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FRENCH

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FRENCH

GCE Advanced Level 9110

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9110/8616/01 – French Speaking

General Comments

Candidates were, on the whole, very well prepared for the examination. Almost all Centres are now aware of the requirement for candidates to make reference to France/francophone culture in their sustained speech, and along with the usual favourite themes of drugs, education, tobacco and alcohol there were many interesting and unusual presentations. Candidates are also used to the fact that they are expected to ask questions. Only a very small minority failed to do so, even when prompted, and the best candidates were able to ask them spontaneously throughout the examination.

There were more Centres this year conducting and taping their own examinations. Most conducted these admirably, but some had clearly not considered the logistics of taping. Only 2 candidates should be recorded per side of a 90 minute cassette, which should be clearly labelled both visibly and audibly with the Syllabus, Centre and candidate numbers as well as the candidates' names. The microphone should be positioned to favour the candidates, who normally speak more quietly than teacher/Examiners – there were a number of cases where Examiners' questions were crystal clear, but candidates' answers almost inaudible.

Examiners should try to keep to the timings suggested in the syllabus – few candidates benefit from an extended oral, as fatigue tends to lead to more errors. Candidates should be allowed a little leeway on the Sustained Speech – the syllabus suggests 3 minutes, but Examiners could allow an extra half-minute before interrupting with questions. If the presentation does not appear to be connected with France in any way, Examiners should try to ask questions to establish whether a link does, in fact, exist. Questions should aim to get candidates to express ideas and opinions, rather than more facts, which are often merely repetitions of material already used in the Topic. Candidates should be prompted to ask questions in both Conversation sections, but Examiners should remember to keep their own contributions relatively short.

Comments on Individual Questions

Sustained Speech

Candidates had chosen a wide range of topics here, and it was evident that many had carried out their research by Internet. This provided them with plenty of background information, though it was sometimes apparent that topics had been selected because of the amount of information available, rather than because of any great personal interest, so conversations were not always sustainable. Examiners were, however, delighted to learn about a whole range of new topics!

Candidates might need to be reminded that their presentation should include some opinions of their own, and for this reason topics of a purely factual/historical/narrative nature are not necessarily suitable. Many candidates were able to deliver their Sustained Speech in a very natural way, but some still see it as a test of memory and gabble their way through a pre-learnt speech at break-neck speed, pronouncing many words as written (-*ent* in 3rd person plural verb forms, for

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instance). Pronunciation and intonation often improved enormously in the conversation sections.

Topic Conversation

Most candidates were able to sustain a conversation on their chosen topic, and many were able to argue their point of view very effectively. In many cases candidates spoke very fluently, using sophisticated language and they achieved a high level of communication in spite of a number of errors. A number of candidates ended their presentations with a question, and when prompted by Examiners, most were able to ask additional questions during the conversation sections, but it was noticeable that they often found it difficult to construct a relevant grammatical question of the spur of the moment, and many had difficulty distinguishing between the use of *tu* and *vous*.

General Conversation

Candidates who had visited France seemed to be at an advantage here, as this is an obvious area of interest, but leisure activities/interests also provided an area for fruitful discussion. Candidates could think ahead to what sort of areas might be discussed: those who have not thought past *je regarde la télé or j'aime sortir avec mes amis* are unlikely to score highly! Though the material under discussion was not as familiar as that of the topic conversation, many candidates were very willing to give opinions on all manner of current events from football to the Euro. Some, however, seemed almost frightened of talking about current affairs, answering *je n'ai pas le temps d'écouter les informations/lire les journaux* – this is an obvious area for candidates to consider in the future. There were often more inaccuracies here as candidates struggled with less familiar vocabulary and tenses, though the future/conditional tense shouldn't cause as many problems as it seemed to.

Overall, it was gratifying to see so many well-prepared and interesting candidates, who showed how much progress has been made in teaching communication in a foreign language.

9110/8616/02 – French Listening

General Comments

It is encouraging to report a goodly number of candidates continuing to be awarded very high marks for this exam. It is also encouraging to note that the tail is continuing to decline. Candidates have clearly noted the advice of previous reports and have applied themselves to ensuring that their answers match the terms of the question much more often than in previous years. There are still occasions where there are too many unattached fragmentary answers bearing no grammatical or semantic relation to the question, but these are on the decrease. We look forward to the time when all the candidates match their answer directly to the question. The quality of the French used continues to be an anxiety.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Partie A

Performances were certainly more variable than usual for this part of the exam.

