

FRENCH

Paper 3015/01

Translation and Composition

General comments

There was a very wide range of performance this year. There were a few very high marks near the top of the scale and a fair number of mid-range marks, but a disappointingly large number at the lower end of the scale showed little or no competence in handling the language. The handful of 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 sometimes mirrored the mark awarded to the essay. A handful of candidates returning blank scripts, scripts containing only a few lines of text and scripts with answers written in English had clearly been inappropriately entered for the examination.

Most candidates had clearly been well prepared for this examination and followed the instructions given on the paper. However, infringements of the rubric still appeared. It should be noted that any failure to obey the rubric is likely to affect the final mark.

A small number of candidates attempted two of the essays in the same section (**Question 2**) from which only one may be done.

This year, the majority observed the stated word limit. However, some candidates 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 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

The story appeared to be clear and there was little misinterpretation or confusion. The relationship between the characters varied, but most candidates took them to be mother and daughter with the man being either a friend or another relative. It is always permissible, as indicated in the rubric, for one of the major participants to become the narrator and each of the three played this role in different scripts. Candidates should, of course, remain consistent. One script started in the third person and then switched to a first person narrative as the young girl, which adversely affected communication. In order to score maximum Communication points, brief reference was required to at least five of the following aspects – the two people walking in the park/by the water; stopping to feed the ducks; the lady greeting the man and letting go of the girl's hand; the girl falling in the water; her rescue by the man; her being given an ice cream in front of admiring spectators. 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.

Much of the necessary vocabulary was known, though there were some surprising gaps. Almost all candidates knew that *lac* was accepted (*lac, bassin, étang, plan d'eau, rivière, mer*, etc.) but several were unable to find even one of these and merely resorted to an English word. *Baguette* and *promenade* were usually known but sometimes misspelt. *Se promener/faire une promenade* were not always known. *S'asseoir* could not handle *s'asseoir*. *Tomber* and *glisser* were known but were frequently used with the wrong auxiliary. *Avoir peur* was generally known but with confusion between *avoir* and *être*. *Pleurer* and *pleuvoir* were sometimes confused and, finally, a surprising number did not know *une glace*. 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 it was noted that both Communication and Language marks were sometimes squandered by candidates' apparent inability to handle the Perfect tense – the use of the Present tense, of the infinitive and of past participles without an auxiliary was not uncommon. Inadequate understanding of the difference between Perfect/Past Historic and Imperfect was seen, as was poor formation of compound tenses (for example *Elles ont décidait* [sic]).

That said, a large body of candidates understood the requirements of this question and produced pleasingly fluent and adequately accurate accounts which deservedly scored well.

Question 2

The same principles regarding the allocation of Communication marks apply as for **Question 1**, though the stimulus is now verbal rather than visual. It is important to stress that the rubric points are not merely guidelines; they *must* be included for an appropriate Communication mark to be awarded. Many candidates, in all three options, lost marks through omitting one or more points. Candidates should also be reminded that writing in excess of 150 words carries the risk that a later Communication point will occur after the word limit and will therefore not be credited.

Question 2(a) Letter

This was quite a popular option and produced some good answers, though there were occasional misunderstandings, one of which being that the letter was to be exclusively about a holiday without leading on to the required points about school. The letter has now followed the other two options for this question in that the opening words are given and candidates should always start by copying these before carrying on the letter in a logical way. Most candidates did indeed copy the lead-in but did not always then move onto the given rubric points. Candidates are advised not to waste words on opening phrases ('how are you', 'thanks for your letter', etc.) which will not score Communication marks. Candidates ignoring the instruction to use the lead-in will risk being penalised. The rubric was quite precise. First of all, candidates were required to say where they had been on holiday. A brief statement of what they did, while not specifically cued, would have been perfectly apposite and would have led naturally to the expression of an opinion about their holiday. This point was often completely omitted. An indication of an appropriate activity following the return from holiday and preceding the beginning of term was then needed and, once more, was often omitted. Then, some reference to the first day of term was required – what you did, whom you met and talked to, etc. to be followed by an indication of your feelings about the new timetable/subjects/courses/teachers etc. with some justification for those feelings. There was a good deal of successful use of language and those who could handle verbs and tense change successfully often scored well. There was some uncertainty about the use of the second person – either *tu* or *vous* could be used but such use must be consistent.

