

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 various types of written article and scan for 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 and format. Successful candidates should be able to demonstrate the ability to employ a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Here, written conventions such as paragraphing and accurate punctuation should be adhered to.

General comments

This year's question paper was well balanced for all abilities and was accessible to all candidates who were entered correctly for this level. It also provided a fair degree of challenge.

The majority of candidates seemed to have previously learnt literacy skills in Urdu and, on the whole, they were well prepared for the examination. The overall performance on this component was very encouraging and of a high standard. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, displaying good general comprehension of the reading passages. In the writing exercises, almost all 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 a descriptive article about ancient civilisation. The short answer questions were designed to test skimming and gist-reading skills. Most candidates answered the questions successfully, providing the precise information required. However, some found **Question 1** and **Question 4** difficult. A minority misunderstood the questions and wrote the answers in the incorrect order i.e. the answer to **Question 1** was given for **Question 2** and the answer to **Question 6** was given for **Question 4** or **5**.

Question 1

This question was about the historic aspect of a civilisation. Although most candidates provided the correct answer as *ancient/old civilisation*, a good number of candidates gave an alternative wrong answer that *the traces of the very first nation were found here* and lost the mark.

Question 2

This question was very well attempted by the majority of candidates. Some lost a mark as they provided an incomplete answer by not mentioning the specific detail about *the land between two rivers*. A small minority selected other incorrect answers.

Question 3

The majority of candidates successfully understood the demand of the question, provided the right answers and scored 2 marks. The ones who demonstrated a partial understanding and provided only 1 detail such as *pictorial script* or *nail/arrow symbols in script development* gained 1 mark.

Question 4

Many candidates responded well by mentioning *the continuity of Maikhi script* and scored a mark. A large number missed the detail of the *continuity* aspect or *the sole use of Maikhi script*.

Question 5

Most candidates selected the correct specific detail of *personal scripts* in response to this question. However, a small minority wrote about legal agreements and property particulars etc. instead of memories and lost the mark.

Question 6

The majority of candidates responded well to this question by providing 2 correct details of *writing* and *preserving the scripts* and scored full marks. Some missed part of the response or gave an alternative incorrect answer and lost a mark.

Exercise 2

Questions 7 – 15

The source text for the testing of multiple matching statements was an article about dentistry and teeth hygiene. Candidates were required to identify certain statements/sentences by matching each to the paragraph in which the idea appeared.

Nearly all candidates found this exercise accessible and achieved good marks. Some candidates found **Question 14** rather challenging. A small minority guessed the option or did not manage to read all paragraphs properly which resulted in them achieving very low marks.

Exercise 3

Questions 16 – 19

In this exercise, candidates needed to read a long text about eagles and to make brief notes under supplied headings by identifying and selecting appropriate details. Although many candidates performed well on this exercise, for some, **Question 18** was challenging.

Question 16

Most candidates successfully handled this question about the variety in physical features of eagles (*aqaab*). They were required to give the differences of either the *body weight* or the *length* of the eagle. Some either focused on the types of bird or other general details instead of focusing on physical differences and lost marks. A small number of candidates did not understand the question and gave answers such as the different names for eagles.

Question 17

Many candidates performed well on this question – there was a lot of information available to choose from. Some candidates just wrote about the qualities of the bird such as *they are quick learners*, or *they are faithful to their owner* instead of concentrating on the *importance of these birds for Arabs*.

Question 18

Most candidates found this 3 mark question quite challenging and were able to provide only 1 correct detail about *the three main factors of the Falcon hospital*. Other responses included very general details which were not credited. Although some high ability candidates managed to give 2 or 3 correct details, the lower ability candidates demonstrated partial understanding and were able to achieve 1 mark. The most popular correct answer was the *'the biggest hospital for hunting birds in the world'*.

Candidates are advised to pay proper attention to the required details of the question and scan the text thoroughly. This question provided a good degree of discrimination.

Question 19

Most candidates met the demand of this question and scored 1 or 2 marks by providing the correct answer(s). This 2 part question was about the title *eagle (shaheen)* and the *message to young people from the poet Illama Iqbal*. Candidates who wrote about the messages to humankind could not gain any marks.

