

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

MAY/JUNE 2005

FRENCH

FRENCH
GENERAL AND BASIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS
MAY/JUNE 2005

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, comprising two sections, tested candidates' ability to listen to and understand a number of aural items in the target language and to read and understand a number of written items. Both sections require candidates to have sufficient mastery of essential grammar and vocabulary. The good performance at both the General and Basic Proficiencies levels was comparable to the performance in previous years.

DETAILED COMMENTS

General Proficiency

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I – Directed Situations

This section tested candidates' ability to respond in French to a series of situations described in English and requiring written responses.

The majority of candidates attempted to answer most of the questions. Even the weaker candidates were therefore able to gain between 5 and 9 marks, as a result. Many candidates scored between 13 and 16 marks. The top-scoring candidates gained between 21 and 25 marks.

All the situations drew on functions/notions and settings and topics (see the syllabus) that could be within the experience of a 16-year-old candidate. Five of the directed situations were common to the Basic and General Proficiencies, while five were addressed solely to the General Proficiency candidate.

Points to watch:

- Candidates must read each situation carefully paying close attention to what is required by the situation.
- Candidates are reminded to number the situations as on the question paper, even if they answer the situations in random order.
- Candidates are **STRONGLY ADVISED** to desist from writing each situation on a new page.

The following table represents a graphic description of the functions/notions as they relate to the settings and topics for each situation.

SITUATION	FUNCTION/NOTION	SETTING & TOPIC
1	Polite request	Home
2	Expressing regret at declining an invitation and giving an explanation for the refusal	School/home
3	Making a request; expressing hobbies	Letter/email to a French magazine
4	Forbidding something	Notice in a public place
5	Telling someone to do something	Text message
6	Expressing a price reduction	Advertisement in a store
7	Expressing absence and illness	School
8	Asking which + future	Letter/email to a pen pal
9	Asking how many + past	Survey in a music store
10	Explaining the reason behind an unfinished	Home

Situation 1

Candidates were expected to supply two elements in their answer: one expressing the request, the second stating the item to be bought. Many candidates were able to express a request appropriately, even using the subjunctive in some cases, for example, “*Je veux que tu m’achètes....*”. There were still far too many instances of candidates misspelling *maman*. Another fairly common error was the use of *vous* with a family member. This problem also surfaced in item 5. On the whole, most candidates earned some marks for a fully or partially correct answer.

Situation 2

Candidates were expected to supply two elements – the refusal and the explanation. While most candidates had no difficulty in expressing regret, choosing *désolé; je regrette*, for example, some students used *pardon*, which was inappropriate in this context. Candidates also need to be reminded that *visiter* and *rendre visite à* are not interchangeable. Despite these errors, this item was well handled by the majority of candidates. Answers such as “*J’aimerais aller au cinéma avec toi, mais malheureusement je dois faire mes devoirs*” were produced by very proficient candidates.

Situation 3

In this item, candidates were expected to write seeking a pen pal with a certain (named) hobby. Some candidates performed poorly on this item because they a) wrongly interpreted ‘for’ to mean ‘on behalf of’ or b) wrote stating **their** hobby instead of the hobby they wished the pen pal to engage in. Surprisingly, some candidates had difficulty expressing hobbies although this is a notion which is very commonly treated in language at this level. Candidates who had no difficulty in understanding what was required in this item managed to request a pen pal and the hobby practised by the potential pen pal in many creative ways. The use of the telegraphic style as in the following answer was quite appropriate: *Jeune garçon de seize ans veut correspondre avec jeune fille qui aime aller au cinéma.*

Situation 4

Many candidates were very comfortable expressing interdiction or prohibition. The more proficient candidates produced statements beginning “*Défense de/Interdit de/Il est défendu/interdit de*”, i.e. statements that were more appropriate in the context of a sign than a simple negative command. Students must be given a fair amount of practice in producing the grammar required, so that answers like, “*Défense de manger dans le magasin!*” would be effortlessly produced by the majority of candidates. *Magasin* was misspelt by quite a number of candidates.

