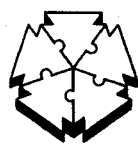


GCSE

French

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MEG

MIDLAND EXAMINING GROUP

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Report on the Examination
in**

FRENCH

Syllabus Code 1525

**FRENCH
STUDIES**

Syllabus Code 2341

SUMMER 1994

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

For each subject the Midland Examining Group has a Chairman of Examiners who is responsible for the maintenance of standards in the subject. For each syllabus there are a Chief Examiner, teams of examining personnel, a Question Paper Evaluation Committee and an Awarding Committee. The Report which follows has been prepared by the Chief Examiner(s), Principal Examiner(s) and Principal Moderator(s) and approved by the appropriate Awarding Committee(s) and the Chairman of Examiners.



FRENCH

(Syllabus Code 1525)

Percentage of candidates awarded each grade

Total Candidature 76303

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Percentage in Grade	4.2	15.7	15.8	15.5	15.3	13.8	12.8	5.8	1.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grades	4.2	19.9	35.8	51.3	66.6	80.4	93.2	99.0	100

These statistics are correct at the time of publication

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Examiners again reported excellent performances from candidates at all levels.

Teachers are becoming familiar with the requirements of the exam and are therefore equipped to prepare their candidates thoroughly for the tests. Some Centres, however, would be advised to note the comments in the Speaking report below, as it contains advice on how to enable candidates to achieve the grades they deserve.

Besides this report, other useful documentation for MEG foreign languages has been published in 1994. These are the Handbook for Teachers and the Speaking Test training tape with its explanatory booklet.

LISTENING

This Summer's Listening Comprehension papers produced the usual wide range of standards. Candidates generally scored well on the Basic level paper and there were very reasonable numbers of good scripts at Higher Part 1. The papers were of a similar level of difficulty to those set last year, though there were few lexical items that caused widespread problems and no single exercise on either of the first two levels produced universally low scores – it is for this reason that the grade boundaries this year are marginally higher. At Higher Part 2, however, candidates did find the texts and questions demanding and, although there were good numbers of excellent scripts, the higher marks were relatively difficult to come by. As always, many low scores were evident because candidates, whether or not they had the ability, attempted this paper which is designed to test the top two grades. Each candidate has the right to attempt the Higher 2 paper, of course, but candidates should be advised that it is not a paper on which they can earn a point simply by virtue of intelligence or inspired guesswork.

Basic

Section 1. This section is designed to be relatively simple, testing common discrete items such as times, prices, days of the week and so on. Candidates should always be familiar with such items and the majority certainly knew them well on the opening four questions.

Q.5 Most candidates failed to pick out the negative and offered 'drinks are included'. One wonders how many in fact guessed the answer before actually hearing the French stimulus. This was certainly the case on:

Q.9. The frequent but totally wrong answer 'do you want stamps' was offered through familiarity with this particular stimulus on last year's paper.

Q.8. Predictably, *monnaie* was quite often misunderstood, leading candidates to select the first alternative.

Q.10 was found difficult, as *quai* was quite difficult to pick out and *voie* caused some confusion. (Misunderstanding of *voie*, a word not generally known at this level, did not invalidate the correct answer).

Section 2. Exercise 1 was well answered. Points worthy of note were:

Maigre in Q.13 caused problems, as did the two pets *lapin* and *cochon d'Inde* in Q.15. *Natation* (Q.16) is now very well known.

Qs.14 & 15. Mishearings of *aussi un lapin* as 'six lapins' and of *dans notre village* as 'dans un autre village' were aural misunderstandings leading to an incorrect concept.

The meaning of *car* (Q.19) is now better known although it was still, predictably, a fairly common source of error. The other questions were generally well answered.

In Q.18 it was pleasing, in particular, to see how well *un quart d'heure* is known, though curious to read '14 minutes' offered quite frequently.

On Section 3, the menu items were well known except for: the starters of *potage* and *melon* (Q.29), the latter quite often rendered as 'mussels'; the amount of wine was not required in Q.27, but candidates were expected to give the colour; on the final exercise (Q.29) *musée* and (Q.31) *syndicat d'initiative* were well answered.