Exercise 4

Question 20

In this exercise, candidates are asked to write a summary on two key aspects from 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 was eagles and candidates were required to mention 4 specific points on 2 aspects, which were *the importance of hunting birds for Arabs* and *the special status of the eagle in poetry*. In order to score full marks for content, both aspects of the question needed to be addressed.

Content

A good number of candidates responded well. They displayed a good range of knowledge by providing valid points relevant to both headings and kept their summary within the word limit. On the other hand, some candidates wrote a summary on the wrong content or mentioned the required information at the end of very lengthy summary and lost marks due to exceeding the word limit.

There was plenty of opportunity available to get the highest content marks for this question. The content points were specific, clear and needed precise detail to achieve full marks. However, not managing to understand the question requirement/instructions, providing irrelevant information such as physical features of eagles in the introduction part of the summary and exceeding the word limit resulted in loss of marks for some candidates. It was obvious from some written responses that some candidates had very little or no experience of summary writing.

It is advisable to cover the main points by reading all the paragraphs/text carefully and giving the specified information required and not exceeding the word limit. Candidates must make sure that they read the whole text carefully and give the specific information required and relevant to the subheadings given in the question.

Language

Most candidates managed to get at least 3 to 4 marks out of 6 for language. Quite a few candidates scored full marks by using accurate and expressive language. Candidates should be reminded that if they rely heavily on lifting or copying directly from the text for their summary, they are unlikely to achieve full marks for language. In addition to this, accuracy in spelling and correct use of a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures will determine top band marks.

Exercise 5

Question 21

For this exercise, candidates write a short piece of functional prose. This series, they were required to write an email to a teacher about book reading. They had to include the detail given in 3 short prompts/bullet points provided in the question. In this written piece, up to 3 marks are available for content and up to 5 marks for language. The 3 content marks were based on the detail in the 3 bullet points. If candidates fail to cover any of the prescribed bullet points, they will lose a content mark. To get the top band mark of 5 in language, the requirement is effective use of a wide range of language, organised into well-constructed and linked paragraphs.

Content



This question was well attempted by most candidates. Some candidates wrote very interesting emails following the format of an email/letter and sustained the interest of examiners. They met the assessment criteria and scored high marks for content. They provided relevant information and appropriate ideas and justified them too. A small number of candidates misunderstood the second point of this task and suggested that they do not like books written for young people. The task required them to write about young people's lack of interest in reading books.

Language

The majority of candidates scored well for language. Those who gained 5 marks wrote more than one paragraph and fulfilled the task with appropriate register. In order to achieve the top band mark of 5 in language, there is a requirement for well-constructed and linked paragraphs.

Exercise 6

Question 22

In this exercise, candidates were required to write a discussion essay of about 200 words on friendship. The stimulus was provided in the dialogue form of '*for and against*' statements which can be used as a part of the discussion. It was interesting to see that most candidates found this topic accessible as it relates to their everyday life. For this exercise, up to 8 marks are available for content and up to 8 marks for language.

The task was handled well by most candidates who wrote well-presented written pieces. The best written compositions integrated interesting, logical and functional accounts by employing appropriate register/style and using a variety of language structures.

Many written responses met the assessment criteria and scored good marks for content and language. They fulfilled the task consistently with appropriate register and provided interesting ideas and justification. In most written pieces, the language used was of good quality with successful use of a range of vocabulary and language structures. Nearly all candidates used paragraphs. It should be noted that there is a requirement to use well-constructed and linked paragraphs to get top band marks for content.

Many high performing candidates handled the topic discussion in their own way by adding other points to the stimulus ideas and keeping the main topic title statement in focus. On the other hand, those who ignored the essay title statement and did not weigh up or conclude the topic argument could not achieve top band marks. Both types of '*for and against*' approaches and a one-sided argument were equally credited

Candidates are reminded that the key to achieving top marks for content is a clear relevance to the given essay title and making sure that ideas are fully developed, opinions are expressed and justified with reasons. The written account should sustain the reader's interest. Similarly, in order to get top language marks a range of language and complex structures need to be used effectively and a high level of accuracy needs to be maintained throughout. Candidates should avoid using English or English transliterated words, though transcribed words for certain names and places are permissible. Candidates are not penalised for writing more than word limit of 200 words but writing unnecessarily lengthy pieces could affect the quality of language mark.

