



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Arabic (1AA0)

Paper 1F: Listening and Understanding in Arabic

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Introduction

This report covers the Foundation Tier exam paper from the full-scale exam series introduced in the summer of 2019. The exam consists of 14 questions, with a total possible score of 50 marks. Candidates have 30 minutes to complete the exam, including 5 minutes of reading time.

The exam assesses candidates' understanding of standard spoken Arabic through various public and social contexts. Responses are required for multiple-choice and open-response questions based on recordings featuring both male and female Arabic speakers.

The paper is divided into two sections:

- **Section A** comprises 12 questions, all in English, with responses required in English.
- **Section B** contains 2 questions, with instructions and texts in Arabic, requiring responses in Arabic.

The exam content spans five themes as outlined in the 2017 specification:

1. Identity and culture
2. Local area, holiday, travel
3. School
4. Future aspirations, study, and work
5. International and global dimension

These themes and related topics are studied in the context of both the students' home country and Arabic-speaking countries and communities. Extensive study of the vocabulary list is essential to enable candidates to understand and express themselves effectively in these themes, supported by reading and listening to authentic material. Teachers should introduce and reinforce a range of vocabulary pertinent to the themes and topics outlined in the specification.

This Foundation Tier paper targets grades 1 to 5. The questions are organized as follows:

- Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 target lower grades (1-2).
- Questions 6, 7, and 8 target mid-grade (3).
- Questions 9 to 14 target higher grades (4-5).
- Questions 9, 11, 13, and 14 are crossover questions shared with the Higher Tier paper.

Summary of Performance per Question

Section A

Q01 (3 marks): While most candidates achieved full marks, some struggled with understanding the meanings of Arabic words, which led to random or incorrect selections. This highlights the importance of being familiar with the vocabulary. For example, some candidates chose "butter" instead of "milk," indicating a lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Q02 (3 marks): Many candidates scored full marks; however, difficulties with Arabic time expressions were evident, highlighting the need for better retention of relevant vocabulary.

Q03 (3 marks): Many candidates scored full marks due to a misunderstanding of the requirement to cross no more than three statements, however, difficulties with Arabic colour terms and other adjectives were evident, highlighting the need for stronger retention of relevant vocabulary. Additionally, some candidates showed uncertainty when identifying family relationships and characteristics, indicating a lack of vocabulary related to the theme one/"family and friends."

Q04 (3 marks): The average score was 2 marks, with candidates who crossed all boxes receiving 0 marks. Emphasis on accurate answer selection is crucial. Few candidates scored 0 marks based on crossing out more than one box for each character.

Q05 (4 marks): Candidates performed better in parts (a) and (b) compared to parts (c) and (d).

In Part (a) This was one of the more accessible parts of the question, with most candidates correctly identifying "piano." This indicates that the vocabulary was familiar and clearly articulated in the recording, making it easier for candidates to respond accurately.

In part (b), many responses such as "work with dogs," "cats," or "zoo/vet" scored zero, as they did not use the required term "animals." This indicates a misunderstanding of the question, which specifically targeted the broader concept rather than specific examples or settings. While candidates generally recognised the topic, some appeared to rely on assumptions drawn from familiar contexts rather than fully grasping the intended meaning. The correct answers "charity" or "with animals" were missed by those who focused more on the setting than the actual nature of the work.

In part (c), candidates were often confused by the word "Monday" (الاثنين), which in Arabic sounds similar to the number two. As a result, many responded with "the second day" instead of "next Monday." This confusion highlights gaps in vocabulary knowledge, particularly in numbers and days of the week.

Part (d) presented challenges for many candidates. A significant number responded with "play football" instead of the correct answer, "watch football," indicating a clear misunderstanding of the text. This suggests that some candidates may have lacked the necessary vocabulary or struggled with listening comprehension. The error appears to stem from relying on

assumptions recognising the familiar topic of football but not processing the specific context. Many responses simply stated "football," which lacked the required detail to gain credit. This highlights the importance of helping students distinguish between closely related actions, such as playing versus watching, and reinforcing the need to listen for meaning rather than keywords. Emphasising these subtle but significant differences in classroom practice could support improved performance in similar tasks.

Q06 (3 marks): Many candidates scored at least one mark, with Question 06(a) being the most frequently answered correctly. However, Q6(b) some candidates misplaced the correct words, putting "Sunday" in the first gap and "August" in the second. Although both words were correct and taken from the word box, placing them incorrectly changed the entire meaning of the text, resulting in the loss of both marks.

