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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Arabic (1AA0) Paper 4H: 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 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 English, except for the last question (the translation question), the instructions are in Arabic. Word counts are specified for each question. In the Higher tier, there are two questions and one translation question from English into Arabic. Candidates must answer all questions.

Question 1

Questions 1(a) and 1(b) worked as intended. There was a relative balance between the choice of candidates to answer 1(a) or 1(b). 45% of candidates answered 1(a), whereas 55% answered 1(b).

Q1(a) had the theme of Identity and Culture and the topic of Daily life. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of an advert about selling a mobile phone. The question had to be answered using present, past and future time frames.

In this question, students were able to communicate all four bullet points effectively. They were able to elaborate the question well, maybe because teenagers are highly informed about

technology and mobile phones. This was reflected and expressed in many candidates' beautiful essays. However, some other candidates struggled to describe one of the bullet points. They confused **حالته للإستعمال** (its condition), with how the phone is used. Overall, students communicated the required bullet points well, some more briefly than others. Accuracy and knowledge of language needed further development.

Q1(b)

The theme of this question was Identity and culture and the topic was cultural life. Candidates were given four bullet points within the context of an informal letter of apology for not being able to attend a friend's exam success party.

The question had to be answered using present, past and future time frames. This is a popular and easy question, where candidates are always trained to write about different celebrations (Eid, birthdays, weddings, graduations. Etc). Therefore, this was very helpful in covering most of the bullet points of question 1(b). However, a number of candidates who answered this question did not elaborate on congratulating their friend with cultural Arabic phrases and used very short phrases for one bullet point. Other candidates ignored the last bullet point, where instead of planning how and where to meet, they used short phrases, which are normally used for ending any letter.

Q2(a)

This was another question that worked extremely well. There was a clear preference for question 2(a), where 72% of candidates answered 2(a) and only 28% answered 2(b). This is maybe because of the popularity of the sports topic amongst candidates. Teachers also spend a considerable time training candidates on sports topics, as well as hobbies of candidates in general. It was a popular sports question and very similar to a past paper question about joining a tennis club that showed up in past paper's exam.

Q2(b)

Volunteering as a topic does not take as much time and content to cover as does sports in the curriculum. This is not one of candidates' favourites topics. Therefore, candidates do not usually expand much in their writing, as much as they do in sports. Nevertheless, those who chose this question, managed to produce well-planned pieces of writing. There were some very high scores from candidates. Others were creative when they wrote about new additions they will bring to the care homes. On the whole, they wrote some pleasing and empathetic essays. The question worked as intended.

Q3

The topic of this translation question was about the environment. This is usually a topic that teachers make sure candidates are well trained to answer. It is only that some candidates find hard. Many students scored between Levels 2 and 3, while a number of them translated the full passage. But in this examination series, there were some key words that candidates failed to accurately translate: 'global warming', 'climate change', 'protecting the environment' and 'recycling'. These candidates confused words like 'Global warming' for 'climate change' and vice versa. At certain times they thought they were the same thing. Some candidates tried to literally translate the phrase, e.g. "Global warming" to something like "international high temperature" rather than using the correct and accurate Arabic translation. These words distinguished well band 4 students from the rest of the students.

Despite the challenging nature of the question, there were some excellent answers produced by a number of candidates. The wording of the question targeted the correct grades; many students were not able to conjugate the verbs and apply the appropriate grammar rules to the writing.

Conclusion and advice to centres:

On the whole, students answered questions with relatively well communicated answers. Generally, the test was appropriate for its purpose. Knowledge of present, past and future tense was generally sound. There was a high level of language used in most answers with the occasional idiom. In the less good attempts, there were basic mistakes in tenses, and complex language was inaccurate. There are some students who used dialect; however, this didn't hinder communication and content.

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 train their candidates more on how to focus and answer 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.
- This examination series, 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.

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