Situation 5

Candidates produced many interesting answers in response to this stimulus. Although some candidates did not include a word meaning urgently or immediately, their answers contained an element suggesting why urgent action was required e.g. that they needed an item for a project or a test the following day; or before a shop/ the bank/the post-office closed; or because someone was ill and so on. A number of candidates overgeneralized the spelling of *maman* and modelled the spelling of *papa* on the spelling of *maman*. The following answer which received full marks was indicative of the creative answers given, “*Papa, maman a dit que tu dois faire les achats pour ce soir pour le dîner.*”

Situation 6

In this situation some candidates lost marks because they did not read the item carefully or did not know the difference between ‘on sale’ and ‘for sale’. But it was pleasing to note the large number of candidates who produced *solde* and *en promotion*, or other expressions conveying that a price reduction was in effect. These candidates demonstrated their familiarity with the language commonly found in shopping contexts. “*Solde sur les jupes*” was concise and appropriate and received full marks.

Situation 7

This situation was nonproblematic for most candidates who managed to produce a wide range of reasons to explain their teacher’s absence on grounds of illness. However, it was somewhat unsettling to see the number of candidates who were unable to spell *professeur*. Students must be taught the right abbreviations for *monsieur* (M.), *madame* (Mme) and *mademoiselle* (Mlle) and be reminded that unlike the English rule of placing a full-stop or period after abbreviations, this is not always the case in French. Neither the abbreviated form of *madame* or *mademoiselle*, for example, is followed by a full-stop. The following answer produced by a more proficient candidate attracted a small penalty because of the lack of noun/adjective agreement, “*Madame Dupont sera *absent aujourd’hui parce qu’elle a attrapé un rhume.*” But most candidates obtained full marks with fairly straightforward answers like the following, “*Madame Rousseau n’est pas ici parce qu’elle est malade.*”

Situation 8

Situations 8 and 9 underscored a point made by the oral examiners who noted that far too many candidates were unable to respond appropriately to question words. Candidates are unable to distinguish *combien* from *comment*, *quand* from *quel* . . . Teachers can help students to internalise the use of *quel*, by drilling the more familiar *Quelle heure/quel temps/quel âge*. But students must understand their responsibility to learn common vocabulary items like *matière*. Upon completion of the 16+ syllabus, every candidate should be able to speak confidently about the subjects they do, those they like or do not like. While many candidates were able to pose the required question to their penfriends, too many were hampered by a lack of appropriate vocabulary and their inability to use the future tense with confidence. A trend was also noted in the use of the conditional in contexts requiring the future. An accurate answer was, “*Quelles matières vas-tu faire l’année prochaine?*”

Situation 9

As in situation 8, the question form was problematic for some candidates. Many, however, produced the two elements required a) How many + item? b) notions of past (tense plus expression of time). The two most common errors were the use of the full partitive after combien – *Combien *des CD...* instead of *Combien de CD...* and the lack of agreement with the preceding direct object “*..as-tu *acheté l’année dernière?*” instead of *as-tu achetés l’année dernière?*”

Situation 10

Performance on this item was good except in those cases where candidates did not include an element to express that a chore was incomplete. A good response was the following, “*Je n’ai pas fini le ménage parce que je devais donner un coup de main à Verena.*” The candidate who said, “*Maman, je suis parti aider mon ami et je finirai * travail ce soir*” fully conveyed the idea of an incomplete task and thus was only penalised for the missing article before *travail*.

Section II – Letter/Dialogue/Composition

This section tested candidates’ ability to produce a piece of French of about 130-150 words based on an outline given in English.

The answers in Section II ranged from excellent to very poor. On a positive note there seemed to be fewer ‘no responses’ in this year’s scripts. Nonetheless, there continues to be a number of candidates who are unable to produce more than a few inaccurate sentences, demonstrating that they are clearly not up to the demands of this item.

This year’s candidates chose to do the letter, dialogue and composition in approximately equal numbers. Quite a number of the more proficient candidates selected the dialogue, contrary to the usual trend of the more proficient candidates choosing the letter or composition and the less proficient candidates choosing the dialogue.

Each selection required candidates to produce vocabulary appropriate to the situation described. It was evident that some candidates tried to use chunks of language that they had committed to memory. This was a good strategy when used by more proficient candidates, but in the case of less proficient candidates this strategy sometimes backfired since the words and expressions had little relevance to the topic selected. Similarly it has been noted that candidates produce a string of names of places to insert in their writing – a good strategy when used appropriately, but a poor one when afflicted by incorrect spelling or inappropriate context, such as the candidate who was delighted by the churches he or she visited in China!

While there was the usual overreliance on translation for unknown vocabulary items or expressions, resulting in corruptions like **le cadeau trip* and **l’école travaille*, the following examples demonstrate the level of language produced by some candidates:

- Ce qui a fait éclater de rire les autres...
- Pourquoi est-il tellement important?
- A mi-chemin, quelque chose d’horrible s’est passé...
- Il m’est arrivé quelque chose de magnifique...
- Je me suis amusé tant que je pense mettre de l’argent à côté afin de visiter la France l’année prochaine.

