FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

| Paper 0501/01 |
| Reading |

Key messages

- **Question 1**: Candidates must read the questions carefully and make sure they answer them correctly and clearly by picking the relevant information from the text and not just quoting the text. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of the number of ideas or points that need to be included in order to gain full marks. Candidates should not give more details than requested by the question as marks will be deducted for any additional incorrect information.

  Candidates do not have to answer in full sentences. When an explanation is required keeping to the words of the text is seldom enough to provide a full response. When the question requires to support the answer with an example from the text, the example should be written in full, candidates who just give the line number where the example can be found or just quote the first and last word of the sentence are not rewarded.

- **Question 2:** A few candidates did not read the rubric and compared the two texts instead of answering the question. Others either wrote an unbalanced summary as they focused only on *section 2a* or *2b*. Some summaries were too long as candidates wrote a lengthy answer on one section and the answer to the other section came after the cut-off point and could not be credited. A few candidates failed to cross out their plan.

  Candidates should produce a structured response, stating each point briefly, rather than developing each point at length, and avoid rephrasing the same idea several times. There should not be any comments on the style of the texts and there is no need to write a lengthy introduction and conclusion.

- **Language:** Candidates need to allow time at the end of the exam to proofread their work so as to avoid careless grammatical and spelling errors.

General comments

Most candidates responded positively to the topic of fashion and many have performed well in **Question 2**. **In Question 1** some candidates had difficulty answering the inference questions and the question relating to the techniques used by the author.

In **Question 2** the candidates who performed well were those who took the time to write a plan in order to ensure they stayed within the prescribed 250 words limit and used a varied vocabulary and a good range of linking words, which indicated that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination. However, many candidates still need further guidance and training on how to write a good summary as this required an ability to identify valid points and to group them into concise and well written paragraphs. Candidates who write their plan on the exam paper before the summary must remember to cross it out if they do not want it to be included in the word count.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidates generally understood the text but occasionally struggled to answer the questions purposefully.

The range of questions provided opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability.

The most accessible questions were **(c)**, **(d)**, **(g)**, **(h)**, **(k)**, and the most challenging ones were **(b)**, **(f)**, **(m)**, **(j)**. The rest of the questions fitted in the middle band, where, as long as the text was well understood, the questions presented no major difficulty. Marks are awarded for each specific relevant point made by the candidate. When a question is worth more than one mark, it means than more than one relevant point must be identified and when an example is required to justify the answer it is important that it is provided in full.

(a)   This was generally well answered, but some did not score the mark because they changed the verb, they wrote *les gens s'attachent…* or *les gens sont attachés par…* instead of *les gens attachent...* which changed the meaning. Many failed to notice that the preposition *à* was used after the verb and not *sur.*

(b)   Many candidates had problems answering this question correctly. Some answered *pour prouver son point de vue* or *pour prouver son argument* which was too vague to score a mark. Others wrote *parce que c'est une citation d'un styliste célèbre* or lifted a sentence from the text *pour montrer que la mode met de la beauté et de la fantaisie dans la vie des personnes.*

(c)   This question was usually well answered but many candidates failed to use the preposition *à* after the verb *bénéficier* which was tolerated in the comprehension exercise since the preposition was in the question. But *l'économie bénéficie la mode* was not accepted as it conveyed a different meaning. A few answered it benefited adults or young people.

(d)   This question was also well answered.

(e)   Candidates who were familiar with this phrase had no difficulty explaining it. Others failed to give an accurate explanation (e.g. *qu'il n'y a pas besoin d'être comme les autres pour être une bonne personne/le style vestimentaire ne décrivent pas la personne*). Some candidates who used the verb *définir* in their answer failed to conjugate it correctly.

(f)   Few candidates managed to explain the phrase well. Candidates had to convey the idea that fashionable clothes do not show who the person really is/give a false image of who the person really is.

(g)   This was another accessible question but some candidates did not score a mark because their answer implied that it was the parents who were following the fashion. This is why it was important to make it clear in the answer that the parents were paying for their children's fashionable clothes.

(h)   Most candidate answered this question well. But *voler des vêtements* was not accepted as it is not in the text. Some candidates had problems with the phase *recours au racket*.

(i)   Most candidates understood the inference and gave the correct answer but some gave a literal explanation e.g. *les personnes énormes plus grandes que normale* or *des gens riches.*

(j)   This question was an accessible one but some candidates lost the mark because they gave the explanation for the word *gaspillage* instead of the word *surconsommation*. Others just said it meant that they bought clothes and failed to convey the idea that they bought too many clothes.

