

Report on the Components

June 2008

1922/MS/R/08

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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GCSE Persian (1922)

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1922/01 Listening

General Comments

Candidates' overall performance was fairly similar to last year's. Candidates' performance would improve if they could be advised to:

- (a) Familiarise themselves with the various Exercise types used.
- (b) Follow the rubrics carefully.
- (c) Observe the word limits set for the various writing tasks.
- (d) Use a pen, rather than a pencil.
- (e) Write legibly.
- (f) Pay particular attention to 'spelling', notably the significant role played by the following features in Persian script:

'Dots': the number and position of 'dots' in dot-bearing letters.

'Dented' letters: the exact number of teeth required for each letter, e.g. س (s) and ش (sh).
The second 'stroke' needed for the Persian letter گ (g) to distinguish it from ک (k).

The above features are important because breaking the rules may create a different word with an entirely different meaning. Furthermore, this can be of special significance when answering multiple-choice questions by writing a Persian letter in the box/gap.

- (g) Use a style or register that is appropriate to what they have been asked to write. A colloquial style may be considered acceptable in a personal letter or email to a friend, but inappropriate in a formal piece of writing, such as an essay or a business letter. Inappropriate style may lose marks.
- (h) Write answers in the allocated spaces, and within the page frame – i.e. avoid writing on the margins. With on-line marking this may lose marks.

2. Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 2

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 3

Questions were generally well answered. Some Candidates, however, seemed to be unfamiliar with question type – they had ticked the boxes instead of writing the appropriate letters in them. Questions 12 and 13 differentiated the stronger Candidates.

Section 2

Exercise 4

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 5

Questions were generally well answered. Some Candidates, however, seemed to be unfamiliar with question type. Nonetheless, this year's Candidates coped with this Exercise marginally better than last year's. Question 23 played a differentiating role.

Section 3

Exercise 6

Questions were generally well answered. However, some Candidates would have done better if they had received adequate training in the type of questions used in this Exercise. Question 28 played a differentiating role.

Exercise 7

Only very good Candidates managed to obtain full marks for this Exercise. Question 35 differentiated the stronger Candidates.

Exercise 8

The stronger Candidates who also had a good command of the English language did well in this Exercise. Question 38 differentiated the stronger Candidates.

1922/02 Speaking (Externally Assessed)

General Comments

The overall results for this component showed a decline in both the quality of speaking as well as in the conduct of the tests.

Quality of Recording

The quality of recordings, although much better than before, were not in some cases up to the required standards. It is vitally important for the conducting Teachers/Examiners to familiarise themselves with the cassette/CD/DVD player's controls and to test the quality of the recording before the examination. A number of Examiners complained that the conducting Teacher had not checked the recording volume or the distance of the candidate from the recorder. Teachers must try to conduct the tests in a quiet room that is isolated from the noisy parts of the building. Problems with these basic procedures creates unnecessary strain for the Examiner and could inadvertently influence the marking.

Conduct of the Examination

Centres should provide the teacher who is going to conduct the exam with the OCR Teacher/Examiner booklet in advance of the date of the exam and the Teacher should adhere to the precise method.

The following suggestions are strongly recommended:

- (a) In the role-plays set the scene correctly and avoid the confusion that would be caused by saying the opening sentences in an arbitrary manner.
- (b) Keep to the correct order of the tasks to be performed by the Candidate.
- (c) Avoid conducting section 3 in the manner of an interview. The Candidate should be encouraged to take the initiative and not the Teacher.
- (d) Adhere to the suggested time lengths in the General Discussion section.
- (e) Encourage the Candidate to speak as opposed to the Teacher doing most of the talking (General Conversation section).
- (f) Avoid using English words.

Comments on Individual Questions

The Speaking test consists of four sections:

- Section 1 (role-play, consisting of 4 specific tasks)
- Section 2 (role-play, consisting of 4 tasks with one task unspecified)
- Section 3 (narrating a picture-based story with Teacher's occasional interjections)
- Section 4 (General conversation with three topics chosen by the Teacher).

In order to avoid subjecting all Candidates to the same set of questions in section 1 to 3, each section is based on a different setting. In total there are three different settings for each section, therefore allowing for variety and randomness in the booklets created per Candidate. There are 6 booklets and each booklet contains a different combination of role-plays selected from the three settings. Therefore, no six Candidates will have the same set of identical questions.

Sections 1 and 2 of the tests (role-plays) were the two sections where most of the errors took place. Some teachers made up additional and occasionally irrelevant questions or responses to the stated written text in the Teacher's Instruction booklet. This practice confused the Candidate and delayed the test unnecessarily.

