection. A number of scripts referred to the theory that noise pollution was a major contributory factor in the death of certain species of whales that beached themselves after being exposed to the loud sound of military sonar. In the case of endangered species, the reduction of usable habitat by the impact of noise has the potential to be a significant factor in the path to extinction.

Visual pollution is an aesthetic issue: it disturbs the visual area of people by creating negative changes in the natural or man-made environment. Billboards, telephone towers, electricity pylons and wires, ugly or badly maintained buildings and litter are all forms of visual pollution. A major cause of visual pollution is the insensitivity of local authorities who fail to exercise adequate control over what is built or put up in public places, allowing, for example, a fast-food restaurant sign to be put up adjacent to a medieval cathedral. Visual pollution impairs one's ability to enjoy a vista or view inducing negative mental and physical effects. Research has shown that, fully taking into account the relative numbers of vehicles using them, the incidence of accidents on urban roads littered with signs, billboards, graffiti and the like is much higher than on scenic country roads and that the stress levels experienced by drivers on rural roads are much lower than those experienced by those driving through built-up areas.

Serious though the effects of sound and visual pollution may be, most essays which addressed the issue took the line that they pale into relative insignificance when compared with the effects of atmospheric pollution which are truly alarming. Long-term health effects can include chronic respiratory disease, lung cancer, heart disease and even damage to the brain, nerves, liver or kidneys. Continual exposure to air pollution affects the lungs of growing children and may aggravate or complicate medical conditions in the elderly. In China alone, air pollution is estimated to kill 500,000 people each year and across the EU, it is estimated to reduce life expectancy by at almost 9 months. According to the World Health Organisation, in 2012 alone, it caused the deaths of around 7 million people worldwide. Another direct effect is the immediate alterations that the world is witnessing due to global warming. With increased temperatures worldwide, increase in sea levels because of melting ice from colder regions and icebergs, displacement and loss of habitat have already signalled an impending disaster if actions for preservation and normalisation are not undertaken soon. Harmful gases like nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides are released into the atmosphere during the burning of fossil fuels. When it rains, the water droplets combine with these air pollutants, become acidic and then fall in the form of acid rain which can cause great damage to humans, animals, plant life including crops and even to cars and buildings. Acid rain strips leaves of nutrients and breaks down trees' ability to resist cold and tree diseases, and historic buildings bear the signs of acidic corrosion and deterioration. Eutrophication is another effect of air pollution: high amounts of nitrogen present in some pollutants are developed on the surface of the sea and of lakes and ponds and form themselves into algae,

resulting in the depletion of oxygen in the water and adversely affecting fish, marine animals and also representing a danger for both humans and land animals. Not least, the depletion of the ozone which protects humans from harmful ultraviolet rays, due to the presence of fluorocarbons in the atmosphere, is already resulting in a significant increase in cancers and eye problems.

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FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/32

Essay

Key Messages

- Choose the title with which you feel most comfortable and on which you can write a relevant, well-illustrated essay.
- Plan your response carefully, using an introduction to show understanding of the elements of the title chosen and a conclusion to show a considered final judgement of the issues discussed.
- Aim to use accurate and idiomatic French, which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary.

General Comments

Good and very good scripts this year were not as numerous as in previous years and there was a noticeable increase in the number of weak scripts. Essays mainly fell into the “average” category, with some quality at the better end but a good deal of poor grammar and very basic and often irrelevant content lower down.

With regard to content, many candidates did not address the specific title of the essays, writing essays on the umbrella topic instead. What is required is some analysis of all the elements given in the title and then to address them and their relationship to each other. Often candidates made a few relevant points surrounded by irrelevance.

The structure of essays continues to be problematic for many candidates. Although it is apparent from rough work that quite a few candidates work on a plan before embarking on their essays, even they can sometimes lapse into a stream of consciousness outpouring of circular argument, repetition and self-contradiction. Some offer a pre-prepared introduction onto which is tacked a repetition of the words of the topic set; at the end of this they ask a question that does not refer to the question on the paper. Others, who follow the path of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, often omit to produce a considered, balanced conclusion rather using the concluding paragraph to introduce a new point or to ask a new question. The very best and most relevant offerings are those which support their arguments with apt illustration and exemplification.

