

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE Arabic (5AR02) Paper 01

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Examiner Report

We were pleased to observe that many centres have improved significantly in the way they conduct the oral examination, especially in regard to questioning, timing and accuracy. Many of the centres we have looked at have followed the correct test rules and guidelines when administering the test. Many of the teacher/examiners are using appropriate questioning methods and techniques, eliciting from the candidates the right amount of response which is necessary for the final assessment.

Unfortunately, however, there are still many centres which are not following the basic examination guidelines and regulations. Centres should realise that inaccurate application of examination rules and regulations negatively impact on candidate's marks. This in effect means that the candidates are penalised through no fault of their own.

Erroneous application of exam rules and regulations that may affect the outcome of the test varied considerably this year, but they could safely be classified under three headings: Content of conversation and administration, techniques of exam conduct and cases of malpractice.

1. Content of conversation and administration:

- A considerable number of centres have taught their candidates a whole set of similar questions and answers which they used in the examination setting, without change, variation or differentiation. Examination rules clearly indicate that candidates should not be given a set of questions in advance and they should certainly not rehearse any answers which would then be recorded in the examination.
- A considerable number of teacher/examiners have used a strict order of questions (mostly adopted from the specifications booklet) without any change or variation, which though acceptable, may not allow candidate's to reach their potential.
- Some teacher/examiners paraphrase the questions in the dialects of the pupils, thus affecting the quality of spoken language produced by the candidates.
- Many teacher/examiners use their own dialects, rather than Modern Standard Arabic, thus causing considerable confusion for their candidates.
- Many teacher/examiners used English to clarify the questions for the candidates when the latter seem to misunderstand the questions asked.
- Some teacher/examiners are happy to accept monologues or presentations throughout the tests, without any attempt to interrupt or to offer follow-up questions that would show the candidate's ability to speak Arabic. Considerable marks are lost when the whole of the candidate's performance is monologue.
- Oral presentations, if chosen as a technique for one or both tasks, should not take more than two minutes. They must then be followed by 2 to 3 minutes of discussion and questions relating to the theme of the presentation. The follow-up discussion is compulsory for the completion of the task.

- There were many instances where the teacher/examiners did only one task of less than 5 minutes with no attempt at task differentiation. Such cases are taken as one task and will only be given half the total mark (out of 25).
- Some teacher/examiners did not allocate enough time for the pupils to say what they wanted to say; they interrupted them with new questions before the pupils have had time to complete their points.
- Many centres failed to submit the Mark Record Sheets (MRS), which proved to be a major problem for marking and recognising the topics discussed during the examination time. Teacher/examiners should realise that MRS provide examiners with details of the task, signatures of the teacher/examiners and their candidates (proof of authenticity) and other important information, for example, the centre and candidates numbers and details.
- Many centres did not complete the MRS fully, leaving some important parts incomplete (e.g. the topics order, the centre details, the name of the examiners and so on.). Topics must be recorded clearly on the MRS by the teacher/examiners conducting the examinations.
- Many teacher/examiners marked the test and recorded their marks on the MRS, thus misinterpreting the instructions in the specification and guidelines. 5AR02 is an externally assessed unit.
- Many centres sent blank disks with no audible recording on them.
- Many centres did not wrap their envelopes securely, thus some tapes/covers were damaged during posting.
- Some centres did not send the Attendance Registers or have added names to the registers that are not registered by Edexcel and have not appeared in the allocations.

2. Techniques of Exam Conduct:

- Many teacher/examiners did not favour or use the microphone close enough to the candidates, thus getting their own voices clearer and louder than those of their candidates. In some cases the candidate voices were hardly audible.
- Many candidates were too quiet during the recording and were not advised to speak louder.
- Many centres are still using the old cassette tapes and many were not rewound to the beginning. Others were badly labelled, causing a lot of confusion. Also many tapes were stopped half way through and turned over for new recordings. This is confusing to the examiners who assume that any new recording should naturally start at the beginning of the tape. To avoid these problems teacher/examiners are advised to adopt a more digital recording using Dictaphones, PCs or CD players.

3. Cases of Malpractice:

- There were clear cases of teacher/examiners trying to give help to the candidates. Background noise in some of the recordings was quite audible and showed teacher/examiners trying to utter certain words and phrases that the candidates repeated.
- Many candidates were heard saying something erroneous, but then changed to say something else after being prompted by the teacher/examiners.
- Background noise in some of the recordings and the nature of answers indicated that the candidates were reading from scripts that had been pre-planned.

Despite the above mentioned problems and concerns, there were a great number of centres that conducted the test and recordings brilliantly, adhering accurately to the correct order of tasks, timing and instructions. Such centres had highly trained and professional teacher/examiners. These centres should be congratulated.

For instructions and further guidance please refer to the Specification and Teacher Support Materials and Administrative Support Guide (ICE) online or contact the Modern Foreign Languages Subject Advisor or Subject Team.

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