

# FRENCH

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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. 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 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 learn 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.

As usual, it was clear that candidates had been well prepared for this Examination, but each year some still prejudice their chances of success by ignoring the clearly stated instructions. For each essay question, candidates are instructed that they must not write more than 150 words. A number 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 read 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.

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.

Thus, Centres are strongly urged to remind their candidates to adhere to the instructions in the question paper 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 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 though the exact identity of the four people depicted in the story was the subject of multiple variations. The main thrust of the story whereby the lady's bag was inadvertently left on the roof of the car from which it fell when they departed, then to be picked up and returned to them by a helpful policeman, was generally clearly understood and related though the uniformed man was described in a number of ways. The Examiners were surprised that the obvious word *agent* was frequently apparently not known or was deliberately replaced by something less usual (or even invented and therefore not scoring). Candidates should be reminded that there is nothing whatsoever wrong with stating the obvious and using a simple word where one is available. Most candidates started their narrative, as was intended, with the greetings at the coach station, but some were unable to resist filling in a lengthy background scenario to explain what had happened before this. Such an approach is pointless as no Communication marks will be awarded for ideas not suggested by the pictures. The greetings, particularly between the girl and the lady, the stowing of the luggage, departure, the fate of the bag, the journey and the events upon arrival at home were usually explained clearly. However, many candidates had used up their 150 word allowance well before the point at which the family arrived home and, in cases of extreme length, many did not get beyond the second picture, thereby immediately losing 3 Communication marks (out of a total mark for the question of 30).

The conventional third person narrative approach was, of course, frequently adopted, but many chose to write in the first person, most commonly as the girl or the father. Taking the point of view of the lady posed no problems, but those who opted to be the policeman created an unnatural situation – it is generally not recommended to adopt the narrative standpoint of someone who does not appear in all the pictures as unnecessary limitations are then placed upon the narrative.

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 common words such as *sac, valise, bagages, saluer, rencontrer, ramasser, embrasser, voiture, coffre, toit, tomber, parler, rendre, remettre*. 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 Pluperfect was not always handled correctly, either not being used when it was required, or, more rarely, being constantly used without justification. Minor common errors were confusion between *car, comme* and *quand*; between *se* and *ce* and between *ces* and *ses*.

### Question 2

#### (a) *Letter*

This was a popular choice. Not all candidates understood the rubric and there was considerable confusion over who the letter was being addressed to and about what. The letter was to be addressed to the host family (covered by the general form of address *Chers amis*) following a stay with them and commenting on that stay. Provided the essential elements were covered, the Examiners decided to be tolerant over minor misunderstandings. Five clear points were mentioned in the rubric and all had to be covered to qualify for the award of the five Communication marks. This year saw the first of the new-style questions, bringing **Question 2(a)** into line with the other two options, whereby the opening words are given. This is intended to guide candidates into immediate treatment of the relevant material in order to encourage them not to waste their time on irrelevant preamble which cannot score Communication marks. With all these questions, candidates should copy out the given introduction and then carry straight on into the first rubric point. A reference to the journey made when returning from the visit was required (though the Examiners also accepted mention of the outward journey at the beginning of the holiday); then to the welcome given by the hosts to the visitor, to be followed by a short description of any tourist-type visit plus an activity which they enjoyed (swimming, shopping, dancing, etc.). Finally a brief impression was required – even as simple a statement as *C'était très agréable* was adequate.

Many candidates fulfilled these tasks successfully, though, as hinted above, some wrote to their own friends about the holiday they had spent with foreign hosts. 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. The points concerning the journey, the visit and the activity could clearly be dealt with at almost any length. 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. They 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. Many candidates, in particular, seem 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 subject clearly did appeal to a number of candidates some of whom wrote witty and cogent dialogues in which the errant son or daughter frequently put up a spirited defence to the parental accusations of irresponsibility! Friends' cars (or their parents') breaking down, non-appearance of taxis, non-functioning mobile phones, accidents en route were some of the recurring reasons for the late return and most speakers were contrite though there were those more defiant individuals who claimed entitlement to a much greater degree of independence from parental supervision than they were apparently being given. 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 interjections 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 this time before the account of the camping trip 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 and then indulging in a lengthy flashback. Both these approaches are pointless and will affect the marks awarded.

Candidates were required to refer to the arrival at the camp site, the process of putting up the tent, the onset of inclement weather, the decision to move into a nearby hotel and the (usually disappointed) feelings on the part of the participants (who were, of course, stated in the rubric to be friends, *not* family of the narrator). Most accounts were fairly predictable but were perfectly acceptable.

