Standardized Arabic Test

- **Main topics:**

  - Introduction

  - Test objectives

  - Justifications

  - Advantages

  - Beneficiaries

  - Test preparation and development stages

  - Bank of questions

  - Test components.

  - Test report.

  - Certificate granted.

  - Test centers around the world.

  - Communication media with test management.

  - Test submission method

  - The video

- **Test objectives:**

1. The "Standardized Arabic Test" aims to fill a gap in Arabic language tests and language proficiency standards, where there is no standardized test for the Arabic language adopted by an official educational institution.
2. Arabic language service and dissemination. There are programs, sections and educational institutions around the world that teach Arabic, but they are in dire need of a standardized test that measures the learners.
3. Measuring the linguistic ability of non - Arabic speakers, and the extent to which they are able to elements of the Arabic language: language, grammar and vocabulary, and the extent of their skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in academic contexts in particular.
4. Colleges , universities, and And institutions of higher education help and encourage Making wise decisions regarding student acceptance in various academic program
5. Helping employers who need to know the competencies of applicants to work and how they can speak, write and read the Arabic language.

- **Justifications**

The Saudi Electronic University decided to design and implement this test for the following reasons:

- Increasing demand to learn Arabic language from speakers of other countries around the world.

- The field is devoid of any governmental institutional efforts to launch a comprehensive standard test to measure the language proficiency of Arab learners, as well as the international standard tests of some

international languages based on precise criteria to achieve their goal, such as TOEFL.

- The need to review the programs of teaching Arabic language in the field in the light of the actual competencies available to learners, and measured by an accurate standardized test. It was co-authored by a group of experts and specialists in this field.

- **Test Advantages**

- Has been prepared according to the best international standards in the measurement of language proficiency, taking into account the specificity of this language according to the latest global theories in the teaching of languages, especially in the areas of measurement and evaluation. After the careful study and evaluation of the latest international practices in teaching and evaluating the second language, the University adopted the Common European Reference Framework for Languages (CEFR), which is a universal measure of language capacity and competency, because it includes: teaching, learning and evaluation. The general theoretical and methodological framework for the teaching of European languages as a second language was adopted after adapting it to meet the requirements of measuring Arabic language skills and elements. The TOEFL test framework was also used in English language in order to provide standardized tools to determine the degree of mastery of Arabic language skills and their components.
- The global spread of the test; the learner can learn Arabic language abilities anywhere in the world due to the global spread of this test, the standard Arabic test is offered at more than 5,000 centers around the world, together with TOEFL and other global standardized tests. It is

the first of its kind in terms of global spread and unprecedented geographical coverage in the Arabic language.

- It is possible to identify the level of language proficiency of learners with a comprehensive testing of language skills and their components in an integrated manner.

• **Beneficiaries**

On the practical side, the test is useful for groups and institutions related to the teaching of Arabic as a second or foreign language to identify the problems faced by their students when performing computerized network tests and to try to avoid them in the stages of preparation and design of their standardized tests. These include:

1. Arabic-speaking teachers who have not been fortunate enough to prepare for the high-stakes tests

2. Testing centers in educational institutions related to teaching Arabic for Non - Arabic Speakers around the world

3. 3) Regional and local bodies concerned with the preparation and development of critical tests.

4. 4) The global bodies concerned with the preparation and development of critical tests

5. 5) Learners at the advanced level, equivalent to the advanced level in the Arab -Online.net, corresponding to the third level marked by C-1, C-2 in the European Common Framework of Languages

6. Higher education institutions and different workplaces, whether in the Arab world or outside

7. . Language learners in the programs of teaching an Arabic language for non - native speakers anywhere in the world; to find out their

language proficiency, and in this light they have the right to get statements in the degrees earned, because the test is available to all.

8. Students who are involved in learning Arabic in the Arabic Online Program, Arabic-Online.net, because it is a prerequisite for obtaining a certificate of proficiency in Arabic for non-native speakers.

