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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Arabic (9AA0)

Paper 1: Translation into English, reading  
comprehension and writing

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## **Examiners' Report on Paper 9AA01 – Autumn 2020**

### **General comments**

This report relates to paper **9AA01**, which tests students' ability to translate from Arabic into English, to read and respond to written Arabic and to demonstrate their ability undertake independent research in Arabic.

This paper was the first of the series of the newly introduced specification 9AA01, the paper structure has some similarities to the old specification of paper 6AR01. Q1 in the old specification is of the same type as Q3 in the new specification, Q5 in the old specification is similar to Q4 & Q5 In the new specification combined, Q6 in the old specification is similar to Q1 in the new specification, Q7 in the old specification is an essay just like Q6 to Q9 in the new specification, except that in the new specification students are required to write an essay based on an aspect of their chosen research rather than writing an essay on a given topic with a smaller word count.

The evidence from marking in this session indicates that the paper was effective in differentiating between students of different abilities and that all the questions worked as anticipated.

The published mark scheme provides extensive guidance with regard to the overarching approach to marking, as well as the range of correct, acceptable and rejected responses as they relate to Section A and Section B, as well as indicative content for Section C. Teachers should note, however, that the mark scheme is not designed in such a way that every possible answer is included. Examiners look at each answer on merit to allocate marks. The approach to marking is positive, so examiners always seek to reward what students produce.

It is helpful for teachers to distinguish clearly between the assessment objectives stated in the specification. These are: A01- listening and responding in Arabic; A02 – reading and responding in Arabic; A03 – grammar and vocabulary of Arabic; A04 Knowledge and understanding of the countries and communities where Arabic is spoken. In this paper A02 is assessed in Sections A, B and C; A03 and A04 are assessed only in Section C.

There was varied evidence of how well students were prepared for this assessment, but there was little evidence of rubric infringement; this is where students either failed to follow the instructions, for example answering in the wrong language, or ticked more than the required number of boxes in the objective tasks.

## Comments on each question

### Section A

This section tests students' ability to translate into English. Teachers should note that in the mark scheme there may, on occasion, appear to be misalignment between the Arabic column and the English column: this is a reflection of the idiomatic nature of translation and the way word order and clause structure varies between Arabic and English. Reading the correct answer column vertically from the top will provide a complete translation in good English of the passage.

### Question 1

This year Question 1 related to the theme of Work and citizenship in the Arab world, the subtheme: Life and work and the content was focused on the aspect of Unemployment.

One mark is awarded for each correctly translated segment up to a maximum of 20 marks and as previously mentioned, not every acceptable or rejected answer is included in the mark scheme. Examiners will award a mark to a segment where the message is conveyed clearly, correctly and unambiguously in such a way that a native speaker of Arabic with no knowledge of English would understand exactly the same message as would a native English speaker with no knowledge of Arabic.

As part of the design of the passage for the assessment of translation into English, each segment is targeted at a particular grade and so it is normal and expected that students with different levels of Arabic should find some parts more challenging than others. In this way the passage is differentiated to assess across the full range of grades.

Most students were successful in translating:

- **who work outside the country**
- **and send money**
- **on regular basis**

The parts of the passage that challenged all, but the highest scoring students were:

- **there is a perception that half of the work force**
- **This matter is not only restricted to Yemen;**
- **what caused the increase in severity of unemployment**

There was evidence that some students needed to pay closer attention to the naturalness of the English phrasing that they used, to avoid ambiguity of message. A close reading of the reject column in the mark scheme will provide teachers with some useful areas to work on in terms of linguistic structures.

## **Section B**

### **Question 2**

This question related to the theme of Changes in Arab Society, the subtheme: Media and the content was focused on the aspect of the influence of media on Arab society.

This is a multiple-choice task with four parts and four options for each part. Teachers can usefully note that incorrect options may include an element of distraction in the form of a word or idea from the text. Students, therefore, need to be careful to read fully and carefully, rather than rely on spotting isolated words. This question targets grades C to E and is intended as a gentle lead in for this paper.

### **Question 3**

This question related to the theme of Work and citizenship in the Arab world, the subtheme: Responsibility to the environment and the content was focused on the aspect of Government positions to alternative energy.

This is a multiple-completion task where students choose four correct answers from nine statements. Teachers can usefully note that incorrect options may include an element of distraction in the form of a word or idea from the text. Students, therefore, need to be careful to read fully and carefully, rather than rely on spotting isolated words. This question targets grades A to E, and so differentiates at a higher level than Question 2.

Most successfully answered was: **Q3 (d)**

Least successfully answered was: **Q3 (g)**

### **Question 4**

This question related to the theme of Changes in Arab Society, the subtheme: Arabic Family and the content was focused on the aspect of Attitudes towards marriage and divorce.

This is a free response task, where students are required to answer in Arabic. There was some evidence that some students did not always read the questions carefully or produced answers which, although correctly locating the information in the text, were not precise answers to the question that was asked or relied on indiscriminate or untargeted lifting from the text.

Teachers are reminded that, in free-response questions, examiners apply a strict order of elements and mark only the first viable answer that a student produces. For example, where the required answer is 'dog' a student who writes 'dog and cat' will receive a mark, but a student who writes 'cat and dog' will not, because only the student's first viable answer to the question is considered for a mark. This question targets grades A to E.

Most successfully answered was: **Q4 (a)**

Least successfully answered was: **Q4 (d)**

## Question 5

This question related to the theme of Work and citizenship in the Arab world, the subtheme: Life and work and the content was focused on the aspect of Social mobility.