- Q1. Although many candidates scored the full five marks here, many were confused over *redresser, maintien, m'asseoir*. It was imperative to make the verbs reflexive in box 4, but we were more indulgent in the spelling of *garantie satisfait ou remboursé*. The third box was the one most candidates were successful with.
- Q2. Again full marks were quite often given, but also a number of zeros. A comparison between past and present practice was required in all but the last case. Candidates were allowed to leave verbs unconjugated provided that the appropriate comparison was present. Again box 3 proved to be the easiest.
- Q3. The easiest of the three questions in this part. The only problem was created by the first box, where it was not only the year that had to be corrected but also the month.

Partie B

Candidates performed very well in this part, despite its somewhat unusual subject matter!

- Q4. Candidates needed to explain that dangerous dogs were to disappear from France - and not just state that it was a radical act (next question).
- Q5. Candidates were expected to get the four verbs for the two marks - confusion between *importer* and *apporter* lost a number of candidates one mark.

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- Q6. Surprisingly few candidates mentioned the close supervision of owners. Often sterilisation was mentioned without it always being clear who or what was to be subjected to the operation; the legal obligation had to be referred to as well.
- Q7. A lot of information was required here and many candidates produced verbatim accounts. Many did not understand *anti-rage*. Others became confused over *preuve, assurance, admettant* but tended to get the gist of the matter – and were rewarded accordingly.
- Q8 (a) Usually correctly answered.
- (b) Many strange spellings of *muselés* and *laisse* were accepted, but not of *tenus*. Candidates found this a difficult question.
- Q9. (a) and (b) Another demanding question, with candidates failing to match answer to question. *Cadre* was not perceived as part of a prepositional expression but as subject; the authorisations also became confused. But as ever the good candidates made sense of the question – and provided sensible answers.
- Q10. From a mass of material most candidates reproduced enough to gain at least two marks. The major problem was in the first point – where it was suggested that the police were to do the tying up, etc. Most candidates enthusiastically homed in on the destruction of the beast.

Section 2

- Q11. Most candidates cited 'need for flexibility in companies'; a good number recognised 'new type of demand' – which earned the two marks. The third point was less well mastered.
- Q12. Correct in the vast majority of cases.
- Q13. 'Assembling toys' was the most commonly offered answer. There were problems with vanilla in tubes and nuts from shells (almost never correct; extractions were made from the most diverse objects).
- Q14 (a) Rarely wrong.
- (b) 'Garage' almost universally correct, but 'separate room' became all sorts of exotic workplaces.
- Q15. This proved to be difficult – interpreting *sollicitations* causing widespread problems.
- Q16. Most candidates performed well here – although invention and imagination began to raise their heads – and would do so in a number of questions subsequently.

- Q17. Invention certainly played a large part here in certain answers. Few candidates scored the full four marks, often being tempted to focus, irrelevantly, on the position of homeworking in the matter. Increased competition and economic power were the two most commonly reported points. The permanently renewed offers and chic environment were rarely mentioned.
- Q18. Working through the night was normally mentioned, but not requisitioning the family's help – candidates suggested (probably correctly) that families were being neglected.
- Q19. Ties and wedding dresses were frequently mentioned, but *costumes* and *chemisiers* caused problems.
- Q20. Conceptually a difficult question. Candidates seemed to spring to the wrong conclusion without listening carefully enough to the tape, and stated that workers were not paid by the hour. The matter of so many ties = so many hours work defeated the majority.
- Q21. After a difficult question 20, a much more straightforward question.
- Q22. Candidates needed to stress that it was 300 hours a month (not a week and not without a qualifier). Again the majority thought that it was a matter of neglect of the family.
- Q23. (a), (b), (c) Usually correct.
- Q23. (d) Candidates did not understand *encaisser* – perhaps they were becoming tired by the end of the test – and were not always clear on the matter of the company disappearing without leaving an address.

9110/8616/03 - French Reading and Writing

General Comments

The paper allowed candidates to do themselves full justice and gave a fair reflection of their ability. There was a full range of marks, from the mid 90s down to the low 30s. The examination therefore differentiated well, but no candidate was overwhelmed by its difficulty. Even candidates with problems in writing French found something they could do in the area of comprehension. Those who could link comprehension to fluent and accurate writing skills found that the paper gave them the chance to display their competence, and there were some impressive performances at the top end of the range. There were more marks in the higher range than has been the case in recent years. This can be explained by a number of factors one of which is that candidates are better prepared for the exam now that teachers are familiar with the style of the papers and have digested the detailed information on approaches to marking the questions which has been given in previous reports. It was also the case that the subject matter in the French and English texts involved topics which had probably been covered in class or were at least within the candidates' range of knowledge and experience. A further factor in the distribution of marks was the construction of the mark-scheme, some comments on which will be made later.

