

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2011

FRENCH

GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Performance in the 2011 examination was comparable to that of 2010. Many candidates displayed fair to excellent levels of linguistic competence, spontaneity and grammatical accuracy. Nonetheless, there is still much room for improvement.

Teachers are again encouraged to continue exposing students to authentic samples of language from electronic and paper-based sources to stimulate real-life situations in which students may practise the target language. Teachers must continue their good work in engaging students in language learning by making it relevant, personal and meaningful.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprised two sections, assessed candidates' ability to (i) listen to and understand a number of items in the target language and (ii) read and understand a number of written items. Both sections required candidates to have a mastery of essential grammar as prescribed in the CSEC syllabus and vocabulary appropriate to this level of competence. The good performance here was comparable to that of previous years.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I – Directed Situations

This section assessed candidates' ability to respond in French to ten situations described in English and requiring written responses. All situations drew on functions/notions and settings and topics (see syllabus) that could be within the experience of a 16-year-old candidate.

The performance of candidates this year in this section of the examination was generally quite strong. The continued close relationship among the functions/notions of the syllabus, the settings, and the wording/requirements of each item, helped to facilitate this.

This year, several of the items were open-ended so as to afford all candidates ample opportunity to showcase their best work. Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 for example, should have allowed candidates at this level to choose from amongst a wide body of work, their best-prepared, appropriate responses (synthesis and application of knowledge). However, too often candidates seemed to be stymied by the very wide choice, falling back on a translation of what they would have wanted to say in English, rather than using what they already knew how to say in French.

SITUATION	FUNCTION/NOTION	SETTING/TOPIC
1	Introducing oneself	Online contact
2	Informing about something	Concert/Email to a friend
3	Expressing a request	Visit to France
4	Explaining	Principal's office/School
5	Interdiction	School library/Signs
6	Expressing disappointment	Visit to aunt/ Message left
7	Expressing request	Home/Note to relative
8	Apologizing/Expressing regret	Classroom/Note to teacher
9	Giving advice	Newspaper/Exams
10	Informing/Giving information	Airport/Arrival plans

Situation 1

This item was generally very well handled. Candidates were required to give two bits of personal information. They lost marks on this item for using the verb *être* instead of *avoir* to give their age. A surprising number of candidates misspelt *Je m'appelle*. However, the open-endedness of the item lent itself to a very wide range of correct responses. For example, *Je suis timide et j'aime jouer à l'ordinateur* gained full marks.

Situation 2

This item was also fairly well handled by candidates. They were asked to mention two aspects of a concert which their friend had not attended. Again, the range of possible answers was very wide. Difficulties here ranged from those related to tense, **Le concert est bien...* to those, as in the example, where the adverb *bien* was often substituted for the adjective *bon*. As a second element, candidates often mentioned an artiste — *Celine Dion a chanté très bien!* Some candidates, in trying to include the fact of the absence of their friend, (a non-essential) lost valuable marks — **Je manqué tu*. Although there were several instances of words being misspelt, for example, **superb*, **beaucoup de monde*, most candidates managed to give two pieces of information for full marks: *Le concert était fantastique et j'ai gagné un T-shirt!*

Situation 3

Two elements were required in the response to this item — two activities with the Conditional Tense, for example, *Je voudrais* + Infinitive/Future Tense/with Logical Future after the word *Quand*. Most candidates had no difficulty expressing two activities which they would have liked to take part in. Superior candidates exhibited reasonable cultural knowledge of France — *Je voudrais visiter Le Louvre et faire une promenade en bateau sur La Seine*. Difficulties encountered by candidates included misspellings — ** le tour Eiffel L'Ouvre*, omission of the infinitive after the auxiliary verb, incorrect preposition used with the geographical names *France* and *Paris* and no logical Future Tense after *quand* : **Quand je vais a France, je veux visité le muséum*. (cf. #6 use of the Future Tense).

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Situation 4

This item required candidates to provide two details of a specific task which they were required to do. Candidates who had mastered the subjunctive gave exemplary responses such as *Le principal veut que j'aille au concert samedi et que je chante et danse*. Many other candidates used other idioms/expressions to good effect; for example, *Je dois rester après les classes, aider les étudiants de seconde avec la physique./Il me demande de finir mes devoirs et de dire aux jeunes de ma classe d'aller à la bibliothèque*.