Question 2(b) Dialogue

This was again a popular option and produced a range of performance. The candidate was to follow the policeman's opening request by explaining briefly why (s)he happened to be in town at the time of the incident (shopping/meeting friends, etc.) to be followed by a statement of exactly where they were. They were then asked to say what they saw, though any statement describing what they did or what happened in general was accepted. Since there were only four discrete rubric points, 2 marks were available for any two separate statements in this section. Finally (and again frequently omitted) a reaction (an emotional response, not simply another statement of what they did) was needed. The majority of candidates attempted to deal with most of these points but, as always, many could not resist straying into largely irrelevant areas. It is always perfectly possible to write the required number of words while sticking strictly to the points given and this is what candidates should aim to do. 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.

Question 2(c) Narrative

This was possibly the least popular choice of the three but most candidates told the story complete. The first point needed a clear statement of what the problem was – inability to get into the house through having forgotten the key – with a simple reaction (annoyed, scared, etc.). It should be noted that, with points like this, candidates should be careful not to repeat verbatim what is printed in the question. An explanation of how they entered the house (an open window being the usual solution) was then needed, followed by a reference to someone having seen this happening – usually a neighbour. The narrator was then asked to give an appropriate explanation for his/her action. The final point involved the return of the parents and their reaction – angry, surprised, amused, etc. The majority of the narratives followed a fairly predictable, but perfectly acceptable, course but not all mentioned the reactions that were needed. The point made earlier is reiterated and emphasised, namely that *all* rubric points must be covered if the full Communication mark is to be achieved. 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. Overall, however, candidates who had obviously worked hard to acquire and practise the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures did well and should be applauded for this.

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.

FRENCH

Paper 3015/02

Reading

General comments

Overall, candidates appeared to be adequately prepared for this paper and found it accessible. Some candidates would benefit from closer reading of the text. In most cases presentation was good and handwriting legible.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Most candidates found this section straightforward.

Exercise 1

No problems were encountered.

Exercise 2

Candidates generally performed well in this exercise, although **Questions 9** and **10** were sometimes incorrect.

Exercise 3

Some candidates seemed to find this exercise challenging, particularly **Question 14**, although it was not clear whether they had not read closely enough or whether they lacked the necessary vocabulary.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Many candidates scored extremely well on this exercise.

Question 21

Some candidates answered *20* or *20 amies* rather than the required *vingtaine*. Some appeared not to understand *15 bougies* as this was occasionally given as an answer.

Exercise 2

Some candidates seemed to struggle with this exercise. A few indicated true or false and did not justify false statements. Some indicated that a statement was true and then wrote unnecessarily to justify this. Some errors may have been avoided by closer reading. Rather than making inferences, candidates are advised to give answers based more precisely on the text.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Question 22

Some candidates latched on to the reference to age in the text and wrote, *A l'âge de 12 ans Catherine découvre le plaisir de grimper* or similar.

Question 23

Although most candidates wrote about balance, some made no reference to stature.

Questions 25 and **26** were answered appropriately by almost all candidates.

Exercise 3**Question 28**

Some candidates merely reiterated the fact that obesity is a problem in the USA. A significant number wrote correctly, *40% des enfants sont gros*, but then added, *mais l'obésité augmente*, which was an inappropriate lift from the text indicating a lack of understanding.

Question 29

Some candidates wrote of the doctor recommending a healthy diet, which suggested misreading of both the question and the text.

Question 30

A few candidates did not write about the children educating their parents and instead made a reference to the doctor recommending a healthy diet.

Question 31

There were many good answers to this question.

Question 32

Although some made reference to the selection of ten schools and the teachers being trained, others wrote about what the teachers did rather than what the *Education Nationale* did, which again suggested that closer reading is required.

Question 33

Most candidates responded appropriately.

Question 34

There were some good answers to this question. However, some candidates lifted *A Fleurbaix on mange encore parfois un hamburger frites ou une pizza* sometimes with and sometimes without the rest of the sentence, which indicated that *Même si* at the start of the sentence had not been understood. Some lifted the final sentence of the text.

Section 3

Responses to this exercise were mixed; some candidates seemed to find this very difficult, including a few who had performed well on the preceding exercises, whilst a significant number scored almost full marks. Some responses seemed arbitrary. Occasionally words that were clearly not French were supplied and in a very few cases weaker candidates filled every gap with the word *un* or the word *mot*.

Most frequent errors occurred in the following questions:

Question 41 Many wrote *très*.

Question 48 Some wrote *que*.

Question 50 A significant number supplied *de*.

Question 51 *Sommes* sometimes occurred and a variety of slightly incorrect forms of *étions*.

Question 52 Very few candidates supplied *pour*. Sometimes *de* was offered.

Question 53 A significant number of candidates supplied *la*.

Question 54 Very few candidates appeared to know this construction as the correct answer was rarely given. *De* occurred not infrequently.