Section 1

Pharmacy in Tabriz – Candidates mostly chose 'headache' as their most common symptom and also chose to have it for an hour or a day, a safe choice indeed. Some Candidates combined more than one or two symptoms, which made the job of the chemist slightly more difficult. As always there were a few Candidates who did not wait for the Teacher to ask the relevant questions and went through the entire four tasks in succession. This kind of response may not lose the Candidate their marks, but can be a source of confusion for the Teacher / Examiner.

Tehran Coach Station. Some Candidates found the second task challenging – they needed to specify the type of ticket. Candidates performed the rest of this role-play with no issues.

Bazaar in Rasht Only the third task caused slight hesitation with some Candidates, as they were not quite sure how to respond to the Teacher's prompt from the previous task. Nonetheless, the Candidates must follow the tasks, as explained in the booklets.

Section 2

Music Store in Shiraz . Again, transition from the second task to the third was a little uneasy for a number of Candidates. The open answer meant that the Candidate had to conclude his or her part by asking a question, which was quite a varied choice. The Teacher, not knowing what the question would be, had to respond with a general exclamatory remark (Great! That's fine) which could be a little confusing, though had no effect on the Candidates' performance as this was the last task of the role-play.

Problem with Neighbours - Most Candidates seem to relate to this theme fairly readily. Nearly all Candidates managed to perform this role-play with relative ease and adroitness..

Organising a Birthday Party The Candidates who responded to this role-play showed no particular difficulty or hesitancy in doing the tasks.

Section 3

This section was generally performed better than the rest of the role-plays. The Candidates could interpret the images with relative ease, and in most cases added their own relevant details to the story.

Campsite. Most Candidates came up with interesting if not innovative narratives. Some Candidates were not certain if the people who were arrested were indeed the family members or the youths who were playing music outside the tent. No Candidate lost marks due to an alternative interpretation of the illustrated story.

Airplane in a Storm This role-play was the most popular among the Candidates, presumably due to their having difficult flight experiences. This was a very straightforward story to tell and many Candidates took advantage of it and allowed their imagination to fly freely!

Arriving late for an Exam - The main challenge was to give the correct time for every stage of the story or at least keep the time sequences correct. Not all the Candidates managed to give a fluent narration but at the end they all arrived at the exam session almost in time!

General Conversation

As in previous years, time keeping in this section was a problem. In most recordings, the duration of this section was either well below or well above the recommended time allocation of five minutes. Also, Teacher / examiners often asked questions that had often a single 'yes' or 'no' for an answer. This did not help the aim of this section which is to encourage the Candidate to speak with as little prompting and advanced hinting as possible..

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although there were noticeable improvements in the overall performances of the Candidates and the conducting Teachers, a number of Centres showed total disregard for the rules of conducting a Speaking test. The following recommendations are made on the basis of the Examiners' observations:

- (a) Centres need to provide the conducting Teachers with the Teachers/Examiner Booklet well in advance of the examination date.
- (b) Centres can vastly improve the quality of their Candidates' performance by arranging 'mock' practice examinations for them in advance of the real examination.
- (c) Teachers should explain to the Candidates before the examination that it is the Candidate who must do most of the talking and not the Teacher.
- (d) Teachers must avoid conducting the test in the manner of an interview. This particularly applies to Section 3 and the General Conversation section. Questions that can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no' should be kept to a minimum.
- (e) Teachers must observe the time allocations for each section and should not prolong the conversations unnecessarily.
- (f) Teachers must not deviate from the Teacher's prompts in role-plays 1 and 2 and make up their own story lines. This is a completely unacceptable practice and invariably will damage the Candidates' marks achieved in that section.
- (g) Teachers should ensure there is enough recording time left on the relevant side of the cassette before starting the exam for a new Candidate.
- (h) Persian speaking tests are not internally moderated. Centres must provide the Teachers with mark sheets for the details of the Candidate and topics of General Conversation to be filled in. Teachers must not enter their own markings on the mark sheets. This is the task of the external Examiners and spaces provided for marking must be left blank.
- (i) It is strongly recommended that Teachers differentiate between the four different sections of the exam – particularly the General Conversation section – by clearly stating on the

- (j) When Centres send the exam material to the Examiners for marking, they need to ensure that they send the material in as organised a fashion as possible, to avoid mistakes and confusion for the examiners. For example, before a cassette is sent to the Examiner, the Teacher should rewind the cassette to the beginning of the test.

Please refer to the OCR website for details about recording on CDs or MP3s instead of on cassette.

