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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 very pleasing and a large number of candidates produced outstanding work demonstrating the use of fluent, varied and accurate French. Only a relatively small number had clearly been inappropriately entered for the Examination. The essay questions produced many extremely competent answers where a wide knowledge of lexis and syntax was evident. This year, the translation into French was a very popular choice and was very 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. 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, one particular point has been stressed in this Report without, so far, having much obvious effect on the work of a majority of candidates. This is that 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. Therefore, yet again, Centres are asked to emphasise to their candidates that nothing after the 150 word limit will score for either Language or Communication. Thus, those writing at great length will almost inevitably 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.

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, thus, a pleasure to mark. Examiners did note, however, a number of cases of poor presentation with messy and unclear handwriting. 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.

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. Many chose to write in the first person; the errant cake eater, the angry mother, the sister and even the dentist, who presumably had psychic powers, all appeared as the narrator. There were many clear and often witty narratives with, inevitably, a strong theme of the application of poetic justice. Mothers varied from sympathetic (but firm, given the fact that the boy was forcibly dragged along to the dentist) to verging on the sadistic, with several suggestions that the swollen cheek in the third picture was the result of a maternal slap. The degree of retribution awaiting the boy at the dentist varied from a couple of fillings, with friendly advice to improve his dental hygiene, to wholesale extraction of all his teeth, often accompanied by unspeakable agony! As a result of excessive length, many candidates did not reach the final picture - the boy's dismay at being unable to participate in a sumptuous feast - within the 150 words, but many scored 5 marks for Communication as there was a "spare" picture.

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, and used successfully, "*morceau, manger, gourmand, fâché/en colère, avoir mal aux dents, pleurer, tirer/lemmener, examiner, enlever, crier*" and a number had a somewhat greater lexical range available with items such as "*tranche, déguster, avaler, douleur, traîner, arracher/extraire, hurler*". The vital expression "*se brosser/laver les dents*" was generally poorly handled. It was pleasing to note many successful attempts to use more complex structure, such as "*En entrant dans la salle ..*", "*Elle lui a ordonné de ...*" and "*Après être arrivé chez le dentiste, il ...*". It is worth pointing out, however, that some of those using the Present Participle construction spoil it by failing to relate it to the subject of the main verb. 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 chosen by many candidates and, being on the topic of holidays, clearly struck a chord. 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. After a statement of where the holiday was to be taken and a reaction to it ("*J'étais ravi(e), choqué(e), mécontent(e)* etc.") at least one actual activity (as opposed to the nebulous "*Nous nous sommes bien amusés ..*") was required for the third point in a recognisable past tense. "*Vos projets*" then invited at least one future reference for the activities during the coming holiday and the final point (which in far too many cases fell outside the word limit and was not therefore counted) asked for a speculative statement regarding an ideal holiday destination. Apart from the problem caused by over-long essays, this final point was, even where it could be counted, not well handled and many candidates omitted it completely.

Many candidates fulfilled these tasks successfully. However, some fell into the trap of extended irrelevant opening comments (family news and health, other matters not germane to the topic) which wasted words. Others talked in a vague way about the topic ("*J'adore les plages à Rodrigues ..*") without getting to the nub of the points outlined above and could frequently not therefore be awarded communication points. 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. As far as possible, candidates should avoid direct copying of phrases from the rubric as language that is reproduced without adaptation from the Question Paper will not be credited.

(b) Dialogue

This was tackled by a minority of candidates only, but the small number seen by the Examiners did contain some lively and authentic-sounding exchanges between the candidate and the policeman. Reference to the four given points was essential but a fifth point was available for any relevant, discrete extra item - for example, the candidate's answer to the policeman's questions about the family or opinion of the town and France. It is, again, essential that candidates do not waste words at the beginning with small talk, enquiries after health and so on. Those answering this question should be careful to follow the rubric and to write only the actual dialogue. Narrative of any kind, scene setting, description of the participants, use of "dit-il", "répondit-il" and the use of reported speech are all contrary to the rubric and will risk compromising the candidate's mark for this question.

(c) Narrative

This was also a very popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. Heart-rending accounts of individuals lying on the pavement in various states of distress were given with frequently gory details of their problems. Most candidates followed the requirements of the rubric, but a small number foolishly changed the story - carried the sick person to their house for example and rang the family. This lost Communication marks as the third rubric point stated quite explicitly the arrival of the emergency services. As with all the other essays, irrelevant material at the beginning stating at great length why the candidate was in the street, where he/she had been already, etc, merely wasted words and generally involved loss of the later Communication marks. As with the dialogue, there were four compulsory Communication points with the fifth available for any extra detail. In most cases, this was earned by giving extra information about the steps taken to help the invalid before the ambulance arrived. Once more, mobile phones were much in evidence!

