

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE Classical Arabic
(4CA0) Paper 01

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General Introduction

In questions 1 and 2, candidates had to understand one example of an ancient text, and one in a modern context. Many candidates often fail to score highly on this question and centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the requirements for understanding ancient texts. Candidates are reminded that some of the Arabic words are not in common usage in the modern language, though the vast majority of Arabic words and expressions from question 1 are in use in the modern literary language.

The modern text of question 2 proved to be more accessible to candidates as it dealt with contexts that are recognisable in our own lives today. There is a wider range of vocabulary here, which candidates applied more successfully than in question 1.

Candidates who scored highly on questions 1 and 2 not only indicated a thorough understanding of context, but also an extensive knowledge of meanings in both Arabic and English. More able candidates were able to manipulate English so as to convey detailed shades of meaning. There was also no confusion between the different types of rhetoric in English and Arabic. These answers used a proper English style of writing to convey meanings, and did not use the regular conjunctions, 'fa' and 'wa', in Arabic, instead they were substituted for tightly constructed English sentences with appropriate use of full-stops for endings, and capital letters for the beginnings, of sentences. Less conveyed directly into English a typical Arabic sentence with multiple use of 'fa' and 'wa'. This approach will not score many marks.

The English into Arabic translation of Question 4 held few translation errors for the majority of candidates, but many marks were lost through incorrect use of Arabic: poor grammar and spelling, colloquialisms and an insipid 'rakik' style of writing.

The grammar questions 3 and 5 proved to be a good discriminator between candidates. In question 3, able candidates were able to display how the grammatical construction of sentences affects the end of word vowelling. Question 5 tested the ability of candidates to apply their knowledge of grammar and rhetorical devices in Arabic through the translation of selected sentences into Arabic. The majority of candidates were able to form suitable sentences correctly enough to score fairly well on their answers. If they did not know the precise word or expression in Arabic, most candidates were able to gain some marks through the use of paraphrase which also conveyed meaning close to the requirement.

Question 1

Here many candidates were unable to differentiate between:

Line 1: *siyar al-Furs*;
and Line 6: *daraba farasahu*

This difficulty of reading between Persians and horses was compounded also by the following:

Line 4: *yuhadhi hisnahum*
Line 5: *iftitah dhalika al-hisn*
Line 7: *rama bihi amama al-hisn*; and: *idha huwa 'ala bab al-hisn*

The majority of candidates read '*hisn*' (fort) as '*husun*' (horses), not realising that the passage referred to both forts and horses.

Candidates also had issues of a similar nature with line 8: '*intaharhum bil-Farisiyya* and line 9: *kataba bima kana minhu ila malik al-Furs*'.

Further issues included problems in line 1 with the following expressions:

'Ista'mal qariban lahu 'ala al-Yemen
Fa-aqama biha hinan
Ahl al-Masani'

In the latter case, many candidates continued to say that the Masan were factories, and did not read the explanation of the real meaning in the Arabic text.

Later in the passage, many candidates struggled with:

'Wathaba al-faras al-wadi, fa-idha huwa 'ala bab al-hisn
Ahl al-Himyar; and bil-Himyariyya
Qatala ta'ifatan wa saba ta'ifatan
Istakhlafa al-hakimu ibnahu'

Question 2

In line 1, some candidates confused '*dawda*' with '*daw*' and did not notice that '*yusma*' was passive. Translating '*dukkhan*' with 'market' can lead to confusion. 'Shop' would be the preferable option. Similarly, 'seller' or 'salesman' for '*ba'i*' can lead to confusion: 'shop-assistant' or 'shop-keeper' is safer.

Other errors were found with line 4:

'Istadara fawqa al-rasif muttajihan nahwa al-tariq'.

The description of the man between lines 4 and 7 was not well interpreted, especially in line 6 the following:

'wa qad afsah madhharahu 'an ihm al sarih ...'

and until the end of the sentence '*nisyan al-dhat*'.

More able candidates were able to express accurately in English the different actions which the man performed when he started to walk, ie between line 7, beginning '*thumma mala yamnatan*' and line 10, ending '*nahwahu bisur'a fa'iqā*'.

Less able candidates either did not translate all of these points, or mixed them up so it was difficult for a reader to know the correct order of events. They was also no distinction between '*murur*' (traffic) and '*marra*' (pedestrians). Similarly, some candidates assumed '*marra*' meant the same as '*mar'a*' (woman).

Towards the end of the passage, there were difficulties with:

'La'allahu al-mufaja'a aw su' al-taqdir aw al-qada
Wathaba ila al-amami
Nadat 'an al-rajul sarkhatun
Hara' nahwa al-rajul
Intashara fi-l-mintaqati al-harj'.

Question 3

Here, candidates were required to know how vowels and diacritical marks can be inserted on to Arabic text to help readers read aloud correctly. Specifically, candidates had to show that they understood how words can change their vowels according to the function of the word in a sentence. To do this, candidates have to be able to distinguish between subject and object, subject and predicate; adverbs; nouns in the construct state; prepositions; transitive and intransitive forms of verbs; past, present and future tenses; diptotes and triptotes; particles and their effect on verbs or nouns.

It must be noted that candidates can only score highly on this question when they have a command of grammar. Many candidates do well on it; many others achieve only low scores.

Question 4

Most candidates performed well or fairly well on this question. There were few translation difficulties, but candidates should note that any omissions, or unnecessary changes in meaning to the text in Arabic, will be penalised. It would be wise for candidates to use the active voice in Arabic, if possible, even where English includes the passive: this is a stylistic matter.

Candidates should also remember the tendency for Arabic to place a verb at the beginning of a sentence which is unlike English.

For a variety of reasons, the following expressions or vocabulary were often imperfectly rendered in Arabic:

Her parents gave her anything she wanted (verb agreement/dual)
She was looked after by a number of servants (active/passive)
Until one morning

As usual	(spelling)
Therefore	
Wild (flowers)	Not 'strange' or 'mad'
Wrong	Not really the same as 'mistake'
At once	Not 'one time'
For ages	Not 'years', but 'a long time'
No one came	Use of negative particle 'lam'
Two men came in	Word order/ dual
'Good heavens!'	The expression used must express surprise

Question 5

- More able candidates were able to translate 'No sooner... than' into Arabic, or were able to paraphrase meaningfully. They were also able to use feminine plural verbs and relative particle.
- The high scoring answers showed correct vocalisation of '*masajida jAMILATAN*' and '*ma'ABIDA QADIMATAN*'.
- Success was achieved by those candidates who were able to use the necessary agreements throughout the sentence for female models (or male ones instead).
- Correct use of the dual as subject of the sentence was needed here, and the ability to use all the necessary agreements throughout the sentence in verbs and pronouns. It was also useful to recognise 'London' and 'Paris' as diptotes in Arabic (*mAMNU' min al-sarf*).
- Successful answers here were able to use the vocative for the manager's address to the team and also to convey his prohibiting of their misleading customers. Some candidates also knew the Arabic for 'gave a speech'. He did not hand it to them!
- Candidates who scored highly used the emphatic particle 'lan' for 'I shall not travel'. They also included all the many details of meaning in the sentence: whereas candidates who tended to omit certain points did not pick up as many marks.
- The number should have been written in full: the bare number in figures was not enough for the full mark. The correct agreement for the noun following the number was important also for the full mark, as was the recognition of the grammatical significance of plural objects in Arabic.
- Here, candidates needed the species for 'no doubt', and the use of the sound plural as '*mudaf*'. The tense of the verb was important: many candidates put it in the past or the future. The form of the present tense in the third person plural was difficult for many.

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