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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

Once again, the Examiners found some extremely impressive work and many candidates demonstrated a very high standard of linguistic competence. Only a relatively small number had clearly been inappropriately entered for the examination. There were some excellent and interesting answers to the essay questions which used a broad range of lexis and syntax though sometimes with insufficient 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, or in some cases exceeded, 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 Examiners come across many scripts where candidates have simply ignored the instructions and lost marks, often heavily, for so doing. One particular point which has been constantly stressed in this report is that the rubric for all the essay questions clearly states 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 well over twice the prescribed length and extreme cases where candidates had written up to 700/800 words were not uncommon. Yet again, therefore, the Examiners wish to stress in the strongest possible terms that this is a total 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 lose communication marks – indeed all five 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. A final example of ignoring the rubric that has been noted over the last couple of years concerns candidates who answer two questions from **Question 2**; this is explicitly forbidden by the wording at the head of the question.

Thus, Centres are strongly urged to remind their candidates to adhere to the instructions in the question paper and that marks are likely to be affected where these instructions are ignored.

The vast majority of scripts were well and neatly presented and this was, as always, 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 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 communication marks. In order to score five 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.

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 started their narrative with the boys playing football in the garden, but there were those who inserted a long preamble to explain what the boys had been doing beforehand, how they acquired a ball and why they decided to play football; this invariably gave rise to excessive length and loss of the later communication marks. Some chose to show off their knowledge of football and associated technical vocabulary by including a long description of detailed tactics and manoeuvres. The almost inevitable result was loss of later communication marks. Many chose to write in the first person as one of the boys – usually the one living in the house and whose father appears at the end – and this was certainly a successful approach. More problematical were attempts to write from the viewpoint of either of the adults. It is generally wise not to attempt a first person narrative by someone who does not appear in all the pictures. Descriptions of the ill-executed kick which resulted in a broken window were often confused. The rest of the narrative was generally well communicated, but, as already indicated, candidates frequently failed to cover the last part of the story before reaching 150 words – and thus, the end of the part that the Examiners would assess.

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 *ballon*, *voisin*, *jardin*, *fâché*, *crier* and *payer*. It was decided to accept *balle*, but not *boule* and *ball*. It is worth pointing out that inconsistency on the part of candidates frequently costs marks – many introduced the item as a *ballon* then immediately afterwards used *ball*, which, of course, gained no marks for the phrase in which it was used. It was pleasing to note the use of slightly less well-known items such as *se plaindre*, *réclamer*, *en colère*, *rembourser*, *interdire à q.n. de faire*. A curious lapse was the verb 'to break', where *écraser* was frequently found instead of *casser/briser* – and not accepted. It should be noted that 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. 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. A clear statement of the destination was required. Among the activities that were usually described, mention of what was particularly enjoyed was then needed, to be followed by an amusing incident (invariably involving unfortunate events befalling fellow students or accompanying teachers) and a problem. The final point required a simple opinion about the outing – *C'était très agréable*, for example was adequate for this mark.

Many candidates fulfilled these tasks successfully. However, possibly the most obvious fault was the assumption that an account of an outing could be successfully done by simply reeling off a string of activities that took place. Candidates are reminded that the specific rubric points *must* be addressed to qualify for the award of Communication marks. In other words, not simply *what happened*, but what was *liked*, what was *amusing*, what turned out to be a *problem*. Many candidates fell into the trap of extended irrelevant opening comments (detailed family news and health, other matters not relevant to the topic) which wasted words and often resulted in the later communication points being lost by coming after the 150 word limit. Even where candidates avoided this trap, they should beware of spending too much time on any one point; activities in general could clearly be dealt with at almost any length and sometimes the descriptions were excessively and unnecessarily 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 amusing event and the problem. 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. It should also be noted that the Past Historic is not accepted in a letter. 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 not a popular option, with the result that the Examiners did not feel any valid general comments could be made.

(c) *Narrative*

This was another popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. Centres will have noted that, in order to encourage candidates to observe the rubric, the opening words are now given for **(b)** and **(c)** and this style will soon extend to **(a)** as well. As a result of this, there were few irrelevant preambles before the account of the breakdown 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. In spite of the foregoing comment, a very small number of candidates seemed to go out of their way to try to avoid the restriction imposed by the given opening, either by writing irrelevant material and then quoting the opening words when well into the essay, or by repeating the given phrase and then indulging in a lengthy flashback. Both these approaches are pointless and will seriously affect the marks awarded.

