

FRENCH (WITH OPTIONAL ORAL)

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 solid body 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 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 follow 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.
- This time, 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 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

The story appeared to be clear and there was little misinterpretation or confusion – though far too many candidates were unable to render the notion of rain sufficiently clearly for a mark to be awarded. In order to score Communication points, brief reference was required to at least five of the following – heavy rain while the car was driving along a country road; worsening of the weather with the river overflowing and the startled reaction of the family in the car; the flood, frightened children with consoling mother and father ringing for help; climbing onto the car roof and a policeman arriving by boat to help them; the family being transported to land and seeing their car disappearing under water; relief of the family thanking the policeman for saving their lives. 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; as indicated above, *la pluie* and *il pleut* in an appropriate tense were often poorly known. Many could not handle *s'asseoir* and *toit* and *bateau* were sometimes misspelt – or even not known at all. 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. As an example of poor tense manipulation, many candidates could not manage, for example, *ils sont montés sur le toit de la voiture*. Inadequate understanding of the difference between Perfect/Past Historic and Imperfect was seen, as was poor formation of compound tenses (for example *Ils ont décidait* [sic]).

Question 2(a): Letter

This was a very popular option and produced some good answers, though there were occasional misunderstandings. 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 apparently understand what they were writing as the notion of remembering was then often followed by something completely inappropriate (e.g. 'how are you?') which could therefore not be credited. 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 something briefly about their family (who it consists of, what they do, what kind of people they are, etc.) to be followed by a reference to school (where they attend school, what they study, what they think of their teachers, etc.). Then any appropriate reference to their hobbies and pastimes was needed. The next point was frequently very poorly answered as it required a past tense reference to something they *did* with a friend/friends, recently. Many ignored the tense and therefore lost the Communication mark. The final reference was to a *future* event. While it was anticipated that this would concern career prospects, anything appropriate, including holiday and travel plans, was accepted. 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 – *tu* was cued in the lead-in and its use was therefore compulsory whenever it clearly referred to the correspondent.

Question 2(b): Dialogue

This was a less popular option and produced a range of performance. The rubric was again quite precise. The candidate was to follow the teacher's prompt by giving his/her name and when (s)he had been a candidate in the teacher's class. An opinion of the time at school was then needed to be followed by a brief description of an amusing event. What both the candidate and the teacher were now doing formed the last two points. Most candidates followed most of the guidelines 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 often chosen though less frequently than the letter and many candidates told the story competently. The first point needed a clear statement of what caused the fire (accident in the kitchen, somebody playing with matches, an adult falling asleep while smoking, etc., were all commonly seen reasons). The next two points concerned the arrival of the fire service and a reference to the action they took. Finally, an appropriate outcome was needed (the house had suffered/been burnt down/was not too badly damaged, parents arrived home and reacted in various ways, children banned from being left on their own in future, etc.) and a reaction from the narrator (pleased, relieved, ashamed, angry etc.). The majority of the narratives followed a fairly predictable, but perfectly acceptable, course but not all stated with clarity the *reasons* for the outbreak of the fire – simply that it started. The other points were often adequately handled though lack of confidence with the formation of verbs frequently adversely affected marks. 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. As in all the questions, the candidates who had worked hard to acquire and practise the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures reaped their reward in a respectable mark.

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 (WITH OPTIONAL ORAL)

Paper 3015/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

There was a wide range of achievement in this examination with slightly fewer candidates than last year scoring very high marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

Questions 1 – 5

Most candidates scored full marks in this exercise. It was clear, however, that some candidates did not appear to understand the vocabulary of **Questions 2** and **3** and consequently gave incorrect answers.

Exercise 2

Questions 6 – 10

Although most candidates coped reasonably well with this exercise, a significant number responded incorrectly with *faux* for **Question 8**.

