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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

At the higher end of the scale, there were some very pleasing performances, but, in general, standards seemed to be slightly lower this year. A small number of candidates produced impressively fluent and accurate writing with a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Rather more, however, clearly able to think and express themselves in fluent and authentic-sounding phrases, took little heed of correct spelling or grammatical accuracy and thus gained only modest marks. The translation into French was attempted by relatively few candidates this time and marks were not high.

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 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 the tendency appeared less marked this time, many candidates still exceeded the limit of 150 words for any essay. Candidates should be reminded that they will gain nothing whatsoever by writing at excessive length as only the first 150 words are marked for both language and communication.

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. A few candidates started with a lengthy introduction detailing what had happened before the walk started. This merely wastes words and may affect the award of the maximum Communication mark. However, in general, the salient points presented in the pictures were clearly communicated though, oddly, some candidates had the boy running to a nearby public phone instead of using his mobile.

Much of the necessary vocabulary was known, though there were uncertainties regarding the information it imparted, the spelling of “bois” or “forêt”, the boy’s reaction (“Il était (sic) peur” was the spelling of “ambulance”, the administration of first aid and certain aspects of the scenes at the. Generally known were “faire une promenade, tomber, pousser un cri, un portable, téléphone, donner/offrir”. The words for the action of the snake (“mordre, piquer” and “attaquer” were accepted) were well known but frequently not well handled and most candidates were not able to handle the passive (“Elle était piqué avec un serpent (sic)” was typical). Surprisingly, “chocolates” or “a box of chocolates” was often not successfully expressed.

Loose handling of basic grammatical structures, poor spelling and inadequate knowledge of verb forms caused many apparently promising candidates to lose marks. Many possible Communication marks were available and the maximum mark was easily scored by those who could write a series of relevant phrases containing a reasonably accurate past tense.

Question 2

(a) Letter

This was a very popular option and produced some good answers. Many candidates clearly found this a topic of interest to them and on which they had something to say and there were many thoughtful considerations of the issues which invariably produced maximum Communication marks. Some candidates failed to see that the question asked about issues such as the availability or otherwise of entertainment and other facilities, transport, noise, pollution, peace and quiet, boredom etc and dwelt at great length on their despair at leaving their friends behind or gave detailed physical descriptions of their new house. 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, though with frequent uncertainty over correct tenses, but candidates should be aware that massive repetition of particular words and phrases will militate against the award of the highest marks - for example, “il y a” or “il n’y a pas” stood out as over-used phrases. Finally, candidates who misspell words that are given in the question (“campagne”, “vieille maison” for example) do not impress the Examiners.

(b) Dialogue

This was a much less popular option and was not always successfully done. The rubric was very open-ended and gave candidates scope to talk about a wide range of things, but something of substance must be included for a Communication mark to be awarded - such as the speaker’s current family or employment status, what they have done since leaving school, mention of ambitions and plans for the future, swapping memories of former mutual friends, even an invitation to come home or go for a drink. Once more, candidates giving lengthy introductions consisting of small talk, enquiries after health and so on were liable to have used most of the 150 words before broaching the actual topic and thus scoring Communication points. The best candidates launched immediately into the main body of the conversation and made clear, logical points and enquiries of the other person 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, description of the participants, constant use of “dit-il”, “répondit-elle” 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 popular choice and many candidates seemed to relish the scope it gave to their imaginations. Any relevant series of events to explain the disappearance of the narrator’s property was accepted for Communication points. Common interpretations included burglary by person unknown, corrupt hotel staff and, in a number of cases, practical jokes or “surprises” involving a friend or spouse having the property moved to another room. 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 in (a), many candidates lost marks by misspelling words borrowed from the rubric (“ouverte” and “possessions” for example). Unusually, a number of candidates from one Centre treated the question as a letter of complaint to the hotel manager. This was clearly a breach of the rubric, risking affecting the final mark.

This question in particular seemed to suffer from lengthy, irrelevant introductions. The candidates were expected to provide a description of what happened after return to the hotel room. Detailed descriptions of what the candidate was staying at the hotel or how he/she had spent the evening merely waste words and will not earn Communication marks.

Question 3

Translation into French

Unusually, this was not a popular option and candidates who attempted it seemed to find it difficult. It was expected that items such as “*on the other side of*”, “*narrow*”, “*it was cool*”, “*he allowed himself to smoke*”, “*a leather jacket*”, “*in a bad mood*”, “*taking ... from his pocket*” and “*fell forward across a table*” would produce problems, though they should not have been insuperable. However, most candidates were expected to translate statements such as “*opened the doors of his café at eight o’clock in the morning*”, “*lit a cigarette*”, “*there were no customers*”, “*all the bottles behind the bar*”, “*a small man*”.