1922/03 Reading

General Comments

This year's Candidates fall into two categories – one group who sat the paper having had various degrees of preparation and another group who were poorly prepared and had lower language skills. However, the majority of the Candidates achieved high grades.

Students coped well with questions in section 1. For section 2, Candidates should read the texts carefully and answer the questions with direct reference to them and the text and not on the basis of previous experience or knowledge.

Section 1

Exercise 1

The set of questions were straightforward and the images were clear for Candidates.

Exercise 2

The questions and rubrics were well understood by Candidates.

Exercise 3

Again, all questions in this exercise were clear and well understood.

Section 2

Exercise 4

These appeared accessible questions.

Exercise 5

Questions were understood well by Candidates.

Section 3

Exercise 6

The questions were based on specific information provided in the text and required careful reading and attention.

Exercise 7

All questions in this exercise required the Candidates to think before answering. Those who simply copied bits of information from the text did not gain any marks. For example, the accepted answer to question 37: 'Why did Hossein not have to worry about accommodation in London?' was NOT 'Hossein's aunt lives in London', but that 'Hossein could stay with his aunt in London.'

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Exercise 8

All three questions in this exercise required precise answers based on the points made in the text.

Question 38

In answer to this question, the applicants were expected to be able to use a correct and acceptable name for our language: Persian or Farsi. Any other names given to the language were considered incorrect.

1922/04 Writing

General Comments

Candidates did generally quite well and slightly better than last year. However, a significant proportion of the Candidates wrote phonetically, which shows that they are simply using their oral knowledge of the Persian and the alphabet, having had little practice or familiarity with written Persian. Some Afghani Candidates seem to have Pashtu as their mother tongue, which makes the writing task even more challenging for them if they have not been prepared for the exam. The influence of their mother tongue is such that they often replace the Persian word with the Pashtu or Urdu equivalent when short of vocabulary.

Comment on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

The question was generally very well answered. The Mark scheme catered for all the varieties of pronunciations of fruits and cutlery in Afghanistan.

Exercise 2

Questions were generally very well answered. The Mark scheme included all the various interpretations of the pictures in the exercise.

Exercise 3

This question was very well answered, although accuracy was an issue.

Section 2

The subtasks in this exercise were carried out well. The second option proved more popular with candidates. A number of candidates who chose this option mistook the term 'holiday' for 'travelling' and gave their impression on 'travelling in general' rather than 'holidays in general' as requested by the subtask. A number of candidates who chose the first option wrote about a 'Party' rather than a 'New Year Party'. Candidates should be reminded to answer the questions as they appear on the paper, rather than writing about their own vague interpretation of the topic.

Section 3

The subtasks in this section were well answered and both options proved to be equally popular. The main mistake in this section was that Candidates attempted both options, which means that there is insufficient time to do justice to either question

General Recommendations

Candidates generally would benefit from:

- (a) Understanding the instructions given in the rubrics. Easy words such as 'either', 'or' are essential part of exam techniques needed by Candidates.

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- (b) Knowing that when a specific number of words are required for an exercise (free writing) they will tend to lose marks if they write fewer words.
- (c) Reading the rubrics carefully and being sure to tackle all the bullet points used as prompts in sections 2 and 3.
- (d) Rendering the points in the third exercise in Persian without translating them literally.
- (e) Responding to only one choice, not two, as required.
- (f) Copying the words in the stimulus correctly to prevent unnecessary inaccuracies.
- (g) Remembering not to omit the letter 'D' with a soft pronunciation, for example at the end of the third person plural when written.
- (h) Learning the correct spelling of basic Persian words such as: 'Only', 'o'clock', 'Family', 'Food', 'Morning', 'Afternoon', 'Now' etc. This would improve the general appearance of the written piece and is likely to earn them marks.
- (i) Reading Persian texts before taking the exam, in order to improve their spelling.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Persian (Specification Code 1922)
June 2008 Examination Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01 - Listening	40	28	23	18	15	12	9	6
02 - Speaking	50	41	36	31	25	20	15	10
03 - Reading	40	30	25	20	17	14	11	8
04 - Writing	80	64	55	46	37	28	20	12

N.B. Component marks are scaled to a weighted mark out of 50. Each component represents 25% of the overall award.

Overall

	Max	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	178	154	130	107	89	71	53	35
Percentage in Grade		37.9	25.2	17.6	9.2	6.7	2.0	1.2	0.2
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		37.9	63.1	80.7	89.9	96.6	98.6	99.8	100

The total entry for the examination was 588.

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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