

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 a required format.

In general, questions requiring simple and straightforward answers were well attempted, while the answers to more stretching questions needed to contain precise detail.

In **Exercise 1, 2 and 3**, candidates do not have to write their answers in full sentences as long as the meaning is clear. The quality of language is not assessed in these exercises.

In **Exercise 2**, complete accuracy and precise/brief information is required when completing the personal details on the form.

In **Writing**, candidates need to ensure that answers fulfil the requirements of tasks as well as allowing for development of ideas. Candidates should demonstrate the ability to employ a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Here, writing conventions such as logical paragraphing and accurate punctuation should be adhered to.

In **Exercise 4 and 6**, marks are awarded both for content and for language.

General comments

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this examination in IGCSE Urdu as a Second Language. The majority of candidates appeared to understand what was expected for each exercise and attempted all the tasks in the paper.

The overall performance on this component was encouraging. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, showing overall good understanding of the passages. In **Exercise 6** almost all the candidates were able to write with some fluency and express their opinions. Many of the written pieces were lively and interesting to read.

If candidates need to write beyond the given answer space it is preferable for them to use the blank pages available in the original exam booklet rather than using additional booklets.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – Questions 1–6

The presented text was an advertisement for language courses, comprising specific and detailed information. The majority of candidates answered these questions successfully and achieved reasonably good marks.

Question 1

Most candidates responded correctly. A few, who wrote 'Arabic and Persian' instead of the required answer 'Arabic', lost a mark. Candidates are reminded that if they do not provide the precise information and write extra irrelevant details then the answer can become invalid.

Question 2

Question 2 proved to be a good differentiator. The correct answer was 'for admission to the right level' but some wrote 'to test their ability'.

Question 3

The majority of candidates successfully understood the question and selected the right detail which was 'for beginners/basic level'. A small minority offered 'beginners to GCSE level' and lost the mark.

Question 4

Most candidates scored a mark for this question; only a small minority were not able to identify the right detail about the course fee.

Questions 5 and 6

Nearly all candidates did well in these questions and scored marks.

Exercise 2

Question 7

In this exercise, candidates are required to transfer information from the provided text and enter specific related details on a form template.

The text was based on the life and achievements of musician Allan Faqeer and candidates were required to complete seven specific details on the form. Many candidates attempted this successfully and achieved good marks. However, there were some candidates who misunderstood one or two parts (**7(a)**, **7(c)** and **7(f)**).

Some less able candidates got confused and chose the distractors or other information from the text for their answers. Candidates are advised to provide brief and precise details (e.g. for **7(b)** just 'drumming') rather than writing long sentences.

Exercise 3

Questions 8 – 9 ((a), (b))

In Exercise 3, candidates are required to make brief notes under given headings relating to the provided text. Some candidates found aspects of this note-making exercise challenging.

Question 8

The majority of candidates understood the task and answered well by selecting three correct options about the advantages of having good hobbies. A small number of candidates gave their own opinions or unrelated details.

Question 9

- (a) This part of the question proved to be a good differentiator. There were three possible answers in the mark scheme. Many candidates supplied one incomplete detail, writing '*fragrance and smell*'. The word *fruit/taste of fruit* was missing in this answer. Other candidates offered the incorrect answer about the facility of smoking Sheesha in various restaurants. Nonetheless, some candidates scored two marks by providing the accurate details from *taste of fruit and its fragrance*, *low level of nicotine* and *less chance of becoming addicted*.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to provide the two effects of Sheesha smoking. One mark was awarded for the correct detail about *increasing benzene and carbon dioxide (both) in the body* and the other accepted answer was any *illness* caused by this.

Exercise 4

Question 10

In this exercise, candidates are required to write a summary on an aspect of a given passage. For this summary, up to six marks are available for content and four marks for language.

This year most candidates appeared to be well-prepared for the requirements of this exercise and overall the quality of performance has improved. The majority of candidates wrote with precision using their own words and kept their answers within the specified word limit. Many candidates achieved good marks for language.

A small minority lost most or some content marks for either exceeding the word limit or limiting the points or for not focusing on 'the use of onions in diet and health'. There were some cases where candidates just copied the introductory and background details about onions e.g. harvesting, shapes and variety/colour from the first paragraph which were not specific to the focus of 'the use of onions in diet and health'. Points identified needed to be specific and clear. It was obvious from some responses that a small number of candidates had little or no experience of writing a focused and concise summary. They wrote at length and included a lot of unnecessary information.

In this exercise, candidates need to make sure that they read the whole text/article carefully and give the specific information required and relevant to the summary title. Candidates should be also reminded that if they rely heavily on lifting/copying the text for their summary, they are unlikely to achieve good marks for language.

Exercise 5

Questions 11 – 17

This exercise is about recognising, understanding and distinguishing facts and ideas from the given information in the text. Candidates are required to answer a series of questions testing detailed comprehension of an extended passage.

