

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 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 form-filling.

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 required for each exercise and they attempted all the tasks in the paper.

This year, there was a wider range of candidate ability evident. The overall performance on this component was encouraging. Most candidates did well in the reading exercises, displaying good understanding of the reading passages. In **Exercise 6** many candidates were able to write with some fluency and express their opinions clearly. Many of the written compositions were subjective, distinctive and interesting to read.

Comments on exercises/specific questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1–6

The stimulus text was '**A poetry evening for Urdu lovers**', and it included precise and detailed information. The majority of candidates answered the questions relating to this exercise successfully and achieved good marks. A small minority chose incorrect answers.

Question 1

The required response was 'Urdu lovers'. Most candidates understood the task and selected the correct answer. A small minority chose wrong answers e.g. 'for family and friends' and could not achieve the mark.

Question 2, 3 and 4 were answered successfully by the majority of candidates.

Question 5

Most candidates selected the correct response, 'in advance', for this part. Incorrect answers included 'in the first ten days' and 'as soon as possible'.

Question 6

The majority of candidates responded well to this question. However, some missed the word 'disabled' and lost the mark.

Exercise 2

Question 7

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

The text was based on the 'Golden Era of Abdul Satar Edhi'. Most candidates attempted this successfully and gained between five and seven marks. However, there were some candidates who misunderstood some parts (particularly **7b**, **7f** and **7g**) and therefore lost marks. In **7b**, for example, the required word was 'assistant'. Candidates who wrote 'worked in a dispensary' or 'opened the dispensary' lost the mark. In **7g**, incorrect responses included 'network everywhere in Pakistan' and 'helicopter service' rather than 'quickest service'. This question proved to be a good differentiator.

Less able candidates chose the distractors or other inappropriate information for their answers. Candidates are reminded that this is a form-filling exercise and they are advised to provide brief information and precise detail rather than including additional information and writing in long sentences.

Exercise 3

Questions 8–10

For this exercise, candidates are required to make brief notes under given headings, relating to the text provided.

Question 8

The majority of candidates did well in this part of the exercise and wrote the correct answers on the effects of a balanced diet on the body. A few candidates missed a detail or included an irrelevant detail.

Question 9

Most candidates met the demands of this question. A small minority did not give two precise details of favourite drinks.

Question 10

This question proved to be quite challenging for lower ability candidates. Instead of providing two environmental reasons for the good health of inhabitants, they wrote about the social aspect or their habits e.g. not smoking and staying close to their family.

Exercise 4

Question 11

For this exercise, candidates are required to write a summary on an aspect of a given passage. They are required to identify points from the whole text, taking all paragraphs into account and present them in a 100-word summary, using an appropriate summary format and structure. Up to 6 marks are available for content and up to 4 marks are available for language.

The source passage was about automatic cars, and, for the summary, candidates were required to identify specific points on peoples' concerns/fears about automatic cars. The overall performance was satisfactory. Only some candidates were able to provide precise details of peoples' concerns, using their own words and



keeping their summary writing within the specified word limit. A small number of candidates gained zero marks or just 1 mark for content because they just copied the introductory text about the development of automatic cars or they included irrelevant details.

It was obvious from some responses that a number of candidates had very limited knowledge of summary writing. They included inappropriate and lengthy information without paying proper attention to the actual focus of the question. Some also lost language marks due to extensive lifting of language from the source text.

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

Exercise 5

Questions 12–18

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. Candidates who performed well demonstrated good understanding of the requirements of each question and answered by providing correct details.

Questions 15, 16 and 17 proved to be challenging for some candidates.

Exercise 6

Question 19

In this exercise, candidates were asked to write an essay on '**Sports competitions**'. The task was handled well by the majority of candidates. 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 and their reasoning, whereas a few chose to write on the given topic in their own format. Both approaches were equally acceptable. There was a noticeable improvement in the organisation and layout of written pieces and especially in the use of paragraphs.

The vast majority of written responses met the assessment criteria and scored good 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, with a wide range of vocabulary used. Nearly all candidates used paragraphs. A small number of candidates used idioms and proverbs effectively and some of the most able candidates used good expressive phrases to make their writing enjoyable for the reader. A small minority did not manage this task well because they just wrote very generally about sport.

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 generate relevant detail and ideas which meet the main requirements for content marks.

Candidates are reminded that the key to achieving top marks for content is clear relevance to the given 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. In order to achieve high marks for language, candidates should make sure that they employ a variety of verbs, good language structures, idioms/proverbs and suitably accurate vocabulary throughout the writing. They should also present their ideas in well-structured paragraphs which have clear links with each other. Candidates should also avoid using English words where possible, 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

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 in their understanding of the questions and their precise and to-the-point responses, and where they demonstrated good spelling, grammatical accuracy and neat and legible 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. چارستارے instead of چاندستارے or مشیروں instead of مشیروں) a mark is not 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 understood this task and **Questions 1, 2 and 6** were very well attempted by almost all ability levels. For **Question 3** the required answer was specifically دوپہر کے وقت گھر سے باہر نہ نکلیں and candidates who gave a general statement گھر سے باہر نہ نکلیں lost a mark. In **Questions 4 and 5** both elements (چاندستارے کا نشان / انڈا اور ڈیل روٹی) were necessary to respond appropriately to the question and qualify for one mark. Candidates who missed some of the detail could not be awarded a mark.

