

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

On the whole, candidates' performance was good. **Section 1** was answered particularly well. In **Section 2**, many candidates demonstrated their command of a range of vocabulary, but spelling and grammatical errors were common in candidates' responses. Many candidates struggled with **Section 3** in terms of using correct vocabulary and structures.

Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing short letters/e-mails and in answering comprehension exercises; this can also help to consolidate the grammar structures and vocabulary that has been studied during the course.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1–15

In general, these questions were tackled well by the majority of candidates.

Question 16

Some candidates struggled to provide an adequate response to this question. Responses often contained many grammatical and spelling errors.

The following is an example of a good answer to this question:

سأذهب إلى بيتي لأن الوالد في المستشفى ومريض جدا. سأرجع إلى المدرسة بعد أسبوع إن شاء الله.

And:

مدرستي، أريد أن أستأذن بالذهاب على البيت لأمر طارئ تريدني أمي فيه. سأرجع بعد حوالي ساعتين لأن الطريق طويل من المدرسة إلى البيت.

Section 2

Question 17–24

Whilst candidates generally made a good attempt at these questions, a number of them encountered difficulty with **Questions 18** and **19**.

Question 25

Some candidates answered this question well, mentioning the required points as indicated by the question and using correct verb tenses and spelling. However, many candidates did not cover all of the required bullet points in their answers, and the language used often contained many spelling and grammatical errors.

The following is an example of a good answer to this question:

كانت رحلة السفر إلى المدينة الجديدة شاقة وطويلة ولكن الطائرة كانت مريحة. أنا أحب بيتي الجديد لأنه كبير، وهناك توجد بركة السباحة وملعب كرة القدم. الناس هنا كلهم طبيون ومعاملتهم معي جيدة، ولقد اشتركت في النادي المحلي لكرة القدم، والتقيت بأصحاب جدد. لكن الشيء الذي لا يعجبني هنا هو البرد الشديد، فدرجة الحرارة في الشتاء تكون صفر وأنا لست معتادا على هذا الجو البارد. أنا أمل أن أزوركم في إجازة الصيف إن شاء الله.

And:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته. صديقي العزيز أحمد:
فقد انتقلت مؤخرا إلى منزلنا الجديد في مدينة الكويت ، وكانت السفره متعبه وطويلة حتى وصلنا إلى بيتنا الجديد. المدينة الجديدة
جميلة، فسكانها من أطيب السكان، ورحبوا بنا بكل سرور ووجههم بشوشة. ولكن لم يعجبني أن المدينة مزعجة في بعض
الأحيان، وخصوصا في فترة الظهر.
أنا مشتاق لك كثيرا وأرجو أن أزورك في وقت قريب، ربما في عطلة الصيف الآتي. وسوف أبدأ دوامي المدرسي قريبا، أريد أن
أعرف ما نظام المدارس هنا، وسأخبرك عن كل شيء عندما أزورك.
أراك عما قريب.
صديقتك فاطمة.

Section 3

Question 26–31

Whilst there were some good attempts at these questions, candidates generally struggled to correct the sentences which were false.

Question 32–39

Again, there were some good attempts at these questions, although a number of candidates did not manage to provide appropriate answers to these questions.

ARABIC

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 the Teacher/ Examiner and the candidate understanding their reciprocal roles. A well-trained Examiner helps candidates to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In general, some of the candidates displayed a high level of speaking skills and communicated well. It was pleasing to note the enthusiasm of those 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 completed successfully. However, a few Centres did not submit copies of the MS1 forms, thus delaying the moderating process. Most of the Centres that sent the MS1 forms had successfully completed them. A few Centres did not write the total marks but shaded the lozenges. 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 both the tape and the mark sheet and that their Role Play card numbers are written on the mark sheet and announced on the cassette/CDs. Please note: **it is essential to send the Work Mark Sheet and the MS1.**

Thank you very much for those Centres who sent the speaking test on CD. It was especially helpful to the moderation process when Centres marked the tracks with the candidates' numbers.