(k)   This question was well understood and candidates generally scored 2 marks. Some did not, either because their answers were too vague e.g. *elle pollue la planète* or incomplete e.g. *les vêtements dégagent des substances toxiques.*

(l)   This was a synoptic question where candidates had to pick up specific and relevant information from the text as a whole rather than from a section of the text to explain why the author thought that young people were the victims of fashion. The question asked for only 4 reasons. Those who added incorrect reasons to the 4 did not score full marks. Most candidates scored at least 2 marks.

(m)   This question was answered better than in past sessions but there are still some candidates who have problems answering that type of questions correctly as they fail to identify the techniques or do not match each technique with the appropriate example from the text. A few just listed examples from the text without mentioning the technique. Some candidates explain the purpose of the technique or the intention of the author, which is not necessary. They only need to identify the techniques and match them with appropriate examples from the text. Candidates often identified

correctly rhetorical questions, statistics, metaphor, personification and hyperbole but many do not seem to know the difference between a metaphor and a hyperbole as they matched them with the incorrect examples.

Question 2

A few candidates (though less than in the previous session) still do not seem to be aware of the change to **Question 2** where candidates are no longer required to compare the two texts but are asked to sum up a certain number of points across the two texts.

Those who compared the two texts did less well than those who followed the rubric and summed up the attractions and the dangers of fashion for young people.

Since this question is a guided summary, it is important that candidates remember that their response should not exceed the word limit, as only the first 250 words are taken into consideration in the assessment. For the best results candidates should read carefully both texts and plan their answer, as planning improves organisation, helps pick relevant points from the text and encourages the use of a more fluent and varied style.

There is no need to make a lengthy introduction and conclusion and to develop each point. There is also no need to mention from which text each point comes from. Quoting from the text or giving line references is equally not necessary. It is however important to mention the points which are relevant to the question. For instance, mentioning that the fashion industry was good for the economy or that it was polluting the planet was irrelevant to the question. Candidates should also be reminded to sum up the relevant points in the texts and not give their own ideas or opinions on the matter. Most candidates scored 8 or above and some managed to get 14 or 15. In the attraction section not many mentioned point a6 (*se différencier*) and point a7(*se rebeller contre ses parents*). Points a1, a3, a4 et a8 were the points most frequently mentioned. In the danger section, candidates often mentioned points b4, b5, b8, b9, b10. Point b6 was seldom mentioned.

It is equally important to be concise, to group ideas in paragraphs and to use a range of linking words so as to enhance the natural flow of language. Candidates should use their own words rather than lift big chunks of texts, avoid narrating the content of each text and avoid repeating the same ideas or developing each idea at great length. They must be reminded that they are supposed to write a balanced summary and not an essay and that they should only mention information from the text and not mention their own opinions or ideas.

To improve, candidates should:

- Read the question carefully.
- Identify as many relevant points as possible.
- Organise and plan their response so that it is purposeful, clear and fully relevant.
- Include several points in a sentence.
- Use a variety of linking words (e.g. *tout d'abord, ensuite, tandis que, par contre, cependant, alors que, de plus, pourtant, aussi, en effet, par conséquent, de ce fait, d'un côté, d'un autre côté, enfin, aussi, également, toutefois…*).
- Remain focused and avoid mentioning things which are not in the text or giving their personal opinion or extensively developing each point or quoting what the people in the text are saying.
- Avoid excessive switching into narrative or descriptive mode
- Answer both parts of the question equally.

Style and Organisation

Organisation is closely linked with content and some of the points mentioned above have a direct impact on it. The stronger candidates grouped and linked ideas, typically introducing several ideas into one sentence (e.g. *Tout d'abord la mode donne aux jeunes la possibilité de s'exprimer et de se mettre en valeur pour plaire aux autres et ainsi pouvoir se faire mieux accepter dans un groupe/suivre la mode peut être très couteux et peut mener à la surconsommation, causer des problèmes de santé et encourager l'addiction*.) It is also important, to achieve a good mark, to use a range of linking words which many candidates fail to do.

Many candidates dealt with ideas in a series of short sentences, often following the same pattern, so that the overall effect was somewhat repetitive and at times laboured. A few picked points at random, losing focus now and again thus making their answer hard to follow.

Style relates to the range and complexity of structures and to the breadth of lexis used. Few candidates were at the extremes of the scale: stylish or purposeful responses were rare, so were very poor responses with excessive lifting written in a basic and barely adequate language.

