



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2010

FRENCH

**ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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1. General Introduction

The current syllabus for Leaving Certificate French was examined for the first time in 1997. Candidates may take the examination at Higher Level or Ordinary Level, but the syllabus is common to both. It is a communicative syllabus, organised around the needs, expectations and interests which pupils bring to the foreign language classroom. Tasks assessed involve both productive use of the language (oral and written skills) as well as receptive use (reading and listening comprehension).

The Leaving Certificate examination, at both levels, is comprised of three components: an oral examination, a written paper containing both reading comprehension material and a written production section, and a listening comprehension test. The marks allocated are as follows:

		Higher Level	Ordinary Level
(a)	Oral Examination	100 marks	80 marks
(b)	Paper I – Reading Comprehension	120 marks	160 marks
	Paper I – Written Expression	100 marks	60 marks
(c)	Paper II – Listening Comprehension	80 marks	100 marks
	Total:	400 marks	400 marks

In 2010 the oral test was conducted between 12th and 23rd April. The examination, which lasts approximately twelve minutes, is school based, but it is administered and assessed by external examiners. All candidates are recorded. A monitoring and moderation process is carried out during June and July.

The written and aural components of the examination were held on Wednesday, 16th June 2010, beginning with the written examination at both Higher and Ordinary levels from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon, followed by the Listening Comprehension Test from 12.10 p.m. to 12.50 p.m.

54,481 candidates sat the Leaving Certificate Examination in 2010. A total of 27,574 candidates presented for the French examination. This figure represents 50.6% of the total candidature.

The percentage of candidates who chose the Higher Level (52.1%) compared to the Ordinary Level French paper (47.9%) in 2010 was broadly similar to that of previous years.

Year	Total French Candidature	Higher Level	% of Total	Ordinary Level	% of Total
2007	27,812	13,771	49.5%	14,041	50.5%
2008	27,697	14,225	51.4%	13,472	48.6%
2009	27,675	13,676	49.4%	13,999	50.6%
2010	27,574	14,359	52.1%	13,215	47.9%

Table 1: Leaving Certificate French participation rates 2007-2010, at each level

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination paper(s) and the published marking scheme(s). These are available on the State Examination Commission's website www.examinations.ie.

2. Oral Examination

2.1 Introduction

The format of the oral examination in 2010 was the same as that of previous years. It consisted of a conversation of approximately twelve minutes duration during which candidates were given the opportunity to display their proficiency in the spoken language. Candidates had the option of bringing in a *document* of their choice. This could consist of a photograph or picture, a newspaper or magazine article, a literary text or a project. All candidates were marked out of a total of 100 marks, which were allocated as follows:

Pronunciation	20 marks
Vocabulary	20 marks
Structures	30 marks
Communication	30 marks

The oral component accounted for 25% of marks at Higher Level and 20% of marks at Ordinary Level. The oral examination is conducted in the same way for both Higher and Ordinary Level candidates. All candidates are marked out of a total of 100 and the marks of Ordinary Level candidates are adjusted at a later stage.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

The performance of candidates in 2010 spanned the total spectrum of abilities and marks achieved were broadly in line with previous years. Examiners reported that most candidates were well prepared and had a very positive and serious attitude to the test. They displayed enthusiasm and a great willingness to communicate and it was clear that the majority had worked extremely hard to prepare. Many candidates revealed a degree of proficiency suggesting a very high level of competence in mastering oral communication skills. Both candidates and teachers are to be congratulated for their success in this area. However at the lower end of the scale, there were some candidates who failed to answer the simplest questions about themselves and their day-to-day life.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

(i) Pronunciation

The standard of pronunciation varied greatly and ranged from excellent to very disappointing. Examiners were strong in their praise of many candidates who achieved a very impressive level in pronunciation, intonation and rhythm. They were particularly impressed by the accomplishment of so many who had never set foot on French-speaking soil. However, it was also reported that pronunciation was all too often the weakest element in a candidate's performance. Many candidates failed entirely to

suppress their local accent. Others pronounced their opening sentences well but then floundered. Examiners frequently refer to learnt-off material as being seriously detrimental to good pronunciation. Candidates may not realise that it is not sufficient to have learnt by heart an impressive amount of material if their inability to pronounce French reasonably correctly renders their presentation almost unintelligible. Candidates may not also realise that, if they do not say a lot during the test, their pronunciation mark may be affected.

Examiners this year emphasised the following problem areas:

- Pronouncing final silent consonant, e.g. *trucs*, *trop*, *cours*, *sport*, *heures*, *je sors*
- Mispronunciation of words such as: *natation*, *installation*, *récréation*, *émission*
- Difficulty in pronouncing correctly the “gn” in *gagner*, *campagne*, *Espagne*
- Confusion between *ville*, *mille*, *tranquille* as opposed to *famille*, *fille*, *pavillon*
- Difficulty with the nasal sounds in words, e.g. *examen*, *jardin*, *vin*, *mon*, *on*, *ans*
- Little or no effort to pronounce the French [r]
- Failure to observe the silent “e” or “ent” in the Present Tense, e.g. *je joue*, *il aime*, *elles regardent*
- Confusion of *matière* / *métier*, *vie* / *ville*, *aîné* / *année*, *cheveux* / *chevaux*
- Final *é* in the Passé Composé not pronounced, e.g. *j’ai joué* pronounced *j’ai joué*
- Not making correct liaison, e.g. *les élèves*
- Mispronunciation of school subjects, especially *le français*, *la chimie*, *la biologie*
- Mispronunciation of common nouns such as *parents*, *poulet*, *soeur*, *travaille*
- No distinction between the pronunciation of *un* and *une*.

(ii) Vocabulary

For many candidates this was the strongest aspect of their performance. Most had mastered a sufficient range of vocabulary to communicate at a basic level on topics concerning their daily lives and the world of young people. At the top end of the scale candidates were not only totally at ease with basic vocabulary themes but had also prepared and had acquired ownership of the terms necessary to deal with more difficult social topics and abstract reasoning. They were willing and able to express their opinions. They also displayed mastery of various idiomatic and elegant expressions, using them appropriately. The *document* frequently provided such candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate the acquisition of the specific vocabulary required for their chosen topic. It is noteworthy that such candidates also had at their disposal a wide range of adjectives.

However, some candidates obviously lacked the basic foundation vocabulary required in order to speak about themselves. These vocabulary themes are normally acquired during Junior Cycle, e.g. family, sport, hobbies, where they live, house, school. These candidates had difficulty with everyday vocabulary such as numbers, time, weather, food and school subjects. Examiners frequently reported an inability to understand basic interrogative words (*qui*, *quand*, *pourquoi*, *comment*, etc.) as a serious barrier to communication. Some candidates failed to recognise key words within a given

question, e.g. *Pâques, cet été, l'année dernière*. They had not learnt the very useful *je ne comprends pas* or *voulez-vous répéter la question, s'il vous plaît?*, which would have avoided at least some of the awkward silences. Examiners frequently mentioned also an impoverished range of adjectives with excessive reliance on *sympa, super* and *intéressant*.

The most common errors in vocabulary were similar to those noted in previous years. They included:

- Les faux amis: *collège* used instead of *université*, *facilités* used instead of *installations / équipements*
- Confusion between certain words, e.g. *journée / voyage, travailler / voyager, boisson / besoin, Pâques / bac, chambre / pièce*
- School subjects and names of countries not known
- Inability to mention a favourite dish other than *frites* or *pizza*, or items of clothing bought or received as a present
- Limited range of adjectives and verbs
- Failure to recognise words within the question which hint at the correct tense to be used in answering, e.g. *dernier / prochain, hier / demain*
- Irish words used instead of French words, e.g. *le* for *avec*, *mar* for *car*, *nó* for *ou*, *a lán* for *beaucoup*
- Occasional inappropriate use of slang terms, e.g. *vachement*
- Widespread inability to cope from a lexical point of view once pushed, albeit gently, beyond their comfort zone.

(iii) Structures

As a general rule, this was not the most impressive feature of the average candidate's performance in the test. Towards the higher end of the ability range, there were, of course, candidates who demonstrated a wonderful grasp of French grammar. Their basic tenses were correct and they were able to manipulate successfully other verb forms, including compound tenses, the infinitive, the imperfect, the conditional and even at times the present subjunctive. These candidates also displayed accuracy in their use of simple pronouns and the negative form.

