

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE Arabic (1606)

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Paper 1 - Listening and Responding

General Comments.

The paper was set in two parts; the question paper and the text which was orally introduced to candidates. The paper covered 9 topics covering 9 areas of study. The topics were:

1. My Family. (Total mark 5)
2. Doctor's Advice. (Total mark 5)
3. The Kitchen of the New Flat. (Total mark 5)
4. Emergency. (Total mark 5)
5. In the Clothes Shop. (Total mark 5)
6. The Summer Holiday. (Total mark 4)
7. At the Checking Desk at the Airport. (Total mark 6)
8. In the Restaurant. (Total mark 5)
9. Looking for the Supermarket. (Total mark 10)

The answers of all questions about the topics from 1 - 8 were in the target language, while topic 9 required students to answer in English. The questions were designed to target all candidates of all levels. The total mark awarded was 50 marks.

Questions about topic 1, 2, 3 and 8 were very popular among students as most of them managed to respond with correct answers and scored well. Higher level students showed great competence in answering questions about topics 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Students with a good knowledge of the English language and a reasonable knowledge of Arabic made successful efforts in answering topic 9 and managed to score well. The question about topic 5 comprises 10 sentences and required candidates to identify 5 correct sentences in order to score the maximum of 5 marks.

Specific Comments:

Question 11: Candidates here had to relate the words they heard in the text to the pictures they looked at. The candidates here had to listen to the text as a whole carefully and then made their choice of ticks. Most candidates managed to score full marks here. The few who failed to score well had a common move towards ticking more than the required 5 ticks and had to lose one mark for each extra tick over 5.

Question 12: this question was a mixture of recognition of spoken words and sentences and directly relating them to question words as in 2 and 3; and showing an appropriate link between the text word " الشرطة " and the word in question "مساعدة".

Question 13 was very challenging question, however students performed very well.

Question 14 was well managed by higher level candidates, with a substantial number of less able candidates who were able to score one or two marks here.

Question 15: This question proved to be a good test of comprehension as there were excellent distracters in it e.g. خمس or أربع , قبل or بعد , تسير or ترجع ... etc. Candidates could construct from these alternatives a sub-plot which would be almost plausible. In order to choose the correct answers, candidates had to understand fully the listening text. A very small number of candidates failed to get all 6 answers correctly.

Question 16: This question was the candidates' joy as many of the less able students found the appropriate challenge in it to reflect their good level listening comprehension.

Question 17: This question was well answered by candidates with good English and a reasonable level in Arabic. There were some common errors among most of the candidates who did not score well here e.g. some candidates were not able to distinguish between a taxi and a rental car nor between a library and a bookshop, or even make the distinction between bigger and better.

Examiners noted that the paper went well among candidates and questions were very revealing to candidates' listening comprehension ability.

Paper 2 - Speaking

This year, as in previous years, the requirements and the administration of the oral examination remained the same. This series, there has been some improvement in the performance of candidates, notably from centres where Arabic is taught to adults as a foreign language.

The examination continues to work well with centres that are fully conversant with the required procedure. Oral tests that are a pleasure to listen to are those where the examiner starts with a random question from the samples provided then modifies subsequent ones to suit the line of discussion with a particular candidate.

As advised in previous years, the best way of preparing students for the oral examination is to develop in them spontaneity, variety and fluency in response. This does not mean teaching them a fixed utterance that is learnt by heart in answer to a set sequence of questions.

Another major area of concern remains the quality of recording from some centres. It is very important for centres to follow the guidance given in the examination booklet on how to proceed.

Paper 3 - Reading and Responding

General Comments

The paper was set in two parts; the question paper and the text which was orally introduced to candidates. The paper covered 8 topics covering 8 areas of study. The topics were:

- My Belongings. (Total mark 5)
- Where did Hasan go on Friday? (Total mark 6)
- Tennis. (Total mark 5)
- At the Grocer's. (Total mark 5)
- You Saw this Advert in an Arabic Magazine. (Total mark 8)
- In the Museum. (Total mark 3)
- Organising Time. (Total mark 7)
- Petra is One of the Seven Wonders of the World. (Total mark 11)

Specific Comments

The answers of questions 1 to 7 were in the target language, while the answers of question 8 required candidates to answer in English. The total mark awarded was 50 marks.

Most candidates responded well to questions 1, 2, and 6, and managed to score well. Question 5 was originally designed to be a good differentiator between candidates' levels but appeared very accessible and students of all levels scored marks. Most candidates managed to score 3 or more marks in this question.

In question 6 candidates were required to tick 3 boxes in order to score a maximum mark of 3, but as in previous years, some candidates ticked more than 3 boxes which resulted in losing one mark for each tick a candidate made above 3.

Examiners noted that the question paper was very well set to assess candidates' competence in reading and understanding of Arabic, and covered a good variety of topics from wider range of areas of study.

Paper 4 - Writing

Question 1: Most candidates wrote down the articles they saw in the pictures. Marks are awarded here for communication only, but there were still a few candidates who were unable to score any marks on this question.

Question 2: This question tested whether candidates could express themselves in a simple non-verbal sentence, another sentence in the past tense, a third one in the present tense and the last one in the future. On the whole the question was dealt with reasonably. This question gave less able candidates a clear layout to follow.

Question 3: This question also tested non-verbal use, present tense sentences and expressions of future intent. The less able began to struggle here even though the topic area and vocabulary were connected with school life. There was a lot of help offered with regard to vocabulary in the stimulus (the Arabic letter). This could have been adopted and adapted by candidates.

Question 4: In the choice between this question and Question 5, this appeared the more popular, giving candidates the chance for some descriptive prose on matters such as the weather, the sea and their surroundings.

Question 5: Many candidates must have had a very limited experience of dinner parties, which may explain the somewhat banal essays made up of endless lists of food items served and clothing worn by the guests. Because Questions 4 and 5 are expressed entirely in Arabic, there may have been only partial understanding of the topics by weaker candidates.

Able candidates produced delightful essays, sometimes exceeding the recommended length of 150 words. They had the vocabulary, the variety of style and the linguistic sophistication necessary to take pleasure in their task. Such candidates were, for the most part, highly literate native speakers of the language. However, for the majority of candidates for whom Arabic is a foreign language, the prospect of writing an essay of 150 words is a daunting task. This year, there was less insistence on word count, if adequate communication could be reached in less than 150 words.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries (Four skills)

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	87	76	65	55	47	40	33	26

(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
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	88	77	66	56	48	40	33	26

(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
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	43	38	33	27	24	21	18	15

Paper 2 Speaking

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

Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 3 grade boundaries	50	42	37	32	26	22	18	14	10

Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	49	44	39	34	30	25	21	17

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