

URDU AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0539/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

In Reading, candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passage/text but also to be able to extract certain information, distinguish facts and recognise ideas and opinions. They are required to demonstrate the ability to extract relevant information from the source texts and scan for particular information, then organise and present it in the required format.

In Writing, candidates need to ensure that answers fulfil the requirements of tasks as well as development of ideas by using appropriate register/format. Candidates should demonstrate the ability to employ a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Here, writing conventions such as paragraphing and accurate punctuation should be adhered to.

General comments

The first paper of the new specification was well balanced for all abilities and accessible to all candidates. The majority of candidates appeared to understand what was required for each exercise and they attempted all the tasks in the paper. The overall performance on this component was high. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, showing good general understanding of the passages. In the writing exercises, many candidates were able to write fluently and express their ideas. Many of the written compositions were subjective, distinctive and interesting to read.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1 – 6

The stimulus text for these questions was taken from a magazine article. The short answer questions were designed to test skimming and gist-reading skills. Most candidates answered the questions successfully, providing the precise information required.

Exercise 2

Questions 7 – 15

The source text for the testing of multiple matching statements was about human development. Candidates were required to match statements/sentences to the paragraph in which the idea appeared.

Nearly all candidates found this exercise accessible and achieved good marks. Some found **Question 7** challenging.

Exercise 3

Questions 16 – 19

In this exercise, candidates needed to read a long text about book reading and to make brief notes under supplied headings by identifying/selecting appropriate details. The majority of candidates did well in answering these questions. A few, who did not provide a complete or precise answer, lost marks, mainly in response to questions 18 and 19.

Question 18

One of the required answers was 'These children's interest in reading is far greater than in other children'. Some candidates just wrote 'The increased interest in reading,' which was incomplete and could not receive credit.

Question 19

One of the required answers was 'books are expensive'. Candidates who just wrote 'due to inflation' could not gain the mark.

Exercise 4

Question 20

In this exercise, candidates are asked to write a summary on two key aspects of the text in **Exercise 3** and to present them in a 100-word summary, using an appropriate format and structure. For this summary, up to 4 marks are available for content and up to 6 marks for language.

The topic of the passage was book reading and candidates were required to write a summary on the current situation of book reading in Pakistan **and** what steps can be taken to develop interest in reading. In order to score full marks for content, both aspects of the question needed to be addressed.

Only some candidates provided precise details on both aspects of the question. The majority of candidates kept their summary within the specified word limit. Nearly all candidates managed to get 3 or 4 marks for content. A small minority gained no mark or 1 mark as they simply copied text from the original passage. In terms of language, many candidates managed to get 4 or 5 marks out of 6.

It was obvious from some responses that a few candidates had little or no knowledge of summary writing and they just wrote unnecessary and lengthy information without paying attention to the question itself.

Candidates should be reminded that if they rely heavily on lifting/copying the text for their summary, it is not possible for them to achieve full marks for language. In addition, accuracy in spelling and correct use of a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures can help candidates achieve top marks.

Exercise 5

Question 21

In this exercise, candidates write a short piece of functional prose. In this series, they were asked to write an email to their grandfather about a visit to a village. They had to include the detail provided in three short prompts in the question. For this exercise, up to 3 marks are available for content and up to 5 marks for language.

To get the top band mark of 5 for language, candidates need to demonstrate effective use of wide range of language, organised into sequenced and linked paragraphs.

Most candidates performed well in this new task, using an appropriate register and form of address for an email communication.

Exercise 6

Question 22

In this exercise, candidates were required to write an argumentative/discursive essay of about 200 words on the value of mother tongue. The stimulus was provided in the form of for and against statements which could be used as part of the discussion. It was interesting to observe that the majority of candidates found this topic accessible, perhaps because it related to both their learning and their social life. In this exercise, up to 8 marks are available for content and up to 8 marks for language.

The task was handled well by the majority of candidates, and they wrote well-presented written pieces. Many candidates used the suggested prompts/statements to organise their ideas and reasoning, whereas a few handled the discussion in their own way. Discursive and argumentative approaches were equally credited.

The majority of written responses met the assessment criteria and scored good marks for both content and language. Nearly all candidates fulfilled the task consistently with appropriate register and provided excellent ideas and justifications. In most pieces, the language used was of good quality with successful use of a range of vocabulary and language structures. Most candidates used paragraphs, as is required to achieve top band marks for content.

Those candidates who took advantage of using the suggested prompts for their planning provided excellent written pieces and gained good marks.

Candidates are reminded that the key to achieving top marks for content is clear relevance to the given title and to ensure that ideas are fully developed, opinions are expressed and justified with reasons; the written account should sustain the reader's interest. Candidates should avoid using English transliterated words, though transcribed words for certain names and places are permissible.

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Paper 0539/02
Listening

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- listen to the recording carefully to identify the specific information needed to answer each question
- read the instructions and questions with care throughout the paper and if a question consists of more than one part, be careful to respond to all parts
- always attempt an answer rather than leaving a blank space

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates was good. Candidates appeared to be well prepared for this examination and responded adequately to the questions; there were also some high-quality scripts where candidates demonstrated good understanding through accurate and focused responses. It was the very first examination after the application of the new syllabus; but due to the postponement of exams in many locations, there was a relatively small candidate entry this year.