In Q.30 many candidates gave 'sports centre' rather than 'swimming pool', because they first heard the phrase *si vous êtes sportif* and based their answer on this, rather than listening further. Candidates should be advised that the whole of a phrase should be heard (both times) before the answer is finally noted. It was acceptable for answers to be given in any order on this exercise, but obviously the correct location had to be given for each place for both marks to be earned.

Higher Part 1

In order to effect an incline of difficulty for this next paper, delivery was slightly faster, the texts denser and some 'higher level vocabulary' was included. Furthermore, the understanding of concepts, ideas and opinions (rather than simply discrete items of vocabulary) was being tested.

Exercise 1. Candidates were required to show understanding of the information or advice contained in three announcements.

Q. 1. The announcement was well understood, though some lost the mark by rendering *dans cinq minutes* as 'for five minutes' or 'in 15 minutes'.

Q. 2 was also understood reasonably well, though again an incorrect time or period of time resulted in the withholding of the mark.

The airport announcement (Q.3) proved more difficult; *surveiller* was not generally known and *effets personnels* was often misunderstood, resulting in answers such as 'leave them with the personal'. Many made a sensible but incorrect guess that the announcement asked passengers to check in their luggage.

Exercise 2. The object was to test gist understanding of details of five different hotels. Candidates were not able to base their answers on comprehension of single words as much as on several words or phrases which conveyed the overall impression. This exercise was well answered by most candidates.

Q.7 caused some difficulty, C or D being selected rather than F.

Exercise 3. Q.13 was the most testing question in the exercise. The answer to the invitation was not clear and candidates were expected to write 'doesn't know' or 'perhaps' or even '?'. Some may have assumed that the answer had to be either 'yes' or 'no' as it was for questions 9 and 11.

In Q.12, simple understanding of the word *malade* led to a number of errors where it was assumed that Alexandre rather than his mother was ill – another good example of the higher standards of listening comprehension required at this level.

Exercise 4 again required candidates to listen for gist rather than single lexical items and was well done.

Q.17 was the only one commonly causing problems. It was pleasing to note how well this type of exercise was handled by the majority.

Q.18 was almost always correct, comprehension being considerably facilitated by the sugary tone in the speaker's voice as he recounted the story of his meeting with the love of his life.

Higher Part 2

This was a fairly difficult paper, though it did contain some quite straightforward questions for this level. Candidates need to be reminded that, although full sentences are not required, the instructions on the front of this particular paper demand that all relevant details should be included. It is equally important however to remind them that the inclusion of incorrect details usually invalidates the correct answer. It might seem a little unfair that the candidate who gives the correct answer and then proceeds to add further incorrect information will lose the mark, whereas the one who simply writes a brief, correct answer will keep it. It is not always possible for candidates to know how much to include in an answer but, as a general rule of thumb, they should consider whether the answer they have given contains enough information from the text to give a clear and relevant response to the question. They should also be advised to look out for key words like 'precisely' (Q.8) and 'basic' (Q.9) and to read questions during the time allocated for this purpose with the greatest of care.

Exercise 1. Q.1 candidates had to convey the idea of the lack of jobs in Guingamp; 'nothing to do' was not clearly related to unemployment. Qs. 4, 5 and 6 were well answered.

In Q.6 the idea of the selling or conversion of the cinema was needed – it was an invalidation to suggest that it was to be demolished.

In Q.7 the concepts of both buying and/or refurbishing the cinema were required.

Exercise 2. Q.9 proved easy: in Q.10 *maux de ventre* was well understood; in Q.8 the precise answer required was that of people going abroad on holiday.

Q.11 was designed to be a searching question, testing comprehension of the phrase *dont vous ouvrirez la bouteille vous-même* and not simply of the word *capsulées*; ('drink from sealed bottles' was in any case an easily guessable answer).

Q.12 the word *glace* was very frequently rendered as 'ice-cream' or 'glass' (both answers quite inappropriate in the context). A number invalidated their answers on the second part of the same question by writing 'fruit and vegetables' for *fruits* or 'supermarkets' for *marchés*.