However, for many candidates this item presented the most difficulty. Many of them seemed not to have read the item carefully enough. Some candidates stated two completely different tasks, not two details of one task. Nevertheless, the examining committee awarded marks to such responses particularly if the tasks were related.

Training in reading the English cue and determining exactly what is required would be of benefit here.

Situation 5

Candidates were required to state two things users of the library should not do. This item was not well handled by candidates. A significant number of candidates were unable to render the interdiction **Non parlé et non mangé dans ici!* Noteworthy is the fact that the wording of the item was somewhat of a departure from other items of its type that were asked in the past, where the candidate would be asked to state what the sign(s) said. Therefore, candidates who wrote: *Silence!* could not attract marks since this did not constitute what users were not to do. Examples of full responses included the following: *Il est interdit/défendu de manger ou de boire dans la bibliothèque. On ne doit pas parler fort, ni laisser les livres partout/ Ils ne doivent pas/Il ne faut pas bavarder ou voler les livres!* If a second appropriate action was not mentioned, it was considered a partial response.

Situation 6

The two elements that candidates needed to consider were expressing disappointment and indicating how the visitor could contact his/her aunt again. Again, some candidates sought to include in their response, the non-essential of the aunt's absence, with poor results vis-à-vis their mark: **Je suis désappointé tu ne maison pas...*

Candidates found several effective ways of expressing their disappointment including *Je regrette/je suis désolé/déçue*. Many candidates then avoided the subjunctive by not mentioning the aunt's absence and simply moved on to how they would contact her again. Good mastery of the future tense was shown in many scripts: *Je reviendrai demain/je t'appellerai/voici mon numéro de portable*.

However, there were still many instances where poor mastery of the tense was evident, for example, **je serai appeler tu demain*, and where candidates did not seem to have the required vocabulary: ** je composerai tu!* The position of the object pronoun also provided evidence of lack of practice or mastery of this grammatical point.

Situation 7

The required elements of this item were a request and two tasks. Many candidates effectively used the familiar imperative in responding to this item and were well armed with the appropriate idioms for household chores — *Fais ton lit et range ta chambre!*

Difficulties were experienced with such as the spelling of ** vaisselle/vaissels*, and the gender of words as ** le lessive*. Since it was a Sunday, many candidates admonished ** Va à l'église!* The infinitive was accepted here as in a list of chores to be done.

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Situation 8

The two required elements of this item were an apology and an explanation of behaviour. It should be noted that candidates did not have to describe the behaviour to gain full marks, they only had to give a reason for the behaviour. Some candidates did not recognize this and so lost marks on a partial response. A response such as *Je suis désolé madame, j'étais malade* earned full marks. *Je suis désolé d'avoir parlé en classe* earned partial marks.

Situation 9

Candidates were required to provide two pieces of advice that a newspaper column would offer to students in preparing for exams. Many candidates ignored the fact that they were speaking to a larger audience and needed therefore to use *vous* in their response. The polite/plural imperative in the positive/negative was accepted here, as well as other generally inclusive idioms and expressions such as, *On ne doit pas/Il ne faut pas/Ne pas + infinitive*. A response such as *Travaillez fort et étudiez au moins quatre heures par jour*, earned full marks.

Situation 10

Candidates were required to provide two details about their planned arrival in Guadeloupe. Once again, a more careful reading of the item would have afforded candidates full marks. Many spoke in the past tense about their arrival in Guadeloupe, and their impressions of its climate and/or its people. Such responses attracted no mark as they were inappropriate. The details that candidates needed to mention included flight number, day and date of arrival, accompanying persons, even what the person would be wearing for identification purposes. The Future Tense verb was not necessary to gain full marks but candidates who inadvertently used the Passé Composé in the mistaken belief that they were using the present Continuous Tense were awarded a partial mark if the further response was appropriate: **Je suis arrivé lundi à huit heures du soir*.

Further Comments and Recommendations

- Candidates must read each situation carefully, paying close attention to what is required by the situation. (What, for example, is the function being tested? What vocabulary/idiom does the setting require?) It was obvious that those candidates who had been trained to accurately analyse and respond to the identified functions gained superior marks.
- Candidates must try to be concise in their answers as long, convoluted sentences result in the loss of marks.
- Candidates are reminded to number the situations as on the question paper, even if they answer the situations in random order.
- Candidates should not write each situation on a separate page.

