

Alternative accreditations for Arabic

We are grateful to Haroon Shirwani at Eton College for this information :

Salam alaikum ya jama'a!

Some good news: I have found two alternatives to Asset Languages. They run along the same lines, with qualifications offered at different levels:

Entry Level (about a term to a year);

Level 1 (1 to 2 years);

Level 2 (2 or more years).

They are:

1. The Certificate in Practical Languages, offered by the Awarding Bodies Consortium (ABC).

General Info: <http://www.abcawards.co.uk/languages/>

Arabic Info: <http://www.abcawards.co.uk/download/15587/>

2. The Certificate in Language Skills, offered by the National Open College Network (NOCN).

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/language-skills>

These are both qualifications used in the further education sector and can be adapted pretty easily for schools. ABC is, I believe, available to all ages, whereas NOCN has a minimum age of 14. I originally found them on the qualifications page on the CILT website:

http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/standards_and_qualifications/qualifications_in_the_uk.aspx

which contains the following spreadsheet, which shows how these fit into the national qualifications and credit framework (QCF):

http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/standards_and_qualifications/idoc.ashx?docid=6004ab5e-1bcd-48c8-88e0-a2d8d4efc3e8&version=-1

Level 2 is the same standard as GCSE. (NOCN also offers Level 3 Arabic, which is the same standard as A-level.)

I am going to go for ABC. I have used them before and had a very good experience: the format of the assessments was flexible, so I could build them around my teaching (so no 'teaching to the test'); and the staff were friendly and helpful. I changed a couple of years ago to try out a different qualification, but I am happy to go back to ABC.

Underneath this e-mail is a message from Daniel Moulton from ABC, which lays out what you need to do to enter your students for their Certificate in Practical Languages. In addition, I am just going to say three things which I think are important to know:

1. Most assessments are set and marked by the teacher and a sample is moderated by an external moderator (appointed the board) to ensure they are up to the relevant standard. Some assessments are set by the board and marked by an examiner. ABC will tell you which is which in their information pack.
2. You need to find a colleague to be an internal moderator. Each set of assessments is signed off by the teacher and the internal moderator. The internal moderator doesn't need to know Arabic but they should be an experienced teacher who is able to check that the teacher has followed the procedures set by the board.
3. As a rough guide to levels:
 - a reading comprehension for Entry Level is a list of twenty words (covered in the course) that they need to translate – your choice, as long as it conforms to the specified standards;
 - a reading comprehension for Level 1 could be a passage from Mastering Arabic (ie a short story or letter) – your choice, as long as it conforms to the specified standards;
 - a reading comprehension for Level 2 could be a passage from Al-Kitaab 1 (ie a more detailed story or letter) – your choice, as long as it conforms to the specified standards;

The ABC Awards system puts learning at the forefront by allowing you to devise assessments based on what you have been teaching. Instead of studying simply to pass an exam, the children can study in order to learn the Arabic language, and then have an assessment which verifies their progress.

From Daniel Moulton at ABC Awards

The current accreditation lasts until August 2013. Then we would envisage that the new accreditation lasts until August 2017 as they tend to work in 4-year cycles. There's no question of us dropping our language qualifications as they are so popular!

Here is a quick guide on how to become an ABC centre and offer our Arabic qualifications:

1. Fill in one form with details about the school (CR1) and a second with the qualifications they want to offer (CR2). [These forms are available by e-mailing Daniel – danielm@abcwards.co.uk]
2. If they are OFSTED inspected, then they will get automatic approval at no charge.
3. After this they will be able to register learners. Registration fees are frozen for 2012/13 at 11-12 prices - ranging from £8.75 to £33.75 per learner dependent on level.
4. Internal moderators do not have to be qualified as such; it is a benefit if they have knowledge of Arabic but the main requirements are that they have a good understanding of criteria-based qualifications. The person elected as internal moderator does not have to go through any ABC screening or approval process.
5. External moderation is done by post at the end of the course. Schools will receive an e-mail from me at least a month before they finish telling them who their moderator is and which learners work needs to be posted off. At this time they are also linked to guidance on preparing the sample for an external moderation.
6. If all grades are agreed by the external moderator, then a key form called an "MS1" is returned signed to the school which they can then use to claim certificates from ABC HQ.
7. And of course if they have any queries or questions throughout any part of the process, then I am their dedicated contact at ABC for Arabic. For any Arabic language-related questions I cannot answer I shall refer them to one of our specialists.