Q. 13 was well answered.

Exercise 3. The first three questions were easy, although here again marks were often lost through the addition of incorrect information, such as 'found it difficult to speak to

other children' (*gens* being confused with *jeunes*) on Q.14 or 'dancing and performing' where only dancing was correct on Q.15.

Q. 15 was well answered.

Qs.17 and 18 were the two most difficult questions on the whole paper, answered correctly by the true A* candidates.

Precise understanding of what was said in Q.17 was required in order to appreciate that in real life Mathilda has a character contrary to the angry nature she sometimes portrays when acting.

Q.18 tested the ability to detect the future tense. Here again, it was necessary to give a clear answer – thus 'this is her first one' was acceptable but not 'her first'. It was disappointing here to see a correct answer spoilt by an incorrect rendering of a simple word as in 'she will be releasing her first next year'.

Although one can feel pleased with the general standards of listening comprehension displayed by this year's candidates, a number of examiners commented on the poor presentation of many scripts. It is essential that candidates attempt to write legibly and make any changes to their answers clear. If a second answer is written (superimposed) on top of a first, neither answer will be credited. Answers placed in brackets will be marked, unless scored out, even if it is the candidate's intention that they should not be. Letters should be written clearly in the box-filling exercises – too often an E resembles an F or a B is written over a D. It should be pointed out to candidates that examiners are instructed not to credit such ambiguous answers.

READING

The Reading Comprehension papers provided appropriate opportunities for candidates at all levels to demonstrate comprehension. There was much evidence that candidates had been well prepared for the tests, having been taught the relevant vocabulary and structures from the Defined Content. Clearly many candidates had also had the benefit of practice on past papers and advice culled from previous reports on the examination. Good scripts were characterised by evidence that candidates had read texts and rubrics with care and expressed their answers succinctly and accurately.

On the negative side there are still many candidates who unwisely attempt the Higher level papers. It must be remembered that a certain level of performance is required before points can be scored to contribute to a grade. Examiners also report that the standard of English spelling and grammar continues to decline. Such weaknesses were noted not only in Basic level scripts but also at the Higher levels. Examiners are very tolerant of poor English but it must be appreciated that candidates may be at a disadvantage if they do not express precisely and clearly in English the ideas contained in the French they have read. This applies particularly to the Higher level papers.

Basic

This paper was a straightforward test of the Basic syllabus and gave all candidates opportunities to score positively. The majority of candidates were familiar with the topics and vocabulary and had no difficulty in scoring sufficient marks for a full points allocation. The weakest candidates were also able to perform positively on much of the paper, although it is sad to note that even at this stage in their course some candidates are still not familiar with days of the week and numbers in French.

The discrete items Qs.1–9 proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates. Vocabulary items which appeared to be less well known were: *fermé, entrée interdite*.

Qs.10–13 were generally correctly answered.

Qs.14–18 were either tackled well or done very badly depending probably on the coverage of this topic in the Centre. Vocabulary items which appeared to be less well known were: *banlieue*, *consigne*.

Qs.19–22 required knowledge of simple vocabulary only and the letter was generally well understood. The idea of *traverser* was not always understood.

Qs.23–28 proved to be the most demanding at this level. Better candidates fared well: others had difficulties with some or all of the following:

The plural 'pupils' (Q.23) often invalidated the answer.

Q. 24 (i). The idea of *dur* was often misconstrued as 'difficult' implying that the work itself was hard, rather than conveying the concept of how hard Eric was working.

Q.24 (ii). Quite often candidates saw *devoirs* as just 'work' or 'schoolwork': 'not enough' or 'too much' invalidated the answers.

In Q.27 *affreux* was not well known, often being rendered as 'frightening'.

The reference to 'two or three weeks' in the text of Q.28 confused some candidates.

Qs.29–33 were generally well answered. Vocabulary items which appeared to be less well known were: *courts* ('curly'), *sac à dos* ('sleeping bag', 'handbag'). Some candidates were not careful enough, rendering *lunettes* for example as 'sunglasses'.