Comments on Individual Questions

- Q.1 There were no real problems with the task, and the great majority of candidates scored four of five. It might therefore be argued that this question fails to differentiate, but there is plenty of scope for differentiation in the paper, and the task can be justified as offering a first, relatively comforting step into the paper.
- Q.2 Many candidates found this task difficult. Only the best candidates scored full marks. It should be stressed that the wording of the rubric does require *le mot qui correspond le plus exactement*, and the mark could not be scored if a whole sentence was given. However, examiners agreed a certain amount of latitude and short phrases containing the key word were accepted, such as *une période préalable* or *se montrent plus réticents*. Besides presenting the candidates with a task to perform, this exercise is also intended to help the candidates' reading of the text by focusing attention on words which may not be known. By a process of elimination the definition given might direct the candidate to "difficult" words such as *nuptialité* and *préalable*.
- Q.3 Most candidates coped successfully with this exercise. The fact that so many candidates scored full marks is a factor in the generally higher overall scoring on this paper which was mentioned earlier. Some candidates wasted time writing out whole sentences, whereas the table on the paper was intended to indicate that they only had to show the links. A surprising number of candidates included the example in their answers, although of course, this gained no marks.

- Q.4 This question was very accessible to all candidates and showed generally good comprehension of the passage. Marks were lost, not because of a failure to understand, but because of a failure to find an appropriate English rendering for parts of the French text. For example, candidates cannot gain marks for using terms such as 'juvenile cohabitation' in their answers. This is not an expression which exists in English in the same form as in French. Similarly, marks could not be awarded for use of English 'reticent', 'heritage' as exact equivalents of the same words in French. The answers in English focus on parts of the French text and, besides testing comprehension, require some use of translation skills to provide an acceptable English rendering.
- Comments on specific questions are as follows (a) The mark scheme insisted that candidates should convey the sense of *rupture* by using an English expression such as 'a sharp break.' The idea of 'change' or 'trend' were not felt to be sufficiently expressive of *rupture*. One candidate was rewarded for suggesting 'watershed'. (b) This proved to offer three straightforward marks. (c) Most managed to get the idea that marriage remained more popular in the country, but getting the detail into acceptable English was a problem. Some thought that *patrimoine* had something to do with patriotism or patriarchy. In the mark-scheme, 'patrimony' was accepted along with 'inheritance,' since the dictionary definition of both words is practically identical in English. However, 'heritage' does not have the same meaning and did not gain the mark. Examiners welcomed freer English renderings such as 'passing on their property'. (d) and (e) offered no real difficulties, and here again marks were relatively easy to gain.
- Q.5 This was the question that candidates found most demanding. Weaknesses in the French sometimes make it difficult to interpret what candidates are trying to say, even though no marks are given for quality of language in this question. (a) answers were generally acceptable, referring to two elements of information *vivre ensemble & sans être mariés*. Candidates were also given a mark if they picked up on the idea of *mieux* in the title, since this might well have been their interpretation of the question. (b) proved to be difficult. There was no definition of the attitude of society, and material was produced from the passage (e.g. about the *trois noms sur la même boîte aux lettres*) without real understanding or references to the question. (c) The sense of this question was to get candidates to consider the evidence in the passage that Patrick was opposed to bourgeois views of life, i.e. aspects of appearance, and his past *période anarchiste*. Surprisingly few candidates referred to his looks (*barbe volumineuse* etc.) The mark most generally given was for Patrick's idea that marriage and cohabitation share the same values even if there is no official document. It is important for candidates to realise that marks are not given for including the question as part of the answer. For example, there are no marks at all for writing *Patrick pense que le mariage est une institution bourgeoise*. (d) and (e) each offered a very straightforward three marks.
- Q.6 Candidates had quite a good understanding of the two passages. This was the part of the paper where marks were easier to gain than in some previous years. The two parts of the rubric *les stades du développement de la vie en couple* and *les caractéristiques de l'union libre* offered a plentitude of possible

marks for content. However, the quality of language was a different matter. The answers underline the gap that exists for many candidates between their ability to understand a French text and their inability to express themselves accurately and consistently. Far too many candidates show an inability to distinguish between an infinitive and a past participle, to conjugate with *être* or *avoir*, to distinguish between *il/ils* or to have any clear idea of the use or tenses. Many candidates are astonishingly careless about adjectival agreements and the use of prepositions. Most difficult to understand is the lack of consistency in some work. It might be expected that some genders will be wrong (although it is surprising at this level to find *le vie, le maison le chose*). But candidates manage to offer both genders within the same sentence.