Unfortunately, other candidates struggled in their efforts to compose short simple sentences. Candidates are expected to be able to manipulate accurately the present, future and past tenses. They should be able to introduce simple pronouns, adjectives and prepositions appropriately and correctly.

As in previous years, examiners noted problems in the area of verbs. Some candidates answered all questions in an approximate version of the present tense. Others used *je* at the beginning of all their verbs and followed this by an infinitive. At times, pronunciation of the verb was often so distorted that it was impossible for the examiner to be sure of which tense was being attempted. Correct manipulation of the negative form, especially in the *Passé Composé*, was rare.

The most common areas of difficulty were:

- Confusion between the subject pronouns *il* and *elle*
- Total absence of verb, e.g. *Ma famille grande*
- *C'est* and *il y a* confused
- Avoidance of the future tense by over reliance on *je voudrais* or *j'espère* + infinitive
- Incorrect word order, e.g. *Ils s'appellent mes soeurs Aoife et Mary*
- Incorrect or unnecessary use of prepositions, e.g. *en Paris, à France, je regarde à la télé, sur samedi, rencontrer avec*
- *Être* used when speaking of age, e.g. *je suis 17 ans*
- Little distinction between definite and indefinite articles
- Expressions of quantity such as *beaucoup* followed by *des* instead of *de*
- Incorrect idiom when speaking of sport and pastimes, e.g. *je joue au sport, je fais natation*
- Confusion regarding expressions of time, e.g. *pendant / pour / depuis*
- Incorrect conjugation of *acheter* and *étudier* in all three basic tenses
- Gender of very common nouns confused or not known, e.g. *la café, le mer*
- Incorrect auxiliary verb or omission of same in Passé Composé, e.g. *j'ai allé, je sorti, je ne pas vu*
- Confusion relating to verbs followed by preposition + the infinitive, e.g. *j'espère d'aller*
- Use of *parce que* or *car* confused with *à cause de*, e.g. *parce que mes études* instead of *à cause de mes études*
- Echoing the question form used by the examiner, e.g. *j'allez, je regardez*, etc.

(iv) Communication

In order to obtain a high mark in this area of the test the candidates must prove by their performance that they are capable of sustaining a natural, flowing and comprehensible conversation in French over twelve minutes. The conversation will deal with the basic details of the candidate's day-to-day life, but will also require the expression of feelings, impressions and opinions. The candidate should have no difficulty in understanding virtually all questions and should give a spontaneous and authentic reply. The candidate should rarely reject any topic proffered by the examiner and there should be no recourse to long extracts learnt by heart. The candidate should be willing and able to take up the challenge of moving beyond the realm of their prepared topics into other related areas. The presentation of the candidate should be such that it would be readily understood by a native speaker of French who has no English. Good pronunciation is, as stated earlier, a prerequisite for efficient communication.

At the top end of the scale many candidates reached the above objectives with ease, communicating excellently on a wide range of topics, some of which required abstract reasoning. Examiners frequently commended the enthusiasm and willingness to

communicate of certain less-able candidates. Failure to reach an acceptable level of communication was attributed largely to the following factors:

- Unwillingness or hesitancy on the part of some candidates to venture beyond the comfort zone of their prepared script, despite gentle but persistent encouragement from the examiner.
- Over reliance on long sections of learnt-off material or speeches, often introduced *mal à propos* by the candidate. Some candidates seemed indeed frustrated by any attempt from the examiner to judiciously steer the conversation towards a more natural and authentic exchange.
- Tendency to misinterpret the question, often caused by focusing on just one word. The candidate then proceeded to say all that he / she knew on the topic, regardless of its appropriateness as an answer.
- The need to have many questions reformulated.
- Poor overall preparation and, perceived lack of interest in French.
- Restricted or erroneous vocabulary, coupled with such inaccurate pronunciation that a native French speaker, with no knowledge of English, would be at a loss to understand what was being said.
- Lack of necessary strategies to overcome any gaps in vocabulary, or lack of opinion on a given subject.

(v) Document option

Candidates may choose to bring in a *document* – a photo, illustration or literary text – for the oral examination. It is not assessed separately, but the candidate's competency in discussing it is taken into account in the final mark. As was the case in previous years, only about half of all candidates availed of this option. In some schools almost every candidate had a *document*, whereas in others no *document* at all was presented. Most candidates chose to bring in a photograph or illustration. There were not many projects or literary texts. Some candidates seemed unaware that a solid object did not constitute a *document*, and that a photograph should have been used instead. This year, and indeed in recent years, examiners have reported at length on this aspect of the oral test. The following is a summary of their perceptions and conclusions.

A well-prepared *document* was generally advantageous to candidates at all levels of ability. Those who were most competent in the language were afforded an opportunity to shine as they could display their acquisition of more complex vocabulary and structures. The presentation of a well-researched *document* generally greatly enhanced the confidence of less-able students. The security of knowing that their prepared topic would be examined put them more at ease and their performance very often improved subsequently.

- Some candidates failed to foresee the full range of questions which their chosen topic might provoke. Examiners felt that there were often missed opportunities. A student who chose the topic of a concert, for instance, did not always realise that there would be the possibility to speak about the “total experience”, e.g. getting tickets, transport, friends who also went, venue, accommodation, eating, general atmosphere, weather, bands who played, crowd, return journey, cost, etc.
- Many other candidates patently continued to believe that they would be allowed to recite without interruption their learnt-off material.
- The most frequently chosen topics were foreign holidays, school trips, sport, family events and concerts. Candidates perceived that such topics represented a safe choice. The candidate was secure in the knowledge that their *document* – the subject of which would probably have cropped up in the general conversation anyway – would be given a more extensive airing.
- There were numerous examples of interesting and innovative *documents*. Examples included last winter’s floods, media coverage of Tiger Woods, a poem about racism, the Niall Mellon township trust, a photo of Marie Curie linked to the role of women in society, the Jade Goody story, Poland since World War 2, the effects of last winter’s cold spell, the film *les Choristes*. The enormous advantage of this type of *document* was that it breathed new life into the conversation and allowed the candidate to display the linguistic talent to cope with a totally different aspect of life.
- The presentation by several members of a class of the same *document* (e.g. trip to Paris) had a tendency to be counter-productive, especially where all candidates had manifestly learnt by heart the same material. Photos of pets or of individuals did not always offer great scope for discussion and development.
- Many candidates who introduced their *document* with a relatively confident opening sentence were sometimes incapable of advancing any further. The discussion was then frequently reduced to a description of those in the photo: *Ça, c’est mon ami Paul, il porte un pantalon noir. Il est à droite*. Such candidates had obviously done little preparation, had perhaps chosen the photograph at the last minute, and were definitely not aware of the spirit and intention of the *document* option.

2.4 Conclusions

- The performance of candidates in the oral test this year spanned the entire spectrum of abilities. Most candidates were serious in their approach to the examination and prepared diligently for it.
- Most candidates showed a great willingness to communicate and made a genuine effort to make the most of their spoken French. They were familiar with the basic topics and issues.

- For many candidates, Pronunciation is the aspect of language most in need of attention.
- While standards in vocabulary were generally satisfactory, grammatical structures including the three basic tenses, the use of adjectives, and prepositions and pronouns remain a source of concern.
- Those candidates who took the time to prepare their *document* carefully and intelligently reaped the benefits of their efforts.
- An unwillingness or hesitation, on the part of some candidates, to venture beyond the comfort zone of prepared topics or material, continues to be an impediment to good communication.
- Almost any subject / topic of the syllabus, including those of everyday relevance to students such as school, family, pastimes, money, can lead to discussion, and thus enable candidates to display a wide-ranging vocabulary and to express feelings and opinions.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- use French as the language of communication in the classroom as much as possible from First Year onwards in order to attune the student's ear to the language
- encourage the students themselves to use French spontaneously and avoid over-correction of their errors
- impress on students the importance of good pronunciation for good communication
- teach pronunciation systematically, starting early in First Year, while emphasising the necessity to actually imitate the French accent and intonation
- revise basic vocabulary as often as possible so that exposure to everyday topics is constant
- teach students to manage a conversation by being able to ask for repetition or clarification where necessary and by being able to express incomprehension
- encourage students to avoid simple *oui / non* or monosyllabic answers and to try instead to develop their answer
- explain to students that their own authentic response, albeit not linguistically perfect, is better than using prepared material inappropriately
- make students aware that the oral examination is ideally a conversation, and that they must expect the examiner to intervene judiciously with questions based on their responses
- stress that all conversations start from questions and, therefore, practise the interrogative words

- discuss the most common errors in each area of language and suggest strategies to avoid falling into the same traps
- encourage pupils in Junior Cycle to prepare “*dossiers personnels*” on some aspect of French culture as this could prepare the ground for a useful *document* for the Leaving Certificate oral test
- advise students who present a *document* that they should be able, not only to describe what is in the picture or text, but to anticipate follow-up questions
- where possible, introduce oral tests from First Year onwards to help students to become more confident when faced eventually with the Leaving Certificate oral test
- remind students that they should be prepared to enter into discussion and to express their own opinions and feelings, not simply describe or narrate
- make students aware that discussion may arise from everyday topics (e.g. What do they think of a certain school rule? Should all students be obliged to take part in P.E.?), as well as from current affairs or from more abstract topics of the syllabus.

