

General comments

Practical examination

Twenty candidates achieved the maximum score of 100%. It was pleasing to see many candidates who were well-prepared and used complex language and extension in their answers. All candidates seemed familiar with the process of the examination. Most markers purposefully used different tenses in their questions to elicit a range of responses. Most candidates could speak about every topic and could respond to the questions asked. On occasion, many candidates spoke too softly and this made it difficult, especially for the second marker, to hear them.

Advice for candidates

- You should study the practical (oral) marking key carefully to ensure that you know the differences in performance for the marks allocated within each criterion.
- Take a pen into the preparation room.
- Know the marker script and format provided in the practical requirements document as it will be used in the practical examination.
- Prepare your stimulus item so you will be able to talk about it in detail and anticipate likely questions.
- Be aware of such common errors as *beaucoup des*; the mispronunciation of *l'alcool* and *les jeunes/les gens, la guerre/la gare*, so as to avoid making them. Be careful of pronunciation and omitting the auxiliary verb (e.g. *je regardé*).
- Adjectival agreements need work – *les vacances* are feminine plural, so it is important to hear the feminine ending of *prochaines* and *dernières* for example.
- Practise pronunciation, especially to avoid anglicising words.
- Ensure that the negative: *ne ... pas/plus* goes around the verb.
- Use the full range of tenses in the syllabus, including subjunctives.
- Respond to questions about the future using the future tense.
- If the marker asks a *si* clause question, that marker is expecting a response in the imperfect/conditional.
- Use a range of opinion expressions and avoid using: *je dirais que, je ne sais pas*.
- Many candidates are not answering questions in depth, preferring to give short answers. This will bring the marks down in the response section. Even if a closed question is asked, be prepared to answer at length.
- Listen carefully to the question and take a little extra time before rushing in with a response.
- Know your verb tenses.
- Speak fairly slowly, clearly and loudly so that both markers can hear what is being said.

Advice for teachers

- Practise school based orals using the marker script and marking keys, so that students know what to expect in the ATAR Practical (oral) examination.
- Ensure that your students know they will be asked open-ended questions and to prepare for this. Explain that while they do need to expand, if it is clear that they are purely reciting from memory rather than engaging in a conversation, it is likely that they will be interrupted.
- Ensure that in the topics relating to the *French-speaking communities*, students do not refer to other countries. Therefore, for *Migrant experiences*, a personal experience of migrating to Australia or from Syria is not part of the topic.
- Remind students not to wear anything that can identify them with their school.

Written examination

The examination was well-balanced and of an appropriate standard. The questions provided a wide range of opportunities for candidates to show their comprehension of the language as well as to express their opinions on a range of topics drawn from the syllabus.

The top candidates really stood out, with the questions catering for a range of ability and the paper allowing for discrimination and differentiation. There was a good balance between both units in all three sections, with a bigger emphasis than in previous years being placed on the role of the media in the modern world, its importance and its influence in the lives of young people, which fits perfectly in this topic's learning context of *The changing world*.

Although some candidates failed to complete the whole paper, the clear majority appeared to have adequate time to answer the questions in all sections. In fact, many candidates tended to write more than the required number of words in the written communication section, hence necessitating the use of the supplementary pages provided at the back of the booklet. This occasionally posed a problem when marking, particularly if the candidate did not number the continuation of the question accurately.

It was apparent from a number of responses in the written section that some candidates had spent too much time on other parts of the paper. Many candidates wrote lengthy answers in the reading section, translating literally whole paragraphs into English without always interpreting, which made marking difficult at times because of poor English expression; thus making it hard to determine whether the text had been fully understood. It is important for candidates to take the time to review their answers and make sure their answers in English are coherent, and for teachers to instruct them on how to answer questions in succinct English. The examination was testing comprehension and literal translations do not demonstrate understanding. Handwriting is becoming an issue and should be noted as it was sometimes impossible to decipher.

In terms of text type and sequencing, most candidates attempted to address and use the key conventions of the text type. However, this was not always the case. In particular, in Question 29 the conventions of writing a formal letter in French were not widely observed.

As noted in the past, grammatical accuracy, including syntax and spelling, continues to be the greatest challenge to many of the candidates and is, therefore, a means of discriminating among them. Particular attention should be paid to verb tenses and use of direct and indirect object pronouns which were generally not well known or used. In the reading and listening sections, some common words were not well-known. Students are encouraged to read widely and build up their general vocabulary base beyond each individual topic.