Exercise 2 – Question 7

Candidates had to fill in the blanks with correct information from the recording about the Aloe Vera plant. There were many responses which showed a very good understanding of the source text and the questions. Although marking allowed all feasible phonetic attempts at answers to be accepted as long as the meaning was not changed, many candidates found the spellings of طبی، مرہم، جراثیم etc. rather challenging. Some candidates working at a lower ability level lost marks when they confused some words with similar sounding words, for example, گئے instead of کرے.

Exercise 3 – Questions 8–13

This part required candidates to replace the underlined expressions with correct ones from listening to a report about Islamabad. Generally, candidates scored well in this task. The majority of candidates who lost marks here were those who spelled some words in a way that they changed the meaning of the sentence or made it unclear. For instance, some wrote مشیروں/مشینوں/مشوروں instead of مشیروں for **Question 8** or گام instead of گان for **Question 11**; probably due to their limited knowledge of the target language. When changing the underlined expression, candidates must carefully select a word that fits grammatically in the sentence as well as giving the required information. It is very important for teachers to equip their candidates with enough practice in transcribing the answers accurately so that they do not lose marks for writing wrong words when they know the correct answers.

Questions 9 (یونڈا ہاندی) and **13** (دست کاری) also proved quite challenging as many candidates struggled with the spellings; although marking allowed all phonetically close answers to be accepted.

Exercise 4 – Questions 14–20

Candidates had to answer short questions based on the recording of an interview with a senior woman about her views on urban and rural life. 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 for each question. 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 the questions or selecting the required information.

Question 14 was worth one mark and candidates had to write about the family tradition that Mrs. Shahnawaz likes to keep alive. The required answer was ‘visiting their village during vacations’. The candidates who only wrote ‘living in the village’ / ‘going to village’ could not be credited.

Question 16, which was worth two marks, also required specific answers. Candidates had to write about two urban facilities that differentiate cities from villages, i.e. modern hospitals (جدید ہسپتال) and institutions for advanced study (اعلیٰ تعلیمی ادارے). Candidates who only wrote ‘schools and hospitals’ lost marks for missing out the specific details.

Question 18, worth one mark, was about the biggest problem, according to the text, faced by the people who migrate from villages to cities. Some candidates either could not select the right answer or gave a general statement, i.e. unavailability of residence; whereas they had to give a specific answer, i.e. unavailability of an appropriate residence (مناسب رہائش).

Question 20 was worth two marks. It asked about the steps that government may take in order to bridge the gap between cities and rural areas. Two things are recommended in the interview:

- giving importance to every village and its problems.
- providing similar facilities for villagers as are provided in cities.

Some candidates phrased their answers in a way that both statements meant the same thing; therefore they could score only one mark for their answer.

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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.
- Hold a conversation on general topic areas led by the Examiner for **Part 3**.

Examiners should:

- Make sure that syllabus guidelines and procedures have been followed in order to conduct the examination correctly.
- Ask questions which allow the candidate to access the full range of marks indicated in the mark scheme.
- Try not to be over cautious when awarding marks.
- In **Part 2**, discuss the areas mentioned in the presentation.
- Cover at least two topics in the general conversation, one from areas A-B and one from areas C-E.
- Select topics for the general conversation which do not overlap with the content of the presentation.

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 so 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 being awarded under a few of the criteria. Where the examination is not conducted according to the guidelines set, again, this can result in differences in the award of final marks.

Recordings and documentation

The June 2019 test recordings were audible and, in most cases, time limits were adhered to. The accompanying paperwork was generally clear and accurate. On the whole, both were in line with good practice.

However, Examiners should take extra care when packaging CDs so they are not damaged in transit. Examiners should also ensure that all paper work is completed accurately.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1: Presentation

Most of the topics presented by candidates were appropriate and accorded with syllabus requirements. The most popular areas selected for presentation were home life, daily routine, hobbies, visiting different places and learning about other cultures. Some candidates took a very general approach and tried to deal superficially with a very wide area, for example, the world around us. It is better for candidates 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.

Most of the candidates selected and prepared their topics for presentation (which reflected aspect(s) of life in an Urdu speaking community or culture) well before the examination. Their presentations were well planned and well structured. They presented fluently, using a wide range of vocabulary. Some of them shared their own experiences, such as places they had visited during holidays. This kept the listener interested. The Examiner conducting the exam should be aware of the presentation 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. In this series, candidates covered a wide range of topics.

Examiners are reminded 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 time to prepare their presentation beforehand. This needs to be urgently addressed by a few centres.

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 2–3 minute time limit, and prevent them from rushing at the end in order to fit in a great deal of content. In this series, the majority of candidates managed to deliver their presentations within the required time, and they displayed excellent linguistic abilities.

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 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 generated by the general nature of the questions they were asked.

Part 3: General conversation

Most candidates covered at least two topics, one from areas A-B and one from areas C-E.

In this section, the candidate and Examiner should engage in a conversation which lasts between 3 – 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 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 able to engage in the conversation as it unfolds.