Higher Part 1

Candidates are presented with longer and more demanding texts at this level. There is therefore scope to misunderstand some of the 'redundant' language. The paper is designed so that appropriate space is allocated for the answer. In general, candidates who write over-lengthy answers which spread beyond the space allocated on the paper do not score well and tend to run the risk of invalidating a correct answer by adding incorrect distorting information. In some cases the candidates' inability to write clear English jeopardises their efforts.

Section One

This section was generally well answered except for:

'Last week' as a rendering of *la semaine prochaine* (Q.1).

In Q.2 *carrefour* was not always known and was rendered as 'traffic lights'.

Some answers to Q.3 were invalidated because of mentioning 'reversing' (*renverser*) or the idea 'going too fast'.

Gauche (Q.4) was omitted or rendered incorrectly; quite a lot of answers to Q.5 referred to a 'seatbelt'; misunderstanding of *légèrement pare-brise* and *frappant* led to some distorted answers to Q.6, and in Q.7, a difficult question requiring the understanding of two sentences, many failed to see the idea of 'not agreeing'.

Section Two

In Q.8 most candidates saw the idea of 'convenient dates' (although very few could spell it correctly), and in Q.10 *au moins* caused problems. e.g. 'less than 5 weeks'.

Section Three

Q.11 was rarely correctly answered. The word *chose* was frequently taken to mean 'choice', and in Q.14 the words *rire* and *peur* were generally well known but *rêver* and *pleurer* were less familiar.

Higher Part Two

This was a testing paper, appropriate for candidates aspiring to grades A and B. Inappropriately entered candidates usually managed to score a few marks but insufficient to be awarded a point.

Section One

Few managed to convey the idea of 'learning while having fun', in Q.1, and in Q.2 *découvrir* and *découvertes* often led to 'open air'. Q.3 the words *fauteuils* and *bouger* caused difficulty and there were frequent references to 'hair standing on end' and 'horses'. Q.4 was generally correctly answered.

Section Two

These proved to be the most demanding texts of the paper and the questions required attention to detail.

In Q.5 the vocabulary items which appeared to be least well known were *s'entendre* and *peu bavarder*. The latter was frequently rendered incorrectly as 'shy'. Very few candidates saw the conditional required in Q.6. Answers to the second part were more successful. Q.7 often led to invalidation, especially in the second part where *s'habituer à l'anglais* was given as 'living with the English'.

An example of lack of attention to detail was the failure of candidates to express the idea of 'better' in the 'getting to know your exchange partner better' in Q.8. Q.9 was usually correctly answered.

Section Three

The subject matter of this text may have been somewhat dry and off-putting to some candidates and all questions proved testing.

Part (i) of Q.10 was usually answered correctly but *la moitié de ceux qui parlent espagnol* proved to be very difficult for many to understand.

Qs.11 and 12 both taxed the candidates' ability to explain in English their comprehension of quite subtle French. This led to distortion and, in some cases, pure invention. The following answer to Q.11 was unfortunately incorrect: 'The French spend a long time cooking for those they love – and even longer loving those they cook for.'!! The tone of the passage in Q.13 was generally accurately identified.

SPEAKING (Internally and Externally Assessed)

The overall standard of examining remains high. Sympathetic examining was much in evidence and the best examples heard were, as ever, those in which examiners listened to candidates and encouraged them to give of their best. It is also pleasing to note that there were more examples of effective 'nudging' this year. Such examiners did not accept ambiguous first utterances and dubious pronunciation, but tried to probe for clarification where necessary.

Most Centres continue to show a high standard of administrative efficiency, and this year saw a further improvement in the quality of the recordings sent to the moderators and external examiners. Regrettably however some persist in penalising their own candidates by failing to check administrative details thoroughly before despatching their sample. Common errors included incorrect transposition of marks to the MS1 and incorrect totalling of marks on individual marksheets. Moderators are instructed to return the documents to Centres for amendment in these cases.

