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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

Paper 3015/01
Translation and Composition

General comments

Performances were extremely wide-ranging this year. There were some excellent results at the top of the scale, with a handful scoring virtually full marks, but a disappointingly large number at the other extreme showed little or no competence in handling the language. A relatively small number of candidates produced impressively fluent and accurate writing, tightly controlled and structured, and demonstrating a good range of vocabulary and syntax. Large numbers, however, clearly able to think and express themselves in fluent and authentic-sounding phrases, appeared to have little grasp of accuracy, in either spelling or the correct handling of grammatical structures, and thus gained only modest marks. The translation into French was attempted by relatively few candidates and, in general, marks were not high.

Most candidates had clearly been well prepared for this Examination and followed the instructions given on the paper. However, infringements of the rubric in one or more of three areas still appeared and these invariably have a deleterious effect upon performance:

- The rubric explicitly states that only *two* questions are to be attempted. Some candidates ignored this instruction and did *three*. No advantage whatsoever is to be gained by doing this and work is likely to be rushed as a result.
- A small number of candidates attempted *two* of the essays in the same section - **Question 2** - from which only *one* may be done.
- Though a good number of candidates observed the stated word limits, far too many still exceeded the limit of 150 words for any essay. Candidates should be reminded that this is a complete waste of their time. Only the first 150 words are marked for both language and communication; nothing thereafter will be credited.

The vast majority of scripts were neat and well-presented and thus, a pleasure to mark. A small number however, were poorly written and, in a few cases, nearly illegible. Candidates should be reminded, particularly if they make alterations to their script, that illegibility and ambiguous writing are never credited.

Communication marks

Question 1 and 2 only - Each essay has a maximum score of five 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 the full five Communication marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Picture story

This was attempted by virtually every candidate. The story appeared to be clear and there was little misinterpretation or confusion. A few candidates fell into the trap of giving a lengthy introduction (the family getting up, having breakfast, etc.) before starting on the material in the first picture. This merely wastes words and may affect the award of the maximum Communication mark. It should be noted that only one Communication mark is awarded per picture, with the result that candidates not covering at least five of the pictures within the word limit cannot score the maximum mark.

Much of the necessary vocabulary was known, though there were uncertainties regarding the phrases, '*faire un pique-nique, faire une promenade*' and words such as, '*bois/forêt, laisse, s'échapper*' and even '*chercher, crier, appeler*'. '*Lapin*' was known by many, but was often misspelt. It was pleasing to note that many candidates were able to handle such expressions as '*Ils ont décidé de rentrer à la maison*' and '*Elle est retournée à la voiture en pleurant*'. Most coped with the vocabulary and ideas in the final picture but, in many cases, were not credited as they had already exceeded the word limit by that stage.

Loose handling of basic grammatical structures, poor spelling and inadequate knowledge of verb forms caused many apparently promising candidates to lose marks. Further problems arose through the use of infinitives or present tenses as the narrative tense (the rubric clearly states the obligation to write in the past), and inadequate understanding of the difference between Perfect/Past Historic and Imperfect was common, as was poor formation of compound tenses ('*Ils ont décidait*' (sic), for example, was rife). There were several possibilities in each picture for the award of a Communication mark; the maximum mark was easily scored by those who could write a series of relevant phrases containing a reasonably accurate past tense while keeping within the word limit.

Question 2

Letter

- (a) This was a very popular option and produced some good answers. The rubric was quite precise. Candidates were required to state that they accepted the invitation and had never been to France. One visit and one activity were required and, for the fifth point, they had to invite their French friend to visit them in their own country. There were, of course, many possibilities for points three and four. Any place and any activity were accepted, even where credibility was stretched - when writing about a stay in Paris, many candidates wished to visit the beach and go skiing or travel some 500 miles to see a relative in Marseille. It should be noted that, for the award of a Communication point, the verb must express the idea accurately - '*J'aime visiter les monuments*', for example, does not describe what you *would like to do*. Most letters were pertinent on the whole, but a number overdid the opening remarks. A few, ritual words of conventional letter etiquette are, of course, appropriate and are rewarded, but, beyond that, French which does not relate directly to the topic will not gain credit. There was a good deal of successful use of language, though with frequent uncertainty over correct tenses ('*Je voudrais*' (*faire de la natation*), for example, was often poorly handled). A number of candidates appeared to have little idea of the difference between '*tu*' and '*vous*' and switched, apparently at random, between the two. There was frequently equal uncertainty regarding the gender of both the writer and the French partner. Finally, candidates who could not handle structures largely given to them in the rubric, ('*vous n'avez jamais visité la France*' and '*Vous invitez votre ami(e) à venir chez vous*') did not impress the Examiners.

Dialogue

- (b) This was a much less popular option and was not always successfully done. The rubric was, again, quite precise. After the opening remarks about the wish to go to a party, at least one specific objection by a parent (*it's too late, you're too young, it's dangerous, all sorts of things might happen/go wrong, you have to study, etc.*) should be followed by the candidate's response(s) (*all my friends are going, their parents are in agreement, I'm no longer a child/I'm perfectly responsible, I never have any fun, I've done all my homework, you can come and drive me back if you are worried, etc.*) and a clear final decision should have been reached within the word limit. Once more, candidates giving lengthy introductions - consisting of small talk, enquiries after health, or too much detail on the specific background to the party invitation - were liable to have wasted a proportion of the 150 words before broaching the actual topic, and were unlikely to complete the task within the word limit thus, losing Communication points. The best candidates launched immediately into the main body of the conversation and made clear, logical objections and responses, which received appropriate credit. Candidates should be careful to follow the rubric and to write only the actual dialogue. Narrative of any kind, scene setting, constant use of '*dit-il*', '*répondit-ell*' and the use of reported speech are all contrary to the rubric and will not be credited.

