



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Arabic (1AA0)

Paper 1H: Listening and Understanding in Arabic

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Introduction

This Higher Tier Listening and Understanding in Arabic exam paper comprises 10 questions with a total mark allocation of 50.

The exam duration is 40 minutes, with an additional 5 minutes allocated for reading time. The paper encompasses vocabulary and structures across all themes and topics outlined in the qualification specification.

Candidates are assessed on their understanding of standard spoken Arabic by one or more speakers in various public and social settings. Responses are required in both multiple-choice and open-response formats, based on recordings featuring male and female Arabic speakers.

The paper is divided into two sections:

- **Section A:** Consists of two questions with instructions and texts in Arabic, requiring responses in Arabic.
- **Section B:** Contains eight questions, all set in English, with responses required in English.

The content covers five themes as per 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

All themes and topics must be studied in the context of both the candidates' home country, countries, and communities where Arabic is spoken. Extensive study of the vocabulary list is crucial for candidates to understand and express themselves within these themes, as well as for reading and listening to authentic material. Teachers should present and exploit a range of vocabulary relevant to the specification's themes and topics.

This higher-tier question paper targets grades 4 to 9, with questions organized as follows:

- Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 target grades 4 and 5.
- Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 target the higher grades 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Below is a summary of candidate performance for each question:

Section A

Q01 (5 marks):

This is a target language question where candidates select the correct words from a cloud to complete sentences. Overall, this question was well-received and clearly understood, with most candidates selecting suitable words from the list and showing both confidence in their listening comprehension and a strong grasp of the theme. The average score was between 3 and 4 marks.

- **Q1(a), (b) and (e)** were answered correctly by most candidates, reflecting a good understanding of the audio. Some common issues were identified:

- (a) A number of candidates selected the word "طويلة" (long) instead of the correct answer "مجانية" (free).
 - (b) Some candidates appeared to guess the answer without fully understanding the audio. For instance, "إطعام" (feeding) was chosen instead of the correct word "ركوب" (riding).
 - (c) A number of students incorrectly selected "للطلاب" instead of "للأطفال".
 - (d) Similarly, "المتاحف العلمية" was chosen by some candidates instead of "الأسواق الشعبية".
- While both responses made sense contextually and grammatically, one of them did not match the content of the recording.
 - Candidates were expected to listen carefully and match what they heard with the correct written word from a provided list. Errors in this section suggest weak reading comprehension and poor recognition of known vocabulary. Some responses appeared to be randomly selected, indicating limited engagement with the task or a lack of focus on listening and understanding.
 - Candidates need to focus on identifying the **precise vocabulary** used in the audio, rather than relying solely on contextual inference.

Recommendations for Improvement

- **Reinforce Vocabulary Knowledge:**
Regular practice with common vocabulary in context will help candidates distinguish similar-sounding words and understand their usage.
- **Practice Listening with Written Support:**
Integrating listening tasks with written word lists can help students develop stronger connections between spoken and written Arabic.
- **Encourage Careful Sentence Review:**
Candidates should always read the completed sentence after inserting a word to ensure it makes logical and contextual sense.
- **Develop Focused Listening Skills:**
Emphasise the importance of attentive listening and discourage guessing. Candidates should be trained to listen for key words and phrases that directly match those in the word list.
- **Familiarisation with Exam Format:**
More exposure to similar question types can improve performance and build confidence in listening assessments.
The overall performance indicates a need for improvement in vocabulary recognition, attentive listening, and reading comprehension. With targeted practice and strategic instruction, candidate accuracy and confidence in listening comprehension tasks can be significantly enhanced.

Q02 (5 marks):

- Question 2, similar to Q1, requires candidates to select the correct words from a list to complete sentences. While some candidates scored full marks, others randomly selected words, resulting in low scores.
- Common issues identified:
 - (b) Some students chose "بريد إلكتروني" instead of the required "إيميل".
 - (c) A number of candidates selected incorrect vocabulary items, such as choosing "سيارات" (cars) instead of "كاميرات" (cameras), and "قطع" (cutting) instead of "زرع" (planting). These errors suggest a lack of precise vocabulary recognition or insufficient attention to the context provided in the recording.

- (d): This was the most difficult part. Many students selected "قطع" instead of the correct answer "زرع". This may have been due to:
- A lack of careful listening, or
 - Confusion caused using "زراعة" in the recording versus "زرع" in the word list.

(e): Proved especially difficult for many candidates. Common errors included selecting "مرتفع" (high) or "مخفضة" (low) instead of the correct word "قليل" (little). This may be due to confusion between synonyms or similar words. In some cases, candidates seemed to recognise a correct meaning from the recording but failed to choose the matching word from the provided list.

- Although these alternatives were contextually appropriate, only the words provided in the box were acceptable answers and therefore no marks were awarded.
- Many candidates appeared to guess the answers rather than rely on what they heard in the recording. In several cases, responses were left blank, indicating either uncertainty or lack of confidence. This points to the need for more structured listening practice and confidence-building exercises.
- This suggests a lack of understanding that, although different words can have similar meanings, only the words from the list should be used in the answers. It highlights a need to strengthen candidates' knowledge of synonyms and their ability to accurately match spoken and written vocabulary.

