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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Arabic (1AA0) Paper 4F: Writing

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## **Introduction**

This examination paper has been designed to accommodate a wide range of candidates' profiles. The GCSE qualification is graded and certificated on a nine-grade scale from 9 to 1, using the total subject mark where 9 is the highest grade and 1 is the lowest. Questions across all four language skills are set in common contexts, addressing a range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes. They are organised into five themes, each broken down into topics and sub-topics.

The five themes are:

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

Each task is assessed using criteria given in two-mark grids:

- communication and content
- linguistic knowledge and accuracy.

The questions in this examination paper (the Foundation paper) were carefully selected to give candidates a wide choice of tasks through which they can express their knowledge of the Arabic language. Candidates are assessed on their ability to communicate effectively through writing in Arabic for different purposes and audiences. They are required to produce responses of varying lengths and types to express ideas and opinions in Arabic. The instructions to candidates are in Arabic. Word counts are specified for each question. Candidates must answer all questions.

In the Foundation tier, there are three open-response questions and one translation question into Arabic.

### **Question (1)**

This is a Picture-based question, where candidates were asked to describe a picture and give their opinion. Candidates were assessed on their ability to write, to describe and to express opinions. Answers to this question were satisfactory on the whole. Most candidates found it straightforward to describe the picture, including describing themselves in the picture and finally providing their opinion. Many achieved excellent marks for content and communication and quality of language.

Some students described the goods in the exhibition only. Others simply copied the question and did not provide an answer. Very few struggled to join letters in Arabic or write any meaningful words. A handful even answered in English.

### **Question (2)**

This question has two options (a) or (b) from which candidates have to select one. This question assesses candidates on their ability to note down key points and convey information.

2(a) and 2(b) were reasonably well understood for most candidates. The majority who chose either part of question 2 did well as far as communication and quality of language is concerned. Furthermore, there was a balance in candidates' choice of questions. 47% answered Q2(a), whereas 53% answered 2(b). This is because the topic of sport is very popular amongst candidates, especially football matches and so on. Many showed a satisfactory level of understanding of the question and expressed their opinion well. It was clear that band 1 and 2 students struggled to find the correct vocabulary for Q2(a). As for the question, it has behaved as it was intended.

### **Question (3)**

This question has two options, (a) or (b), from which candidates have to select one. This question assesses candidates on their ability to convey information, narrate, express opinions, interest, and convince the reader about a certain point. Candidates had to use the informal register. This question was a crossover to the Higher tier.

Q3(a)&(b):

As for question 3, the distribution of choice was as follows: 45% answered 3(a) and 55% answered 3(b). There were many good answers produced by candidates who chose to answer 3(a). However, many of these essays had an extensive main focus on the description of the phone and little or no information about the other 3 bullet points. This question was popular with students of bands 3, 4, and 5. Their communication was relevant to the task most of the time and they developed their guiding points reasonably well. Their adaptation of language was effective and they gave convincing opinions. There were quite a few Level 4 students who expanded their bullet points well, used complex sentence structures to express their thoughts and wrote a significant amount. Even non-Arabic speakers managed to develop at least one bullet point and managed to score Level 2 marks, indicating that they had practised their vocabulary.

### **Question (4)**

This is the translation question. Candidates were required to translate five sentences from English to Arabic. The sentences were ordered by increasing level of difficulty. Translation was a very decisive item here, where candidates proved to either excel or just provide a minimal number of words.

The translation question presented difficulty for a great number of candidates. Words/expressions such as calculator, university, computer games, favourite and looking for work, were challenging for students to translate. There were so many blank spaces in the papers and other papers with few individual words on them. One can conclude that these questions stood out as being challenging in this examination series.

4(a) and 4(b) were answered well by most students, but 4(c) was challenging. The words 'calculator' and لا أحتاج were wrong most of the time.

Q4(d) was very challenging. The words 'حصلت' and درجات surprisingly confused many candidates. The past tense was not successfully translated.

Q4(e): The word تبحث was the trickiest word in the sentence, where a number of candidates got at least one point in their answer for (e).

Many Arabic speaker students relied on dialectical terms to convey their expressions across the entire question, where they were not harshly penalised most of the time, as they delivered the meaning of the sentence correctly.

Non-Arabic speakers kept leaving gaps in their translations or answering with one word, which scored them a single mark most of the time, e.g.: في المدرسة / في الجامعة.

On the whole, the question wasn't difficult for most students to grasp. The vocabulary was within their reach and the topic was one that students should have found simple. Unfortunately, some students struggled with the language, but their vocabulary level and learning were low. Nevertheless, all questions performed comparably and as intended, including question 4.

### **Conclusion and advice to centres:**

In general, the performance of the candidates was of a high standard. Most of the questions proved accessible for a considerable number of candidates.

Paper 4F was very well prepared, where some specific types of questions were challenging for the Foundation level. There is sufficient evidence of preparation of candidates by the teachers according to the specification. The marking was well achieved. Teachers, however, should make sure to more train their candidates on how to focus on reading more into the questions, especially not to miss out on bullet points.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates and teachers are offered the following advice:

- Some questions in this year's examination paper were more popular than others and were consequently answered better than other topics with better candidate results.

Teachers need to make sure that all topics are covered. This will better prepare candidates and help to achieve grades that truly reflect their ability.

- The majority of candidates wrote their answers on the correct answer space, however, some students are still making the mistake of writing their answers on the wrong side of the answer space provided. This might cause them to lose marks! Therefore, teachers should remind candidates to write their answers on the correct answering space.
- As mentioned in the introduction, the exam paper will cover all topics/themes in the specification. This means that it is important for teachers to train candidates on the topics/themes, with more attention given for the less familiar topics.
- Candidates should work on making themselves more familiar with the topics, to improve their performance.
- Candidates should do more familiarising with the vocabulary list to secure a better score.
- Centres should make sure that candidates are reminded to read well into the questions, including the bullet points, before answering, so that they do not lose any of the question requirement(s).
- The use of English words should be avoided. Candidates are advised to avoid writing English words, except for transliteration.
- Candidates should practice exam-style questions, using past paper exam questions and frequently revise key vocabulary and complete translation practice tasks.
- Candidates should leave enough time at the end to revise their answers.