Narrative

- (c) This was also a popular choice, and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. Starting from arrival at home, any comments relating to reactions on the part of the narrator and what he/she discovered on entering the house, scored Communication points up to a maximum of four. The fifth point was awarded for a clear conclusion which, of course, had to come within the word limit. The majority of the narratives followed a fairly predictable course with justice generally prevailing in the end (a number of candidates heroically tackled and detained the perpetrator themselves while awaiting the police). The culprit occasionally turned out (slightly improbably given the wording of the rubric) to be a brother/sister having forgotten their key or a family pet, but all versions that were at all conceivable were accepted. The best stories were lively and graphic and used a range of appropriate vocabulary. Tense usage was sometimes suspect, with confusion between the Imperfect and Perfect/Past Historic - as well as the Pluperfect, which was clearly relevant in this question. As in **Question 1**, the formation of tenses was often poor. Few were able successfully to handle the Passive. The new question format, whereby the opening words were supplied, encouraged candidates to dispense with irrelevant long introductions, though a number were still unable to resist doing this; consequently, this had a negative effect on their marks. It should be noted by Centres that this question format will be frequently used in all future papers.

Question 3*Translation into French*

The translation was only attempted by a minority of candidates this year. Given the low numbers, it was difficult to draw reasoned general conclusions about the performance of the candidates who attempted it, but it was felt that most simply did not do themselves justice through sheer carelessness, lack of basic knowledge or unwillingness to think problems through logically. Most of this question simply involves a direct word-for-word translation of the material in front of them, the majority of which should be easily within the grasp of an 'O' Level candidate. It was perhaps to be expected that items such as '*on the other side of*', '*seeing that*', '*he had always thought*', '*headed for*', '*they had just reached*', '*perhaps he ought to go and see what was happening*' and '*as soon as MD arrived*' would produce problems, though they should not have been insuperable. However, where candidates are unable to translate statements such as '*it was not raining*', '*with his dog*', '*his coat and his hat*', '*they left the house*', '*an old man*' and '*opened his eyes*', to name but a few; this suggests that such candidates have been inappropriately entered for this paper.

The handful of candidates who attempted the question and produced a good mark roughly commensurate with their essay mark, showed that this question is a perfectly viable alternative to a second essay for those who feel at home with the skills involved.

Paper 3015/02 Reading Comprehension
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Section 1**Questions 1 - 5***Exercise 1*

This exercise did not cause too much difficulty. The question most likely to be answered wrongly was **Question 3**, with B the most common wrong choice.

Questions 6 - 10*Exercise 2*

This exercise was answered well. Most of the mistakes were in **Question 9**.

Questions 11 - 15*Exercise 3*

There were very few mistakes indeed, in this exercise.

Section 2**Questions 16 - 23***Exercise 1*

This exercise was generally done well. As with other exercises, which required more than ticking a box or choosing a letter, one of the main causes of lost marks was the failure to manipulate the material to answer the question precisely. In **Question 16**, for instance, some candidates did not distinguish between what Stéphanie does and what she wants to do. A similar error caused problems with **Question 23**, which asks what sort of work she is looking for, not what sort of work she does. Some, having understood *going to a disco* and *going to the cinema*, did not check that they were matching the activity with the present or a future desire.

Questions 24 - 27*Exercise 2*

In this kind of exercise, there are still some candidates who do only half the task, simply filling in the boxes without correcting the false statements.

Lifting from the text caused a lot of difficulty here. *'Un professeur de sports dans son lycée l'a remarqué'* and *'Un professeur dans son lycée lui a conseillé de s'inscrire dans une école Sports-Études'*, were two answers that appeared regularly for **Questions 24** and **25**. Another common mistake in **Question 25**, was to fail to adapt the sentence in the text to answer the question, for instance, *'Au début j'étais assez moyen'* or *'Je sautais moins haut que mes copains'*.

Questions 28 - 34*Exercise 3*

This exercise proved very difficult. Again, lifting sentences from the text without adapting them to answer the question, caused a lot of problems. In **Question 28**, a frequent answer given was, *'Leurs parents ne peuvent pas quitter leur emploi et n'ont pas les moyens d'envoyer les enfants dans les centres de vacances'*. In order to answer the question correctly, the same material needed to be presented *'Les parents ont besoin de temps et des moyens'*. **Question 29** required an answer that said what *the children* were able to do, hence answers such as, *'L'association organise des excursions au bord de la mer'* were not acceptable. A considerable number of candidates did not understand **Question 31** and offered answers such as *'Elle habite pas loin de Paris'* or *'Elle a vu des photos'*. **Question 32** was well answered. In **Question 33**, candidates often had difficulty manipulating the material. Some lifted from the text, but did not go far enough, e.g. *'Un immense pique-nique'*. With **Question 34**, it was again, the tense required that caused problems. The question is asking about the programme, about an event in the future, and as such, answers in the past tense are inappropriate.

Section 3**Questions 35 - 54***Exercise 1*

It was clear from some of the suggestions that candidates found the general sense of this passage rather difficult to understand. There were few very good scripts. Here are the most common errors in this exercise:

- 35. à, dans
- 36. de
- 39. dans
- 40. des
- 41. à
- 42. lui

43. commencer, ça, réussir, maintenant

44. cettes, des, ses, leurs

47. enfin, a

48. ont, avaient

49. de

50. et

51 car, que, mais, si

52. qui, dont

53. suite, effet, plus, vérité

54. avions, pouvons