Each report on this paper makes the point that candidates are expected to stick to the word limit of 140 words, and are not assessed for material written over that limit.

- Q.7 This question requires very accurate responses. Many candidates manage to gain the Content marks but lose all their language marks because of a variety of often elementary errors in adjectival and verb agreements. Short, factual answers are required, not lengthy mini-essays. (a) Many candidates wrote *parques* but this was allowed as a spelling mistake. Many did not know *gazon, pelouse*, or even *herbe*. (b) was generally handled well for content, but language marks were lost where a two roomed flat was referred to as having *deux salles* or *deux chambres*. In the marking of these answers such errors of vocabulary are treated in the same way as grammatical errors. (c) Besides the usual crop of errors of agreement (*Julie et ses enfants sont plus libre*) there were problems in rendering English expressions such as 'walk to school' often rendered wrongly as *marcher à l'école* or *promener à l'école* or *aller aux pieds*. (d) There were more vocabulary problems here, for example the invented word *végétales* for 'vegetables'. There was also some misuse of *cité*.
- Q.8 As regards Content drawn from the text, candidates showed a good understanding and generally managed to score some points. The personal response required a focus on the actions of the *pouvoirs publics*. The best candidates managed to write fluently on what the authorities should do to reduce the exodus of Parisians. Other candidates were confused, or wrote a great deal on pollution with no reference to the actions of the authorities. The main reservations must come, as with question 6 with the standard of written French. Of course, there are candidates at the top of the range who write accurately and fluently. But there are many candidates in the middle of the range who score perfectly well for comprehension, but show an alarming lack of acquaintance with very basic grammatical points, or else a high degree of carelessness. As with question 6, the word length is important. Candidates who write at excessive length are in danger of losing the Content marks for their personal opinion, as work over the limit will not be assessed.

9110/04 – Essay

General Comments

This year's entry showed a wide spread of performance, particularly when looked at in the context of grammatical accuracy, which, it is worth recalling, accounts for 40% of the marks allocated. Whilst the general level of performance proved to be a little higher in the middle of the range, there were slightly fewer scripts showing outstanding linguistic ability at the top end of the achievement spectrum. At the lower end, there is cause for concern about candidates who even had difficulty in writing French which reached the minimum degree of grammatical awareness required to go much beyond the threshold of productive use of GCSE grammar.

Typically, towards the lower end of the achievement range, though by no means at the bottom, scripts were interspersed, in varying degrees of persistency, with glaring errors:

- in the use and formation of common verbs:
ils arrivents; ils y ont; nous devons; nous pouvons remercions; l'enfants à commencent a communiqué
- in the agreement of subject and verb endings:
le gouvernement pensent; cela leurs donnent; les jeunes est le futur
- in the agreement of adjectives with nouns;
des émissions éducatif; une marée noir; un programme sportive
- in the mis-spelling and/or wrong gender of essential subject-specific vocabulary:
une téléphone; une problème; le couche d'ozone; une divorce; la petrol, la publique

They tended also to be marked by a considerable degree of anglicism:

pas si beaucoup changerais; au fin de le jour je pense que; cela dépend sur que vous voulez; les membres d'une famille doivent communiqué avec chaque autre.

In the middle of the range, candidates generally achieved a fair, if uneven, level of accuracy. On the whole, writing tended to be coherent and sequential; ideas were communicated more clearly, in spite of lapses. Common tenses and regular verbs were used more competently, though candidates did not have a totally convincing grip on, for example, irregular verbs, more difficult tenses, certain types of pronouns, certain prepositions. Inconsistency characterised scripts falling into this category: the capacity to use more complex structures was hinted at; promised: but not sustained. Accurately reproduced pre-learned expressions tended to jar rather than to blend into the text. The overall impression was that candidates were not quite realising their potential, that time saved for systematic revision of their work would have allowed them to eliminate quite a few of their more careless errors. The following examples are taken from a range of scripts in this category and reflect some of the difficulties referred to above.

