

ARABIC

Paper 0544/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Candidates coped very well with the paper and many managed to achieve good results. However, some questions posed particular problems.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

Exercise 1

Question 1:

Overall, candidates coped well with this question.

Question 2:

Overall, candidates coped well with this question.

Question 3:

Overall, candidates coped well with this question.

Question 4:

A majority of candidates coped well with this question. A few, however, thought the TV picture was a computer picture.

Question 5:

This question posed problems for several candidates, who seemed unable to identify which picture went with the verb "play".

Exercise 2

Questions 6-10:

Overall, candidates coped very well with this exercise, which seemed to pose few problems.

Exercise 3

Questions 11-16:

Candidates found this exercise more challenging. Many failed to identify the correct answer. For example, instead of referring to the kind of dish required, many candidates referred to the main title of the menu.

Exercise 4

Question 16:

Candidates coped well with this question, and in general managed to write a postcard using the headings provided.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Questions 17-21:

Overall, candidates coped very well with these questions. Most managed to answer them sometimes creatively.

Exercise 2

Question 22:

Candidates performed well, generally managing to write the letter about their school using the different points provided.

Section 3

Exercise 1

Questions 23-28:

Some candidates struggled with this exercise. There were a range of responses, and credit was given wherever students demonstrated comprehension of the text.

Exercise 2

Some candidates found this a challenging part of the paper. However, candidates who applied themselves to the task and showed their understanding and ability were given full credit for their responses.

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Paper 0544/03
Speaking

General comments

This paper is common to all candidates who follow both a Core Curriculum and an Extended Curriculum course and contains three elements: Role plays, Topic Conversation and General Conversation. The full range of marks is available to all candidates. Examiners and candidates are reminded that MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) should be used during the speaking test. In the interest of fairness to all candidates, using colloquial language or slang is not appropriate and can cause confusion.

The success of this test depends on both the Examiner and the candidate understanding their reciprocal roles. A well-prepared Examiner helps his/her candidates to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In general, the candidature displayed a high level of speaking skills and communicated well. It was a pleasure to hear the enthusiasm of candidates, many of whom, as a result of good examining and careful preparation in Centres, were able to show how well they could communicate. The ability of candidates to communicate via the spoken word is central to the IGCSE Arabic examination and, indeed, this Speaking test carries equal weighting to the other components of the syllabus.

Administration

On the whole, administration of the test was done carefully. However, a few Centres did not submit the Moderator copies of the MS1 forms, thus delaying the moderation process. A few Centres failed to show a mark in each column and wrote just a global total. Some Centres sent MS1 forms, but had failed to complete the final mark in figures and shaded only the lozenged part. A few Centres failed to check additions and transcriptions. A few Centres gave $\frac{1}{2}$ marks, which are not available, or gave more marks than are available for the Role plays. Centres are reminded to check that all clerical work is correct including checking the marks and addition of marks for each part of the test. Centres should also ensure that all tapes are clearly labelled.

Quality of recording

Most Centres sent audible and clearly recorded tapes. All equipment must be checked prior to the test – in the room where the test will take place. Recording of each candidate, once started, should be continuous: the tape should not be paused between the different sections of the test. Please ensure that both candidate and Examiner are clearly audible.

Preparation

Most Examiners are to be commended on their careful preparation of the Role plays. Some, however, had not familiarised themselves adequately with the Role plays and either miscued or missed out certain tasks. In such cases, candidates cannot be awarded marks for tasks they have not attempted. A few Centres added more tasks that exceeded the time for the Role plays. Examiners should ensure that all three sections of the test are completed. Marks cannot be awarded for a section of the test that is not attempted and Examiners who combined the Topic Conversation with the General Conversation, or completely missed out the General Conversation, disadvantaged their candidates. Although it is shown on the Working Mark Sheet that the test starts with the two Role plays, a few Centres started with the General Conversation or the Topic Conversation without mentioning on their recording what part of the test this was. Others created more tasks at the beginning of their recording, which is not required and which may confuse or disadvantage the candidates.

Application of the mark scheme

Generally, marking in Centres was close to the agreed standard and, if adjustments were necessary, these tended to be small. Where Centres required larger adjustments, this was usually due to one of the following:

- Too little time allowed for Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections.
- Failure to give candidates the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames in Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections. Candidates who do not show this cannot score more than 6 marks in Category b (linguistic quality).
- Failure to ask the candidate to speak for one or two minutes to present a topic of their choice in Topic Conversation.
- Failure to conduct the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation (candidate would not score any marks).
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the Role plays.

Most Examiners marked consistently across the range and this is important as inconsistent/erratic marking results in remarking for those candidates who were recorded.

Sampling

Samples were usually representative and covered a good range of marks. A few Centres sent the speaking test for the top candidates only. Others sent cassettes for all candidates. Centres should remember that if there are 6 or fewer candidates entered for a speaking test, they are required to send the recording for all the candidates' speaking tests. If there are more than 6 candidates entered for a speaking test component at a Centre, recordings of 6 candidates' Speaking Tests will be required and the teacher responsible for internal standardisation in the Centre for that syllabus must select the six candidates covering the whole mark range with marks spaced as evenly as possible from the top mark to the lowest mark. Where there is more than one teacher involved in the marking of the work, the sample must include approximately equal samples of the marking of each teacher.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Overall, this part was conducted correctly. Please make sure to examine each candidate in two Role plays only (A and B) and choose a different Role play card for each candidate.

