GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

FRENCH

SUMMER 2017
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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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FRENCH
GCSE
Summer 2017
UNIT 1: LISTENING

General comments

Candidates at both Foundation and Higher Tier appeared to have found the examination accessible and most were entered at the correct tier for their ability level.

As can be expected, a few candidates found some parts of the listening examination challenging.

In both tiers, all candidates attempted every question.

Spelling errors were frequent but in most cases the answer was unambiguous and therefore credited. Handwriting occasionally made the answer difficult to decipher.

Times and numbers were generally understood apart from Foundation Tier Q.4 (a) where 15 years old was often answered as 14 and in some cases candidates reversed 15 to 51. In Foundation Tier Q.4 (f) the time 7 pm was sometimes given as 07:00 (24 hour clock) and marked as incorrect (= 7 am). Higher Tier Q. 6 (a) asking for David Ghetta’s birth year, 1967, was interpreted by many as 1977 or 1987. In Higher Tier Question 4(c) 199 euros was answered correctly by very few candidates.

In general, candidates seem to have understood the gist of most questions but lost marks by giving answers which were imprecise and, therefore, not credited e.g. Higher Tier Q.6 (g) ‘children’, when ‘his children’ was required.

Candidates were familiar with the format and, in most cases, followed the rubrics correctly and responded in the appropriate language. In Higher Q.5 (a) ‘bagage’ was marked incorrect as a rubric error, although it was more likely to be a spelling error.

As seen in former examinations, most candidates respected the rubric and answered in English/Welsh as required. Most understood that the number of answers required depended on the marks bracketed next to each question and the lines provided for their answers. In written responses, candidates occasionally gave too many alternative answers or added some incorrect / superfluous information. However, more marks were lost because of imprecise answers or insufficient responses than because of extra information.

There was evidence that some candidates had used the reading time profitably by highlighting, circling or underlining the mark allocation and interrogative pronouns and noting key vocabulary under pictures and on the draft page. Some candidates made notes in the question side of the paper rather than on the blank page which occasionally caused some confusion.
Administration

Centres generally used the correct procedures for forwarding scripts to examiners. Most scripts arrived promptly and were correctly packed and labelled. Attendance registers were completed correctly.

However, as is the case each year, a few envelopes did not display the required information. Problems encountered included:

- No information on the outside of the script packet other than the centre number. The front must also indicate the title and paper number as well as the number of scripts contained in the pack.
- The register from larger centres was included in one of the packs only instead of splitting the register sheets to correspond to the candidates’ names and numbers in each envelope.
- Where multiple packages were sent from larger centres, no indication was made of either the content or the sequence (1 of 6, 2 of 4 etc.) of the packages.
- A few candidates did not write their candidate number on the script. Some candidates muddled their exam number with the centre number or gave a different surname to the one recorded on the attendance register. Centres are required to check this information.

The issue of administration continues to be a problem and it would be much appreciated if Exams Officers were directly informed of the need to ensure that scripts are collated, packaged and labelled correctly before dispatching them from their centre.

FOUNDATION TIER

Question 1

This question was suitably answered by most candidates. A very small number of candidates ticked only one item per row, most were familiar with the format of two rows requiring two answers each. ‘Stylo’ was sometimes not known or recognized and ‘compass’ ticked instead. Book and bag - ‘livre’ and ‘sac’ - were both well known.

Question 2

Some candidates selected ‘the leg’ instead of ‘the arm’ in Section 1 and some selected the person with ‘the cold’ instead of the one with ‘a sore throat’ in Section 2. A high number of candidates scored 3 out of 4 in this question.

Question 3

Section 1

(a) Some candidates selected ‘shop’ instead of ‘read’ - mistaking ‘magazines’ for ‘magasins’.
(b) Surprisingly, ‘housework’ was often ticked instead of ‘homework’.
(c) Most candidates selected ‘goes out with friends’ correctly, while a few answered ‘texts her friends’ - ‘je sors’ not understood as first person present tense of ‘sortir’.
Section 2

(d) ‘Work’ was selected correctly by most candidates, although a few ticked ‘watch TV’.
(e) Some candidates heard ‘contente’ in the question posed and ticked ‘happy’ instead of the answer ‘sad’.
(f) Some candidates selected ‘brother’ or ‘mother’ although most correctly selected ‘her sister’.
(g) ‘Patient’ was selected by a few who mistook ‘paressseux’ for meaning ‘patient’.
(h) ‘Lazy’ was selected correctly by a considerable number of candidates, although ‘noisy’ was also ticked as a guess answer.