9. Arab parents who lived in non-Arab environments (children of Arab expatriates) who suffer from poor language proficiency in Arabic

10. Non-Arab communities and their children who live in Arab countries for work, trade, politics and diplomatic affairs who wish to measure their language proficiency

● Test preparation and development stages

The process of building and testing the test involved a series of complex steps; the team was able to verify that the test and its items met the quality criteria that were set for each text, question, or item in each test. As well as making sure that each model, applied to the examinees, is similar to the other model in terms of: content, degree of difficulty, and time it takes. The University Testing Center uses two types of test authors and developers to build the Standardized Arabic Test. The first group: permanent internal (evaluation specialists) and who have received training courses in language learning and teaching at the university level. Most of them have taught in schools, colleges or universities that teach Arabic to speakers of other languages within or outside Arab countries. The main task of this team is to formulate, prepare, collect and select test stimuli (texts, lectures, dialogues, views) as well as items (test questions) that must eventually be in the hands of the examinees.

The second group may be members from all over the Arab world, they are carefully chosen. Their tasks are focused on the initial development of the test material before the evaluation team has refined and reviewed it. The University is interested in the expertise of these and their diverse backgrounds.

1. <u>Write items</u>

Those who are entrusted with writing the items should be bound by the detailed instructions given to them to guide them in their choice of texts and lectures and in writing the items or questions, taking into account that these questions are comparable from one application to another. They also take into account whether these texts and lectures (and questions) are related to the

process of constructing and preparing the test to meet the following four basic elements:

a. Be clear, coherent, acceptable level of difficulty, and , not have cultural complexities or prejudices
b. It does not require a deep knowledge background to understand them.
c. Contain a rich material sufficient to extract questions and items suitable for inclusion in the test

2. <u>Review items:</u>

A model revision goes through the following order:

a. Review content in general.
b. Review the content while verifying compliance with the principle of fairness.
c. Review content with editorial review, then final review of content.

In the light of the above, the evaluation team reviews the test material many times. Three or more of this team sequentially reviews each text and the subsequent items, and the text or item becomes usable only if the evaluation team has agreed on its validity.

The following three points can be addressed in some detail:

- Review content in general:

At this stage, the evaluation team reviews the texts and items to investigate the validity and accuracy of both language and content, taking into account the following questions:

➢ Is the language in which the test material is provided clear? Is it understood by a non-Arabic speaker who wants to attend or study at a university where Arabic is the main language of teaching?
➢ Is the content of the texts, and what is mentioned in the items, known and accessible to non-Arabic speakers who lack the specialized knowledge of the scientific field presented in the test (economy, medicine, eloquence ...etc.)
➢ Is there one answer that is the only correct or the most correct answer?
➢ To What extent is the reasonableness and attract dispersions (incorrect options)?
➢ Is the phrasing or wording of the items and instructions clear?
➢ Is the answer to an item included in another previous or later item? Does the answer to a subsequent item relate to a previous item?
➢ Does the item measure a valuable educational output?
➢ Does each item address a problem or just one idea?

- Achieving the principle of justice:

Quality and fairness standards require review to achieve the principle of justice. This review is done before the materials are used in the test. If the members of the evaluation team find an unacceptable material in the content, they call it "does not meet the principle of justice", and then refer to the content reviewer who tries to resolve it until the parties agree (the references of justice and content references) on the content and honesty of construction

- Editorial Review:

In this review, all standard test materials are subject to verification to ensure that the linguistic material contained in it (such as language usage, punctuation, spelling, style, form, words, rules, and organization) is as clear, short and consistent as possible. Editors at this point, verify that the method adopted by the testing center has been taken into consideration. In addition to that, they

verify the accuracy and validity of the scientific facts mentioned in the test materials; the scientific facts in some scientific fields may change from time to time.

3. Collecting new test models:

After the evaluation team decides on the use of the text and the associated questions and items, the material is combined into test models. Each model in the "Standardized Arabic Test" should meet the same content specifications and statistical specifications for the test models as before. It is important that each test model is similar to other models, so that items are similar in nature and level of difficulty. This analogy, in turn, facilitates the process of equating grading, a statistical process that is used to calibrate the results of different models of the same test. When compiling the test model, the evaluation team takes into account a number of complex variables. This includes the variety of subjects in each test, the number of items in each type of question, and the difficulty of the questions. Test model assemblers work according to specifications designed for the assembly process

4. Correction Guidelines:

The Testing Center has prepared guidelines for assessing the performance of subjects in the speaking and writing tests. These standards were carefully prepared, with the participation of its experienced experts in assessing the abilities of the speech and speech examiners in the Arabic language for non-Arabic speakers. These include teachers teaching Arabic as a second or foreign language, evaluators specializing in oral competence, and applied linguistics specialists in measurement and evaluation.