The following are examples of responses contained in a good script.

1. *J'ai dix-sept ans et j'adore les sports.*
2. *Il y avait beaucoup de gens et *des chansons étaient sympathiques.*
3. *Je veux goûter la nourriture française et je veut aller au musée.*
4. *Je dois écrire un conte *d'honnête et je dois aller au laboratoire pour la retenue.*

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5. *Il est interdit de manger et **dans la bibliothèque.*
6. *Quel dommage! Je vais t'appeler bientôt.*
7. *N'oublie pas**préparer le déjeuner et **faire ton lit.*
8. *Je regrette, je ne pensais pas.*
9. *N'allez pas au lit trop tard et faites tous **devoirs.*
10. *Je vais arriver bientôt, je mets une robe rose et j'ai une valise noire.*

Section II – Letter/ Composition

This section assessed candidates' ability to produce a piece of French of about 130–150 words based on an outline given in English. Candidates had the choice of producing either a letter or a composition.

The responses in Section II ranged from excellent to poor. It must be noted that this year more candidates attempted the composition. Candidates' familiarity with the game of cricket might have been the reason for this fact.

In general, the problem of inaccuracy continued to be a source of concern. Few candidates seemed to have done a rough copy of their essay, and then revised, corrected and improved on it before submission. Teachers need to practise such techniques with their students.

Essay writing skills need also to be taught to students of Form 4 and Form 5 so that they are more aware of the features of a good essay such as:

- A balance in the length of the paragraphs. Most candidates write at length in Parts (i) and (ii) and very little in Parts (iii) and (iv).
- Use of connectives to improve the flow of the essay and its coherence (*alors, mais cependant...*). Most candidates write their answers in a 'stream of consciousness' mode, with long lists of nouns, and many sentences which consist only of subject, verb and object.
- Use of structures which are rewarded by markers: *inviter* + person + *à* (infinitive), *après avoir visité, passer* (time) *à* (infinitive) etc.

However, there was an improvement in the use of the correct format for letter headings and greetings, salutations and closure. There was also evidence that teachers had prepared their students well for opening and closing remarks in the letter, for example, *Je profite d'un instant de repos pour t'adresser ces quelques mots....* and *je dois terminer ma lettre, ma mère m'appelle pour faire la vaisselle.*

The problem of candidates writing too much was evident. Students and teachers must understand that markers do not score the essay beyond the 150 (170) word limit. Quantity does not replace quality.

Further Comments and Recommendations (Letter)

Candidates were generally unfamiliar with some of the essential vocabulary, notably *une bourse, une interview, poser sa candidature*. Therefore, some candidates sensibly substituted French words close in meaning to those required, *entretien, rendez-vous, réunion, offre, cadeau, un grand prix* (for scholarship). Less competent candidates supplied less successful renditions *l'homme de l'école, appliquer, attendre l'université, subscription* and *le bec* (for scholarship). Weak candidates resorted to English or Spanish *entrevista* or invented words *scholaire universitaire*.

It is noteworthy that the challenge of writing about a scholarship and interview without knowledge of the relevant vocabulary did not deter candidates from choosing this question. In many instances, candidates bypassed the problem in different ways, for example, *recevoir un coup de téléphone, bonnes nouvelles, recevoir éducation gratuite, rendez-vous avec le directeur*.

Candidates must be encouraged to practise the art of paraphrase and alternative renditions in their classroom exercises.

Part (iii) required the construction, *poser une question*, usually with an indirect object pronoun *me*. This was not well handled. In cases where direct speech was used, the formulation of questions was also poor and understandably, candidates had generally little knowledge of inversion after direct speech (*a-t-il dit*). Tense sequence was challenging.

In Part (iv), candidates often ignored the request to use the future tense "... preparations you will make for your trip...", and instead wrote in the past tense, losing the opportunity to introduce constructions relevant to writing about future time and intention.

Candidates generally made better attempts in this examination than in past examinations to use the correct letter format. There were very good opening remarks in the letters. However, some candidates wrote too much in the first paragraph with pre-learnt pleasantries. Pre-learnt sentences are not fully understood if used out of the correct context. Teachers must direct students on their use.

Further Comments and Recommendations (Composition)

As for the composition, the essential vocabulary for the game of cricket was often not known (*la batte, la balle, frapper la fenêtre, le carreau, casser*). Substitutions were *heurter, *tossier, *giflet la pelote, *batter, *concer, *dresser, *blesser, *abimer, *breker*....