Question 4

Section 1

This question was answered correctly by very few candidates.

(a) 15 was answered correctly by a high number of candidates although a few answered incorrectly ‘14’ or ‘over 15’. Some gave the answer of ‘51’, seemingly reversing the order of the numbers 1 and 5.
(b) ‘Animals’ was correctly given as an answer by many candidates. However, many answered ‘working with the public’ which was the answer to the next question, Question 4(c).
(c) ‘Working with people / the public’ often answered correctly, although ‘talking to people’ was given instead of ‘helping people’. ‘Working’ or ‘helping “young” people’ was not accepted as ‘gens’ had probably been understood as ‘jeunes’.
(d) ‘À côté de’ was not understood by many candidates. Many answered ‘near the library’ which was not accepted as a correct answer. ‘By the library’ was accepted as meaning ‘next to’.

Section 2

(e) Many candidates answered ‘5 o’clock’ on its own which was not accepted as a sufficiently correct answer for ‘[every] evening’.
(f) 7pm answered correctly by many or 7 o’clock, although some candidates answered from 5 to 7pm. Few candidates answered 19:00 hours but some answered 07:00 (=7 am) which was not accepted.
(g) This question caused problems. The most common answers given were ‘work with animals’ or ‘clean up/clean the animals/cages’ which were not credited a mark. ‘Play with animals’ OR ‘talking to customers’ were the only credited answers.
(h) ‘Juillet’ was often confused with ‘juin’ with “10th June” a commonly given incorrect answer. Other answers were wild guesses: end of the week, next week, etc.

OVERLAP QUESTIONS

Question 5 Foundation/Question 1 Higher

Section 1

(a) ‘She walks’ often selected instead of ‘she goes by car’.
(b) Some candidates heard ‘physique’ and selected PE instead of computer science.
(c) ‘Easy’ often selected instead of ‘useful’ (‘utile’ misheard for ‘facile’).
(d) 4:15 selected instead of 4:30 by some candidates when they heard the final time in the sentence ‘cinq heures et quart’.
Section 2

(e) This question was not answered correctly by a considerable number of candidates: ‘old fashioned’ often given as an incorrect answer. Other candidates understood ‘vieux’ to mean ‘view’ and proceeded to answer ‘nice or scenic view’.

(f) ‘Swimming pool’ answered correctly by many, although ‘computers’, the answer to (g), was often given for (f).

(g) Many understood ‘computers’ but incorrectly added ‘room’ or ‘IT room’ rather than ‘need computers in the classrooms’.

(h) This was not answered correctly as many guessed answers given, negative and positive: ‘annoying’, ‘badly behaved’, ‘rude’ and ‘funny’, ‘silly boys’, ‘well-behaved’, ‘attentive’. ‘Loud’ was accepted as well as the expected answer of ‘noisy’.

Question 6 Foundation/ Question 2 Higher

8 letters to be inserted in boxes. Not that many candidates obtained full marks. L and J (umbrella and tie) were not well-known and many did not guess F (scarf).

HIGHER TIER

Question 3

Section 1

3 correct statements to tick:

Many candidates selected (ii) mixing up ‘village’ with ‘ville’ or hearing ‘plus grand’ and guessing incorrectly that Pierre wanted to live in a town. Many candidates lost a mark in this section.

(iv) was often selected when they heard ‘ennuyeux’. (vi) was selected correctly most often than not (‘wifi’).

Section 2

(a) Well answered generally, although some candidates answered ‘2 km’ instead of ‘3 km’ from Pierre’s house.

(b) Many candidates gave the incorrect answer ‘10 euros’ which was the weekly price. It was evident that the majority of candidates did not understand ‘gratuit’.

Question 4

(a) ‘6 hours’ answered by most.

(b) ‘Interactive’ OR ‘easy to use’ answered correctly although a few candidates incorrectly answered ‘easy to assemble/make’ or ‘useful’.

(c) This question was not answered correctly by a considerable number of candidates, including candidates who got every other question in the paper correct. Many ‘99 euros’ and a few £ instead of € signs which was not accepted.