Basic Transactor

Centres should note that if a vocabulary item is given to a candidate no mark can then be awarded if the candidate simply repeats this item. If candidates respond with an English word, or very anglicised pronunciation, this should be queried by the examiner. If the query elicits a correct response, then a mark can be awarded. The cards were generally found to be well balanced in terms of difficulty and a fair challenge to Basic candidates. A general comment from the examining team was that candidates had most difficulty in tasks which required them to ask the question (as in card 2, task B5), but that candidates showed levels of competence similar to last year.

On Card 1A some candidates found that the idea of asking for a seat near the exit was too difficult and problems were experienced with 'ask if you can buy sweets' but all other tasks in the first role play were usually successfully completed. 1B was perceived to be more accessible and, apart from an anglicised pronunciation of *moderne* in B1, the remaining tasks were competently handled.

On Card 2A some candidates had difficulty with the pronunciation of *bière* and *fraise* and a few with the 'a good idea', 'you are free' and the preposition in B4. Candidates experienced most difficulty in A5 and only the most able conveyed the idea of 'getting off the train': there was also some confusion between *voyager* and *travailler* in A2. 3B proved to be accessible to the vast majority of candidates.

Surprisingly some candidates were unable to cope with the concept of 'two boys and a girl' in Card A2, but only the most able were comfortable with asking for the location of the dormitories in A5. In 4B there was again some confusion over the preposition in B2, and some poor pronunciation of *à pied* in B4. It is worth noting that where the pronunciation of a word is so distorted that it does not communicate, no mark can be awarded. In general, however, this role play was well handled.

The vast majority of candidates found the tasks on Card 5A accessible, apart from asking for 'a lettuce' in A3 although some candidates found 'in the summer' difficult in task B5.

Basic Interviewee

Yet again it was good to note that the good practice of teachers putting a pencil dot in the grid to indicate on which topic they have asked the questions has spread to a few more centres. Most examiners asked the required number of questions at the right pitch of difficulty. In a minority of centres fewer than sixteen questions were asked of some candidates, obviously to their detriment. Again, in a minority of centres, teachers do not use the grid provided in the correct way: it is helpful to the external examiner and the moderator if the teacher puts a dot or a mark in column 1 for Q.1 and in column 2 for Q.2 and so on. It is again worth emphasising the good practice in centres where candidates are allowed to express themselves and gain bonus bars, not being limited by questions which require only *Oui* or *Non* answers. It goes without saying that answers in English cannot be rewarded, and questions which cue such answers should be avoided. (e.g. *Quelle est ton émission préférée?* 'Neighbours').

Good examining in this section covered the requisite number of topics. The standard heard in this section was very similar to that of 1993 and it was encouraging to hear even the least able managing to communicate on familiar topics. Bonus marks were usually well awarded by examiners.

Higher Part 1 Transactor

The role plays in the Higher part 1 section of the examination were deemed to be slightly less difficult than in 1993, balanced and fair, each appearing to have its own area of difficulty. It was especially pleasing to see the way in which the candidates coped with the open ended tasks in all of the cards. The assessment criteria were usually well applied but a few centres awarded 2 instead of 1 when the tense was inappropriate. An incorrect tense often equals ambiguity of message.

Some candidates found the first task on Card 1 difficult, but it was in C5 that most candidates experienced some difficulty, frequently omitting the idea of 'have to' in their response.

Candidates coped well with all tasks on Card 2 except C3, where there were many responses containing either '*l'angine*' or '*ne travaille pas*'. 'Mechanic' also caused problems.

In Card 3, only the most able could communicate the idea of 'an extra blanket' accurately, but the remaining four tasks in this role play were extremely well handled.

On Card 4, candidates found the concept of 'fashionable' difficult to communicate in C3 and some seemed to struggle with the prompt from the teacher/examiner in C4.

Candidates could often give the number 40 but sometimes found it difficult to find one of the various ways to render 'normally wear'. It is worth pointing out here, that these prompts are suggestions, and provided the candidate does not merely repeat a lexical item, teacher/examiners may re-word the prompt.