However, candidates dealt quite well with the reaction of the victim of the incident and ways in which the victim could be reimbursed. This gave them the opportunity to use vocabulary well within their grasp (*laver le chien, nettoyer la maison, balayer, passer l'aspirateur, faire le ménage*).

Notwithstanding, there were still some direct translations from English which betrayed candidates' lack of understanding of parts of speech (*donner elle chien un lave, marcher le chien, il allait folle, elle est fou l'environ*).

As was the case for the letter, there were good attempts to introduce the story of the incident: *tout a commencé quand ...; mes amis et moi jouions au cricket quand ...* There were also well-chosen exclamations and some well-formulated commentaries on the role of friends in causing trouble. In the better scripts, Part (iv) was well developed — *Cette expérience m'a appris beaucoup de choses. J'ai appris que bien qu'on a le droit de s'amuser, on a aussi la responsabilité de prendre soin*.

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However, candidates expended most of their effort on recounting the cricket match with less development of the last two parts. Again, it was clear that candidates did not always understand how to use the idioms they had been taught, for example, *j'ai pris gout à ma voisine, au bout du monde* or used them without considering the tense required, *j'ai le fou rire* in past tense narrative.

Below is an example of a very good letter submitted by a candidate.

Basse Terre, le trois mai

Cher Jean Marc,

*Ca va ? *J'espère que tu vas bien. Je regrette de ne pas avoir écrit* *tôt. Je t'écris pour *dire –toi de* ma opportunité d'étudier en France.*

*Ma professeur me *donné un dépliant d'un* cour **Français pour deux années. J'étais excitée parce que j'ai eu la *plus bonne note* dans le français et aussi, j'ai l'intention de* pour suivre des études* superiere à l'université dans le domaine des langues modernes.*

*Au rendez-vous avec des professeurs du département ** français, nous avons parle de mes projets d'avenir et mes bonnes notes. Donc, j'étais heureuse parce que j'ai*reçu la opportunité d'étudier en France et je ne dois **payer.*

*Alors j'ai la opportunitè de perfectionner ma connaissance des langues et **apprendre la culture française. **Aura l'occasion de passer du temps avec les jeunes guadeloupéens et enfin je peux enseigner l'anglais pour gagner l'argent de poche.*

Avant je vais a la France, je dois organiser un appartement, la visa et ma valise. Je dois acheter beaucoup *des vêtements et **livres.*

Ecris moi vite.

Lesha.

CANDIDATES' RESPONSE	CORRECTIONS REQUIRED	CORRECT RESPONSE
<i>*èspere</i>	Incorrect position	Espère
<i>écrit** tôt</i>	Word missing	Plus
<i>*dire –toi</i>	Wrong verb and pronoun	Te parler
<i>*ma oppurtunité</i>	Pronoun and spelling	Mon opportunité
<i>me **donné</i>	Omission of auxillary verb.	M'a donné
<i>*cour **Français</i>	Spelling of cour, omission of “de” and capitalization of Français	cours de français
<i>*plus bonne</i>	Wrong term	meilleure
<i>*dans le</i>	Anglicism	en
<i>*pour suivre</i>	Should be one word	poursuivre
<i>*superiere</i>	Spelling error	supérieure
<i>** français</i>	Omissions	de la langue française
<i>*Recu</i>	Wrong verb/past participle	eu
<i>**payer</i>	Omission	rien
<i>**apprendre</i>	Omission	d'apprendre
<i>**aura</i>	Omission of subject	j'aura
<i>*je vais a la France</i>	Erroneous structure	d'aller en France
<i>*des</i>	No plural after beaucoup	de
<i>**livres.</i>	omission	de

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Below is an example of a very good composition submitted by a candidate.

