



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education  
Alternative Ordinary Level (2026)**

**Arabic  
(Syllabus 8187)**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Centres and candidates take Arabic at Alternative Ordinary Level. Candidates take the Alternative Ordinary qualification as a stand-alone assessment.

Note: Centres and candidates should note that the use of dictionaries is not permitted in this assessment.

## 2 AIMS

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The aims of the syllabus are the same for all students. The aims are set out below and describe the educational purposes of following a course at Alternative Ordinary Level:

- to develop the ability to understand the language from a variety of registers
- to enable students to communicate confidently and clearly in the language
- to form a sound base of skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure
- to develop insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken
- to encourage positive attitudes to language learning and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations
- to support intellectual and personal development by promoting learning and social skills

## 3 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

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The examinations are designed to assess candidates' linguistic competence and their knowledge of contemporary society. In the exams, candidates will be expected to:

- understand and respond to texts written in the language, drawn from a variety of sources such as magazines, newspapers, reports, books and other forms of extended writing
- manipulate the language accurately in spoken and written forms, choosing appropriate examples of lexis and structures
- select information and present it in the language
- organise arguments and ideas logically

## 4 TOPIC AREAS

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All textual material used in the examinations will be drawn from the topic areas below, with reference to the country or countries where the language is spoken. More guidance on the topic areas is given in Section 7.

- Human relationships
- Family
- Generation gap
- Young people
- Patterns of daily life
- Urban and rural life
- The media
- Food and drink
- Law and order
- Religion and belief
- Health and fitness
- Work and leisure
- Equality of opportunity
- Employment and unemployment
- Sport
- Free time activities
- Travel and tourism
- Education
- Cultural life/heritage
- War and peace
- The developing world
- Scientific and medical advances
- Technological innovation
- Environment
- Conservation
- Pollution
- Contemporary aspects of the country or countries where the language is spoken

## 5 ASSESSMENT

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### AVAILABILITY OF COMPONENTS

This syllabus is available in November only.

### RULES OF COMBINATION

Candidates take Components 2 and 3.

### SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

|                            | Component 2          |           | Component 3          |           |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
|                            | duration             | weighting | duration             | weighting |
| Alternative Ordinary Level | 1 hour<br>45 minutes | 70%       | 1 hour<br>30 minutes | 30%       |

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

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### COMPONENT 2: Reading and Writing

**1 hour 45 minutes, 70 marks**

Two passages in Arabic are set which deal with related themes.

Candidates answer specific and general comprehension questions on the two passages, and respond to a task requiring a summary or comparison of issues raised. Arabic will be used for all questions and answers.

The passages will have been written during the last twenty years, and will reflect the international scene. In addition:

- the two passages, taken together, will not exceed 750 words
- on the first passage, there will be a series of comprehension questions (15 marks for content and 5 marks for quality of language). These will then be followed by two tests (5 marks each) will cover vocabulary recognition and grammatical manipulation
- on the second passage, there will be a series of comprehension questions (15 marks for content and 5 marks for quality of language)
- the last question will require candidates to write about 140 words, drawing information from both passages and adding their own opinions (10 marks for information drawn from the passages, 5 marks for personal response to the material, and 5 marks for quality of language)

### COMPONENT 3: Essay

**1 hour 30 minutes, 40 marks**

A list of five topics, selected from the topic areas in Section 4, is published annually in the syllabus, and changes every year. A question will be set on each of the five topics; candidates choose one question and write an essay in Arabic of 250–400 words. Of the 40 marks available, 24 are for quality of the language and 16 are for the content.

#### Set Topics for 2026:

1. Young people
2. Human relationships
3. Free time activities
4. Travel and tourism
5. Environment

## 7 TOPIC AREAS – FURTHER GUIDANCE

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Teachers can explore the topic areas in any way they choose. The following examples (which are not prescriptive) are a useful guide to planning courses. All these suggestions, and other themes chosen by the teacher from within the topic areas, should be studied with reference to countries/communities where Arabic is spoken.

### **Human relationships – family – generation gap – young people**

- family activities; new patterns of family relationships; the status of the elderly and responsibility for their care
- generation gap; conflicts in the family circle; young people and the older generation; attitudes of young people to the family environment
- young people; young people and their peer group; young people as a target group for advertisers and politicians

### **Patterns of daily life – urban and rural life – the media – food and drink – law and order – religion and belief – health and fitness**

- daily routine; school; the individual's way of life; living conditions
- advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural life; transport and communications; shopping; housing
- the role and influence of the media; the power of advertising
- healthy eating; fast-food; national traditions of eating and drinking
- violence and crime; drug-related crime; the role of the police; law-enforcement
- the place of religion in society; attitudes to religious belief; patterns of attendance; religious minorities
- healthy living; exercise; dieting; drugs; health care provision; stress; AIDS

### **Work and leisure – equality of opportunity – employment and unemployment – sport – free time activities – travel and tourism – education – cultural life/heritage**