This is a free response task, where students are required to answer in Arabic. Teachers are reminded to train students to give one detail per mark, as they answer free response questions. Some questions do carry two marks, and, in some cases, there may be more than two possible things a student could write. This is a normal part of the way the questions work, and so there is no need for students to offer more information than required by the rubric. It is useful to note that questions are also designed so that the answers could reasonably be expected to fit on the writing line provided. Students should aim for concision in their responses.

This question targets grades A to E.

Most successfully answered was: **Q5 (b)**

Least successfully answered was: **Q5 (c)**

## Section C

This section tests students' ability to conduct independent research in Arabic, and to respond critically to a text that relates to the research topic they have chosen. Students need to be mindful that they need to relate the text that they have read to the research that they have done about the topic they have chosen. The A02 information from the text needs to be contextualized and added to from the research, A04. It is not enough simply to give a critical view about the content of the text or to use the research statement simply as a kind of essay title and overlook the text.

The highest scoring students had effectively combined the information from the text provided with what they had researched to respond critically to the research statement. The inclusion of perceptive ideas was an indicator of high levels of performance in this task. A perceptive idea is defined in the specification and mark scheme, but broadly can be considered any knowledge or understanding that goes beyond what the average speaker of Arabic would know about the topic in question. This could include facts, data, trends, social or historical context or the connection of ideas in such a way as to demonstrate real understanding of the issue. These students had also used appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary specific to the task and had shown their ability to write the language in a natural, authentic and sophisticated way including a range of structures and features. These students often also showed evidence that they had proofread their own work, as was indicated by corrections made to what they had written.

The lower scoring students often missed a crucial element of the task; they either focused exclusively on the passage, without adding from their own research or they used the research statement as a stimulus for a

generalized set of comments that were straightforward in nature and did not go beyond what any speaker of Arabic might be expected to know. Often the language used was less academic in register, less wide-ranging and contained errors that impeded clarity or generated ambiguity. Here there was evidence of a lack of proof-reading.

Teachers are reminded that the mark scheme contains indicative content, but this is not intended to be definitive answer to the statement. Examiners use a levels-based mark scheme and reward all relevant response produced by the student, accepting that each student may approach the task in a different way.

### **Research from Theme 1**

The passage dealt with the issue of hospitality in the Arab world. Teachers should look carefully at the indicative content in the mark scheme for information about the level of response expected.

In response to this research topic, students produced a range of thoughtful and well-structured responses and there was evidence that many had prepared well. For example, one student wrote about **how guests are honored in Saudi Arabia and the importance of hospitality throughout centuries, he also wrote in his conclusion how there is a high level of exaggeration on the issue of hospitality.**

### **Research from Theme 2**

The passage dealt with the importance of celebrations and festivals in Arab society. Teachers should look carefully at the indicative content in the mark scheme for information about the level of response expected.

In response to this research topic, students produced a range of thoughtful and well-structured responses and there was evidence that many had prepared well. For example one student wrote about how **Emiratis celebrate their national day by organizing games aimed at bringing their citizens and those residing in Emirates together by having fun in a way that makes them cooperate with one another and learning at the same time about the 5 Emirate states and their culture.**

### **Research from Theme 3**

The passage dealt with how tourism helps the economy in Arab countries. Teachers should look carefully at the indicative content in the mark scheme for information about the level of response expected.

In response to this research topic, students produced a range of thoughtful and well-structured responses and there was evidence that many had

prepared well. For example, one student wrote about **how tourism has been the most important factor in the growth and development of Dubai, and how tourism has helped to build their economy and it is regarded more important than Oil and Gas.**

#### **Research from Theme 4**

The passage dealt with how minority groups have blended in well in some Arab countries. Teachers should look carefully at the indicative content in the mark scheme for information about the level of response expected.

In response to this research topic, students produced a range of thoughtful and well-structured responses and there was evidence that many had prepared well. For example, one student wrote about the **Circassians community in Jordan and how well they blended in the Jordanian society to the level that their culture has become an important part of the Jordanian national and cultural life and how they became personal trusted royal guards.**

#### **Guidance for teachers for future sessions**

- i. Ensure that all students are familiar with the format of the paper and what they need to do in each section and question.
- ii. In section A, make students aware that a correct translation will not necessarily be a literal word-by-word translation. There will be difference in word order, clause structure or other linguistic features between the two languages. The resulting English passage should be natural, correct and unambiguous English.
- iii. In section A, work with students using the mark scheme, to exemplify different approaches to translation. It can be useful in teaching students to translate into English to ask them to produce a 'mark scheme', rather than a translated passage; this can help to develop the ability to think laterally. It may also be helpful in steering them away from online translators if they are encouraged to think carefully about alternatives and how to avoid errors.
- iv. In section B it can be a useful exercise to focus students not only on finding the correct answers, but also looking at why the incorrect options are wrong. This encourages a careful reading of the questions and develops metacognition in terms of how the questions work.
- v. In section B teach students about the 'order of elements' rule and apply it during teaching, so that students learn to produce clear and concise answers.
- vi. In section B teach students to be guided by the number of marks and the space allowed for writing. This can help them give enough detail and avoid indiscriminate lifts.
- vii. In section C, ensure that students understand the task and give them practice in linking a passage with research. This can make a useful



speaking task and provide teachers with insightful assessment for learning information about the student's understanding.

- viii. In section C, ensure students are equipped with a good range of topic specific, academic vocabulary to be able to ensure that the written response is correct in terms of register and not overly colloquial in tone.
- ix. In section C, give students practice in proof-reading their own work and that of others, looking to correct common errors and develop the habit of writing accurately.