Q07 (3 marks): Candidates generally performed well, with an average score of 2 marks. However, some lost marks by crossing out more than three boxes.

Q08 (3 marks): This question effectively differentiated between levels of candidate ability, presenting significant challenges for those of average proficiency. Candidates needed to pay close attention to specific details and context, which some found difficult. Below are the common answers that caused candidates to lose marks.

Q8(a) This question asked candidates to identify the speaker's childhood dream visiting Algeria. While some answered correctly, a wide range of inaccurate responses were observed. Common errors included answers such as "to be famous," "visit the desert," or vague references to going on holiday. Additionally, several candidates focused on the idea of travelling with the speaker's father, likely influenced by information presented later in the audio. This suggests that many candidates struggled to isolate the specific detail required, highlighting a need for improved listening precision and focus on the exact wording of the question. These errors suggest that the candidates either misunderstood the audio content or failed to recognise the name of the country, *Algeria*. This indicates a lack of familiarity with the names of some Arabic-speaking countries, or an inability to accurately pronounce or spell them in English.

Q8(b) There was a noticeable degree of confusion with this question. Although the transcript clearly indicated that the father went to the city centre to arrange travel either through a travel agency or to find a better deal a significant number of candidates misunderstood the purpose. Common incorrect responses included "shopping," "buying things for the holiday," or "for work." A few candidates even suggested he went to "find internet." These answers suggest that while many candidates grasped the general context, they struggled to identify the specific purpose of the trip, indicating a gap in precise listening and inference skills.

Q8(c) This was one of the better-answered parts of Question 8. Most candidates successfully identified at least one of the offers, with common correct responses including "hotel stays" and "free museum tickets." Incorrect answers, such as "food," were less frequent and typically resulted from vague phrasing or overgeneralisation. Overall, this question

demonstrated stronger listening comprehension and a clearer understanding of specific details.

Q09 (4 marks): Candidates generally performed well, with many achieving full marks.

Q10 (4 marks): This question posed considerable difficulty, with only the candidates demonstrating the highest proficiency in Arabic managing to score well. Many candidates lost marks on questions 10(b) and 10(c), while some also struggled with question 10(d). Successfully answering these questions required close attention to specific details and context, which proved challenging for some candidates. Below are the common answers that caused candidates to lose marks:

Q10(a) This item required a high level of precision, and many candidates lost marks by providing incomplete or overly general answers. While the correct responses were "foreign students" or "university students," many simply wrote "students," which was too vague to be awarded marks. Some candidates offered specific but incorrect answers such as "children," "Arabic-speaking students," or "people online." A common source of confusion appeared to be the word أجنب (foreigners), which several candidates seemed to misinterpret as "English university students," possibly assuming the speaker was referring to British learners of Arabic rather than understanding the intended reference to teaching foreign university students.

Q10(b) This part of the question proved challenging for many candidates. Although the speaker clearly referred to his experience, strong work ethic, and the fact that he speaks Arabic as reasons for his suitability, a significant number of candidates gave vague or inaccurate responses. Common incorrect answers included "he is smart," "he is good with the internet," or "he speaks good Arabic." Some also misinterpreted the reference to "four years of teaching Arabic," instead writing "four years of learning Arabic." While many candidates seemed to understand the general context, these responses indicate a struggle to identify and recall the specific details required. The transcript clearly highlights that Sami's suitability stems from his ability to speak Arabic and his experience teaching foreign university students. This underscores the importance of accurate interpretation and careful listening, particularly when key information is subtly conveyed.

Q10(c): This part also proved challenging for many candidates. Acceptable answers included a university certificate or a reference letter; however, a wide range of incorrect responses were given. Common errors included "passport," "ID," or "Arabic certificate," while some simply wrote "letter" without specifying the type, which did not meet the mark scheme criteria. These responses suggest that some candidates relied on familiar or recognisable words rather than listening carefully for the precise meaning required. To improve performance, it would be beneficial to focus classroom practice on developing attentive listening skills, emphasising the importance of distinguishing between similar sounding or related terms and understanding exact details in context.

Q10 (d): This part of the question frequently caused confusion, as the correct answer "translator" or "interpreter" was often missed. Many

candidates answered with “Arabic teacher,” while others gave a variety of unrelated professions, suggesting guesswork rather than careful listening. This may be due to confusion between the speaker’s previous job and his current or future plans, or difficulty distinguishing closely related occupational terms.