This paper assesses 'listening for understanding' and therefore most feasible and legible phonetic attempts at answers are accepted as long as the meaning is clear. However, candidates must ensure that their responses are comprehensible and unambiguous. If the answer is spelled in a way to make another word that changes the meaning (e.g. حساب instead of نصاب or مرضی instead of ماشی), a mark is not awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise I – Question 1–8

These questions were based on eight different brief scenarios. Candidates had to respond to questions, selecting the key information they gathered from them. Candidates understood this task well and **Questions 3, 4 and 8** were accurately answered by all ability levels. **Questions 1 and 7** were mostly well understood, whereas, some candidates found **Questions 2, 5 and 6** a bit challenging. However, the majority of candidates managed to achieve good marks for this exercise.

Candidates should be able to differentiate between the key information and more detailed information when answering these questions, so that they can respond accurately to the precise question asked.

Exercise II – Question 9

For this exercise, candidates had to fill in the blanks from **Question 9(a)** to **Question 9(h)** with correct information from the recording which was about the establishment of schools. There were many responses that showed a very good understanding of the recording and the questions. All feasible phonetic attempts at answers were accepted as long as the meaning was not changed. **Question 9(e)** proved challenging for many candidates and they confused the school leaving age of children in 1880 (10 years) with other numbers mentioned in the recording.

Exercise III – Question 10

This multiple-matching exercise required candidates to listen to six people's opinions about fashion and then match the opinions in one column with the correct person in the other column. Generally, most of the candidates scored well on this task.

Exercise IV – Questions 11–18

Exercise IV consisted of eight multiple-choice questions based on the recording of an interview with students at foreign universities for an Urdu newspaper. Candidates had to select and mark the correct answer out of four given options. Generally, this part was well attempted, and many candidates successfully scored high marks. **Questions 12, 13, 14, 17 and 18** were accurately answered by all candidates. However, a few candidates were unsuccessful with answers to **Questions 11, 15 and 16**

Candidates should be advised to listen carefully to all parts of the recording and carefully select their answers from the given options.

URDU AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0539/05 Speaking

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination candidates should:

- Choose a particular aspect of a topic for their presentation prior to the examination.
- Focus on this selected aspect of a topic rather than deal superficially with a wide area.
- Be prepared for spontaneous conversation in the topic conversation.

General comments

This year there were a limited number of centres which sent recordings for moderation.

Some candidates seemed to be unprepared for the examination and demonstrated a lack of awareness or understanding of syllabus requirements. In some cases, the examiner showed a lack of understanding of the procedure for conducting the speaking examination.

Comments on specific part of the examination

Part 1: Presentation

Candidates are expected to select a specific aspect of a topic prior to the examination, which should be an area in which they have a personal interest or in which they have some personal experience so that they are able to share their opinions and ideas. To allow for the development of ideas and conversation, it is better if candidates focus on one particular aspect of a wider topic, for example, talking about a hobby, or a holiday. The presentation should last for two to three minutes in total. In general, candidates should provide an overview of their chosen topic. This will help them to stay within the 2–3-minute timeframe and prevent them from rushing in order to fit in a great deal of content.

Most candidates did not appear to be sufficiently prepared for the examination and some did not present their topic for the required length of time. This resulted in the test starting as a conversation, which had an impact on the candidates' performance.

Nonetheless, some candidates and examiners were well-prepared, and these tests were conducted well. Here, the candidate presented in a confident and a fluent manner for the required length of time and was aware of the need to focus their presentation and demonstrate their knowledge of contemporary society.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

This part of the examination is linked to **Part 1**, and it should last for 3–4 minutes. The examiner should ask open-ended questions to explore the information given during the presentation in more detail. Some candidates could not perform this task as the presentation was missing. Consequently, candidates could not be awarded marks for this part of the test as the two parts are interlinked. Instead, the examiner asked questions on various unrelated topics and the candidates had a general conversation with the examiner.

Some candidates were prepared well for this part and performed well. It was evident that they had prepared well. Centres must make sure that they have provided examiners with necessary documents, such as the syllabus and guidelines on how to conduct the speaking test well before the examination is due to take place. They must also ensure that candidates understand and are familiar with the format of the speaking examination.

Part 3: General Conversation

In this section, the examiner and candidate should engage in a conversation which lasts between 3–4 minutes. At least two topics must be covered from the general topic areas listed in the syllabus. The examiner should ensure that at least one topic from topic areas A–B is covered as well as one from areas C–E. It is vital that candidates prepare for all topics as they do not know in advance which topics will be covered by the teacher/examiner.

Most candidates managed to respond well to the examiner's questions and score reasonable marks. Some candidates demonstrated a wide vocabulary and complex sentence structures in a fluent manner. A variety of topics were covered in this section, for example, holidays, visiting different places, differing lifestyles and education systems.

The teachers/examiners and candidates must read the speaking test guidelines and syllabus requirements well before the examination day. It is also advisable for candidates to have practised the test format in class, so they are suitably prepared and fully understand what is expected of them in the examination.