External Assessment Report 2012   Higher French

General comments

- Number of presentations has increased to 4,688.
- Content of examination was of an appropriate level of difficulty.
- Each element was accessible, but proved demanding and produced good range of performances.
- Listening text challenging for many candidates.
- Candidates generally well prepared with very few really poor performances.
- Average speaking mark was 21.3/25

Candidate performance and Advice to Centres

Candidate performance in Reading/Translation
- Average mark 27.9 /45
- Performance overall encouraging, with some excellent performances in Paper 1. Less evidence of word-for-word translation that resulted in the loss of marks through awkward use of English. Few poor performances.
- Detail required in Question 1 posed difficulties. 'des centaines' was translated as 'certain' and 'une longue journée' as 'a long journey'. Some failed to recognise 'au spectacle' and 'leur anniversaire', and promouvoir des savons was badly translated because of poor use of dictionary.
- Most candidates performed well in the translation section but there is still a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles (tous les enfants), subject pronouns (elle/ils), singular/plural nouns (les mêmes passions) and verb tenses. The first sense unit (Donc, chaque mois, elle part avec l'un d'eux) was the most demanding. Many candidates translated 'part' as share.
  'l'un d'eux'; 'pour lui offrir'; 'nous dit-elle'. were only well done by most able candidates

Advice to centres
- Highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate and precise translation of a particular section of the text.
- Encourage candidates to do translation **after** the reading comprehension questions as that should make the context clear
- Discourage word for word translation of the text as a response to the reading comprehension questions, as this often results in incomprehensible use of English.
- Encourage candidates to look closely at each word in each section of the translation passage and to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Candidate performance in Listening
- Average mark 15.8/30
- Listening is skill most candidates find most difficult, as writing element in Paper 2 satisfactory..
- Good variety of straightforward and more demanding questions. Most candidates gained points in questions 2, 3 and 4. More able candidates coped well with questions 1a/b and 6a/b, which required more detailed responses.
- Some candidates failed to recognise à 15 heures trente; améliorer, bavarder, grignoter, se débrouiller; le déjeuner, des sports d'équipe.
- Many candidates understood part of information, but did not give sufficient detail in answers (toutes sortes de clubs; moins de devoirs; l'accent écossais; gens de mon âge).

Advice to centres
- Encourage candidates to make use of the questions to anticipate information they will need to extract from text
- Encourage candidates to give as much detail as possible in their answers and paying careful attention to numbers, prepositions and question words.

Candidate performance in Directed Writing/Writing
- Both of the writing tasks proved challenging but accessible for most candidates. They were required to select, manipulate and recombine learned material appropriate to the specific tasks. These tasks produced the greatest range of performances - very good to very poor.
- In Directed Writing, some candidates struggled to incorporate learned material with the required level of accuracy and relevance to achieve a satisfactory performance. A small number of candidates produced poor and very poor performances showing little or no control of basic grammar and verb formation and with serious misuse of dictionary.
- In the Directed Writing the vast majority of candidates addressed all 6 bullet points. Only most able were able to develop bullet point 3 (what you had to do in your work experience) and 6 (if you would now consider working abroad when you are older).
- Relatively few candidates were penalised for avoiding a bullet point, but some failed to address both parts of bullet points 1 and 2. There was some confusion between 'rester' and 'loger' and 'voyage' and 'journée'.
- In Paper 2, there were few instances of candidates struggling for ideas.Candidates seemed well prepared to deal with both parts of the stimulus (aimez-vous passer du temps avec les copains / quelles sont les qualities d'un(e) bon(ne) ami(e)).
- Many candidates performed less well because of poor grammatical knowledge of genders and verb tenses, and poor spelling and omission of accents
- Very able candidates produced well-structured, accurate pieces of writing showing excellent range and variety of language structures

Advice to centres

- In Directed Writing, encourage candidates to write to the context set and to be prepared in some part of their writing to **explain** the reason for the visit to or from France.
- Candidates should consider the wording of each bullet point carefully, and to ensure that they incorporate learned material that is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
- Candidates should use the dictionary to check the accuracy of spelling, genders etc, but **not** to create and invent new sentences.
- Share the expanded assessment criteria for Writing with candidates so that they know what is expected in terms of Content, Accuracy, Range and Variety
- In Paper 2, ensure candidates read the stimulus and incorporate and adapt learned material that is **relevant** to the aspects contained in the stimulus.

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