(d) This was answered well by most candidates, apart from a few ‘8 to 10’ instead of ‘8 - 12’.
Question 5

Section 1

(a) This question was answered correctly by a high number of candidates, although a fair number answered ‘they had lost their luggage’ which was not accepted as it was too ambiguous. A few gave the correct answer ‘they missed their flight’.
(b) Most candidates gave the correct answer ‘she had to buy clothes’, although some answered ‘she had to buy things’ and did not get the mark.
(c) ‘The pool was dirty’ was often given as incorrect answer. Other inventive answers were ‘there were rats in the farm’ (from ‘fermée’ mistaken for ‘ferme’).

Section 2

(d) ‘Canada’ was answered correctly by most, although ‘Netherlands’ was often given (paysages - Pays Bas).
(e) Not many candidates answered correctly ‘at night’. Many offered seasons such as spring or summer.

Question 6

Section 1

(a) ‘1977’ was the most common incorrect answer given, although ‘1987’ was a close second.
(b) ‘Belgian’ and ‘Belgium’ were accepted as correct answers. ‘Catholic’ was often misspelt as ‘catholic’. Other alternative answers often given were ‘alcoholic’ or ‘very strict’. A few candidates answered ‘very happy’ correctly.
(c) Many candidates answered ‘lawyer’ instead of ‘law’ and lost the mark. Other subjects commonly given as an answer were ‘music’, ‘art’ and ‘business’.

Section 2

(d) This question caused problems: ‘suits his character’ was often given and not accepted as a correct answer nor was ‘he likes music’. Many candidates also answered incorrectly ‘music was a liberty’. A couple of candidates misunderstood ‘caractère’ for ‘karaté’ and gave the answer ‘he preferred music to karate’. A few candidates answered (David) ‘had been influenced by Madonna’, not sure where this detail came from.
(e) Had to be answered in the past tense. Most candidates had the wrong idea that ‘he earned a lot of money’ and not many mentioned ‘he played in night clubs’, just offering ‘he played gigs’ / ‘he was a DJ’ which was not precise enough. A couple of candidates translated ‘gagner de l’argent’ as ‘win money’ which was not accepted.
(f) This was either answered correctly as ‘he is nothing special’ or incorrectly ‘he is special’.
(g) Many candidates answered ‘his child’ incorrectly or gave the answer ‘he wants to have children’ or just plain ‘children’. Only ‘his children’ was accepted with the possessive pronoun. Many candidates lost the mark by answering ‘his music and his children’.
Administration

This year most centres submitted their samples to the moderator by the deadline, however, a minority of centres did not. Centres are also reminded that work should be sent by first class post since “signed for” services cause great inconvenience to moderators.

Samples should contain an equal number of Structured Conversations and Presentation/Discussions as far as possible and most centres did this. Also, the range of marks awarded for both tests should be represented in the sample. Only the mark sheets for the chosen sample should be included in the package along with the recordings.

The vast majority of mark sheets were fully and correctly completed, though some were not properly authenticated. These forms should be completed in black ink. Occasionally, there were clerical errors in the addition of marks on the cover sheets, or the mark on the cover sheet and the online mark did not tally. A few centres entered the marks for the two tasks in the wrong columns online. Centres are advised to double check their marks to make sure they enter the correct ones before submission.

Rather helpfully, many centres included the downloaded sample list which gives moderators a quick overview of the sample. Moderators would also like to thank those centres which annotated mark sheets in support of their marking.

Most CDs and USB pens were labelled correctly with the centre name and number. Some moderators experienced problems when labels were stuck on CDs or when the recording was done in an uncommon format; MP3 is a widely recognised format and is preferred. Very occasionally no recorded material was found on the CD/USB. It is most helpful when individual recordings are clearly labelled with the centre number, candidate name and number and an indication of which assessment (SC/PD) is recorded, both on the file name and at the start of each recording.

The quality of recordings was excellent for the most part, although some centres had background noise or candidates spoke very quietly which made the test difficult to listen to. Centres are advised to check that all the recordings are clear and that both teacher and candidate are audible.

