

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
in Arabic (5AR03/01)  
Paper 3: Reading and understanding  
in Arabic

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

The question paper consists of nine questions. Five marks are allocated to all questions with the exception of question 9 which is marked out of a total of ten marks. The questions are all differentiated and address all abilities across the full grade range A\* - G.

The questions cover different topics from the GCSE Arabic Specification. All the questions are in English except for the relevant question/stimulus material which is in Arabic. Students were asked to respond to a variety of question types by matching pictures to the correct letters as in question 6, putting a cross in the correct box as in questions 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8. In questions 5 and 9 candidates were asked to read a text in Arabic and answer comprehension questions in English.

This paper is designed for non-native candidates who are confident in English, and this will help them attempt questions successfully. In questions 5 and 9 candidates are expected to write answers in English demonstrating their understanding of the texts. It is also worth remembering that any answers in the target language will not be marked and no marks will be awarded to answers in Arabic.

Centres must ensure that their candidates are prepared for the exam paper and are familiar with the layout and our expectations by practicing past exam papers. This will maximise their chances of achievement and helps them to achieve grades that truly reflect their ability.

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

- In some questions students are asked to put a cross  in the correct five boxes. Students should avoid selecting more than five boxes as this will result in the subtraction of marks. For every extra box crossed, a mark will be deducted from the total.
- If you make a mistake, place a clear line through your incorrect answer and write your correct answer next to it.
- Some questions require students to respond in English; therefore any answers in Arabic, even if they are correct, will not be awarded any marks.
- Centres must ensure that students have practiced past exam papers to familiarise the students with the format, layout and expectations of the paper.
- Candidates should make every effort to write in a clear and legible writing when answering questions.

### **Question 1 Class equipment**

This is an accessible question and good opening question to the exam. Many candidates found the question accessible and managed to score full marks. However, some candidates were not as successful as expected because they did not know the meaning of 'exercise book' and 'rubber' in Arabic. These words and all vocabulary in our exams are in the Arabic core vocabulary.

### **Question 2 A friend's visit**

Candidates, across abilities, performed well in this question. The mean mark for this question was 4.81 out of 5, which is very good.

The topic of holidays and places of interest is quite popular and it comes as no surprise that candidates performed well on this question.

### **Question 3 Hassan's lifestyle**

This question was targeted at grade D candidates, and generally candidates did quite well and performed as expected and according to their ability. Candidates did particularly well in questions 3c and 3e. These questions include activities; a popular topic that is, in general, taught well in centres.

However, some students failed to gain full marks in this question. Nearly half the candidates failed to answer question 3a because they were not familiar with the concept of time in Arabic, especially the terms 'quarter to' and 'quarter past'. Teachers must ensure that learners are taught time as it often appears in the question paper. Please refer to Edexcel Pearson's core vocabulary.

### **Question 4 Visiting relatives in Sudan**

This question worked well in the paper and many candidates performed as expected and achieved their expected marks. Some candidates found issues with 4iii, a question that also deals with the concept of time. The overall mean mark for this part of the question is 0.61 out of 1 compared to an average mean mark of 0.85 out of 1 in other parts of the question.

Teachers need to ensure that learners are familiar with the concept of time in order for them to perform and achieve results that truly reflect their ability.

### **Question 5 Job vacancy**

Question five was targeted at B grade candidates, and the question differentiated well between candidates of different abilities. Many candidates found 5c quite accessible and easy to attempt. However, some candidates found questions 5b and 5d rather challenging and the mean mark for these two questions was around 0.90 out of a possible 2 marks.

Candidates who failed to answer question 5b were not familiar with the adjectives ambitious (Tamouha), and serious in her work (Jaadda fee 'amalihaa), and candidates who did not succeed in answering question 5d were not familiar with terms relating to free accommodation and health insurance. These terms are present in the Edexcel Pearson Arabic Vocabulary.

Still, this question did not present any issues in the paper seeing that candidates performed as expected and achieved marks reflecting their ability and skill.

### **Question 6 My town**

This question was very popular and proved a success with candidates, in all abilities, because most of them performed very well in all parts of the question. Our overall data showed that around 90% of students achieved five out of five for 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 places in town.

In order for candidates to achieve similar successes in other questions teachers need to cover all other themes and topics relating to GCSE Arabic. This will better prepare candidates for the exam paper and ensure their success in the exam.

### **Question 7 Sport**

'Sport' is a very popular topic and often candidates perform quite well in questions relating to sport. Candidates did very well in all parts of this question. The overall mean mark for this question was 4.5 out of 5, which is quite impressive.

Most candidates were able to pick out the relevant information relating to sporting activities from sentences with opinions, reasons and connectives.

### **Question 8 The Dead Sea**

This question was targeted at grade A\* candidates and it differentiated well between higher and lower abilities. Most students met our expectations in this question.

The question incorporates many popular and key themes and topics from the Arabic GCSE specification ie numbers, connectives, intensifiers, adjectives, quantities, adverbs and verbs in different tenses. Furthermore, the question draws the attention to an important place and tourist destination from the Arab World. It is important that Arab Culture is incorporated in the context of the stimuli in the exam, and we therefore encourage teachers to immerse their learners in Arab culture and in the teaching and learning of Arabic. Good and sound knowledge of Arab culture will motivate learners to learn and enable them to use the language effectively and efficiently in any situation.

## **Question 9 Mother's Day**

Question 9 worked very well in this paper. Candidates were generally quite successful in this question and many of them achieved marks that reflect their ability and skill.

However, many candidates found issues and difficulties with question 9a. Our data indicates that only 13% of all candidates answered this question correctly. These students did not know the school subject 'social studies'.

It is worth noting that many A\* grade candidates find question 9 fairly challenging because their lack of fluency in English impedes their achievement in this question. It is important that students practice past exam papers to familiarise themselves with the layout and expectations of the paper and better prepare them for the final exam.

Students must also have basic English language skills to attempt question 9 successfully. Please remember that any answers in Arabic in question 9 will not be valid and will be awarded no marks.

## **Summary**

This paper differentiated well between students of different abilities. Our expectations and predictions of student's performance, in all questions at all levels, have been met and these assertions are supported by our data. The paper was fair to students regardless of ability.

Centres should ensure that all candidates are familiar with the content of the minimum core vocabulary. The core vocabulary list can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and should play an important part in the teaching of Arabic in the classroom. Candidates should also be fairly familiar with key aspects of Arab culture, as we believe it strengthens and consolidates the teaching and learning of Arabic.

Candidates, especially native speakers, should be given further opportunities to practice answering higher level questions in English. They need to have the necessary English language skills to attempt questions such as question 9. 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.

Some topics are more popular than others and are consequently taught better than other topics with better candidate results. Teachers need to make sure that all topics are covered and taught well. This will guarantee fairness to candidates in the exam and better consistency and reliability of results where candidates are able to achieve grades that reflect their ability.

## **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>

