FRENCH

Paper 0520/03
Speaking

Key messages

- Centres had generally prepared candidates well for the new speaking test.
- Role plays were conducted well by most examiners.
- In the topics section, some centres need to make greater use of extension questions to elicit fuller answers from candidates. Sometimes, the topic conversations were very short.
- Most examiners understood the need to adhere **precisely** to the script in the Instructions for Teachers/Examiners and not to rephrase any questions.
- Most examiners also understood the need to ask **no more than two further questions** of their own if timings were short on topic conversations.
- Centres are reminded to use the alternative questions provided in the topic conversations if a candidate does not understand the first version (and repetition) of the question.
- The randomisation grid in the Instructions for Teachers/Examiners was usually followed correctly.
- Clerical work was usually very good in centres.
- The quality of recordings was usually very good.
- Centres are reminded to include candidates at the very top and the very bottom of the mark range in the sample.

General comments

The format of the test was new this year. The Speaking test is intended to be a test of spontaneous communicative ability. A wide range of performance was evident across the candidature and examples of performance at all levels of ability were heard.

Centres had usually prepared candidates well for the format of this new test and examiners were mostly aware of how to conduct the test efficiently and correctly. Examiners greeted candidates using the prompts provided and nearly all examiners read the scenario for the role plays as instructed in French. Most centres followed the instructions concerning the randomisation grid and understood the need to test candidates according to the prescribed order of the cards and conversation topics. Centres are reminded that the cards should be distributed according to the grid provided on pages 14–15 in the Instructions, with Card One given to the first candidate who takes the test and so on.

Role plays were generally conducted well. Centres are reminded that questions can be repeated (but not rephrased) once if the candidate does not answer a question or gives an ambiguous response. It is important for examiners to read the role play tasks exactly as printed to ensure that they are not changing the nature and level of difficulty of the tasks. It is useful to note that the role plays are not timed.

For the **topic conversations**, timings were not always appropriate. These were often too short and, in a few cases, too long. Some examiners needed to ask more **extension questions** (e.g. *Donne-moi plus de details* or *Peux-tu me dire autre chose à ce sujet ?*) to give candidates the opportunity to develop their answers and go beyond brief or incomplete answers which do not communicate fully. Candidates need to understand the wordings of these extension questions so that they know when they need to give more detail. When asking extension questions, examiners can only use vocabulary provided in the printed question or vocabulary already used by the candidate. Examiners must not feed new vocabulary or ideas to the candidate.

If a candidate does not understand **Questions 3**, **4** or **5** in the topic conversations (and a repetition of these questions), examiners must ask the **alternative question**. These alternative questions give candidates another opportunity to understand the task. Some examiners asked the alternative questions when the candidate had already answered the first question clearly, or used the alternative questions as extension questions. This should be avoided as it can be confusing for candidates.

When there was a PAUSE between two questions in the script, most examiners gave candidates the time to answer the first question before asking the second one.

Centres are reminded that if a topic conversation lasts 3½ minutes or less, even after asking extension questions, the examiner must ask **up to two further** questions of his/her choice on the **same** topic as the other questions to make sure that the conversation lasts 4 minutes. If the topic conversation still lasts 3½ minutes or less, the examiner must stop the conversation.

Examiners are reminded to introduce the topic area at the start of each topic conversation. This must be done in French.

Clerical checks and sample size

In most centres, the clerical work had usually been completed very efficiently and centres are thanked for this. It is essential that all clerical work is checked very carefully to ensure that candidates receive the correct mark. Centres generally understood the requirements of the sample size and samples were nearly always correct. In the very few cases when extra or replacement recordings were required, centres were quick to respond. Please always remember to include the work of candidates at the top and bottom of the mark range.

Recording quality

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality. Centres are thanked for this. Please check all recording equipment prior to the live exams and before despatching the sample. Please also try to ensure reasonably quiet conditions for recording to avoid background noise. The examiner, and **not** the candidate, must introduce the candidate by name and number. The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file and saved as .mp3. Each recorded file in the sample must be clearly named using the following convention: centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. Recordings should be labelled correctly with the candidates' name and number on the box for the CD.

Application of the mark scheme

In the **role plays**, marks can only be awarded for the **set tasks**. To score 2 marks, an answer may be brief, but the language should be appropriate to the task, in an appropriate time frame, substantially accurate and not be ambiguous in terms of the message being communicated. If the meaning of the required message is made ambiguous through poor pronunciation of a key word, an incorrect time frame or an inappropriate form of a verb (if used), then a mark of 1 should be awarded. There were cases of 2 marks being awarded for answers which did not address the set tasks. In such cases, a mark of 0 was appropriate.

