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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

FRENCH

GCE Ordinary Level

<p>Paper 3015/01 Translation and Composition</p>
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General comments

In general, standards were impressive and many candidates produced exceptional work demonstrating a high level of linguistic competence. Only a relatively small number had clearly been inappropriately entered for the examination. There were some excellent answers to the essay questions which used a broad range of lexis and syntax though sometimes with varying degrees of accuracy. The translation into French was once again a very popular choice and was well done by many candidates who had clearly worked hard to learn a good range of vocabulary and basic grammatical structures and there were many very good marks indeed which frequently mirrored the marks gained for the essay. A small number found the demands of this question beyond them and scored poorly.

As usual, it was clear that candidates had been well prepared for this examination. However, each year, the problems of infringements of the rubric arise. One particular point has been constantly stressed in this report: the rubric for all the essay questions states quite clearly that the essay must not exceed 150 words in length. Large numbers of candidates persist in ignoring this instruction and often exceed this number by an enormous margin – this year, it was common to find essays of between 300 and 500 words in length. Yet again, therefore, the Examiners wish to stress in the strongest possible terms that this is a complete waste of candidates' time as nothing is taken into account after the 150 word limit for either Language or Communication. Thus, those writing at great length will certainly be penalised by losing Communication marks - indeed all 5 marks can easily be lost with very long essays which do not begin to address the required points within the first 150 words. Furthermore, by writing at excessive length, candidates clearly will not have the time to check their work as carefully as they should in order to minimise the incidence of error.

A second continuing point of concern is that some candidates insist on ignoring the rubric by answering *three* questions instead of the *two* that are clearly required. No advantage will be gained by doing this; indeed, candidates answering three questions are likely to find themselves rushing their work.

The vast majority of scripts were well and neatly presented and this was much appreciated by the Examiners. However, a number of cases of poor presentation with messy and unclear handwriting were noted. Candidates should be reminded, particularly if they make alterations to their script, that, while Examiners will always try to be tolerant, illegibility and ambiguous writing are never credited.

Communication Marks (Questions 1 and 2 only): Each essay has a maximum score of 5 available for successful communication of relevant points in unambiguous, but not necessarily completely accurate French. It should be noted that, while Examiners show considerable tolerance of faulty spelling and grammatical inaccuracy when awarding Communication marks, a mark will not be given for a phrase containing a verb form which is so inaccurate that the meaning becomes unclear. Poor handling of verbs was by far the most significant factor preventing the award of Communication marks. In order to score 5 marks, candidates must make clear reference to at least five of the pictures in **Question 1** and to all the given rubric points in **Question 2**. Lengthy essays will therefore almost invariably be penalised if they fail to cover one or more of the later points or pictures within the word count.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1***Picture Story*

Of the essays this was by far the most popular choice. The story appeared to be clear and there were very few cases of confused narrative. Most candidates wisely started their narrative at the café, but there were those who inserted a long preamble to explain why the boy was there and this invariably gave rise to excessive length and loss of the later Communication marks. Many chose to write in the first person as the motorcyclist hero. Attempts to take the standpoint of the waitress or the master criminal were forced and unnatural. The narrative was generally well presented for the first half but attempts to describe the events in the airport were occasionally less successful. As a result of excessive length, many candidates did not get much beyond the arrival at the airport in the first 150 words and thus lost at least one Communication mark.

The narrative was frequently competently executed and many candidates showed confident handling of the necessary vocabulary as well as a variety of appropriate structures. Most candidates knew common words such as *journal, tasse de café, lire, voir/apercevoir, moto, agent, arrêter*. It was pleasing to note widespread use of a somewhat greater lexical range with items such as *à la une, poursuivre/à la poursuite de, recherché par la police, se diriger vers, arrivé(s) à l'aéroport*. On the other hand, carelessness was evident in the misspelling of *aéroport* - given twice in the pictures! - and it seemed foolish to attempt the word *cafétéria* (frequently misspelt as *cafétaria*) when *café* was available and to try to describe the crash helmet (*son helmet* was seen) when the word was clearly not known and was not, in any case, crucial to the plot. Candidates should be advised not to attempt words about which they are uncertain unless it is unavoidable. However, a good range of vocabulary will always score highly as will complex syntax – use of infinitive constructions and present and past participles, for example. Not all candidates managed tense usage successfully and there was frequent confusion between the Imperfect and the Perfect/Past Historic. The Pluperfect was not always handled correctly, either not being used when it was required, or, more rarely, being constantly used without justification.

