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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Arabic (First Language) (4AA1) Paper 02:
Writing

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Introduction

This examination paper has been designed to accommodate a wide range of student profiles. The International GCSE qualification will be graded and certificated on a nine-grade scale from 9 to 1, using the total subject mark where 9 is the highest grade and 1 is the lowest. The paper consists of three writing tasks where candidates are required to choose two. They are asked to choose two questions out of a choice of three and they are required to write a minimum of 300 words in each answer. Both tasks require writing in Arabic where candidates have one hour and 30 minutes to complete this paper. This paper carries a maximum of 50 marks.

The questions may relate to any of the following prescribed themes:

- Youth Matters
- Education
- Media
- Culture
- Sport & Leisure
- Travel & Tourism
- Business, work & Development
- Environment
- Health
- Technology

Each task is assessed for Content and Communication (15 marks) and Knowledge and Application of Language (10 marks) only. The maximum mark for this task is 25 for each question.

The questions in this examination paper were carefully selected to give candidates a wide choice of tasks through which they can express their knowledge of the Arabic language. In general, the performance of the candidates was of a high standard. Most of the questions proved accessible for a considerable number of candidates.

Question 1:

This was the most popular question out of the three questions. It asked candidates to write an article about reading as being an active interactive skill between the reader and what they read. It asked them to highlight the importance of reading for the individual and the community with the possibility of using the following bullet points:

How to make reading important in upbringing,

Reasons behind the decline of reading in the time of modern technology,

And the challenges of abundant information and time constraints.

Most students who chose to answer this question were capable to elaborate and write about the importance of reading as an interactive activity between the reader and the material they read. They also mentioned about the positive impact of reading on individuals and the whole society. There was an emphasis on the role of parents in encouraging their children from an early age and acting as good role model in joining libraries and spending quality time reading books.

Many responses were excellent in terms of content, language and accuracy, scoring full marks or close to full marks. There were some remarkable answers, which reflected candidates' level of understanding of the importance of reading for the individuals and the society they live in. They expressed their wishes to what should be done to improve and encourage reading from an early age. Many candidates commented on the role of parents and their support in encouraging their children to read and to be more active at a young age. They explained the importance of family role and how vital it is to integrate the love of reading into the child's early life. Moreover, their emphasis was on the role of media, and technology in our lives, which prohibited reading accessibility. Many gave good solutions of how to make reading more accessible to different levels of people in this busy society. Some less able students got confused between reading and learning and sometimes focused more on the importance of learning and going to schools. They devoted a big part of their responses to discuss the importance of education and learning in general rather than talking about reading and its impact.

There was also a focus on technology and how it has affected reading especially for youngsters. Some candidates focused on the social media and electronic games and how they negatively impacted on reading, but others appreciated the convenience that electronic books provide to readers. Overall, candidates Produced very good essays and used the bullet points provided. The bullet points were helpful in keeping student focused on the main ideas of the writing.

Question 2:

This was the least popular question, yet most candidates who answered it did very well. Candidates were asked to write about a speech they gave about a project that they were part of. The speech describes the planning and implementing a project in their city, which then encourages teamwork with the possibility of using the following bullet points:

Their contribution to this work,

The pros and cons of teamwork to the individual and community,

And the experience they gained from this work.

Most students were successful in writing the speech and introducing to the audience a project they took part in or will take part in. Some speeches were very well structured, focused and purposeful. Candidate also spent some time writing about the importance of teamwork and the impact of the project on the wider community. some did not specify any project, instead they wrote in general about making their schools and cities better places without highlighting their personal contribution nor the impact of the project on the community. Very few students wrote about the importance of volunteer work in general and its impact on community. Some less able students used pre-learnt expressions to start their speech and made the introduction very long and vague.

As for Accuracy and knowledge of language are concerned, again most candidates demonstrated various good vocabularies related to their project description, providing good ideas and plan for their essays. Some others showed inconsistency in their use of time reference: started their speech by using the future tense proposing a project and asking for the audience support however, further down they would mention that they have had a great experience doing project.

Generally, most candidates understood the task and had good responses where they covered all the points required by the question. Most of the candidates had no difficulty to use good Arabic and correct grammar in their answers.

Many students understood question 2; however, it was the least popular of the three questions answered by candidates. Some responses were about the importance of 'taking brave decisions regarding their cities rather than about taking part in a particular project. Most students had shown good understanding of the question and therefore their answers were very relevant, wrote in details about the importance of group work, and managed to address their teamwork experiences.

Question 3:

This was the second most popular question where candidates were asked by their science professor to write about a topic entitled "Let's make our world a better place", with the possibility of using the following bullet points:

The role of educational and media institutions in environmental awareness,

Starting with school environment conservation,

And methods that control environmental pollution.

Many candidates showed very good understanding of the environment issues around them, where the majority stated the good advantages of living in a clean environment and what should be done to try and keep it safe. They demonstrated a good level of maturity in dealing with the pollution. Most of them understood the danger affecting the planet and provided very good solutions. Candidates followed the bullet points provided and wrote creative essays about the importance of protecting the environment in order to make the world a better place. Students answered very well to this question and the topic was covered in detail with their teachers. They focused on protecting the environment and listing different ways to achieve it, for example: recycling, using electric cars, cycling instead of driving, using media to increase the awareness of climate change and how we can control it...

Some other students linked the topic to religious values for keeping it clean and looking after the animals and planet Earth. Other students focused more on describing the causes of the pollution and damaging the environment rather than coming up with solutions and suggestions to improve the situation. Few students wrote about stopping wars and oppression in the world to make it a better place.

They illustrated a high ability, good description and strong arguments including logical organisation, effective ideas and good quality of language.

Using the bullet points in the question had helped most of the students extend their descriptive ideas and add the reasons for each point. They used highly accurate grammar and sentence structure. Very few candidates found difficulty to provide good responses, but overall most candidates who answered this question understood the topic fully and produced excellent essays.

Conclusion

Students had a good level of communication, reasonable level of accuracy and most managed to use variety of lexical terms and structures successfully. Many candidates showed very high level of performance where bullet points helped them to focus on the main points required by the questions. It helped give them areas to write about, extend their descriptive ideas, and add the reasons for each point they wrote about.

When the less able candidates seemed to run out of ideas, they often resorted to repeat themselves, use irrelevant quotations from the Quran, or Arabic poetry.

This series questions were clear and almost all candidates found them straightforward.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates and teachers are offered the following advice:

Some questions in this year's examination paper were more popular than others and were consequently answered better than other topics with better candidate results. Teachers need to make sure that all topics are covered. This will better prepare candidates and help to achieve grades that truly reflect their ability.

Candidates seemed to be more at ease with the questions when provided with bullet points which helped candidates to focus on the main points required by the questions. It gave them areas to write about, extend their descriptive ideas, and added reasons for each point they wrote about.

Centres should make sure that students are reminded to read well into the questions before answering, so that they do not lose any of the question requirement(s).

The use of English words should be avoided. Candidates are advised to avoid writing English words or literal translations.

The essays that scored the highest marks were characterised by a clear and defined structure, clarity of thought, well supported ideas, good presentation and use of an appropriate style.