



JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

2002

FRENCH

HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Modern Languages syllabus for Junior Certificate is common and communicative in character. It is examined at two levels, Higher and Ordinary.

The analysis of candidate performance and the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report have been richly informed by the work and reports of the Chief Advising Examiners at both levels, Advising Examiners and Assistant Examiners. It is to be hoped therefore that the report will be of practical use to Principals, teachers and students alike and that it will serve both to inform classroom practice, and to enhance examination performance.

The report, to be of optimal benefit, should be read in conjunction with the following materials:

- The French Syllabus for Junior Certificate Programme in Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 2001-2002.
Government Publications, Postal Trade Section, 4-5, Harcourt Road, Dublin. Tel: 01-6476834. Cost € 12,70.
- The Junior Certificate Ordinary Level Written Paper and Listening Comprehension Cassette 2002.
The D.E.S., Examinations Branch, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel: 0902-74621.
- The Marking Scheme for the Written Paper.
DES website: <http://www.education.ie>
- The following documents which relate to the optional oral examination, and which are available from the DES, Examinations Branch:
 - (a) Circular S61/01
 - (b) Guidelines for the Administration and Marking of the Optional School-based Oral Test

The Examination & its Structure

The examination in its full form assesses a candidate's competence in four skills – aural comprehension, reading comprehension, written production and oral production. The Oral Examination continues to be an optional component and the vast majority of students sit the Written Examination only. Candidates who do not present for the oral examination are marked out of a total of 320 marks.

Oral Examination: The optional oral examination is school based and teacher administered and assessed. Lasting 5 to 10 minutes, the test follows a format chosen by the teacher himself/herself (details to be sent to the Examinations Branch) or that suggested by the Department of Education and Science. The performances are taped and retained in the schools for possible moderation.

The suggested oral examination format comprises two parts:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|----------|----------------|
| (a) | General Questions | 32 marks | (8 x 4 marks) |
| (b) | Role Plays | 48 marks | (2 x 24 marks) |

Candidates are required to accomplish each communicative task. They are assessed on their ability to accomplish the given communicative task in a comprehensible manner and on their proficiency in pronunciation, vocabulary and structures.

Written Examination: The examination is of 2.5 hours duration for each of the two levels. The paper comprises three sections:

		Higher	Ordinary
Section I	Listening Comprehension	140 marks	140 marks
Section II	Reading Comprehension	100 marks	120 marks
Section III	Written Expression	<u>80 marks</u>	<u>60 marks</u>
		(320 marks)	(320 marks)
Oral examination (optional)		80 marks	80 marks
Total		400 marks	400 marks

In Section 1, candidates are required to listen to a number of conversations (usually five) in the target language and to answer the accompanying questions in English or Irish. They are assessed on their ability to comprehend the material.

Section 11 comprises a number, and variety, of reading comprehension exercises. Questions are asked in English/ Irish and again candidates are assessed on their ability to understand the material as presented in the target language.

Section 111, the Written Expression section of the paper, tests productive writing skills. Candidates are required to answer two questions in this section. All candidates are required to write a letter in the target language based on their choice of a number of stimuli. Candidates have a further task, which may be to write a postcard or a note, again aided by the stimuli provided. Candidates are assessed on their ability to respond appropriately and accurately in the target language.

Participation rates

60,151 candidates sat the Junior Certificate Examination in 2002. A total of **40,521** candidates presented for the French Examination. This figure represents **67%** of the total examination candidature for 2002. Within the cohort of French candidates, again 67% sat the Higher Level paper and 33% the Ordinary Level. These percentages are consistent with that of recent years, as can be seen from Table 1, where approximately two thirds of candidates take the Higher Level and one third take the Ordinary Level each year. The numbers taking Higher Level French have also stabilised after a slight decline in recent years.

Table 1. Junior Certificate French participation rates 1999-2002 at each level

Year	Total French Candidature	Higher Level	% of Total	Ordinary Level	% of Total
1999	43,804	29,925	68%	13,879	32%
2000	42,062	28,651	68%	13,411	32%
2001	41,709	27,245	65%	14,464	35%
2002	40,521	27,154	67%	13,367	33%

2. PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

A total of **27,154** candidates sat the 2002 examination at Higher Level while **13,367** took the Ordinary Level. This year **453** candidates (1% of all French candidates) presented for the optional oral examination. Of these candidates 378 sat the written examination at Higher Level and 75 at Ordinary Level.

