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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Autumn 2021

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
Arabic (WAA02/01)
Unit 2: Research, Understanding, and Written Response

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Introduction

Candidates are required to draw on and apply their knowledge and culture of the Arabic language, grammar, and lexis by selecting appropriate forms of words to complete sentences and demonstrating an ability to manipulate the Arabic language in continuous writing.

Candidates are expected to recognise and use Arabic in a variety of contexts and in relation to the following general topic areas: Youth culture and concerns, lifestyle, health and fitness, environment and travel, education and employment, technology in the Arabic-speaking world, society in the Arabic-speaking world, and ethics in the Arabic-speaking world.

Unit 2 is a 3-hour examination divided into three sections.

Section A: Translation - candidates undertake a short translation (200 words) from English into Arabic.

Section B: Creative/Discursive Essay, where candidates write a 240–280-word essay, in Arabic, in response to a short authentic Arabic-language stimulus. Candidates choose to write creatively or discursively on the topic through two options provided. The assessment rewards candidates for communicating relevant information effectively and the quality of the Arabic language produced.

Section C: Research-based essay, where candidates answer one of 12 essay question options in Arabic that relate to a topic or a text chosen from the prescribed list of set topics, texts, and films. A choice of two questions is offered for each prescribed topic and text, and the candidates write an essay between 300–400 words in length.

Question 1

Question 1 WAA02 contains a passage of 200 words in English titled "Training Falcons" to translate into Arabic; most candidates were successful and achieved a good grade. Candidates mostly performed well in response to the stimulus.

The majority of candidates provided an accurate transfer of meaning in style expected in Arabic; however, some candidates found the following terms challenging to translate into Arabic:

- 'Falcon' الصقر
- 'nomads' البدو الرحل
- 'Presidential cup' كأس الرئيس
- 'gazelles' الغزلان
- 'date' [fruit] التمر/ البليح
- 'cages' أقفاص
- 'hoods' [cover] غطاء الرأس

Typically, candidates who mistranslated the above terms did not consider the context in the sentences. Translation techniques should include contextualizing the words as indicators to help the translator transfer accurate meaning into the target language.

Question 2 (a)

For the creative essay option, candidates were required to write a story based on the events described in the given text of 100 words, describing two friends discussing the costs and benefits of genetic engineering.

Most candidates who chose the creative essay between 240-280 words were able to respond appropriately with characters, setting (time and place), events, and story plot with an ending. Some candidates did not seem to understand the requirements of writing a story, writing an article instead.

It would be advantageous for candidates to gain experience writing structured stories for creative essays using a variety of stimuli and be confident with the different requirements for a discursive article essay.

Question 2 (b)

Discursive essay - to compose an article about an agricultural project to help farmers improve crop yields. Candidates who chose this option mainly were of good quality. They pitched their article to the right audience, provided an engaging introduction, a persuasive argument, and a conclusion linked strongly back to the stimulus regarding the use of genetic engineering.

Strong articles used a genuine situation of particular crops and places in the Arabic-speaking world; they demonstrated an excellent awareness of the food crisis, were reflective, knowledgeable, and confident with vocabulary and range. Weaker articles did not follow the purview of the question and wrote lower quality responses for this discursive essay as they copied large amounts of the 100-word stimulus into their own 240–280-word essay, even copying events and names. This demonstrates a lack of skill development to use the stimulus as the intended inspiration. The responses should be independent writing with clear input from the candidates, with their knowledge and research studies.

Question 3 (a)

In the first of two questions on Arab science, the candidates were instructed to discuss the important contribution Ibn Al-Haytham made to physics, together with some biographical details of the scientist's life and background.

There were only three responses to this question. One of them was excellent with a clear depth of knowledge of Al-Haytham. Another did not answer the question directly as they discussed a different scientist, scoring zero.

Question 3 (b)

There were no responses for this second question on Arab science, which gives candidates the flexibility to write an account about an Arab sociologist from Andalusia.

