

GCSE

Persian

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J735**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J035**
J135

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the report on the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme.

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A821 Listening

General Comments

Overall the candidates performed very well, and their efforts and those of their Teachers are to be commended. As in previous series, candidates can improve by:

- a) familiarising themselves with the various exercise types and rubrics commonly used in the examination paper
- b) following the rubrics carefully and reading and ensuring they understand each question before answering
- c) writing legibly and in the allocated spaces
- d) 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. (s) and (sh).
 - the second stroke needed for the Persian letter (g) to distinguish it from (k).
 - The above features are important because a violation of the rules may create a different word with an entirely different meaning. It can also be significant if answering multiple-choice questions by writing a Persian letter in the box/gap.

Comments on Individual Questions

Candidates responded well to most questions and there were no particular problems.

Q. 27 The majority of candidates coped very well with this question.

Q. 42 In order to answer this question successfully, candidates needed to understand the negative form. Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with all common negatives.

A822 Speaking

General Comments

The overall quality of the candidates this year for the speaking exam was very good. Candidates generally appeared to be fluent and they performed well under examination conditions.

The tests consist of two parts:

- Part 1: comprises a one minute presentation based on a topic chosen by the candidate; a follow-up conversation between the candidate and the Teacher/Examiner on the same topic and lasting about 4 minutes,
- Part 2: a five-minute general conversation between the candidate and the Teacher/Examiner on selected topics.

In general Teacher/Examiners conducted the tests quite well and there were no major issues. The observations and the recommendations below will help to further improve the conduct of these tests in future.

Part 1

Presentation

The presentations were delivered with accuracy and often in a non-colloquial style.

With the football World Cup being this year, many male candidates chose to speak about their favourite players and teams. Among other popular topics of presentations were *Nourooz*, holiday travels abroad, martial arts, school and friends, home and family and food.

Some presentations were short and delivered too quickly. Candidates need to be briefed in detail before the test about the timing and the speed of delivery in the presentation.

A number of presentations were clearly memorised ahead of the test. The mark scheme does not reward the ability to memorise a text and redeliver it accurately; it rewards the skills of speaking freely. So while candidates are expected to have prepared the general structure of the presentation, they will not gain good marks by reciting it word for word.

There were a few examples of presentation where the candidate seemed to be reading it off a prepared text. Centres are reminded that this is unacceptable, being against both the spirit and the requirements of the specification.

Follow-up Conversation

On the whole, candidates had a lot to say about the topic of their presentation. Often they took the lead and spoke almost without encouragement from the Teacher/Examiner.

There were, however, many instances when the candidate could do little more than repeat points already covered in the talk. Teacher/Examiners are reminded of the importance of their role here. They must ask the sort of open-ended questions which will encourage the candidate to expand on the issues already presented.

Part 2

General conversation

As stated above, the role of the Teacher/Examiner is vital in the Follow-up and General conversations. To earn high marks candidates should speak at greater length, complexity and accuracy. They should express opinions and explain their ideas.

It is important therefore that the Teacher/Examiner should not do too much of the talking and should not ask too many questions, especially of the sort likely to cue very short or even one-word responses from the candidate. Depending on how well the candidate is coping, the Teacher/Examiner should aim to ask open-ended questions such as: "What do you think of...", "How far do you agree that ..." and above all: "Why...". Teacher/Examiners are reminded that OCR has provided a list of suggested questions, targeted at different levels of ability, in the teacher's pack. The best Teacher/Examiners have selected suitable questions from the list as a means of promoting the candidate to speak to the best of their ability. The test is neither an interview nor an interrogation and Teacher/Examiners are encouraged to help all their candidates to express themselves as fully as possible.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To this end it is important that Centres encourage their Teacher/Examiners - particularly if they are target-language speakers brought in specifically to conduct the test - to familiarise themselves with the test and its requirements prior to conducting the examination. This will undoubtedly be to the advantage of their candidates.