Table 2. Performance of candidates in French in 2002

Level	Grade	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
Higher	Number		2,816	6,849	8,734	7,033	1,517	193	12
	%	100	10.4	25.2	32.2	25.9	5.6	0.7	0.0
Ordinary	%	100	1.6	20.0	34.8	30.8	10.6	2.1	0.1

At Higher Level, the combined A+B+C result for 2002 was 67.8% and the combined E+F+NG result was 6.3%. At Ordinary Level, the combined A+B+C result was 56.4% and the combined E+F+NG result was 12.8%. Comparative tables of results for 2001, 2000 and 1999 are provided.

Table 3. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Higher Level French in 1999-2001

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1999	29,925	7.2	24.6	36.8	26.8	4.2	0.4	0.0
2000	28,651	11.5	27.4	32.3	23.1	5.0	0.7	0.0
2001	27,245	9.6	24.8	35.0	25.7	4.3	0.5	0.0

The results in Tables 2 and 3 show that this year's outcome is broadly in line with that of previous years for Higher Level.

Table 4. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Ordinary Level French in 1999-2001

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1999	13,879	1.9	18.5	32.5	31.6	12.9	2.5	0.1
2000	13,411	3.9	28.8	34.2	24.6	7.3	1.2	0.0
2001	14,464	1.3	17.2	35.3	31.1	11.8	3.1	1.1

The Ordinary Level results for 2002 are broadly in line with those of previous years, 2000 excepted, when there was a significant drop in the failure rate and a consequent rise in the numbers achieving a Grade D or higher.

The numbers attaining an A grade have increased slightly, by 0.3%, in 2002 when compared to the figures for 2001. There has also been a drop in the failure rate, from 15% in 2001 to 12.8% in 2002. The 2002 failure rate of 12.8% is very close to the average failure rate of 12.95% calculated on the results of the last four years.

The data relating to percentage of candidates reaching Grade D or more again shows a slight rise in 2002 when compared to 2001, 87.2% in 2002 as compared with 84.9% in 2001. There was a rise of 2.3% in the percentage of candidates in this category. As in the case of the percentage figures for those candidates failing to reach Grade D, the figures for this year are very close to the average figure obtained when calculated on the results of the last four years.

Please see Appendix 1 for an analysis of performance by gender at Ordinary Level and of results for 75 candidates who took the optional oral examination at this level.

3. ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE: HIGHER LEVEL

The detailed analysis of candidates' performance in the different sections of the examination, which now follows, is best read in conjunction with the published marking scheme, which can be downloaded from the Department of Education and Science web site, www.education.ie

SECTION I: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

(140 marks)

There are five parts in this section, A, B, C, D and E.

Part A

This multiple-choice question is traditionally regarded as an easy introduction to the examination. This year candidates did very well on the first and second passages but the third passage caused difficulties for a number of candidates.

Part B

Overall, the questions relating to the first speaker, Philippe, were answered better than those relating to the second speaker, Odile.

First Speaker: Philippe

Philippe's age and birthday were identified correctly as was his father's job and his favourite type of music. The city he lived in – Cherbourg – did cause problems. A number of candidates failed to identify the city as was evident from the variety of attempts at spelling the name.

Philippe's future career was identified by the majority of candidates, but examiners expressed some surprise that a significant number of candidates failed to identify correctly one or other of the two school subjects which Philippe was studying. The most common error seen was the answer "PE" or "Physical Education" for "la physique".

Second Speaker: Odile

Questions on the speaker's number of brothers, and on her age were well answered. When asked about where she worked, most candidates opted for the answer "la librairie" and gave the correct response "bookshop". However, a significant number of candidates answered incorrectly with "library". This was disappointing as teachers point out to students that the word "librairie" is one of the "faux amis" and students at Higher Level would be expected to know this.

