

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/02

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

In their preparation for this paper, candidates should ensure that they

- have a broad range of vocabulary relating to topics encountered in daily life
- can communicate information in the form of a note or brief letter/email, using straightforward vocabulary, structures and verbs
- feel confident in expressing their feelings, likes, and dislikes
- are able to describe locations and simple directions.

General comments

In general, candidates coped well with this paper. Candidates would benefit from reading more widely in the target language as this would help them to feel more confident when tackling **Section 3** of this paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1–5

Most candidates answered these discrete questions with ease.

Exercise 2, Questions 6–10

The questions in this matching task were generally handled well.

Exercise 3, Questions 11–15

For this exercise, candidates were given a short text to read followed by five multiple choice questions. The text took the form of a brief description about a day in the life of Ashraf. As in the previous two exercises, these questions were answered very well by the majority of candidates.

Question 16

Candidates were asked to write a short message to their mother, giving three pieces of information: **(a)** where they are going, **(b)** with whom they are going, and **(c)** when they are going to return home. There are three marks available for communication (1 mark for each element of the message) and two marks for the language used. The points of information are cued by a short Arabic stimulus supported by an illustration and the correct interpretation of the illustrations is important. Those parts of a candidate's answer which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Candidates should be advised that there is nothing to be gained from expanding their answers to this exercise. There are no additional marks to be gained by adding to the required information and any time spent adding such embellishment, which is ignored by the Examiner, could be allocated more profitably to **Sections 2** and **3**. The most successful answers are those which manage to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately.

This writing task was generally handled quite well. Some candidates struggled to provide an adequate response to this question. Responses often contained a number of grammatical and spelling errors,

particularly in the use of the plural, but incorrect spellings were tolerated provided that the meaning was clear. Many candidates could not express time (as required by prompt (c)); they would therefore benefit from more practice in this area.

The following are examples of good answers to this question:

أمي العزيزة
ذهبت بعد ظهر هذا اليوم إلى شاطئ البحر للسباحة، ذهبت مع أصدقائي في المدرسة، وسوف أعود إلى المنزل الساعة السابعة مساءً، إن شاء الله.
ابنك سمير

والدتي الغالية
تحية طيبة
ذهبت مع صديقاتي سلوى وحنان و لولو إلى شاطئ البحر لنستمتع بغروب الشمس، وسأرجع الساعة 7 في المساء.
ابنتك سميرة

Section 2

Exercise 1, Question 17–25

In this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended passage of Arabic and to answer questions on it, also in Arabic. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the passage. The passage took the form of a narrative about the author's Uncle Mustafa. Often, a one or two word answer was all that was needed, but provided that what the candidate had written contained the correct answer, additional material copied from the text was tolerated unless it was contradictory. The quality of written Arabic is considered only for the purposes of communication. The majority of candidates answered these questions correctly, and it was noted that, in general, the quality of candidates' written Arabic was very good.

Exercise 2, Question 26

In this writing task candidates were asked to write a letter to a friend, talking about their experience at their new school. In their piece of writing they were asked to complete 4 tasks: (a) to describe where their new school is located, (b) to say which is their favourite lesson, (c) to say what they like and dislike at their new school, and (d) to say how they felt on their first day at their new school. 10 marks are available for communication of the required elements and 5 marks are available for language.

In terms of the mark for language, candidates should aim to write reasonably accurate and understandable Arabic. The most successful candidates wrote simply and clearly, using a range of apt vocabulary and structures. They avoided attempts to convey over-complicated ideas for which they did not have sufficient command of the language. Less successful responses were characterised by short, abrupt sentences and various grammatical errors, particularly in the conjugation of the verb and in the use of tenses.

In terms of the mark for communication, candidates should be reminded that they must address all of the given bullet points in order to have access to the top marks.

Many candidates drew on their own experiences to help them answer the question, and there were a number of good answers where candidates clearly demonstrated that they were familiar with the topic and its associated vocabulary. The best candidates addressed all of the given bullet points very clearly in their responses, and the following is an example of a good answer to this question:

السالمية
الكويت
2011-5-24

صديقي الغالي مروان
أرجو أن تكون بخير أنت وأسرتك
كما تعلم ، لقد انتقلت إلى مدرستي الجديدة، واليوم أكتب إليك لأخبرك عنها.
مدرستي كبيرة، وتقع في ضاحية السالمية ، قرب الحديقة العامة، وليست بعيدة عن المطار .