Despite the observations above, many moderators commented on how straightforward the moderation process had been thanks to centres’ diligence.
Moderation process

Timings were generally good and in accordance with the specification though there were exceptions. A minority of centres' timings were too short which meant the candidates had trouble accessing the full range of marks. Many centres demonstrated good questioning techniques which were varied and challenging in order to stretch the stronger students. With these stronger candidates, there was evidence of justification and longer sequences of coherent speech in their responses. The stronger candidates made good and appropriate use of idioms as well as showing mastery of tense usage. Equally, there was strong evidence of some sympathetic questioning of weaker candidates. Centres with a large number of entries and more than one teacher tended to carry out internal moderation to standardise marking which is good practice.

On the whole, marking was fair and consistent, however, the accuracy mark for weaker candidates tended to be a bit severe. Though still very much a minority, there seemed to be more centres this year whose marks were too generous across all the marking criteria. Teachers are advised to familiarise themselves with the descriptors for each band in advance of the tests to ensure candidates have an opportunity to meet the criteria.

Candidates were well prepared for both tasks and some presentations were very interesting and thoroughly researched. Candidates do better when their presentation is on a topic of direct personal interest as the ensuing discussion flows well. The intention is that conversations develop organically with a response leading to the next question so centres are advised not to issue candidates with a list of questions to learn prior to the assessment as the conversation does not sound natural and the structure of a response often sounds contrived.

Some candidates cover a lot of content in their tasks, however, pronunciation affects the communication of that content. Some candidates' pronunciation limited the information conveyed but the marks did not take this into account. These candidates often mispronounced cognates and verb endings or pronounced consonants at the end of words. For example: *temps, ennuyeux*. Numbers were sometimes mispronounced e.g. *sink* (5), *doo* (2). Other common errors included: *auzzi* (aussi), *l'oo* (l'eau), *parce coo* (parce que), *bocop* (beaucoup), *esst* (est).

Structured Conversation

Popular themes this year were: healthy lifestyle, work experience, free time, school, town and region, family and holidays. The best tests sounded like a natural conversation, developed confidently, were engaging and a pleasure to listen to. Many showed a very good range of vocabulary, tenses and structures which were used correctly along with a variety of opinions. Yet, there was not always evidence of unexpected or spontaneous questions.

Timings of the Structured Conversation were mostly within the specified 4-5 minutes.

Presentation and Discussion

This year popular themes were holidays, school, the environment, leisure and healthy lifestyle.

Timings of the tasks were generally well adhered to. Few centres exceeded the time limit but some presentations were too short. Candidates are advised to speak for 2-3 minutes and then take part in a conversation for between 3-4 minutes. Timing is in two separate sections, not global. It is advised that the timings set out by the WJEC are adhered to so that candidates have an opportunity to access the full range of marks.
Most candidates delivered their presentations well with a pleasing range of vocabulary and complex structures; unfortunately, some could not maintain the same standard in the following discussion. Therefore, care was needed when assessing the quality of language as the quality of both the Presentation and the Discussion had to be considered.
General Comments

Most Foundation candidates were entered at the correct tier and were well prepared for the examination. Very few questions were left un-attempted and very few candidates failed to adhere to the rubrics.

FOUNDATION TIER

Question 1

This question was answered well and very few (if any) candidates failed to attempt the question. Instructions were followed with most candidates writing correct letters in the boxes. Occasionally, confusion arose between ‘église’ and ‘château.’

Question 2

Well answered. Candidates were generally successful at recognising the vocabulary for food although occasionally (b) ‘fraise’ and (e) ‘framboise,’ were confused.

Question 3

This question was generally answered well
(i) Most candidates wrote ‘river’ although ‘Riviera’ was occasionally given as well as the French word ‘rivière.’
(ii) Most candidates wrote ‘Thursday’ although other days of the week were suggested especially ‘Tuesday’ and ‘Friday.’
(iii) Mostly correct.
(iv) Mostly correct.
(v) Mostly correct but occasionally ‘bus station’ was given.
(vi) ‘Drink’ was widely recognised although ‘fish’ did occur as well as ‘fishing rod.’ Occasionally, candidates named drinks such as ‘water.’

Question 4

Section 1.

There was a mixed response to this section with surprisingly few candidates managing to get all three answers correct suggesting that ‘maillot de bain,’ ‘savon’ and ‘montre’ were not familiar items of vocabulary. Of the three answers however, (ii) ‘Marie’ was most frequently correctly answered.
Section 2.