In the **topic conversations**, most centres awarded the marks for **Communication** consistently but a little generously. It was necessary to think carefully about how well the answers gave the **required information** and how consistently this could be done across the two topics. Performances where answers convey most of the required information but are brief, sometimes irrelevant and with little development, would fall into the Satisfactory category. To score high marks for Communication, candidates need to be able to offer **consistently** relevant information and to show that they can develop their ideas and opinions, adding relevant detail where necessary. The ability to justify and explain is also a feature of performance of the Very Good mark band. It should be noted that if conversations are short, candidates can be disadvantaged as they may not have the opportunity to develop their material.

In most centres, marks for **Quality of Language** also tended to be a little generous. The key descriptors considered here are the ability to use a range of structures as listed in the syllabus, and the ability to use a range of appropriate vocabulary. Pronunciation is also a key descriptor. To score high marks for Quality of Language, candidates need to show control of a **wide range** of accurately used language and structures and pronounce well. The ability to use appropriate time frames and correctly conjugated verbs is assessed here as part of the range of structures.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Examiners generally read the scenario as instructed. The nine role plays were accessible to candidates and set at an equal level of difficulty. They were all set in situations in which candidates could find themselves with a speaker of French and were transactional in nature. Contexts such as arranging outings with friends, obtaining goods or services and discussing travel details featured on the cards. Most candidates approached the role plays well with many scoring good marks. The weakest candidates also showed that they could score marks for partial communication on some tasks.

The first two tasks on each card were of a very factual nature and gave candidates the opportunity to answer briefly. They did not require longer and more developed answers. Candidates mostly answered these two opening questions well. It was essential for candidates to be familiar with questioning formulations such as *À quelle heure ? Combien ? Quand ? Où ? Quel ? Comment ?* Weaker candidates did not understand these and consequently gave irrelevant information which did not answer the set task. The last three tasks gave candidates more opportunity to develop responses. The vocabulary used in the role play questions was straightforward and usually notions of time and place were quite well understood.

On each card, the last three tasks were more challenging and gave candidates the opportunity to show that they could use past and future time frames correctly and develop their answers with opinions and simple explanations. A useful technique for candidates to adopt in the 10-minute preparation time is to think very carefully about useful vocabulary and structures which could occur in their given role play scenario. They should also think about the person with whom they are talking. Many candidates understood the key question *Pourquoi ?* and were usually able to give simple relevant reasons and opinions. In each role play, weaker candidates experienced some difficulty in answering in the time frame of the question and this made their responses ambiguous. The best responses heard were ones in which the time frame matched the time frame of the question as this meant the message was relevant and communicated unambiguously. Candidates also need to be aware that sometimes the form of register heard in questions is different according to the nature of the interaction and whether it is informal with a friend, or formal with a stranger when purchasing goods or obtaining services. On cards using the more formal *vous* form of address, candidates heard conjugations of verbs which they sometimes repeated inappropriately and did not conjugate the verb correctly in their answer, e.g. a question such as *Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire aujourd'hui ?* was sometimes answered as *j'allais/j'aller* which led to some ambiguity of time frame and prevented a mark of 2 from being scored.

Card 1 was accessible, and most tasks were approached well. On the third task, some candidates did not understand the need to respond with a type of film, although most were able to complete the task at least partially with an appropriate reason. Other tasks were generally done well.

On **Card 2**, most candidates were able to respond with an appropriate number in **Task 1** and day or date in **Task 3**, although the second part of **Task 3** was challenging for weaker candidates who had difficulty expressing a past time frame. In **Task 2**, some candidates could not give a type of room whilst others gave lots of unnecessary details about the room they wanted which sometimes led to ambiguity. **Tasks 4** and **5** were generally answered competently although the weaker candidates did not recognise the need for a future time frame in **Task 5**.

Card 3 was approached well, and most candidates were able to respond to **Task 1** with a number of days. On **Task 2**, some candidates did not understand the interrogative *comment* and were unable to reply with a means of transport. Other tasks where generally handled well although weaker candidates were not familiar with the vocabulary in the first part of **Task 5**: *mettre* and *sac à dos*. However, most were able to complete the second part of the task as *acheter* and *supermarché* were very familiar vocabulary items.