*Le dimanche dernier le soleil brillait dans le ciel même si c'était la saison pluvieuse. *Don mon frère et moi, nous avons décidé de jouer au cricket dehors. C'était un bon match car nous sommes doués pour * *cricket* mais soudain *le ballon a frappé la fenêtre de notre voisin, Monsieur Lafayette.*

*Nous avons *écouté un *crier et l'homme, qui était en colère, nous **approche légèrement. Après avoir* nous grondé, il m'a dit que je* dois lui payer, même si je l'ai *cassé par hasard.*

J'ai dit à maman, « Puis-j'emprunter de ton argent pour lui payer ? » et à ma grande surprise elle n'est pas mise d'accord.*

*Donc, je dois laver la voiture de Monsieur Lafayette tous les jeudis. *J'ai la lavé deux fois déjà et c'est vraiment dur ! La prochaine fois, je jouerai au cricket au centre de loisirs !*

CANDIDATES' RESPONSE	CORRECTIONS REQUIRED	CORRECT RESPONSE
*Don	Spelling error	Donc
pour * *cricket	Omission of article	Le
*le ballon	Wrong noun	La balle
*écouté	Wrong past participle	Entendu
*crier	Noun and not verb to be used	Cri
approche légèrement	Omission of auxiliary verb and wrong adverb	A approché lentement
*avoir nous grondé	Wrong position of nous	nous avoir grondés
*que je dois	Wrong verb tense	que je devais
*cassé	Subject/verb agreement	cassée
*n'est pas mise	Wrong tense; wrong verb	n'était pas
*J'ai la lavé	Wrong tense	je la lave

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Section III – Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue

This section required candidates to respond in French (in about 80–100 words) to a set of cues in order to create a contextual announcement or to complete a contextual dialogue.

Candidates' responses to both options of this item indicated that they were better prepared this year to write either option. However, there was still evidence that candidates needed more practice in writing. It is recommended that teachers encourage students to apply, analyse and synthesize knowledge rather than recall and regurgitate set constructions which candidates believe must be included whether relevant to the question or not. This year there were more frequent instances of candidates scoring marks in the 'Very Good' and 'Excellent' categories. Nevertheless, candidates continued to be challenged by orthography and simple grammatical issues of the target language.

The contextual dialogue was the more popular choice of candidates. However, candidates must be made aware that the contextual dialogue demands comprehension of the words uttered by the interlocutor and a matching coherent production of French to create a fluent conversation and therefore demands a more skilful manipulation of the language by the candidate. The contextual announcement, on the other hand, required specific elements (time, date and place), and even weaker candidates tended to score points once these structures were mentioned in their attempt at the announcement. This does not mean, however, that candidates can simply reuse announcements that they had practised previously in class. Though they would have scored points for employing the aforementioned set structures, they could not score in the higher categories due to their failure to apply the relevant cues.

Recommendations for Teachers

- Instruct and train students to read the entire paper carefully and thoroughly before making the choice of Dialogue or Announcement.
- Instruct and train students to note all the details given in the question. They are relevant to the item and their inclusion improves the overall quality of the response.
- Train students to decide which form of address is relevant to the question.
- Develop exercises which would ensure that students become more careful with the spelling of necessary, frequently used and important phrases such as *s'il vous plait*, *qu'est-ce que*, *y a-t-il*, and months of the year.
- Expose students to those 'faux amis' like *attendre*.
- Continue to expose students to cultural experiences related to the teaching of the language.
- Use the World Wide Web as a resource to familiarize students with different aspects of the financial, geographical and socio-cultural experiences of Francophone countries.

Contextual Announcement

It was interesting to note that the announcements that were categorized as good to excellent tended to be based on the real-life experiences of the candidates. They drew from cultural experiences to which they were exposed in their five years of studying French. This should serve to encourage teachers to continue to expose students to experiences outside of the classroom that are still very much related to French and should be promoted as they deliver the curriculum. The contextual announcement promised its challenge with the word *postponed* (not a high frequency word at this level) being a key component.

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Although there was a fair share of Anglicism, there were instances of the use of *reporter*, *annuler*, *repousser*, while other candidates opted to successfully use *ne...plus*, *n'est pas... mais...* and the date as well as *au lieu de...* Although the Future Tense was generally correctly used, some candidates continued to have problems in accurately matching subject with verb endings. Candidates identified a variety of events that were postponed (sporting, social, cultural, academic, culinary), as well as the reasons (bad weather, another competing event, illness, death, examinations, lack of funds). In attempting to list three things for club members to do before the event, candidates encountered obvious challenges with the use of the Imperative, *devoir*, plus the Infinitive or Subjunctive. In this instance, candidates continued to be plagued by the inaccurate rendering of various French verb phrases. Candidates appeared not to understand what a 'follow-up' activity was, but they did manage to suggest some activity as well as a reason for it.