Advice for candidates

- Use the reading time efficiently to make sure you plan and allocate the correct time to each section.
- Work on writing clear, concise English in listening and reading responses.
- Avoid translating chunks of text literally.
- Always look at the mark allocation for each question carefully in listening and reading.
- Avoid using chunks of memorised answers in the written response in the hope that they will fit the question.
- Pay very careful attention to the content required in written responses, and give equal importance to all dot points.
- Use the information provided in the stimulus fully and refer to it very clearly in your answer.

- Try to show some originality and imagination in your answers so that you stand out from the crowd. From a marker's perspective, it is always refreshing to read something a bit different.
- Read the marking keys for previous years carefully so that you know what markers are looking for in your answers and how you can maximise your marks.

Advice for teachers

- Encourage and train your students to use succinct English in their listening and reading responses and avoid clumsy literal translations.
- Spend some class time on *faux amis* (false cognates) — especially on those most commonly encountered in French ATAR contexts and topics.
- Have your students practise answering written questions in the correct amount of words – there is little or no gain in going way over the word count and often it is detrimental as it usually indicates a rambling, repetitive response.
- Have your students practise and model written answers that are structured and sequenced clearly.
- Spend time building up students' vocabulary base beyond the individual topic so that common words are easily understood.
- Encourage students to show some originality and imagination in written responses.
- Teach students how to make effective use of their dictionaries.
- Encourage students to make full use of the initial reading time, and to continue reading all questions carefully throughout the examination.
- Make tenses a focus and encourage students to use the full range of tenses in their written responses.
- Provide guidance and training on how to make effective use of the information provided in stimulus questions. Most candidates did not relate answers 'strongly to the stimulus' as outlined in the marking key.
- Spend class time going through previous marking keys to help students understand what is required.
- Be fully familiar with the learning contexts and their related topics. There are still some candidates who referred to immigration from non-French-speaking countries in written responses.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Practical examination

Part B: Discussion of stimulus (20 Marks)

Most candidates seemed well-prepared this year. There was evidence of some excellent teaching. The markers followed the marker script explicitly and candidates were aware of the process. The majority of candidates showed a good-to-excellent knowledge of the course content. Some were very well-prepared and demonstrated not only competent language skills, but a thorough knowledge of the subject being discussed. All candidates attempted this section. All candidates presented a stimulus related in some way to one or more of the ATAR Unit 3 or Unit 4 contexts.

It is pleasing to note that most candidates were generally only adding a conclusion or a pertinent point at the end of their stimulus when asked, rather than just reciting all of the things that they did not get to say, which is not helpful to them. They should note that there are only a few seconds here before the examiner will move on to the conversation.

Part C: Conversation (20 Marks)

A few candidates were confused about the correct contexts for their topics. *Migrant experiences* refers to the accounts of French speaking migrants to and from French-speaking communities and *Film and music* refers to French-speaking communities. *Technology and me* is about the individual. The topics in *Youth issues* are stress, drugs and alcohol. There is a large range of understanding as to what *In the media* is about. This topic refers to the impact of media on the global community. Questions such as: *Quel rôle joue la technologie dans les médias de nos jours? Comment est-ce que les médias influencent les jeunes/la communauté globale?* are all relevant to this topic.

In both the stimulus and the conversation it is important that candidates are fully prepared to participate in a conversation. Those who recite memorised text will not score as highly as those who can hold a free-flowing conversation with the marker. The marker aims to ensure that they are sharing a conversation and not just reeling off a series of questions as in an interview.

Candidates ranged from those having excellent knowledge of each topic area to those who could not articulate anything beyond their rehearsed speech.

Written examination

Section One Response: Listening (42 Marks)

Performance in the listening section was better than in recent years. There was a good range of question types and most candidates were able to attempt all questions.

Section Two Response: Viewing and reading (72 Marks)

The main issue in this section was poor expression in English and a tendency to translate chunks of text literally in the longer answers. Most candidates were able to attempt all questions. While some texts were more challenging, there was a good range of question types catering to all levels of ability.

Section Three: Written communication Part A: Stimulus response (20 Marks)

Candidates did not use the details and information provided in the stimulus fully in their responses. The stimulus information is there for a reason and to gain top marks for content candidates must use it effectively.

Section Three: Written communication Part B: Extended response (20 Marks)

In general, responses lacked originality and imagination, with many candidates relying on pre-learnt chunks of texts without reworking them to really address the question. In this section the top candidates really stood out.