On Card 5, some candidates experienced difficulty in C1 and some in the communication of 'well-cooked' in C3. It was the final task which seemed to be the most inaccessible, and only the most able were skilful enough to communicate the task fully.

Higher Part 1 Interviewee

Centres are reminded that they should cover a full range of the relevant topics from the syllabus. The test must not be limited to the same three topics for each candidate and the teacher must choose the topics. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of Centres had written in the subjects for discussion, allowing the external examiner or the moderator to follow the flow of the examination. It is also important to note that the communication of more than just present tense is required in this section of the examination. It was noticed that teachers in some Centres had inadvertently limited their candidates by not allowing candidates to use other tenses. Regrettably, a few Centres allowed candidates to deliver pre-learnt monologues which failed to show an ability to respond appropriately to an examiner's questions: monologues cannot be said to be conversations or discussions.

When the teacher and the candidate engaged on a conversation and the teacher input was at a minimum, these dialogues were a pleasure to listen to. This section of the examination is designed to be between three and four and a half minutes in duration. In some centres candidates were put under a severe disadvantage when dialogues continued for between ten and sixteen minutes.

Higher Part 2 Narrator

As in 1993 there was evidence of over-optimistic entry at this level. For appropriately entered candidates, however, instances of monologues were pleasingly far fewer this year. Most examiners were able to intervene or question judiciously and not to interrupt the flow of their candidates or dominate the account. Some very good performances were heard from the better candidates and these were typified by accurate, well paced and fluent accounts which included detail where necessary.

The cards were perceived to be of similar difficulty, and accounts from candidates were full. However, it was noticed that an increasing number of candidates do not seem to have read the English rubric in the introduction. Centres should remind them to read this before embarking on their preparation of the narration. Centres were a little too generous in the Quality of Language award.

Card 1 provided some lively and flowing accounts from candidates who used their imagination and played themselves into the situation. Some candidates gave graphic accounts of French meals and drew on their own experience to augment the bare detail on the card. Only the most able, however, coped with *souhaiter une Bonne Année* and the reflexive verb contained in the final block of text.

Card 2 candidates again produced some good accounts, but some did not appreciate the setting and therefore said *Mon père* in the second block of text, assuming that they were at home.

Some Card 3 candidates were confused by the loss of the passports, but the appropriately entered candidate handled the information on this card well. Only the most able, however, realised the significance of *bateau annulé* and *une affiche* in the final block of text. Some thought that the picnic was breakfast.

Card 3 seemed to be the most stimulating, and produced some very lively accounts of both the party and the dreams experienced. Indeed, among the more able candidates,

there were some graphic descriptions of the dreams, especially of the teacher element. In contrast, few candidates grasped the meaning of *plus de fruits de mer* in the fourth block of text. Difficulties were experienced with the reflexive verbs in Section 2.

Card 5 again produced some very good accounts and the able candidates were able to build on the bare bones of the story contained in the notes. As in previous cards, inappropriately entered candidates struggled with the use of reflexive verbs. In addition, only able candidates seemed to understand the notion of *un enfant qui manquait* in the third block of text, and were able to give convincing reasons.

SPEAKING: Internal Assessment

Internal moderation within Centres was generally good, and better than in 1993. The reliability of the marks within a Centre, especially in large Centres, depends on the consistency of application of the marking scheme. Centres are reminded that various ways of achieving standardisation are outlined on Page 10 of the Modern Foreign Languages Handbook for Teachers. Centres were usually very thorough in their approach to standardisation of marking, but in some the standard of internal moderation was poor. Such centres are reminded that they may be required to remoderate the marks in the interest of fairness to **their own** candidates, as well as others.

Sample size was well understood by nearly all Centres. Moderators occasionally requested the work of extra candidates to gain a more balanced sample and most Centres were very helpful in such cases, returning further samples quickly. Centres are reminded that a prompt return of extra samples (or corrections to paperwork in the case of clerical error) is vital so as not to delay the moderation procedure. As the work of all candidates should be recorded, moderators can request the work of particular candidates should they feel it to be necessary.