Candidates also needed to have good control of essential grammar, for example, sufficient mastery of the present, past tenses, and the future. As has been noted in the past, structures that are considered to be well within the competence of the 16+ candidate were not always well handled. Weak areas included agreements

(subject-verb, noun-adjective), the position of object pronouns, the negative, word orders and the frequent omission of the auxiliary in the *passé composé*. The very best candidates excelled not only in the range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions they produced, but also impressed with their sophisticated handling of tense, voice and syntax in general.

Points to watch:

- **Candidates must be reminded to obey the limit of 130-150 words.** This warning needs to be addressed to all candidates, more and less proficient, since the practice of going beyond the word limit is very widespread. It is important that candidates plan their answers, making sure to pay attention to the outline given, and above all, making sure not to exceed the stipulated number of words. When candidates do not obey the word limit, they often have little time or space to develop the last element of their selection, within the 130-150 word limit. The candidate who only develops three out of the four elements given is therefore penalized.
- Candidates need to develop the habit of proofreading their written work. Frequent spelling errors and omissions may be avoided with just a little more care.
- Candidates must bear in mind the most common mistakes found at this level and try very hard to eliminate them from their writing.

Comments on each option

Letter

The letter was handled fairly well by most of the candidates who chose this option. Many candidates tried to include all four elements of the rubric producing adequately developed, balanced letters. Most candidates produced the correct date and address including all six elements required, e.g. Kingstown, le 2 septembre 2005. There was also a good attempt by many candidates to produce appropriate beginnings and endings. Many candidates are to be commended for their use of a wider range of appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic expressions.

Dialogue

As stated earlier there were quite a number of good dialogues this year. There is still a tendency among the less proficient candidates to spend too much time, i.e. use too many words, on greetings between the two speakers. Another trend noted this year was the use of an introduction to the dialogue. Teachers should advise students against this since any introduction is included in the word count. Some candidates presented the dialogue in the form of a composition and thereby attracted a penalty.

Composition

Although all three options were fairly evenly distributed among the candidates, the composition proved to be the most popular option this year. Many candidates were able to produce a fairly wide range of vocabulary and structures in their compositions.

The following is an example of an excellent letter:

Ste. Anne, le 5 septembre

*Chèr Jean-Paul,

Quoi de neuf? J'espère que tu as passé *des bonnes vacances d'été. Moi, je me suis beaucoup amusée. Je viens de retourner d'un voyage super à la *Republique Dominicaine que j'ai gagné. Un samedi après-midi je cherchais une jupe dans un magasin quand un homme m'a dit <<*Félicitations! Vous êtes la quinzième cliente et vous avez gagné un voyage à la *Republique Dominicaine!>>

Le vol était assez long, mais très confortable. Je suis restée cinq jours dans un hôtel de luxe et pendant mon séjour j'ai fait du tourisme dans la capitale, j'ai joué au beach-volley et je *suis montée Pico Duarte, la plus grande montagne *dans la Caraïbe. A Pico Duarte, j'ai essayé de parler en espagnol avec un homme aux beaux yeux marron, mais je ne *savait aucun mot d'espagnol!

*Dans le *futur, je voudrais y retourner pour faire des études universitaires, mais d'abord je dois faire quelques cours d'espagnol!

Amitiés,
Sophie

Section III - Reading Comprehension

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

The passage "A Hero's Tale" was handled quite well by most candidates. Generally, candidates understood the passage, although a number of candidates seemed unable to convey their ideas clearly in English when answering the questions. Quite a number of candidates scored full marks in this item.

Question 1

Most candidates answered this question very easily, providing answers indicating the 'who' and 'where' elements of the story. Candidates correctly said that two tourists found themselves in difficulty in the sea/in the water in Ste. Anne.

Question 2

Although most candidates understood the passage well enough to answer correctly that the tourists were very afraid/traumatised/panic-stricken - according to the text they experienced the greatest fear of their lives - some supplied as their answer that the tourists were thankful or grateful, although the notion of gratitude does not occur until much later in the unfolding of the story.

Question 3

The correct answer here was that he heard a child's desperate shouts. Many candidates, either deliberately or accidentally translated the French *enfant* by infant.

Question 4

Some candidates paid no attention to the word *sans* before *hésiter* and in so doing conveyed the exact opposite of what was stated in the passage that is that Philippe responded immediately, with no hesitation, diving into

the water to reach the tourists. Candidates need to read the comprehension text very carefully, paying attention to vocabulary and grammar.

