Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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GCSE Arabic (5AR01) Paper 1

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Listening Comprehension Paper

The 9 questions were designed to target all levels of ability. Candidates across the ability range found questions 3 and 7 to be the most accessible, as they were designed to be. The topic in question 3 was favourite food, in question 7, hobbies.

However, the Listening Comprehension paper is not a mere test in vocabulary set in relatively simple sentences. Equally accessible questions in question 1 (In town) and question 6 (Complaints) scored less well, probably because of the perception that if the stimulus is in a longer sentence or in continuous prose; it is bound to be difficult. Candidates need to listen for the key words that answer the questions in front of them and not give up or resort to guess work simply because they could not understand every word spoken.

Overall Performance in the Questions

Question 1 (In Town)
The most accessible part of the question was 1(iv). The great majority recognised the word for mosque, المسجد
Most challenging was 1(ii). Nearly a quarter of the candidates either did not know the word for restaurant, مطعم, or were thrown by its context "Lebanese Restaurant", which led them to opt for Lebanese Embassy in the multiple choice question.

Question 2 (Hotel Accommodation)
This question tests knowledge of numbers, dates and prices. It should be accessible if candidates have learnt their numbers in Arabic. Nearly a third of candidates got the number of rooms in this small hotel wrong. They did not recognise the number 22:
اثنين وعشرين غرفة
Performance was also limited in recognising dates and prices. Clearly, as has been reported in previous years, more work and testing needs to be done in class to ensure that candidates understand cardinal numbers readily. This is a basic requirement in any specification.

Question 3 (Favourite Food)
Filling in the grid posed no problems here. Most candidates scored full marks for this question.

Question 4 (Holiday Invitation)
In this multiple choice question, the stimulus is a short monologue of 80 words, the five questions are straightforward. The first is about Suad's father. Only 70% of candidates recognised the word for male nurse: ممرّض
The three subsequent questions were also found difficult by a quarter of the candidates. The last question about Suad being allowed to go to Syria with her mother scored best.

Question 5 (Television and the Internet)
5(iv) and 5(v) proved the most testing here with an average of 65% of candidates getting them right.

Question 6 (Complaints)
The best score turned out to be in 6(iii), boring TV programme, the least in 6(iv), dirty chair.

Question 7 (Hobbies)
This proved the most accessible of all the questions, even for the weakest candidates.

Question 8 (Family and Friends)
The choice of five correct statements from 10 on a fast flowing dialogue was set for differentiation purposes and targeting candidates capable of an A* in this paper. Few scored the full five marks here but, equally, very many were able to score two or three marks. The topic was near enough to a 16 year olds experience, which must have encouraged the candidates to concentrate all the more.

Question 9 (Bravery in Saudi Arabia)
This authentic item of news was beyond the experience and understanding of weaker candidates. Even with the stronger candidates, very few scored the full 10 marks here, partly because the details they gave were not the relevant ones. For example, in questions 9(f) and 9(i), 'What did the first brave young man try to do?', 'he jumped in the water' does not answer the question. The operative word in the question is 'try'.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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