It is recommended that students:

- realise that poor pronunciation is a hindrance to effective communication and therefore make a real effort to pronounce the sounds of French correctly and to imitate the intonation of the native speakers whom they hear on CD, in songs, etc.
- be aware that the basic vocabulary themes studied from First Year onwards (e.g. family, house, weather) will prove essential in the oral test, and that constant revision and use are necessary
- remember that the key word in most sentences is the verb, and therefore practise regularly the Present, Future and Passé Composé tenses, with special attention to the negative form
- devote time to the study of other aspects of grammar, with particular attention to basic pronouns, prepositions and adjectives
- ensure that they are familiar with and recognise easily the various interrogative words which introduce questions, e.g. *Qui? Pourquoi? Comment?*
- practise avoidance of the echo response, e.g. when the teacher asks: *Quel sport pratiquez-vous?* then the answer should be: *Je pratique* (not *je pratiquez*)
- learn to recognise words or expressions which will hint at the tense to be used in answering a question, e.g. *prochain, dernier, demain matin, hier soir*
- be aware that the examiner is there to support them and that seemingly difficult questions are not asked with the aim of “catching them out” but rather to enable them to demonstrate how much French they can speak
- treat the oral examination as a normal conversation and be ready to talk about themselves, their friends and family, and their interests
- understand that, although many of the examiner’s questions will follow on logically from what they have said, it is ultimately the examiner who is in charge of the conversation and who decides when to move on to another topic
- realise that if they repeatedly tell the examiner that they know nothing about various subjects (e.g. hobbies, sport, films, TV, current affairs, etc.) or that they

do nothing at weekends or with friends because they are studying all the time, then they are effectively closing down opportunities to talk

- prepare their own personalised response for the usual topics, rather than rely solely on their text book or set of notes, as this approach to preparation will make them stand out more as an individual
- prepare separate sentences on a given topic rather than long paragraphs
- be aware that the examiner will intervene gently with further questions if the examination risks becoming a monologue instead of a conversation
- realise that the examiner wants to award them the highest mark possible, and therefore may coax and encourage them to step outside their comfort zone of prepared material
- listen carefully to the whole question asked by the examiner, rather than focus on just one word which they recognise
- tell the examiner in French if they do not understand or if they did not hear the question clearly
- correct a mistake immediately if they become aware of it (e.g. *Je parti, non, je suis parti.*)
- choose a *document* which interests them and with which they are comfortable from a language point of view
- take ample time to prepare it, as this will give them confidence going into the examination
- try to anticipate the type of questions which the examiner may ask on the *document*, for example by showing it to their teacher or to other adults.

3. Ordinary Level

3.1 Introduction

The analysis of candidate performance and the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on the detailed reports submitted by the Assistant Examiners, Advising Examiners, and Chief Advising Examiner at Ordinary Level. It is hoped that this report will prove helpful to both teachers and students in their classroom practice and in their preparation for future examinations.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following materials:

- The Leaving Certificate French Syllabus
- The Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level 2010 Written Paper, Listening Comprehension Paper, and Listening Comprehension CD
- The Marking Scheme for the Written Paper (www.examinations.ie)

The French Ordinary Level examination comprises three components – Written, Aural and Oral. This section of the report deals with Written and Aural components only. The Written paper consists of two sections – Reading Comprehension and Written Expression.

Reading Comprehension: (160 marks)

There are four questions, each worth 40 marks. All four questions must be answered.

Written Expression: (60 marks)

There are three sections, A, B and C, with a choice in each section. Each question is worth 30 marks. Candidates may choose one exercise from each of two sections from A, B and C.

Listening Comprehension: (100 marks)

There are five sections. All questions are to be answered.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 13,215 candidates sat the 2010 Leaving Certificate French examination at Ordinary Level.

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2007	14,041	1.6	22.0	38.2	29.8	7.1	1.1	0.1
2008	13,472	1.6	19.1	40.3	31.1	6.6	1.2	0.1
2009	13,999	1.6	24.9	38.1	26.9	6.9	1.4	0.1
2010	13,215	2.0	28.1	37.4	24.5	6.3	1.6	0.2

Table 2: Performance of Ordinary Level candidates from 2007 to 2010
(Grade data represent percentages)

The results for 2010 are broadly in line with those of the previous years. The combined A+B+C result was 67.5% while the combined E+F+NG result was 8.1%

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Written Paper: SECTION I – Reading Comprehension

The 2010 French Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level paper met with generally favourable reaction. The Written Production section was well received and the pace and clarity of the CD for the Listening Comprehension section was considered fair. Candidates performed best at the Aural Comprehension and least well at the Written Production.

Question 1

There were nine questions to be answered, consisting of ten segments.

1. Well answered. “Walk / walking to school / going on foot” were all given as correct answers. Recurrent incorrect answers included “go by bus / exercise / drive”.
2. Many understood “cars” here. However, *circulation* was problematic and *ville* was sometimes misunderstood.
3. (i) & (ii) The majority of candidates understood the first part of this question. “Brushing their teeth” was generally answered correctly. However, *la vaisselle* was not known. Guesses included “after a shower / bath / washing themselves”.
4. Generally well answered. Incorrect answers included “buy less paper” or “write on a page”.

5. Generally well answered with most candidates referring to “he gave up cigarettes”. Some even included “since the first of March”. A common incorrect answer was “he doesn’t smoke”.
6. Full marks were not always obtained here. This was mainly due to the fact that precise information was not given. Surprisingly, *poubelles* was not understood by many candidates and a sizeable number failed to mention “two”.
7. Not well answered. Lots of extraneous material was given here. *Changé* was often misread as *chargé*. The word *portable* was misunderstood. A frequent incorrect answer was “she changes operator”.
8. This question proved challenging. *Branchés* was sometimes perceived to be associated with trees. Very few candidates gave “in the majority of houses”. Recurrent incorrect answers included “they leave them on all day / he doesn’t use the lights in his house”.
9. Often incorrect. *En veille* was confused with *en ville* or *vieille*. Frequent incorrect answers included “He never takes his computer to town / The server is not working”.

Question 2

There were nine questions to be answered, consisting of ten segments.

1. This was well attempted, with candidates showing a good understanding of *je bavarde* and *offre ... quelques fruits*. *Volontiers* led some to believe that volunteers were involved, with answers such as “he volunteers to help with the fruit”.
2. Few correct answers given here. Surprisingly, the word *gendarmes* was not understood by the majority of candidates. “Security” was often given instead of “police”. There were many variations on the idea of stealing, e.g. “he had to stop them stealing the fruit / they didn’t pay him / they stole from him”.
3. Reasonably well answered, although the word *sans* was not always understood. “Impolite people” was a common incorrect answer.
4. Reasonably well answered. Surprisingly, the phrase *il est interdit de manger* was not understood by many. Incorrect answers included “do not read the magazines / no stealing / chips sold here”.
5. Many candidates got one element correct here, i.e. that the man wanted to go for a walk. Very few, however, showed comprehension of *la planche à voile*, translating it only as “sailing”. Some candidates associated *bois* with “drink”, obviously because of its closeness to the word *boisson*.

6. Very well answered, with most candidates understanding the word *vacances*.
7. (i) & (ii) Most candidates got one element correct here, i.e. that too many people stayed / that they left the apartment in a terrible condition. Common incorrect answers included “pizza on the floor” and “food in the fridge”.
8. Many candidates had difficulty here. The idea of going to their caravan or tent was understood but often it ended there. The word *réveiller* was not known. Most candidates gave “he” instead of “she” when referring to the *directrice*. Incorrect answers included “he threw them out / he gave out to them”.
9. Fairly well answered. At times, partial marks could only be awarded as the words *fermé* and *bureau* were often ignored. “They went to reception at all hours” was a frequent answer.

