OPAL Arabic Threshold

Prerequisites:
The course is aimed at those who have successfully completed the Elementary OPAL course (for more information please see the Learning Outcomes for Elementary OPAL) and is designed to enable learners to communicate in Modern Standard Arabic using four key skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The course enables learners to engage with a variety of interconnected themes in authentic contexts, such as personal, professional and familial activities; the Arabic media; living in one’s own country and abroad; writers in/from the Arab world; and Muslim and Christian festivities in the Arab world. Grammar is therefore presented as an integral part of the abovementioned topics rather than in isolation. By the end of the course learners will be able to read, write and present on a variety of topics in the target language. Although a diversity of dialects exists throughout the Arabic speaking world, Modern Standard Arabic is considered the common denominator across the region; it is used for formal spoken and written communication on official occasions, in education and in the media. Participants are expected to prepare before each class, and to complete short assignments between sessions; preparation and coursework will amount to approximately two-hours of extra-curricular work per week. A high level of commitment and regular attendance are therefore essential for the successful completion of this course.

Course material:
The course is taught primarily in Arabic, with explanations provided in English as necessary. The sessions draw on a textbook: Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya with DVDs: A Textbook for Beginning Arabic, Part One (2nd Edition) [Paperback] by Kristen Brustad, Mahmoud Al-Batal and Abbas Al-Tonsi (Georgetown University Press), as well as contemporary printed and audio/video materials and exercises tailored by the tutor.

Course description:
Please note that OPAL tutors will provide a detailed 'week-by-week' course syllabus and a self-study guide at the beginning of each term.

Structural content:
Word Structure:
- Gender - verbs, nouns and adjectives
- Numbers, the dual, sound and broken plurals

Noun Phrase and Sentence Structure:
- Noun-adjective phrases
- Idāfa phrases
- The structure, tenses and negation of the verbal sentence
- The structure, tenses and negation of the nominal sentence

Miscellaneous:
- Pronouns
- Question Words and Question Formation
- Adjectives and Adverbs
- Regular and Irregular Verbs
Communicative content:
Personal, Professional and Familial Activities
Exploring Arabic Media Programmes
Living in One’s Own Country and Abroad
Writers in/from the Arab World: Edward Said, Malek Bin Nabi, Mai Ziadeh and Taha Hussein
Muslim and Christian Festivities in the Arab World

Arabic Threshold Assessment Framework:
Continuous Exam:
Michaelmas Term Test 15%
Participation and Coursework 15%

Final Exam:
Trinity Term Test 35%
Project Presentation 35%

Final Marks:
50 – 69 Pass
70 – 79 Pass with Merit
80+ Distinction

Learning outcomes:

- Can express opinions on professional, cultural or abstract matters, offer advice and understand instructions.

- Can present on a range of topics.

- Can understand routine information and articles, including factual newspaper articles, routine letters from hotels, and letters expressing personal opinions.

- Can write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.
Michaelmas Term (7 weeks)

Week 1: Conjugation of verbs in the present tense:
  • Revisiting categories of Arabic verbs
  • Conjugating regular verbs in the present tense
  • Revisiting all personal pronouns
  • Creating a narrative in the present tense

Week 2: More on verbs:
  • Exploring selected key irregular verbs in the past and present tense
  • Incorporating object pronouns into transitive verbs

Week 3: The verbal sentence:
  • Forming sentences by utilizing verbs in the past, present, and future tense
  • How to negate the past, present, and future tenses

Week 4: The nominal sentence:
  • Negotiating adjectives and nouns in the singular, dual and plural form
  • Sound and broken plurals
  • Adding al- to nouns and adjectives

Week 5: Negation of nominal sentences:
  • Past tense of the nominal sentence and its negation
  • Kāna, inna and their respective sisters

Week 6: Examining verbal and nominal sentences in texts:
  • Revisiting key question words
  • Addressing questions in full sentences
  • Forming questions in relation to texts

Week 7: Revision and progress test
Hilary Term (8 weeks)

Week 1: Colours in the singular, dual and plural form:
  - Describing people and non-human objects
  - Identifying areas, buildings and people by using colours

Week 2: Comparatives and superlatives:
  - Comparing and contrasting objects and people
  - Writing a two-paragraph piece comparing a European city with a Middle Eastern one

Week 3: Functions and uses of al-idāfa:
  - Forming two- and three-word idāfa constructs
  - Identifying al-idāfa in texts
  - Translation exercises involving al-idāfa

Week 4: Relative pronouns:
  - How to use relative pronouns effectively
  - From simple to compound sentences

Week 5: Using key connectors and ordinal numbers:
  - Narrating events
  - Constructing compound sentences in Arabic

Week 6: Summarising in Arabic:
  - Inferring the main points in a text
  - Relating specific functions to words

Week 7: Negotiating meaning in conditional sentences:
  - Present and past in conditional sentences
  - Possible/ probable, improbable and impossible conditional sentences

Week 8: Revision and preparation for independent study projects and final exam