

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE Arabic (5AR04)

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Unit 4 - Writing

This was a crossover year where two GCSE Arabic specifications were offered; the new GCSE in Arabic was offered for the first time and the legacy specification (1606) was in its last year. The majority of candidates were entered for the legacy Arabic exam (1606) and only a small number completed the new GCSE in Arabic. The writing paper of the new GCSE was set and designed to test candidates' writing skills in Arabic. Unlike previous writing papers where candidates were expected to have sufficient knowledge to read and understand questions, the entire rubric and the questions are in English. This is to ensure that the assessment is not over-reliant on reading ability.

The examination paper has been designed to accommodate a wide range of students profiles and rewards work from grades G to A*. It consisted of two tasks that require writing in Arabic. Students have only one hour to complete this paper and it carries a maximum of 50 marks.

The questions in this paper were well prepared to give students a chance to express their knowledge of Arabic language. In general, candidates' performance was of high standard. Most of the questions proved accessible for considerable number of candidates and there was no indication that English words or phrases in the question paper posed difficulty to some candidates.

Task 1: Students were required to produce a short writing task in Arabic (30-70 words) in response to a choice of four questions that relate to both prescribed themes; 1. Media, Travel and Culture, 2. Sports, Leisure and Work. Candidates were asked to choose one question out of four. The task was assessed for communication and knowledge and application of language only. The maximum mark for this task is 20. The 20 marks were awarded to content and communication (10 marks), and Knowledge and application of language (10 marks).

The most popular question attempted by candidates was question 1(a). Responses showed excellent level of performance from the vast majority of candidates. They displayed very good awareness of vocabulary relating to holidays and travel in general. This could have been because the majority of students must have had a real experience of an unforgettable holiday and/or they could have been prepared to write an essay about it. Many of these essays were a pleasure to read.

Many other candidates attempted question 1(b) about a favourite book or film. The majority of these candidates had a very good level of performance. Some weaker candidates however, did not succeed in mentioning what they liked about it.

A small number of candidates attempted question 1(c). Some scored good marks where others failed to mention what they have learnt from organising a school trip to the beach.

There were fewer candidates who attempted question 1(d) however; the standard of the produced essays in response to this question was very good. Candidates managed to provide a good range of vocabulary about healthy eating habits and exercise. However, very few of them did not explain how this benefits health in later life.

Task 2: Again Students were required to produce one essay in Arabic in response to a choice of four questions that relate to both prescribed themes, but in this section they were expected to produce an extended piece of writing (at least 120 words). Students are expected to narrate, express opinion and justify points of view. The task is assessed for communication, knowledge and application and accuracy of language. The maximum mark for this task was 30. They were awarded to content and communication (15 marks), Knowledge and application of language (10 marks) and accuracy (5 marks).

All four questions in this section were popular among candidates. The most popular was 2(a) where candidates spoke about a recent celebrity news item and expressed their opinion about what they liked about the person they chose. Very few however did not pay attention to what the question is really asking for and wrote about their favourite celebrity without referring to a particular news item. Thus, they did not satisfy the requirement of the question and lost marks for communication as a result.

The second popular question was 2(b). Candidates who attempted this question were able to cleverly link their answers to their own experience with the internet. They wrote about the impact it had on their lives and succeeded in giving good examples of how they use it. They were able to use a number of internet vocabulary and relevant expressions. Those candidates managed to score very good marks.

Questions 2(c) and 2(d) were also very popular and most of the students who attempted them scored good marks. These two questions proved accessible to a significant number of candidates and they were answered well. The most successful candidates were those who were able to develop good and realistic ideas in presenting their own opinions.

In general the best essays written by candidates in this paper appeared to be among those responding to the details required in the question. These essays were characterised by clear and defined structure, clarity of thought, well supported ideas, good presentation and use of appropriate style.

Grade Boundaries

Raw Mark boundaries

Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
50	40	35	30	26	22	18	15	12

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16

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