

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The overall level of achievement of candidates on this paper is high, with most candidates achieving good marks across the range of tasks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, 2 and 3

Most candidates answered all of these questions correctly.

Exercise 4

In this exercise, each of the three tasks must be completed. Most candidates followed the instructions but some did not address the three required tasks and so could not score the full marks available.

Section 2

Exercise 1

In this exercise the order of the questions follows the order of the information in the text. The text is clear and getting the correct answer depends upon candidates understanding the meaning of the text rather than just particular words.

Exercise 2

In this exercise candidates had to demonstrate their letter-writing ability given a few instructions. They had to include all four elements. Most candidates followed the instructions and fulfilled the required task without any difficulty.

Section 3

Exercise 1 and 2

A few candidates did not attempt all of the questions in these two exercises. Some candidates did not notice the instructions for **Exercise 2** which required them to give the correct answer in cases where the answer was false (x) and instead followed the instructions for **Exercise 1**.

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/03

Speaking

General comments

This paper is common to all candidates who followed 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 or slang language 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-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. 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.

Preparation

Most Examiners are to be commended for 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. 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 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 cannot score more than 6 marks in Category b (linguistic quality).

- 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 poses problems to Moderators.

Sampling

Samples were usually representative and covered a good mark range.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Role plays

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each set task. The set tasks must not be changed. If only one part of a task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded.

Section B

Topic (prepared) Conversation

It was a pleasure to hear a range of interesting and lively topics some of which were fairly ambitious however these candidates showed a clear mastery of the language. Most Examiners correctly stopped candidates after a minute or so, and then asked questions. The best examining elicited spontaneous responses and a natural conversation ensued. There were some very fluent expositions of topics and, generally, Examiners were well aware of the need to ask questions which could elicit past and future tenses.

Section C

General (unprepared) Conversation

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

As in the Topic Conversation, a very pleasing 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. Examiners should also remember that it is helpful if they indicate when the Topic Conversation section is over by telling candidates that they are now moving on to the General Conversation. Regrettably, a few Centres did not present this final section and thus seriously disadvantaged their candidates.

Section B

The **Section B** Role Plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary. Candidates should be reminded to read the settings for these Role Plays as they provide a contextualising framework.

ARABIC

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 many cases considerably more than that. 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, by a greater evidence of imagination, and in a few cases even a little humour.

Most candidates appeared to have sufficient knowledge of Arabic grammatical structures to enable them to complete the paper without undue difficulty and there are no particular errors to which attention needs to be drawn. The poor quality of many candidates' handwriting did, however, give some cause for concern.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question allowed a choice between two topics. Slightly 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 difficulty. Many essays incorporated what appeared to be prepared material, but in most cases this was integrated into the structure reasonably satisfactorily. A few candidates paid insufficient attention to appropriate opening and closing phrases, and there were 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. A few candidates attempted to answer the question by the exclusive use of dialogue, but this approach tended to result in the use of a more limited vocabulary than would otherwise have been the case. Other 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, of which there were a large number, were also marked by evidence of imagination, and though in one or two cases this was at the expense of sound structure, the overall level of performance was extremely competent.