As far as quality of language is concerned, there were some impressive essays where grammatical accuracy and an impressive range of structures and lexis made for a high level of fluency. However, in much of the work submitted, grammatical accuracy was poor. This affected mainly noun-adjective and subject-verb agreements. Many of these errors could be avoided by thorough checking. Sentences lacking a main verb were quite common, usually consisting of an initial subject followed by a relative clause leading to a full stop. Inappropriate register was also fairly common (*ça, boulot, mec, truc, bosser, chiant* and *emmerder*). There was also a large number of errors incurred by miscopying of words given in the titles, e.g. *réseaux, menace, sonore, l'oisir, les jeunes perdre / perdrent leurs idéaux*. More positively, pre-learned essay phrases were used sparingly and by and large appropriately, and some candidates did have grammar on their minds, one candidate opening “*Sur un plan purement subjonctif.....*”.

Question 1

En ce qui concerne les rapports humains, les réseaux sociaux comme Facebook ou Twitter font plus de mal que de bien. Etes-vous d'accord ?

This was the most popular question. Unfortunately, however, many candidates missed the key phrase *en ce qui concerne les rapports humains*. The principal theme of the bulk of the essays submitted was the positive and negative aspects of social networking sites and, very often, of the Internet in general. Long sections included accounts of Internet shopping, the educational value of the Internet and, not least, social ills, such as paedophilia, identity theft and other forms of fraud, attributable in large part to cyber activity.

Opening paragraphs that were succinct and to the point stated the huge potential afforded by social networking sites, not least in terms of the benefits in the sphere of personal relationships, but also... Thereafter, a whole range of points were made.

First and foremost, it is now possible to make many new friends online among people whom otherwise we would never have encountered. There exist millions of married couples whose first meeting with their spouse was on a social networking site. Introverted people and those lacking in social confidence who are not comfortable with face to face interactions can thrive in an online environment. Such sites are a lifeline too for disabled people who are confined to their homes and whose possibilities for interacting with others would otherwise be extremely limited. Moreover, the opportunity people are afforded for sharing ideas, experiences, photographs, with people from different backgrounds, different religions or different cultures, is calculated to promote tolerance and social harmony. Relationships with family members and real-life friends also benefit from social networking sites. Work and study commitments mean that people lead very busy lives and are not free to meet or talk at the same time as those close or dear to them, so that posts and photos on Facebook or a similar site are the most convenient way of keeping in touch. In days gone by, keeping in touch with friends and family living abroad, either permanently or temporarily, would have been either very expensive in the case of the telephone or very slow and not altogether reliable in the case of the postal service, but today free of charge instantaneous contact is possible and, on some sites such as Skype, the interlocutors can even see one another. If contact has been lost with old school friends or former colleagues, several specialist sites are on hand to help users to trace them so that contact can be renewed. Other sorts of human contact are also facilitated. Politicians use Twitter and Facebook to bring them closer to their electors. Many idols of the stage and screen and of the sporting world, formerly only seen in magazines and on television, now make a point of having direct contact with their fans through social networking sites. It is increasingly common for companies and professional people such as teachers, doctors and lawyers to have an account on such a site in order to promote relations with their clients, candidates and patients.

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La ville est l’endroit où les jeunes perdent leurs idéaux. Discutez de cette affirmation.

Not a popular choice, this question was also the least well done. The principal problem seemed to be the interpretation of the word *idéaux*. Most candidates clearly realised that the title referred to the city as a place where something is lost, hence a negative, and many proceeded to sing the praises of the country or the village as a place where one’s *idéaux* are preserved. This led either to a “beauty/purity of the country versus the evils of the city” debate or to rather abstract writing on the decline of religious and family values in modern life.

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Question 4

Comment expliquez-vous le nombre toujours grandissant de conflits armés dans le monde?

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A starting point for some was the end of the Cold War in the mid-80s which brought optimism regarding prospects of world peace. However, sadly, that optimism was short-lived as subsequently there have been a number of major conflicts in many areas of the world. A prominent cause of war, identified by many essays, has been the desire of populations and/or foreign governments to overthrow tyrannical regimes, e.g. Libya, Iraq, Syria.