- *Tout le monde devraient essayer de combattre la situation laquelle concerne la pollution atmosphérique.*
- *Il faut que les personnes sont donnés la possibilité de décider...*
- *Tout le monde peut conserver l'énergie chez lui.*
- *Nous savons que le divorce est un problème ce qui on trouve dans nombreuses de familles.*
- *Parce que des développements dans le domaine de la communication...*
- *La situation actuelle posera des problèmes jusque nous faisons un effort...*

At the top of the range, the more gifted linguists produced scripts which, whilst not faultless, contained errors of relatively minor significance when set against the use of impressively complex sentence patterns and structures, the depth and breadth of vocabulary, their overall fluency. Here, pre-learned expressions were usually integrated seamlessly into the body of the essay rather than being used as padding. Examples of the quality of some of the work at this level follow.

- *Il est hors doute que l'homme fait partie de la nature tout comme celle-ci fait partie de l'homme. On peut donc dire que la dégradation de notre planète par l'homme est un processus naturel.*
- *Il est difficile mais possible de résoudre les problèmes auxquels toute famille typique doit faire face.*
- *Le rôle des média est pour ainsi dire une épée à double tranchant...*
- *Ce n'est qu'en utilisant pleinement leurs heures de loisir que les gens arrivent à se déstresser de la vie quotidienne.*

There follows a list of areas of grammar in which examiners most frequently found errors this year and which candidates across the ability range would be well advised to address:

- confusion and use of: *c'est / il est*
leur / leurs
qui, que, dont, ce qui, ce que, ce dont
mieux / meilleur
des / certains
parce que / à cause de
- mis-use of *plusieurs* (as in *plusieurs de*)
- tense sequence after *si*
- conjugation of *vouloir, pouvoir, devoir, faire*
- position of object pronouns.

Answers were spread amongst all six topics but not evenly so. Most candidates stayed within or close to the 400 word limit. When this was exceeded by a considerable number of words it was usually because candidates failed to be selective about what ideas were relevant to the question and attempted to write anything they could think of on the broad topic area. Too many lost marks for content by simple choosing to ignore the focus of the question and to look at it from an angle upon which they were already decided. This type of essay tended to be more common towards the bottom of the range, though not always. It was

disappointing to read accurate and fluent French squandered on an all-purpose essay, which, typically only referred to the question set in the opening sentence or paragraph. This said, examiners were impressed by essays at the top of the range characterised by relevance, a coherent and well developed argument, and a clear focus on the issues involved.

Comments on Individual Questions

- Q.1 This was the most popular question, attracting candidates from the whole ability range. It provoked lively and in some cases impassioned answers, with most candidates adopting a position firmly against the proposition, at the same time recognising the need for children to be able to get away from parents subjecting them to physical or sexual abuse. A disappointing number of candidates, however, ignored the core of the question and chose to write on the effects of divorce on children, or, even more irrelevantly, to write on the subject of the ideal family, in which divorce would never even cloud the horizon. A small number of candidates had a problem with *supporter*, to which they gave the sense of financial support, with consequential confused and irrelevant answers.
- Q.2 This was quite a popular question, which candidates tackled with varying degrees of success and enthusiasm. The most successful answers managed to get to the heart of the question and to address the four key ideas, with well-chosen examples to illustrate their argument. However, in the majority of cases, candidates tended to limit themselves to an analysis of how and why the public is informed and/or entertained by the media, with no reference to "*But compréhensible mais dangereux*". A surprising number of candidates misunderstood *divertir*, taking it to mean bending the truth for political or other ends.
- Q.3 This was the second most popular title. On the whole, candidates had been well prepared, and many produced essays which contained impressive subject-specific vocabulary and an array of facts and statistics to illustrate points made. However, too many candidates started their essay with a relevant introduction, indicating that they had understood the two key elements, only for the balance to be lost and for the essay to become no more than a description of various forms of pollution, even noise pollution. In this type of essay, conclusions tended to be weak. Quite a number of candidates took *processus naturel* to refer to such natural disasters as earthquakes, floods, famines, landslides, hurricanes, and consequently misplaced the focus of their essay.
- Q.4 This was another question and produced some lively and enthusiastic scripts. Most of the candidates who selected this topic produced answers that were very well structured and relevant. Leisure activities ranging from the creative, the physical, the dangerous, the thrilling, the social to the cultural were discussed, against a background of an ever-increasing need to escape the tensions, stresses and frustrations of modern life.