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were asked to discuss two forms of Arabic calligraphy in terms of styles, uses, and origins. There were few responses, but those who did choose this question wrote good quality essays with a strong demonstration of knowledge and understanding of Arabic calligraphy.

Question 4 (b)

The second essay question on Arab art and architecture requires candidates to describe and discuss the cultural significance of a public park or garden in an Arabic-speaking country.

There were good answers from candidates who chose this question option by describing a specific park or garden, its features and facilities, and cultural importance, such as Sheikh Zayed park in Abu Dhabi.

Question 5 (a)

In this section, Comedy in Arabic Cinema, candidates must identify the film's director and discuss reasons for the protagonist dressed as a woman and the plan to meet at the pyramids in the film "Sukar Hanim." They focused on the social attitudes and challenges explored by the film and reflected on their views on the film's ending.

A popular question for candidates, the higher ability candidates, produced balanced essays that directly address the question. Less able candidates produced essays that generally summarise the film but not answer the question- this is the most common difference with more able candidates.

Question 5 (b)

In this section on Comedy in Arabic Cinema, candidates must identify the film and discuss the issue of the possibility of women being superior to men when studying and working and the conflicts and problems between spouses.

Essays should include substantiated opinions that illustrated situations highlighted by the candidates from the film. Higher ability candidates produced balanced essays that directly addressed the question, and lower ability candidates produced essays that generally summarise the film but do not answer the question.

Question 6 (a)

In this section, Tragedy in Arabic Cinema, candidates were required to analyse the effect of poverty in the film 'Captain Abu Raed' for the future prospects for Tariq and Murad's characters. Candidates should discuss their views give substantiated reasons for their view.

Of the candidates that chose Q6a, the responses were mostly good or better, answering the question directly with accurate references to the film. Those who successfully analysed the characters of Tariq and Murad, and the context of the film, avoided generalisations by giving accurate examples with reflective analysis and technical cinematographic terms.

Question 6 (b)

Tragedy in Arabic Cinema: Candidates were required to identify a film that depicts injustice, The Land, evaluating techniques used by the director to highlight the features of injustice for the weak imposed by other groups.

There was a range of very good responses; however, some other responses failed to identify the correct film (their writing suggests a misreading of the question or not fully reading it).

Question 7 (a)

Arabic poetry: Candidates were required to analyse the poem "Tomorrow I will meet you" and discuss how the poet described the night before the meeting and the techniques employed for effect.

No candidates answered this question.

Question 7 (b)

Arabic poetry: Candidates were required to discuss how the poet depicted the darkness of the city explored in the poem "I... and the city."

No candidates answered this question.

Question 8 (a)

Arabic literature: Candidates were required to explain how the writer described the village and the relationship between Zein, Haneen, and Naima in the novel "Wedding of Zein" and discuss the artistic style used.

Higher ability candidates answered the literature question with a good approach by referencing the text and substantiating their opinion with authentic evidence. The only common issue seemed to be in spelling grammar accuracy.

Question 8 (b)

Arabic literature: Candidates were required to identify a novel that explores the influence of customs and tradition on the behavior of society. Those who identify 'The Nightingale' should discuss the fate of the two sisters and the social problems experienced.

Though the literature in question changes each year from the required reading list, this question elicited good quality responses from those who referenced the text accurately.

Paper Summary

General candidate performance was good, with similar translation skills and creativity as the last series.

Candidates need to be given plenty of opportunities to gain experience with essay questions and practise techniques to understand the question's requirements and plan responses. Long-standing errors still occur due to a lack of exam techniques practice. Some candidates still answer questions on films and novels with generalised summaries of the storylines and completely bypass the actual questions, which results in scoring low to no marks.

Questions on films, especially comedy and tragedy, continue to prove popular year on year. Few candidates answered questions on poetry, which suggests some candidates may not be covering the full specification, limiting their awareness and opportunities, which is concerning as 70% of Arabic literature for the past thousand years to the modern era is poetry.