Territorial conflict and the preservation of national identity were identified as another major cause of bloodshed. Often cited was the Bosnian war in the 1990s or the conflict between Gaza and Israel. Power struggles within countries between rival ethnic groups have been another major source of bloodshed, e.g. the former Belgian Congo in Africa during the 1990s.

Many essays made the point that religion and war have gone hand in hand since time immemorial and, in recent times, the problem for western powers has been the combat against religious fanaticism which has been another important factor in the increasing amount of armed conflict in the world, e.g. the September 11 attacks in New York, ISIS.

A wide range of examples of other ongoing conflicts were variously cited, including the Islamist insurgency in Nigeria, the Somali Civil War, the conflict in the Central African Republic, the war in the Donbass region in Ukraine and ethnic violence in South Sudan. Some good essays concluded by stressing that the efforts of such agencies as the United Nations to ensure peace in the world are doomed to failure in a world where arms seem to be easily obtainable and where greed, the thirst for power and fanaticism are so prevalent.

Question 5

La pollution sonore et visuelle constitue une menace tout aussi importante que la pollution atmosphérique. À votre avis, dans quelle mesure est-ce vrai?

It was evident from many essays on this topic that candidates had made an in-depth study of the causes and effects of pollution: they drew a clear differentiation between the different types of pollution mentioned in the title, consolidated them with specific examples and drew an informed conclusion. Too many, however, used pre-prepared material in which types of pollution other than those referred to in the title figured prominently, in particular water pollution, and paid little or no heed to the specifics of the question. Moreover, there was a significant number of candidates whose understanding of visual pollution was limited, equating it with such things as girls dressed in clothes calculated to shock more conservative members of the community, or simply litter. Noise pollution was better understood though in some cases this was limited to the noise emanating from discotheques. Many candidates, although including examples, needed to address the issue of comparative impact which was key to the question.

Brief definitions of the phenomena referred to in the title were helpful. Noise pollution is the disturbing or excessive noise that may harm the activity or balance of human or animal life. The sources of outdoor noise pollution most commonly cited were machines used for road works and construction, along with transportation systems in the form of motor vehicles (noisy engines and exhausts, car horns and car radios), aircraft and trains. Other sources sometimes mentioned included amplified music coming from bars, the sirens used by the police and the emergency services, wind turbines and military sonar. Poor urban planning, some pointed out, may give rise to noise pollution since adjacent industrial and residential buildings can give rise to such pollution in residential areas.

Noise pollution has serious effects on both physical and psychological health. Chronic exposure to loud noise may cause hearing loss and it also responsible for high stress levels, hypertension, tinnitus and sleep disturbances. Noise can also have a detrimental effect on wild animals, e.g. increasing the risk of death by changing the delicate balance in predator or prey detection. A number of scripts referred to the theory that noise pollution was a major contributory factor in the death of certain species of whales that beached themselves after being exposed to the loud sound of military sonar. In the case of endangered species, the reduction of usable habitat by the impact of noise has the potential to be a significant factor in the path to extinction.

Visual pollution is an aesthetic issue: it disturbs the visual area of people by creating negative changes in the natural or man-made environment. Billboards, telephone towers, electricity pylons and wires, ugly or badly maintained buildings and litter are all forms of visual pollution. A major cause of visual pollution is the insensitivity of local authorities who fail to exercise adequate control over what is built or put up in public places, allowing, for example, a fast-food restaurant sign to be put up adjacent to a medieval cathedral. Visual pollution impairs one's ability to enjoy a vista or view inducing negative mental and physical effects. Research has shown that, fully taking into account the relative numbers of vehicles using them, the incidence of accidents on urban roads littered with signs, billboards, graffiti and the like is much higher than on scenic country roads and that the stress levels experienced by drivers on rural roads are much lower than those experienced by those driving through built-up areas.

