Arabic ab initio

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 30	31 - 45	46 - 60	61 - 72	73 - 85	86 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

Individual oral

Please ensure that the visual stimuli presented to the candidates are directly linked to the target culture. Words should only appear on the visual stimulus if they are a natural part of the scene, for example, shop or street signs. Any such words should be in the target language.

Introductions, even if they do not form an official part of the oral, should take place in the target language. The candidate should introduce himself/ herself in the target language giving name and candidate number.

Teachers are reminded to 'guide' students through the oral by informing them of when one Part is over and when another is about to begin.

In order that candidates can access the upper markbands for both criteria, teachers are encouraged to intervene if necessary and move the candidate on in order that the three parts are completed in timely fashion.

Teachers are reminded to ask the two compulsory questions on the Written Assignment after the description and follow-up questions on the visual stimulus. It is important to ask these questions because the student will possess the necessary vocabulary to handle both open ended and more direct questions on the Written Assignment and thus stands a better chance to access the higher markbands in Criterion B, interactive and receptive skills.

The style of questions chosen by the teacher is important and must be one which allows stronger candidates to access the upper markbands while allowing weaker candidates to feel comfortable throughout.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general the course of the individual oral complied with procedures and there was a good level of interaction between teachers and candidates. On the other hand, the candidates' presentations were limited in time when compared with the teacher discussion and sometimes there were no discussions but only presentations. Teachers are reminded to follow the guidelines set out in the syllabus. Most centres sent their recordings on CDs, and some of them uploaded the orals to IBIS which proved to be an advantage.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Candidates' oral proficiencies differed amongst centres. There was no single trend and the candidates showed different abilities in speaking and presenting. Also candidates' enthusiasm towards the visual stimuli was varied, some were very enthusiastic, and others were not, which reflected the varying descriptive qualities of the visual stimuli.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Choice of the stimulus

Each visual stimulus must be related to one subject/topic only and should contain a sufficient amount of content to be described by the candidate. The stimulus must reflect the Arabian culture/society not the Islamic one, as Arabian society is not limited to Muslims only.

Time

Centres are reminded to follow the time guidelines for each section of the oral as indicated in the ab Initio guide.

Introduction and greetings

Most teachers used proper greetings, however, some did not offer the chance to the candidates to present themselves and give their candidate and centre number in Arabic.

Questions

The question and answer section was mostly very good, the questions were focussed and targeted what was in the stimulus. The follow up questions, in general, were also appropriate, however, there were some issues regarding the questions the teacher raised, as listed below;

Some questions were not relevant to the theme in the visual stimulus.

Some teachers asked two or three questions at the same time (i.e. when and how and why....)

Some teachers, in some cases, asked closed questions (yes or no) - such questions do not allow candidates to demonstrate their ability in spoken language.

Some questions were unnecessarily long.

Some teachers asked questions which the candidate had already answered during their presentation.

Feedback

Most of the teachers were supportive of the candidates but some teachers corrected them while presenting. Although this is permitted, it can be off putting for the candidate.

Visual Stimulus

Choosing the visual stimulus in my opinion was the most critical issue. Some visual stimuli were cartoons and not real pictures and failed to attract the candidates' interest.

Some pictures didn't reflect the Arabic society and some contained many pictures which sometimes were not related to each other. Some visual stimuli were not inspiring rendering the candidate unable to present.

Language

In general, the use of Modern Standard Arabic was respected. A few teachers slipped into a regional variation of Arabic however the use of regional dialect was far more common amongst candidates and teachers should continue to enforce the use of Modern Standard Arabic exclusively.

Further comments

It is recommended that some teachers re-read the instructions and the guide relating to the internal assessment before the exam.

Candidates must not read from a text prepared beforehand as the task requires a conversation.

For many, the total exam time was less than 10 minutes which resulted in low grades; centres are strongly advised to adhere to the time frames given in the guide.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 17	18 - 20

Written assignment

Choice of topic

The topic selected for the written assignment **must** come from the prescribed topics as detailed in the guide:

Individual and society	Leisure and work	Urban and rural environment
Daily routines	Employment	Environmental concerns
Education	Entertainment	Global issues
Food and drink	Holidays	Neighbourhood
Personal details, appearance and character	Media	Physical geography
Physical Health	Sport	Town and services
Relationships	Technology	Weather
Shopping	Transport	

Teachers should guide students to choose topics which are sharply focused and manageable in the number of words available (200 -300).

