

# Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE Arabic (8602/9602)

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## General Overall Comments for both AS and A Level

Both the AS and A level examination papers were comparable to previous years and some candidates were able to reach high performance grades. However, there has been a noticeable decline in the quality of work of candidates who have been entered for this year's examinations, some have clearly not been of AS/A Level standard. This trend was particularly evident in the Unit 2 paper (6012/01).

In the Unit 2 paper (6012/01); there was a distinctly lower quality of Arabic and a poorer understanding of the topics and texts. Handwriting and basic spelling errors needed attention. Others came to the examination with pre-learnt essays that they did not adapt to the question. Many of the answers were, therefore, barely relevant to the questions. Dialect was used more often than usual even though only Standard Arabic is accepted. There was also a great deal of 'etc' and its variations used in essays. This should only be used very sparingly, as it does not give any information, serves no purpose and will not be awarded any marks.

There has been an increase in the number of candidates entered at both levels this year, which is an encouraging sign. But teachers must ensure that their students are well-prepared for these examinations.

Both teachers and candidates are once more strongly advised to refer to Past Papers, Specimen Papers and Mark Schemes as well as previous Examiners' Reports as part of their preparation for examinations. The Specification and Assessment Criteria in the specification should be consulted to know the basis on which marks are awarded. Grade Boundary Descriptors should also be examined. There is clear evidence that all these reference materials have not been sufficiently used.

Pencil is still being used for writing final answers. This should be avoided as well as writing in pencil first, then going over the answers in pen. It is also unnecessary to write out the questions in Paper 2 as it takes up precious time. It is sufficient to write the question number as the examiner has the question paper. Students should also be encouraged to take time to read the question / instructions ( rubric ) carefully and to check they have answered the question.

## Unit 1 - Reading and Writing

### SECTION 1

#### Questions 1-5

#### Passage 1

Mostly candidates answered this well. However, a number of candidates ticked only 4 boxes instead of 5.

#### Question 6

#### Passage 1

Most candidates understood the rubric in as far as they knew that it was synonyms that were required. This is a sign of continuing improvement. However, they are still not reading the rubric thoroughly and were offering full sentences instead of **one word** as required here. Some also gave words not found in the text. Q6b) Many gave a phrase, such as **في ذلك العام** instead of the required one word. Q6e) Some candidates gave a synonym but not according to the meaning in the text. The candidate must choose a word from the text that can be used instead of the word supplied in the question (i.e. directly substituted). For example, **الحصول** was given by some. If this had appeared on its own in the text, it would have been correct. However, it appeared in the form of **الحصول على**, which does not have the same meaning and, therefore, cannot be substituted with the word **وقوع**.

#### Question 7 - Vocalization

#### Passage 2

The use of **Hamzat WaSI**, needs much more practice. Teachers are strongly advised to familiarise their students with the rules for it. It is an ongoing problem despite constant reminders in Examiners' Reports and during INSET. Candidates should also be reminded not to use pencil. There was also a marked increase in the incorrect use of the **shadda**, which was included on letters which did not require it. The extra **shaddas** were ignored this year, but this point has now been particularly emphasised. Therefore, in future, the **shadda** will be treated in the same manner as other vowels. If it is incorrectly used in addition to another vowel, the **shadda** will cancel out the other vowel - even when the other vowel is incorrect - and the candidate will not score a point. This has always been the case with other vowels. For example **مِنْ / زَيْتِه**.

## Question 8 - Comprehension

## Passage 3

Questions a) b) and d) were generally well answered. Q8c) - stronger candidates understood the question and gave clear and logical answers. Weaker candidates tried to copy from the text, but some manipulation was necessary to gain full marks. Candidates are not applying the rubric advising them to use their own words as much as possible. This was particularly evident in g), where whole sentences were copied from the text. This will affect their Quality of Language mark. They can use words from the text if they wish, but if they do so, they should try to manipulate this. Answers based on general knowledge are not accepted for Reading Comprehension. The answers must be based on the information in the passage.

### Quality of Language

Candidates who communicated their message but made spelling and grammatical errors for Questions 6 and 8, gained their marks for these sections but may have had their overall Quality of Language mark reduced. Quality of Language marks for comprehension ( Question 8 ) are awarded mainly for the quality of candidates' own words / expression as well as their ability to manipulate language found in the text.

## SECTION 2

### Question 9 - Translation

Again, many forgot to translate the title and lost marks needlessly. Straight-forward words and those re-cycled from previous papers were not known. For example, نهتمّ ، المترادفات ، المترادفات ، لفظ ، عصري ، قاموس ، منذ ، to name a few. Also, very surprisingly, الصحافة and الإعلام . This is particularly disappointing since, for example, 'Current Affairs' and 'Media' are AS general topics, not to mention GCSE ones and candidates are, therefore, required to know this vocabulary. Candidates should take more care with English spelling, punctuation and grammar as these are counted. Also, writing alternatives / more than one suggestion for words and phrases must be avoided, as only the first word / phrase offered will be marked.

