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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Subsidiary
in Arabic (WAA01) Unit 1: Understanding and
Written Response

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Introduction

This is the first examination session for this new specification, so we had a small entry. It looks like some centres entered a few students to test the water and to experience the demands of the new test. Most of the students entered seemed to be very able students, some of whom were obviously native or near-native speakers. The performance was generally good in this first session. All students passed with some excellent responses on the upper end.

This paper was set in accordance with the Specification guidance and sample paper. The total time allocated to students was 2 hours 30 minutes.

The paper consists of eight questions in three sections; reading, grammar and writing. All eight questions are compulsory, and most students attempted all questions, including Q8, with widely varying outcomes.

The passages sought to encompass topics of current interest from a variety of authentic Arabic sources.

Section A: Reading

This section consists of four questions. Students are required to read, understand, retrieve, and convey information from different Arabic language texts.

Question 1

In this text, students needed to find the correct phrases (from a list of eight) to complete five sentences summarising what the text was about. Each part was worth 1 mark. The passage (Buraida dates festival) is from the *World Around Us* topic. The students did well in this question, where on average students scored 3/5 of the available marks. There did seem to be some unfamiliarity with this type of question or else students did it without looking at the meaning and ended up giving a response that did not make sense.

Students should be advised to read all the sentences before starting to answer in order to cut down the number of possible answers to each question based on grammar, vocabulary, as well as general meaning.

Question 2

This is also a reading comprehension question. The passage is about *Vocational Education*, it is both current and relevant to the age group sitting this examination. The questions for this passage are multiple-choice questions, where each of the five questions is worth 1 mark. While most students chose the correct answer after reading the passage, it was noticed that some students made the choice without considering the text. That disadvantaged them and meant they did not achieve the marks. This question examines comprehension of the text.

Question 3

This question relates to passage 3 (*Shopping Addiction*) and is a gap filling question. Students were given 20 words from which to choose 10 to fill the gaps correctly. This question carries 10 marks. Students managed to get (a), (b), and (c) correct but some confused (e) and (g). A sizable number got (i) & (j) wrong or mixed them up.

Students need to read all the words in the box and read the text before they start to answer in order to get the correct meaning. They also need to take into consideration the grammar.

Question 4

Passage 4, (*Increased Flooding in the World*). This passage is more complex and it is meant to stretch more able students and differentiate. The same topic is used for question 4, reading comprehension and question 5, grammar.

Question 4, contains short answer questions, where students are required to respond to questions using their own words. Each part of the question is worth 2 marks. The questions require knowledge and deep understanding of the text as well as good language.

It was pleasing to see a number of students achieving good marks, but there was also clear evidence that some students had not read the questions carefully, hence missing important parts and therefore lost marks. An example of this would be the second part of Q5a, where most students offered a percentage, which is not related to the answer, instead of a number or an approximation. The same was true for Q5d.

Students are advised to read the passage carefully, understand it, and read all the questions before answering.

It is important to note that all answers to the questions come in order unless it is a deduction question. No answer will be used twice. Lifting from the text will not be rewarded if it is too long or does not make sense. Lifts should be targeted.

Section B: Grammar

This section consists of three questions. Students are assessed on their ability to manipulate language, grammar, and lexis.

Question 5

Question 5 is connected to the previous passage used for reading comprehension. In this question, students need to manipulate grammatical structures in Arabic by manipulating sentences that appear in a previous exercise and reforming the sentence around a given word.

As a new style of exercise, a number of students managed to get a good mark, reflecting their language competency and showing that they have seen the Sample Assessment Materials. Nevertheless, many students did not know how to restructure the sentences using the given word. That may be due to weak language or they have not familiarised themselves with the new style examination question. It seems that more practice is needed on this type of questions.

Question 6

This question is linked to Passage 5. It is about colours. This passage was used for vocalization. The purpose was to use enough language structures to test student's knowledge of grammar as well as pronunciation. Students will be assessed on their ability to apply Arabic vowels correctly on the underlined words only.

This question was well answered. However, some students vocalized the last letter or appeared to guess the vocalization. Some students vocalized the whole text. This could be because they did not read the instructions or misunderstood it.

Question 7

This is linked to passage 6, (*How to make new friends*), which is also current, with familiar vocabulary used in daily life. The topic is lifestyle, health and fitness. Students need to manipulate grammatical structures in Arabic by selecting the most appropriate word form to fit the gap. This question is in form of a multiple choice.

Section C: Writing

Passage 7, a short passage, used as a stimulus for question 8, precedes this question. It is about fashion and designers from Arab origin. It is meant to provoke thought and ideas and help students to write the essay covering the bullet points given in the question.

Students appeared to relate well to this topic and responded very well. Students reflected their day-to-day experience and gave their own independent views. They responded well; covering the first point, though some gave a general answer rather than selecting a specific group or sect that has the most interest in fashion. Students also gave reasons including wealth, media, social status, education etc, which showed their awareness of Arab culture. However, in most responses, the third point was only partially covered, as students did not give their personal views in the answer.

The language quality in this question varied. There were some good responses with high language. It was noticed that some students though answered well-made use of colloquial language.

Advice to students and centres:

- Avoid long and prelearnt introductions. This will save you time and allow you to concentrate on the points.
- Read the stimulus and the question well before you start answering.
- Cover each point in depth, and then move to the next one making a good link between each one of them.
- Finish with a good conclusion.
- Check your answer for content and language corrections.

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