

## Arabic ab initio

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 16	17 - 33	34 - 47	48 - 61	62 - 74	75 - 87	88 - 100

### Standard level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general the individual orals complied with procedures and there was a very good level of interaction between teachers and candidates. However, in some instances, after the candidate had described the visual stimulus the questions asked were not related to it and were very general in their nature instead. Teachers are reminded to follow the guidelines set out in the syllabus. All centres uploaded their recordings and related material on time.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

There was no single trend and the candidate's oral proficiencies and styles of presentation varied greatly. The candidate's enthusiasm towards the visual stimuli differed; some were very enthusiastic and others less so, reflecting the varying descriptive qualities of the visual stimuli.

### Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Each visual stimulus must relate to one subject/topic only and should contain a sufficient amount of content to be described by the candidate. It should be reiterated that the visual stimulus should reflect the Arabian culture/society.

Centres are reminded to follow the time guidelines for each section of the oral as indicated in the Ab Initio guide which comprises three parts; Part one: a 1 – 2 minute presentation of the visual stimulus by the candidate, part two: 2 – 3 minutes of follow up questions based on the visual stimulus and part three: 4 – 5 minutes with at least two questions on the written assignment followed by a general conversation on a broad range of topics.

## Introduction and greetings

In the majority of cases proper greetings were used, however, in some cases candidates were not given the opportunity to present themselves and give their candidate and centre number in Arabic.

## Questions

The questions asked of candidates were mostly focussed and targeted what was contained in the stimulus. The follow up questions were also generally appropriate, however, there were some issues as listed below;

- Some questions were not relevant to the theme in the visual stimulus.
- Some questions were closed (yes or no) and therefore did not allow the candidate to demonstrate their ability in the spoken language.
- Some questions were too long.
- Some questions were about points which the candidate had already answered during their presentation.
- Questions weren't asked about the written assignment.
- In some instances the same questions were repeated for all candidates with no consideration for the differences between the candidates.

## Feedback

Although it is permitted to correct candidates while they are speaking, in some cases this was very off putting and disadvantaged the candidates.

## Visual Stimulus

Choosing an appropriate visual stimulus is critical. 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 were not related to each other. Others were not inspiring rendering the candidate unable to present.

## Language

In general, the use of Modern Standard Arabic was respected however there were some lapses into regional dialect. It should be noted that candidates should be encouraged to use Modern Standard Arabic at all times.

## Further comments

It is reminded that the visual stimuli presented to the candidates should be 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 and any such words should be in the target language.

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

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

The timing of the oral is essential. If an oral exceeds the recommended time limit, examiners are instructed to stop listening and assess only the first 10 minutes therefore teachers are encouraged to intervene if necessary and move the candidate on in order that all three parts of the oral 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 candidate will possess the necessary vocabulary to handle both open-ended and more direct questions on the Written Assignment and thus stand a better chance of accessing the higher mark bands in Criterion B: Interactive and Receptive skills.

For part three, it is important that the discussion between the teacher and candidate covers more than one topic and that the style of questioning allows stronger candidates to access the upper mark bands while allowing weaker candidates to feel comfortable throughout.

It is recommended that the guide and the instructions for conducting the internal assessment are re-read prior to conducting the exam.

It is reminded that candidates must not read from a previously prepared text.

For many, the total exam time was less than 10 minutes which resulted in low grades; it is therefore strongly advised that the time frames given in the guide are adhered to.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted.

The majority of the work submitted for the written assignment was of a good standard. Most candidates were aware of the requirements of the task including the headings and the different sections (description, comparison, reflection) however some of the areas of weakness are outlined below.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

Criteria A: Some of the descriptions were limited and brief.

Criteria B: Some candidates were not able to make comparisons and their work represented only one culture with no comparison to another. In some instances, candidates focused on only one area of comparison.

Criteria C: Some responses were very brief and not supported by evidence.

Criteria D: generally good with comprehensive language.

Criteria E: of a mostly suitable standard.

Criteria F: of a mostly suitable standard.

In the description, most candidates provided factual information on the target culture, varying from one piece of factual information to two, three or four. Some of the weaker assignments only described the topic and provided factual information relating to their own culture not the target culture.

In the reflection, most candidates were able to answer the three questions appropriately, mentioning which aspects of the topic surprised them and why the similarities and differences between the two cultures exist. The third question is still not clear to many candidates.

### Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is essential that teachers of group 2 are aware of the requirements of the written assignment task so that they can explain it clearly to the candidates. In some centres there

were consistent errors across all candidates, for example, not writing the minimum number of words or addressing the reflection incorrectly. In these cases, the candidate's grades were affected adversely.

## Further comments

### Choice of topic

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

<b>Individual and society</b>	<b>Leisure and work</b>	<b>Urban and rural environment</b>
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 candidates to choose topics which are sharply focused and manageable within the number of words available (200 -300).

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

Candidates must select a target culture where the target language is spoken. If a candidate chooses a country in which the target language is not spoken, the following marks are applied:

Description: 0

Comparison: 0

Reflection: 3 maximum mark (no mark will be awarded for the intercultural understanding element of this criterion)

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

The topics chosen by the candidates varied, however the most discussed topic was Social Celebrations.

