

FRENCH

Paper 3015/01

Translation and Composition

General comments

Overall, the Examiners were impressed by much of the work that they saw and there were a number of superb performances right at the top of the range. Only a relatively small number of candidates had clearly been inappropriately entered for the examination. There were some excellent answers to the essay questions which used a wide range of lexis and syntax, though frequently the writing was inaccurate. Candidates should be reminded that a broad and fluent command of the material is highly commendable and will be well rewarded, but that accuracy in writing is absolutely essential for full credit to be given. The translation into French was once again a very popular choice and many candidates are to be congratulated on the high standard they achieved in this question; they had clearly worked hard to acquire a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, and there were many very good marks indeed which frequently mirrored, or in some cases exceeded, the marks gained for the essay. Set against this was the fact that, sadly, many candidates wasted marks through sheer carelessness and an apparent unwillingness to read the English carefully and translate exactly what is there. 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, but each year many still prejudice their chances of success by ignoring the clearly stated instructions. For each essay question, candidates are instructed quite specifically and unambiguously that they must not write more than 150 words. 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 anything between 200 and 600 words. It would appear either that candidates do not bother reading the rubric or that they do not believe the Examiners will exact any penalty. Yet again, therefore, it should be emphasised in the strongest possible terms that the rubric is unequivocal and that candidates writing any amount in excess of 150 words are simply wasting their time. They should be reminded as clearly as possible that nothing whatsoever is taken into account after the 150 word limit for either Language or Communication - no tolerance at all is applied. Thus, those writing at great length will certainly 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. 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.

Each essay question has quite specific guidelines regarding its content – either the pictures for **Question 1** or clearly stated rubric points for the three options of **Question 2**. The word count will start at the beginning of the answer for **Question 1** and the first word after the given opening phrase for **Question 2**. Candidates who ignore the instruction to start their essay after the given phrase are liable to be penalised. Any material which does not clearly relate to the content guidelines for any essay will remain as part of the word count but will be treated as irrelevant and will gain no marks for either Communication or Accuracy.

A further 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.

Thus, Centres are strongly urged to remind their candidates that the instructions in the question paper mean exactly what they say 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 not credited.

Communication Marks (Questions 1 and 2 only): Each essay has a maximum score of 5 for successful communication of relevant points in unambiguous, but not necessarily complete, 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 point 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 3 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. It was intended that the story would start with a reference to the four people (either a family or four friends) cycling along a country road on their way to a picnic. A certain amount of description of what had preceded this (preparing their food, making arrangements to meet up, for example), is permissible but lengthy introductory material should be avoided as it will not score any extra Communication points and may be treated as irrelevant if taken to excess. The arrival of the group at the entrance to a field deemed to be a likely picnic spot and with what appeared to be a sign promising water constituted the second point, to be followed by them entering the field, settling down on some kind of protective covering and eating their lunch. The fourth picture showed disaster arriving in the shape of an angry and dangerous-looking bull along with an equally angry farmer/warden/landowner and the horrified reaction on the part of the picnickers. The next event was the destruction by the bull of the group's property and picnic while they fled to safety and the final picture saw the man pointing out that, seen from a slightly different standpoint, the sign warned of the presence of a bull in the field. Most candidates started their narrative at the appropriate point, but some were unable to resist filling in a lengthy background scenario to explain what had happened before this, often including an account of basic morning routine (getting up and washed, having breakfast, etc.). As pointed out above, such an approach is pointless as no Communication marks will be awarded for ideas not suggested by the pictures. The narrative was frequently competently executed but dwelling at too great a length on the earlier part of the story inevitably led to loss of the later Communication points for many candidates. This could very easily make a significant difference to the final grade. Those who kept within the word limit generally had no difficulty scoring the maximum of 5 for Communication.

The conventional third person narrative approach was mostly adopted, but some chose to write in the first person, as one of the group of four. This was, of course, perfectly acceptable.

The quality of the language used was variable but many candidates showed confident use of the necessary vocabulary as well as a variety of appropriate structures. Most candidates (but by no means all) knew the basic words required by this set of pictures. *Taureau* was, of course, given in the final picture but it was disappointing to note that, even so, some candidates could not spell it or invented another word.. A number of words were accepted for the picnic site (*ferme, pré, prairie, champ, parc*, but *plaine* and *jardin* were felt to be inappropriate). *Place* was almost universally used instead of *endroit* or *lieu*; *barrière* was not well-known and *pique-nique* was frequently written in English. Highly welcome when they appeared were better items of vocabulary such as *arriver en courant, en colère, s'enfuir, détruire*, etc. 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 Present, of course, was unacceptable as the narrative tense. The Pluperfect was not always handled correctly, either not being used when it was required or, occasionally, being constantly used without justification. Minor common errors were confusion between *car, comme* and *quand*; between *on* and *ont*, *ce* and *se* and *ces* and *ses*.