Most candidates made a good start to **Card 4** and were able to communicate a day and a time for going to the beach. Again, *comment* in the first part of **Task 3** proved to be a challenge for weaker candidates, although the association with the verb *voyager* was helpful for some. Some candidates found it difficult to answer the second part of **Task 3** in the past time frame. **Task 4** was not always understood, and many candidates listed items of food rather than saying what sort of restaurant they would like to eat in. **Task 5** was usually well done.

On **Card 5**, the first two questions were answered well. The past time frame in **Task 3** caused problems for weaker candidates but most candidates were able to give a train destination and complete at least part of the

task successfully. **Task 4** was usually well done. **Task 5** was not always understood with some confusion over the meaning of *notre région* and weaker candidates could not give a reason.

Card 6 was generally approached well with nearly all candidates able to say how many ice creams they wanted. *Parfum* in **Task 2** was not understood by some candidates, although this is a question that could have been anticipated from the role play scenario. **Task 3** was usually well done. A simple opinion and justification were enough for 2 marks to be awarded for this task. **Task 4** was usually successful although a few candidates could not pronounce *la Tour Eiffel* correctly. **Task 5** was less successful as some candidates did not seem to understand *pays* and others made errors of time frame which led to ambiguity.

On **Card 7**, most tasks were done well. The main challenge was expressing a preference correctly in **Task 5** with some candidates choosing *écouter de la musique chez toi* but not being able to make the correct grammatical change and repeating *chez toi*, thus leading to ambiguity. However, most were able to give an appropriate reason so were able to complete the second part of the task successfully.

On **Card 8**, most candidates began well, but some found it difficult to give a place to meet at the airport in **Task 2**. Any place that could feasibly be found in an airport was acceptable. Some candidates did not recognise the past time frame in **Task 3** and gave answers indicating what they were going to buy in France during their holiday rather than what they had bought in preparation for their stay. It is important for candidates to bear in mind the context of the role play given in the scenario. Most candidates were able to respond successfully to both parts of **Task 4**, and **Task 5** was also generally well done.

Candidates made a good start on **Card 9** and were able to suggest a time and a place for the cycle ride. Some candidates did not recognise the need for a past time frame in **Task 3** and this led to some ambiguous answers. Some candidates could not give a reason for liking cycling in **Task 4**, possibly due to a lack of relevant vocabulary. Most candidates were able to state their preference for a picnic by a river or in a forest for **Task 5**, but only stronger candidates were able to express a clear reason for their choice.

Topic conversations

Examiners are reminded to introduce the topic area in French just before the start of each conversation. The first three topics were based on one of the sub-topics of Areas A and B as listed in the syllabus. The last four topics were taken from one of the sub-topics in Areas C, D or E of the syllabus. All these sub-topics were familiar to candidates and a full range of performance was seen with each conversation having its easier and more challenging questions. The first two questions on each conversation were closed and straightforward in nature and were set at an easier level to start off the conversation. They could be answered briefly and with factual language, although stronger candidates took the opportunity to give more developed responses containing relevant details. The time frame used in the first two questions was the present. The final three questions on each card were more open and required candidates to communicate relevantly in past and future time frames. Each topic conversation also gave candidates the opportunity to express opinions and develop where possible their reasons for their opinions.

Topic 1, *manger et boire*, was a familiar topic for most candidates. In **Question 1**, some candidates did not understand the interrogative *où* and instead talked about what they have for breakfast, therefore giving an irrelevant response. **Question 2** was usually well answered with more able candidates taking the opportunity to add some extra details mentioning, for example, who they have dinner with or an alternative dinner time at the weekend. The introduction to **Question 3**, *parle-moi de*, and the past participle of the verb *prendre* proved challenging for some candidates and the use of the alternative question was required. Weaker candidates had some difficulty using the appropriate time frame here. **Question 4** was generally approached well, and most candidates were able to express an opinion of fast-food. Stronger candidates were able to develop answers about the health risks of fast-food and use a very good range of health-related vocabulary. **Question 5** was the most challenging question on this topic. Only the stronger candidates were able to mention a special occasion to celebrate in a restaurant and the alternative question was often used. However, most candidates were able to say who they would like to eat their special meal with, with most mentioning family and friends.