Question 3

This was considered to be a suitable text for this age group, and appeared to capture the interest of the candidates. The majority scored higher marks here than in previous years. There were seven questions in French, consisting of eight segments, and one question in English, requiring two points.

1. Well answered, with many candidates giving both possible correct answers.
2. (i) & (ii). Very well answered. Many candidates mentioned *le salaire*. The word *la chance* was not understood by some, however, and resulted in the incorrect answer *le club FC Nantes est venu le chercher*.
3. (a) & (b). Very well answered generally. Unfortunately, a number of candidates answered in English and therefore lost half marks. A common incorrect answer was *il gagnait mieux sa vie*.
4. This was the only specific grammar question on the paper, but the majority of candidates had difficulty in understanding what was required. Many did not offer any verb and, of those who did, the most common answers were *voyait / gagnait / avait*.
5. Quite well answered. Partial marks awarded for *C’était un garçon timide, simple et modeste* ensured that most candidates were awarded some marks here.
6. Well answered. However, (c) was sometimes offered as an incorrect answer.
7. This was not well answered and part of the problem was that many candidates appeared to have difficulty expressing themselves in English. In most cases there was no clear reference made to the text. Speculation and vague answers were often offered when factual information was required. The phrase *vêtements de marque* was perceived to mean “buying his clothes in the market” by some. As in

previous years, many less-able candidates unfortunately wrote nothing for this question, thereby losing a potential eight marks.

Question 4

This passage was considered to be suitable material and candidates performed better than in previous years. The illustration helped to focus the attention of the candidates.

1. Reasonably well answered. A recurrent incorrect answer was *je leur raconte ce qui s'est passé à l'école aujourd'hui*.
2. Generally well answered. A quotation from the text was regularly given here. Many candidates remembered to change the subject to *il*, but more often than not the possessive adjective was left unchanged.
3. (i) & (ii). Generally well answered. The wide choice of clothing helped the candidates.
4. Well answered. *Pile* was frequently omitted. Students often continued the sentence by including *dans la rue des Platanes*. Common incorrect answers were *22h30* – the other time mentioned in the text, but which belonged to a different section – and also the phrase *on attend dix minutes*.
5. Generally well answered. *Où* was either not known or else not seen by some candidates, often resulting in an incorrect answer – *pour vérifier qu'il ne se passe rien* – being given. The full sentence was given by others, who then incurred a penalty for extraneous material.
6. Well answered, with many candidates giving more than one possible correct answer. Some, however, turned to Section 3 instead of Section 4 for their answer and gave the phrase *pas une voiture*.
7. Usually correct. (b) was the most common incorrect answer given.
8. Well answered. Most frequently correct answers included the clothes worn and the time Mathieu met Tristan. “He told his parents he was going to study in his room” was a popular correct answer too. Some candidates unfortunately made no attempt to answer this question, and lost a possible eight marks.

SECTION II – Written Expression

The questions in this section were considered fair and well within the capability of candidates at this level. While some excellent work was produced, the majority of candidates had problems with present, past and future tenses as well as basic

vocabulary. Many did not attempt this section at all, while others attempted only one exercise.

Candidates had a choice of (a) or (b) within each Section A, B and C. The cloze test in Section A was by far the most popular choice, with the Formal Letter the least popular. As always, some candidates answered more than the required number of questions.

Section A (a) – Cloze Test

This question was attempted by most candidates but, unlike previous years, many did not score well. Marks were sometimes lost through lack of care with transcription. The average score was 12 to 15 marks out of a possible 30.

1. *Pas*: usually correct
2. *Occupée*: when marks were lost here, it was usually for omitting the *accent aigu*
3. *En*: surprisingly, many candidates got this incorrect
4. *De*: usually correctly answered
5. *Tous*: didn't pose a problem
6. *Me*: some candidates had difficulty here
7. *Viens*: another area of difficulty
8. *Nouveau*: reasonably well answered
9. *Visite*: this was often misspelt and misplaced
10. *Peux*: as in the previous gap, this too was often misplaced.

Question A (b) – Form Filling

Generally speaking, candidates scored well here. Questions 1 – 5 were well answered. In addition, many of the longer questions were based on work which candidates would have prepared for the Oral, so they would have had the added benefit of approaching this section with confidence.

Questions 1. & 2. Well answered although some confused *Nom* and *Prénom*.

Question 3. The year of birth was sometimes omitted.

Question 4. Generally correct. Some candidates gave a city or town instead, and others gave their nationality.

- Question 5. Well answered.
- Question 6. Fairly well answered with good use of adjectives such as *sympa*, *bavard(e)* and *sensible*. However, some candidates misunderstood the word *Parlez*, and gave the incorrect answer *Je parle français*.
- Question 7. This was not well answered. A number of candidates gave just one subject, despite the question being phrased in the plural, and many did not understand *à part*, instead stating that *l'anglais* or *le français* was their favourite subject.
- Question 8. Many candidates had problems here, and the word *travail* was often confused with “travel”, resulting in no marks. Also evident was great difficulty with the Passé Composé tense.
- Question 9. Some candidates handled this question well. *Je veux perfectionner mon français / j'aime l'argent / j'aime rencontrer les gens* were common answers. But others struggled to articulate why they wanted to work in a bank.

Communication marks for this question were generally high, but Language marks were lower, and were mainly awarded from the middle or the bottom category, rather than from the top. Misspelling was common and verbs, tenses and vocabulary were poor in many cases.

Section B (a) – Message

This was a less popular choice than Section B (b). The tenses and vocabulary required were problematic for many candidates.

- C1 Many candidates had difficulty with the time. *C'est / il y a* were frequently given and *heures* was often misspelt, or else given in the singular. *Se coucher* was not known and *je vais au lit* was rarely used.
- C2 The word *devoirs*, when known, was often written without the final “s”. It was sometimes confused with “housework”. Candidates also had difficulty with *j'ai fait*, and *je fini(s)(t)* was frequently given. “Easy” was usually *simple* or *facil* or else *ce ne pas trop difficile* (with no verb given). The possessive adjective was often incorrect or else omitted.
- C3 Most candidates knew *J'espère* but many omitted the *accent grave*. The word *que* was omitted by most, and the Passé Composé was often replaced by *tu aime le concert*.

In general, Language was poor. The Passé Composé tense proved difficult and basic vocabulary was lacking. The spelling of simple words, agreements and prepositions was problematic for most candidates.

Section B (b) – Postcard

This was a more popular choice than Section B (a).

- C1 The word *correspondant(e)* was unknown to most candidates. *Mon ami* and even *mon stylo ami* were used. Many candidates correctly used *la plage* but “near” eluded the majority. *Maison* was sometimes misspelt and agreement of the adjective *beau* was often missing.
- C2 *Faire du ski nautique* was virtually unknown. Instead, the words *ski de l’eau* or *planche à voile* (perhaps lifted from the reading comprehension) were frequently used. The phrase *avec des / mes / les amis* was generally correctly written.
- C3 *Je vais aller* was given, but infrequently. *Un match de foot* was often given as *un foot match*. The weekday *mardi* was known by most, although sometimes written with a capital letter, but it had the words *sur / le / en* placed before it. Fewer candidates knew the word *soir*.

Language marks awarded were low. Poor verbs, spellings and vocabulary were evident. Many candidates included paragraphs of extraneous material for which no marks could be awarded.

Section C (a) – Diary

- C1 Very few candidates were able to say *Je suis très triste*. Some avoided it by writing *je ne suis pas content(e)*. *Je déteste* was known by most but *la rentrée* was not. Many ended up using the phrase *Je déteste l’école* instead.
- C2 *S’amuser*, when used, was generally written in the Present tense or else the words *j’aime / j’adore* were given. The word *été* was often correct, but the fully correct phrase, *cet été*, was known only by a few candidates
- C3 The Future tense *Je devrai* was generally not known. Candidates had difficulty in using the correct reflexive verb. *Me lever* was usually translated instead as *me réveiller* (perhaps taken from the reading comprehension). *Se laver* was often used instead of *se lever*. “Early” was translated by giving a particular time instead. *Demain matin* often appeared as *matin demain* or by the single word *matin* or *demain* on its own.

Language marks awarded were low. A lack of knowledge of tenses, agreements, vocabulary and spelling accounted for this.

