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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 covered virtually the entire mark range this year, from 0 to 59 out of a total of 60. There were some superb 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 competence in handling the language. The best 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 even basic grammatical structures, and the incidence of sheer carelessness and apparent unwillingness to check anything seemed to be even greater than in previous years – it was not uncommon, for example, to find gross gender errors (*la garçon*, *le femme*) and the same word spelt differently, or given a different gender, on successive lines. The translation into French was not attempted by many; where it was done, the marks frequently reflected those gained for the essay.

By and large, 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 continue to cause concern and these will 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. Thus, those writing at great length will certainly be penalised by losing Communication marks – in extreme cases, all 5 marks can 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.

The 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 and a small number were virtually illegible. 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 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. Most candidates confined themselves to the points presented by the pictures, but some spent too long setting the scene, even describing events preceding the first picture. Doing 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. There were several possibilities in each picture for the award of a Communication mark and 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.

Much of the necessary vocabulary was known, but there were surprising lapses. "*Dame*" became "*damme*", "*vieille*" was hardly ever spelt correctly, generally appearing as "*veille*" or "*vielle*". "*Agent*" was often "*argent*" and "*poste de police*" and "*commissariat*" appeared to be virtually unknown. "*Rendre*", "*remettre*" and "*donner*" (for handing back the bag) were uncommon. Pleasing exceptions were "*féliciter*" and "*fièr(e) de*", which were used by many candidates. "*Applaudir*" was clearly known but was invariably misspelt. There were many errors this time with prepositions – e.g. "*Il a couru avec le voleur*" (for "*après*"), "*il a rendu le sac pour la dame*" (for "*à*"). Finally, both here and in the other essay questions, many candidates used the nonsensical "Ont (parlait)" for "On (parlait)". Centres are encouraged to stress to candidates that no spelling errors are tolerated for the award of Accuracy marks and that the Communication mark will be withheld if there is serious doubt about the meaning.

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 from the widespread 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).

Candidates who had a reasonably firm grasp of basic grammar and vocabulary, and who were able, in particular, to handle verbs confidently had no difficulty in producing high scores provided they observed the word limit and confined themselves to the material suggested by the pictures.

Question 2

(a) *Letter*

This was somewhat less popular this year and the formal context was not always appreciated – a number of candidates used the inappropriate "tu" form and the "formules" at the end of this kind of letter were rarely correctly used. The rubric was quite precise and offered plenty of easy scope for candidates even if they were not used to such a task. Candidates were required to state when they would be free to work (many displayed inability to manipulate "*vous serez*" into "*je serai*"); what kind of work they wished to do (in an office/shop/garage/hotel, etc., working with people/cars/animals, etc.); their relevant experience ("*I've worked in a shop/office/garage, I've done baby sitting*". etc.) and the skills they could offer ("*I get on well with people, I can handle a computer, I speak French*", etc.). Only one relevant reference was required for each of these points and a fifth mark was available for a discrete additional reference to any of the points. Most letters were pertinent on the whole, and the rubric seemed to discourage irrelevance at the beginning. There was a good deal of successful use of language, but the same sort of problems that bedevilled **Question 1** appeared throughout **Question 2** as well, and more complex structures were often unsuccessful ("*Je voudrais travaille (sic) comme secrétaire*"). Candidates are strongly advised not to invent words where a choice is available to them – it was foolish, for example, to write phrases such as "*Je voudrais être shop assistant* (sic)" when there were so many job possibilities the vocabulary for which should be known by an O Level candidate.

(b) *Dialogue*

This was a very popular option this year – the notion of discord between the generations some lively and interesting pieces. The rubric was again quite precise. The first point n some reference to the aunt's intentions; ("*You've been invited to spend 3 weeks in France her/stay on her farm in the country*)" etc.). The conversation then needed to contain at least on reason given by the parents as to why the child ought to go; ("*You can go to the beach/see the farm animals/meet new friends/you'll be company for her*" etc.). Candidates were then required to raise at least one objection; ("*I'll be bored/there's no-one my age/I've already made arrangements*" – usually to go away with friends). A clear final decision should then have been reached within the word limit. Once more, the fifth mark was awarded to any extra piece of information attached to any of the rubric points. Most candidates had no difficulty answering these requirements but over concentration on any point early in the conversation could easily prevent them from broaching the final point within the word limit. Candidates should be careful to follow the rubric and to write only the actual dialogue. Narrative of any kind, scene setting, use of "*dit-il*", "*répondit-elle*" and the use of reported speech are all contrary to the rubric and will not be credited.