Candidates had no difficulty in giving one of her pastimes or in identifying her fiancé's job, but the question about when they were getting married, elicited a poorer response. Many could not identify the common expression "l'année prochaine".

The question on where the house was situated was not well answered. In the final sub-section, while candidates noted the connection to "work", some were unable to elaborate on what the problem would be, which was necessary for full marks.

Part C

The majority of candidates coped well with questions in this section. However, the spelling for "Dijon" was rarely fully correct in 1(a).

In 2(a), candidates recognised "anniversaire" as "birthday", but not many specified that it was the speaker's "wife's birthday", a detail which was needed for full marks.

The spelling of the surname "Arnauld" was very good. Examiners commented on the clear improvement in the recognition of French spelling since the introduction of this type of question in 2000.

3(a) and (b) were answered without apparent difficulty. The first reference to the "euro" was handled well by most candidates.

4(a) and (b): Candidates were well prepared for this question on a telephone number.

5(a) and (b): The word "gare" was correctly identified, although some candidates gave extra incorrect information. An example of this was "*bringing* his brother to the station".

Part D

This section was generally well answered. The majority of candidates coped well with Questions 1(a), 2(b), (c), and 3(a).

"Deux mois" in 1(b) proved difficult. There was some confusion of "équitation" and "natation" in 2(a). In the final segment, examiners were disappointed to note that a number of candidates did not know the meaning of "glaces". The preposition "en face de" was also not understood.

Part E

In this sub-section, news items 1 and 4 were answered best, although in 4(a), “Barcelona” was given as the answer instead of “Spain”, even though the question specified the country. This illustrates a point made in many examiners’ reports that some candidates do not read the actual question carefully enough.

In 3(b), the word “vêtements” was not always understood. In the question on weather (5), marks were lost when candidates identified the correct words but reversed the order of the two answers.

SECTION II – READING COMPREHENSION

(100 marks)

There were nine texts in the Reading Comprehension section including one long passage. The overall number of questions asked in this section was reduced to forty this year. Examiners in their reports welcomed this change, as it was considered that this allowed candidates more time to study the material in the comprehension passages.

Text 1: Many candidates scored full marks in the opening multiple-choice question.

Text 2: There was good knowledge shown of the days of the week in (a). However, many candidates failed to recognise “en tombant” in (b). In (c), the word “gendarmerie” was not understood. As in a previous question where a lack of knowledge of French cities was evident, the failure of many Higher Level students to recognise “gendarmerie”, highlights the need for more time to be spent in class on aspects of French civilisation.

Text 3: Questions on this text were well answered. In (d), a number of candidates did not recognise the term “montres”.

Text 4: Examiners remarked on the lack of care shown by candidates when reading this question. It clearly stated that the *name* of the TV programme was required, yet a number of candidates only gave the *time* of the programme.

Text 5: Answering here was of a high standard with many scripts awarded full marks.

Text 6: Parts (a) and (b) caused no difficulty, but (c) proved to be a stumbling block for many candidates who did not understand “défavorisés” or the other clues in the passage which would have led them to the correct answer.

Text 7: This was perhaps the single most demanding text on the examination paper in terms of vocabulary and syntax. In the event, examiners noted that candidates acquitted themselves well on this text. Parts (a) and (d) were answered correctly by the majority. In (b), many were able to give one of the regiment’s duties, although only a minority could identify a second duty.

Text 8: A surprise here was the high number of candidates who did not recognise the nationality of the person in the text. “Écossais” is a word with which students would be expected to be familiar. The incorrect answer “Greek” was encountered as frequently as the correct answer. Parts (b) and (c) were well answered. Candidates were also awarded high marks in (d) where a number of possible answers were accepted.

Text 9: This text on Sophie Marceau, although long, was considered by examiners to be accessible for candidates, both in terms of its subject matter, and the vocabulary used. However only a small number of candidates gained high marks here. The main difficulties were in the following areas:

- (b) Many candidates had trouble understanding “vendaient” even though the verb “vendre” features in most textbooks as the typical example of a regular “re” verb.
- (c) Few candidates knew the meaning of “routier” or “tenait une brasserie”.
- (e) Candidates were unable to account for Sophie’s annoyance in the shop.
- (f) Instead of “Cannes”, many candidates opted for the incorrect answer “Nice”, which illustrated a lack of comprehension of the text.