Quality of recording

Although most Centres sent audible and clearly recorded tapes/CDs, in a few instances the sound was not clear enough or there was a lot of background noise (bells ringing, doors opening, noise of candidate preparing for the exam). Mobile phones must be switched off during the recording of the exam. Please make a brief test recording before conducting the speaking test and then listen to the recording to check that the microphone is suitably positioned on the desk to capture clearly the voices of both yourself and the candidate. Also, after recording the first candidate, listen to the quality of the recorded sound to confirm that it is clear and comprehensible. Most Centres recorded the speaking test for each candidate successfully. A few Centres, however, stopped the recording between each part of the test. Please note that, once an examination has begun, the recording should not be stopped or paused between elements of the examination, but should run continuously until the end of that candidate's examination. Please make sure that for each test you record: the Centre number/ Centre name/ examination number/ name of Examiner/ date of exam/ candidate number/ candidate name and Role Play card number. It is advisable to check the recording of all the samples you are sending, as in some cases the recordings were too fast, while in a few cases the test failed to record at all or was only partially recorded. **Please ensure that you record all parts of the exam and remember to record the whole exam of a candidate on one side of the cassette** as it is off-putting for a candidate if the cassette runs out in mid-examination.

Preparation

Most Teachers/ Examiners are to be commended on their careful preparation of the Role Plays. However, some Teachers/ Examiners had not familiarised themselves adequately with the Role Plays and either miscued or missed certain tasks. In such cases, candidates cannot be awarded marks for tasks they have not attempted.

Please ensure that you give the candidates 15 minutes preparation time for their Role Play tasks. The Topic Discussion must be chosen by the candidate, it has to be prepared before the exam and the candidate should speak for only one or two minutes before the Examiner asks questions.

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 combine the Topic Conversation with the General Conversation, or completely miss out one of the Role Plays, the Topic Conversation or the General Conversation, disadvantage their candidates. Please remember to announce each part of the exam.

Application of the mark scheme

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

- Failure to complete all the tasks in the Role Plays.
- Only the Role Play sections were submitted for the whole test.
- Topic and General Conversations that were shorter than the required length.
- 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 cannot score more than 6 marks in scale b (linguistic quality).
- Failure to give the candidates the opportunity to present a topic of their own for one or two minutes before the Examiner begins to ask them questions about it.

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

Sampling

Not all samples were representative or covered a good range of marks. Some Centres sent all their speaking test cassettes rather than selecting six candidates from a wide range of ability as required. In a few cases Centres only sent the marks of the top and middle candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Role Plays

Each candidate should be examined in two Role Play situations (one card only) selected at random by the Teacher/ Examiner from the cards supplied.

Section A

Most of the Centres completed this part of the exam successfully. Some Centres did not introduce each Role Play. Others created additional Role Play tasks. Please note that in the interests of international standards Teachers/ Examiners should not miss out parts of the Role Play tasks or replace parts with alternative or different tasks. Candidates should be given 15 minutes preparation just before the exam to allow them 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 complete the final task which 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 that the marking scheme does not contain any half marks and that a maximum of 3 marks can be awarded for each part of the Role Play, but where a candidate makes no response, no marks can be awarded. The Principal 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 as they require the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary. Please note: if a candidate misses out a task, the Teacher/ Examiner should try to guide him/her back to it, in as natural a way as possible.

Question 2

Topic Conversation (prepared)

It was a pleasure to hear a range of interesting and lively topics, some of which were fairly ambitious, with candidates showing a clear mastery of the language. However, only a 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 suggested some topics for the candidate to choose from then asked them a few questions. 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. In a few cases Centres did not conduct this part of the test at all and therefore disadvantaged their candidates.

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.

Question 3

General Conversation (unprepared)

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 ask 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 had 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 missed this final section. Please remember, it is useful for the Teacher/ Examiner to have a bank of questions prepared so that candidates may be offered different topics for conversation. On the whole, the time for the General Conversation was too short and some Centres failed to ask candidates questions that allowed them to communicate past and future meaning.

Question 4

Impression

At the end of the test the Teacher/ Examiner makes an assessment of the candidate's pronunciation, accent, fluency and his/her overall performance, following the guidelines given in the marking instructions.

Most of the Teachers/ Examiners coped well with this question; a few of them were too generous or too harsh.

Note on sampling arrangements for 2011

Centres are reminded that the size of the recorded sample required for external moderation will change in

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2011 and they should consult the 2011 0544 Arabic syllabus booklet (available on the CIE website) for further information.