Accuracy (Questions 1 and Question 2)

Generally, candidates tended to perform better in **Question 1** than in **Question 2** as their answers were shorter and they had the support of the text whereas in **Question 2** they had to produce their own language. But similar errors appeared in both questions:

- use of the infinitive instead of the past participle or vice versa
- incorrect verb endings
- failure to agree adjectives and past participles
- wrong gender
- omission of *ne* when using the negative form
- failure to use the subjunctive after *pour que, ne pense pas que…*
- incorrect use of pronouns and possessive adjectives
- failure to use the correct prepositions after certain verbs
- use of *par* + infinitive or *en* + infinitive instead of *en* + present participle
- failure to put the accents or apostrophes.

Many candidates favour the phonetical rendering to the detriment of grammatical accuracy e.g. *c'est* was sometimes spelt *cet/cette/ses/ce*; *est* often spelt *et* or *ai* and vice versa; ce spelt se; ceux spelt ce/se; ça/ç'a spelt sa; *on* used instead of *ont*; *a* instead of *à* and vice versa; *eu* instead of *eux*; *sont* instead of *son* and vice versa; etc.

All these mistakes can be avoided if candidates take the time to proofread their work.

The language was generally appropriate but often simple and unsophisticated. In **Question 2** the language was sometimes repetitive as candidates were often more concerned with making valid points than with improving the quality of their language.

To improve the quality of language, candidates should pay particular attention to the following:

- the agreement of adjectives and participles
- the correct verb endings
- the correct use of pronouns and prepositions
- the difference between *a* and *à*; between *et, est, ai* and *aie*; between *c'est, s'est, ses, ces, sait*; between *ce* and *se*; between *sa* and *ça*; between *été* and *était*; between *on* and *ont*; between *son* and *sont*
- widening their knowledge and use of linking words and vocabulary
- increasing the use of complex structures
- the importance of accents and apostrophes.

Concentrating on these areas should stand all candidates in good stead.

FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0501/02
Writing

Key messages

To be successful in this paper, candidates need to select two titles (one for each section) and write a response that is relevant, well-structured and clear. Essays should be accurate with the use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary as well as be coherent with well-developed ideas.

General comments

Candidates were given a choice of four titles for the discussion and argumentative essay and four titles for the descriptive and narrative essay. Each essay was marked out of 25, comprising a maximum mark of 12 for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 for task achievement. Centres should note that **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** are for discursive essays where candidates need to present a balanced discussion of the issue by developing both sides with equally relevant statements and providing examples; **Questions 1(c)** and **1(d)** for argumentative essays where candidates need to present persuasive statements and justification; **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** for descriptive essays and **Questions 2(c)** and **2(d)** for narrative essays.

Some candidates wrote a descriptive essay despite choosing a narrative question and vice versa. Most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words used (300 – 500 words per essay), however, some essays were significantly shorter than required (essentially descriptive essays) and offered limited markworthy content. Some essays were very difficult to read due to poor handwriting and candidates should be reminded that they need to take extra care to ensure they are not unduly penalised simply for the lack of clarity.

There was a range of ability demonstrated, from the very weak to the very good. Strong candidates managed to write two convincing and coherent pieces of work incorporating a wide range of structures. **In *Section 1*** the best essays featured a clear and relevant introduction to the title set including a range of ideas and examples in support of both sides of the argument. Less able candidates found it difficult to express their thoughts and although they constructed paragraphs, their meaning was corrupted by a lack of language accuracy. Some work had no proper introduction or concluding remarks while in others, the conclusion simply repeated the title set often using the same words that had already been used in the development. It is important to allocate some time and some thoughts to write a striking conclusion. Planning is a key element when writing a discursive or argumentative essay and some candidates appear to bypass this important phase.

In *Section 2*, some descriptive essays (a and b) were exceptional and a pleasure to read, providing details of sensual perception and insight into the narrator's thoughts and feelings. However, some essays continue to offer a simple description of objects and there is no sense of continuity. Some narrative essays in **(c)** and **(d)** had a tight plot structure and captivated the reader's interest from the beginning to the end. Unfortunately, too many candidates were unable to develop a good story, either because of the wrong use of tenses or the story was too predictable. Candidates choosing the narrative essay should mainly use the past historic (*passé simple*) and imperfect tense (*imparfait*) as it is far more effective than using the present tense. Taking a few minutes to plan a rough plotline as a draft is the key to achieving a higher mark.