Question 5

Most candidates understood that the effort to reach the tourists cost Philippe and he was unable to complete the rescue because he was too tired. This question was well done by most candidates.

Question 6

The majority of candidates answered the first part of the question correctly stating that Philippe called the dog. The less proficient candidates had difficulty supplying the second reason – that Fido sensed that there was something serious amiss. There were some very creative answers which saw Fido going to play with Philippe or with a ball or with the tourists in the water.

Question 7

In the final questions, candidates were required to justify their reason for selecting the hero of the story. Most candidates chose Fido as the hero, since he was the one who actually rescued the tourists and Philippe. Some candidates selected Philippe as the hero, reasoning that it was his swift response to the tourists' plight and his subsequent appeal to his dog that saved the day. Both answers received full marks. It was pleasing to see how candidates marshalled their most persuasive English language skills to convey their supporting arguments on why Fido or Philippe was the more appropriate hero.

Section IV – Expanded paragraph

This section tested candidates' ability to use written cues to produce a continuous and coherent paragraph of 80-100 words.

This year, again, the performance of candidates in this section varied from excellent to poor. Some candidates produced paragraphs written in a logical manner. They used all the cues given and marked transitions with suitable link words. They also used appropriate vocabulary and idioms and showed mastery in the use of the structures they chose.

However, a number of candidates still seem unclear about what is expected in this question. One candidate produced a "paragraph" that was of equal length to his or her essay. Although candidates are expected to conjugate infinitives, include articles, and obey all the conventions of normal writing, given the number of words at their disposal, candidates must be very concise in reporting the information given as cues. Candidates need to be reminded that the inclusion of irrelevant details such as hobbies, favourite food or address more often than not leads to exceeding the word limit.

Many of the problems noted for the longer free response item in Section II re-appeared here, for example, poor construction of the passé composé, poor command of tenses, even difficulty with some fundamental grammatical elements like subject pronouns and the French possessive. The Pluperfect and the passive voice were very clearly foreign concepts to many General Proficiency candidates. This lack of mastery is in sharp contrast to the work produced by more proficient candidates who used appropriate tense markers; a good range of idiomatic expressions and wrote sentences such as, "...il est retourné au magasin pour l'acheter. Malgré son effort en y arrivant ...la chemise a été déjà vendue."

Points to watch:

- Candidates must be careful to keep within the length stipulated (80-100 words) for the expanded paragraph. Candidates must not write an introduction to their paragraph, before beginning to use the cues, as they squander in this way, some of the words at their disposal. Candidates who do this find themselves unable to include all the cues, because of their long preamble, and are penalized for failing to complete their paragraph or include all the clues within the stipulated length.
- Candidates must try not to introduce unnecessary errors into their work by copying carelessly words that have been supplied to them in the cues.

The following is an example of a very good extended paragraph:

La semaine dernière *était l'anniversaire de Patrick et il *avait 15 ans. Il a voulu acheter une chemise pour sa boum. Il est allé en ville et il a vu une chemise bleue layette dans *une magasin. Donc il est rentré chercher l'argent chez lui. En retournant dans la magasin, quelle surprise, la chemise bleue layette a *vendu! Lui, il était très triste et il *n'avait pas avoir une chemise à porter à sa boum. Ce soir, son père est arrivé à la maison avec la même chemise. Patrick était très content de *le voir.

Basic Proficiency

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I – Directed Situations

This section tested candidates' ability to respond in French to a series of situations described in English and requiring written responses.

The majority of candidates attempted to answer most of the questions. The more proficient candidates earned between 8 and 14 marks. There were, however, a few scripts where candidates scored between 0 and 1 mark.

All the situations drew on functions/notions and settings and topics that could be within the experience of a 16 year old candidate. Five of the directed situations were common to both proficiencies; while five were addressed solely to the Basic Proficiency candidate.

Points to watch:

- Candidates must read each situation carefully paying close attention to what is required by the situation.
- Candidates are reminded to number the situations as on the question paper, even if they answer the situations in random order.
- Candidates are **STRONGLY ADVISED** to desist from writing each situation on a new page.