Points to be dealt with were: the action taken to summon help (walk to phone box/use mobile phone, walk to garage, flag down passing motorist, etc.); the arrival of a mechanic on the scene; what he suggested or what he actually did (told them the car had to be towed away, mended it on the spot, etc.); the outcome of the incident (car having been repaired, they continued their journey, they had to catch public transport back home, they spent the night in a hotel waiting for repairs to be completed, etc.); narrator's reaction (very annoyed/frustrated/relieved/happy etc.). Most accounts were fairly predictable but were perfectly acceptable. One or two had a useless father having failed to check the fuel, but most were unforeseeable mechanical breakdowns (often related using remarkable technical vocabulary) and the majority of the problems were solved by efficient and kindly mechanics – who, in at least one case, took the family back and put them up for the night!

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 arrival of expert help.

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 again 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 – and, in a number of cases, the mark gained for the translation was higher than the essay mark. 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 – confusion of 'the' and 'a', for example. 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

emmener frequently misspelt as *enmener*.

pourrait often given in wrong tense.

musée sometimes misspelt. In spite of having written ***le*** *musée*, many candidates then made *local* feminine.

Paragraph B

'got up' frequently became *se réveillèrent* instead of *se levèrent*.

partir seemed to be regarded as a universal verb of motion. It is never accepted as a direct replacement for *aller*.

le train ***à*** *neuf heures* is not the same as *le train* ***de*** *neuf heures.*

voyageaient frequently had the first *e* omitted.

devoir was often poorly handled. Candidates ought to be able to cope with straightforward usage of modal verbs at this level.

wagon was known by very few candidates.

Paragraph C

Points 1 and 2 were well handled. By contrast, 3 and 4 were poorly translated. The most obvious translation for point 3, *faire une promenade*, appeared hardly to be known at all.

partir was again incorrectly chosen by many.

what should have been a straightforward usage of *aller* was badly handled by almost everyone.

librairie was hardly known by anyone. Where it was known, the point was often spoilt by the use of the definite article.

Paragraph D

soudain was accepted almost anywhere but not directly before the verb i.e. *soudain regarda*. The verb was erroneously followed by à in many cases.

Ironically, the one time *partir* was needed, it was not used but was usually replaced by *se diriger.*

gare was poorly known.

Paragraph E

This section had few real difficulties, but many marks were lost through carelessness. Notable cases were use of *dit-elle*, use of a masculine adjective referring to the wife and failure to translate the easy phrase 'where are the children?'.

Paper 3015/02
Reading Comprehension

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise was done well. **Question 5** was most likely to be answered wrongly, usually with candidates choosing B.

Exercice 2 Questions 6-10

Question 9 was most likely to produce a wrong answer here.

Exercice 3 Questions 11-15

This exercise was answered well and many candidates gained full marks.

Section 2

Exercice 1 Questions 16-27

On the whole, the passage was well understood and many candidates answered most of the questions clearly and accurately. In **Question 19**, it needed to be emphasised that the results the parents received were bad results. In **Question 23**, some missed the fact of Antoine telling funny stories and went for a more general explanation such as *pour se distraire*/*pour rendre l'atmosphère plus gai* or *pour passer le temps.* In **Question 24**, there were some who had not realised that in the train they were no longer listening to Antoine's stories but rather playing cards. A relatively frequent error in **Question 25** was to put *la mer*. Eléonore could hear the sea from her bed, but the passage does not say that she could see it from her room, but rather a beautiful garden. In **Question 26** some simply said that she *avait un ami*. They needed to make clear that it was Antoine who lived next door in order to get the mark.

Exercice 2 Questions 28-38

Candidates found this passage harder and also had more difficulty expressing their answers clearly. In **Question 29**, some answers were too vague, for instance *pour la deuxième guerre mondiale.* **Questions 30** and **31** were well done. **Questions 32** and **33** proved more difficult. Some put *Il a travaillé au cinéma for* **Question 32**. *Il connaissait les scènes par cœur* was a common answer for **Question 33**. In **Question 34**, although most candidates understood the scene, many failed to give enough detail, putting answers such as *un homme prend sa femme dans ses bras* or *la scène de sa mère et de son père*. **Question 35** caused quite a few problems. It was important to make it clear that the camera was a present from his father, so answers such as *Il a eu un caméra* or *Il a un caméra avec son père* were not enough. **Question 36** was quite well answered and also **Question 37**, although here the common error was *parce que son père le réconforte.* **Question 38** caused the most difficulty, largely because candidates tended to copy from the passage *de ne pas avoir partagé cette joie avec son père* without explaining the cause of the joy.

Section 3

Questions 39-58

Candidates found this exercise difficult. The most common errors are given below:

Question 39 *le*
Question 40 *tout, dans*
Question 41 *à, dans*
Question 42 *avait, à*
Question 43 *depuis*
Question 44 *de*
Question 45 *eut*
Question 46 *et*
Question 47 *dans*
Question 48 *était, fait*
Question 49 *du*
Question 50 *cet*
Question 51 *pas*
Question 52 *pour, qui*
Question 53 *était*,
Question 54 *en, sur, par*
Question 55 *pour*
Question 56 *par*
Question 57 *que*
Question 58 *quand*