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 Comprehension

General comments

The overall standard was lower this session. In **Section 2**, many candidates made little or no attempt to manipulate the text to answer the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

Questions 1- 6

Candidates had little difficulty with this exercise. The most frequent errors occurred in **Questions 3** and **5**, with candidates tending to choose Option A in both cases.

Exercise 2

Questions 7 –13

Candidates also coped well with this exercise. The most mistakes came in **Questions 11** and **12**.

Exercise 3

Questions 14 – 20

This exercise was done very well indeed, even by the weaker candidates.

Section 2

In this section, many candidates relied heavily on material lifted straight from the text, with hardly any attempt made to adapt it to answering the question. As a result marks were lost because the answers either made no sense as they stood, or there was so much irrelevant material included as to suggest the candidate had not understood the question.

Exercise 1

Questions 21 – 27

In this exercise it was striking how many candidates did not even attempt to correct the false answers. They should be encouraged always to have a try, even if they are unsure, since an answer left blank loses any chance of the mark.

Question 21

A common error was to describe the *Méridienne Verte* simply as a *ligne*.

Question 22

A number of candidates seized on the two towns named in the text and thought the statement was true.

Question 23

This question produced a great many examples of text being lifted without any adaptation – '*Incroyable également l'immense nappe à carreaux rouges et blancs, déroulée le long de la 'Méridienne Verte' et fabriquée spécialement pour l'occasion et qui mesurait plus de 700 km de long.* Without a main verb and out of context this makes no sense. Just making the simple change *Une immense nappe est fabriquée spécialement pour l'occasion* would have been enough for the mark.

Question 24

Many candidates wrote out agreement with the statement, although that was not necessary.

Question 25

Here again, failure to make any changes to the text led to problems. Candidates should aim to show through their manipulation of the material that they have understood both the text and the question. Some merely wrote *Le nombre de participants était incroyable* without making it clear why it was incredible, namely that there were a lot.

Question 26

This was an example of where a straight lift provided an acceptable answer and as such candidates were not penalised.

Question 27

This was answered quite well.

Exercise 2

Questions 28 - 33

In this exercise, in **Questions 29, 30 and 31**, a great many candidates provided only one of the two pieces of information required for the mark. There were also problems with candidates giving too much irrelevant additional information.

Question 28

Most candidates knew the correct answer, but were let down by their inability to express it in French. As a result it was quite common to see answers that suggested someone had lit a fire in Zahdig's house, rather than set fire to it.

Question 29

There were many possible answers to this question. The most common were *Il veut fuir les soldats; Il veut trouver du travail, Il veut gagner de l'argent.*

Question 30

A common error here was to omit to make it clear that Zahdig *thought* or *had heard* that life in France was easy. There were also many instances of candidates failing to manipulate the text at all and in doing so ending up giving the answer *Je parlais bien français et mes parents m'avaient dit que c'était un pays où la vie est facile*. The adaptation necessary for the mark is not huge - for instance *Je parlais* to *Il parlait*, *mes* to *ses*, *m'* to *lui*, but it is necessary for a correct answer.

Question 31

Here most candidates knew that Zahdig was noticed because he was young and alone, but many gave answers such as *Ils veulent savoir d'où il vient, s'il a des parents ou amis qui l'attendent* or *Ils découvrent que Zahdig est seul et sans aucune ressource* neither of which answer the question why the police notice him in the first place.

Question 32

Very few candidates answered this correctly, and in nearly every case it was because they said what happened to Zahdig rather than what happened to people who were like Zahdig but over 18. There was also much confusion between *son* and *leur*.

Question 33

This was quite well answered, but many candidates drew their information from the wrong paragraphs, saying that the pupils work so hard because they *font le ménage, la vaisselle* or because *Ils ont du retard par rapport aux élèves de leur âge*.

Section 3

Questions 34 – 53

Candidates found this section difficult. The most common errors were as follows:

Question 34

en

Question 35

de

Question 36

leur, ses

Question 37

Eiffel, était

Question 38

ayant, avait

Question 39

à

Question 40

Well answered.

Question 41

Well answered

Question 42

de, aux, le

Question 43

du

Question 44

comme

Question 45

A wide variety of verbs - *est, sera, fait*

Question 46

leur

Question 47

qui, de

Question 48

que

Question 49

bien, meilleur

Question 50

avec

Question 51

Pour

Question 52

a

Question 53

sur, pendant, depuis