(c) *Narrative*

This was also a popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. Starting from any point after leaving home, a brief description of any circumstance causing delay was accepted for the first point. Most candidates opted for car breakdown, road accidents/congestion or members of the family forgetting passports and/or tickets which necessitated a return home to fetch them. Reference to arrival at the airport and to a suggestion put forward by an airport official (most commonly to catch a later plane) constituted the next two points. Some mention of how the time was spent (looking round the airport shops, going to eat, even returning home where a long wait for the next plane was involved) and a reference to the fact that the family were eventually able to travel were necessary for the two final points. Candidates should be advised to read the rubric carefully and to keep to the given outline – in a number of cases the story was changed (e.g. the holiday was cancelled as no other arrangements were possible) with the result that marks were lost for not covering all the required points. 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 ("*When we arrived at the airport, the plane had already left*") – and, as in **Question 1**, the choice and formation of tenses was often poor. 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 with a consequent 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 many simply did not do themselves justice through sheer carelessness, lack of basic knowledge or unwillingness to think problems through logically. That said, there were plenty of easy marks available and scores on this question frequently matched, or even exceeded, those gained on the essay. 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. 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.

The candidates who attempted the translation and produced a reasonable 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

General comments

Candidates often found it difficult to express themselves even though they had understood the gist of the passages.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercice 1, Questions 1 – 5

In this first exercise, **Question 3** proved a problem for the majority of candidates. There was no one wrong answer favoured, but it was noticeable that candidates generally were avoiding **C** and choosing something that might accompany a meal with chips, rather than picking the picture that corresponded to the *avec frites*. **Question 4** also caused difficulty, with many candidates choosing **C**.

Exercice 2, Questions 6 – 10

In this exercise, **Questions 7** and **8** caused the most difficulty.

Exercice 3, Questions 11 – 15

Option **E** was regularly chosen as a wrong answer for various questions, particularly **Questions 11** and **13**. **F** was also often chosen for **Questions 13** and **15**.

Section 2

Exercice 1, Questions 16 – 20

On the whole this exercise was well done.

Question 16

A common error was to fail to make it clear that Delphine was writing to the journal because she no longer understood her friend, indeed some managed to give an answer that suggested the exact opposite.

Question 17

Most answered this correctly. Only a few confused *école* and *lycée*.

Question 18

A common error here was to state that *Amanda <u>était</u> plus âgée que Delphine* rather than that she <u>seemed</u> older.

Question 19

Most candidates answered this correctly.

Question 20

This was also well answered.

Exercice 2, Questions 21 – 26

The candidates who had difficulty with this exercise often produced sentences, or parts of sentenc from the text, but unable to stand alone and inadequate as answers. Answers also often displayed l thought about what was being written.

Question 21

A lot of answers here suggested that *all* the climbers died attempting to conquer Everest.

Question 24

Here candidates needed to make it clear that Temba had been unable to reach the summit on the 18th May, even though he had wanted to. Many simply gave *une terrible tempête se lève.*

Question 25

This was quite well answered.

Question 26

The main problem here was incomplete lifts. A great many candidates offered answers such as *le gouvernement népalais ne veut pas que d'autres adolescents.*

Exercice 3, Questions 27 – 33

Candidates found this exercise difficult.

Question 27

The weakest candidates did not think Hélène was different – *elle ressemble à beaucoup d'autres vieilles dames.* Others gave answers in the inappropriate Present tense.

Question 28

A common error here was to give *elle voulait découvrir la Méditerranée* rather than *pour oublier la guerre.* A number of candidates who knew the correct answer did not go far enough, simply referring to *cette période horrible* without referring to the war.

Question 29

This was well answered.

Question 30

The most popular answer was *la beauté sauvage du pays.*

Question 31

(a) This was quite well answered. The most common error was to say simply *elle était une femme seule*, without mentioning the travelling.

(b) This was well answered.

Question 32

(a)(b) Both parts of this question were well answered.

Question 33

Candidates struggled to express themselves here, although most understood what was meant.

Section 3

Exercice 1, Questions 34 – 53

Candidates found this exercise difficult, particularly the first half of the passage. Sometimes answers w phonetically correct, but in this exercise the answer has to be completely accurate to earn the mark. Often (e.g. in Questions 42 and 53) the correct verb was known, but the candidates were unable to provide the correct form of it. There were also a number of candidates who tried to fill a gap with more than one word e.g. qu'ils or c'est. The most common errors are given below:

Question 34	à, a
Question 35	
Question 36	qu', ou
Question 37	à, est
Question 38	et, ou, avec
Question 39	était, étè
Question 40	pour, pour le, le
Question 41	bon, 7, huit
Question 42	partis, misse, mette, mettent, mets, partir
Questions 43, 44 and 45	These were quite well answered.
Question 46	il, va
Question 47	les, du, de
Question 48	dans
Question 49	aux
Question 50	Various impossible suggestions.
Question 51	a
Question 52	an
Question 53	Candidates found this question particularly difficult. Very few managed the infinitive after *devoir.* prends, pris, par, prandre.