Centres are reminded of OCR's suggestions and regulations about the formats and deadlines under which candidate work is to be submitted to OCR. These are the result of many years of experience and, if followed, will make the work of the Moderators much easier and therefore mean that the publication of candidates' results is less likely to be delayed.

A823 Reading

General Comments

In general all sections of the paper were accessible, with no identifiable problems. The overwhelming majority of candidates had sufficient knowledge of the language and adequate familiarity with the exam format, although a minority struggled because they seemed to have no training in the language or in the test.

However all candidates need to be reminded that they are in danger of losing marks if they do not write their answers clearly and legibly.

Comments on Individual Questions

Exercise 3: Questions 13-18

It is worth reminding candidates that they are expected to choose their answers from the list of words provided in the box. Words or phrases with the same meaning are not acceptable and will result in the candidate losing marks.

Exercise 4: Questions 19-24

No problems identified in the accessibility with this exercise. Candidates should be reminded to tick just one box. Where two boxes are ticked, the mark cannot be awarded.

Exercise 5: Questions 25-30

Candidates need to pay full attention to the wording of the questions in order answer the questions successfully. For example, the answer to question 26: "Who was **also** disappointed about this?" is "Soudabeh's mother", as it had already been established that Soudabeh was disappointed.

It is worth emphasising that all answers must be based on the text. The answer to question 27a: "Who is she (Soudabeh) hoping to stay with in the first week?" is: " her mother's friend"; therefore "her friend" is not an acceptable answer.

Exercise 6: Questions 31-36

The comments about Exercise 3 apply here too. The rubric requires that sentences must be completed **with a word from the list**. Answers not from the list are therefore not acceptable.

Exercise 7: Questions 37-42

Candidates need to be advised to read the text carefully before attempting to answer the questions in this section. Answers based on the candidates' opinion or experience will not be rewarded.

Exercise 8: Questions 43-48

At this stage in the paper candidates are expected to provide precise and correct answers. Phrases copied from the text with no relevance to the question cannot be rewarded. Similarly incomplete answers will not carry marks. For example, the answer to question 46: "What has been the result of Iranian painters being known abroad?" is "their paintings/ works of art being sold at high prices" and not simply: "being sold at high prices". Similarly, the answer to question 47: "How has the opinion of the youth in Iran changed towards music in recent years?" is "many more go to music classes", and not "they pay more attention" or "it has increased".

A824 Writing

General Comments

Candidates overall used their knowledge of Persian language appropriately to respond to their selected two out of five options for questions.

Many excellent answers gave detailed accounts on the chosen subject using a variety of vocabulary and range of tenses. Exceptional answers not only followed the guide but also added further illustrative detail to their description. Excellent answers gave a variety of justifications for points made and attempted to do so in different tenses.

Others needed to develop their style of writing to include a variety of tenses apart from just the Present and should also avoid writing a response that reads like a set of bullet points.

A few candidates appeared to misunderstand the requirement of their chosen question and at times the paper itself. They therefore produced long responses on a topic that was not featured in the actual questions. There were even examples of candidates responding in English.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No. 1

This was a very well answered question. There were responses that showed a clear and sometimes sophisticated style and an ability to provide strong explanations and justifications. It was also pleasing to see candidates use a variety of tenses.

When candidates did not achieve higher marks it was usually because of incorrect grammar or inability to write full sentences.

Question No. 2

This was a well answered question. Candidates achieved higher marks when they engaged with the topic and gave exact examples of experiences. Candidates generally did well with meeting the criteria and writing relevantly. Most responses provided a good variety of tense, vocabulary and examples to create the type of narrative the question required.

When candidates did not achieve higher marks it was usually because of insufficient vocabulary to express what they wished to convey.

Question No. 3

To gain marks for this question, candidates needed to identify a leisure or entertainment activity and expand on it. Answers that concentrated on the life of a particular celebrity were not relevant to the actual question.

Question No. 4

This question was answered well by candidates. The best answers delved into details of a trip, and showed relevant development within the context of the experience.

Question No. 5

Candidates needed to describe what an “educational exchange” meant. Answers that simply concentrated on normal school life and everyday personal experiences were not relevant.

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