Contextual Dialogue

While most candidates who attempted the contextual dialogue scored in the satisfactory to good categories, there were many whose work was excellent. Although the cues listed encouraged candidates to attempt this option, certain utterances in French appeared beyond the comprehension of the average candidate at this level, *Je suis sûr qu'elle y arrivera* and to a lesser extent, *Nous n'avons pas d'accord avec eux*. Candidates encountered difficulty expressing a request, although the greeting was simple enough. As with the contextual announcement, the reason for this difficulty varied, but far too many candidates found it challenging to use the Passé Composé in its accurate form. They continued to have problems deciding whether the Passé Composé or the Imperfect Tense should be used. In addition, there was again difficulty with *devoir* followed by the Infinitive, as well as *avoir besoin de*. The rendering of "my sister's 21 birthday party" proved to be challenging for the majority of candidates, with some of them finding it difficult to accurately produce even *vingt et un*. Candidates also had difficulty deciding which object pronoun to use with *demander*, *appeler* or *téléphoner*. These errors detracted from the overall fluency of responses, and the conversation between the traveller and the agent did not, in some cases, develop logically and realistically.

It is recommended that teachers use technology available in schools to make experiences like overseas travel, which is alien to many students, familiar to them.

This dialogue gave candidates the opportunity to use sophisticated French constructions, and those with such skills did manage to do so superbly. *Ma sœur fête son anniversaire ce soir et je dois y être ; Il est possible que j'aïlle au vol sans payer car je vous ai payé la semaine dernière? ; Avez-vous un vol ce soir ? Il faut que j'aïlle à la Jamaïque pour l'anniversaire de ma sœur, and Qu'est-ce que je peux faire pour aller à la fête de ma sœur ce soir? Elle sera très triste*, are some examples of the more sophisticated structures.

The following are recommendations for candidates regarding the actual presentation of their scripts for the contextual announcement and the contextual dialogue.

- Use only the insert to write the responses for the contextual dialogue. Candidates must desist from rewriting the dialogue in their answer booklet.
- If a candidate has not opted to do the contextual dialogue, he/she should not attach the blank insert to his/ her answer booklet.
- Refrain from writing in pencil and super-imposing in pen as this practice reduces legibility of the script.
- Pay closer attention to the length of responses, especially with respect to the contextual dialogue. Some candidates write more than each response requires, thus reaching the word limit before completing half of the dialogue.

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Below is an example of an excellent announcement.

*Le club * langue français vous informe que la pique nique ne va plus commencer à huit heures car il y aura un examen a la heure même.*

Tous les membres doivent aller au jardin vers midi le jeudi qui vient. N'oubliez pas de choisir un plat français pour apporter au pique-nique.

Avant du pique-nique on peut aider a mettre la table et arranger les fleurs. Nous savons que des membres manqueront ce pique-nique car elles seront à la Martinique. Peut-être il y aura un autre pique nique quand elles sont retournées.

Venez en grand nombre au pique-nique! Nous vous souhaitons une bonne journée.

CANDIDATES RESPONSE	CORRECTIONS REQUIRED	CORRECT RESPONSE
Le club ** langue	Omission of de	Le club de langue
langue français	Langue is feminine	Langue française
**pique nique	Hypen missing	Pique-nique
<u>a la heure même</u>	Accent on a; wrong position of même	À la même heure
<u>du</u> pique-nique	Wrong article	Le pique-nique
<u>sont</u> retournées	Wrong tense	Seront retournées

Here is an example of an excellent dialogue.

L'Agent: Bonsoir Monsieur/Madame, puis-je vous aider?

Moi: *Bonsoir Monsieur, oui je suis ici pour mon vol 273.*

L'Agent: Mais Monsieur/Madame, cet avion est déjà parti; ça fait dix minutes!

Moi: *Non! Zut alors! Pour quand est-ce que le vol était **

L'Agent: Le vol était pour 14,30 et il est maintenant 14.50 pourquoi êtes-vous en retard?

Moi: *Oh! Il y avait beaucoup de circulation dans les rues.*

L'Agent: Je comprends votre situation Monsieur/Madame mais je ne peux rien faire pour vous!

Moi: *Maintenant, je serai en retard pour l'anniversaire de ma ** sœur! Est-ce qu'il y a un autre vol ce soir?*

L'Agent: Nous n'avons pas de vol ce soir mais l'autre compagnie a cote a un vol ce soir.