SITUATION	FUNCTION/NOTION	SETTING & TOPIC
1	Expressing a favourable comment and encouragement	At school
2	Expressing date and time	Email
3	Requesting permission	At school
4	Expressing good wishes	Birthday card
5	Describing someone	Written statement
6	Polite request	Home
7	Expressing regret at declining an invitation and giving an explanation for the refusal	School/home
8	Making a request; expressing hobbies	Letter/email to a French magazine
9	Forbidding something	Notice in a public place
10	Telling someone to do something	Text message

Situation 1

Candidates generally had no difficulty in expressing a favourable comment, although many were unable to express words of encouragement.

A suitable answer would have been, “*Très bien, continue à travailler.*”

Situation 2

Most candidates managed to produce a date and time in an acceptable format. A surprising number used combinations of English and Spanish. Candidates could have adopted a telegraphic style in their answer. Some candidates struggled unsuccessfully to use a future form. An appropriate answer was, “*Il sera à Fort-de-France le 5 janvier à 8h.*”

Situation 3

Many candidates were unable to produce the element of permission. Vocabulary posed a problem to many who did not know the word for appointment and could not think of other ways to convey the information. A good response was, “*Est-ce que je peux partir pour aller chez le médecin?*”

Situation 4

Candidates were required to express two wishes in a birthday card. Some candidates managed to produce ‘*Bon anniversaire*’ spelled correctly. There were far fewer examples of a correctly written second wish of the type, “*Ne travaille pas trop.*”

Situation 5

Candidates were expected to produce two elements to describe a thief involved in a robbery they had witnessed. Many descriptions centred on the physical features of the culprit, for example, “*Il est petit et il est chauve.*”

Situation 6

Candidates were expected to supply two elements in their answer: one expressing the request, the second stating the item to be bought. A common error was the inclusion of both *tu* and *vous* forms in addressing the parent. This error also occurred in item 10.

Situation 7

Candidates were expected to supply two elements – the refusal and the explanation. Answers produced by the candidates included: “*Je suis désolée Magali, mais je ne suis pas libre*” ; “*Je ne peux pas aller au cinéma parce qu’il faut que je reste à la maison avec ma petite sœur.*”; and “*Je suis désolé, ma chère, je ne peux pas sortir avec toi ce soir.*”

Situation 8

Vocabulary posed a problem to many candidates who did not know the word for pen pal and were unable to supply another appropriate answer. A good answer was, “*Je voudrais avoir un correspondant qui aime le football.*”

Situation 9

A number of candidates at the Basic Proficiency were also able to produce suitable answers in the item which was common to both proficiencies, for example, “*Interdit de manger ici.*”

Situation 10

Many candidates managed to produce an answer telling their parent to do something. As at the General Proficiency level, there was sometimes no word or expression to convey the urgency of the demand.

Section II – Completion of Form or Questionnaire

This section tested candidates’ ability to complete a short questionnaire in the target language.

This question was generally well done. No candidate scored less than 5 marks. Several candidates scored full marks. A large majority gained 8 to 9 marks.

A frequent error made by many candidates was using *nom* for *prénom* and vice versa. Far too many candidates make this mistake every year, losing two easily gained marks. Questions 6 and 9 were the items that gave most candidates difficulty.

Section III – Gapped passage

This section tested candidates’ ability to supply 10 lexical or grammatical items to complete a short passage in the target language.

Many candidates produced correct answers to items 8 and 9. But the overall performance is somewhat disappointing for what is a very manageable exercise. About a dozen candidates gained full marks. A number of candidates do not perform as well as possible because their vocabulary is minimal or because they make errors with very basic grammatical structures either through carelessness or ignorance. The following answer was produced by a candidate who understood the passage very well but lost quite a few marks through carelessness:

Chère Catherine

Je suis vraiment très *content de pouvoir correspondre avec toi. Mon amie Suzette m'a donné *vous adresse et elle m'a dit que tu es très sympa. J'ai *un sœur, mais je n'ai pas de frères. Et toi, tu as *en frères et sœurs? Alors *ecrire-moi bientôt.

Chantal

* Indicates an error

Section IV – Reading Comprehension

The performance in this question was good on the whole. A few candidates scored full marks. Many others scored between 8 and 14. The following answers would have gained the candidate full marks.

Question 1

The name of the restaurant is “La Carambole”.

Question 2

The occasion which is being celebrated on May 29th is Mother’s Day.

Question 3

They are celebrating the occasion with lunch and a dance.

Question 4

An adult ticket costs 45 euros.

Question 5

That person would have to pay 45 euros.

Question 6

All mothers receive a glass of champagne and a rose.

Question 7

The first course is tomatoes and shrimp.

Question 8

Desert is ice cream, cake and fruit salad.

Question 9

The name of the group is Necktar.