Section C (b) – Formal Letter

This was the least popular choice of all the written questions. Specific marks for Layout were awarded here as well as marks for Communication and Language.

Top of page: Many merited 1 mark for general layout. Errors included omission of the year and / or *Irlande*. The incorrect salutation *Cher monsieur / madame* was often used.

Closing formula: Many candidates did not attempt to use the closing formula and opted instead for *à bientôt* or *merci*. When a formula was attempted, marks were lost for mistakes in accents, incorrect spelling and incorrect use of *tu* instead of *vous*.

- C1 Very few candidates gave a satisfactory verb combination for “plan to go”. Incorrect attempts included *je vais / j’alle / je m’intend / j’espère*. Surprisingly, candidates had difficulty in translating “aunt”, which was generally unknown. The words *aintín / t-ante / aunt / auntie* were used instead. *En avril* was well attempted.
- C2 *Je voudrais* was known by some candidates, with others using *j’aime* or *peux-tu*. The word “brochures” was mainly given in English. Attempts at translation of “on the city and the area” were very poor, e.g. *en ville* and *quarter*.
- C3 Generally, very poorly attempted. The word *louer* was mainly unknown, *renter / réserver* being used instead. *Voiture* was often given the wrong gender. *Pour deux semaines* was handled reasonably well, but even here *deux* was often misspelt, as was the word *semaine*.

Very low marks were awarded for Language. There was a poor attempt at tenses and a formal register was often absent. If candidates choose to attempt this question, they would need to learn the layout of a formal letter, and thus gain a potential 6 marks.

Paper II - Listening Comprehension

The CD is common to both Higher and Ordinary Level candidates. The aural test has five sections, with all twenty questions in English, the majority being multi-choice. Section I was the best answered, and less-able candidates scored well here. Section III caused most difficulty. In general, the multiple-choice questions were better attempted than those requiring a written answer.

Section I

1. Well answered.
2. (i) Well answered.
(ii) Often incorrect. “Once a week / every week / once a year / never” were recurrent incorrect answers.
3. Well answered.

Section II

1. Very well answered. However, the reference to *trésors* led some candidates to answer “when she was 13 years old”.
2. Usually correct.
3. Well answered.
4. Candidates had great difficulty with numbers. *Mille* was often mistaken for “million” and *quinze* was often unknown.

Section III

1. (i) “Suburbs” was given by a minority. Many thought *banlieue* was the name of a town and attempted to write it as *Bonne low* or *Bon Lieux*.
(ii) Rarely correct
2. Rarely correct. “To the museum where she works” was a recurrent incorrect answer. *Usine* was sometimes translated as “kitchen / swimming pool”.
3. Rarely correct. *Plancher* was unknown to most candidates.

Section IV

1. Very well answered.
2. Very well answered.
3. Very well answered.
4. Well answered. Incorrect answers included “customers” and “food”.

Section V

1. Reasonably well answered. However, some candidates had difficulty with the 24 hour clock or with numbers generally.
2. Usually correct, with (a) being the most common incorrect answer.
3. Quite well answered. “Teachers / over 18’s / internet / old people” were incorrect answers given.
4. Reasonably well answered. (b) was sometimes offered as an incorrect answer.

3.4 Conclusions

- The 2010 paper proved accessible to Ordinary Level candidates. Results were broadly similar to those of previous years.
- Candidates generally performed better in Questions 3 and 4 of the Reading Comprehension this year, rather than Questions 1 and 2. Examiners noted a lack of basic vocabulary, which candidates would have been expected to have learnt for Junior Certificate.
- The Written Production section continues to pose problems for candidates at this level, with poor knowledge of tenses, vocabulary, and spelling. However, as always, they generally coped well with the Listening Comprehension section of the paper.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- strive to cultivate grammar awareness in students at this level
- revise basic aspects of the syllabus, i.e. numbers, time, pastimes, days, months, expressions of emotion, i.e. all Junior Cycle vocabulary
- ensure that all students can correctly use Present, Passé Composé and Future tenses
- teach students the meaning of key words such as *Citez, Trouvez, Relevez, un mot, une expression, une phrase* in order to avoid incurring penalties in Reading Comprehension questions
- develop in students the skills to extract precise and relevant information from texts
- revise systematically key question words, e.g. *pourquoi, où, qui, quand*
- remind students to answer comprehension questions in the correct language
- teach the required format for a Formal Letter to all students (available in the Appendix of the Marking Scheme)
- encourage students to answer all questions and leave no blanks
- encourage students to remain in the examination centre for the full duration of the examination and to devote any spare time they may have to re-reading and perfecting their work.

It is recommended that students:

- be familiar with the format of the examination paper
- revise all basic Junior Cycle vocabulary
- read all questions carefully and re-read their work on completion of tasks

- become familiar with key words such as *Trouvez, Citez, Relevez, un mot, une expression, une phrase.*
- learn to distinguish between questions requiring quotation and manipulation
- in Reading Comprehension, take care to provide an answer from the relevant section of the text
- answer Reading Comprehension questions in the correct language
- transcribe accurately from the text and avoid penalty for careless transcription
- choose the required number of options in Written Expression and use the time to perfect these, rather than attempting to answer additional questions
- avoid the use of irrelevant extraneous material in Written Expression.
- learn the required layout for a Formal Letter which is available in the Appendix of the Marking Scheme
- write in blue / black ink, as pencil is difficult for examiners to decipher on blue paper
- listen to French CDs, French language radio and television programmes, etc. to help prepare for the Listening Comprehension test
- give only one clear answer in multiple-choice questions.

4. Higher Level

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of candidate performance and the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on the detailed reports submitted by the Assistant Examiners, Advising Examiners, and Chief Advising Examiner at Higher Level. It is hoped that this report will prove helpful to both teachers and students in their classroom practice and in their preparation for future examinations.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following materials:

- The Leaving Certificate French Syllabus
- The Leaving Certificate Higher Level 2010 Written Paper, Listening Comprehension Paper, and Listening Comprehension CD
- The Marking Scheme for the Written Paper (www.examinations.ie)

The French Higher Level examination comprises three components – Written, Aural and Oral. This section of the report deals with Written and Aural components only. The Written paper consists of two sections – Reading Comprehension and Written Expression.

Written Paper

Section I - Compréhension Écrite (120 marks)

Question 1 – A Journalistic Text

Question 2 – A Literary Text

Each of Questions 1 and 2 contain ten segments to be answered in French, followed by one segment to be answered in Irish or English.

Section II - Production Écrite (100 marks)

Question 1 (40 marks)

- Compulsory
- Choice of two Writing Tasks
- 90 words approximately

Questions 2, 3 and 4 (30 marks)

- Choice of two Writing Tasks in each
- 75 words approximately

Candidates are asked to answer Question 1 and two questions from Questions 2, 3 and 4. All questions to be answered in French.

Listening Comprehension Test

There are five Sections in this paper. In 2010 there were seventeen questions, some with sub-sections. The questions are to be answered in either Irish or English.

4.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 14,359 candidates sat the 2010 Leaving Certificate French examination at Higher Level, an increase of 683 on the 2009 figure. The results were broadly similar to those of previous years.

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2007	13,771	12.4	27.6	34.2	23.0	2.5	0.1	0
2008	14,225	13.5	27.2	32.8	23.4	2.9	0.1	0
2009	13,676	10.7	27.3	34.9	23.8	3.0	0.1	0
2010	14,359	12.3	26.5	34.4	24.2	2.4	0.2	0

Table 3: Performance of Higher Level candidates from 2007 to 2010
(Grade data represent percentages)

4.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Paper I - Section 1: Reading Comprehension

Both texts this year proved to be somewhat challenging, although the themes in each were regarded as being familiar and of interest to Leaving Certificate students. Examiners noted that most problems arose when manipulation was required in the answers. Many candidates had difficulty with questions where the answer could not be taken directly from the text, or which required them to read and understand a paragraph as a whole. However, more-able candidates showed an excellent understanding of the material, and were able to achieve high marks in this section.

Certain of the questions required careful reading and concentration on the texts, in keeping with the Syllabus which requires Higher Level candidates to “*explore various levels of meaning within a text*” and to be able to “*work out the implicit inferences of statements*”. However, these were balanced by other more straight-forward questions, where the correct answer would have been easier to identify.

Question 1 - Journalistic Text

1.(i) Generally well answered. Most candidates gained full marks here.