To improve performance, classroom activities should focus on developing students’ ability to listen for specific details and understand nuanced vocabulary related to professions. Exercises that emphasise context, comparison of similar job titles, and active listening strategies can help students accurately identify key information. Reinforcing these skills will reduce errors and improve comprehension in future assessments.

Q11 (3 marks): Candidates generally performed well, with many scorings at least 2 marks.

Q12 (4 marks): This question was fairly well understood by many candidates; however, part (d) proved challenging for the majority. While most responded accurately to parts 12(a), (b) and 12(c), several candidates lost marks on 12(d) due to insufficient detail in their answers. The main difficulty appeared to be in distinguishing between similar pieces of information and identifying the specific detail required by the question.

Q12(a): This part of the question was generally understood, though many candidates struggled to provide the level of precision required. Acceptable answers included “secondary school” or “girls’ school;” however, some responses were too vague such as “big school” or simply “private” and therefore did not meet the mark scheme criteria. These responses indicate that while candidates recognised some characteristics of the school, they often failed to identify the specific detail being assessed. To support improvement, classroom practice should focus on helping students distinguish between general and specific information. Activities that involve listening for purpose, identifying key words, and justifying answer choices can help develop this skill. Encouraging students to listen beyond surface details and focus on what the question is explicitly asking will enhance their precision and accuracy.

Q12(b): This part was generally well answered. Many candidates correctly identified that the special room in the library contained technology or electronic devices, with “electronics” being one of the most common and accurate responses. This suggests that many candidates were able to focus on and interpret the relevant detail in the audio effectively. However, a small number of responses such as “books” were also seen likely based on assumptions about what is typically found in a library rather than on what was heard. These instances highlight the importance of training students to rely on the content of the audio rather than prior knowledge or context-based guessing.

In the classroom, this can be supported by encouraging active listening through prediction tasks and follow-up comprehension questions that require evidence from the recording. Developing this habit can help students better distinguish between what they assume and what is stated.

Q12(c): Responses to this item were mixed. While many candidates correctly identified that English classes were offered for parents, others provided unrelated answers such as “free books” or “reading sessions.” This suggests that some candidates may have confused details from other parts of the audio or relied on general assumptions rather than focusing on the specific information required.

To improve accuracy, classroom strategies should include practising how to track key information throughout longer audio texts and distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details. Reinforcing the importance of careful, focused listening especially when multiple ideas are presented in close succession can help minimise these kinds of errors in future tasks.

Q12(d): This part of the question proved challenging for several candidates. The correct answer was “build a sports club,” but many responses were vague or unrelated, including answers such as “sports day,” “maths lesson,” or “school trip.” In some cases, candidates repeated their response to part (c), indicating possible confusion between the questions or difficulty in tracking the sequence of information in the recording. These patterns suggest that some candidates may struggle with retaining and organising information when multiple ideas are presented in proximity. To support improvement, classroom activities should focus on developing listening strategies that help students follow the flow of spoken texts, such as note-taking, sequencing tasks, and prediction exercises. Practising with multi-part questions can also improve their ability to differentiate between similar-sounding or thematically related content.

Section B

Q13 and Q14 (5 marks each): These crossover questions were challenging, with many candidates scoring only 1-2 marks. Regular practice with such questions is recommended to improve performance.

Question 13:

Candidate performance across the five items in this task was mixed. Part (a) proved particularly challenging. The correct answer, “مجانية” (free), was frequently missed, with many candidates opting for alternatives such as “للطلاب” (for students) or “غالية” (expensive). While these responses were grammatically correct and made logical sense within the sentence e.g., “a trip for students” or “an expensive trip around the island” they did not reflect the key detail mentioned in the audio. This suggests that some candidates may have relied on written context or assumptions, rather than listening for the precise information provided.

Parts (b), (c), and (d) were generally well answered. In part (b), the correct word “ركوب” (riding) was identified by most candidates, likely aided by the clear reference to “الخيول” (horses) in the audio. In part (c), many accurately selected “للأطفال” (for children), showing good understanding of the intended audience. Part (d) also saw a strong performance, with a high number of candidates correctly choosing “الأسواق الشعبية” (traditional markets).

Part (e), however, was more problematic. The correct response, “الهاتف” (phone), was often replaced with unrelated words like “إيميل” (email) or “مجانية” (free), indicating a misunderstanding of the detail or potential guessing.

Additionally, a noticeable number of candidates left the entire question blank. This could point to issues with vocabulary recognition, lack of confidence, or difficulties with time management.