The topic should be clearly stated in the title of the written assignment. It is recommended that the target culture (country /countries) is mentioned in the title.

Students must select a target culture where the target language is spoken.

Teachers are reminded that the topics selected by students for the written assignment can overlap but each title **must** be different.

Presentation

The written assignment consists of:

- Title
- Description
- Comparison
- Reflection
- Bibliography

The headings (Description, Comparison and Reflection) should be used to structure the text. The three questions which form the basis for the section Reflection should also be written out fully.

All written assignments must be hand-written in ink.

When quoting from a source, almost all ab initio languages use the same convention of either speech marks or footnote notes:

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1. …and confirmed according to J Fotheringham: "cycling is as popular in Great Britain as it is in France".
2. …and confirmed because cycling is as popular in Great Britain as it is in France.[1]

Word count

The word limit **must** be respected. There is a 2 mark penalty in Criterion E, Language if less than the minimum number of words or more than the maximum number of words has been written.

For the purposes of the written assignment, a word is defined as having a space either side of it:

It's a shame that = 4 words

It is most unfortunate that = 5 words

Quotes, the headings of each part, the three questions (Reflection) are **not** included in the word-count.

Criterion specific comments

Description

It is important that factual information on the **target culture** be included in this section. Information given on the student's own culture will not be awarded marks in this section.

The factual information should emanate from the research conducted by the student. Justifying why this topic has been chosen is **not** considered factual information.
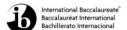
Comparison

A comparison may be made in a single paragraph using comparative language (*but, on the other hand, while*, *whereas, more than*…) or in two parallel paragraphs which treat the same elements in both cultures.

For the purposes of assessment, similarities and differences between the cultures chosen for the written assignment will be treated equally.

Reflection

All three questions must be answered.

Students should not include any information that has already appeared in the two preceding parts (Description and Comparison).

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[1] [1] J. Fotheringham

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In the third question: *What might a person from the target culture(s) find different about your chosen topic in your culture(s)?* the student is being asked to consider the chosen topic not in the context of the target culture but in his / her own culture from an "outsider's" point of view.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general, the performance of the candidates was within an acceptable margin. The majority submitted work related to the topic of the "Individual and Society" and most of the assignments submitted were successful. However, in terms of content, candidates had a tendency to focus on the Islamic and not Arabic society. A few candidates chose topics other than the "Individual and Society" and also submitted acceptable work. Some candidates submitted work discussing their personal experience with the Arabic Society, which means he/she has failed to understand what the Written Assignment requires.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Title:

A notable number of candidates' titles were broad; however they could be understood after reading the assignments.

Description:

Most candidates successfully acquired the two marks available in this criterion. The candidates that did not acquire the two marks lost one mark as they failed to describe both cultures.

Comparison:

Most candidates acquired at least two of the three marks available. The main focus was generally about the cultural differences and similarities however the points mentioned in the comparison were sometimes shallow.

Reflection:

Most candidates acquired three or four marks out of a total of six. The main reason for this is that the majority of candidates focused on the justification of the similarities and differences of the two cultures only and failed to address the other two questions.

Register:

Most candidates successfully acquired the two marks. Most candidates' register was appropriate to the task.

Language:

Most candidates acquired between two marks and the total mark of four in this criterion. It has to be noted here that some candidates had an advanced language, higher than the level expected of Arabic Ab Initio.

Formal Requirements:

Most candidates successfully acquired the three marks available in this criterion however; once again, it is important to mention that some resources were of a higher level than expected for Arabic Ab Initio candidates.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Firstly, centres should choose a variety of topics and secondly, candidates should be given more training before commencing their Written Assignments. The resources used should be of an appropriate level for Arabic Ab Initio candidates and the resources should neither be too long nor too short. It is also worthy to mention that Wikipedia was excessively used this session.