Serious though the effects of sound and visual pollution may be, most essays which addressed the issue took the line that they pale into relative insignificance when compared with the effects of atmospheric pollution which are truly alarming. Long-term health effects can include chronic respiratory disease, lung cancer, heart disease and even damage to the brain, nerves, liver or kidneys. Continual exposure to air pollution affects the lungs of growing children and may aggravate or complicate medical conditions in the elderly. In China alone, air pollution is estimated to kill 500,000 people each year and across the EU, it is estimated to reduce life expectancy by at almost 9 months. According to the World Health Organisation, in 2012 alone, it caused the deaths of around 7 million people worldwide. Another direct effect is the immediate alterations that the world is witnessing due to global warming. With increased temperatures worldwide, increase in sea levels because of melting ice from colder regions and icebergs, displacement and loss of habitat have already signalled an impending disaster if actions for preservation and normalisation are not undertaken soon. Harmful gases like nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides are released into the atmosphere during the burning of fossil fuels. When it rains, the water droplets combine with these air pollutants, become acidic and then fall in the form of acid rain which can cause great damage to humans, animals, plant life including crops and even to cars and buildings. Acid rain strips leaves of nutrients and breaks down trees' ability to resist cold and tree diseases, and historic buildings bear the signs of acidic corrosion and deterioration. Eutrophication is another effect of air pollution: high amounts of nitrogen present in some pollutants are developed on the surface of the sea and of lakes and ponds and form themselves into algae,

resulting in the depletion of oxygen in the water and adversely affecting fish, marine animals and also representing a danger for both humans and land animals. Not least, the depletion of the ozone which protects humans from harmful ultraviolet rays, due to the presence of fluorocarbons in the atmosphere, is already resulting in a significant increase in cancers and eye problems.

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FRENCH LANGUAGE

Paper 8682/33

Essay

Key Messages

- Choose the title with which you feel most comfortable and on which you can write a relevant, well-illustrated essay.
- Plan your response carefully, using an introduction to show understanding of the elements of the title chosen and a conclusion to show a considered final judgement of the issues discussed.
- Aim to use accurate and idiomatic French, which demonstrates complexity both in structure and vocabulary.

General Comments:

Planning is clearly an important first step in writing a good discursive essay. Most candidates showed some evidence of planning, but it was often short and sketchy, written in English and quite superficial in nature. Candidates who define the terms of the question in their own mind, considering all elements of the question set, and put their material into a logical order before writing will be highly rewarded for content. It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general topic area. Some candidates used the first paragraph to define the terms of the generic topic without reference to the question. Others launched straight into the meat of their argument without any introductory statements.

In terms of language, clumsy use of idiom and a significant proportion of anglicisms were common, along with frequent examples of phonetic spelling. Pre-learned phrases were frequent and often served only to highlight the deficiencies in the candidates' own writing. Successful candidates used a range of structures and appropriate vocabulary, did not over-reach themselves and managed to express their ideas in accurate, ambitious and succinct language. In other cases, however, candidates demonstrated very little grammatical, structural or idiomatic awareness.

Examples of good use of language include:

Appropriate use of linking words/phrases such as *lorsque, ainsi, puisque, cependant, pourtant, d'abord, d'ailleurs, en outre, ensuite, néanmoins, d'autre part, en revanche, de prime abord.*

Range of structures including correct forms of the subjunctive. Use of a range of verbs such as *accompagné de, reposer sur, promouvoir, justifier, mener à.*

Range of topic appropriate vocabulary demonstrating that candidates have read widely during their course.

Correct use of idioms, e.g. *la première constatation qui s'impose, il convient de, en d'autres mots, venons-en à, au revers de la médaille, il est généralement admis que, force est de constater*

Common errors:

Incorrect genders/spellings (sometimes when the word is in the title): *manque, travail, divorce, menage, pays, environnement, développement, gouvernement, monde, planète, rôle, exemple, avis, phénomène, deuxièmement, problème, aspect*

Frequent use of *beaucoup des* with a plural noun.

Overuse of *aussi* at start of sentences and paragraphs.

Use of *parce que* instead of *à cause de* and *car* for *pour*.

Overuse of the word *chose / choses* and *cela / ça*. Use of *personnes* for *gens*.

Incorrect sequence of tenses with *si*.

Inaccurate use of accents e.g., *phénomène, déchets, écologique*.

Confusion between/misuse of : *ces / ses, les / des, place / endroit, bon / bien, mauvais / mal, c'est que / ceux que, ceux qui / ce qui, ou / où, a / à, sa / ça* (overused instead of *cela*), *mieux / meilleur, leur / leurs*.