In this section (iv) and (vi) were usually correctly answered with (v) ‘sac de couchage’ proving more difficult. Most candidates recognised ‘sac’ as meaning ‘bag’ and there were some very inventive answers including ‘handbag, rucksack’ and ‘bag of cabbages’ (maybe confused with ‘choux’) but also ‘bag of pears.’

Question 5

(i) This question was generally answered well although a number of candidates did not recognise ‘un mois’ and instead gave ‘spring’ as an answer.
(ii) Foundation Tier candidates did not always succeed in conveying the idea of the family getting together for a reunion/meal as the highlight of Alfie’s visit but opted for the simpler (and not accepted) idea of visiting/seeing/meeting family.
(iii) This was generally answered well although other seasons were sometimes given, in particular ‘spring’ which was mentioned previously.
(iv) Most candidates recognised that it was fun being with friends but missed the importance of the determiner ‘plus.’
(v) ‘Circulation’ was understood by many candidates.
(vi) Most candidates understood that Sylvain stayed on a farm, however some read the text superficially and failed to recognise the negative ‘Nous ne faisons jamais de camping,’ and so gave answers such as ‘caravan, camping car, motorhome, tent.’
(vii) Some candidates recognised ‘chauffage’ but failed to make it central.
(viii) ‘Reading’ was given more often than ‘sleeping’ as a correct answer however some candidates interpreted ‘Je lis’ as ‘I lie down.’ If an incorrect answer was given, it was often linked to farm activities (often involving eggs.)

Question 6

This question was answered well. The most common error was in mixing up (vii) Solange and (viii) Valda. Perhaps this was because ‘musique’ was mentioned for Solange.

HIGHER TIER

Question 1

Higher Tier candidates answered this question well.
(i) ‘Un mois’ was not always recognised however.
(ii) As for Foundation Tier, there was some imprecision with candidates recognising that the answer was something to do with the family (meeting, visiting, eating meals) but not managing to express that it was a family meal/reunion/get together.
(iii) Usually correctly answered.
(iv) Many candidates successfully recognised the comparative and explained that Véronique preferred holidays with friends because it was ‘more’ fun.
(v) Many candidates understood ‘circulation’ and explained that it was the lack of traffic that Sylvain enjoyed.
(vi) There were a number of alternative answers some of them referring to camping and some suggesting various forms of accommodation on a farm as in ‘a lodge/barn/stable on a farm’.
(vii) Many Higher Tier candidates recognised ‘chauffage central’ as ‘central heating.’
(viii) ‘Reading’ was given more often than ‘sleeping’ as an answer and there was sometimes misinterpretation of ‘Je lis’ as ‘I lie down.’
Question 2

This question was answered well. The most common error was in mixing up (vii) Solange and (viii) Valda. Perhaps this was because ‘musique’ was mentioned for Solange.

Question 3

This question was answered well. Candidates followed the rubric. The most common mistake was in choosing ‘Norbert’ for (v). Perhaps this was because candidates noticed ‘favoris/fantastique/formidable’ and thought this meant the ‘best’ holiday without recognising the word ‘meilleur’ from Éric.

Question 4

This proved to be the most challenging question overall and the one which yielded the fewest number of candidates with full marks with (1) and (2) often incorrectly answered and occasionally ‘mère’ incorrectly given for (3).

The most common correct answers were (3) père, (5) chaque, (7) apprécié, (8) faire. Some candidates, having worked hard to identify the correct word, then copied it incorrectly into the gap. Some candidates appeared to understand the meaning of the text but chose a grammatically incorrect response as in ‘travail’ instead of ‘travailler’ for (4). A very small number of candidates, who had initially written in all the correct answers, changed their minds, crossed out one or two correct answers and consequently lost marks.

(1) Often incorrectly answered.
(2) Often incorrectly answered.
(3) Usually correct but ‘mère’ sometimes given.
(4) Often incorrectly answered as ‘travail.’
(5) Usually correct.
(6) Usually correct.
(7) Usually correct.

Question 5

Certain parts of this question were answered well. Generally speaking however, candidates needed to exercise higher level reading skills and ‘drill down’ to avoid choosing what might appear to be an easily found answer after a superficial reading.