Centres should also note that individual marksheets of all candidates should be submitted as well as the marksheets of the sample candidates.

All Centres should note that samples should be despatched as soon as possible after completion, and are reminded that tapes should be checked carefully during the examination process, as a few samples were poorly recorded and inaudible in places. The Moderators wish to thank those Centres which despatched materials promptly.

Moderators are aware of the demands of simultaneously conducting and assessing the examination and were pleased to hear how professional many examiners were.

WRITING

Centres are reminded that the syllabus, in accordance with the national criteria for GCSE, links the grades a candidate can achieve to the levels of Writing papers submitted. To be eligible for a Grade C, a candidate must submit a Writing paper at Basic level. To be eligible for Grade B or above, a candidate must in addition submit Writing papers at **both** Higher 1 and Higher 2.

Basic

As was noted last year, candidates seem familiar with the format of the paper; few are missing the last question and the majority are responding positively to the rubric.

Question 1

Both the requirements and the lay-out are a regular feature of this paper. The question is designed to allow students to display what they know and many did so. A few continue to ignore specific instructions – in this case not to include food/drink. Most

lists were complete and it was gratifying to see a wide range of appropriate items. Even candidates under pressure elsewhere on the paper could offer *réveil; verres de contact; parapluie; maquillage; boucles d'oreille*, amongst many other items of importance for an early departure and journey.

Question 2

Candidates' ability to handle prepositions successfully is important in conveying messages effectively. In tasks 1 and 2 *dans* was all that was required; similarly in tasks 3 and 4 *à* with the expression of time. Many candidates achieved only partial communication of these elements because of their lack of security in using these simple prepositions. It was disappointing to find students using *cycles* for 'bicycles' and *gare* for 'garage'. Equally, an appropriate word for 'fridge' escaped many.

Tasks 3 and 4 produced a number of versions including *commencer/finir* to render 'open/close'. As elsewhere in the examination a proportion of candidates continue to use 'am/pm' when expressing the time in French.

In some respects task 5 proved the most difficult. Rather than using the greeting *Bonnes Vacances!* – sometimes rendered as the inappropriate *Bon voyage!* – many chose to write a sentence, *Vous avez . . .* The singular vacance remains.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to achieve at least partial communication in tasks 1, 2 and 5. In the latter case it was surprising to find *pièce* or *salle* so frequently used for the more obvious *chambre*.

Tasks 3 and 4 proved to be the most taxing for genuine Basic candidates. Numbers of students clearly did not know *demain*; a good proportion of these found an appropriate strategy by dating the note *mercredi* and by referring to *jeudi* in the message. *Tôt/de bonne heure* were also not as well-known as might have been imagined. In the same tasks, many substituted *aller* for *sortir/partir*; and an acceptable tense, either future or continuous present, did not feature.

Higher Part 1

There was a marked preference for Q.1. Whereas the vast majority of candidates seem to feel at ease in handling the letter format, there remains some concern on behalf of those who have not learnt how to begin and end the letter and thus limit their score.

As with last year, there is a proportion of unreadable work, in spite of the increased space provided for candidates.

Many candidates are attempting this paper who can gain marks for communication but whose linguistic control is still very approximate, mis-spellings, inappropriate prepositions and uncertain verb forms being the most common difficulties. By and large, candidates are now writing at an appropriate length and not wasting their time by producing letters in excess of 200 words.

Question 1

Careful reading of the rubric is essential; there was needless loss of communication marks by candidates who set the time in a season other than summer.

Task 1 required dates and, as with times, weak control of prepositions meant that many achieved only partial communication. Such items have been a regular feature of recent examinations and it is disappointing to note how much of a challenge it remains for candidates.

Task 2 was the most difficult on this question; the combination of an interrogative with the idea of 'need' proved taxing for all but the best.

Task 3 revealed a degree of confusion between *voyager* and *travailler*. Less significant were those who asked for advice *Comment je vais voyager?*

Task 4 also provided communication difficulties. Some candidates were able to achieve some communication by using *rendez-vous*; a small proportion only were able to show knowledge of *rencontrer*.