- Q.5 Another quite popular question, but quite a large proportion of the scripts paid only scant attention to the word *instantanée*. Many candidates tended to limit their discussion to the role of the Internet in everyday life. A typical essay in this category would point out the advantages of electronic shopping and the ease of accessing information, set against the accessibility of violent and pornographic material. Those who cast their net wider referred to e-mail, fax machines, mobile telephones, and on the whole most concluded that the advantages thereof by far outweigh the drawbacks.
- Q.6 A small minority opted for this question, and most seemed to be handicapped by the fact that they had read few books other than set texts or that they had not spent a great deal of time in France. However, some praiseworthy attempts were made to evaluate the level of understanding that can be drawn from reading compared with that which would theoretically result from a stay in the country. Candidates, however, who interpreted the question as an invitation to define the French national character tended merely to produce a well-worn catalogue of stereotypical statements which suggested that they had spent no time at all in the country. The overall impression of examiners was that this was the least well prepared topic.



9110/05/55 – French Texts and Thematic Studies

General Comments

There was much excellent work again this year and few candidates produced really poor answers, though a handful had allocated their time unwisely or clearly had not read the texts. Most candidates showed evidence of careful work and good understanding. The best offered an impressive combination of knowledge, a coherent argument and a perceptive response.

One problem was noted especially this year: now that only two questions need to be answered, centres should be wary of offering the same two books for their themes – for instance, *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (principal text) and *Antigone* (additional text) for *La Condition féminine*, and the other way round for *L'Individu et la Société*. Few candidates can manage this without considerable overlap of material. There is a similar problem, particularly if the (b) question is chosen in Section 1, when candidates offer *Thérèse Desqueyroux* as set text and *La Condition féminine* as theme, or *Boule de Suif* (text) and *La Guerre* (theme). One can see the advantages for centres of this kind of focused work, but the result is unacceptable repetition or the sight of conscientious candidates trying hard not to re-use essential references. It is also a pity that a few centres use only American or English films as secondary material (*Saving Private Ryan* was very popular), when it cannot be too difficult to find tapes of French films such as *Au Revoir, les enfants*.

The French was often elegant and expressive, usually competent and, in a few cases, almost too inaccurate and anglicised for comprehension. Candidates would often benefit from acquiring a simple literary vocabulary, including such basic words as *roman* (not *ce novel* or *cet nouvel*), *conte*, *pièce de théâtre*, *personnage*, *intrigue*, *chapitre*, *dénouement*. It would also be pleasing to see correct spelling of such essential names as Célimène, Sartre, Meursault, Meaulnes, Colette, Mme Dalleray and the rest.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION 1

1. Molière, *Le Misanthrope*

This was less popular than in the past and is possibly seen as a difficult text. It was clear that candidates with some notion of seventeenth century court life and behaviour were able to produce a much more intelligent response to the play. Otherwise, answers to the first two parts of Q.1a were solid, if sometimes lacking in analysis. Part (iii) was often treated superficially: candidates could describe Alceste's reactions without managing to pinpoint their comic side and examples of *réactions comparables* were offered without explanation. In Q.1b *droit* was sometimes assumed to mean 'right'. Many candidates defended Alceste and claimed that he was indeed '*droit, sincère...*' but forgot to look at the ways in which these qualities co-exist with comedy. Some answers looked very perceptively

at this two-sidedness and were particularly intelligent in analysing how a *misanthrope* can be in love with a woman like Célimène.

2. Maupassant, *Boule de suif et autres contes*

Q.2a was very popular. Cornudet was alleged to be *irritant* and not everyone could go on to explain why his singing of the *Marseillaise* has such a powerful effect on the other passengers. Some answers looked very fully into both its patriotic and republican overtones and clearly also had some idea of Cornudet's political stance. The better answers also noted Maupassant's ironic presentation of Cornudet instead of seeing him as a wholly *sympathique*. These candidates were also very competent in their analysis of the many ironic effects at the end of the story. Answers to Q.2b were often very solid in their detail but tended to be catalogues of examples rather than an analysis of Maupassant's image of patriotism.

3. Colette, *Le Blé en herbe*

In Q.3a, candidates often failed to notice the second part of the question and many agreed that the passage shows a typical image of Vinca. The better answers referred to her boyish behaviour at other times; some even claimed that Vinca is here trying out one of the possible female roles, as she does elsewhere when playing the seductress for the Parisian visitor. Part (ii) was competently done on the whole. Part (iii) often needed fuller treatment: most answers stopped short of a brief mention of Mme Dalleray's arrival instead of explaining how the relationship between Vinca and Phillipe is now subject to all the new tensions of adolescence. For Q.3b, candidates tended to miss *ne...que* in the quotation and lost the opportunity to look at less tragic aspects of *Le Blé en herbe*.