The best stories were lively and graphic and used a range of appropriate vocabulary. Tense usage was sometimes suspect with, again, confusion between the Imperfect and Perfect/Past Historic.

Question 3*Translation into French*

This was the most popular of all the options and often produced work of a high standard. The vocabulary and grammatical structures required seemed largely to be available to most candidates. However, it should be pointed out 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 (several candidates scored full marks) but difficulties were experienced with a number of items:

- Paragraph A - "to have a picnic" (the noun being frequently misspelt as well as the wrong verb being used).
 "with their two children .." omission of "s" on "leur" – an avoidable error.
 "pleasant" - frequently "amusant" which was felt not to be close enough to the English.
- Paragraph B - "a beautiful Saturday" which a number of candidates unaccountably translated "dimanche".
 "a blue sky" NOT "the blue sky"
- Paragraph C - "pendant que Eliane (sic)" – an avoidable error.
 "food" - many knew "nourriture" but "nourritures", "repas", "déjeuner" were not accepted.
 "boot". Many knew this, but we also found "bateau" - did candidates not read the English word carefully enough?
 "swimming costumes" – "maillot", where used, was frequently misspelt.
 "Costumes de bains" was common.

- Paragraph D - Careless loss of marks with “*Finallement* (sic)” and “*la porte*” which should have been plural.
Deliberately more testing points in this paragraph were the agreement on “*achetée*” and “*After closing ..*”.
- Paragraph E - The first two points turned out to be difficult - the construction with “*depuis*” appears not to be well known.
“*loud*” – “*fort*” was what was expected; “*grand*” and “*gros*” were rejected.
For items 10 and 11, “*to rain*” and “*crying*”, it was pleasing to note that candidates did not confuse “*pleuvoir*” and “*pleurer*”, though “*crier*” was found for the latter.
“*barking*” - many candidates knew “*aboyer*”, but it was often misspelt.

<p>Paper 3015/02 Reading Comprehension</p>
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General comments

The majority of candidates performed well on this Paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

All the exercises in this section were answered well.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Questions 16 – 23

It was clear that most candidates understood this passage and knew the answers to the questions. A number of candidates offered *Il répétait les questions* for **Question 17**. There was also some difficulty with **Question 23** with some candidates suggesting that the trouble with the new teacher was that he did not pass any comment on the work at all.

Exercise 2

Questions 24 – 29

Candidates found this exercise by far the most difficult of the section. There were a noticeable number of gaps left, quite often the corrected sentence, suggesting that there are still candidates unsure of what is expected in this kind of exercise. In **Question 24**, the main error was to say where the parliament met, rather than when. There were also a lot of candidates who did not adapt the material to answering the question, especially, for instance, in **Question 25**, where a great many just referred to the *Parlement des Enfants*, forgetting that the statement they were correcting was referring to the adult parliament and consequently some sort of comparison was necessary if information about the *Parlement des Enfants* was going to be used. The weaker candidates also often lifted half an answer from the text and ended up writing nonsense – e.g. *Au Parlement des Enfants les filles sont en nombre*. In **Question 27** it was important to make it clear that there was discussion before the vote. Simply using a verb such as *choisir* did not indicate any more than an individual making a decision. In **Question 28**, some candidates focused on the *graves malformations* rather than *la protection des rivières*.

Exercise 3

Questions 30 – 34

Candidates understood most of this passage. **Question 31** often produced answers that could not be found in the text e.g. Because the teachers cannot see them. A common problem in **Question 32** was to phrase the answer in such a way as to suggest that the *raquetteurs* return to attack the parents rather than the child.

Section 3

Exercise 1

Questions 35 – 54

This exercise was particularly difficult for the weaker candidates, who were often guessing wildly or leaving gaps. The common errors were:

Question 35	<i>tout</i>
Question 40	<i>peut, pu</i>
Question 41	<i>quand, donc, mais</i>
Question 43	<i>a, Legrand, sont, avait</i>
Question 45	<i>va, à</i>
Question 46	<i>les, ses</i>
Question 47	<i>dans</i>
Question 49	<i>eut, eus, fait</i>
Question 50	<i>lui, se</i>
Question 52	<i>écouté, vu</i>