There are four points worthy of mention:

- There were instances where the focus was on the Islamic culture, and not the Arabic culture as it should have been
- On some occasions, a comparison was made between two Arab societies, which does not meet the requirements of the task.
- The resources used were often of a level higher than that expected of true ab initio candidates and [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) was used excessively.
- The title of the Written Assignment was sometimes left blank or the title given was generally too broad.
- Most candidates abided by the layout provided in the guide.

## Presentation

The written assignment consists of:

- Title
- Description
- Comparison
- Reflection
- Bibliography

The headings (Description, Comparison and Reflection) should be used to structure the text and 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 until further guidance on this is given.

## Word count

The word limit must be respected as examiners will stop marking written assignments when the 300 word mark is reached. There is also a 2 mark penalty in Criterion E: Language if the mark range has not been adhered to.

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 a shame that = 5 words

Quotes, the headings of each part and the three questions 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 candidate's own culture will not be awarded marks in this section.

The factual information should emanate from the research conducted by the candidate. 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 should be treated equally.

#### Reflection

All three questions must be answered.

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

In question three, (what might a person from the target culture(s) find different about your chosen topic in your culture(s)?), the candidate is being asked to consider the chosen topic in his/her own culture from an "outsider's" point of view and not in the context of the target culture.

### Standard level paper one

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 8	9 - 16	17 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 32	33 - 37	38 - 40

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

Some candidates still find the True/False with justification questions difficult to handle: some ticked one box but omitted the justification, some gave the correct justification but did not tick either box and others selected the correct justification but ticked the wrong box. The most common cause of a zero mark remains to be the failure to follow both parts of the rubric, which requires the correct 'tick' and a justification from the text that is precise and concise.

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

The exam paper did not present major problems for the majority of candidates: the average candidate was generally successful in selecting and handling the information needed across the full range of question types in the four texts. Some candidates, however, would have benefited from better preparation for questions that required close reading, understanding the meaning of a word or an expression in context, and inference.

## 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 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.

Overall, the performance of the candidates was good. Candidates did very well in the questions related to the first text and, as the difficulty of the texts increased, the differences between the candidates abilities became more apparent.

### Reading Text A

The reading passage was an environmental advertisement and most candidates performed well or above average for this text.

Q1-4(Short answer questions): Question 1 had the most wrong answers compared with other questions.

Q5-8 (Multiple answer questions): Most candidates did well in this exercise.

### Reading Text B

The reading passage was an extract from a web page regarding an airline:

Q9-11 (True or false questions): Most candidates achieved well in these questions.

Q12-16 (Matching questions): Generally moderate performance.

Q17 (Choose correct sentences): Candidates performed well.



## Reading Text C

The text was based on an interview with a designer.

Q18-21 (True or false questions): candidate performance was only satisfactory in these questions because either candidates struggled with the written text or did not provide justifications.

Q22-25 (Choose the correct question): Generally, answers were satisfactory.

## Reading Text D:

The text was a brochure about an area of tourism.

Q26-29 (Short answer questions): Candidates did well in this exercise.

Q30-33 (Choose the matched meaning): Candidates did well.

Q34-37 (Multiple choice questions): Candidates did well.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should advise candidates to provide complete justifications in True/False questions and that crucial parts of the quotation should not be omitted
- Teachers should impress upon candidates that providing unnecessarily long answers rarely, if at all, results in more marks.
- Candidates should practice the skills needed for the examination like vocabulary and language enrichment skills, text referencing, and subtitling.
- Candidates must write their answers clearly, especially in multiple choice questions, and must avoid writing two letters without clearly crossing out one. Unclear answers will not be awarded the mark. Among ambiguous answers were C/G, E/F, E/L and A/D.
- Teachers are advised to focus on close reading techniques and referencing: two essential skills that must be continuously reinforced in lessons.
- Teachers must continue to draw candidates' attention to the importance of writing their answers in the boxes provided. When an answer is written outside the box, the candidate must indicate where the answer appears (for example, "please see attached paper").
- Teachers should familiarize candidates with the common types of questions and with appropriate strategies to answer each.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

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

In section A, many candidates chose the second task (poster) and yet were unable to present their work in an appropriate format.

In task 3 of section B many ideas were very vaguely presented and not all components of the format were addressed.

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

It is evident that the candidates were well prepared to write an e-mail or a letter. It is also worth noting that some candidates demonstrated strong linguistic abilities when presenting their ideas. Many candidates also successfully reached the designated word limit.

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

In Section A, question 1, all candidates were familiar with the format of an e-mail however some were unable to initiate their writing successfully. In question 2, most of the posters covered the required content however the format and the choice of words were not as attractive as they should have been in a poster.

Many candidates favoured Question 3 in Section B which related to youth however, some were not able to cover the necessary content which can be explained by a lack of vocabulary. Also, frequent grammatical and spelling mistakes caused candidates to lose marks. Question 4 was the second most popular choice although many were unable to meet the requirements of the question as they did not fully understand its purpose nor were they familiar with the format of a blog post. Question 5 was the least popular choice; the candidates did not understand what was asked of them. Also their limited vocabulary and inability to express their ideas affected their performance.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Format: Candidates are expected to use the layout and approach necessary for each text type.
- Handwriting and spelling: A lot of candidates had serious difficulties with handwriting and spelling, thus even more practice on handwriting and spelling in class before the examination is recommended.
- Punctuation: Many scripts had excessively long sentences either with no commas or with ill-placed commas.