The majority of candidates were able to provide accurate responses and receive good credit. The text was based on a selection of interesting information about Cambridge. Candidates who performed well demonstrated good understanding of the question requirements and answered by providing accurate details.

For the majority of candidates, Questions 11, 12, 13 and 15 proved to be accessible and many gained quite good marks.

Question 14

Question 14, which focused on what was special about Cambridge buildings, proved to be a good differentiator. The majority of candidates missed the right detail which was their *architectural style* and instead gave other irrelevant details.

Questions 16 and 17

Most candidates managed to score at least one of the available marks for Questions 16 and 17 which were about a cultural fair and transport. The most able candidates scored full marks for both questions.

Exercise 6

Question 18

The topic '*Cyber Bullying*' in social media was handled well by the vast majority of candidates and they wrote reasonably well. The best compositions integrated interesting points and logical arguments as well as employing appropriate register/style and utilising a variety of language structures. Many candidates used the suggested prompts/bullet points to organise the information and reasoning to write about general and their own personal experiences. There were others who decided to write on the given theme using their own direction. Both approaches were acceptable.

Many responses successfully met the assessment criteria and scored high marks for content and language. They fulfilled the task with consistently appropriate register. They provided relevant information and ideas and justified them too. The language used was of good quality and a wide range of vocabulary employed. The strongest candidates used idioms/proverbs effectively and varied vocabulary to make the writing enjoyable for the reader. There was noticeable improvement in the organisation and layout of written pieces and especially in the formation of paragraphs.

A small minority did not manage this task well and just wrote about school or common bullying, street bullying or media in general and they scored lower marks. A few written pieces barely had any relevance to the topic.

Candidates are reminded that the key to achieving high marks for content is clear relevance to the given task title. In addition, ideas need to be fully developed, opinions expressed and points justified with examples and reasons. The written account should sustain the reader's interest. Similarly, in order to get top language marks candidates they should try to employ a variety of verbs, use varied and accurate language structures as well as some idioms/proverbs. They should attempt to organise their ideas in well-structured paragraphs that have clear links with each other. Candidates should avoid using English written words, though transcribed words for certain names and places are permissible.

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 part, be careful to respond to all parts
- always attempt an answer rather than leaving a blank space

General comments

Many candidates appeared to be well prepared for this examination and responded adequately to the questions. This paper assesses 'listening for understanding' and therefore 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 such a way as to form another word that changes the meaning (e.g. مابین/مہرین instead of ماہرین or ذہین instead of ذہن), a mark cannot be awarded. As there is no restriction about the use of Urdu or English 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 Question 1–6

These questions were based on six different brief recordings. Candidates had to respond to questions using the key information they gathered from them. The majority of candidates performed well in this part. Candidates should be able to differentiate between the key information and distractor information when answering these questions, e.g. **Question 2** required the response that Imran likes to watch کشتی (wrestling). Some candidates were distracted by the additional information that he also likes to play cricket, and thus gave a wrong answer. **Question 3** proved challenging for a large majority of candidates who could not comprehend the word کھیل due to their limited vocabulary.

Exercise – 2 Question 7

For this exercise, candidates had to fill in the blanks in the form with correct information from a speech about the importance of sleep. There were many responses that showed a very good understanding of the source text and the questions. However, some candidates found the spellings of اعضاء، ماہرین etc. rather challenging.

Question 7(e) required the percentage of people who sleep for less than four hours on Sunday nights, according to a survey. A large majority of candidates, particularly from the lower and middle ability range, either could not understand the meaning of چھپتے (56), or misunderstood the question and wrote 25% (which was the percentage of the people who cannot sleep properly on Sunday nights, according to the survey). Similarly, **Question 7(f)** was not properly understood by a number of candidates and they could not give a suitable answer. Careful and consistent marking allowed only feasible phonetic attempts as answers to be accepted.

Exercise 3 – Question 8–13

This exercise required candidates to change the underlined expressions into correct ones from listening to the recording of a report about extravagant wedding celebrations. Generally, candidates scored well in this task. **Question 10** was answered exceptionally well by all candidates; whereas the majority of lower ability candidates struggled to answer **Questions 12** and **13**. A large number of candidates wrote پیار محبت ہائے instead of رشتوں, which does not convey the required meaning. When changing the underlined expression, the candidates must carefully select a word that fits grammatically in the sentence as well as giving the required information.

Exercise 4 – Question 14–20

Candidates had to answer comprehension questions based on the recording about the invention and use of the 'rickshaw'. For this part, candidates are expected to write their answers in a complete sentence. The allocation of marks for each question corresponds with the number of details required. Although there were many candidates who displayed a good understanding of the recording and questions, it was observed that some candidates faced difficulty in understanding and responding with the required information.