Further comments

The choices of the candidates varied. However the most popular topic for discussion was about Social Celebrations. There are four points worthy of mention:

The focus should be on the Arabic and not the Islamic culture

In some instances, a comparison was made between two Arab societies, which does not suit the task.

The resources used should be of a linguistic level appropriate to Ab Initio candidates.

www.wikipedia.com was over used.

On occasions, the title of the Written Assignment was omitted or too broad in its nature.

Most candidates abided by the layout given in the guide. However, on occasion, the content of the comparison and reflection did not serve the purpose of the task.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 6	7 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 25	26 - 30	31 - 35	36 - 40

General comments

Overall, performance was good. Candidates did best in tasks related to the first text and, as the difficulty of the texts increased, this was reflected in the candidates' performance.

Reading Text A:

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The passage was a recipe and almost all candidates did well or above average in this text as it was the easiest.

Q1-5 (Short answer questions): Question 3 presented the most difficulty for candidates.

Q6-10 (Multiple choice questions): Most candidates did well in this exercise.

Reading Text B:

Performance here was generally good.

Q11-14 (Matching words and questions): Most candidates did well in this exercise.

Q15-18 (Choosing the correct word): Generally answers were good.

Q19-24 (True or False questions): The performance was generally good; however some difficulties were witnessed in Q19. Candidates did not always provide the correct justification however, which caused them to lose marks.

Reading Text C:

The text is based on social issues.

Q25-27 (Cause and effect questions): candidate performance was poor here. This can possibly be explained by the fact that this question was new in terms of question type.

Q26-28 (Matching questions): Generally answers were good.

Q29-32 (Vocabulary exercises/Matching words): Generally results were not properly achieved.

Reading Text D:

The text was an interview.

Q33-35 (Choosing the sentences relevant to the text): Candidates did well in this exercise.

Q36-40 (Short answer questions): Candidates did very well, however the last question witnessed many wrong answers.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates need more practice of True/False with Justification questions. They are required to get both parts of the question correct in order to obtain the mark.

Some short answer questions based on the more challenging texts proved difficult. Techniques for deducing meaning using context could be of assistance here.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Students performed best in the multiple-choice and matching exercises which demonstrates a good command of the topic based vocabulary.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

It was obvious that the candidates were well prepared for the Paper, given that the format of the questions is similar to previous years. However, whenever the question required a justification, most candidates either left this blank or justified his/her answer without a quotation/citation, thereby losing the mark. Another apparent weakness was that candidates faced difficulties with timings. The proof of this was that on numerous occasions, the last questions on the paper were left blank.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is recommended that teachers offer a wider variety of text types covering all topics on the syllabus. Also, I suggest that the level of difficulty and type of text (letter, film review, etc…) varies in order to develop more well-rounded skills.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

Part A: Most of the candidates chose the first task in part A. Few candidates chose the second task and those that did couldn't achieve the requirements of the task.

Part B: the choice of tasks varied. Overall, the performance was weak. The weakest results, in particular, were associated with the interview, suggesting that the candidates did not receive enough practice of the written task types required for part B as a whole. The reason for the low grades was due to either improper layout of the responses or an inability to develop ideas.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates struggled with the different conventions of each text type and focus should be given to this in centres.

More practises of these types of task will be beneficial to candidates in future exams.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates chose the email task in Part A and the majority successfully met the requirements. In Part B the candidates were better prepared for the letter writing task.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

In Part A, option (i) [email], the candidates were familiar with the conventions of writing an email which enabled them to score well in Criterion C. On the other hand, they lacked the creativity to develop their ideas which caused them to lose marks in the other criteria.

In Part A, option (ii) [invitation], very few candidates chose this option. Was this because they were unfamiliar with the required conventions of writing an invitation?

The choice of tasks in Part B varied between a letter, a speech and an interview. All in all, performance was weak and the main reasons for low grades were either an incorrect layout or an inability to develop ideas. The weakest results were associated with the interview task closely followed by the speech. Candidates performed slightly better in the letter writing task and it was clear that candidates were more familiar with this text type than the others.

In general, centres need to focus on the different text types associated with Part B tasks and practise these thoroughly with their candidates.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates:

It is highly recommended that candidates develop their skills in all areas of paper 2, with a focus on the development of ideas.

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