SECTION III - WRITTEN EXPRESSION

(80 marks)

Letter

While the majority of candidates were awarded good marks for format (3 or 4 out of 5), it is regrettable that marks continue to be lost here. It may be useful to stress to students again that the only acceptable introduction for the letter continues to be “Cher/Chère”.

Five communicative tasks were set in this question. Examiners found that the tasks allowed candidates plenty of scope to develop their answers, and were pleased that most candidates attempted all five points. Each point was usually set down in a separate paragraph.

The first three points were well attempted.

For point four, many candidates found it difficult to express the term “school trip”, while lack of familiarity with the future tense also hindered communication.

In point five, formulating a simple question proved difficult. This was disappointing, as a similar task appeared on a Higher Level paper in recent years.

In general, the standard of vocabulary in the letter was good. Also, there were a number of candidates who showed an excellent command of French, both of idiom and grammar. These candidates were marked very highly for language and communication. However, across the broad range of candidates, the standard of the writing was much lower. Understanding and use of the basic tenses (past, present, future) was poor. Use of the Imperfect Tense was rare and the Conditional even more so. Adjectives and object pronouns were seldom used correctly. Sentences with mistakes such as “Ils a donné moi un cadeau” were all too frequent.

Postcard

Performance on the postcard task was of a considerably higher standard than was the case in the letter. The tasks set were accessible and the standard of written expression was better.

Point one was usually the best answered of the three.

In point two, relating to the weather, it was disappointing that some candidates confused the words “froid” and “chaud”. It was also noticeable that a proportion of candidates ignored the phrase “*a bit* cold”, and so failed to communicate the point in its entirety.

In point three, lack of knowledge of the future tense and of the vocabulary for “going shopping”, hindered full communication.

4. GENERAL COMMENTS (HIGHER LEVEL)

This paper was very well received and well answered by many candidates. It was balanced in that no one section posed any greater problem to candidates than any other section. In particular, examiners considered that the Written Expression section was pitched at the right level. However, some expressed concern at the low standard of French grammar evident in some of the scripts marked.

There was evidence of high levels of achievement and competence in the work of a number of candidates. A significant improvement in spelling and in numbers was also noted in many scripts. Students need to increase their familiarity with expressions of time, with verb tenses, and with the use of prepositions. Using French as the language of communication in the classroom is the most effective way of bringing about continuing improvements in French.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (HIGHER LEVEL)

It is recommended

- That the very good work being done in the communicative teaching of French be continued.
- That students be given the opportunity to increase their awareness of French culture and civilisation.
- That teachers and students use French as the language of communication in the classroom.

6. ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE: ORDINARY LEVEL

The detailed analysis of candidates' performance in the different sections of the examination, which now follows, is best read in conjunction with the published marking scheme, which can be downloaded from the Department of Education and Science web site, www.education.ie

SECTION 1: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

There are five parts in this section of the paper: Parts A, B, C, D and E. To their credit many candidates attempted all questions in this section. Performance was best in Part D and weakest in Part B.

Part A. Dialogues:

Most candidates acquitted themselves well here. However only the better candidates got full marks. Candidates did best in Q.1, were somewhat less successful in Q.2, and had greatest difficulty with Q.3.

Accurate recognition of the colour 'jaune' caused a difficulty for quite a number of candidates. The expressions "se faire mal" and "se fouler le genou" proved to be difficult for many candidates.

Part B. Personal Presentations:

Candidates did least well in this part of Section 1. Whilst almost all candidates coped very well with Q. 1, Pierre Dumont, the vast majority had significant difficulty with Q.2, Odile Lardin, and indeed some candidates left this question unanswered.

Q. 1 (Pierre Dumont)

In Q. 1 candidates were successful in identifying Pierre's age, a school subject which he likes, his father's occupation and Pierre's own choice of future career. Some had difficulty in correctly identifying the number of sisters he has.

Candidates appeared to find it easier to recognise 'physique' than to recognise 'chimie'. Where subjects were identified incorrectly, the most commonly found answer was 'music'.