There were some enjoyable and graphic accounts of these incidents, with few massive misunderstandings of the points required but, as implied above, excessive length in the treatment of the earlier points often involved the loss of the final Communication points and it was not uncommon to find the word limit had been reached even before the deterioration in the weather let alone the move to a hotel. Many candidates added a completely unnecessary and detailed account of how they enjoyed themselves on the beach after setting up their camp and, in so doing, almost inevitably failed to cover all the required points before reaching the limit.

The best stories were lively and fluently written, using a range of appropriate vocabulary and structure. In general, the vocabulary was accessible but few knew the appropriate terms for putting up a tent (*construire* was widely used instead of *monter* or *dresser*). Tense usage was sometimes suspect with, again, confusion between the Imperfect and Perfect/Past Historic and 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. The vocabulary and grammatical structures required seemed largely to be available to many candidates though some of the structures, inevitably, proved to be more difficult. 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 Unaccountably, *vingtième* often became *douzième*.  
‘Too much’ – *trop* was poorly known; often combined with *beaucoup*.
- Paragraph B There appeared to be no intrinsically particularly difficult points. Marks were lost through careless translation of minor points - *à* for *vers* (‘towards the station’), *le* for *son* (‘his train’), the same error for ‘his ticket’, *le* for *un* (‘on a bench’).
- Paragraph C The correct spelling of *compartiment* proved elusive. This paragraph perhaps contained more difficult grammatical points than the first two but these were often well handled although few recognised the need for the infinitive construction *à manger* after the verb *passer*. The relatively basic adverbial phrases *plus tôt* and *plus tard* were not always correctly translated.
- Paragraph D The two most difficult phrases potentially – ‘he must have arrived’ and ‘he did not recognise anything’ were sometimes well translated. However, easy marks were lost through sheer carelessness – ‘he woke up’ mistranslated as *il se leva*; ‘a small town’ as *un petit village*; wrong agreement on *situé*. It is just as important in this exercise to concentrate on getting the small points right as it is to score in the more complex structures.
- Paragraph E The more testing sections in this paragraph were ‘opposite a sign’ where neither of the elements was well known and the last phrase, ‘he would not eat so much at parties’ where poor handling of the Conditional was noted as well as uncertainty over the adverb ‘so much’.

# FRENCH

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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*

Very few candidates had any difficulty with this section.

Problems occasionally arose with the following questions:

#### Exercise 1

Question 1 Some candidates did not select A, so did not seem to understand *poulet rôti*.

Question 3 There was sometimes an apparent confusion between *natation* and *équitation* as some selected C as their response.

#### Exercise 2

Question 8 A significant number of candidates decided that this statement was true. It is possible that they mis-read or misunderstood *joueur*, which suggests that closer reading of the text is advisable.

#### Exercise 3

Question 12 Some candidates offered E as a response suggesting that they thought that one might sing whilst playing the guitar; again close reading of the text is recommended.

### *Section 2*

#### Exercise 1

Many candidates scored extremely well on this exercise.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Question 18 In some cases candidates generalised and said that Lucas ate *nourriture riche en calories* or similar; whilst this is true, candidates are required to make responses which refer specifically to the text.

Question 19 Some candidates stated that Lucas ate hamburgers etc. during family meals, perhaps missing *presque rien* in the text.

Question 25 Weight loss was sometimes given as the reason for Lucas' happiness.

## Exercise 2

Again a high percentage of the candidature produced very good responses. Some errors may have been avoided by closer reading.

Problems sometimes arose with the following questions:

Question 26 Although most candidates understood that Henri Gouès was a priest, a few responded confusingly with *Il fait (le) prêtre*.

Question 27 There was some confusion over dates with a number of candidates suggesting that he became a priest in 1954 or became *l'Abbé Pierre* after the Second World War.

Question 30 A significant number seemed to miss that the death of the woman and baby triggered the radio appeal.

Question 31 Some candidates listed the goods supplied by the benevolent and missed the other responses made to the appeal.

Question 33 Many responded with *le même enthousiasme et la même générosité*, which, lifted from the text, does not make sense here.

## Section 3

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

The most frequent errors occurred in the following questions:

Question 35 Some appeared to misread the sentence and supplied *avons*.

Question 38 Some wrote *au Sydney*.

Question 39 Some supplied *que*.

Question 41 A significant number wrote *et*.

Question 45 Various incorrect verb forms were offered here including *avons*.

Question 49 Some supplied an adjective.

Question 50 There were various verbs supplied here, sometimes infinitives, but *rencontrais* and *rencontrai* occurred too.

Question 52 A significant number of candidates supplied *en*.