

ARABIC

Paper 0544/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Overall, the standard of the paper is similar to last year. The general performance of candidates was good, especially in **Section 1** and part of **Section 2** where many candidates scored full or almost full marks. Most candidates attempted **Section 3**.

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this exam.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5:

These questions were mainly answered correctly. A minimum number of candidates answered one or two of these questions wrongly.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10:

Many candidates scored full marks. A few candidates made mistakes, probably because they did not read the text/questions carefully enough.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15:

This exercise proved to be very accessible to most candidates, many of whom scored full or near full marks.

Exercise 4 Question 16:

There was occasional confusion about the requirements of the task (e.g. the location required), though most candidates performed well, scoring 2/3 marks for communication and at least 1 mark for accuracy.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-24:

Most candidates coped well with this question; even the weaker ones tried to spot keywords and find the answers.

Exercise 2 Question 25:

A large number of candidates attempted this question and many candidates managed to gain good marks.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31:

Most candidates attempted all the questions, but even the stronger candidates lost marks when trying to write the correct answer to the false statements. Many candidates interpreted **Question 31** as a national project rather than a world wide project.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-38:

Most candidates understood the text and questions sufficiently to obtain a respectable score on this final exercise. Many candidates were able to comprehend the text well and to answer questions using their own similar words and were rewarded accordingly. For example in answering **Question 33** candidates who wrote that families would have a nice time together was accepted as correct because it expresses the feeling of family ties although it is not originally mentioned in the text itself. On the whole most candidates attempted this exercise well. Any mistakes there were appeared in answers to **Questions 32, 33 and 36**.

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Paper 0544/03

Speaking

General comments

This paper is common to all candidates who followed both the Core and Extended Curriculum and contains three elements: Role plays, Topic Conversation and General Conversation. The full range of marks is available to all candidates. Teachers/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 or slang language is not appropriate and can cause confusion.

The success of this test depends on both the Teacher/Examiner and the candidate understanding their reciprocal roles. A well-trained 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 pleasing to note 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. Some Centres sent MS1 forms, but had failed to complete them. Some Centres failed to check additions and transcriptions. It is important to remember that it is the Centre's responsibility to check that all clerical work is correct. Please make sure that both cassettes and boxes are labelled with examination details and that labels clearly state which candidates are to be found on which side of each cassette. Please ensure that all candidates are identified on tape and mark sheet and that their candidate number and role play card number are the same in both mark sheet and the tape. Role play card number for each candidate should be written in the mark sheet.

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. It is important to remember that all mobile phones should be turned off during examination and that any external microphone used for recording should be positioned so that both Teacher/Examiner and candidate are clearly audible.

Preparation

Most Teachers/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. Teachers/Examiners should also 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 Teachers/Examiners who combined the Topic Conversation with the General Conversation, or completely missed out the General Conversation, disadvantaged their 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:

- Short Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections.
- Failure to give candidates the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames in both the Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections. Candidates who do not show they can do this score more than 6 marks in Scale b (linguistic quality).
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the role plays.

Most Teachers/Examiners marked consistently across the range and this is important as inconsistent/erratic marking poses problems for Moderators.

Sampling

Not all samples were representative and covered a good mark range. Some Centre sent all the speaking test cassettes rather than the six candidates required covering as wide a range of ability as possible.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Please note, in the interests of international standards, Teachers/Examiners should not miss out parts of the role play tasks nor replace parts with alternative or different tasks. Candidates should be reminded to read the settings for the role plays as they provide a contextualising framework. 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. Please remember that, in some cases, the candidate's final task depends on what the Teacher/Examiner has just said.

If only one part of a task is completed, only one mark can be awarded. Please remember, the mark scheme does not contain any half marks and that the maximum mark for each task in the role play is three, but where a candidate makes no response, no marks can be awarded. The Teacher/Examiner should not offer vocabulary items or options, unless these appear in the Teachers' Notes – please let candidates work for their marks. **Section B** role plays are more demanding in that they required the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary.

Topic (prepared) Conversation

It was a pleasure to hear a range of interesting and lively topics some of which were fairly ambitious, the candidates showed a clear mastery of the language. Few Teachers/Examiners correctly stopped candidates after a minute or so, and then asked questions. Some Teachers/Examiners left the candidate to talk for most of the time, others created a problematic situation (fire or car accident) and asked the candidate to talk about it and turned it into a general conversation.

Some Teachers/Examiners were well aware of the need to ask questions which could elicit past and future tenses and did so to good advantage. Others however tended to interrupt the candidate after each sentence with a relatively low level question about what he/she had just said.

On the whole the time for the topic conversation was either too short or much longer than five minutes. In some instances the topic conversation was not chosen by the candidate and was turned into a general conversation.

General (unprepared) Conversation

It is recommended that general conversation covers a wide range of topic areas that are different from the one chosen by the candidate for the topic conversation. It is better to let the conversation flow rather than asking a series of unconnected questions. As with the topic conversation, a very pleasing level of performance was heard from candidates. Some Teachers/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 in general been well prepared for this section of the test, however there were some very short general conversations which did not allow candidates to demonstrate the full range of their ability. Teachers/Examiners should remember that it is helpful if there is a clear distinction between the topic and the general conversations. Regrettably, a few Centres did not present this final

section. Please remember, it is useful to have a bank of questions prepared so that candidates can be offered different topics for conversation. On the whole, the time for the general conversation was

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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: the majority achieved results that were satisfactory or above, though there was a greater proportion of weaker candidates than in 2006. Most essays were well focused on the topic in question and were satisfactorily structured; the best scripts were marked by a wider range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, and by a greater evidence of imagination.

Most candidates appeared to have sufficient knowledge of Arabic grammatical structures to enable them to complete the paper without undue difficulty and there are only a few particular errors to which attention needs to be drawn: these include (a) the misspelling of *wala:kin* with an *alif*; (b) lack of agreement between adjectives and nouns; (c) the use of *ha:dhihi* instead of *ha:dha*; and (d) failing to attach *wa* to the following word, leading to a split between lines. As in 2006, the poor quality of many candidates' handwriting continued to give cause for concern.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question allowed a choice between two topics. More candidates opted for **(a)** than for **(b)**, but the difference was not a marked one. In both cases, most candidates succeeded in communicating most or all of the relevant points without undue difficulty. Many candidates opting for **(a)**, however, appeared to lack knowledge of appropriate opening and closing formulae for letters, and there were also some examples of lack of 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 2006, several candidates prefaced the Arabic sentence given in the question paper with material of their own, which was not the intention of the question. As in **Question 1**, however, most candidates succeeded in communicating at least the basic information required by the rubric. In addition to a wider range of vocabulary and grammatical constructions, the better essays were also marked by evidence of imagination, and overall, the level of performance was generally competent.