5. Exploratory tests and preliminary analysis:

Under the contract between the university and Prometric Company, exploratory tests were conducted on 225 candidates, which ended on December 31, 2015. After that the tests are held at all the canters owned by Prometrics, except those it finds inappropriate.

After applying the test, each test form will be subjected to the "preliminary analysis" process, to assess the effectiveness of the items in terms of difficulty levels, and the extent to which they distinguish between examined persons with different abilities. This analysis helps both the measurement specialist and the evaluator to identify difficult items, or those that fail to distinguish between highly qualified and low-skilled persons. The "preliminary analysis" process is carried out collectively: the assessment team and the measurement experts make

the right decisions about the performance of the item and analysis. After the "preliminary analysis" process, the items are normally taken to be in the accepted items groups and attached with their statistical information.

The team does not stop at the preliminary analysis, but reviews the various statistics provided by the online testing system by the company's contractor (Prometric); to check the quality of the items of questions, and to deal with other items that failed to reach the quality standards. The test is therefore continuously subject to development in accordance with regular periodic statistics from the system.

• Bank of questions:

The department maintains a wide range of questions and items to support the test when necessary. It has a question bank of more than twenty-seven thousand questions and items, distributed over more than 500 forms.

The examiners at the Saudi Electronic University are working on the development of this bank, and are constantly feeding it on new items that are already in the process of editing, experimentation, calibration and statistical analysis.

• Test components:

As shown in the attached table, each test form consists of five sections:

1. Language (grammar, syntax, lexicon, semantics)

2. Listen and watch

3. Reading

4. Speaking

5. Writing

The number of questions, items and time varies from section to section (see table below). Each of the five sections is corrected on a scale of 0 to 20 degrees which measure the question in terms of ease and difficulty; each section represents 20% (see figure 2), to be the maximum score (total) of 100 degrees. The total test time is 120 minutes.

	Section	Items number/ Questions	Items kind/ Questions	Test time	(Degree) Grading scale
1	language	20	Multiple choices	20	0-20
2	Listening and watching	17-22	Multiple choices	25	0-20
3	Reading	13-11	Multiple choices	25	0-20
4	Speaking	1	Speaking	20	0-20
5	Writing	1	Essay	25	0-20
Total		50-57		120	0-100

Table (1) Components of the "standard Arabic test"

Figure (2) Distribution of test skills by percentages

Test report:

Correcting the language skills, listening and reading automatically, and delaying the sending of the report until the correction of the skills of

speaking and human writing is completed through the mechanism followed, where the examiner records oral material and writes on the requested subject, then sends them to the system. After completing the correction process for these two skills, their scores are monitored in the system. The report is thus complete for all five sections and will be sent automatically to the examinees' mails, including a report card in each section with the total.

• Certificate:

The Saudi Electronic University grants the students who pass the Arabic test a certificate of language proficiency that indicates their proficiency in the skills of the Arabic language and its components.

• Test canters on the world:

The test is offered at more than 5,000 canters around the world under the cover of (Prometric Company), a leading global institution in standard testing field. "The Standardized Arabic Test" is combined with other standardized language tests such as TOEFL, IELTS and others. It is the first of its kind in terms of global outreach and unprecedented geographical coverage in the Arabic language.

Accurate security procedures are applied to identify the examiner; many options are available to the Saudi Electronic University (ID card-ID fingerprint-biometric fingerprint identification) to verify the identity when you log on. The University is entitled to take information from the examiner to verify irregularities or security issues.

Test canters around the world were provided gradually with an Arabic keyboard that the examiner could use while answering the fifth section of "the Arabic Standard Test": Writing Skills. The canters were also provided with explanatory brochures about the test with an Arabic copy and the mother language of the examiner, where the brochures were translated into 16 international languages.

- Contact information with the test administration:

- Test website: Saudi Electronic University paid attention to have a website for the Standard Arabic Test as a marketing interface for introducing the test and everything related to it through the following link: (http://www.arabictest.net). It was translated into sixteen languages, the most widely known on the global and Islamic world (English, Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, French, Korean, Chinese, Hindi, Bahasa, German, Urdu, Japanese, Russian, Swahili, Farsi, and Portuguese).

- The Arabic Standard Test e-mail ARABTEST@SEU.EDU.SA in which we can receive inquiries and observations from those who are interested to make the test and answering their questions.

- Test brochures and handbooks.