General Issues:

The handwriting of some scripts was hard to read; examiners could only credit the work they were able to read. Centres should advise candidates to write legibly. Candidates should cross out their work if it is wrong and then rewrite it neatly. A good number of candidates use additional booklet sheets for a part of their written answer. They could instead write on the question paper as there are 2 extra blank pages available.

URDU AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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 element, be careful to respond to all parts of the question
- always attempt an answer rather than leaving a blank space

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates was good. Many candidates appeared to be very well prepared for this examination and responded adequately to the questions; there were also some very high-quality scripts where candidates were exceptional, not only in their understanding of the questions and their precise and to the point responses, but also in demonstrating good spelling, grammatical accuracy and neat and clear handwriting. However, a few candidates could not perform well due to their limited exposure to the target language.

This paper assesses 'listening for understanding' and therefore all feasible 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 response is spelled in a way to make another word that changes the meaning (e.g. کولی instead of کھلی or لاکوں instead of لکوں) then a mark is not awarded.

As there is no compulsory requirement for the use of Urdu numerals where required, it is advisable for the candidates not to take chance with using Urdu numerals if they are not completely sure about their accuracy.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – Questions 1–8

These questions were based on eight different brief recordings. The candidates had to respond to questions, identifying the key information they gathered from them. The majority of candidates understood this task and **Questions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7** were very well attempted by almost all ability levels. However, a few candidates could not comprehend the questions properly or reproduce the required information accurately due to their limited knowledge of the target language. The questions which proved challenging for some candidates are as follows:

For **Question 1** the required answer was specifically گھٹنوں/ادریک بیٹھنا and the candidates who only mentioned sitting in one place during the flight lost a mark because there had to be a clear response about sitting for a long time; the reason she does not like air travel.

Similarly, for **Question 3**, there could be several acceptable answers that clarify the reason why she does not like the red answer book, i.e.

تنگ لائن/لائینیں کھلی نس ہیں/کھلی لائنوں والی چاہیے/تنگ لائنوں والی نہیں چاہیے/اردو لکھنے کے لیے موزوں نہیں

Candidates who gave ambiguous answers like کھینے میں مشکل ہوتی ہے/لائینوں کی وجہ سے could not be awarded a mark as the answer does not clarify the actual reason. Candidates should be able to differentiate between the key information and secondary or additional information when attempting these questions, so that they can respond accurately to the precise question asked.

Question 8 also proved a bit challenging for most lower ability candidates. They were asked what has to be done if someone wants to watch 'kabaddi' matches. The answer had to specifically mention going to Gujrat stadium (گجرات اسٹیڈیم جانا ہوگا); as the recording explains that 'kabaddi' matches will not be shown on television.

Ambiguous answers like گجرات اسٹیڈیم or incomplete ones like اسٹیڈیم میں دیکھنا/گجرات جانا were not awarded a mark.

Exercise 2 – Question 9

Candidates had to fill in the blanks with correct words or phrases from the recording of information about the selection of subjects at school level. There were many responses showing a very good attempt at understanding the text and writing correct spellings of required answers. Although all feasible phonetic attempts at answers were accepted as long as the meaning remained the same, many candidates found the spellings of لازمی/اختیاری/فرق, etc. a bit challenging. Some lower ability candidates lost a mark when they wrote words that grammatically do not fit in with the given sentences like لڑکا/لڑکیاں پرانے for **Questions 9(a), 9(c) and 9(g)** respectively. **Questions 9(b) and 9(f)** were wrongly answered by many lower ability candidates because they could not find suitable words to convey the correct information. **Question 9(h)** was answered very well by all ability levels, whereas a number of candidates struggled slightly with **Questions 9(c), 9(e) and 9(g)**.