Topic 2, *les amis*, was accessible to candidates. The first two questions were generally answered well, although some candidates used the verb *être* to express age rather than *avoir* in their response to **Question 2**. Stronger candidates were able to add some relevant extra detail such as *il a le même âge que moi*, taking the opportunity to develop their answer and demonstrate the use of a comparative structure. Most candidates were able to respond to **Question 3**, although the alternative question was needed for weaker candidates. Answers here ranged from the simple (e.g. *elle est intelligente, il aime jouer au foot*) to the more sophisticated with the mention of qualities such as *loyauté, honnêteté et générosité* or more

complex expressions such as *il me fait rire* or *elle a les mêmes goûts que moi.* The first part of **Question 4** was generally approached well, and most candidates were able to give some factual information about what they did with their friend during a weekend in the past. The second part of the question was not always as successful, and some candidates could not express why they found the weekend enjoyable. **Question 5** was challenging for some candidates and there was often some repetition of vocabulary from **Question 4**.

Topic 3, *le sport*, was a very familiar topic for candidates. In **Question 1**, some candidates did not understand the interrogative *où* and instead talked about the sports they usually do, therefore giving an irrelevant response. **Question 2** was generally well answered with stronger candidates adding details about when they do sport at school and when they do it in their own time. Most candidates were able to give some relevant information in response to **Question 3**, but weaker candidates struggled to use and maintain the correct time frame. **Question 4** on the importance of sport for young people was mainly understood but the reason given was not always as successful. Many candidates were able to give a simple statement of the health benefits e.g. *c'est bon pour la santé*. Stronger candidates referred to the socialising aspect of sport, the spirit of friendly competition and the benefits of being part of a team. **Question 5** was usually approached well in a future time frame, but some candidates did not realise the significance of *autre(s)* or *nouveau(x)* and mentioned sports already referred to earlier in the conversation, leading to ambiguity.

Topic 4, *le monde naturel et l'environnement*, was accessible to candidates and most were able to say where they live in response to **Question 1**. In **Question 2**, either *temps* was misunderstood as meaning time or candidates were unable to use weather expressions correctly leading to ambiguity. On **Question 3**, some did not understand the significance of *une excursion récente* and the alternative question was often necessary. Most candidates could give some element of response to **Question 4** and the stronger candidates were able to show knowledge of a very good range of vocabulary to discuss environmental issues. **Question 5** was mainly understood, although weaker candidates lacked the necessary vocabulary to express their ideas on how they might contribute to the protection of the planet in the future.

Topic 5, *l'environnement construit – les courses*, was approached well by candidates but in **Question 1** some misunderstood *les courses* for *les cours* and began talking about lessons at school and this question often had to be repeated. **Question 2** was generally well answered. On **Question 3**, some candidates were unable to give a type of shop for which to express a preference and therefore the alternative question was sometimes needed. Stronger candidates were able to develop their ideas well on this question and talked about their interest in fashion, sportswear or gadgets. **Question 4** was generally approached well, and most candidates were able to give some details of a trip to a shopping centre, although the past time frame was a challenge for the weaker candidates. **Question 5** was usually understood by most candidates, but some did not have sufficient vocabulary to discuss the merits of choosing to shop in town or online in the future. Stronger candidates were able to mention the advantages of being able to see, touch and try on clothes in shops while others preferred the practicalities and rapidity of online shopping.

Topic 6, *l'éducation,* was a familiar topic and most candidates were able to answer **Question 1** and **Question 2** well. On **Question 3**, candidates needed to talk about what they did in their lunch break the day before and most were able to give relevant information, although weaker candidates had difficulty using and maintaining the past time frame leading to ambiguity at times. **Question 4** was the most challenging question on this topic. Some candidates did not understand the meaning of *règlements scolaires* and others did not have the necessary vocabulary to express their ideas clearly. Stronger candidates were able to discuss the merits of strict or relaxed school rules and their thoughts on wearing school uniform or their school's mobile phone policy, for example. **Question 5** was usually answered reasonably well with most candidates able to give some indication of their future plans in terms of education and reasons for their choice.

Topic 7, *les pays, les nationalités et les langues*, was generally approached well by candidates. Most candidates were able to express their nationality correctly in answer to **Question 1** and were also able to say what languages they speak for **Question 2**. **Question 3** was generally understood, although weaker candidates sometimes struggled to use and maintain the past time frame in their answer about their last holidays. In **Question 4**, some candidates found it difficult to say why it is interesting to visit other countries. Stronger candidates were able to discuss the merits of discovering other cultures, meeting new people and trying new food, for example. **Question 5** was not always understood, perhaps due to the unfamiliarity of *étranger*, and the alternative question was often needed. Once the question was understood, most candidates were able to respond with relevant information in the correct time frame as they were able to pick up *voudrais + infinitive* from the question.