

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE Arabic (4AR0)
Paper 1

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General

As in previous years, this year's exam paper consisted of three sections which were to be attempted in 2 hours and 15 minutes. The three sections were designed to assess candidates' reading comprehension, writing ability and knowledge of grammar respectively.

Section 1

This section was designed to test candidates' reading comprehension through six questions which covered a variety of bullet points. They were required to respond with answers based on the information in the text but in their own words and style.

The passage was an article published in 'Arabic Writings' 10th edition, 1981-Qatar. It was titled 'The duty of youth'. The topic was well chosen and contained a number of aspects about youth's upbringing, expected manners/behaviour and their duty towards their society and country as a whole. It was a good example that reflected students' different reading and understanding abilities. The length of the passage was adequate to the task and candidates were able to perform this task in the required time.

The majority of candidates showed good understanding of the questions. Most were able to locate the right answers for the questions in the text. Many used their own style and words and hence secured good marks. This year's performance was undoubtedly better than previous years. One good explanation is that candidates felt related to the topic since it talks about youth. Another possible explanation is the Arab spring which is currently taking place in the Arab world and is mainly led by youth. The overall performance and responses to the questions were satisfactory and showed a good improvement which reflects better preparation of students than in previous exam series.

Very few candidates found it difficult to use their own words and/or organise their thoughts. They copied wording from the passage and/or gave answers that were not directly related to the text. Others chose to express their own opinion. Those were a minority and had lower scores as a result.

Section 2

This section was made up of a short passage called 'Coffee on the wall' which appeared in 'Al Anssari' publications in 2009. The story was about a couple of men who entered a coffee shop and noticed one customer at a time drink one cup of coffee but pay for an extra cup. The waiter then sticks a piece of paper on the wall which reads 'A cup of coffee'. This cup of coffee is later offered to someone who cannot afford to pay for it. The moral of the story is that some people give without waiting for a reward or wanting to be known. While the waiter acts as a medium that helps in the process without asking for anything in return. Candidates were required to answer two questions about the text. The questions were designed to test candidates' level of reading ability as well as their writing skills.

Question 1 was a straightforward test of candidates' reading comprehension and ability to respond in good language and style. They were asked to summarise the story by highlighting the characters who participated in the act of giving. Those who missed out on highlighting these characters or who summarised the story as if it happened to them had lower scores.

Question 2 required a much deeper understanding of text where candidates had to write a short story based on the theme and the message of the text. The most successful candidates were those who managed to write a short story in line with the spirit of the given text. Many of the less able candidates understood the question but were unable to write a story in line with the theme of the given text. Some other candidates wrote a related story but missed out on highlighting that giving in this case should be by people who do not make themselves known or visible. Those candidates were not able to secure the 10 marks allocated to the question.

Section 3

This section was designed to test candidates' knowledge of Arabic grammar. It contained four questions to cover a wide range of grammatical areas. Candidates' responses showed great knowledge of grammar especially in the last questions. Some of the answers provided by some candidates were accepted in the mark scheme as it showed a higher level of knowledge previous exam series. Many answers were thorough and reflected a higher level of teaching and preparation. Very few candidates were weak in grammar.

It is important that candidates equip themselves with sufficient information in preparation for the writing exam. Teachers may wish to consult the new Edexcel International GCSE Arabic – First Language student book published in June 2011:

<http://www.pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk/Secondary/ModernLanguages/IGCSE/EdexcelIGCSEArabic1stLanguage/EdexcelIGCSEArabic1stLanguage.aspx>

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