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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

There was a very wide range of performances this year. The best candidates scored high marks near the top of the scale, but a disappointingly large number at the other extreme showed little competence in handling the language. High-scoring candidates produced impressively fluent and accurate writing, tightly controlled and structured and demonstrating a good range of vocabulary and syntax. Unfortunately, many others, often 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 less popular than the second essay and, in general, marks were not high, though they frequently mirrored the mark awarded to the essay.

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. It should be noted that any failure to obey the rubric is likely to affect the final mark.

- 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.
- The majority of candidates observed the stated word limit. However, some 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 well and neatly 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 (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 – though, in a number of cases, the children were, oddly, taken to be adults. A few candidates fell into the trap of giving a lengthy introduction (getting up, having breakfast, preparations for going out, decisions to go for a walk, 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.

In order to score Communication points, five of the following references were required – seeing the cat in the tree, deciding to help the cat by climbing the tree to rescue it, the near accident, summoning the fire brigade, the arrival of help/the rescue of boy and cat, thanks given for the help/the cat starting all over again. Much of the necessary vocabulary was known, though there were some surprising gaps; probably the most glaring was inability to spell *arbre* and even to produce *chat* (*chien* appeared on several occasions).

Loose handling of basic grammatical structures, poor spelling and inadequate knowledge of verb forms caused many apparently promising candidates to lose marks. In this question, a specific instruction is given to write in the *past*, but, time after time, both Communication and Language marks were squandered by candidates' inability to handle the Perfect tense – the use of the Present tense, of the infinitive and of past participles without an auxiliary was disappointingly rife. Inadequate understanding of the difference between Perfect/Past Historic and Imperfect was common, as was poor formation of compound tenses (for example, *Ils ont décidait*). There were several possibilities in most of the pictures 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.

Question 2

(a) *Letter*

This was a very popular option and produced some good answers, though there were occasional misunderstandings. Not everyone understood the meaning of *important* and there was confusion between *une partie de l'argent* and the English word "party". The rubric was quite precise. First of all, candidates were required to write an appropriate statement expressing thanks for the gift. They then had to state how part of the money had been spent (virtually anything being accepted) and to give a reason for the choice (e.g. "I've bought some clothes because I'm interested in fashion/I've bought a new computer because the old one had gone wrong"). This latter point was often overlooked. A change of tense was then required in order to state intentions regarding the unspent part of the money to be followed by a brief comment on what happened on the birthday. Again, careless reading of the question sometimes had the candidate talking about *what they were going to do* on their birthday as opposed to *what they did*. Any way of spending money (many were selflessly going to help needy friends/relatives or worthily intending to spend it on education) was acceptable as was any kind of birthday activity. 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 and those who could handle verbs and tense change successfully above all often scored well. There was some uncertainty in the way the uncle was addressed – while *tu* was expected, *vous* was, of course, accepted but inconsistency was penalised.

(b) *Dialogue*

This was a less popular option and produced a range of performance. The rubric was again precise. The candidate was to open the conversation and needed to describe at least two different events/experiences during his/her stay, anything reasonable being accepted. An impression of the country or the inhabitants was then required ("It's a beautiful country/The people were really friendly"). A description by the other person of something (s)he had done was then necessary and, for the award of the final point, any extra, relevant point under any of these headings was credited. Once more, candidates giving lengthy introductions consisting of small talk, enquiries after health or gratuitous, irrelevant information were liable to have wasted a proportion of the 150 words before broaching the actual topic. The best candidates launched immediately into the main body of the conversation and made clear, logical points about their activities and their opinions 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-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. On discovering the wallet, the narrator was required to describe a reaction (what he/she *felt*, not what they *did*). The second point was awarded to the action taken (decided to take it to the police station/opened it to try to discover the identity of the owner, etc.). A mention of the owner (his/her arrival on the scene or presence at the police station/speaking to him/her on the phone, etc.) and a description of his/her reaction on hearing the news, was needed for the next two points and any logical conclusion (usually thanking the finder in some form) scored the final point. The majority of the narratives followed a fairly predictable, but perfectly acceptable, course with gratitude on the part of the owner of the wallet and a feeling by the narrator of having done a good deed generally prevailing in the end. 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 and, as in **Question 1**, the 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 impact on their marks. It should be noted by Centres that this question format will be used in all future papers for all the questions in this section.

Question 3

Translation into French

The translation was not as popular a choice as some of the essays though a fair number of candidates attempted it. There were, of course, a number of testing phrases included in the piece, but a large part of it was totally accessible to anyone with a reasonable command of basic vocabulary and grammar and the ability to make a fair shot at handling verbs. Sadly, in many cases, these fundamental abilities seemed to be lacking and it was felt that many candidates 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. 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 and Writing

General comments

There was a wide range of achievement in this examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1 – 5

Most candidates scored full marks on the exercise. It was clear, however, that some candidates did not appear to understand *baguette* and consequently gave an incorrect answer for **Question 1**.

