

FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 0508/01_Arabic
Reading

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FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 0508/01_English
Reading

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to spend some time checking their answers for grammatical accuracy and spelling errors.
- Candidates should ensure they use their own language in summarising the text.

General comments

Performance this year ranged from good to very good overall, with some candidates presenting impressive performances in all aspects. Texts were accessible to candidates, and many were able to capture the main ideas in their summary. There were few scripts with no responses to both questions.

Some candidates used colloquial Arabic in answers, and their language contained many spelling and grammatical errors as well as awkward structures.

Comments on specific questions

The sub-questions were based on text 1. They covered a variety of points and tested different levels of ability.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question successfully.
- (b) Overall, performance on this question was good but many candidates only gave a partial response. An incorrect answer seen was 'لا نكون مثل النعامة تُخفي رأسها في الرمال'.
- (c) Most candidates answered this question successfully.
- (d) This question was answered well by many candidates, but other candidates answered the first point to do with الاحترام but missed the second, which was الجَدُّ.
- (e) Only stronger candidates answered this correctly and many others did not cite the evidence correctly. Some candidates did not give the correct response and others started with the correct phrase 'عن تلك السمات التي جعلت' but did not qualify it with 'منها مدارس ممتازة'.
- (f) Many candidates answered this question correctly.
- (g) Many candidates missed the focus in the question on the key phrase 'برأي الكاتب' about education reforms and gave different answers, such as 'نظرية حشو الأدمغة بالمعلومات البعيدة عن الحياة'، 'بعض مدارسنا أهملت واجبها في تكوين تلاميذها تكويناً خُلقيّاً'، 'العملية'.
- (h) Performance was very good overall, as most candidates answered the question correctly, capturing the two required points. Some weaker candidates captured only one point.



- (i) There was a good performance on this question overall and many candidates correctly gave the three required points. Others only gave two correct points.
- (j) Most candidates answered the first point about 'الأخلاق' or 'التكوين الخلقى', but they did not capture the second point about 'المناهج' or 'تطوير المناهج'. Instead, they used alternatives for the first point like 'تقدير الأساتذة' and 'احترام الأساتذة'.
- (k) Performance was good overall, but a number of candidates were unsuccessful in answering this question. Some gave answers like: 'التعاون بين الأساتذة والطلاب' and 'جعل الحب والتشويق والاتصال المباشر بالحياة العامة'.

Accuracy

Many candidates showed a high level of accuracy in their use of language, with few spelling and grammatical errors. Candidates understood the questions and delivered direct answers correctly. Only a few candidates lifted whole chunks of text to get to the answers, demonstrating weak understanding of some questions.

However, many candidates used their own language, rephrasing the sentences from the texts.

Question 2

Content

Performance on the summary section was good overall, with some impressive performance by a good number of candidates. The observation is that many candidates found both texts accessible and relevant to their experience in education.

Overall, the performance in capturing the main ideas of the texts ranged from average to excellent. There were a few candidates who wrote generic summaries unrelated to the texts and used irrelevant points or themes, which demonstrated weak comprehension skills.

Style and Organisation

Many candidates used meaningful introductions and conclusions and presented their summary in thematic paragraphs, using good linking words and phrases that were applied correctly in context, some of which were of high standard, for example:

لطالما، مما لا شك فيه، ناهيك عن، من الجدير بالذكر، علاوة على ذلك، ختاماً.

In addition, many candidates adhered to the word limit and were able to summarise the main ideas within this constraint.

Accuracy

In the summary of both texts, many candidates used appropriate vocabulary and a range of good grammatical structures, some of which was complex and, in some cases, higher than the required level (see examples below). There were many very accurate summaries seen. However, there were some candidates whose language contained minor/major grammatical errors, such as in noun-adjective agreement, non-human plural agreement, subject-verb agreement, 'idafa' phrases and the use of the accusative case after كان and its sisters, or when the word is in the object position (see examples below) and the use of colloquialisms. This sometimes made their summary hard to follow due to an unclear focus and persistent errors. In addition, the wrong preposition was often used with some verbs (see below).