Question 2**(a)** *Letter*

This was a popular choice with some Centres. Five clear points were mentioned in the rubric and all had to be covered to qualify for the award of the five Communication marks. The best candidates spent the minimum amount of time (and words) on opening pleasantries then immediately tackled the rubric points. Surprisingly, the date of birth, which should have been totally straightforward, was not always successfully tackled. A date (in French!) was required with an appropriate verb; this was not invariably offered and some candidates even omitted the point altogether. Some mention of 'Presents' was required at some point – the chronological placing of the reference was not important, but, again, it was sometimes omitted altogether. Almost any description was acceptable – what the presents were, the fact that many were received or that they were *beaux*, for example. Almost any activity was accepted for the third point, provided it was in a past tense – helping prepare the meal or decorate the venue for the party, going to the beach, playing games, etc. While the Examiners, mindful of different customs in these matters, did not insist on an evening event, reference to a celebration of some sort was needed for the next point and a simple comment on how the candidate felt about the day (*C'était très amusant*, for example) was adequate for the final point.

Many candidates fulfilled these tasks successfully. However, most fell into the trap of extended irrelevant opening comments (extended family news and health, other matters not germane to the topic) which wasted words and often resulted in the later Communication points being lost through coming after the 150 word limit. Even where candidates avoided this trap, they should beware of spending too much time on any one point: for example, *activités durant la journée* could clearly be dealt with at almost any length and sometimes the descriptions were excessively long. It was, in fact, rare to reach the final point at all within the word limit and many candidates had run out of words even before reaching the description of the party. Once past the well-rehearsed stock opening phrases, the best candidates were able to express their ideas in a range of appropriate and accurate French which gained high marks for Language. Competence in handling different tenses is clearly vital here if a high score is to be gained and this was not always evident. Many candidates, in particular, seem to have little appreciation of the difference between the Perfect and Imperfect tenses. Correct handling of a multiplicity of other linguistic aspects is equally important as marks for Language are only awarded for accurate usage and not for 'near-misses'.

(b) *Dialogue*

This was unpopular with the result that the Examiners did not feel any valid general comments could be made.

(c) *Narrative*

This was a very popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. The new style of presentation of the question this year encouraged candidates to observe the rubric and there were virtually no irrelevant preambles before the account of the accident started – though, as with **(a)**, some candidates dealt with the earlier points at far too great a length and thus ran out of words before completing the Communication tasks.

Heart-rending accounts of young siblings in various states of distress were given with frequently gory details of their problems. Some had fallen down the stairs/off chairs/off the top of furniture; others had cut themselves when playing illicitly with father's knife/sharp workshop tools. Heedless of the dangers of playing with electricity, young children had all but electrocuted themselves. The narrator generally expressed horrified ignorance of how to proceed (*Ne sachant quoi faire...*) but the more enterprising often fetched bandages and bound up wounds prior to seeking more expert help. Parents either arrived at the house or met the victim at the hospital, both versions being perfectly acceptable. Most stories ended happily, with the doctor reassuring the family that the injuries were not serious, but parents were usually quick to blame the hapless narrator for failing to exercise a proper degree of supervision and the *suite* (when it was reached within the word limit) generally involved return home of a frightened but unharmed sibling and a firm promise by the elder brother/sister to be more alert in the future.

There were some enjoyable and graphic accounts of these incidents, with few massive misunderstandings of the points required but, as implied above, excessive length in the treatment of the earlier points often involved the loss of the final Communication point and it was not uncommon to find the word limit had been reached even before the advent of medical attention.

The best stories were lively and fluently written, using a range of appropriate vocabulary and structure. Tense usage was sometimes suspect with, again, confusion between the Imperfect and Perfect/Past Historic, and careless errors in other areas (gender, agreement of adjectives, incorrect use of object pronouns, misspellings) frequently cost Language marks.

Question 3*Translation into French*

This was the most popular of all the options and often produced work of a high standard. There was a high level of parity between the essay mark and the one gained for the translation though there were, of course, exceptions. The vocabulary and grammatical structures required seemed largely to be available to many candidates though some of the structures, inevitably, proved to be very difficult for many. What seemed to be careless errors rather than lack of knowledge accounted for a large proportion of lost marks. While the marking principles are identical (ticks are given for correct units of language and errors are ignored) it should be pointed out that this is a rather different exercise from the essay. The linguistic demands for the translation are very precise and, in most cases, the English will transfer directly into French without the need for paraphrase, circumlocution or drastic changes in word order. Candidates are advised always to translate exactly what the English says and not to seek to use alternative words if this is not necessary. The Examiners will not credit French which strays too far from the sense of the English original without good reason.

No points proved universally impossible but difficulties were experienced with a number of items.

- Paragraph A
- Quite unnecessarily, *partir* replaced *aller* both in this section and also in paragraphs B and C.
 - *La plupart de* was not well known.
 - *Cours* was frequently rendered as 'classes'.
 - Frequently poor handling of the description of her eyes and hair. Agreement of the adjectives was usually not made correctly.
 - The construction with *depuis* was not usually known.