ARABIC

Paper 0544/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The Writing paper consisted of two questions. **Question 1** was a choice of two essays where candidates were asked to write either a letter or an article. In **Question 2** candidates were asked to write a short story based on a small number of points. Both questions required candidates to demonstrate a variety of skills and each was marked out of 25: 5 marks for communication, 15 marks for language (5 of which were for vocabulary and 10 for grammar) and 5 marks for general impression. The total mark for the paper was 50 marks.

The two questions in the writing paper required candidates to demonstrate a variety of skills. The questions posed an appropriate challenge to the vast majority of candidates. Most candidates attempted both questions but the quality of their writing skills varied significantly.

Overall, candidates' handwriting was acceptable. Those candidates' answers which could not be read due to illegibility of handwriting were not awarded marks.

Time management did not appear to be a problem and a significant number of candidates managed to complete the tasks. There were occasions where candidates produced draft versions which were not clearly crossed out. This sometimes posed difficulty for the Examiners in deciding what to mark. Any notes or draft versions should be clearly crossed out.

The performance of the candidates spanned a wide range of ability, but the majority achieved results that were good and in a few cases the performances were excellent. Most essays were adequately focused on the topic in question and were well structured, though many were somewhat unimaginative. It was noticed that the number of well-structured scripts was higher than the previous year.

However, Examiners did note the following during marking:

- **Question 1a** (the letter) appeared more accessible to candidates than **Question 1b** (the article)
- Some candidates did not appear to recognise the style of article writing and wrote a letter instead
- There was some use of incorrect punctuation: full stops, commas, question marks and exclamation marks.

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:

- Writing the ends of the verbs with Ta Marbuta (ة)
- Not applying the correct possessive pronoun endings
- Using long and short vowels incorrectly
- Using prepositions incorrectly
- Using tanween as a letter and not as tashkeel, e.g.: مَعْن instead of مَعْنٌ.
- Using colloquial spoken dialect
- Using simple structured sentences.

A small number of candidates wrote completely irrelevant essays which affected their final grade.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally well attempted and a full range of marks was achieved. In addition, careful reading and comprehension of the rubric helped the vast majority of candidates produce appropriate answers suitable for a letter. They were awarded marks according to communication, language and general impression.

This question allowed a choice between two topics, **1(a)** in the form of letter writing and **1(b)** in the form of article writing. Most candidates opted for **Question 1(a)**. In a number of cases, candidates answering **1(b)** wrote the article in the form of a letter which showed that most candidates were well prepared for letter writing.

In relation to the content of the questions, the vast majority of candidates managed to address the four content points appropriately, while a small number of candidates did not appear to have fully grasped the details of the information requested in the question.

A substantial number of candidates produced clearly understood essays through their vocabulary choices, accurate use of tenses and clear sentence punctuation, and hence achieved high marks. Candidates who were not as successful wrote essays that were difficult for Examiners to understand with errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and limited vocabulary.

Candidates who followed the rubrics were successful in achieving the task, but Examiners were not able to award marks to those who:

- did not attempt this part
- wrote an irrelevant response
- simply copied sections of the prompts

Question 2

This question allowed more scope for the candidates' imagination than the first question as this question was about descriptive writing (a story). Most candidates attempted this question successfully in an appropriate style, with some showing excellent creative talents. Some candidates used the form of dialogue.

A good number of candidates seemed confident in attempting this question. Such candidates wrote a clear narrative using accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation, gaining high marks. In strong responses, Examiners were able to award from within the top band of marks. These well-constructed responses were easily understood by the Examiners, and showed not only a good tense usage and accurate spelling but also usage of linking devices.

Less successful candidates wrote confusing stories due to weaker use of tenses or poor word selection, and sometimes produced sentences which could not be followed. Lack of basic sentence punctuation also made these stories more difficult to follow. Sometimes there were instances where the responses were shorter than the required number of words. All of the above led the Examiners to award from within the lower band of marks.

In general, a good number of candidates did not appear to have sufficiently grasped all the details of the information requested in the question and in consequence a number of answers did not succeed in communicating some details required by the rubrics. Examiners were not able to award marks to those who:

- did not attempt this part
- wrote irrelevant stories.