

Syrian Interim Government Qualifications



Students in Rural Damascus complete Fall Semester exams in February, 2017; Rural Damascus ED.

UK NARIC has found the Syrian Interim Government Grade 12 qualifications suitable for consideration for entry to International Foundation Year programmes available at UK universities. Grade 9 provides suitable preparation for continuing secondary education.

Context and scope

To help fulfil the educational needs of the 5.4 million school age children in Syria¹ and the 1.4 million children, displaced by the conflict, in neighbouring countries, the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) has established a Ministry of Education to organise and oversee the provision of a 12-year education system, running in parallel to the pre-existing national system. It is currently delivered in nine Syrian Provinces and refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Latest figures indicate that from the period 2013 to 2017

55,000 students hold the SIG General Secondary Certificate Examination (grade 12) and 120,000² students have graduated at Grade 9 with the General Preparatory Certificate. To support and inform recognition of this education provision UK NARIC undertook a comparative review of the SIG Grade 9 and 12 examinations and curricula against the English RQF levels 1-3 in the period April to October 2017.

¹ Correct as of March 2016. *No Lost Generation No Lost Generation Initiative (2016). Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper: London 2016 Conference*

² SIG Ministry of Education (09/11/2017)

Overview of the SIG Secondary Education System

The SIG education system is developed by the SIG Ministry of Education, and is supported in its management and implementation by the Education Directorates of the nine Syrian provinces, and the Education Offices of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Arabic is the official language of instruction at both levels and in all locations.

Entry and duration

Basic secondary education is compulsory to Grade 9, resulting in the *Shahâdat al-Dirâsi al-I-edâdiyya al-Âmma al-Kafâ'a* or *Brevet* (General Preparatory Certificate). Students can then progress to upper secondary education, for a further three years leading to the *Al-Shahâda al-Thânawiyya al-Âmma* (General Secondary Certificate).

Structure and Content

Grade 9 comprises seven compulsory subjects; whilst in upper secondary (Grades 10, 11 and 12) students study either a literary or scientific stream. The different subjects for each stream at Grades 9 and 12 are presented below.

Grade 9	Grade 12	
	Literary Stream	Scientific Stream
Mathematics	Islamic Education	Islamic Education
English	Arabic	Arabic
French	English	English
Science	French	French
Islamic studies	History	Mathematics
Geography	Geography	Biology
Arabic	Philosophy	Physics
	Sports Education	Chemistry

Assessment, Grading and Certification

The sample exam questions reviewed at Grade 9 assessed the students' awareness of information relevant to the area of study, in alignment with the RQF level 1 descriptors; however the marking system allowed for acknowledgement of those students who were able to demonstrate a greater understanding and awareness more in line with level 2.

At Grade 12 good practice is followed in the provision of an overall mark with consideration of individual subjects and appropriate weighting allocated to core subjects.

Key findings

There are clear overall expectations in the provision of education across the different provinces and countries. Acknowledging the constraints that the SIG schools are operating within, and the geographical complexity of its delivery, there is a good basis for quality monitoring within schools.

The conclusion of the study found that the Grade 9 and 12 qualifications are broadly comparable to RQF levels 1-2 and RQF levels 3 respectively. At Grade 9 students can express knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas. However, it should be acknowledged that in the current context, documentation and information on quality assurance and control is limited.

On completion of Grade 12 students are able to apply knowledge with some components of RQF level 3 primarily in the students' ability to analyse complex information. The SIG continues to review and develop the education system to improve and enhance the quality and standards of the education provided.

Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation comprised a review of the Grade 9 and Grade 12 examinations in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration, including recommended guided learning hours
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment objectives
- Associated outcomes.

This involved interviews with SIG teachers, educational directorates and the Deputy Minister of Education, and a desk-based comparative review of the By-law of pre-university education, dated 2015-2016, available texts, sample marked assessments, and specimen exam papers for a sample of subjects with specifications and assessment materials for respective GCSE and GCE AS/A Level subjects from a UK exam board.