(i) ‘Sapins de Noël’ was not well known. Various other festive options such as ‘decorations, presents’ and ‘elves’ were suggested as were ‘mobile phones’ and ‘trainers’ (from traîneau).
(ii) ‘In a toilet’ was by far the most common response with candidates recognising ‘WC’ and perhaps not fully understanding the text. ‘Placard’ was not widely known and many castle based alternatives such as ‘tower/dungeon/jail’ were suggested as well as ‘in the play area’ and ‘in a shelf.’
(iii) ‘Kick’ was either well known or well guessed and many candidates answered correctly.
(iv) The majority of candidates did understand the idea of a ‘large number of lorries/trucks’ causing traffic jams although some candidates suggested ‘a large number of factories’. Going with the Christmas theme, a few candidates thought that ‘too many reindeer in town’ were causing the problem.
(v) ‘Grandfather’ and ‘son’ were often incorrectly given as answers. A close reading of the text was needed to find the correct answer and the pronoun ‘sa’ might have been a clue to the gender of the co-worker.
Most candidates expressed the idea that the referee had to stop/abandon the game. This was one of the few questions where occasionally too much information contradicted the correct answer rendering it ambiguous.

Mostly correct although some candidates thought that the players were fighting rather than the spectators.

Mostly correct although a few candidates gave too much incorrect detail and lost marks.

Generally, questions (vi), (vii) and (viii) were answered correctly and almost all candidates gained some marks for this question.

Candidates were well prepared for the Higher Reading paper. Very few questions were left un-attempted although in a small number of cases it appeared that candidates had, unfortunately, completely failed to see a whole question. Most adhered to the rubric for each type of question, answered in the correct language and for more open questions such as 1 and 5, were selective in the information given in order to gain a mark.

There was no significant difference in standard between the Welsh medium and English medium scripts, and no questions in which candidates answering in Welsh seemed to underperform in comparison with those answering in English. A small linguistic point for Welsh medium scripts is that for Q.5 (iv) Foundation / Q.1 (iv) Higher –‘mwy hwyl’ was accepted although it should be ‘mwy o hwyl.’
FRENCH
GCSE
Summer 2017
UNIT 4: WRITING

General Comments

Most centres are now familiar with the requirements of the specification and had prepared their candidates well for this unit. Standards have improved throughout the life of the specification and the mean mark has risen again this year, indicating continued improvement.

As this is the final year of the current specification, this report will focus mainly on issues that remain relevant to the new written examination. There will be some repetition of shortcomings and advice given in previous reports as, although there is evidence of some centres heeding this, some issues still prevail.

Administration

Thank you to those centres who followed the administrative guidelines. Unfortunately, there were still a number of problems this year but those relevant to next year’s examination relate more specifically to the work of Examination Officers. Issues included the dispatch of folders to the Speaking moderator, the omission of the attendance register and the failure to indicate a candidate’s absence, resulting in unnecessary referral to WJEC.

Task setting

Thank you to those centres who adhered to the regulations governing task setting. The most popular titles again this year related to the topics of Holidays, Free Time, School, Healthy Living, Home Town and Work Experience. The best titles were those that were accessible to all abilities and provided opportunities for candidates to gain the highest marks in all three criteria. Some titles of a more descriptive nature (e.g. inviting candidates to describe family members or their home) often resulted in repetition of language structures, limiting access to the higher bands. Less able candidates often struggled with titles inviting a discursive response to an issue or a review of a film/book.

Communication

This year most candidates stayed within the remit of the title and included relevant information and points of view, though there were still some occasions where candidates digressed. This was sometimes due to an inappropriately broad title e.g. *A letter to my penfriend*, which gave a free rein to candidates to write information and points of view which spanned more than one context. Some candidates introduced themselves (name, age etc.) as a matter of course at the start of each task and should be discouraged from doing so unless this is relevant to the task.
It is evident that most candidates are familiar with the mark scheme and many wrote responses which achieved or aspired to the requirements of the top band. However, some very able candidates did not give due attention to structuring and presenting their work ‘in an organised fashion’. A number of 300-word responses were presented as one continuous paragraph, often marring an otherwise high quality performance. There were also some very well written narrative and descriptive pieces that lacked the necessary development and justification of points of view to be awarded nine or ten marks for Communication.