- Paragraph B - While the phrase 'I had already decided that I would invite her ..' was intended to be testing, many candidates handled it competently but then, surprisingly, were unable to cope with 'to go to the cinema'.
- Few handled the verbs *finir* or *se terminer* correctly and a needless loss of a mark was frequently incurred by writing *à cinq heure (sic)*.
- Paragraph C - The construction using *venir de faire* was not generally known. Similarly, few knew *celui-ci*. *Vraiment* was frequently misspelt.
- Paragraph D - *Ravi* was frequently rendered by (*très*) *content/heureux* which was not considered to be close enough to the meaning.
- *Rendez-vous* was not always known and the careless omission of the *s* on *heures* lost a mark needlessly for many.
- Paragraph E - *Espérer* was invariably followed by *de*. The verb was also rendered, incorrectly, by *souhaiter*.
- *Problème* was frequently written in English.
- Pleasingly, *déménager* was known by many and the last sentence was often well translated.

<p>Paper 3015/02 Reading Comprehension</p>
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Comments on specific questions

The scores in **Section 1** were consistently good.

Section 1

Exercice 1, Questions 1 – 5

This exercise caused very few problems. Some candidates chose B in **Question 1**. In **Questions 2** and **4** some were tempted by C.

Exercice 2, Questions 6 – 10

This exercise was well done with very few errors indeed.

Exercice 3, Questions 11 – 15

This exercise was also very well done.

Section 2

Exercice 1, Questions 16 – 23

On the whole this exercise was answered well. A common error in **Question 16** was to choose A or C. **Questions 17, 18** and **21** were mostly answered correctly. In **Question 19**, a number of candidates thought it was *passionnant* to be *des milliers de kilomètres de chez eux*, rather than the more general *aventure*. **Question 20** proved to be one of the more difficult questions in the exercise. Some candidates did not give full enough answers, simply putting *situations difficiles*, rather than making it clear that it was the getting out of these difficult situations on their own that helped the young people to grow up. **Questions 22** and **23** were well answered, although in **Question 22** meeting up with other travellers was sometimes omitted. Sometimes the idea of staying together was attached to the wrong group of people or tacked on, making nonsense of the answer. In **Question 23**, the weaker candidates often suggested *pour savoir ce qu'en pensent les lecteurs*.

Exercice 2, Questions 24 – 28

Candidates found this exercise more difficult. There are still some who tick the right boxes but give no explanation for the ones that are faux. Also, when correcting the statements that are false, it is important to avoid simply putting a negative version of the original statement. In **Question 24**, for example, it is not enough to write *Non, il n'a pas fait de belles photos des requins*. The candidate should look for information in the text that explains why the statement is false, namely that, terrified by the sharks that were surrounding him, he came up to the surface quickly, forgetting to take any photos. In **Question 26**, *Le danger est immense* does not make it clear that the danger was *too* great to take photos. **Question 27** was usually right. A common error in **Question 28** was to say that Patrick joined the team to try to understand the reason for the attacks, rather than that he was asked to join because of his great knowledge of the shark's behaviour.

Exercice 3, Questions 29 – 34

Some questions in this exercise proved difficult and this led to a wide range of marks. **Question 29** was well answered. In **Question 30**, many candidates did not go far enough, saying simply that she wanted to help poor people, without making it clear that it was poor people in India. **Question 31** was well answered. In **Question 32**, many put *les gens ont la chance d'apprendre en s'amusant* but found the second part of the answer more difficult. *Comment apprendre quand on ne sait pas lire* does not answer the question, the candidate needs to manipulate that information to provide an acceptable answer. Some simply lifted the idea of assembling doctors and actors. The main problem with **Question 33** was giving all the elements required. Many just put *because there was a film on* which was not enough. In **Question 34**, a lot of candidates ignored *le lendemain* and gave rather more long term improvements.

Section 3**Exercice 1, Questions 35 – 54**

There were few high marks in this part. Many candidates did not have a clear understanding of what was happening in the passage. The most common errors were:

Question 35	<i>quand</i>
Question 36	<i>à</i>
Question 37	<i>est, a</i>
Question 38	<i>l'</i>
Question 39	<i>les</i>
Question 40	<i>de</i>
Question 41	<i>de</i>
Question 42	<i>était</i>
Question 43	<i>durant</i>
Question 44	<i>le</i>
Question 45	<i>leur</i>
Question 46	<i>aussi</i>
Question 47	<i>devant</i>
Question 48	<i>qui</i>
Question 49	<i>avait</i>
Question 50	<i>pour</i>
Question 51	<i>se</i>
Question 52	<i>si</i>
Question 53	<i>de</i>
Question 54	<i>sortait, partaient</i>