

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 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

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

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 good standard. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, displaying good general comprehension of the reading passages. However, to some candidates, the reading exercises proved more challenging than the written exercises. In writing, 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 an article about a play in a theatre for visually impaired people. These short answer questions were designed to test skimming and gist-reading skills. Most candidates answered the questions successfully, providing the precise information required. Some found **Question 4** and **Question 6** challenging. A small minority misunderstood the questions and answers were written in the incorrect order i.e., the answer to **Question 3** was given for **Question 4**. Some missed the mark for not giving sufficiently complete information.

Question 1

The majority of candidates provided the right response for this part and scored a mark. A few candidates gave an alternative response that it was about the life history of Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, which was not the required answer.

Question 2

Again, the majority of candidates responded well to this part. A small minority responded with, 'they went to the theatre with the general public' which was not an acceptable answer.

Question 3



This question was well attempted by most candidates. Some candidates demonstrated partial understanding and could not score the mark.

Question 4

Many candidates responded well to this comparison question and scored full marks. A number of candidates missed the information about playing the recording of the film and lost a mark as a result.

Question 5

This was well attempted by most candidates who provided two correct details. However, a small minority wrote invalid details and therefore lost at least one mark.

Question 6

Some candidates responded well to this question and scored a mark, but a good number of candidates missed the mark by writing a partial answer or not giving complete information i.e. the use of headphones and government representatives.

Exercise 2

Questions 7 – 15

The source text for the testing of multiple matching statements was an article about a special dog. Candidates were required to identify statements/sentences by matching each to the paragraph in which the idea appeared.

Nearly all candidates found this exercise accessible and achieved between 6 and 9 marks. Some candidates found **Question 14** rather challenging. A few candidates 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 the life of insects and to make brief notes under supplied headings by identifying and selecting appropriate details. Although many candidates performed well in this exercise, for some, **Question 17** was challenging.

Question 16

Nearly all candidates provided one reason for liking the ladybird. One of these reasons was that they eat herbivorous insects, which was usually provided successfully. Many candidates did not mention the other reason which was the ladybird being beautiful.

Question 17

Many candidates found this 3-part question rather challenging. They needed to reverse the format of the positive statements about insects given in the passage. They did not explain clearly what the effects would be on life due to the decrease in the population of insects. The majority explained the importance of insects rather than the effects on life. This question provided a fair amount of discrimination.

Question 18

In this question, candidates were required to provide reasons for the population growth of insects such as cockroaches. Nearly all candidates provided one correct reason about developing immunity to drugs. Many missed the other reason about their high breeding rate.

Question 19

This question was about the benefits of a naturally grown crops. Most candidates met the demand of this question and scored one or two marks by providing the appropriate answer. If the candidate missed specific information e.g. pesticide and toxic chemicals, marks could not be awarded.

Exercise 4

Question 20

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

The topic was insects and candidates were required to mention 4 specific points on two aspects which were what problems insect deficiency can cause to humans around the world and what steps can be taken to breed useful insects.

In order to score full marks for content, both aspects of the question had 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 general information about insects 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 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 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 good 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

In this exercise, candidates write a short piece of functional prose. This series, they were required to write an email to a cousin about online study. They had to include the detail given in three short prompts provided in the question. For 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 prompts. If candidates fail to cover any of the prescribed detail in the prompts, they will lose a content mark. To get the top band mark of 5 in language, the requirement is for effective use of 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 good marks for content. They provided relevant information and appropriate ideas and justified them too. Some candidates missed one point and lost a mark for content.

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 for language, there is a requirement for the candidate to use well-constructed and linked paragraphs.

Exercise 6

Question 22

In this exercise, candidates were asked to write a discursive essay of about 200 words on school uniform. The stimulus was provided in the dialogue form of 'for and against' statements which can be used as 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 by keeping the main topic title statement in focus. On the other hand, those who ignored the main topic title statement and did not weigh up or conclude the argument, could not achieve top band marks. The 'for and against' approach and the one-sided argument were equally credited.