Conclusion:

This task highlighted the variation in candidates' ability to extract specific information from audio and demonstrated the need for careful listening, especially in tasks requiring precise word choices from a list. Focused classroom practice on listening for exact meanings and distinguishing between contextually plausible but incorrect options would be beneficial.

Question 14:

This question proved more challenging overall compared to Question 13, although some candidates performed well on specific parts.

Part (a) was generally well answered. Most candidates correctly selected "إعادة" demonstrating a clear understanding of the context.

However, **parts (b) to (e)** showed greater variation in responses:

In **part (b)**, many candidates incorrectly chose options like "سيارات" (cars) or "منشورات" (leaflets) instead of the correct answer "إيميل" (email). This suggests some confusion with similar-sounding or familiar words.

In **part (c)**, the correct word "كاميرات" (cameras) was frequently replaced with "مكان" (place) or other unrelated options, indicating difficulties in pinpointing specific vocabulary.

In **part (d)**, "زرع" was often confused with "قليل" or "قطع", possibly due to mishearing or guessing based on context.

In **part (e)**, a few candidates gave "مرتفع" or "سيارات" instead of the correct word "قليل". This again points to confusion between similar vocabulary or concepts.

A recurring issue across this task was the inclusion of **two words for a single gap**, particularly when answer options were listed with slashes (e.g., "قطع/مرتفع" or "قليل/إعادة"). Since only one word was permitted per blank, such responses were marked incorrect.

Additionally, a significant number of candidates left the entire question blank, suggesting challenges with either vocabulary knowledge, confidence, or overall comprehension of the audio.

Conclusion: This task highlighted the importance of attentive listening and precise word selection, particularly in multi-part questions requiring specific vocabulary. Candidates should focus on enhancing their **vocabulary knowledge** and maintaining **clear handwriting**, as these aspects were pivotal in some candidates losing marks. Questions 13 and 14 particularly revealed lower performance levels, indicating that increased emphasis on **vocabulary retention** and **legibility** could significantly improve outcomes in similar listening assessments. Targeted classroom practice that emphasises careful listening for meaning, vocabulary reinforcement, and accurate transcription will support stronger performance in future tasks.

Conclusion and Advice:

The performance across the paper showed clear strengths in familiar and accessible areas, but also highlighted recurring issues that affected outcomes, particularly in more detailed listening tasks. To support stronger future performance, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Comprehensive Topic Coverage

- Candidates must be exposed to all GCSE themes and subtopics well in advance of the exam. The evidence shows that unfamiliarity with certain cultural or thematic contexts, such as education systems or career aspirations in Arabic-speaking countries, negatively impacted understanding.
- Use authentic materials (e.g., news clips, podcasts, student blogs) that reflect real-life themes to deepen engagement and broaden topic familiarity.

2. Vocabulary Development

- A strong vocabulary base is essential. Many marks were lost due to misinterpreting key words or failing to recall the precise term needed.
- Encourage regular vocabulary review through spaced repetition, use of vocabulary books/lists, and topic-based quizzes.
- Emphasise semantic fields (e.g., school, travel, work) to help students group and retain related words.

3. Managing Open-Response Questions

- Candidates generally performed better in multiple-choice questions. However, open-response questions require more precise understanding and accurate transcription.
- Classroom tasks should involve dictation, summary writing, and targeted listening that build the skills needed to extract and record key information.
- Reinforce the importance of handwriting clarity, as several responses could not be credited due to illegibility.

4. Multiple-Choice Techniques

- Marks were lost when candidates selected too many options or failed to follow instructions. This can be avoided by:
 - Training students to read instructions carefully.
 - Practicing with exam-style tasks where choosing the correct number of responses is enforced.

5. Effective Notetaking Strategies

- Students should be trained to jot down key words during the first hearing and refine their answers during the second.
- Model how to listen actively and anticipate information, especially in tasks with multiple parts.
- Encourage using the margins of the question paper for quick notes or keywords heard.

6. Utilising Reading Time Efficiently

- The short reading time before the audio begins is crucial for predicting the topic and identifying key terms.
- Teach students to underline or annotate question words, prompts, and distractors before the recording starts.
- Practice timed pre-listening exercises in lessons to build this habit.

7. Careful Answer Selection

- In gap-fill tasks, candidates must select only one word and ensure it matches the audio precisely.
- Reinforce the rule that choosing multiple answers (e.g., using slashes) invalidates the response.

Final Note:

The listening paper continues to challenge candidates not just in comprehension, but also in precision, vocabulary retention, and exam strategy. By embedding these skills into regular classroom practice and assessments, students will become more confident and perform more consistently across all sections of the exam.