It is very important for teachers to equip candidates with enough practice in writing so that they do not lose marks for writing inaccurate words even when they know the answers.

Exercise 3 – Question 10

Question 10 was worth 6 marks. This part required candidates to match the statements given in column one with the correct answers in column 2. The statements were based on recordings of six different people giving their opinions about vacations. Candidates were given seven statements ((a)–(g)); from which they had to choose six correct statements and match them with the relevant opinions in the second column.

Generally, candidates performed well on this task and scored good marks. Only those with a limited understanding of the target language could not match a few answers accurately and lost marks. Candidates should write their answers carefully in the box alongside the second column, and, if they change their mind afterwards, they must strike through the previous response; otherwise, the answer inside the box is taken as a valid answer.

Exercise 4 – Questions 11–18

Questions 11 to 18 are multiple choice questions. Candidates had to listen to a recording of an interview with an editor of a children's magazine about his journey of achievements. Candidates were given three different options for each of eight questions, and they were asked to identify the correct answers with a tick. This part was also well attempted by the majority of candidates, and they scored good marks. Only a few candidates faced difficulty in understanding the questions and identifying the required information.

Question 16 was misunderstood by some lower ability candidates where they were asked (according to the person being interviewed) what was the public reaction when he published his first magazine as an editor.

Candidates who could not respond in the target language properly selected a wrong answer زیادہ خوش نہیں تھے (they were not very happy) instead of زیادہ مطمئن تھے (they were very satisfied) and lost a mark. Candidates who selected more than one answer also lost a mark as they are expected to choose only one correct response.

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.

The majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination and demonstrated an understanding of syllabus requirements. There has been an improvement in conducting the speaking test by some centres. However, in other centres, aspects of the speaking examination need to be tackled in such a way so that candidates can be appropriately awarded for their skills in speaking. Further understanding of syllabus requirements needs to be imbedded to avoid confusion. The examiner should select the topics for Part 3: General conversation for each candidate. The examiner should ensure that one topic is selected from areas A to B and that a second topic is selected from areas C to E.

Comments on specific parts of the examination

Part 1: Presentation

All Examiners should state the centre number, candidate number and examination series at the start of each test.

Candidates are expected to select a specific aspect of a topic prior to the examination. This should be an area in which they have a personal interest or 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 2 to 3 minutes in total. In general, candidates should provide an overview of their chosen topic. This will help them to stay within the suggested 2 to 3 minute time frame and prevent them from rushing in order to fit in a great deal of content.

Most candidates appeared to have a good understanding of the requirements for the presentation. They demonstrated knowledge of their prepared topic and presented in a confident and a fluent manner for the required length of time. They were aware of the need to focus their presentation and demonstrated 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 to 4 minutes. The examiner should ask open-ended questions to explore the information given during the presentation in more detail. Most candidates performed this task well as they had prepared their topic and were able to discuss it further. The examiner should end the Topic conversation by saying 'we are now moving on to **Part 3** of the test' to allow the candidate to proceed with the General conversation. A small number of examiners were not sure how to tackle this part of the test and this had an impact on candidate achievement.

Part 3: General Conversation

In this section, the examiner and candidate should engage in a conversation which lasts between 3 and 4 minutes. At least 2 topics must be covered from the general topic areas listed in the syllabus. The examiner must ensure that at least 1 topic from topic areas A to B is covered as well as 1 topic from areas C to E. For example, the examiner could select 'family relationships' from area B and 'future plans' from area D. It is vital that candidates prepare for more than 2 topics for this section as they do not know in advance which topics will be covered by the examiner.

Most candidates managed to respond well to the examiner's questions and score reasonable marks. Some candidates demonstrated a wide vocabulary and usage of complex sentence structures. A variety of topics were covered in this section, including family and school life, holidays, visiting different places, different lifestyles, festivals, education and future plans. However, some examiners tried to cover more than three topics in this part. This approach puts candidates under unnecessary pressure and topics tend to be covered superficially rather than in depth.

Examiners and candidates must read 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.