Candidates are reminded that the key to achieving top marks for content is clear relevance to the given essay title and ensuring 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 beyond the word limit of 200 words but writing unnecessarily lengthy pieces of essays can affect the mark awarded for language.

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. کود instead of خود or خون instead of فون) then a mark is not awarded.

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

Comments on specific questions:

Exercise 1

Questions 1–8

These questions were based on eight different brief recordings. Candidates had to respond to questions, identifying the key information they gathered from them. The majority of candidates understood this task and **Questions 1, 2, 5 and 7** were very well attempted by almost all ability levels. However, a few candidates could not comprehend **Questions 3, 6 and 8** properly or reproduce the required information correctly due to their limited knowledge of the target language. The questions which proved challenging for some candidates are as follows:

Many candidates faced difficulty while answering **Question 3**. The required answer was specifically **آٹھ بجے** / **آٹھ بجے** / **آٹھ بجے** / **آٹھ بجے** and candidates who wrote **پہلے** / **پہلے** / **پہلے** / **پہلے** lost a mark because they had to mention the exact time in order to clarify that they had understood the recording adequately.

Similarly, for **Question 6**, there could be several acceptable answers that clarify what is described about his mathematics result, i.e.

اچھا نہیں / مایوس کن / کچھ خاص نہیں تھا / کارکردگی پر مایوسی

Candidates who gave ambiguous answers like اسے اگلی سیٹ پر بیٹھنا پڑے گا/مایوس/ٹیسٹ مایوس تھا etc. could not be awarded a mark as the answer does not make clear what is understood by the candidate about his mathematics result as described in the text. Candidates should be able to differentiate between the key information and secondary or extended information when answering these questions, so that they can respond accurately to the precise question asked.

Question 8 also proved a bit challenging for many lower ability candidates. They were asked which programme is not going to be aired during Ramadan i.e. ڈرامے/طویل ڈرامے. Quite a few candidates could not produce valid answers and got confused with other programmes mentioned in the recording.

Exercise 2

Question 9

Candidates had to fill in the blanks with correct words or phrases from the recording of information about Malta. There were many responses showing a very good attempt at understanding the text and writing correct spellings of required answers. **Question 9c** was answered exceptionally well by all ability levels. Although all feasible phonetic attempts at answers were accepted as long as the meaning remained the same, many candidates found the spellings of انگریزی/عربی/صفائی 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, such as صاف ستھرا/ صاف پانی for **Question 9h**.

Question 9b was wrongly answered by some candidates because the answer required inference. In the recording it was mentioned that the area of Malta is a bit larger than Hyderabad; whereas, the sentence which needed completing presented the two cities the other way round. These candidates did not pay full attention to either the recording or question; therefore, they gave the wrong answer that Hyderabad is a bit larger than Malta.

Question 9d and **9h** needed simple and straightforward answers (موسم، صفائی), but quite a few candidates could not find suitable words to convey the correct information and gave ambiguous answers.

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 stories. 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 many candidates 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 carefully write their answers 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 radio interview with a hockey player about her journey of achievements. Candidates were given three different answers for each of eight questions, and they were required to identify the correct answers with a tick. This part was also very well attempted by the majority of candidates, and they scored good marks. However, some lower ability candidates faced difficulty in understanding some questions or identifying the required information. **Question 14** was misunderstood by quite a few candidates where they were asked (according to the person being interviewed) what she relied upon for her success in the competition. Candidates who could not understand the recording properly, selected a wrong answer instead of option B (her courage) and lost a mark. Candidates who ticked more than one answer for any question, also lost a mark, as they are expected to

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education
0539 Urdu as a Second Language June 2023
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

choose only one correct response. If they change their mind later, they must strike through the previous tick and clearly indicate which option they have chosen as their answer.

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 submitted recordings for moderation.

The majority of candidates seemed to be 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 candidates can be 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 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. Examiners should ask short and clear open-ended questions so that candidates can show their potential. This task should take 3 to 4 minutes in total and the examiner should end the Topic conversation by saying 'we are now moving on to Part 3 of the test.' 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 one topic from topic areas A to B is covered as well as one 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, festivals, education and future plans. However, some examiners tried to cover more than 3 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.