Question 10

You can call that number for information and for reservations.

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

Basic and General Proficiencies

This paper tested candidates' ability a) to read aloud a short passage in the target language; b) to produce appropriate responses in the target language in a number of simulations; and c) to respond in the target language to general questions based on 4 out of 6 topics indicated in the syllabus.

Performance in the oral examination ranged from excellent to poor, with a number of candidates scoring full marks in this paper. On the other hand, there were candidates who scored no marks. This range of performance is also reflected in the very mixed feedback submitted by different examiners depending on the centres where they conducted the examination.

Given the communicative focus of the syllabus, it is expected that candidates at both proficiencies would make a reasonable showing in this paper. While this is so for the more proficient candidates at both proficiencies, oral examiners expressed their disappointment that some candidates seemed able to answer only minimally or not at all to even the most basic questions in Section III. A number of examiners also expressed their concern about the level of difficulty of some of the questions and attributed the poor performance by some candidates to this fact. Generally though, the comments made by oral examiners indicated that candidates' performance was a reflection of their level of readiness for the examination.

Reading

At both proficiency levels, candidates' performance in reading demonstrated their level of comfort and familiarity with the target language. The oral examiners found that while some candidates read fluently, with mostly correct pronunciation, good expression and suitable intonation, many seemed not to understand what they were reading. Additionally, examiners commented on a) the pronunciation of the ending of verb forms in the third person plural; b) the lack of liaisons in places where these were necessary; and c) anglicization of certain French words.

Situations

Examiners expressed their surprise at candidates' inability to ask the price of an item, talk about the weather and many of the common topics of oral interaction. It was felt that candidates should have been able to produce answers to those topics far more spontaneously. All the candidates are expected to be able to respond appropriately in familiar contexts for the 16+ language learner, while the more proficient candidates are expected to be able to handle the more challenging situations. In this part of the oral paper, examiners rated candidates' performance as excellent to unsatisfactory. Oral examiners felt that there were too many instances of candidates simply responding "*Je ne sais pas*" or "*Je ne comprends pas*" without making any attempt to

provide an answer.

Conversation

As in sections I and II, performance ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory in the conversation. The graded nature of the items in this section - as in all three papers of the examination - from pre-CSEC level questions requiring candidates to produce their name, their age, their favourite sport or hobby, to CSEC level questions about their school/home/ and wider environment should allow all candidates to perform comfortably in some areas of the examination and the better candidates to perform very well in all areas of the examination.

Oral examiners' expressed concern about the challenge posed by some questions in the current examination as well as the level of preparation of the candidates. Both sets of concerns have been noted. As an example of the latter issue, one examiner stated, "Candidates could not understand questions beginning with words such as *combien, qui, comment, qu'est-ce que, quand, pourquoi* and *où*." This difficulty with question forms was also seen in the written examinations.

General Comments

Students must be helped to understand that their participation as candidates in the oral examination is a natural progression from the kind of oral activities in which they had been engaged since Form 1. Candidates could be trained to expand on their answers, as happens in normal conversation, even when the question posed is a closed question. The candidate who in reply to the question, "*Combien de frères ou de sœurs as-tu?*" answers "*Deux frères. Mon grand frère s'appelle John et mon petit frère s'appelle Richard.*" obviously shows more ease and familiarity in the language than the candidate who stops his/her answer at "Deux".

Examiners too are asked to demonstrate a level of flexibility in their examination techniques. It is understandable that a candidate living in a country that has been severely affected by volcanic activity, hurricane, or floods, may be constrained to talk about public buildings in his/her area. But a candidate should not feel at a disadvantage, because there is no public building in his/her immediate environs. There is nothing to prevent such a candidate from talking about places of worship; fire stations/post-offices/police stations real or imagined in the nearest village/town/district/city or even the capital of his/her country.

Teachers can encourage their students to appreciate that the oral examination is not a test of content information – it is immaterial whether they live in a city or village or have no or multiple public buildings in their environment – but a test of skill and their opportunity to show off their ability to communicate on a restricted number of topics (four per year) in the target language. Students who are comfortable speaking French bring a level of confidence to the oral examination and acquit themselves quite well. The reports coming from the various examiners in the various territories suggest that well-prepared candidates are in no way traumatized by having to participate in a 10-15 minute oral interview with an unknown examiner. Thus while the examination caters to a range of mastery from less proficient to more proficient candidates, there is a strong feeling expressed by oral examiners as by their counterparts in the written examinations, that even the weaker candidates could perform better with more practice.