1.(ii) Only the more-able candidates achieved the full 7 marks. The most popular answer, for 6 marks, was *l'épreuve théorique étaient trop compliquées*. For most other candidates, the inclusion of excess gave them a score of 5 Marks.

2.(i) This question caused some problems, as a failure to manipulate *retirer* here resulted in many candidates losing 1 mark. The word *points* was sometimes incorrectly taken to mean “penalty points”.

2.(ii) More-able candidates coped well here, and had no problem in locating the two necessary pieces of information contained within the sentence, and using the correct form of the verb *réussir / être reçu*. Others correctly opted to use the simpler phrase *Ce sera / c'est une faute éliminatoire*. Some candidates, however, lost marks by relying simply on taking expressions from the text, e.g. *Pour être reçu éliminatoires*.

2.(iii) Not well answered. Many candidates failed to recognise *désormais*, or else ignored the instruction *Relevez le mot*, and gave a phrase or a full sentence as an answer. However, others achieved full marks for *(À l')avenir*.

3.(i) Most candidates did well here. The most common incorrect answer included the phrase *De l'ordre de cinq mois dans certains départements*. The *coûts du permis* was less often offered as a correct alternative.

3.(ii) Very well answered.

4. This proved to be challenging for the majority of candidates, as a careful reading of the section was necessary to arrive at the correct answer. Only the more-able candidates chose the right option.

5.(i) Well answered, with several correct options for full marks. Many candidates who did not have the fully correct answer achieved at least 4 marks for *On travaillait avec le Minitel, un vieux outil, mais au moins ça marchait.*

5.(ii) Generally well answered. Marks were sometimes lost for inclusion of excess: *Comme aujourd'hui, ces derniers seront envoyés par la Poste.*

6. Generally well answered. Successful candidates offered points on the improving of road safety, the less complicated theory test, and the reduction in waiting time. Many showed near perfect comprehension of the text. However, some candidates suggested incorrectly that the new driving test would be easier than the current test.

Question 2 - Literary Text

1.(i) Very well answered. Most candidates scored either full marks or else lost 1 mark only for excess by including the words *Un soir* or *appela Khady*.

1.(ii) Very well understood and answered.

2.(i) Well answered. However, some candidates offered (a), possibly because the word *impatience* appeared in that section of the text.

2.(ii) Well answered, although certain candidates seemed to have confused Khady with *la belle-mère*, offering *rentra vite à l'intérieur de la maison et referma la porte derrière elle*. Another common incorrect answer was: *Elle hâta le pas car l'homme devant elle marchait vite.*

3.(i) The only specific grammar question, which was poorly answered. Surprisingly at Higher Level, most candidates did not recognise the *participe présent*. A wide range of incorrect words was offered, e.g. *traversa, posa, tourna, s'assit, pouvait, etc.*

3.(ii) Reasonably well answered. The idea seems to have been understood, but failure to manipulate correctly caused candidates to lose some marks.

4.(i) Not well answered. Many candidates did not see the hint offered by *entendre*, which pointed to the correct answer. They also ignored the word *mot* in the instruction, and gave more than one word in their answer.

4.(ii) This question proved difficult as it appears that *tirés* was not always understood. This led to a lot of answers involving *Les gens devant elle tête*, i.e. stopping before the beginning of the correct expression.

5.(i) Generally well answered. However, the word *putride* was often omitted. Some candidates chose expressions which included the word *bateau*, e.g. *se hissaient dans le bateau*.

5.(ii) Reasonably well answered, although many candidates lost marks for excess. Some grasped the idea of *un tel nombre* without relating it to *peur*. Others connected *peur* to *terreur* in the text, also saw the word *bateau*, and offered: *prise de terreur, elle passa une jambe pardessus le bord du bateau*.

6. Many candidates showed excellent understanding of the story. However, a lack of global comprehension of the text very often resulted in less-able candidates succeeding in offering only one correct point. Problems arose with understanding the basic vocabulary word *belle-mère*, sometimes mistranslated as “nice mother”. The correctly identified points were Khady’s fear and the negative impressions given of the characters around her.

Section II: Production Écrite

Those who performed really well at the written production addressed the issues set out in the tasks and developed them in idiomatic and accurate French. Others, however, relied heavily on learnt-off material without adapting it to the particular demands of the chosen task. Some candidates seem to have learnt by heart generic introductory and closing paragraphs and stock phrases which they felt would suit all topics. In such cases, however, the communicative intention was often stultified as – once the lengthy introduction and conclusion were read – the content relating to the stimulus itself was sparse. Other candidates, who resorted to clichés and proverbs, were unable to mask their lack of real language skills.

Examiners commented that the standard of written French was generally high this year, and that candidates appeared to find the range of topics on offer attractive and stimulating. However, the gap between those who performed really well and those who performed very poorly was once again marked. It is clear that many candidates are taking Higher Level who would be better advised to sit the Ordinary Level paper. Specifically, examiners cited poor performance at basic sentence construction, use of tenses, agreements, accents and negatives.

A small number of candidates answered more questions than was required. This was generally of no benefit to them; in many cases, the decision to do an extra question was to the detriment of the three primary questions where mistakes were made which may have been avoided had candidates not been so rushed. Similarly, many candidates who wrote answers out fully in pencil as rough-work, and then painstakingly re-wrote the entire answers again in pen on their answer-book, wasted much time that could have been more worthwhile spent refining and perfecting their work. In many cases, examiners noted that such candidates scored badly on the Reading Comprehension texts, as they had obviously cut down on the time they should have devoted to this section in order to have additional time for the written production section.

An analysis of the popularity of the written question options (based on a random sample of 780 candidates) gave the following results.

Q.1 (a)	Q.1 (b)	Q.2 (a)	Q.2 (b)	Q.3 (a)	Q.3 (b)	Q.4 (a)	Q.4 (b)
16%	84%	78%	11%	34%	16%	44%	25%

For the compulsory Q.1, the question on emigration – part (b) – was more popular than the driving test – part (a). As in previous years, Q.2 (a), the *journal intime*, was the most popular of the other topics.

Q.1 (a)

This question required candidates to write an account of a real or imaginary driving test. No technical knowledge of an actual driving test was needed, and candidates were free to focus on the theory or practical test, as they wished. As in other years, there was again a lot of evidence to suggest that many candidates were unable to write a simple *récit*. This was due to lack of suitable vocabulary and an inability to use the Passé Composé and Imparfait effectively. Some candidates merely transcribed material on the driving test from the reading comprehension text. Others described the morning before or the aftermath of the test, with very little on the event itself.

Other candidates ignored the instruction in the stimulus material to *Racontez ce qui s'est passé* and the word *récit*, and attempted instead to treat it as a discussion question. It was evident in many cases that candidates were using prepared essays on e.g. driving accidents, drink driving, the evils of driving on Irish roads, etc. The introduction of such irrelevant material, and the failure to answer the question asked, meant that such candidates had to be marked from the bottom or middle category of the Marking Grid, and not from the top category.

Some of the more successful candidates entered merrily into the spirit of the *récit*, with some very humorous offerings about nightmare experiences for driving instructors. It was not always obvious if their accounts were real or imaginary. Some examples:

- *Je viens de passer mon permis de conduire.*
- *J'ai eu un génial examinateur. Il était très sympa*
- *J'ai téléphoné à ma mère et elle est contente pour moi.*
- *“Bon courage ma petite”...j’entends ma mère qui referma la porte derrière moi...tu vas l’avoir ma petite...*
- *Je n’ai pas roulé trop vite. J’ai même évité un petit chat qui traversa la route au feu rouge.*
- *L’examinatrice était tres sympa et quand je suis entré la voiture elle m’a donné un chocolat*
- *Je ne peux pas rapeller comment je l’ai fait mais brusquement la voiture était dans une piscine*

Q.1 (b)

Clearly, candidates had prepared *la crise économique* in the course of the year and their success here depended on the extent to which they adapted the learnt material to the task set. As ever, they performed best when they wrote in a personal, spontaneous, natural way.

Most candidates agreed or disagreed with the statement. Many, of course, referred to the recession and the state of the economy to put forward their rationale. Some wove it in very appropriately, others concentrated too much on the financial crisis without tying it in properly to the question of emigration. Nearly all related it to young people in Ireland, often with personal anecdotes about their own brother / sister being forced to emigrate. Some cited other good reasons to emigrate such as cultural interests, broadening the mind, etc. These were sometimes very appropriately included, in addition to comments on economic necessities. A few candidates appeared to be confused, and wrote about immigration instead of emigration.