Moi: *Oh! Ce serait possible *changer de mon vol?*

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L'Agent: Non Madame, ce ne serait pas possible. Nous n'avons pas d'accord avec eux.

Moi: *Quelle dommage! Et moi, je portais le gâteau pour ma sœur...*

L'Agent: Demandez à votre sœur de repousser la fête à demain soir, nous avons un vol à six heures demain matin.

Moi: *Demain matin! Oui, je voudrais ce vol s'il vous plait. Je téléphonerai * *ma sœur maintenant.*

L'Agent: Je suis sûr qu'elle y arrivera!

Moi: *Oui ! Merci beaucoup Monsieur. Bon soir!*

L'Agent: Bon soir. Le vol partira à 6h du matin. Ne le ratez pas cette fois ci!

CANDIDATES' RESPONSE	CORRECTIONS REQUIRED	CORRECT RESPONSE
Pour <u>quand</u> * <i>changer de</i> <u>Quelle</u> dommage ** <i>ma sœur</i>	Wrong structure Wrong position of de Dommage is masculine Omission of a	Pour quelle heure De changer Quel dommage A ma soeur

Section IV – Reading Comprehension

This section assessed candidates' ability to read and comprehend a short passage in the target language. The questions on the passage and candidates' answers were in English.

The reading passage, 'The Maid', was within the capability of the average candidate. It was definitely within the experience of candidates at the CSEC level. Overall, most candidates performed satisfactorily, with a significant number of them scoring in the upper categories. Nonetheless, there were those candidates who misinterpreted the majority of the questions and scored less than half the allotted marks. This year, many more candidates than in recent years obtained perfect scores.

The passages used for testing comprehension are very concise texts that are generally between 130 and 150 words. There is therefore little room for redundancy with this restricted content. In classroom practice, students should be encouraged to identify the key words or elements in the questions as a preliminary strategy, before attempting to answer the questions. This might help them to read critically and arrive at a sound understanding of the text.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. What is the relationship of the narrator to Clarisse?

Although this item seemed simple, many candidates misinterpreted the relationship and gave responses such as 'husband' and 'wife' instead of 'cousin'.

An asterisk () indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure. Two asterisks (**) indicate an omission.*

2. What was the event and when did it take place?

Candidates did not pay attention to the fact that the event took place in the past and responded in the present or future. They also expressed ‘last week’ as ‘the last week’, ‘the last week of the month’, ‘weekend’, and ‘last Saturday’. Many candidates only responded to the first part of the question.

3. Where did the event take place?

Candidates were able to identify part of the response correctly but were not specific enough. Responses included ‘at the house’, ‘at home’, ‘at a house’, instead of ‘at the couple’s house’ or ‘at the home/house of the couple who got married’.

4. List the three activities that took place at the weekend.

Many candidates were able to identify the three activities which took place. However, many of them mentioned those areas in an awkward manner; for example, ‘good food for eating; popping champagne for drinking; dancing competition for dancing’.

5. Where did the couple spend the weekend?

While most candidates were able to recognize the response to this question, they were unable to state all three components of the response. *Quatre étoiles* became ‘four seasons’, ‘four storeys’, ‘four miles’, ‘four blocks’, while *sur la côte* became ‘by the side’ or even ‘at their cost’.

6. Who is Mathilde?

Generally, the majority of candidates were able to respond correctly to this question. However, there were other candidates who gave responses such as ‘bridesmaid’, ‘maid of the hotel’ or ‘maid of honour’.

7. Why does Mathilde apologize to the couple?

Candidates captured the disturbance element of the response but many of them failed to include the honeymoon detail.

8. What is Mathilde’s problem?

This question was not generally well handled. The terms *sacs poubelle* and *en train de* posed comprehension problems for candidates and many of them substituted words which suggested luggage or bags in general on a train. Candidates gave responses such as ‘She was training to clean’ or ‘She was on a train with the luggage’. While others captured the term garbage bags, the idea of there not being enough of them was lost.

9. Why is the gentleman puzzled?

This question was generally very well handled.