Examples of the use of own words:

- يجب الاقتداء بالمدارس الناجحة
- تُحَقِّز الأخلاق
- التعاطف والرحمة

- اختيار ما يُشير اهتمامهم (أي الطلبة)
- مُجارة الأمم المتقدّمة
- عليهم التمعّن أثناء دراسة حال المدارس
- غرر بُدور الأخلاق في جيلنا الحالي

Examples of complex and strong structures:

- نبّه الكاتبان إلى ضرورة إصلاح النظام التعليمي وذلك من خلال عدة محاور، أهمها التركيز على علاقة الطالب والمعلم، إذ يجب أن تمتلئ بالحب والاحترام والتعاون.
- يجب الاستمرار بتحديث وتجديد وسائل وطرق التعليم نظراً إلى التغيير المستمر في مطالب وحاجات زمننا هذا.
- يُصلح حال النظام التعليمي من خلال تعاون المفكرين والمسؤولين وحتى المتعلمين وإدراك حجم المشكلة الحقيقي، والاتفاق على الطرق الصحيحة ذات العقبات الممكن تجاوزها.

Examples of weak structures/grammatical errors:

- هناك مشكلات كثير
- الطلاب لم يُركّز في الدرس
- لا بد الحكومة أن يُوظّف مدرسات جيّد
- يساعد على بلوغ الحياة المنشود
- ابن النجار الذي يعمل في الدكان أبيه
- يجب من المفكرين والمدرسين أن يتطلعون
- يُعتبر الإصلاح مُهم
- إذ أنها تُشكّل خطر كبير على المجتمع

Examples of using the wrong preposition:

- يجب التخلّي على نظرية حشو الأدمغة
- وليس أن يركزون عن فهم معطيات الدرس
- بالإضافة على

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Paper 0508/02_Arabic
Writing

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Paper 0508/02_English
Writing

Key messages

To do well on this paper, candidates need to:

- Read the question thoroughly first and try to understand what the task is exactly then provide a relevant and precise response to what is being asked.
- Comply with the writing style of the task, so descriptive tasks should not be converted into a narrative one and an argumentative task should not be turned into a discussion (or story) between two people.
- In argumentative tasks, candidates need to argue for or against a case and not simply give the opposing opinions.
- Ensure that the description provided in descriptive tasks is meaningful and serves the purpose of the task and gives a clear picture of what is being described. Candidates should avoid side descriptions that have no purpose.
- Avoid the use of memorised introductions and conclusions that are generic unless they have direct link with the task.
- Avoid the use of colloquial and foreign words and expressions.
- Improve on the correct use of case endings. For instance, make sure that the subject is in the مرفوع case, while the predicate of كان وأخواتها and objects are in منصوب case.
- Remember that weak verbs in *majzoum* case lose the last weak letter (ى، ي، و)
- Improve on the conjugation of verbs especially with dual and feminine plural.
- Pay more attention to the difference between human and non-human plurals when applying grammatical rules.
- Pay more attention to the difference between masculine and feminine especially with the use of verbs and الأسماء الموصولة.
- Use the correct pronouns especially with prepositions: مع هو not معه، في هي not فيها. Similarly, pay close attention to the use of prepositions with verbs and remember that verbs in Arabic take different prepositions to English.
- Remember prepositions like في should not attach to the following word. We write: فالمدينة not في المدينة.
- Pay more attention to the difference between certain words that are close in pronunciation such as إلى and إلا, also لاكن not لكن / هذا not هذا.
- Be more careful when writing and distinguishing: همزة الوصل and همزة القطع.
- Improve on the writing of the همزة within and at the end of words.
- Pay more attention to the difference between الألف المقصورة and الألف الطويلة.
- Pay more attention to how to write الاسم المنقوص especially in nominative and genitive cases.
- Pay attention to the difference between التاء المفتوحة و التاء المربوطة especially with verbs.

General comments

In general, all questions proved to be very popular amongst the candidates. Though, some of these questions were slightly less popular than the others. In **Section 1, Question C** was less popular than the rest, while **Questions A and D** were slightly more popular than **Question B**. In **Section 2, Question C** was the least popular whilst all other questions were very popular.