### SECTION 3

#### Question 10 - Continuous Writing

This was a very accessible topic to candidates ( Mobile phones - pros and cons ). Candidates often did not complete the topic fully and omitted to cover all the points in the stimulus. They also gave insufficient cultural references, resulting in general essays that were not linked to Arab culture and, therefore, loss of marks. When references were made, they were insufficiently explained / supported with examples.

Some candidates are still writing either too little or more than required. The number of words written should be between 200-220. Writing more will not gain credit and may even lose marks as the task may not have been fully covered within the word limit. Anything written beyond the word limit is not sticking to the constraints of the paper. Long introductions should, therefore, be avoided. Writing less will usually also result in loss of marks for Content as points will not have been sufficiently covered. Candidates should ensure they cover all the points required within the word limit. The stimulus at the top of the page is important and key points in the stimulus should be referred to in the answer.



## Unit 2 - Reading and Writing Topics and Texts

### SECTION 1

#### Passage 1

#### Comprehension

These questions differentiated well as they required the candidates to pay close attention to what they were writing. The questions required them to read the passage and questions carefully. They tested their understanding of the passage. For example, Qa) requires the candidates to give ONE benefit and TWO reasons for their choice. The majority of candidates simply copied out sentences from the passage without adaptation. Therefore, these candidates were unable to score high marks. Some listed several benefits without reasons. There was clear evidence of carelessness and lack of concentration on the actual content of the passage, most candidates preferring to skim read. Answers based on general knowledge are not accepted for Reading Comprehension. The answers must be based on the information in the passage.

#### Passage 2

#### Translation

This was a very straight-forward and very accessible passage. Candidates found this passage challenging, this is despite the fact that some of the words could be found in passage 1 (which they had just read), and one of the words was glossed for them **مدرب**. Surprisingly, candidates still have problems translating the word 'however'. Basic grammar, such as noun gender, adjectival agreements and vocabulary were poor.

## SECTION 2

## Topics & Texts

It is noticeable that many candidates answered Topics questions, expecting them to be easier than the Texts. Candidates are reminded that the Topics must show the same depth of K/U as the Texts and should not be seen as an easier option. The answers to the Topics questions were predominantly general and were often only very loosely linked by candidates to Arab culture. Also, when the question asks for ONE example, candidates should not then mention several.

Handwriting has deteriorated, as has the overall level of K/U and Language. Candidates are not reaching the required depth of study of the Topics and Texts required to gain high marks. Some answers were completely off-point and candidates showed evidence of producing pre-learnt essays with little or no relevance to the question. It should also be remembered that only ONE essay can be written on each question, either a) OR b) but not both. If this occurs, only the highest-scoring essay of the two will be counted.

The most popular questions were - 5b); 3a); 2a); 4a) and 7.

The following points have been noted for each question :

Question 1a) Mostly avoided. When it was answered, candidates often misinterpreted the meaning of the word nationalism. Credit was given for alternative interpretations that were within reason. It became evident that candidates did not know what is meant by the 20<sup>th</sup> century and discussed the wrong time period.

Question 1b) Some attempts. Those who answered did not answer well.

Question 2a) Very popular but mostly rambling. Insufficient substantiation supplied. Some mistakenly evaluated the pros and cons of TV. This was a question in a previous examination. It was more evidence of pre-learnt essays being offered without adaptation.

Question 2b) Popular but very little evidence of actual knowledge of the subject.

Question 3a) Most candidates discussed football. Some were able to give good substantiation for the importance of this to the Arabs, linking it to identity issues.

Question 3b) Attempted, but mostly generalities about buildings in Dubai.

Question 4a) There were some good solutions produced. However, most were one-sided arguments.

Question 4b) Some attempts made.

Question 5a) not as popular as 5b). Candidates should be encouraged to practise more questions relating to style.

Question 5b) By far the most popular question, although many still tend to re-tell the story without sufficient analysis. Also, candidates have incorrectly focused on the film rather than the book.

Question 6a) Mostly avoided.

Question 6b) Popular.

Question 7a) Popular.

Question 7b) Popular. On the whole, they were well-answered.

Question 8a) Popular. On the whole, they were well-answered.

Question 8b) Very few attempted this.

## Statistics

### Unit 6011 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	70	60	50	40	30
Uniform boundary mark	300	240	210	243	195	147

### Unit 6012 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	140	87	74	61	48	35
Uniform boundary mark	300	240	210	180	150	120

#### Notes:

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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