

Report on the Units

June 2010

J035/J135/J735/R/10

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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GCSE Persian (J735)

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A821

General Comments

There was a significant change in the format of the New GCSE (A821) compared with the legacy paper (1922/01). When A821 was being set, every effort was made to limit the 'change' to FORM and maintain the difficulty of CONTENT at a level comparable to that of 1922/01.

The number of candidates for A821 was significantly lower compared with that for the legacy.

The candidates and the Question Paper performed well.

Candidates' performance would improve if they could be advised to:

- (a) familiarise themselves with the various exercise types and rubrics used in the examination
- (b) follow the rubrics carefully
- (c) observe the word limits set for the various writing tasks
- (d) write legibly
- (e) use a style or register that is appropriate to what they have been asked to write. A colloquial style may be considered acceptable in a personal letter or email to a friend, but inappropriate in a formal piece of writing, such as an essay or a business letter. Inappropriate style loses marks
- (f) write answers in the allocated spaces, and within the page frame - i.e. avoid writing on the margins. This is particularly significant for on-line marking
- (g) pay particular attention to 'spelling', notably the significant role played by the following features in Persian script:
 - 'dots': the number and position of 'dots' in dot-bearing letters
 - 'dented' letters: the exact number of teeth required for each letter, e.g. س (s) and ش (sh)
 - the second 'stroke' needed for the Persian letter گ (g) to distinguish it from ک (k)

The above features are important because a 'violation' of the rules may create a different word with an entirely different meaning. Furthermore, this can be of special significance when answering multiple-choice questions by writing a Persian letter in the box/gap

- (h) use a pen, rather than a pencil
- (i) enter all the required details in their appropriate boxes (Centre/Candidate Numbers and their full name)

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1

Questions were generally well answered.

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Exercise 2

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 3

Questions were generally well answered. Questions 15 and 17 differentiated the stronger candidates from those who needed to work further.

Exercise 4

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 5

Questions were generally well answered. Questions 27 and 29-31 played a differentiating role.

Exercise 6

Questions were generally well answered.

Exercise 7

Questions were generally well answered. Question 40 played a differentiating role.

Exercise 8

Questions were generally well answered. Questions 45 and 47 differentiated the stronger candidates.

A822

General Comments

This is the first year that GCSE Persian new specification, J075, J175 and J375, was offered to candidates. It ran alongside the previous (legacy) specification, 1922. The number of candidates who took the examinations for the new specification was fairly low, which makes it difficult to draw very many general observations and reach meaningful conclusions.

Quality of Recording

A number of factors influenced the quality and conduct of the speaking tests in this year's new specification examinations. Many centres still used cassettes instead of a CD when recording their candidates' speaking tests. Centres must also take care to package discs appropriately to avoid damage in the post. The quality and sound volume of recordings were in a few instances poor and somewhat inaudible.

Careful preparation for the A822 tests is important for both candidates and conducting teacher/examiners. If the tests are conducted in a formal interview style it is difficult for candidates to take the initiative and give the sort of fully developed answers that score the highest marks.

Candidates who may have used the previous specification's papers to prepare, found the new test, particularly the presentation section, daunting and unfamiliar.

It is hoped that teacher/examiners will find this year's experience, and the advice contained in this report, helpful in preparing themselves and their candidates for the new specification tests that will continue to be offered in coming years.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Presentation

This section has been introduced in the new specification and constitutes a principal part of the test.

Although the candidates performed the presentation part with varying degrees of success, it was noticed that some delivered the one-minute presentation in a bookish and unnatural style. In other cases more careful preparation would have given them greater confidence. Only a few candidates presented a coherent, succinct and fluent speech in this part.

The one minute speech is supposed to form the basis of the follow up conversation between the candidate and examiner. There were instances when the question and answer part of this section turned into a formal interview, with the candidates waiting for a question to be asked and limiting their answers to that question, without making any attempt to expand the subject. Candidates must be encouraged to take the initiative and develop the conversation.

General Conversation

This section remains the same as that in the legacy specification. Candidates were more at ease and generally performed better in this part than in the new presentation section or in any of the role plays of the previous specification.

The key issue in this section is to give maximum opportunity for the candidate to develop and expand the conversation. It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher/examiner to advise and instruct the candidates ahead of the test and to make them aware of this important fact. Fluency and lack of hesitation are two of the criteria on which the candidates can gain or lose marks.

It is important to remember that questions requiring only a 'yes' or a 'no' answer cannot help the assessors in determining the true speaking abilities of the candidate, nor do they help candidates to demonstrate their conversational skills.

Examiners should make every effort to encourage the candidate to talk.

Timekeeping is another main issue in both sections of the speaking test. Centres are reminded that they must adhere to the correct time allowed for this test (10 - 12 minutes).

A823

General Comments

This was the first year that this paper was offered and the entry was fairly small. The question paper and the exercises within were well received and candidates performed well.

Exercise 1: Questions 1–5

A straightforward set of questions which were well answered.

Exercise 2: Questions 6–12

The questions and rubrics were well understood.

Exercise 3: Questions 13–18

All questions in this exercise were clear and well understood by candidates.

Exercise 4: Questions Qs 19–24

Although this exercise has a new format which is different from that of the legacy exercises, candidates had no problem with it.

Exercise 5: Questions 25–30

The questions were understood well by most candidates.

Exercise 6: Questions 31–36

Candidates' attention needs to be drawn to the fact that all of the possible answers to the questions in this exercise were listed for them. Answers not included in the list were not given marks.

Exercise 7: Questions 37–42

Candidates need to be advised to read the text carefully before attempting to answer the questions.

Exercise 8: Questions 43–48

Once again, the answers required for these questions were based on the text only so the text had to be read carefully first.

A824

General Comments

Candidates generally did well in this writing paper. However, as this was the first year for the new specification, the entry was fairly low. This makes it difficult to make comprehensive judgements about which questions performed better than others. Also, since this is a new GCSE examination, there was no opportunity to compare results with those of previous years. However, it was clear that some candidates were simply using the alphabet to transcribe their oral knowledge of Persian, showing little evidence of being at ease in producing written Persian.

Able candidates produced delightful essays, although sometimes exceeding the recommended length of 150 words. They had the vocabulary and a variety of styles. Such candidates were, for the most part highly literate Persian speakers. For some candidates, the prospect of writing an essay of 150 words was a daunting task. There were a few who wrote far fewer than 150 words. Teachers need to be aware of the examination requirements and they need to give their students practice in constructing texts of the required length.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This question was about home and local area and was very popular amongst candidates. A few candidates showed great competence in answering this question.

Question 2

Candidates with a good knowledge of Persian managed to score well here.

Question 3

This question was about Persian celebrations and appeared to be less popular than others.

Question 4

The subject was travel and the wider world. Some candidates had limited knowledge of the relevant vocabulary when answering this question.

Question 5

Candidates answered this question generally well, but found it difficult to express why it is important to study abroad.

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