Use of *faire* for *rendre*

Use of the past participle after modal verbs, e.g. *elles doivent resté à la maison, on peut allé au gymnase*

Use of the wrong preposition after common verbs followed by an infinitive structure, e.g. *aider de, préférer de*

Use of *avoir besoin de* instead of *devoir*.

Overuse of *il y a, il faut que* and the conditional tense of *devoir*.

Use of anglicisms such as *ils veulent leurs parents de supporter les, c'est évident pour tout de voir*, and use of *travailler* for *marcher*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

De nos jours, le divorce n'a rien d'une catastrophe. Êtes-vous d'accord ?

This question was attempted by a small number of candidates. Most candidates understood the question explained why divorce today was no longer considered taboo. They talked about a change in society which is now much more accepting of the rights of the individual and the right to be happy. This has led to a change in how marriage and divorce is viewed. Candidates were, however, keen to point out that although divorce can be seen to benefit the partners in a difficult relationship, the effects on children can still be devastating. Several candidates spoke of their own experiences of going through a divorce in their own families and it was clear that this had a significant effect on them as people. Some candidates talked about the financial implications of divorce and the difficulties of dividing up resources. Overall, the essay stimulated some good discussion with a range of views about divorce today.

Question 2

Dans nos grandes villes, il y a tant de monde et pourtant tellement de gens souffrent de solitude. Comment expliquez-vous ce phénomène ?

This was the second most popular question and gave candidates the chance to talk generally about city life. Unfortunately many of them did not cover the loneliness aspect of the question, preferring instead to discuss the ranges of options open to people living in the city such as shopping, free access to the internet, leisure facilities and education. Those who discussed loneliness made reference to city dwellers being independent and individual, not part of a community, and therefore suffering from lack of human warmth and contact. These candidates pointed out that despite the large numbers of people, it is very easy to feel alone in a big city.

Question 3

*Ne pas savoir bien profiter de son temps de loisirs est à la base de beaucoup de maux.
Discutez de cette affirmation.*

This was the least popular question. There was some difficulty with the concept of *maux*. Candidates talked about leisure as a time away from work for travelling, sports activities or relaxing. Some recognised that people waste a lot of their leisure time on activities related to the internet, such as accessing social media, playing games and living in a virtual world. There was a general feeling that sitting at a computer indoors might not be the best thing for developing healthy human relationships or good physical health and wellbeing. Some candidates recognised that with the growth in the amount of leisure time available to people, it is important that they use it properly so that it provides the necessary break from high powered work or study.

Question 4

A votre avis, existe-t-il de bonnes raisons pour faire la guerre ou sont-elles toutes mauvaises ?

This was the most popular question. Successful candidates were able to express their ideas in logical, well-argued and exemplified essays with reasoned conclusions. Weaker candidates were still able to access the question and showed that they had understood the parameters but tended not to use appropriate examples to back up their assertions and made sweeping generalisations. It was clear that candidates had strong feelings about war both now and in the past. Reference was made to wars being waged for reasons as varied as religion, power, territory and resources. Candidates talked about a number of different wars, weighing up whether they were just wars or not. Some candidates felt very strongly that some wars were necessary to prevent suffering or takeover by dictators, others expressed the view that there is no such thing as a good or just war as all wars cause suffering to innocent people.

Question 5

Les déchets de toutes sortes représentent une grande menace écologique. Comment assurer une meilleure gestion de ces déchets ?

This was the third most popular question. Candidates read the first part of the question and made a reasonable effort to describe the types of *déchets* that threaten the existence of our planet. They were less good at tackling the second part of the question about the management of these *déchets*. Successful candidates wrote about the threats to the environment of all kinds of waste products including factory outflows, exhaust fumes, food waste and they were well able to discuss the processes by which these waste products could damage the delicate ecology of the planet. They then went on to suggest how strategies could be put in place to improve the management of these products, including imposing taxes on industries causing pollution, taxes or curfews on car owners, more effective waste disposal facilities, more effective recycling by individuals and governments. Weaker candidates seemed uncertain what *gestion* might mean in this context and tended to ignore it.