Again, there seems to be a continuous improvement in terms of complying with the writing styles of the tasks, especially in the descriptive style where we see more candidates moving away from the habit of transforming it into a narrative style. Nevertheless, the new trouble here is while candidates are using a descriptive style, they tend to employ it to describe issues that are only secondary and do not serve in fulfilling the task. So instead of describing traditional weddings for instance (as required in the question) they engage in describing the party or the people who attend the wedding. Describing secondary issues is fine and can add strength to the writing piece but only when it is not the focus of the description. Candidates need to be advised and guided to read more descriptive works in standard Arabic by authors who are famous in this style to learn how and what to describe. There has also been a continuous improvement in terms of the use of colloquial and foreign words and expressions, as we see fewer and fewer of them in comparison to previous sessions.

Unfortunately, we still see that grammatical errors are playing a key role in obstructing candidates from accomplishing higher marks. This is especially true in the case of several candidates who are talented in terms of developing decent ideas and know how to comply with the writing style of the task, but they are let down by the frequent grammatical mistakes they make. Candidates can benefit greatly from reading aloud (supervised in class) authentic works by well-known authors, so one can get familiar with the use of the idiomatic style of Arabic which will not only improve their own style of writing but also can help them avoid obvious grammatical errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Questions A and B

The task in these two questions is to produce an argumentative essay, contending for or against an idea. In **Question A**, candidates were asked to give a clear opinion on whether life a hundred years ago was easier than our life now or the other way around, whereas, the task in **Question B** was to write an essay on whether parents have the right to read personal diaries of their children. Both questions clearly ask candidates to state their opinion on the matter and provide evidence to convince the reader of their essays. A good number of candidates who opted for these questions addressed them very well and some of them were able to produce good responses, as they argued for one view or the other. However, higher marks overall could have been achieved if grammatical accuracy had been carefully reviewed. In addition, some candidates missed the opportunity to score high marks for writing their opinion in a comparison style rather than an argumentative one. Others also employed a discursive style, so instead of arguing for one side and giving reasons for choosing their stance, they simply discussed the stances without providing where they stand and why.

Questions C and D

The task in these two questions is to produce a discursive essay, without the need to argue for or against one side. In **Question C**, candidates were asked to discuss the assumption that friendship between people from different countries cannot be successful. In **Question D**, candidates were asked to examine the truth behind the belief that technology has thwarted the youth's ability to innovate. Unsurprisingly, the latter question proved to be very popular amongst candidates, as they were able to link it directly to their day-to-day lives. Generally speaking, a good number of those who opted for these questions were able to highlight a series of relevant points and made a clear attempt to develop some of them. However, as it seems to always be the case, marks could have been significantly higher had the language level matched the level of the content.

Section 2

Questions A and B

The task in these two questions is to produce a descriptive essay, in which candidates are expected to give a vivid, detailed description of something, such as a place or an object, showing their ability to use the language in an original and creative manner, to convey to the reader a memorable image of whatever they are describing. In **Question A**, candidates were asked to describe traditional weddings in their countries and the general atmosphere during these weddings. In **Question B**, the task was to describe a book exhibition that took place in the city. Both questions drew large interest, although the former was slightly more popular. In general, there is a continuous improvement in using the descriptive style compared to previous sessions,



as a good number of candidates were able to deliver a very nice description using a good selection of interesting ideas and images with a range of details. Yet, some candidates missed the opportunity for scoring higher marks by drifting away from the descriptive task by telling a story. Also, several candidates were unable to avoid some basic grammatical errors which affected their marks negatively.

Questions C and D

The task in these two questions is to produce a narrative essay, in which candidates are expected to write a story that has an introduction, plot, characters, setting, climax, and conclusion. The story needs to be in a clear and eye-catching language and a satisfying pace. The task in **Question C**, was to write a story that illustrates the benefits of being patient at work, while in **Question D**, candidates were asked to write a story ending with the expression '*and only at that point I understood what my grandmother told me*'. The latter question proved to be more popular and that is maybe because it gives more freedom to choose a desired topic than the former which has a precise topic. Overall, there is a clear improvement in terms of understanding the meaning of narrative writing as stories were easy to follow with a good pace and developed smoothly. Many candidates were able to link their stories (especially the latter) to their day-to-day life. There were some very nice stories with good imagination in developing the details of the events. Then again, there were some candidates who tried to produce various stories, but their stories lacked a real climax and were purely an account of a series of incidents. In some writings, the events throughout the stories were not developed logically which prevented these stories from running smoothly. Again, marks could have been significantly higher in some cases, had the language level matched the level of the content.