Q.2 (Odile Lardin)

Candidates identified Odile's pastimes with some ease but had considerable difficulty with the remaining parts of this question.

Odile's occupation caused difficulty because most candidates confused 'librairie' with 'library'.

Difficulty in comprehending the term 'moniteur de ski' and in recognising basic numbers and the basic expression of time 'l'année prochaine' meant a generally poor performance in the other parts of this question.

Part C. Conversations:

This part of Section 1 was well answered by the vast majority of candidates.

Candidates experienced greatest success with Q.1 and 3, much success with Q.2 and Q.4 and, perhaps surprisingly, least success with Q. 5.

Accurate recognition, of the vowel 'u' caused difficulty in Q.2, as did accurate identification of the numeral '63' in Q.4.

Examiners expressed concern at the inability of very many candidates to correctly identify 'Saturday' in Q.5.

Part D. Extended Conversation:

Candidates scored very well here with many gaining full marks.

Where any difficulty was experienced it was in Q.2 where some candidates confused 'équitation' with 'natation' and some failed to recognise the expression of time 'l'après-midi'.

Part E. News Items

Candidates did reasonably well in this part of Section 1. Whilst most did well in Questions 1 and 2, many experienced difficulties in 3, 4 and 5. The word 'piscine' was not recognised by many candidates. Perhaps the expression 'il fait frais' was not familiar to many candidates.

SECTION 11: READING COMPREHENSION

There were six parts in this section. This year's paper saw a reduction in the number of items to be read.

Candidates did best in this section. Many achieved high marks. Examiners were pleased to note that most candidates attempted all questions and that they adhered to the specific instructions for each question, ticking only the appropriate boxes in Q.3 for example.

Candidates did especially well in Questions 3 and 4 and quite well in Questions 1 and 2. Greater difficulty was experienced with Questions 5 and 6, with candidates finding most difficulty with Q.5.

Q.1. Candidates were well prepared for this type of question. Examiners did however remark that fewer candidates than in other years attained full marks here.

Some candidates confused 'consigne automatique' with 'ascenseur'.

Q.2. Most candidates attained high marks here. Parts (iv) and (v) were found to be the more challenging. Accurate recognition of the verb ‘fumer’ proved to be a serious challenge for many candidates.

Q.3. The vast majority of candidates scored high marks in this question with many attaining full marks.

Examiners’ remarks suggest that perhaps those who were most successful here were those candidates whose classroom experience had exposed them to the use of the target language for the purposes of transactional communication. Conversely, those who had greater difficulty in this question may have had less such exposure.

Q.4. Most candidates did very well in this question. Examiners noted that the visual nature of this authentic document was of considerable help to candidates.

Q.5. Candidates did least well in this question. It challenged even the most able. Many found parts (a), (c), (d) and (e) somewhat easier than parts (b), (f), (g) and (h).

Q.6. Candidates did somewhat better in this question with many correctly answering three of the five questions. Candidates were more successful in parts (a), (b) and (c) than they were in parts (d) and (e), which many confused.

SECTION 111: WRITTEN EXPRESSION

There are two questions to be answered in this section. Question 1, a letter, is compulsory. In Q.2 candidates may choose to write a postcard or a note.

Examiners were pleased to report that most candidates attempted this section. It is however a matter of particular concern that there still remains a minority of candidates who do not attempt this section at all and a sizeable minority whose level of productive writing skill is well below their level of attainment in the receptive skills area.

Closer analysis and review of overall candidate performance underlines the importance of attempting both questions in this section and suggests that there is a very close co-relation between overall level of achievement in the examination and attainment in this particular section of the paper.

Q.1. Letter

Candidates were required to write an informal letter using four of the nine stimuli provided. Some more successful candidates did extremely well here but many others, whilst very successful in completing the communicative task required, had difficulty in achieving a similar standard of linguistic accuracy.

Format:

Most candidates got some marks here but very few attained full marks.

Examiners again underlined the importance of attention to basic conventions in the teaching of letter writing and especially in examination preparation.

Typically those who did not score highly here gave a full address and although writing an informal letter, had difficulty in writing the date accurately, used 'Bonjour' rather than 'Cher/Chère' and lost marks for spelling, particularly for the omission of accents in words such as 'Amitiés'.