Exercise 2, Questions 6 – 10

Although most candidates coped reasonably well with this exercise, a significant number responded incorrectly with *vrai* for **Question 6**.

Exercise 3, Questions 11 – 15

Most candidates dealt well with this section. For **Question 14** some candidates gave E as the answer, presumably misreading *fruits de mer* as *fruits*.

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 16 – 21

Most candidates dealt very well with this section.

Question 16 was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

For **Question 17** some candidates offered *ses parents n'ont pas le temps d'occuper/s'occuper* without making any reference to Sébastien.

In **Question 18** many answered correctly; although amongst these were a significant number who supplied a response including an incorrect form of *faire*, e.g. *Ils ne font rien seulement regarder la télé*. Some answered incorrectly that they did nothing.

Question 19 proved to be straightforward.

Questions 20 and 21 were generally correctly answered. Some candidates supplied answers which made no reference to his/Sébastien's parents, e.g. *Passer plus de temps avec eux*; it was not clear with whom he wished to spend time.

Exercise 2, Questions 22 – 27

There was a significant amount of lifting of fairly substantial chunks of text, which were not always make grammatical sense.

Question 22 proved to be straightforward for most candidates.

For **Question 23** although many candidates decided correctly that the statement was false, a significant number were unable to offer a correct justification for this decision. Many offered *Ce ne sont pas des vacances pour Stéphane*.

Question 24 was generally correctly answered.

Questions 25 and 26 led to some confusion. Many candidates decided correctly that the statements were false, but then some merely lifted an irrelevant statement from the text, whilst others offered the justification for **Question 25** for **Question 26** and vice versa.

Question 27 was again correctly understood to be false. A notable number then referred to Stéphane's interest in mechanics and photography rather making the required point about people in general having as much as possible to offer.

Exercise 3, Questions 28 – 33

Question 28 was mostly answered correctly, although some had clearly misunderstood and wrote *Elle rit. Elle pousse des cris de joie*.

Question 29 was well answered.

Question 30 (a) posed no problem. Parts **(b)(i)** and **(ii)** were answered with varying degrees of success; some described her reason for stopping her career as being to open a school; some indicated that it was to sell her worldly goods; others seemed to have misunderstood *supporter* and wrote *elle supporte la misère des enfants*. Most indicated her desire to help the children.

Question 31 proved to be straightforward.

Question 32 was answered correctly by many candidates, but some answers did not convey the idea of the 3 000 pupils having been to the school since it started, but rather suggested that the school had 3 000 pupils.

Question 33 was answered well by the greater majority of candidates. Just a few suggested that the *vêtements de danse* had been forgotten.

Section 3**Questions 34 – 53**

This exercise proved to be challenging for many candidates. Sometimes it was evident that a candidate understood the text and the part of speech required, even if the answers proved to be inaccurate. On other occasions, words supplied suggested that the candidate had written a word arbitrarily, as it made no sense contextually, grammatically and on a few rare occasions it did not even appear to be a French word.

Some candidates wrote a word that seemed to fit with the word(s) immediately before or after it but not in the wider context. Just a few wrote more than one word in a gap and two candidates inserted the words of the rubric into the gaps.

- Question 34** Many wrote *le*.
- Question 35** Some wrote *en*.
- Question 36** Many correct answers; a few wrote *que*.
- Question 37** Many wrote *les*.
- Question 38** Very many candidates used *est* to form the perfect rather than the required pluperfect.
- Question 39** The greater majority wrote *en*.
- Question 40** Some wrote *ont*.
- Question 41** There was a variety of responses here including *au*, *à le*, *par*.
- Question 42** Almost all candidates gave the correct answer.
- Question 43** The majority supplied *pour* correctly.
- Question 44** Most wrote *est* correctly.
- Question 45** There were some correct answers, but a wide range of incorrect ones including *avait*.
- Question 46** Very few recognised the need for a reflexive pronoun.
- Question 47** Most supplied *a* forming the perfect rather than the pluperfect.
- Question 48** Some supplied the correct response, but a variety of alternatives were offered.
- Question 49** Some correct responses, but many supplied *où*.
- Question 50** Most candidates gave the correct answer.
- Question 51** Almost all candidates gave the correct answer.
- Question 52** Some correct answers, but some wrote *derrière* or *dedans*.
- Question 53** Very many wrote *jamais*.