Some examples of candidates' work:

- *Chaque jour beaucoup de magasins et d'usines ferment leurs portes.*
- *Il n'y a pas de travail ici en Irlande (en ce moment).*
- *J'espère trouver un poste ici après le bac. Sinon, je devrai partir comme mon frère et ma soeur. Ce sera triste pour mes parents.*
- *On pourra goûter une autre mode de la vie, la culture, la langue.*
- *Je pense que les conséquences de l'émigration sont quelquefois positives. Sans doute c'est l'occasion de découvrir une nouvelle culture.*

Some candidates veered away from the topic by concentrating too much on the experience of immigrants who came to Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years. Racism was sometimes irrelevantly evoked, and less successful candidates had difficulty expressing their ideas.

Q.2 (a)

As always the *journal intime* was a very popular question. The stimulus in the question was rather long this year and some candidates simply rewrote it, often in poorly manipulated language. However, it was extremely well done by many candidates who often wrote quite a few words in excess of the requirement. There was good evidence of the candidate entering into the appropriate register. Most referred to the stimulus and reacted appropriately. There was some confusion of time period, Christmas/New Year. Very few used the *plus que parfait* when it would have been more appropriate but many used the *passé composé* well. Here are some examples of what was seen on scripts:

- *...je viens d'annuler ma grande fête chez moi pour le Nouvel An. Quelles mauvaises nouvelles. J'ai envie de fondre en larmes.*
- *J'attendais la fête avec impatience...maintenant je passerai le Nouvel An...avec mes parents à cause du temps.*

- *Mes parents me veulent chanter Auld Angs Ayne avec eux, et ils sont chanteurs affreuse.*
- *j'étais sur la point de fait mon maquillage quand j'ai vu la météo. Quoi-faire?*
- *...maintenant je passerai mon nuit devant la télé avec Pat Kenny où Ryan Tubridy. Quelle horreur!*
- *Il neige! Neige en Irland!*
- *Le réchauffement climatique est devenu un grand probleme aujourd'hui, la neige, c'est fou ICI.*

Finally, candidates tend to insist on using phrases in the diary which often do not suit. *J'ai du pain sur la planche* as an ending to a diary is pointless. *La nuit porte conseil* is often used when there is no dilemma. A simple, authentic, personal reaction would be more appropriate.

Q.2 (b)

This was not a popular option. Where selected, there was generally an attempt to include all five points. Some candidates unwisely opted for this question and it did not serve them well. Many who attempted it failed to adhere consistently to the register chosen, in other words *tu* and *vous* were often intermingled in the same answer.

Here are some of the most common errors in the order of the points of the stimulus:

- Candidates had difficulty with using *attendre avec impatience*, often using an incorrect tense or even the infinitive: *j'attendre la feté avec l'impatience*.
- Many used *attendre* or *attender*, instead of *assister* for attending a wedding.
- *Mariage* was often misspelt (e.g. using the English form) and those who did not know the word for "Spring" in French either omitted it or replaced it with a month (*avril*).
- Many could not spell *malheureusement*. They had difficulty conveying the idea that the flights were expensive. Here is a typical example: *L'avion cout tres cher*. "Because of" was frequently interpreted as *parce que*.
- The time and date posed problems for many.
- *Deux* became *douze*, the day was sometimes omitted or *samedi* or *dimanche* were used instead, and some candidates were unable to spell *avril* or to write down the correct month. Days and months were often spelt with capital letters.
- The fourth point was always attempted but many did not know the verb *réserver*, and *salle* was sometimes used instead of *chambre*. "Near" was not always translated, with other prepositions or none being used, such as *à côté de* or *proche*.
- Using the correct format for questions proved difficult.
- Various tenses of *vouloir* were used and many candidates did not know the word *chapeaux*. Some alternatives offered were *bonnet / bateau / huitres / cap-tête / hatta* and *des vetements de tete*.
- Very few candidates mentioned *des invités*. The word for "wedding" was often not known.

Q.3 (a)

Candidates had plenty of vocabulary to deal with this task and often achieved good marks. Many mentioned obesity, but not too many candidates digressed too far. Many successfully made their answer personal and others referred to health and the advantage of sport and a healthy lifestyle. Although there was some irrelevant material, most candidates managed to keep to the point. Very few used the term *restauration rapide*. Many used the popular French abbreviation *chez McDo*.

Some examples:

- *D'après moi c'est facile de grossir dans une société comme la nôtre. Tout le monde est à la bourre donc ils grignotent les friandises.*
- *...la vie moderne c'est la course et quand les adultes rentrent le travail le soir, ils ne veulent pas préparer un dîner, c'est trop fatiguant.*
- *Le government devrait organiser une campagne nationale et encourager une alimentation équilibré.*

Many suggested that going to McDonalds occasionally was acceptable:

- *J'y vais une fois par semaine quand je sors avec mes amis.*
- *tout le monde va y avec les copains et c'est n'est pas trop.*

Less successful candidates entered into the spirit of the question and tried to make some good points, but lacked the linguistic skills to make themselves easily understood by a *Français unilingue*.

Q.3 (b)

This question was not very popular. Some candidates concentrated more on the value of being in a club – which was not what was required – or else spoke about conditions in the Third World or the earthquake in Haiti. Others did not seem to have any concept of what volunteering entailed, apparently thinking it just meant “giving money”. However, there were some outstanding answers in which candidates, for example, looked at the work of various charity organisations in Ireland, the work of volunteers for the GAA, and the work of singers and celebrities for charitable organisations. Others mentioned the fact that with so much unemployment, people now had time to give back to society. Here are some examples of candidates' work:

- *Faire un peu de travail bénévole c'est une très bonne idée. Il ne s'agit pas de travailler dans le tiers monde, il s'agit aider les gens dans votre quartier peut être la “tidy towns” ou donner votre temps avec le GAA.*
- *Personnellement je n'ai aucune temps cette année à cause du Bac. L'année prochaine j'aiderais le club de foot dans mon quartier. Je donnerais beaucoup d'expérience.*

Q.4 (a)

Many candidates did address the issue of the comparison between boys and girls, but some merely resorted to an essay on *La Mode*. Many cited male celebrities as a source of inspiration and encouragement to boys to dress well. Others mentioned a boy friend or brother(s) who had an interest in fashion:

- *...regarder les célébrités de la mode, la plupart dont hommes, par exemple Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger et Philip Tracey (un homme irlandais).*
- *Pour moi, j'ai un frère qui adore la mode. Il dépense environ 30 euro tous les mois en vêtements. La style est très important pour il.*
- *...Ce n'est pas le cas pour les garçons. Ils préfèrent être en plein air, jouer au basket et ils n'aiment pas faire du shopping.*
- *J'ai un petit ami et il est vraiment masculin...mais à vrai dire j'espère que qu'il devenir plus ouverte comme les autres garçons...l'attitude des garçons sont changer et je l'adore....*

Many were repetitive, using the quotation at both the beginning and the end of their answers.

Q.4 (b)

Although this was not a popular question, those who attempted it performed quite well. Certain candidates misinterpreted it, or at least didn't seem to be very sure of what the question meant. Some treated the subject of absenteeism without any reference to offering money as an incentive. Many had difficulties with conditional clauses using *Si* in this answer. Here are some examples of candidates' work:

- *Fantastique ! L'argent pour travailler a l'école, quel chance !*
- *C'est pour tu que tu travailles et non pour ganger un peu d'argent.*
- *Il y a beaucoup d'étudiants et il n'y a pas d'argent pour tout le monde.*
- *L'éducation est important dans notre société. Mais c'est un choix. Ce n'est pas la responsabilité des profs de pousser les élèves envers l'éducation.*
- *Est-ce que si la prof n'aime pas l'élèves ? Cette élève ne recevra pas de l'argent.*
- *...mais peut-être que ce sera un succès. On regarda la situation en France !*

Paper II – Listening Comprehension Test

Examiners reported general satisfaction with this year's Listening Comprehension Test. The clarity, pace, articulation, accents and topics all seemed to favour the candidates. However, failure to recognise certain crucial vocabulary (appropriate for this level) caused problems for candidates, e.g. *agressé, poids, sol, os, loyer, trou, plat du jour, télécommande*. In addition, basic Junior Certificate level words such as *mois, genoux, équipe, mille, bureau, usine, avant, toit, pluie, monnaie, and quartier* were not always known.