Question 2

(a) Letter

This was a popular choice. Most candidates understood the task and often covered the required points very well, but those who ignored the guidelines or who dealt with any point at excessive length were inevitably penalised. Five clear points were mentioned in the rubric (four separate points with one requesting two details) and all had to be covered by a discrete statement containing a verb to qualify for the award of the

five Communication marks. Candidates are reminded that for all **Question 2** essays the opening must be given and should be copied out before starting the main body of the essay. Deliberately ignoring the opening and launching into a pre-learned and irrelevant opening will be penalised. A reference to the invitation to open the letter, to be followed by a statement of where the holiday was to take place. Justification of the decision was then required ("It's beautiful, peaceful, lively, interesting, we always go there, my uncle lives there," etc.). The final Communication marks were awarded to any two statements describing different possible activities – *On pourrait faire de la natation. Il y a des discothèques. Je t'emmènerai faire du shopping* etc.

The majority dealt in a satisfactory manner with the points outlined above. Some rubric points will, of course, invite greater length than others, but a single, clear reference in an acceptable tense is sufficient for the award of a Communication mark. Even where candidates have avoided the trap of wasting words on irrelevant preamble, they should still beware of dwelling at excessive length on any one rubric point in order to ensure that they deal with all five before reaching the word limit.

Candidates who started with the given opening followed immediately by relevant treatment of the rubric points usually covered the material appropriately. Some, however, in spite of being given the lead-in, could not resist then turning to a conventional letter-opening formula full of stock phrases and irrelevant references, with the inevitable result that, once into the body of the letter and the actual rubric points, they quickly ran out of words. Candidates should be encouraged to avoid doing this. 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. In particular, many candidates seemed 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 the least popular of the three options but the relatively straightforward subject of two people talking about themselves clearly appealed to a number of candidates some of whom wrote competent and relevant dialogues. The best candidates dealt with the points exactly as stated and in the order in which they appeared. They were asked to give at least one relevant detail about family, hobbies/pastimes, pets and future holidays. As there were only four rubric points a further mark was awarded to any discrete relevant extra detail about any of the stated points.

It was felt that a conversation based on presumably well-practised topics should be within the compass of virtually all candidates and, indeed, there were some competent performances. Candidates should beware, however, of over-using basic phrases – for instance asking about the health of each member of the family or what they do for a job – as Impression marks are likely to be lowered for material that is excessively repetitive.

It should be noted that only the actual words of the conversation should be written (with an indication, of course, of which person is speaking). Any kind of narrative introduction, interjection or description via reported speech is contrary to the rubric and will be ignored in the marking.

(c) Narrative

This was another popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. As a result of being given the opening words, there were few irrelevant preambles before the account of the incident in the classroom started – though, as with the other essay questions, 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 but not then immediately dealing with the first rubric item. Both these approaches are pointless and will seriously affect the marks awarded.

Candidates were required to give a brief description of the friend's symptoms (headaches, nausea or dramatic collapses onto the floor being the most popular) and to describe the action taken by the teacher. A mention of a phone call by someone at the school to the parents was then required to be followed by their arrival (usually at school, though in some cases at the hospital). The final point required a reference to their gratitude – usually thanking the teacher, the narrator or the doctor. Needless to say, the situation in a highly

familiar context seemed to appeal to those who attempted this question and gave great scope for imaginative invention. There were some enjoyable and graphic accounts of the incident, with few misunderstandings of the points required but, as implied above, excessive length in the treatment of earlier points often involved the loss of the final Communication points.