Poor punctuation hindered communication on numerous occasions. The absence of full stops in particular meant that information had to be re-read and the meaning inferred. In some instances, whole paragraphs were written in accurate French without a full stop or capital letter featuring anywhere. On other occasions, full stops were wrongly inserted in the middle of a sentence, thus rendering the meaning unclear.

It goes without saying that candidates must write legibly in order to communicate. Whilst examiners do their utmost to try to decipher poorly formed letters or minuscule handwriting, some scripts this year were totally or partially illegible. The number of such scripts seems to increase each year.

Quality of Language

There were many pieces demonstrating a high degree of accuracy and a wide range of language.

Many candidates demonstrated the ability to write in more than one tense and some used tenses of which only receptive knowledge is required at this level. Reflexive verbs were often handled well in different tenses and in their negative forms. The most frequent errors in verb formation occurred in attempts at the perfect tense (where accents on past participles were frequently omitted) or when candidates used the imperfect where a conditional was required, most notably ‘je préférerais’ instead of ‘je préfèrerais’. In fact, it is worth noting that the verb ‘préférer’ is the most the frequently misformed verb, in all its forms.

Spelling errors were a frequent occurrence again this year. Cognates often appeared as English spellings e.g. comfortable/uncomfortable, problems, exercise; and nouns ending in té proved difficult: personnalité, activity, qualité (with and without the acute accent). Other frequently misspelt words were: l’étranger (l’entranger), vacances (vacanes), malheureusement and normalement (many versions). Sometimes the misspelling of words meant that they took on a whole new meaning, examples being: Monsieur Ministre de l’Enivrement; Nous n’avons pas pu pendre mon chien; Je devrais arrêter de grignoter quatre fois par jour afin que je puisse garder la linge; C’était genital!

The phenomenon of splitting words, highlighted in last year’s report, was still prevalent this year. The following are just a few of the many examples: dé jeuner, le çons, té moins, ta bagisme, jour née, je tais (‘étais), ne cessaire, pour tant, je ne fume rais pas. Conversely, separate words were often fused: le sujet demon essai c’est ... je fais attention à mon poidset je fais beaucoup d’exercice, iyla. Sometimes both types of error featured in the same sentence, e.g. iyla cinq cours, chacun d’ure une heure. The phrase il y a proves problematic in both present and imperfect tenses, sometimes appearing as one or two words and sometimes with the words misordered e.g. il yavait a.
Dictionary errors were few, though there were some examples e.g. *L’Eurodisney était ennuyeux parce que ma favori monter était fermer*. Some errors were caused by searching for a word with an incorrect English spelling e.g. *le rugby au hêtre* (beach rugby?) and others appeared to be the result of a word-for-word search or poor internet translation e.g. *Ce qui n’est pas à l’amour?* (What’s not to love?)

Accents continued to pose problems for many candidates. Missing accents were the most common feature (see note on past participles above) and the use of the wrong accent was also common. The latter mostly related to use of grave instead of acute accents or vice versa but some candidates used accents that don’t feature in the French language. Some hedged their bets by using macrons (ê, â), some tried curves (è) and some used vertical lines. Omissions or errors in accents were a particular feature of word-processed pieces.

Most candidates kept within the word-count. Some ventured beyond and managed to sustain the quality of language but others began to self-penalise, as the quality of the language deteriorated. Whilst it is appreciated that candidates need to be aware of the word count, it would be helpful if they could refrain from numbering words within the body of the text, as this can be very distracting for the examiner.

The range of language demonstrated by some candidates was impressive. It was clear that teachers had encouraged candidates to attempt a variety of tenses, to extend sentences and to attempt complex structures. Compound tenses, subordinate and relative clauses, direct and indirect object pronouns, comparatives and superlatives, various negatives and adverbs were often handled well by more able candidates.

On the other hand, there were again numerous examples of less able candidates trying to over-stretch. Their attempts at more complex structures resulted in inaccuracies, which not only impeded communication but also had an adverse effect on the marks for Accuracy and Range (complex structures needing to be ‘mostly correct’ for 4 for Range). Idioms, proverbs and similes were once again used to good effect and proved popular with candidates of all abilities.

The hard work of teachers in preparing candidates for this unit is recognised, and congratulations are due to teachers and candidates for the high and improving standards achieved over the life of the Controlled Assessment in Writing.