One hundred and eighteen (118) candidates registered for the above examination. Four (4) candidates were absent. The following table shows the distribution of grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of candidates</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>% of candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examination consisted of four papers, including an oral test in reading, conversation and Civilisation française.

**Paper I**

**Analyse d’un texte non littéraire (60 marks)**

41% of the candidates failed this exercise and only 8.7% obtained 75% or a higher mark. Indeed, many candidates had no notion of what constitutes the *idée principale* and the *idées secondaires* in a text; marks were lost for either confusing these ideas, or for failing to identify them. With regard to sentence structure, most candidates remarked on the three questions of the first paragraph, however, only a few discussed the use made by the author of simple and complex sentences. Many failed to comment on the length of sentences and on their sequence. Several candidates contradicted themselves by stating that the text was objective, while at the same time insisting on the author’s presence and opinion. Regarding verb morphology, many candidates could not explain the reasons behind the choice of the tenses, some were unable to identify correctly the tense and mood used. With regard to general presentation, some candidates did not write in continuous prose and often candidates expressed themselves in poor French as a result of negligence in the application of basic grammar rules. Spelling mistakes and the use of the wrong article to indicate the gender of nouns were common, even in the case of the most basic vocabulary.

**Paper II**

This paper consisted of two exercises, an essay and a written comprehension.

(a) **Essay (100 marks)**

There was a high percentage of failures in the essay, (41.9%). This figure is very worrying as it reflects lack of serious preparation for creative writing. The main reason for such low marks is the same as that mentioned in the paragraph concerning Paper I, namely candidates are not familiar with grammar rules, and if they are, they do not apply them well out of carelessness. Gross errors were heavily penalised. These included the use of the tenses, conjugation of common irregular verbs, the rules of agreement, pronouns, direct and indirect object, etc., grammatical rules that candidates are expected to be familiar with at SEC level. Another handicap is the candidates’ limited vocabulary. Obviously, reading in French is not their favourite pastime, and it seems they do not read at all, as they generally lack ideas which would make their essay interesting to read.
While all the titles were chosen, the most popular by far was (a) *Le chauffage climatique et ses conséquences*. While some candidates seemed prepared for such a title and made use of technical terms which have to do with climate change, like *effet de serre*, others gave such expressions in English. Title (e) *Êtes-vous d'accord avec la constatation que le sport est aujourd'hui devenu partie prenant de la culture des jeunes?* was also chosen by a good number of candidates. Some candidates went slightly out of point when they dwelt on the different kinds of sports preferred by the two sexes. Title (d) *Satisfaction et désagréments que procure l'utilisation de l'informatique* also appealed to a good number of candidates who were generally proficient in discussing the pros and cons of the use of information technology. One essay focused on the differences between television and the computer, this candidate probably did not give him/herself enough time to read carefully and understand what he/she was asked to write about. Only a few candidates chose title (c) *La carrière que je n'embrasserai jamais* and an even smaller number chose (b) *Le mystère des désastres naturels*. Some candidates were so short of ideas that they wrote less than the minimum required of 350 words... a few of them did not even surpass the 200 word count! A very small number of candidates wrote over 400 words. Candidates should remember that they are penalised whenever they do not follow the instructions. Finally, it should be pointed out that marks are also lost for spelling mistakes. Sometimes, even the simplest words were carelessly written, for example, *la mer*, referring to the sea was written *la mère*. Candidates should be encouraged to check their script thoroughly before giving it in.

(b) Written Comprehension (75 marks)

The text dealt with a very current theme: the global economic crisis. The title in question *L'Amérique au régime* did not refer only to the Americans' problem regarding obesity, it also referred to their present trend of embarking on a more frugal existence in view of their dire economic situation. A considerable number of candidates did not include this latter idea and, consequently, lost half of the marks for the first question where they were required to justify the title. In question 2, candidates were asked to explain five different sentences taken from the text, however, their vocabulary is too limited to allow them to answer this question well. In question 3, candidates were meant to find from the text what measures were being taken in America to fight obesity. Instead, some of the candidates fabricated interpretations of their own. Question 4 was also a direct question, however, candidates should interpret the answer in their own words and not copy directly from the text. This “copy and paste” trend made those who adopted it – and they were many – lose marks; it should also be said that often, when copying, candidates still give the wrong answer as they either omit an important part or they give unnecessary details. This also applies to questions 5, 6 and 7. Some answers for question 6 were wrong as candidates selectively copied parts from the fourth paragraph and their answer was completely distorted. Regarding question 7, most candidates understood the three main reasons behind the Americans' saving on calories, but some of them failed to justify such reasons limiting their answer to making a list of them. Question 8 was generally answered correctly. In answering question 9, some candidates did not find *un pronom démonstratif* and *un verbe pronominal*. Does this indicate that they never heard of these terms? The last question entailed giving a personal opinion based on one's reading or experience. Several candidates found it difficult to express their own ideas clearly, whilst others had only a vague inkling of the effects of the economic crisis.
Paper III

Literature (75 marks)

