

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Arabic (5AR03)  
Paper 1 Reading and Understanding in  
Arabic

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**GCSE Arabic**  
**Unit 3 Reading and Understanding in Arabic**  
**Examiner Report**

The question paper consisted of nine questions. Five marks were allocated to all the questions with the exception of Q9 which was marked out of a total of ten marks.

The questions are all differentiated and are targeted in a way that covers all abilities (A\*, A, B, C, D, E, F and G). The aim of the paper is to ensure that all abilities are addressed and that the paper is accessible and fair to all students.

The questions cover a variety of topics from different areas as detailed in the Specification and the scheme of work for GCSE Arabic. All the questions are in English except for the relevant question/stimulus material which was in Arabic. Students were asked to respond to a variety of question types by matching pictures to the correct letters as in question 1, putting a cross in the correct box as in Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7 and answering questions about an Arabic text in English as in questions Q5 and Q9.

Students in this paper are expected to know some English to be able to understand tasks and respond to questions accordingly in the first eight questions. Question 9 required students to respond to questions in English about an Arabic text.

Our data showed that some A\* students, many of whom are probably native speakers of Arabic, encountered issues with Q9(h) due to a lack of fluency in English. Centres must ensure to prepare their students for the exam paper by practicing past exam papers and ensure that students have basic English skills to ensure they can attempt the exam paper and achieve grades that truly reflect their ability. It is also worth remembering that any answers in the target language will not be marked and no marks will be awarded to such answers.

To avoid losing marks unnecessarily, students are advised to observe the following points:

- If the question requires a letter of a correct item to be selected, avoid giving more than one. No marks are awarded to answers with more than one letter in their answer.
- If you make a mistake, place a clear line through your incorrect answer and write your correct answer next to it.
- No marks are awarded to an answer with more than one cross in a multiple choice question.
- In a 'true or false' question students are asked to place crosses in front of five correct answers only. Any extra crosses will result in losing a number of marks based on the number of the extra crosses. For example, if a student placed six crosses in front of six items and he/she had four correct answers out of the six, the examiner will award three marks after deducting one mark for the extra cross.
- Q9 requires students to respond in English, therefore any answer in the target language will not be marked and hence no marks awarded to it.
- Centres must ensure that students have practiced past exam papers to familiarise the students with the format of the paper.

**Q1: Where are they going?**

Many students were successful in this fairly accessible opening question. However, some students struggled with Q1(iii) coast and Q1(v) swimming pool. It is important that students are familiar with the specification's core vocabulary. The latter is available on the Edexcel Pearson website.

**Q2: At the shops**

Students generally performed well in this question. Most students demonstrated good knowledge of simple clothing items, colours and descriptions. However, many students were unsuccessful in answering 2G correctly. This can only be explained by the student's failure to define wool and cotton and as a result they were unsuccessful in achieving the full five marks in this question. It is important that students are familiar with Edexcel Pearson's core vocabulary book to ensure that students are successful in the exam.

**Q3: Leisure activities**

This question was targeted at grade D students, and many students found it fairly accessible. Sport and leisure is a fairly popular topic and this explains the student's success in this question. However, some students failed to achieve the full five marks in this question. Teachers must ensure that learners are taught all sports and activities covered in Edexcel Pearson's core vocabulary book to get the most out of the exam paper.

**Q4: At the Alhambra Palace**

Although many students found the question fairly accessible, many G to C grade students failed to answer questions Q4(ii) where the question related to prepositions and question Q4(v) where many students did not know the word for phone.

**Q5: Pen friends**

Question five was targeted at B grade students, yet students of all abilities managed to gain marks in this questions. The majority of students found Q5(a) and Q5(c) very accessible and easy to attempt. However, few students found question Q5(d) quite a challenge as they did not know the word for poetry. Still, students of all abilities managed to do quite well in this question.

**Q6: At the restaurant**

A very popular question and most students, in all abilities, performed well in this question. Our overall data showed that over 90% of students achieved five out of five in this question. This can perhaps be explained by the good quality of teaching and learning in schools and also the popularity of the topic of food and drink. In order for students to achieve similar success in other questions teachers need to cover all other themes and topics in the schemes of work to better prepare their learners for the exam.

**Q7: At school**

'School subjects' is a popular GCSE topic and many students did quite well in this question and achieved marks that truly reflected their ability. However, a few students struggled with Q7(i), which relates to literature and Q7(iii) relating to biology; some students did not know the meaning for these words. Students should be familiar with the core vocabulary book to maximise their chances of achievement in the exam.

### **Q8: Scholarship application**

This question was targeted at grade A\* students and it differentiated well between higher and lower grade students. Most students met our expectations in this question and managed to achieve their predicted and targeted marks in this question.

The question incorporates many popular and key themes and topics from the Arabic GCSE specification ie numbers, personal information, family and career. Furthermore, the question highlights a personality from the Arab World and the importance of incorporating Arab culture in the teaching of Arabic. Good and sound knowledge of Arab culture will motivate learners and enable them to use the language effectively and efficiently in any setting.

### **Q9: A family problem**

This question worked very well for students of different abilities. The question incorporates many key themes and topics. The question differentiated well between students of all abilities. Q9(a) and Q9(b) were accessible to all students regardless of ability and as expected students did quite well in these two questions. However, some students found Q9(c), Q9(d), Q9(g) and Q9(h) fairly difficult. This was expected as these questions discriminated well between the different abilities.

A\* grade students found Q9(h) fairly difficult as they could not answer the question in English due to a lack of fluency in English. It is important that students practice past exam papers to better prepare them for the final exam and ensure that they achieve grades and marks that truly reflect their ability. Students must also have basic English language skills to attempt Q9 successfully. Please remember that any answers in Arabic in Q9 will not be valid and will be awarded no marks.

### **Summary**

This paper differentiated well between students of different abilities. Our expectations and predications of student's performance, in all questions at all levels, have been met; these findings are supported by our data. The paper was fair to students regardless of ability. Our grade boundaries were set to reflect the level of difficulty of the paper and the students' performance and attainment in each question.

Centres should ensure that all students, at all levels and ability, are acquainted with the minimum core vocabulary list. This can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and should play a key part in the teaching of Arabic in class.

Students, especially native speakers, should be given more opportunities to practice answering higher level questions in English. They need to build and have the necessary English language skills to be able to attempt questions such as Q9 successfully. It is also important that students of all abilities have an opportunity to view and practice past papers to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the paper.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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