

GCSE

Edexcel GCSE

Arabic (1606/7)

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Examiners' Report

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## Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Analysis of the question paper reveals three major categories of response to the listening stimuli tested:

- a) reliance on ticks or figures placed in the right slot (50% of the marks)
- b) responses in Arabic (not necessarily in full sentences) (30% of the marks)
- c) responses in English (not necessarily in full sentences) (20% of the marks)

An appreciable number of candidates have often found the 3<sup>rd</sup> category hardest because they cannot express themselves well enough in English. This year, however, the topic area was "Internet Shopping", a subject very much within most candidates' scope and experience. This may explain why the majority of candidates scored well in this question.

In category (a) questions, candidates have to choose a picture or a square for an answer. This is not always straightforward. This year, many candidates had difficulty distinguishing between the picture of a train and that of a coach (Q8) and some could not interpret the pictures that stood for History and Science. There were also a few who took Mathematics رياضيات to mean Sport رياضة (a linguistic dilemma for some).

However, as always, it is the multi-skill question that distinguishes between weaker and stronger candidates. Here, listening is tested in conjunction with the reading and writing skills. Consequently, Q.18 & Q.19 proved very difficult, if not impossible, for the less literate candidates.

And now for some advice to teachers on improving the understanding and performance of their pupils in this paper. Q.18 revealed many weaknesses in form filling. The words for nationality, British, profession, age, date of birth, place of work, etc. are an essential part of the syllabus, yet there were many instances of confusion in understanding these basic words in Arabic, in writing a date of birth, in distinguishing between *profession* (d) and *reason for visit* (e). Teachers of Arabic could be advised to introduce forms to be filled out in Arabic similar to those given upon entering a foreign country.

Incomplete, vague or inaccurate answers remain a problem with quite a few candidates. In Q.19 (b) which asks about the distance between the house where Saleh is staying and the nearest city, some wrote five, others five feet, others five kilometres where five miles is the correct answer. As for sound discrimination, in Q.18 a few candidates thought that Hiba was أستاذة علوم rather than أستاذة علوم while in Q.25 many took the carpet to be Turkish rather than Kurdish.

However, overall, the general performance was good and the impression left with the examiners was that this was an easier paper than last year's.



## Paper 2 Speaking

This paper is taken under the supervision of a teacher-examiner who would conduct the exam according to Edexcel's instruction manual. Candidates are required to be examined into two areas of study out of the five areas listed by Edexcel; one of these is a candidate's choice, and the other two are the teacher-examiner's. Although the conduct of the exam had some impact on the candidates' performance, candidates are assessed purely on their own merit.

The timing of the examination and the format of the question paper are similar to the years before. Assessment criteria remain the same.

The overall performance of candidates has improved this year, despite the very few unfortunate technical problems that occurred in the recording, such as:

- Misjudgement of timing resulting in excessively long recordings or below the minimum timing requirement.
- Poor recording due to malfunction of cassette player or previously used tapes.
- Microphones not placed to serve the clarity of candidates' voice recordings.
- 

Other problems examiners faced were the incorrect or improper labelling of the actual cassettes or LT3 forms.

It appeared, as in previous years, the Home and Daily Routine topic was the most popular area among the candidates, in contrary to the Employment topic.





## Paper 3 Reading and Responding

The timing of the examination, the format of the question paper, and the number of tasks candidates are required to complete are similar to the years before. Assessment criteria remain the same. The only difference is that the questions targeting weaker candidates were placed after each other as 1, 2 and 3 this year.

There was a variety of questions covering a wide range of areas of study in this paper. There was slight confusion in interpreting certain pictures in picture questions such as the coat and the shirt in question 2. This was not substantial.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 went down well among all candidates. Questions 5 and 7 went down well among the C and above candidates.

Students with no knowledge of English found question 8 very difficult to answer. In general candidates performance has improved well above last year's performance. Candidates' response to question types was perceived as follows:

1	Tick and match picture to word.	Over 90% of candidates got full marks here.
2	Fill grid with the correct figure from text.	Despite the slight confusion in using Arabic or English figures, the performance was good here.
3	Fill box with the relevant name.	A popular question as it tests the candidate's knowledge of hobbies.
4	Fill gaps with information from map.	It would have been more appropriate if this question showed a drawing of a compass.
5	Match words to sentences	A very good discriminator which went well among the D and above candidates.
6	Write answers to questions.	This is a good discriminator to identify the B and above candidates.
7	Tick in the grid.	Here weak candidates found some difficulty as the question requires good level of Arabic to understand the text about the environment.
8	Interpreting question.	Here knowledge of English to write, as well as good Arabic level to understand text. Some slightly weaker candidates managed to score 1 or 2 marks in part b.



## Paper 4 Writing

### Question 1

This question is designed to be the easiest and least demanding. This year we have provided pictures of objects people take with them when they go on holiday to help those who cannot think of five different items and yet there were still some candidates who were not up to scoring full marks here.

### Question 2

This question was on a very practical and realistic level. There were some excellent answers that dealt with the bullet points and went beyond. However, with weaker candidates, specific requirements to use the past and future tenses were ignored and there were many who did not even sign their "card". Another evidence of carelessness came from those candidates who disregarded the fact that they were supposed to be on holiday in "an Arab country" and not in Paris or Karachi or London.

### Question 3

Weaker pupils found it difficult to adhere to the required format. Their language lacked the flexibility to express the suggested comments in a natural way, and they were forced to use a lot of repetition. There were many instances of colloquial language, indicating that many candidates lack the experience of reading good Arabic. Teachers need to provide their pupils with many examples of grammatically accurate and fluent prose.

### Question 4

The most interesting and personal written accounts came from candidates who wrote about their work experience. In doing so, it clearly enabled them to reflect on their experience and they produced some very insightful and closely observed detail. Such candidates had excellent control in the language. It was a pleasure to read their work.

### Question 5

Many candidates chose the traditional topic of "a good party". The best of them provided interesting and unexpected details relating to the occasion, the participants and the entertainment provided. Less inspired candidates wrote a very bland report with few distinguishing features whilst weak candidates showed a poor grasp of written Arabic and little interest in literary style: their exposure to good Arabic would seem to be minimal and their experience of writing different types of sentence is also very limited.

With both topics (Q.4 and Q.5), there were many candidates who wrote far fewer than 150 words and they lost marks because of it. Teachers need to be aware of the examination requirements and they need to give their students practice in constructing text of the required length.



## Statistics

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries (Four skills)

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	81	70	59	48	40	32	25	18	0

(NB each paper is worth 25% of the total)

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries (Three skills)

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	83	71	59	48	41	34	27	20	0

(NB each paper is worth 33% of the total)

### Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	44	38	32	27	22	18	14	10	0

### Paper 2 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	0

### Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 3 grade boundaries	50	42	36	30	25	21	17	14	11	0

### Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	46	39	32	26	21	17	13	9	0





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