The best stories were lively and fluently written, using a range of appropriate vocabulary and structures. Tense usage was sometimes suspect with, again, confusion between the Imperfect and Perfect/Past Historic. 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 very 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 more challenging. 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 “Alain and his wife lived ... liked being free” – the tense was often wrong, *de* was wrongly used after *aimaient* and, in spite of the immediate proximity of the plural pronoun, *libres* rarely showed a plural agreement. “Their children” – few wrote *leurs* correctly.
- Paragraph B “Half an hour later” was frequently misspelt as *une demie-heure* or translated as *une heure et demie*. “Evening” was frequently translated as *après-midi* instead of *soirée*. “A lot of Alain’s friends”, “several employees” – there was frequent confusion between and misspelling of *beaucoup* and *plusieurs*.
- Paragraph C “They were feeling” – the Imperfect was essential. “Alain had drunk only mineral water” – the partitive – *de l’eau minérale* – was often poorly handled and the feminine agreement on the adjective was also missed. “His wife soon fell asleep” – neither the verb nor the adverb were well handled. “They went to bed” – for a relatively simple phrase, this was surprisingly poorly translated.
- Paragraph D This paragraph was probably the most successful of all but hardly anyone knew *épuisé*.
- Paragraph E “I’m sorry, Dad” - in spite of the mention of “daughter” in the preceding paragraph and the next word being “she”, it was rare to see the feminine agreement where *désolée* was used. “Can you take me by car?” – the use of *prendre* was widespread, but is incorrect for *emmener*. “In order to help his daughter” – *pour* or *afin de* were expected but were not as well known as had been anticipated. “He was not at all pleased” - “at all” was frequently omitted.

FRENCH

Paper 3015/02
Reading Comprehension

General comments

Overall, candidates appeared to be very well 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 exercise straightforward.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Exercise 1

Question 2 A notable number of candidates did not seem to understand *charcuterie*.

Question 5 Some candidates seemed to understand *moto* to mean motor car as they selected **D** in answer to this question.

Exercise 2

Almost all candidates performed well in this exercise, although some answered **Question 10** incorrectly. Some candidates may have benefitted from closer reading of the text.

Exercise 3

A number of candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with some of the vocabulary in this exercise. **Questions 11** and **12** were sometimes incorrect, but **Questions 13, 14** and **15** were answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Many candidates scored extremely well on this exercise.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Question 20 In a small number of cases candidates mistakenly stated that Paul had never seen his father happy before rather than noting that he had not seen him so happy for a long time, suggesting that *depuis longtemps* had not been understood.

Question 26 Some candidates wrote ambiguous answers in response to this question. For example, *Il allait passer du temps à faire/expliquer/étudier les maths*; it was not clear who the subject of the sentence was. Some used a pronoun which rendered the sentence confusing, for example, *Son père allait t'expliquer les maths* or even *Le père de Paul allait s'expliquer les maths*.

Exercise 2

Again a high percentage of the candidature produced very good responses. Some errors may have been avoided by closer reading. Rather than making inferences, candidates are advised to give answers more precisely on the text. Signs of genuine comprehension are required; some candidates who appeared to lift indiscriminately failed to demonstrate comprehension and did not score the mark.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Question 29 proved challenging for a notable number of candidates. Some lifted *S'il fait 3 degrés en été...* which did not show a true understanding of the question. Some wrote that it was particularly cold in summer, or even more confusingly, that it was particularly hot in summer. Just a few candidates wrote about the temperature falling au moins 40 degrés rather than à moins 40 degrés, suggesting that more careful checking of work is required.

Question 30 Some candidates did not use a reflexive verb here, but wrote *Elle a vite adaptée*, which was not credited, because it made no sense as a response to the question.

Question 34 Although there were some very good responses here, a number of candidates again failed to use a reflexive verb and wrote *Emilie occupait des reserves de nourriture*. This was not credited. Some wrote *Emilie était responsable de la nourriture*. Again this was not credited as it suggested that she was in charge of cooking rather than of food supplies.

Section 3

Responses to this exercise were mixed; some candidates seemed to find this very difficult, including several who had performed very well on the preceding exercises, whilst a significant number scored almost full marks.

The most frequent errors occurred in the following questions:

Question 40 Although almost all candidates knew that a preposition was required here, not all supplied an appropriate one. *Sous* and *dans* occurred frequently.

Question 42 A significant number wrote *pas*.

Question 45 Many candidates wrote *de* rather than the required *à*.

Question 46 It appeared that some candidates did not fully understand the storyline, as both *pendant* and *après* were supplied as answers, which worked grammatically but which were not very logical choices.

Question 49 Many candidates wrote *en* or *du*.

Question 51 *Les* or *des* were used.

Question 54 Almost all candidates provided an infinitive, but not always *faire* as required; *prendre* occurred frequently.

Question 56 Candidates gave a variety of responses including *de* and *les*.

Question 57 Many candidates supplied an incorrect preposition. *En* and *à* were the most common.