

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

O Level

## O Level Classical Arabic (7603)

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# Paper 1

## Candidates' Responses

### Question 1

The majority of the candidates generally showed a good grasp of the meaning of the Arabic passage and were able to translate it into English accurately.

However, there were nevertheless some phrases which proved challenging. In the opening paragraph, the phrase '*li anaama fil-qaa'ilati*' (... to have a midday nap/siesta); and '*warakibtu baghlati*' (... and mounted my [female] mule)' were, by and large, mistranslated by a number of candidates. Equally, the word '*malikika*' (your king/leader) in the second paragraph was misread as '*milkuka*' and translated as '*your possession/property*' by many students.

Other phrases in question one which unexpectedly caused difficulties for candidates were: '*...wasirtu fi aziqqati Baghdad li atashaaghala ammaa ana feehi minad-dajari*' (and walked along an alleyway in Baghdad in order to take my mind off my troubles); and '*lammaa qumtu min bayna yadayhi*' (when I had left his presence..)

The top candidates succeeded in translating the phrase '*fa ahbibtu an ufdee ilayka bihaajatee*' (I wish to make you aware of my need) very well, as well as the final phrase '*idhaal hammaaloon qad sabaqoonee bikhamseena alfi deenaari wa-alfay deenaarin lil aamaa*' (... [to my surprise] some porters had reached there before me, carrying with them fifty thousand dinars, and an extra two thousand dinars for the blind man).

### Question Two

Some candidates struggled to convey coherently the intended meaning of a number of phrases and sentences in the Arabic passage of question two. Nevertheless, a substantial minority of students did correctly decode the passage and encoded it into fluent English. The last paragraph of the question two passage in particular served to distinguish A grade candidates from those who obtained lower grades.

Words or expressions in the passage that caused particular problems included the following: '*naadaytu taabian lee...*' (I called [one of] my subordinates...);

'fakalaamuhu mufamun bilharaarati wal-ikhlaas' (his words were filled with warmth and sincerity). The most mistranslated sentence in Question Two was: 'walaakin kayfan-tabaqatis-sooratu "tibqal-asli" alaa ghayril-asli bihaadhihees-sihoolati' (but how could it so easily be possible for his imaginary picture to exactly match 'the original' which was in fact not the actual original)

### Question Three

The passage was selected to test the candidates' knowledge of various areas of Arabic grammar, in particular the jussive and subjunctive moods, the accusative case, the genitive of possession and the genitive following a preposition. Many candidates performed better at this task than in previous years. However, a sizable minority are still failing to write each vowel mark and orthographic sign as required.

### Question Four

The English passage of question four was generally well decoded and rendered it into fairly fluent Arabic by many candidates. However, certain areas of vocabulary and expressions proved particularly challenging and were poorly translated, even by some of the most able candidates. Examples are as follows:

- '... in his eyes my life is without price (priceless).' The Arabic translation of this phrase by many students changed the meaning to ' in his eyes my life is worthless'.
- 'When he tipped it upside down, there was a flash of brilliant light as something ice-white dropped on to the plain wooden desk-top.'
- 'diamond'
- 'It must be quite valuable'
- 'I shall always treasure it'.

Generally speaking, the overall performance of the candidates in translating the English into Arabic revealed a chronic weakness in their ability to conjugate verbs correctly and to spell words accurately.

### Question Five

As was the case last year, the main weakness in the candidates' performance in this task was in their handling of verbs appropriately. Many candidates failed to render the phrase 'My best friends Sara and Mariam like mathematics' at the beginning of (g) into Arabic using the appropriate dual form.

The most challenging sentences in question five were (c) and (f). These two sentences in particular acted as effective discriminators in assessing the candidates' level of ability.

The phrases which were largely incorrectly translated or omitted altogether were: 'I rarely' (sentence a); 'unlike the..' (sentence c); '..if not..' (sentence e), 'In spite of..' (sentence f); 'starting from..' (sentence h).

The expressions 'unlike the system followed in western countries' (sentence c), and 'if not within the school as a whole' (sentence e) also proved problematic for many candidates.

### **Recommendations for centres:**

Candidates appear to need further guidance on:

- Recognising Arabic titles and place names and learning their English equivalents.
- Developing a more formal English style and avoiding slang when translating into English.
- Paying closer attention to conveying the meaning of each word in a passage when translating into English and avoiding over generalisation.
- Using verb tenses consistently.
- Using the accusative and genitive cases appropriately in Arabic, including idafa and the genitive of possession, as well as diptotes.
- Developing accuracy in Arabic spelling and understanding the rules governing the positioning of hamza (*qawaa'idur-rasmil-hamza*).
- Developing accuracy in English spelling and the use of verb tenses.
- Teachers might also consider building up the candidates' knowledge of English connectives and commonly used phrases/constructions to enable them to handle question 5 better.





## Statistics

### Paper 1

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	100	70	56	43	38	26

#### Note:

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.





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