

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC

ARABIC

May 2007

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**SEC ARABIC
MAY 2007 SESSION
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

The examination consisted of Paper 1, the core paper, and Paper IIA and IIB

This year there were 15 candidates who sat for the examination, of which eleven registered for Paper IIA and four for Paper IIB.

Paper 1 (part 1) Listening Comprehension (10 marks)

With the exception of six candidates, on the whole they performed quite well and only one candidate obtained full marks. Several spelling mistakes were the cause of loss of marks while another candidate showed that s/he has a serious problem with writing the letters in medial or final position correctly.

The Reading Passage (5 marks)

The candidates were given a short reading passage for which they had enough time to read it before reading it in front of the examiner. Some of the candidates read well and with flow but some others had difficulties in the pronunciation of the correct vowels on the letters and also did not end the final letter with a *sukun* where required. Four candidates in particular could hardly recognize the letters of the alphabet and took ages to try to read the short passage.

Conversation (10 marks)

The candidates were asked to freely select a prepared topic out of five topics to talk for a few minutes with the examiner. As usual, some students, who although performed well, appeared to have learned by heart their chosen topic, and when asked certain questions by the examiner they were lost and could not follow or interact with the examiner. Few other students made use of Maltese words to make up for the vocabulary that they did not know in Arabic to try to keep the flow of the conversation. On the other hand the Arab native speakers made use of their regional dialect and at times had difficulties to maintain the conversation in standard Arabic as required.

Dictation (10 marks)

In this section the majority of the candidates did not fair well and none of them obtained full marks. Through this exercise it clearly transpired that the candidates have serious problems with the listening and writing skills. The average mark obtained for this section was 4. There were several basic spelling mistakes and most of the students showed that even at this level they are still unable to distinguish between the short and the long vowels and are also unable to recognize and write correctly similar sounding phonemes. One fourth of the candidates even wrote words that were not dictated to them while others left out the words that they could not figure out.

Paper 1 (part 2) The Reading Comprehension (15 marks)

Since this was a written text the majority of the candidates did quite well in this section, however none of them obtained full marks due to spelling mistakes or wrong answers. Question 5 of the comprehension seemed to have caused problems to the candidates as none of them were able to provide the correct answer for it.

PAPER IIA

Section 1a – Translation from Arabic into English/Maltese (10 marks)

None of the candidates obtained full marks. Many important words or phrases were left out or improvised with other words. Those candidates who translated this passage into English or Maltese also had several spelling mistakes together with syntactic errors. But on the whole the basic gist of the translation was conveyed.

Section 1b – Vocalization of the same translation (5 marks)

The aim of this section is to examine the candidates' knowledge of the grammar. But it clearly appeared that the students' performance here was quite weak. Common grammatical errors were that instead of vocalizing in the genitive after a preposition, candidates vocalized either in the nominative or accusative, the same applied for the *'idafa* or the verbs. Some other candidates either left the vowels out were required, while some others vocalized according to their native dialect.

Section 2a – Translation from English into Arabic (10 marks)

None of the candidates obtained full marks in this section and most of the translations were weak in idiomatic expression, serious grammatical errors and vocabulary. A common error was that the verbs were not conjugated in agreement to their subject, gender and number. Serious spelling mistakes were another major shortcoming. Some other candidates also skipped some sentences and did not translate them.

Section 3 – Essay (25 marks)

Once again in this section none of the candidates obtained full marks and only two of them fared well. The majority of the candidates chose the title "In the Public Library" and very few opted for a different title despite the wide range of topics. Some candidates were not even capable of writing 100 words and wrote much less than required. Most of the essays were poorly written, lacked sufficient vocabulary, and had a poor content with grave grammatical mistakes and spelling. Most of the essays lacked ideas and had no originality in their narrative description.

PAPER IIB

Section 1 – Translation from Arabic into English (10 marks)

The average mark obtained in this section was 5 and the basic gist of the translation was conveyed. Only one candidate fared very badly in this short translation, while the other did quite well.

Section 2 – Translation from English into Arabic (15 marks)

Despite the short and simple type of translation given in this section only one candidate managed to translate the gist of the text. Those who attempted to translate this passage fared poorly and the typical dominant errors consisted of spelling mistakes, weak sentence structure, and grammar. As usual those candidates who did not know certain vocabulary in Arabic made use of Maltese words transcribed in Arabic letters.

Section 3 – Picture Composition (25 marks)

It is sad to note that even in this section the candidates proved that they are unable to produce a coherent simple essay on the given pictures and even the title. Strangely enough even though the title of the picture composition entailed the word ظيبي candidates instead used the word غزال . With the exception of two candidates, the rest managed to write a fairly good essay.

Conclusion

The examiners feel that in most sections of the Arabic SEC examination the desired standard in the Arabic language is still not attained. Some candidates would have performed better if they sat for Paper 2B instead of Paper 2A. The major drawbacks in the writing sections among the candidates were the essay and the translations. While in the oral and aural sections candidates showed that they still have serious difficulties with phonetics, intonation and grammar. Most of the candidates who sat either for Paper 2A or 2B are still unable to express basic ideas and emotions in narrative or descriptive essays. Many of the candidates are also unable to apply and infer correctly the set grammatical rules for texts for vocalization, essays and passages for translation. Some candidates even have problems with distinguishing between the short and the long vowels and are not that confident in handling conversations when unfamiliar questions or ideas are presented to them.

Chairman
Board of Examiners

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