10. In light of this incident, how do you assess the maid’s judgement? Justify your response.

This item proved to be the most challenging for candidates. Candidates did not know how to assess the maid’s judgement and so gave answers such as ‘the maid was guilty’, ‘anyone can make mistakes’, ‘she was a good maid’ and ‘she was right to inform the couple’. Some candidates lost focus. Instead of concentrating on the maid’s folly in the passage, they spoke about the disturbance of the couple at such a time.

Here is an example of an excellent response submitted by a candidate.

1. Clarisse is the narrator's cousin.
2. The event was a wedding and reception and it occurred last week.
3. The event was at Clarisse's house.
4. They ate, drank champagne and danced.
5. They spent their honeymoon at a four star hotel on the coast.
6. Mathilde is their maid.
7. She apologizes for disturbing them on their honeymoon.
8. She was in the process of cleaning the house when she realized that she needed more bags.
9. He is sure that he had left enough bags at the house.
10. Her judgement was not very good as she could have deflated the balloons and would have extra space in the bags for other things.

Recommendations

- Candidates are encouraged to read the title of the passage so as to get a general idea of what the passage entails.
- Teachers must insist that their students read the passage more than once for the general sense and not just look for responses in the passage.
- Candidates must note the marks allotted to a question which would indicate to them the number of necessary elements required in their response.
- Teachers must constantly remind students to follow the instructions to answer in English and refrain from translating directly from the passage. Responses should be read over to ensure that they make sense in English and does not distort what is written.
- Teachers should continue to emphasize/drill students in analytical skills and expose students to a wide and varied vocabulary.
- Students should be warned to respond more concisely and to the point in order to avoid distorting their responses.
- Candidates should refrain from offering a choice of responses as this will be detrimental to their performance. For example, 'Mathilde is a housemaid/receptionist'.
- Teachers must encourage students to present work that is as neat and legible as possible.

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Paper 03 – Oral Examination

This paper assessed candidates' ability to (i) produce appropriate responses in the target language in a number of situations; (ii) read aloud a short passage in the target language; and (iii) respond in the target language to general questions based on four out of six topics indicated in the syllabus. An attempt was made to link the theme of the reading passage with the general questions in order to create a more natural flow from one task to another.

Performance in the oral examination ranged from excellent to poor, with a number of candidates scoring full marks on this paper. Again, the comments made by oral examiners suggested that candidates' performance was a reflection of their ease and familiarity with the target language and an indication of their level of readiness for the examination. Nonetheless, there is cause for concern when oral examiners state that there are many candidates who are unable to perform even the simplest of tasks in the foreign language. Every effort must be made by teachers to ensure that students are adequately prepared to perform the simplest of tasks in the oral component of the language.

Responses to Situations

Generally, candidates performed creditably in this section of the examination. Where there were concerns they were quite specific as they pertained to specific vocabulary — *poisson d'avril*, *être au régime*, *to borrow* and functions such as giving the date and time. All the same, there is concern with the level of grammar of candidates who did not perform well.

Some common errors encountered were the use of *il est beau* (with respect to the weather); *Le vingt de avril* and *Je visite mes grand parents...*

There was also evidence of difficulty in constructing situations properly and the appropriate placement of verbs in questions.

Reading Passage

Many candidates demonstrated a high level of comfort and familiarity with the target language. However, oral examiners found that while some candidates read fluently, with mostly correct pronunciation, good expression and suitable intonation, there were many candidates who did not seem to understand what they were reading. Additionally, examiners commented on (a) the mispronunciation of the ending of verb forms in the third person plural, (b) the lack of liaisons in places where necessary and (c) the anglicization of certain French words.

Teachers must make a concerted effort to familiarize students with the French alphabet, supply them with the basic rules of pronunciation and teach them to use their dictionaries as a resource for pronunciation.

Conversation

As in previous years, the performance by candidates ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. Some candidates were able to answer questions asked with great spontaneity and correctness of expression, while for others repetition was required in order for them to grasp some form of understanding of the questions. Weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary were identified. Some candidates experienced difficulty in understanding certain questions, for example, *Où se trouve...*, *Parle-moi...*, *Décris...*, *Combien coûte...*. These are basic forms of questions and should not have posed problems at this level. There is therefore need for much training of students on the part of teachers.

Further Comments on the Oral Examination

Students must be helped to understand that their participation in the oral examination is a natural progression from the kind of oral activities in which they had engaged upon entry to secondary school. Students could be trained to expand on their responses to make the conversation as normal or natural as possible.