Communicative Tasks:

The most popular choices here were Points 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8. Candidates generally avoided, and had far more difficulty with, Points 3, 4, 6 and 9.

Point 1: Candidates did well, many gaining full marks for "Ça va?"

Point 2: Few candidates attained full marks here. Many did not know the word 'carte'.

Point 3: Candidates did not do well in this point. The spelling of 'soeur', the use of the possessive adjective and the use of the expression of time 'demain' all posed problems.

Point 4: Failure to link this point to Point 3 as required and use of the past tense meant that many candidates did not do well in this point.

Point 5: Candidates were relatively successful in this point. Difficulties arose in relation to the accurate conveying of 'favourite', the spelling of the subject mentioned and accuracy in the use of 'j'aime' and 'j'adore'.

Point 6: Few candidates attempted this point. The word 'devoirs' and the use of the expression of quantity 'beaucoup de' were the problems most commonly encountered.

Point 7: This was a popular choice and was generally quite well done. Candidates often referred to age, career or holiday plans and some described their parents. Where candidates had problems they were in relation to basic vocabulary, père/frère, and the accurate use of the possessive adjective.

Point 8: Although quite a popular choice, candidates were not especially successful here. Many had difficulty with the gender of 'discothèque' and with the expression of time 'the weekend'

Point 9: Candidates very rarely attempted this point. Many had great difficulty with the use of the interrogative form.

Comment

Candidates at the top end of the scale continue to produce letters that are a credit to themselves and to their teachers. There is no doubt that such a level of productive linguistic competence and confidence is due in no small measure to a sustained effort to use the target language in the classroom.

Many other candidates could enhance their overall achievement by further preparation and practice of the required format. Effort should also be made to concentrate on the importance of the conveying of the idea/substance of any given point as simply, fluently and accurately as possible.

The language errors which most commonly detracted from a candidate's achievement in this question were:

- (i) a lack of/inaccurate use of basic vocabulary – ‘soeur’, ‘père’, ‘frère’, ‘carte’, ‘matière’ and ‘discothèque’;
- (ii) a poor grasp of/ability to manipulate the possessive adjective;
- (iii) a lack of familiarity with basic expressions of time – ‘demain’, ‘le weekend’ and quantity – ‘beaucoup de’
- (iv) difficulty with basic tenses of common verbs and with the use of the interrogative form.

Q.2 (a) Postcard

The vast majority of candidates chose this question and examiners felt that in general they were well prepared for it. Most candidates attempted all four points and were particularly successful in point three.

Examiners, correctly, advert to the importance of reading the full question. Many candidates lost marks in the postcard because they had obviously omitted to read the introduction.

Point 1: Candidates managed this point quite well provided they had read the introduction. Many showed ease and familiarity with the use of phrases such as “je suis en --” and “me voici à --”. However, accurate use of prepositions of place was the most common difficulty experienced by others.

Point 2: Whilst candidates managed to communicate the essence of this point few were able to use the expression “faire du camping”.

Point 3: Credit is due to the vast majority of candidates who coped well with this point.

Point 4: Some high-scoring candidates handled this point well showing an obvious level of cultural awareness also. Those candidates who experienced difficulty here did so either because of a lack of basic food related vocabulary, a poor grasp of the partitive article or an inability to use the verb ‘manger’.

Q.2 (b) Note

This option was not the choice of most candidates. Levels of performance were also poorer than in the case of the postcard.

Point 1: As with the postcard, many candidates lost marks here because they had not read and seen the relevance of the introduction to the note. Once again gaps in basic vocabulary meant that very few candidates knew the word 'tante'.

Point 2: As this point was linked to Point 1 those who had not accomplished the given communication task in Point 1 also lost marks here.

Point 3: The appropriate choice of verb, correct use of tense and time proved challenging here.

Point 4: Once again candidates had great difficulty with the use of the interrogative form.