In order of popularity this cohort chose: *Section 1*: **Question a, Question d, Question b, Question c;** *Section 2*: **Question c, Question b, Question d, Question a.**

The quality of language used varied considerably across the cohort; the best essays combined high levels of accuracy, fluency and complexity showing the ability to use a wide variety of vocabulary and expressions. At the other end of the spectrum, there were many essays with errors in the use of basic grammar such as singular/plural, subject-verb and noun-adjective agreements, wrong preposition and lack of accents. Weaker

essays were characterised by persistent errors and as a result, it was not always obvious what the candidate was trying to say. Candidates of all abilities are advised to leave some time at the end of the examination to check for avoidable language errors.

Among a number of common errors, the following were seen:

- *Omission of accents: à et a, où et ou, dû et du.*
- *Confusion between ce/se, ça et sa, ce et ceux, on et ont, pose et pause, voie et voix.*
- *Anglicisms: balancer for équilibrer, sauver de l'argent for économiser, journée for trajet, mes expectations for mes attentes, government for gouvernement, attendre/atteindre for assister à, supporter for soutenir.*
- *Une plaque solaire for les panneaux solaires.*
- *Lapses of register: chose, truc, puer, pote.*
- *Use of the **tu** form instead of **vous** or **on** form.*
- *Imperfect tense of faire (often written fesait).*
- *Past participle endings: nous sommes allé, j'ai mangée.*
- *Preceding direct object agreement: le les ai regardé.*
- *First person singular past historic: j'alla, je me réveilla.*
- *Irregular verbs past historic: je veni, nous atterrissâmes.*
- *Inappropriate conjunctions at the beginning of the paragraph: donc, du coup, alors, mais.*
- *Dependent infinitives: préférer de rester, il aide de, permettre à, mener de.*
- *Use of connaitre instead of savoir and vice versa.*

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question a

Stronger candidates were able to provide well-developed ideas of the advantages and disadvantages of taking a gap year before embarking onto further education. A high number of candidates were convinced of the benefits of a gap year (travel, volunteering work, revision, work to save money or just take a break) and detailed the drawbacks (dropping out, time wasting, losing your academic momentum, expensive). Some essays were very well-balanced with development and exemplifications, and some candidates drew a personal conclusion stating that a gap year may not be suitable for all candidates and meticulous planning was the key to a successful break from studies.

Question b

As per **Question a**, this question required a development explaining why technology might lead to laziness and to why it might not. Some candidates went off topic and generally developed the advantages and disadvantages of technology without focusing on the implications of the question, others struggled to convey the desired message and tended to repeat their main ideas by just focusing on social media.

Question c

Most candidates were of the opinion that governments needed to adopt urgent measures as fossil fuels, which play a dominant role in global energy systems, are reducing drastically and are an important cause of global warming. However, they were sceptical that renewable energy could fully replace fossil fuels in the very near future. Some candidates detailed the development of fusion energy which could become a strong alternative energy source. Some candidates wrote too much about the differences between green energy and non-renewable energy and thus did not fully answer the question.

Question d

Most candidates agreed that sport among young people played a vital part in their lives in order to alleviate mental health issues, tackle obesity and foster teamwork. Some essays were slightly measured; practising a sport they said offers a lot of benefits but can sometimes have the opposite effect: it can result in bullying and lead to serious injuries. Some candidates believed that some young people may have found a passion for music for example, therefore were able to gain the same benefit as those involved in sport. Very few

candidates misunderstood the phrase '*une place primordiale*' and developed the idea that sport should or should not be compulsory.

Section B

Questions a and b

There were some extraordinary answers, providing an exceptional range of detail using all the senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste and feel. The reader was able to feel the atmosphere because of the use of accurate and effective vocabulary. Most candidates who chose **Question a** focused on the parade, the vibrant colours of costumes and the different noises they could hear as they were walking; for **Question b** a large number of descriptions were set in the heart of a city. Some answers may have been rehearsed and when sentences were put together did not make sense, or the description did not fully match the title; in **Question a,** the carnival became a funfair and in **Question b,** sitting on the terrace of a café was not mentioned at any time. Some candidates used the past tense to write their description which added extra challenges in the language accuracy.

Questions c and d

Successful candidates created an interesting plot and managed successfully to maintain the reader's engagement. Most stories either took place on a boat or on a rainy day for **Question c**, and being victims of petty crime for **Question d**. Some stories were too predictable, and the climax was ineffective.

All scripts integrated the required sentence in **Question c**, however, there were a few candidates who conspired to modify it in order to fit their story. It is important to include the given sentence as it is. Although there is no specific requirement about where to locate the given sentence, it is preferable not to start the narrative with it.