

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 **Exercises 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 this exercise.
- In **Exercise 2**, complete accuracy and precise/brief information is required when completing the 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 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 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.

This year the entry increased and there was a greater diversity in the quality of the candidature. Nonetheless, the overall performance on this component was encouraging. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, displaying good understanding of the source passages. In **Exercise 6**, almost all the candidates were able to write with some fluency and express their opinions. Many of the written compositions were distinctive and interesting to read.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – Questions 1–6

The source text was an advertisement about the Haidri Cargo service, comprising specific and detailed information. Most candidates answered these questions successfully and achieved reasonably good marks.

Question 1

Nearly all candidates responded accurately.

Question 2

The majority of candidates responded well to this question and provided exact detail.

Question 3

Question 3 proved to be a good differentiator. The majority of candidates did not pay attention to the question and wrote all the qualities of the service instead of the specific information required. Candidates are reminded that if they do not provide the right/precise information and include extra irrelevant details the answer can become invalid.

Question 4

Most candidates scored a mark for this question; some candidates were not able to identify the right detail (30 kg) and repeated the amount which was mentioned in the question (1 kg).

Question 5

Nearly all candidates did well on this question and scored a mark.

Question 6

Most candidates answered accurately although some could not provide the exact detail and lost the mark.

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 a famous cricket player, Syed Zaheer Abbas Karmaani. Candidates were required to fill in seven specific details on the form. The majority of candidates attempted this successfully and gained between five and seven marks. However, there were some candidates who misunderstood one or two parts (particularly **7(c)** and **7(e)**) and therefore lost marks.

Less able candidates got confused and chose the distractors or other information from the text for their answers. Candidates are reminded that this is form-filling exercise and they are advised to provide brief information and precise detail (e.g. for **7(b)** just *golf*) rather than including extra information and writing in 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. The first part of this exercise proved to be more challenging; in contrast, the second part was well attempted by candidates.

Question 8

Some candidates found this question challenging. General information relating to the aesthetics was needed; however, many candidates concentrated on the general qualities of mustard and its uses.

Question 9

- (a) The majority of candidates selected two correct options and scored full marks. A few candidates missed one or two uses of mustard oil or wrote some other irrelevant details, and therefore lost marks.
- (b) Many candidates met the demands of this question. A small minority did not give two exact medical qualities of mustard seeds or wrote something else instead of 'cancer' and 'asthma'.

Exercise 4 – Question 10

In this exercise, candidates are required to write a summary on an aspect of a given passage. They have to identify relevant points from the whole text (taking all paragraphs into account) and present them in 100 words in an appropriate summary format and structure. Up to six marks are available for content and up to four marks for are available for language.

Most of the candidates appeared to be well-prepared for the requirements of this exercise and the overall quality of performance was good as most adhered to the word limit and avoided lifting sections from the original text. The majority provided the precise details/points on the benefits of the magic stick, using their own words and they kept their summary within the specified word limit. Many candidates gained good marks for language.

However, there were some cases where candidates just copied the introductory and background details of the ordinary walking stick and lost content marks for not mentioning points relating to the *magic stick* within the required word limit. It was obvious from some written responses that a number of candidates had very limited knowledge of summary writing. These candidates just wrote unnecessary and lengthy information without paying attention to the focus of the question. Some also lost language marks due to lifting substantial sections from the original text.

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. Candidate should also be reminded that if they rely heavily on lifting/straight copying from 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 text was based on the informative topic of *Medical advice and the internet*. The majority of candidates were able to provide accurate responses and receive good credit. Candidates who performed well demonstrated good understanding of the question requirements and answered by providing accurate details.

Questions 14 and 17 proved to be more challenging for some candidates.

Exercise 6 – Question 18

In this exercise, candidates were asked to write an essay on their *Favourite film or TV programme*. The task was handled well by the majority of candidates and they wrote well. The best compositions integrated interesting, logical and descriptive accounts while also employing appropriate register/style and a variety of language structures. Many candidates used the suggested prompts/bullet points to organise the information. Other candidates chose to write on the given topic in their own format. Both approaches were acceptable. There was a noticeable improvement in the organisation and layout of compositions and especially in the formation of paragraphs.

The vast majority of written responses met assessment criteria and scored high marks for content and language. They fulfilled the task with consistently appropriate register. They provided relevant information and appropriate ideas and justified them too. The language used was of good quality, wide range of vocabulary used. Nearly all candidates used paragraphs. Only very few candidates used idioms/proverbs effectively and some of the most able candidates used good phrases to make it enjoyable for the reader. A small minority did not manage this task well by just writing on Films or TV programmes in general.

It has been noticed that those candidates who took advantage of using the suggested given bullet prompts for their planning, provided excellent written pieces and gained good marks. Although not mandatory, the bullet points are designed to draw relevant detail and ideas/opinions/suggestions which are the main requirements of content marks.

Candidates are reminded that the key to get top marks in contents is clear relevance to the given task title and to make 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 they should make sure that a variety of verbs, good language structures, idioms/proverbs and suitable accurate vocabulary is provided all way through. For this they should also layout their ideas in well-structured paragraphs that have clear links with each other. The candidates should also avoid using English written words, though transcribed words for certain names and places are permissible.