7. GENERAL COMMENTS (ORDINARY LEVEL)

- The overall performance of candidates in this examination was in line with that of previous years.
- Candidates who sat the optional oral examination were very successful and many enhanced their overall level of achievement in the examination.
- The performance of some candidates who attained high marks in all three sections in the written examination was most admirable.
- Many of those candidates who failed to reach pass standard did so either because they did not attempt Section 111 of the paper or because they did considerably less well in this section than in the other sections of the paper.
- Candidates did particularly well in Reading Comprehension, quite well in Listening Comprehension and least well in Written Expression.
- There is some evidence to suggest that greater exposure to the use of the target language in the classroom would raise the level of candidate achievement in both Listening Comprehension and Written Expression so as to bring them to a level commensurate with the ability seen, and the standard reached, in Reading Comprehension.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (ORDINARY LEVEL)

- Very high achieving candidates should always be afforded the opportunity to sit the Higher Level paper.
- Continued commitment to the use of the target language in the classroom cannot but increase student linguistic confidence and competence.
- Consideration should be given to affording greater numbers of candidates the opportunity to sit the oral examination. This, it is clear, would increase general linguistic competence and would provide a source of motivation in the classroom.
- Candidates at this level would benefit from much reinforcement of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- Classroom practice of reading comprehension should involve exposure to short passages where students are trained in the basic skills of focused reading.
- Examination candidates should be encouraged to:
 - (i) attempt all sections and questions as required;
 - (ii) read all instructions carefully and fully;
 - (iii) write simply and accurately from their language base;
 - (iv) maximise their opportunity to do well in the letter by learning and practicing the appropriate format;
 - (v) read comprehension items in a focused manner.

APPENDIX ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ASPECTS OF ORDINARY LEVEL FRENCH

Table 5. Analysis of Ordinary Level Performance by Gender

YEAR	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2001	14,464	1.3	17.2	35.3	31.1	11.8	3.1	0.1
Male	7,982	1.0	14.6	33.5	32.4	14.1	4.2	0.2
FEMALE	6,482	1.6	20.4	37.6	29.5	9.0	1.9	0.1
2002	13,367	1.6	20.0	34.8	30.8	10.6	2.1	0.1
Male	7,288	1.0	16.7	32.8	33.5	12.9	3.0	0.1
FEMALE	6,079	2.3	24.0	37.2	27.5	7.9	1.1	0.0

The statistics illustrated in Table 5 show the following:

Girls outperformed boys at this level in both 2001 and 2002. In 2001 89.1% of girls attained a Grade D or higher as compared with 81.5% of boys. In 2002 91% of girls obtained a Grade D or higher as compared with 84% of boys. The percentage difference was reduced slightly in 2002.

Greater numbers of boys fail to reach pass standard than do girls. In 2001 18.8% of boys failed to reach pass standard as compared with 11% of girls. A similar pattern emerged in 2002 where 16% of boys failed to reach pass standard as compared with 9% of girls.

Girls are more heavily represented in the top grades. In 2001 22% of girls attained a Grade A or B while 15.6% of boys did. A similar pattern emerged in 2002, where 26.3% of girls reached these higher grades as compared with 17.7% of boys.

OPTIONAL ORAL EXAMINATION

Candidates who present for this element of the examination perform very well indeed.

Table 6, below, provides a percentage breakdown of the grades achieved by Ordinary level candidates in this year's oral examination.

Table 6. Performance in Optional Oral Examination – Ordinary Level 2002

Total	Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
75	%	17.3	28.0	28.0	18.7	4.0	4.0	0.0

The results show that 92% of candidates reached Grade D or higher in this part of the examination. 73.3% attained Grade C or higher and a very encouraging 17.30% achieved an A Grade.

A closer look at the final grade achieved by these candidates shows that in the case of 19% of this cohort, their overall achievement was enhanced by the addition of the result for the oral component of the examination. The final grade awarded to these candidates was higher than that attained in the written component only.

Comment

Although the oral examination remains an option that is not widely chosen at Junior Certificate, even a summary examination of the performance of candidates in this year's examination would suggest that there are considerable benefits to be gained by those who choose this option.

Given the communicative nature of the syllabi at both Junior and Senior Cycle it would indeed be desirable that greater numbers of candidates would prepare and present for the oral examination at Junior Certificate level.