Question 14 was based on how the idea of making a rickshaw had developed. The answer specifically had to be that it was 'due to the physical disability of the inventor's wife'. Many candidates successfully answered the question but a few candidates – mostly from lower ability level – could not score a mark as they only offered 'for disabled people' or 'to assist his wife'.

Question 15, which was worth two marks, was relatively straightforward. Candidates were required to write the difference between the first two forms of rickshaw. The answer was that the first was pulled by man (on foot) and the second was pulled by a bicycle. Although this question was answered well by most candidates, due to their limited understanding of the question, some candidates gave only one response or failed to identify correctly which form came first and which came second.

Question 16 had two parts – *who* proposed the ban on these rickshaws, and *why*. This question proved quite challenging for most candidates and only the strongest could give the correct answer:

انسانی حقوق کی تنظیموں نے ظالمانہ عمل قرار دے کر ان پر پابندی کی درخواست کی۔ Candidates who wrote only انسانی حقوق نے for the first part or محنت/مشقت کا کام for the second part could not be awarded marks as these answers do not convey the meaning accurately.

Question 20 was worth one mark. Candidates were asked why a rickshaw-like vehicle is being used in London. The answer was شوقیہ طور پر استعمال کی جاتی ہے۔ Candidates who wrote شوقیہ طور پر/شوخ سے lost a mark as the answer did not clearly show that the question had been understood correctly.

URDU AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

0539/05
Speaking

Key messages

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

- Choose a particular aspect of a topic rather than deal superficially with a wide area for **Part 1**.
- Be prepared for spontaneous discussion in **Part 2** leading on from the presentation.
- **Part 3**: hold a conversation on general topic areas led by the Examiner.

Examiners should:

- Ask questions which allow the candidate to access the full range of marks indicated in the mark scheme.
- Discuss the areas mentioned in the presentation.
- Try not to be over cautious when awarding marks.
- Make sure that all administrative procedures for the conduct of the exam have been followed closely.

Examiners should not allocate topics in the exam room and expect candidates to prepare there.

General comments

Assessment

In general, Examiner assessments were close to the agreed standard. In a small number of Centres, the differences between the Examiner's and Moderator's marks were significant and marks had to be adjusted. Examiners should ensure that they follow all the required administrative procedures and apply the assessment criteria consistently. Where the examination is not conducted according to the guidelines, it can result in differences in the award of marks.

Recordings and documentation

The June 2017 test recordings were audible and in most cases the time limits were adhered to. The accompanying paperwork was generally clear and accurate. Both were, on the whole, in line with good practice.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1: Presentation

Most of the topics presented by candidates were appropriate according to syllabus requirements. The most popular areas were daily routine, holidays, festivals and moving to a new country. Some candidates took a very general approach and tried to deal superficially with a very wide area, for example, self-help and helping others. It may be better for candidates to be advised to choose one particular aspect of a wider topic. This could be an area in which they have a personal interest, or in which they have some experience, so that they are able to share their opinions and ideas. This worked well for many candidates who chose specific topics and were, therefore, able to develop the conversation through their personal interest in the subject.

Well before the examination, candidates must select and prepare a topic for presentation which reflects aspect(s) of life in an Urdu speaking community or an Urdu speaking culture. The Examiner conducting the

exam should be aware of the selected topics of their candidates to prepare appropriate questions in order to lead an interesting discussion and adhere to the time limit set for each part.

In general, candidates should provide an overview of their chosen topic rather than include a significant amount of detail. This will help them to stay within the suggested 2–3 minute time limit, and prevent them from rushing in order to try to fit in a great deal of content.

This year, candidates presented on a wide range of topics which was positive, and most Centres conducted this part appropriately. Please note, however, it is not appropriate to ask candidates to select a topic in the examination room and then present that topic after a short interval. This puts the candidate at a distinct disadvantage as compared with other candidates who have had the time to prepare their topic beforehand.

Part 2: Discussion

The Examiner should encourage the development of ideas during the conversation by asking appropriate and specific questions on the subjects mentioned within the presentation. Sometimes the questions asked by Examiners did not encourage this kind of development of ideas. Nonetheless, some Centres did really well to prepare their candidates.

Examiners should encourage candidates to provide responses by asking them open questions which encourage discussion in line with the mark scheme. This would enable candidates to meet the required criteria to achieve high marks, where they are sufficiently prepared. If these questions are not asked, then marks cannot be awarded. In a few instances, candidates achieved low marks, partly because detailed discussion was not prompted by the very general nature of the questions they were asked.

Part 3: General conversation

In this section, the candidate and Examiner should engage in a conversation which lasts between 3 and 4 minutes. The Examiner may begin this section by asking straightforward questions about the area of interest, and then move on to develop the discussion/conversation of different topic areas, in depth. Examiners need to be ready to react to what candidates say and lead the discussion on to new and unexpected areas. It is vital that candidates prepare for discussion on several topics for this section, and are also able to engage actively in the conversation as it develops.