Exercise 3

Questions 11 – 15

Most candidates dealt well with this set of questions. **Question 11** proved to be problematic for a significant number of candidates, who appeared to be unaware of the two meanings of *l'histoire* and consequently answered **F** instead of **E**. Many then offered **E** in response to **Question 13**.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Questions 16 – 22

Most candidates dealt well with this exercise. Some answers were lifted entirely from the text with no attempt to use the third person.

Question 16 was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

Question 17 seemed to cause confusion for some candidates who wrote *dix minutes* or *une heure* or rather vaguely, *peu de temps*.

Question 18 caused similar problems to **Question 17**, although most answered correctly.

Question 19 proved to be straightforward.

Question 20 was generally correctly answered.

Question 21 was well answered by many, although some candidates copied the whole of the first sentence of the final paragraph or wrote only of his apology and promise to do his homework, perhaps indicating that they did not understand *essayer*.

Question 22 was clearly understood by most and the concept of the activity being relaxing was conveyed, albeit with a variety of incorrect attempts at replacing *me* with an appropriate pronoun. *Se* was common. Some copied *ça me relaxe*. A few misunderstood *sujet* and answers seemed to suggest that they thought the question was asking about the subject IT on the school curriculum.

Exercise 2

Questions 23 – 28

There was a significant amount of lifting of fairly substantial chunks of text, which were not always lifted to make grammatical sense. Some candidates wrote justifications of statements that they considered true as well as those they deemed false.

Question 23 proved to be straightforward for most candidates.

Question 24 was correctly answered by almost all candidates.

Question 25 was correctly deemed true by most candidates.

Question 26 was answered appropriately by many candidates, but some thought the statement was true.

Question 27 was correctly understood to be false by the greater majority, but a few maintained that some young offenders needed to go to prison.

Question 28 proved straightforward for most candidates.

Exercise 3

Questions 29 – 35

Question 29 proved challenging for some candidates, who answered variously *depuis quelques années* or *tous les étés* or *tout l'été*.

Question 30 was well answered by most, although some answers fell short of the full implication of the question as they wrote *Pour les Parisiens* and did not explain which Parisians in particular.

Question 31 posed no problem for the majority, but some appeared not to understand *endroit* as they answered *en été* or similar. Some wrote *au bord de la mer*.

Question 32 was answered with varying degrees of success; some only mentioned that Michel has breakfast and did not say where he does this and/or what he does at the same time.

Question 33 proved to be straightforward for most candidates, although some merely reiterated that it was a large outside disco.

Question 34 Some candidates wrote only of the cost and did not mention the number of people. Some mentioned merely that it was like a supermarket, but did not state in what respect.

Question 35 was answered well by the majority of candidates. A few lifted part of a sentence here, which neither communicated the answer nor made syntactical sense.

Section 3

Questions 36 – 55

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 just 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 *un mot* of the rubric into the gaps.

Question 36: Some wrote *ont* instead of *sont*.

Question 37: Most wrote *qui* but some wrote *que*.

Question 38: Many correct answers; a few wrote *a*.

Question 39: Some wrote *de*.

Question 40: Some candidates supplied *des*.

Question 41: The greater majority wrote *dans*.

Question 42: Some wrote *a*.

Question 43: Many candidates wrote *de*.

Question 44: Many candidates gave the correct answer.

Question 45: The majority supplied *en* correctly. Some gave *quand*.

Question 46: Most supplied an appropriate past participle.

Question 47: There were many correct answers, but a range of unlikely prepositions was also supplied including *dans*.

Question 48: Most answered correctly.

Question 49: Many candidates wrote *ou*.

Question 50: Some supplied the correct response, but there were a variety of alternatives including *jamais*.

Question 51: Some gave a correct response, but many supplied *que* or *c'est*.

Question 52: Almost all candidates gave an incorrect answer. *Leur* and *leurs* were frequent.

Question 53: Many answers were incorrect. The greater majority supplied a past participle.

Question 54: Most answers were correct.

Question 55: Very few answered correctly. Very many wrote *pendant*.