Please note in the interest of standardisation and fairness to candidates, Teachers/Examiners should ensure that the candidates complete all tasks of the two Role plays without replacing any parts with alternative or different tasks. Please remember, when candidates omit a task, the Examiner should prompt them to attempt it, to give them the opportunity to work for marks. Please note, when an answer is fed to a candidate, no marks can be awarded for that element of the task. Teachers/Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation of Role plays; if incorrect cues are given, it is impossible for candidates to score marks for the task. In some cases the candidate's task depends on what the Teacher/Examiner has just said.

The mark scheme does not contain any half marks and the maximum mark for each task for the Role play is three. When the candidate makes no response or is not allowed to respond, no marks can be awarded. Please note that the Examiner must play his/her part in the Role play and should not leave the candidate to do it alone. Examiners are reminded to use the script in the Role play cards and not to create more questions. Please note, candidates are allowed 15 minutes preparation for the two situations and to keep their Role play card with them during the exam.

Section B in the Role plays is more demanding as it requires the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary. In preparation, candidates should be reminded to read the settings for these Role plays as they provide a contextualising framework. Examiners are also reminded to read the settings for each Role play at the beginning of part A and part B.

Topic (prepared) Conversation

It was a pleasure to hear a variety of interesting and lively topics, some of which were fairly ambitious and allowed the candidates to show a clear mastery of the language. A few Examiners omitted the Topic Conversation due to a lack of preparation, did not familiarise themselves with each part of the exam or did not read the Teacher's Notes carefully. One Centre did not follow the procedures of the exam and did not conduct the Topic Conversation or the General Conversation. In another case, the Examiner asked grammatical questions. Finally, please remember that the candidates must choose and prepare a topic in advance and that this topic must not be 'Myself' or 'My life'.

Please allow candidates to:

Speak for not less than one minute and not more than two minutes on their chosen topic before asking questions.

Please do not:

- Leave the candidates to talk for the whole time without asking them questions about their chosen topic.
- Ask the candidates questions about their chosen topic without allowing them to present their topic.

Examiners/Teachers are reminded that the stipulated time for the Topic Conversation is about 5 minutes.

General (unprepared) Conversation

It is recommended that general conversation covers a wide range of topic areas different from that chosen by the candidate for the topic conversation. It is better to let the conversation flow rather than ask a series of unconnected questions.

As in the Topic Conversation, a very encouraging level of performance was heard from candidates. Examiners correctly covered at least two or three topics and often managed to guide candidates beyond factual information, seeking opinions and exploring the topic where possible. Candidates had, generally, been well prepared for this section of the test. There were, however, some very short General Conversations which did not allow candidates to demonstrate the full range of their ability. Please remember to indicate when the Topic Conversation is over by telling candidates that they are now moving on to the General Conversation. Unfortunately, a few Centres did not present this final section and thus disadvantaged their candidates.

Examiners/Teachers are reminded that the stipulated time for the General Conversation is about 5 minutes.

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Paper 0544/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The question paper gave a choice of two essays, each marked out of 25: 5 marks for communication, 15 marks for language and 5 marks for general impression. The total mark for the paper was 50. The performance of the candidates spanned a wide range of ability, but the majority achieved results that were satisfactory and in a few cases somewhat more than that. Most essays were adequately focused on the topic in question and were satisfactorily structured, though many were somewhat unimaginative, and the number of outstanding scripts was fewer than in previous years.

Most candidates appeared to have sufficient knowledge of Arabic grammatical structures to enable them to complete the paper without undue difficulty, but there were a number of persistent elementary errors, including the misspelling of *wala:kin*, the treatment of *wa-* as a separate word, and a lack of attention to the accusative (*mansu:b*) ending *-an*. As in previous years, the poor quality of some candidates' handwriting (in a few cases, verging on illegibility) gave cause for concern.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question allowed a choice between two topics. A roughly equal number of candidates opted for each. In both cases, most candidates succeeded in communicating most or all of their relevant points without undue difficulty. A few candidates in **1(a)**, however, did not appear to have paid sufficient attention to the details of the information requested, and in consequence a number of answers were structurally unbalanced. In both topics, a few candidates paid insufficient attention to appropriate opening and closing phrases, and, as in previous years, some candidates lacked knowledge of the correct format for dates.

Question 2

This question allowed more scope for the candidates' imagination than the first question, and candidates adopted a variety of approaches. As in previous years, a few candidates attempted to answer the question by the exclusive use of dialogue, resulting in the use of a more limited vocabulary than would otherwise have been the case. In general, candidates adopting this approach did not do themselves justice. Other candidates devoted too large a proportion of the essay to 'scene setting', leaving themselves insufficient words to cover the material specified in the question. As in question 1, some candidates also failed to read the question carefully enough, with the result that the 'yesterday' specified on the question paper was commonly ignored. As in **Question 1**, however, most candidates succeeded in communicating at least the basic information required by the rubric, and the overall level of performance was competent.