- women in society and in the workforce; equality of opportunity for minority groups
- preparation for work and job opportunities; career plans; qualifications and job routines; plight of the unemployed; areas of high unemployment; demise of traditional industries; possible solutions; immigrant workers
- individual and team sports; amateur and professional sport
- value of leisure; balance between leisure and work; planning leisure time
- tourism as a modern phenomenon; friction between tourists and local inhabitants; holidays and foreign travel
- education systems and types of school; patterns of curriculum; relationship between education and training; further and higher education provision; examinations
- the world of the arts; significant figures and trends in the arts; the place of culture and the arts in the life of the nation

### **War and peace – the developing world**

- conflicts in the world: ethnic, religious, ideological
- problems of developing countries; future trends

### **Medical advances – scientific and technological innovation**

- advances in the treatment of disease; ethical issues of medical and other technologies
- cloning; genetic modifications; modern communications systems

### **Environment – pollution – conservation**

- the individual in his/her surroundings; effect of environment on individuals; protest action to protect one's locality; ways of contributing to environmental awareness
- global warming; acid rain; air pollution; water pollution; noise pollution; destruction of rain forests; damage to animal world; solutions and cost implications
- saving endangered species and landscapes

### **Contemporary aspects of the country/ies where the language is spoken**

- e.g. political, regional, social issues

## 8 MARK SCHEMES

### COMPONENT 2: READING AND WRITING

#### Quality of Language – Accuracy (Questions 3, 4 and 5)

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>5 Very good</b>     | Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order).                                       |
| <b>4 Good</b>          | Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has a sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures.                     |
| <b>3 Sound</b>         | Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions. |
| <b>2 Below average</b> | Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions frequently incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives.   |
| <b>0–1 Poor</b>        | Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error.   |

**Note re questions 3 and 4:** the five marks available for the quality of language are awarded globally for the whole performance on each set of answers.

A concise answer, containing all mark-bearing components for content, is scored on the full range of marks for language, i.e. length does not determine the quality of language mark.

An individual answer scoring 0 for content cannot contribute to the overall quality of language mark. This means that the total mark out of 5 available on the whole set of answers is reduced on the following scale:

Answer(s) worth 2 or 3 scoring 0: reduce final assessment by 1

Answer(s) worth 4 or 5 scoring 0: reduce final assessment by 2

Answer(s) worth 6 or 7 scoring 0: reduce final assessment by 3

Answer(s) worth 8 or 9 scoring 0: reduce final assessment by 4

**Note:** A minimum of one mark for quality of language should be awarded if there are any content marks at all (i.e. 0 language marks only if 0 content marks).

**Response to the passage (Question 5)**

This should be marked as a mini-essay according to the variety and interest of the opinions and views expressed, the candidate's response to the original text stimulus, and their ability to express a personal point of view. Additional guidance on marking specific questions will be given to examiners.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>5</b>   | <b>Very good</b><br>Varied and interesting ideas, showing an element of flair and imagination, a capacity to express a personal point of view.  |
| <b>4</b>   | <b>Good</b><br>Not the flair and imagination of the best candidates, but work still shows an ability to express a range of ideas, maintain interest and respond to the issues raised. |
| <b>3</b>   | <b>Sound</b><br>A fair level of interest and ideas. May concentrate on a single issue, but there is still a response to ideas in the text.  |
| <b>2</b>   | <b>Below average</b><br>Limited range of ideas; rather humdrum. May disregard the element of response to the text, and write a largely unrelated free-composition.                    |
| <b>0–1</b> | <b>Poor</b><br>Few ideas to offer on the theme. Banal and pedestrian. No element of personal response to the text. Repeated error.  |

**COMPONENT 3: ESSAY**

| <b>Language (24 marks)</b> |  | <b>Content (16 marks)</b> |  |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| <b>21–24</b>               | <b>Very good</b><br>Confident use of complex sentence patterns, generally accurate, extensive vocabulary, good sense of idiom.       | <b>14–16</b>              | <b>Very good</b><br>Detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated; coherently argued and structured.   |
| <b>16–20</b>               | <b>Good</b><br>Generally sound grasp of grammar in spite of quite a few lapses; reads reasonably; some attempt at varied vocabulary. | <b>11–13</b>              | <b>Good</b><br>Sound knowledge and generally relevant; some ability to develop argument and draw conclusions.  |
| <b>10–15</b>               | <b>Adequate</b><br>A tendency to be simple, clumsy or laboured; some degree of accuracy; inappropriate use of idiom.                 | <b>7–10</b>               | <b>Adequate</b><br>Some knowledge, but not always relevant; a more limited capacity to argue.  |
| <b>5–9</b>                 | <b>Poor</b><br>Consistently simple or pedestrian sentence patterns with persistent errors; limited vocabulary.                       | <b>3–6</b>                | <b>Poor</b><br>Some attempt at argument, tends to be sketchy or unspecific; little attempt to structure an argument; major misunderstanding of question. |
| <b>0–4</b>                 | <b>Very poor</b><br>Only the simplest sentence patterns, little evidence of grammatical awareness, very limited vocabulary.          | <b>0–2</b>                | <b>Very poor</b><br>Vague and general, ideas presented at random.  |