Recommendations:

- **Emphasise Listening Skills:** Encourage candidates to listen carefully to the transcript to avoid misunderstandings and incorrect guesses.
- **Vocabulary Practice:** Ensure candidates are familiar with different grammatical forms of vocabulary words to prevent confusion.
- **Logical Answer Selection:** Teach candidates to rely more on their listening skills rather than selecting what seems logical without evidence from the transcript.
- **Avoiding Blanks:** Encourage candidates to attempt every question to maximise their chances of scoring marks.

By addressing these areas, candidates can improve their performance and accuracy in responding to such questions.

Section B

- **Q03 (4 marks):** This multiple-choice question required candidates to complete sentences by selecting the correct option. Many candidates scored the full 4 marks, indicating that familiarity with the topic and the format of multiple-choice questions positively influenced performance.
- **Q04 (3 marks):** Another multiple-choice question where many candidates achieved full marks. Some candidates lost marks by selecting more choices than required.
- **Q05 (4 marks):** In this multiple-choice question, most candidates scored at least 3 out of 4 marks. The most frequent incorrect answers occurred in Q5(iii). Some candidates lost marks by selecting more choices than allowed.
- **Q06 (5 marks):** This open-response question showed varied performance.

- Most candidates answered parts (a) and (c) correctly, while many struggled with part (b) as "لوحة الكترونية" seemed unfamiliar to significant number of candidates who either left it blank or provided incorrect answers using words such as (internet/ online/or board on its own) instead of (electronic board/ screen).

- In Q6(d), most candidates successfully provided at least one of the two possible benefits the visitors gained from the exhibition

- Students were required to answer in **full sentences in English**. Most performed well, providing a variety of valid responses that reflected a clear understanding of both the audio and the questions.

- **Q07 (5 marks): Listening Comprehension – Theme 2: School Summer Camp**

This comprehension question was based on **Theme 2: School Summer Camp**. Most candidates performed well overall, particularly in **parts 7a, 7b, and 7d**. However, **part 7b** proved more challenging for some.

The difficulty in part 7b may be attributed to a lack of full understanding of the listening material, or to insufficient notetaking both during the allocated reading time and while listening to the recording. A common error observed was writing **"equipment for camping"** instead of the correct answer, **"shoes"**.

To address these issues, candidates should be encouraged to avoid making assumptions based on what they believe the answer **should or could** be. Instead, they must focus closely on the actual content of the recording. Active listening, coupled with strategic notetaking, is essential for improving accuracy and comprehension in tasks of this nature.

- **Q08 (6 marks):** In this multiple-choice question, candidates listened to Munir talking about a city in Syria. Many candidates scored full marks in both parts (a) and (b). However, a few struggled with part (a)(iii), appearing to guess and select random answers from the list.

To improve accuracy, candidates should be encouraged to carefully listen to the recording and cross-reference their answers with the given options. Regular practice with similar listening exercises can help reduce guesswork and enhance comprehension skills.

- **Q09 (10 marks):** This open-response question, based on theme 5 (sports events), is divided into two parts: (a) and (b). Overall, this question proved to be the most challenging for candidates, with very few managing to score the full 10 marks.

Part (a)

- **9a(i) & 9a(ii):** Many candidates found these questions challenging. For 9a(i), a significant number of responses incorrectly stated, "in a sports shop," indicating that candidates were unfamiliar with the word *factory*, which is included in the GCSE vocabulary list. Similarly, in 9a(ii), it appeared that candidates either did not fully understand the text or were unaware of the meaning of "اجر قليل" ("low wage") in English. Some candidates gave irrelevant or inaccurate answers, such as "because her dad's friend works there," demonstrating a lack of comprehension.
- **9a(iii):** This part was particularly well answered, with most candidates providing the correct response. However, some common mistakes were frequent where many candidates wrote **"nursery home"** instead of the correct **"nursing home"**, receiving no marks. A common error was confusing **"she learned"** (تعلّمت) with **"she taught"** (علّمت), resulting in incorrect answers such as *"She taught to take care of the elderly"* or *"She taught caring of old people"*
- **9a(iv):** Most candidates scored 2 marks on this question. Very few misunderstood it or failed completely, as most were able to secure at least 1 mark out of 2.

Part (b)

- **9b (i):** Candidates generally did not perform well in this question where high percentage of them provided incorrect answers as they did not focus on what Ahamad specifically did in his job and consequently losing a mark.
- **9b (ii) & 9b(iv):** Many candidates performed well in these parts, demonstrating a good level of understanding of Arabic.
- **9b (iii):** Some Candidates misheard "مسنين" (elderly people) as "مسلمين" (Muslims), or assumed "مسنين" was related to **dentistry**, which led to incorrect answers.
- **9b (iv):** Generally, a good number of candidates provided the correct answer. However, many lost the mark for providing incomplete or incorrect responses such as *"get license"*, *"learn how to drive"*, or *"get driving lessons"*, instead of accurately stating *"Driving license"*.

Recommendations:

To improve performance, candidates should focus on:

- **Familiarising themselves with key vocabulary:** Understanding words in the vocabulary list, especially those relevant to the themes, is crucial.
- **Contextual practice:** Regular practice using these words in context can enhance comprehension and usage.
- **Open-response practice:** Frequent practice of open-response questions can help candidates structure their answers better and improve accuracy.

Q10 (4 marks): This multiple-choice question is divided into two sections (i) and (ii), each worth 2 marks. Most candidates scored at least one mark in each section, with an average total score of 2-3 marks. Some candidates achieved the full 4 marks.

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 likely 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.