4. Mauriac, *Thérèse Desqueyroux*

As always, this text elicited an admirably detailed and perceptive response. From the very full passage most candidates could find Thérèse's reasons, both conscious and unconscious, for marrying Bernard. On the latter there was some disagreement: some thought him affectionate and sympathetic at this point; others noted all the hints of dominance (*deux grandes mains enserraient sa petite tête*) and the desire to control even his wife's thoughts (*quelques idées fausses*). Good candidates made the most of all the premonitions of tragedy, noting the potential incompatibility, the harsh landscape imagery (*mortes...salissaient...sèches...perçaient...acide*), the reptile dormant in Thérèse, even her interest in poison. Q.2b was again very solidly done, with the best answers going beyond straightforward descriptions of the claustrophobic marriage and family and picking out all the related images of *étouffement* throughout the novel.

5. Anouilh, *Antigone*

Fewer candidates than expected chose this text, though some used it for a thematic answer in Section II. There is a tendency to obscure much of what is in the play by an over-contemporary reading of Antigone as a 21st century woman with identity problems. It was surprising how few candidates made any reference to destiny or the Gods or could go very far in explaining Antigone's refusal to compromise.

SECTION II

A. *La Guerre*

Here Q.7 was predictably the most popular, covering Maupassant, Joffo and Vercors. Once again, there was a tendency to list examples rather than seek for explanations or connecting links. The examples were knowledgeable and well chosen, however, even if they mainly illustrated *le pire* and missed the altruism, courage and kindness also evident in these texts. Candidates tend also to refer to Maupassant's shorter stories (*La Mère Sauvage*, *Deux Amis*) rather than using the large amount of subtle material in *Boule de suif*.

B. *La Jeunesse*

Candidates who chose Q.9 on the theme of cruelty found themselves with a severe shortage of possible examples from Laye and Pagnol. *Vipère au poing* might have been more appropriate here. In Q.10 some candidates misunderstood *déceptions* and again had problems scouring inappropriate texts for evidence of deceit. But in general this was a fruitful question for those who had studied Colette or *Le Grand Meaulnes*. Q.11 also elicited solid illustration (and a little too much story-telling) with some well-analysed comparisons of the approach to adulthood depicted in Colette, Pagnol and Rochefort.

C *La Condition féminine*

Candidates choosing Q.12 found plenty of useful material in Lainé, Rochefort and even Mauriac. A surprising number agreed with the quotation. Q.13 produced few but thoughtful answers (perhaps it was less predictable) and one or two even argued intelligently that *la condition féminine* is a modern literary invention. Unhappiness in marriage (Q.14) was the most popular topic, with *Thérèse Desqueyroux* as the principal source for examples of both misery and contentment (Anne de la Trave and her mother). Some solid comparisons were also made between *Thérèse Desqueyroux* as the principal source for examples of both misery and contentment (Anne de la Trave and her mother). Some solid comparisons were also made between Thérèse and the various women in *La Dentellière* and *Les Petits Enfants du siècle*. Again the 'wrong' text was sometimes chosen: *Un Coeur simple* does not really work for this question, whereas it would have been ideal for Q.12.

D *L'Individu et la Société*

There were some excellent answers for Q.15, making intelligent use of *Antigone* and *Les Mains sales*. *L'Etranger* also featured strongly, although little reference was made to the importance for Meursault of the natural world. Indeed, the second part of the question (*Que signifie la vie pour eux?*) was too frequently ignored. Q.16 was rarely chosen. For Q.17 most answers used *L'Etranger* and *Antigone*, but generally saw the central characters as admirable or heroic: since these *individus* had chosen their own path, the notion of suffering was difficult to imagine and many candidates did not wholly focus on this question.

9110/06/66 - Coursework

General Comments

This year's coursework produced a good range of titles; as well perennial favourites such as the environment, drugs and AIDS, mad cow disease and GM foods were popular topics this year. Some of the most successful pieces of work managed to combine a high level of personal involvement in the subject matter or an imaginative element and an evaluative and analytical approach to the material. Thus one candidate wrote an imaginary interview with Napoleon and a second piece detailing the events at Oradour and analysing the candidate's own response to a recent visit to the site.