If candidates have overflow of writing due to not having enough space for their essay, for the sake of continuity it would be best to use blank pages available in the original exam booklet instead of using additional booklets/sheets.

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

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; however, some candidates could not perform well due to their limited exposure to the target language. This paper is assessed for '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. اونٹ instead of اون or تشریح instead of تشبیہ), then a mark cannot be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 : Questions 1–6

These questions were based on six different brief recordings. The candidates had to respond to questions regarding the key information they gathered from them. The majority of candidates performed well on this task. **Questions 1 and 2** were well attempted by almost all ability levels. For **Question 3** both answers were necessary to qualify for one mark. Candidates who missed either of the two بچلی/گیس could not be awarded a mark. Candidates should also be able to differentiate between the key information and extended information while answering these questions, so that they can respond accurately to the questions posed. **Question 4** proved challenging for many candidates who could not comprehend or reproduce the word اُون and gave incorrect answers.

Exercise 2: Question 7

Candidates had to fill in the blanks on the form with correct information from the recording of information about a bird. There were many responses that showed a very good understanding of the recording and the questions. Although marking allowed all feasible phonetic attempts at answers to be accepted as long as the meaning is not changed, many candidates found the spellings of گجور، جھنڈ، تشبیہ etc. quite challenging. Some candidates, especially from the lower ability level, lost marks when they misspelled the required answers in such a way as to create words with different meanings. It is very important for teachers to equip candidates with enough practice in writing and with a sound knowledge of standard Urdu vocabulary so that they do not lose marks for writing words which are illegible or incomprehensible when they know the correct answers.

Exercise 3: Questions 8–13

This exercise required candidates to replace the underlined expressions with correct ones. The source recording was a report about Dubai. Generally, candidates scored well in this task. **Question 10** was answered exceptionally well by all levels; whereas quite a few lower ability candidates struggled to answer **Questions 8** and **12**. When changing the underlined expression, candidates must carefully select a word that fits in grammatically in the sentence as well as providing the required information. It was observed during marking that a few candidates who generally performed well in the rest of the paper did not understand the requirements of **Exercise 3** at all, and instead of changing the words in a way to give correct information, answered by writing صحیح/غلط .

Exercise 4: Questions 14–20

Candidates had to answer short questions based on the recording of a lecture about current fashion trends. For this exercise, candidates are expected to write their answers in a complete sentence. Allocation of marks for each question corresponds with the number of details required for each question. Although there were many candidates who displayed a good understanding of the recording and questions, it was observed that quite a few candidates faced difficulty in understanding the questions and selecting the required information.

Question 16 was worth two marks and candidates had to write two important factors which are neglected by odd fashion trends, i.e. 'geography' and 'climate'. The question was not fully understood by some candidates who tried to give their own views or wrote that media or designers are responsible.

Question 18 which was worth one mark was straightforward. The candidates were asked to write what sort of people must think sensibly before purchasing designer goods. The answer was 'those who have financial issues/problems', but many candidates wrote 'common people' (عام لوگ) which was not acceptable.

Question 19 had two parts for one mark each. Candidates were required to give two specific reasons for the parents' concern regarding their children. The answer, as detailed in the recording, was

بچوں میں فیشن کا شوق اور ڈیزائنرز اشیاء کا جنون / پسند . Many candidates were either unable to give accurate answers or gave only one detail and thus lost marks.

Question 20 was worth one mark. It asked about the recommendation in the lecture that the parents are suggested to consider, i.e. not to ingrain a habit of using only designer goods in children from an early age. Very few candidates could manage to give the required answer; and a large majority wrote that parents need to correct their own behaviour or that they should not let children follow fashion at all. They lost a mark as the answer did not show that the question had been understood correctly.

URDU AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 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 be over cautious when awarding marks.
- Make sure that specification guidelines and procedures have been followed to conduct the examination correctly.

Examiners should not give topics in the exam room and ask 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. Significant differences in the final marks awarded by the Examiner and the Moderator can be caused by unwarranted additional marks under a few of the criteria. Where the examination is not conducted according to the guidelines set within the specification, it can result in differences in the award of final marks.

Recordings and documentation

The June 2018 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 selected for presentation were home life, daily routine, hobbies, internet, holidays and the importance of time. 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 is 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 their topic for presentation, which must reflect an 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 in order to prepare appropriate questions to lead an interesting discussion and adhere to the time limit set for each part. A wide range of topics were covered by candidates which was an interesting and positive development.

Examiners are reminded, however, that it is not acceptable 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.

In general, candidates should take a broad approach to their presentations, and provide an overview of their chosen topic. This will help them to stay within the suggested 2–3 minute time limit, and prevent them from rushing at the end in order to fit in a great deal of content.

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. Some centres, nonetheless, 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 enables 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

At least two topics were covered from A–B and area one from C–E by most candidates which was interesting and positive.

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 into new and unexpected areas. It is vital that candidates prepare for discussion on several topics for this section, and are also able to engage in the conversation as it unfolds.