Only six candidates failed in this paper, while 28 candidates obtained 75% or over. Although this is not a bad result, yet last year’s performance was better. Most candidates prepared the set texts by Molière, Saint-Exupéry and Mauriac; five candidates answered the questions on Hiroshima mon amour, two candidates chose the questions on Au café, while no one prepared Giraudoux’ text. Both questions on Molière were attempted. Most of the candidates who tackled question (a) either failed to understand the expression amour contrarié or overlooked contrarié altogether with the result that they dealt in a superficial manner with the obstacles encountered by the lover in the process of establishing a formal relationship with the loved one. Many made no mention of important scenes, thus failing to exploit, for instance, the scene where Cléante comes to know that his father is his rival and when he is tricked into admitting his love for Mariane. Regarding question (b), many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the lifestyle in Harpagon’s household by describing how the servants’ behaviour and status reflect upon the depiction of the master’s miserly nature. However, some candidates showed they only had a superficial knowledge of the play when they mixed up characters, especially La Flèche and Maître Jacques and when they were not sure who had stolen the cassette; according to them, the culprit varied between La Flèche, Valère, Maître Jacques and Cléante! Question 2 dealt with Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The vast majority of the candidates who answered question (a) lacked knowledge regarding what the Petit Prince found on every planet he visited. They limited their answer to a retelling of what happened on each planet without showing its significance within a general depiction of human vices and failures. Others did not relate at all to the episode of the wandering on the different planets to the main moral messages present elsewhere in the book. Regarding question (b), some candidates did not go beyond discussing the theme of the importance of love and friendship, as if this were the only lesson learnt in the book. Some answers were superficial or again consisted in a retelling of the story or in giving a very partial rendering of the moral wealth of the book. With regard to question 3 on Thérèse Desqueyroux by François Mauriac, confusion seems to exist in some candidates’ minds as to the period of the novel’s story: it was considered as having a 13th century background on more than one occasion, and an 18th century one for a few others. Almost all candidates who answered question (a) rightly agreed with the statement in the title, however, several candidates failed to mention Thérèse’s reasons for choosing to marry Bernard and what the family code was all about, they did not discuss the shortcomings in the marriage and failed to explain what may then have led her to the point of poisoning her husband. In answering question (b), the main mistake lay in the fact that often comments were made as to Thérèse being different from the rest of society without giving any explanation as to what made her different. Although some candidates gave a thorough description of the nature and role of all female characters, many simply picked anecdotes here and there in the story and gave a very incomplete picture of them. In their answers to question 5 (a) on Hiroshima mon amour by Marguerite Duras, some students failed to mention the efforts to commemorate the Hiroshima bombing on which the scenario insists at the beginning, focusing only on the story of ELLE; and most failed to notice the impossibility of conjuring the real horror of Hiroshima, as LUI insists, this failure being offset by ELLE’s success in reliving her past story thanks to the Japanese lover’s taking on of the German soldier’s role. Regarding the answers to question (b), they showed an imbalance in that the Nevers story was emphasized to the detriment of the healing experience of her Hiroshima affair for ELLE; they also failed to comment on the parallelism and contrast between the two illegitimate affairs, the first one being lived in shame, guilt and punishment and the second one in freedom, thus healing her wounds. Only 2 candidates answered the questions on Mohammed Dib’s Au Café, one answered question (a), the other one answered question (b). The answers did not tackle the short stories deeply enough; Le Compagnon could well have been exploited for both, and the power of Dib’s descriptions and strength of message were hardly discussed.
Paper IV

Dictée (30 marks)

While only one candidate did not manage to obtain a pass mark in this paper, a better result can be obtained if candidates were to listen more carefully to the examiner and if more attention were to be paid to apply basic grammar rules, especially those concerning agreement. The vocabulary that presented most difficulty included *aigres-doux* which some candidates wrote in the singular when it followed *autres plats; saignant* and *volaille*. The word *horaires* was frequently written *horreurs*. In this case, not only is the pronunciation of the last syllable different, the sense of the sentence can only be understood with *horaires* which relates to the previous word *durée*. Other obvious mistakes which could be avoided relate to (a) sound recognition, especially the *e caduc* as different from the closed *e*, for example in the case of the article, where candidates wrote *les nombres* for *le nombre*; (b) non-application of elementary grammar rules as in the following examples. Agreement of gender and number between articles, adjectives and nouns, for example, *chinois* describing *les restaurants* was sometimes written either in the feminine singular or in the feminine plural. Regular verbs often had the wrong endings, for example, “*on partagent*”. Other verbs which should have been in the infinitive as they follow a conjugated verb or a preposition were often rendered by the past participle, for example, “*préfèrent mangé*” and “*de révolutionné*”. Nouns of nationality were written in small letters, some even wrote *Allemagne* for *Allemands*. The superlative structures also proved very challenging to many, as different parts of the sentence *une des plus saines et des plus élaborées du monde* was rendered in many scripts “*une de plus saine et de plus élaborée du monde*”.

The Oral Examination (60 marks)

The oral examination was composed of a reading exercise (15 marks) and a dialogue made up of two parts, namely, free conversation (20 marks) and a dialogue based on a set text on French culture (25 marks). Twelve candidates failed the oral test. Regarding the Reading test, candidates are advised to make better use of the preparation time by firstly understanding the text in order for them to read it with the right intonation, and secondly, by reading the longer words syllable by syllable in order not to skip any syllable during the test. Candidates are also reminded to take notice of all the punctuation marks which should reflect in their intonation. Some candidates find difficulty in expressing themselves during the dialogue test, mainly because of their very limited vocabulary; on the other hand, it is clear that they are finding the notes they write during preparation time very helpful. Once again, the Board would like to remind candidates that this is not an exercise in free composition and they are only expected to write notes and not to read out a composition! Regarding the dialogue based on a set text on French culture, candidates did generally well, in fact, most were very well prepared.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners

May 2010