It should be emphasised that creative writing and personal experience are by no means the only effective approaches to this paper. There were some excellent discursive essays both on literary and factual themes. The study of literature can produce some impressive pieces of work provided that the material is analysed and candidates do not just retell the story. Indeed, titles should be chosen with care; even candidates with first-rate linguistic skills will not shine or gain top marks if they have chosen merely to relate an account of an exchange visit to France. There may well be personal involvement but such a choice of topic when reduced to a purely narrative level is not really suitable for an A-level paper which seeks, as stated in the mark scheme, to reward work which is "well thought-out" and "wide-ranging in treatment".

Another aim of the component is to encourage research and reading in the target language. To this end excessive use of sources in English would seem inappropriate. The Internet can be a useful research tool but as with any source there must be an element of selection of information and discernment as to what is relevant, which is not always easy given the wealth of data available.

Essays do not have to be word-processed but if this option is chosen candidates must not omit accents as this will affect the accuracy mark. Simplicity of packaging is always preferred and placing work in ring binders is highly undesirable.

There were few adjustments necessary to teachers' marks during the moderation process. Indeed there were even fewer examples of whole centres requiring scaling of marks. Mostly they were odd individual candidates whose work needed re-examination for a variety of reasons e.g. over-generosity or undue harshness when applying marking criteria. Generally marking was accurate.

One problem which emerged was the application of penalties for those who failed to relate their work to francophone countries as required by the syllabus. Many candidates sailed close to the wind in essays on general themes where only the odd statistic linked the piece with a target language speaking country. For those whose subject matter is wholly unrelated to the french-speaking world the term 'irrelevance' is the key to the content mark which may be awarded. This means that

according to the mark scheme the piece cannot be given more than ten marks for content.

Another instance where teachers must take responsibility for correctly applying the marking criteria is in the over use of sources. Original sources may legitimately provide facts and figures, useful idioms and short phrases. Where pages have been copied from sources and the candidate attempts to pass them off as his or her own work this is plagiarism and the Board will investigate suspected cases rigorously. There is obviously a grey area in between and here the teacher must not only indicate in the Teacher Comment Sheets that the candidate has over-used sources but apply the mark scheme as appropriate. In the Content band the relevant phrases are "derivative" of "very derivative though not exactly plagiaristic" and under Use of Language "leans rather heavily on the language of source materials" or "highly sophisticated foreign language clearly drawn from source materials". It is obviously easier for the teacher to detect such abuses than the moderator as the teacher sees the draft essay, can query sources and knows the candidate's usual standard of work.

Teacher's comments are invaluable, particularly when they explain exactly why a mark has been awarded. The candidate who pays close attention to the syllabus and to the advice in these reports, who knows what the marking criteria are and most importantly who listens to the teacher, is likely to do well. The component continues to offer great freedom of choice, time to research and work on content and to perfect structure and accuracy.

Report on components taken in June 2000

Component Threshold Marks

French 9110

Component	Max mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1	100	75	65	58	52	46	40	0
2	60	46	41	35	30	25	20	0
3	100	76	68	61	54	47	40	0
4	40	32	28	24	20	17	14	0
5	50	37	33	30	27	25	23	0
6	100	82	75	66	58	50	42	0
55	25	19	17	15	13	12	11	0
66	50	41	38	33	29	25	21	0

Overall Threshold Marks

Combination	Max mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1,2,3,4 & 5	400	299	269	240	211	183	155	0
1,2,3,4 & 6	400	297	269	240	211	183	155	0
1,2,3,4,55 & 66	400	298	267	239	211	183	155	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Cummulative %	29.07	50.11	70.61	84.20	92.97	97.83	100

The total candidature was 1966

These statistics are correct at the time of publication

French 8616
Advanced Supplementary

The reports in this booklet deal with the A level French syllabus (9110). The AS (8616) papers are in every case the same as, or part of, the equivalent A level paper.

No separate report has therefore been written as comments on 9110 apply equally to 8616.

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1	100	75	65	58	52	46	40	0
2	30	23	20	17	15	12	10	0
3	60	47	42	38	34	30	26	0
33	30	25	23	21	19	17	15	0
66	50	41	38	33	29	25	21	0

Overall Threshold Marks

Combination	Max mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1,2 & 3	200	148	128	117	106	96	86	0
1,2,33 & 66	200	145	140	126	112	98	84	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Cummulative %	23.53	49.02	67.65	77.45	87.25	92.16	100

The total candidature was 109

These statistics are correct at the time of publication