Section 1

1. Very well answered.
- 2.(i) Well answered. Certain candidates lost marks for omission of the word “parents”
- 2.(ii) Generally correctly answered, although some candidates gave “week” instead of “month”.
3. Reasonably well answered, although certain candidates failed to grasp the meaning of *agressé par des bandes*.

Section II

- 1.(ii) Very well answered.
- 2.(a) & (b) Most candidates managed to get one correct point, the most popular being: “Study a topic in the library”.
- 3.(a) & (b) Not well answered. Problems arose with *sol* and *genoux*. The result was a lot of reference to “being in the sun” and very few to “being on the ground / on their knees”.
- 4.(i) Very few candidates recognised *os*. They were more successful with *taureau*, but the context was rarely fully correct.
- 4.(ii) Reasonably well answered, although the number of years was rarely correctly identified.

Section III

- 1.(i) Well answered. However, examiners expressed surprise at how many candidates did not refer to buying a house, achieving only partial marks for “moving”.
- 1.(ii) Not very well answered. Many candidates did not understand *loyer*. Several picked up *tête* and thus many referred to headaches in their answers. Some candidates even mistook *dix pour cent* for *dix personnes*.
- 2.(i) Not very well answered. The majority of candidates understood the idea of “two buses”, but seemed to misinterpret *bureau* (e.g. as “bank”). The confusion between *deux* and *douze* was in evidence yet again.
- 2.(ii) Not very well answered as *usine* was not widely understood. Many candidates translated it as “museum”. A few took *mari* for Marie.

3.(i) Not well answered as, surprisingly, very few understood the basic preposition *avant*, although they picked up “The Second World War”.

3.(ii) Quite well answered. Problems arose with translating *toit*, but grasping the concept of “hole / roof” merited partial marks.

Section IV

1. Not very well answered. Most candidates sensed that there was a price / cost issue, but failed to grasp the detail.

2.(a) & (b) Reasonably well answered. Most candidates understood the idea of “refusing to buy”, but rarely offered a second correct answer.

3.(a) & (b) Reasonably well answered. Again, one correct answer was the limit of most candidates’ achievement. Many correctly grasped the idea of the French tipping less, but could not make the comparison between the French and the Americans in relation to tipping.

4.(i) Well answered. The most popular correct answers were based on “looking at prices / menus”

4.(ii) Reasonably well answered, although the details were not always fully understood. The most popular answer was “tourists”.

Section V

1. Well answered.

2.(i) Well answered.

2.(ii) Generally well answered. However, many candidates referred to “sites for alcohol”.

3. Not well answered as so many candidates failed to understand *télécommande*.

4.4 Conclusions

- The 2010 French Leaving Certificate Higher Level examination produced some excellent work and is indicative of the hard work put in by many candidates and the comprehensive preparation carried out by their teachers in the classroom.
- Examiners again felt that a high proportion of candidates who chose Higher Level this year, and who struggled with many aspects of the paper, would have been better advised to select Ordinary Level instead.
- Although some candidates had difficulty with certain segments of the Reading Comprehension, most candidates fared reasonably well overall in these two questions.
- With regard to Written Production, simple, accurate writing which addressed the stimulus material was rewarded. Learnt-off material with inappropriate clichés and proverbs, poorly adapted or irrelevant to the question set, was of limited value.
- As in previous years, many candidates had difficulty with the Listening Comprehension section, despite the clarity and appropriate pace of the CD. A lack of basic vocabulary was evident.

4.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- ensure that students have regular, balanced practice in all of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing
- remind students of the importance of recognising the meaning of *trouvez, citez, relevez, un mot, une expression, une phrase, un élément, etc.*, as penalties incurred in the Reading Comprehension would be greatly reduced by this knowledge
- encourage students to read French literature so as to become accustomed to following a story line and gain a global understanding of a passage
- encourage students to explore various levels of meaning within a text, rather than focus only on what is explicitly stated
- constantly revise basic grammar, including the main verb tenses, agreement of adjectives, plurals, negative and interrogative forms, and prepositions
- ensure students can pick out the main grammatical elements in a sentence
- advise students to devote time to learning to write simple and grammatically correct sentences
- advise students that they will score better in the Production Écrite section of the paper if they write an authentic, personal response which focuses on the question asked, rather than attempt ‘pre-packaged’ paragraphs from text-books or notes which are not relevant to the task

- ensure students know how to write a clear account in the past, using Passé Composé and Imparfait tenses, as required by a typical *récit* question
- teach students how to structure a written passage, with introduction / conclusion / paragraphs, etc. and clear development of points
- encourage students to devote any extra time in the examination to reviewing the work they have already done, rather than attempt additional questions
- advise students not to spend too much time writing and re-writing answers to the Written Production section, if it is to the detriment of the Reading Comprehension section of the paper
- revise basic vocabulary already learned for Junior Certificate, e.g. family, home, numbers, dates, clothes, buildings, food, etc., as these are particularly important in the Listening Comprehension passages
- encourage students to listen to French tapes, CDs, and French language radio and television programmes to help prepare for the Listening Comprehension test.

It is recommended that students:

- be very aware of the significance of words such as: *Citez, Relevez, Trouvez, Phrase, Expression, Mot, Élément*, as used in Reading Comprehension questions
- practise manipulation skills, being careful to make the necessary adjustments to verbs, pronouns, adjectives, etc., especially when changing Direct Speech into Indirect Speech or First Person narrative into Third Person narrative
- practise identifying grammar elements in a paragraph
- learn to navigate carefully through a literary extract in order to understand character, motivation, sequence of events, etc.
- try to read some French short stories or even a short novel as preparation for the Reading Comprehension, rather than relying solely on past papers
- remember that answers in comprehension passages must make complete sense, so care should be taken to begin and end a quotation in the correct place
- remember, in Q.6 of the Reading Comprehension, that points should be very precise, that quotations and references must support them, and that the two spaces provided should be used to make two separate points
- consider reading Q.6 first, as it often gives a sense of the direction or focus of the passage
- read French newspapers online
- for Production Écrite, choose very carefully the written tasks that will allow them to display their strengths
- note that prepared material must be adapted to new context to ensure relevance
- avoid putting in a learnt-off paragraph unless it is relevant, as it will gain no marks, no matter how excellent it is
- read the stimulus in the question very carefully, and be sure that they know what they are being asked to do
- avoid focusing on only one word in the stimulus, e.g. *la mode*, as it may not necessarily be appropriate to the answer required
- practise narrative writing in order to develop effective techniques, in particular correct use of Passé Composé and Imparfait tenses

- practise formulation of questions / requests / enquiries, etc. as these may be required in diaries, letters, messages or e-mails
- be conscious of using the appropriate register, e.g. avoiding the use of slang in formal writing, and knowing when to use *tu* as opposed to *vous*
- revise and refresh vocabulary / structures / idioms / techniques prepared for Junior Certificate
- make sure to demonstrate their skills by using a variety of tenses
- write what they can say rather than what they want to say
- always double-check agreements, verb endings, pronouns and prepositions before leaving a piece of writing
- write in a personal, authentic, spontaneous way, expressing their own ideas, preferences, opinions and experiences
- realise that simple ideas, directly and effectively expressed in correct, idiomatic French, generally work better than clichés, proverbs, and ‘showy’ pre-prepared phrases used inappropriately for their own sake
- structure ideas and use paragraphs to guide the reader through the Introduction, Development and Conclusion
- avoid writing at much greater length than required by the instructions, as the more they write, the greater the tendency to make mistakes
- remember that three written tasks are required and that rather than answering a fourth question, which is unlikely to get a higher mark, the time might be more usefully spent revising and perfecting the required three
- avoid spending an excess amount of time writing their answers first in full as ‘rough work’, and subsequently re-writing them in their answer book, as this may lead them to cut short the time needed for the Reading Comprehension passages
- listen to French radio or TV stations, e.g. TV5, as practice for the Aural test
- practise listening to the whole sentence rather than the ‘punch line’ in the Listening Comprehension.
- listen for the idea / concept rather than just the key words alone
- avoid writing their answers straight away, but wait until after the second or third hearing, as this will enable them to identify more detail and nuance
- make their answers as detailed and precise as possible
- practise numbers
- avoid using pencil as it tends to fade and is very difficult to read on pink paper
- try not to cross out a lot of material as it leads to very untidy work which is often extremely difficult to read.