Many felt confident in making the invitation to visit at Christmas; quite frequently however the positioning of appropriate object pronouns was not well-handled *tu peux visiter moi à Noël?* being a popular response.

Question 2

Those candidates prepared for the formal letter appeared to relish the opportunity to show their talents.

Dates again proved a problem, but perhaps less than in Q.1, as this option appeared to draw more from the more able students.

A problem in item 3 was that some candidates felt the need to translate 'experience' whereas a statement of what they had done e.g. *j'ai travaillé dans un hôtel* was all that was required.

The requirement to express their knowledge of French caused problems in that some did not qualify their abilities with some appropriate adverb e.g. *bien* or an expression of time e.g. *depuis trois ans* and thus achieved only partial communication.

Task 5 as in Q.1 task 2 proved the most challenging for identical reasons.

Higher Part 2

As the paper is targeted at candidates capable of achieving grades B and A, there remains some concern about the ability of many of those attempting this part of the examination.

Of those appropriately entered, many displayed a most creditable range of control of verbs, idiom and structure, for which they received reward. Both questions appeared to be popular with candidates.

Question 1

The work of good candidates was characterised by good control of vocabulary and verbs. Many were able to give a balanced view of the merits/disadvantages of life in town and country and to sum up with cogent reasons for their choice.

Those who did not have the necessary linguistic skills frequently resorted to repetitive use of *il y a* etc; equally they revealed only limited control of the necessary vocabulary *Campagne* was often mis-spelt and the genders of *ville/campagne/village* unknown.

Question 2

The inclusion of the start of the letter seems to have eliminated the problem of irrelevant letter preamble. This year, however, many choosing this option had focused on an 'alarming' experience; often the ensuing account made no reference to getting lost, but rather an accident or losing some personal possession.

Those answering the question set produced some interesting accounts, accompanied by the emotional response to the events. A few were able to use *s'égarer*; most resorted to *perdre le chemin*.



GRADE THRESHOLD MARKS

Candidates' performances were assessed on each component. The minimum performance (the threshold mark) was determined for the grades appropriate to each level.

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

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Component 1: Listening – Threshold Marks

Component by level	Max. Mark	Grades: Points:	A 2	B 1	C 2	D 1	E 3	F 2	G 1
Basic	40						28	22	15
Higher 1	20				13	10			
Higher 2	20		12	8					

Component 2: Reading – Threshold Marks

Component by level	Max. Mark	Grades: Points:	A 2	B 1	C 2	D 1	E 3	F 2	G 1
Basic	40						28	22	15
Higher 1	20				12	9			
Higher 2	20		13	9					

Components 3 and 5: Speaking – Threshold Marks

Component by level	Max. Mark	Grades: Points:	A 2	B 1	C 2	D 1	E 3	F 2	G 1
Basic	40						30	23	17
Higher 1	20				14	11			
Higher 2	20		15	11					

Component 4: Writing – Threshold Marks

Component by level	Max. Mark	Grades: Points:	A 2	B 1	C 2	D 1	E 3	F 2	G 1
Basic	40						27	22	17
Higher 1	20				13	10			
Higher 2	20		14	11					

Conversion of Points to Grades

GRADE	Points required for candidates attempting Components 1, 2, 3/5	Points required for candidates attempting Components 1, 2, 3/5, 4
A*	–	28
A	–	24 – 27
B	–	20 – 23
C	–	16 – 19
D	12 – 21	12 – 15
E	8 – 11	8 – 11
F	4 – 7	4 – 7
G	1 – 3	1 – 3

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Credit of up to 5% of the unscaled marks was available for spelling, punctuation and grammar in components 3 and 4. In the Grade Boundaries Table below the totals include marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The conversion of marks to points and then to grades does not apply for this syllabus. The marks for each component are given the appropriate weighting according to the table below and then aggregated.

Weighting of marks	Paper 1	Speaking Test	Paper 3	CW
	15%	15%	40%	30%

Grade Boundaries	C	D	E	F	G
	180	152	124	94	70