أحب هذه المدرسة كثيراً، وأستمتع فيها بدروس الجغرافيا، والتاريخ، واللغة الفرنسية، ولكن درسي المفضل هو اللغة العربية، لأن الأستاذ لطيف وعنده طريقة جميلة في التدريس. أحببت النظام فيها، والنظافة، ولكنني لم أحب الدوام الطويل، لأنه يجب البقاء حتى المساء لنهني واجباتنا. يومي الأول كان ممتاز المشاعر، في البداية شعرت بالقلق و الخوف، وأحسست أنني وحيد لأنني لا أعرف أحداً، ولكن سرعان ما شعرت بالسعادة والثقة بالنفس بعد أن تعرفت على عدد من الأصدقاء اللطفاء. هذه أخباري، فما أخباركم؟ أرجو أن تبلغ سلامي إلى كل أصدقائنا، وأمل أن أراك في العطلة القادمة.

صديقك المشتاق
علي

Section 3

In this section, Examiners are looking not just for evidence that candidates are able to locate the correct information in the passage, but for signs of genuine comprehension, e.g. the ability to select the exact details required for the answer.

Exercise 1, Question 27–32

In **Exercise 1**, candidates are required to read an extended passage in Arabic, decide which of the given Arabic statements are صح and which are خطأ, and then go on to correct the false ones as simply as possible, in Arabic, using the material from the passage and in the style of the example given. While it is still sometimes possible to lift answers from the passage, candidates need to be very precise in what they choose for their answer, as additional material copied indiscriminately may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. It is therefore important that candidates are trained to answer succinctly as the longer the answer the higher the risk of including extra distorting material and invalidating an otherwise correct answer.

Generally, candidates struggled to correct the false statements, which often indicated a lack of understanding of the reading passage. A number of candidates ticked صح but then attempted to correct the statement. There is no need to provide a correction where candidates decide that the statement is true.

Exercise 2, Question 33–42

In this final exercise of the paper, candidates are required to read an extended passage in Arabic, and show their understanding of it by answering questions on it, also in Arabic. The questions are asked in the same order as the information is presented in the passage. The subject matter of the passage was generally not well understood, and a number of candidates struggled to answer the questions correctly. This exercise requires responses to be sufficiently accurate to communicate the answer without ambiguity or distortion. This means that answers 'lifted' unselectively from the text may contain additional information or unclear information, which can invalidate an answer. Candidates need to be prepared to rephrase their answer to make sure that they are using the correct person of the verb or correct adjectives.

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/03
Speaking

Key messages

In preparing for, and conducting, the IGCSE Arabic Speaking test, Centres should bear the following pointers in mind.

- Careful preparation by Examiners is essential.
- Modern Standard Arabic should be used by both Examiner and candidate during the test.
- Examiners should adhere to the role play tasks as set out in the Teachers' Notes.
- If an element of a Role Play task is omitted, an appropriate prompt may be given.
- Candidates should convey past and future time in each of the conversation sections.
- Examiners should ask appropriate questions to allow candidates to convey past and future time.
- Examiners should make a clear distinction between Test 2 (Topic presentation & conversation) and Test 3 (General conversation).
- Examiners must adhere to the timings stipulated in the Teachers' Notes booklet.
- Examiners should vary the topics covered and should not ask all candidates the same series of questions.
- Candidates should be asked both expected and unexpected questions.
- To achieve high marks, candidates do not have to be of native speaker standard.

General comments

This paper is common to all candidates, whether they had followed the Core curriculum or the Extended curriculum. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in previous years, the full range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Candidate performance

Overall, the standard of work produced by candidates was perceived to be a little better than that produced last year. It was encouraging to note the enthusiasm of those candidates, many of whom, as a result of good examining and careful preparation on the part of their Examiner, were able to show how well they could communicate.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where it was clear that oral work was a regular part of classroom activity and where candidates were familiar with the requirements of the Speaking test. In such Centres, the Examiner conducting the test had prepared the Role plays well, enabling candidates to show that they could communicate in a variety of everyday situations. Candidates gained marks by following their cues and answering concisely. They were aware of the need to respond to unexpected questions on one task in each role play. The Examiner managed a smooth transition to the conversation sections and then pitched questions at a level appropriate to the candidate, while bearing in mind the descriptors of the mark scheme. Conversations were natural and candidates were given the

opportunity to work in a variety of tenses, using a range of structures and vocabulary and covering a selection of different topics across both conversation sections.

In general, Examiners were aware of the need for spontaneity and conversations featured both predictable and unexpected questions. Candidates were given the opportunity to show that they could respond to questions on topics with which they may have been familiar, but which they had not over prepared. A few Centres need to work towards achieving greater spontaneity during the test. The use of question banks is of course useful during the learning process. Then, once vocabulary and structures have been acquired, candidates should be encouraged to move gradually away from predictable banks of questions. If the same banks of questions which have been used in class are used in the test room there is little opportunity for spontaneous conversation. A more effective approach is for Examiners to keep eye contact with candidates, listen to what they have to say and respond accordingly.

Conduct of the test

From the evidence heard on the recorded samples, many Examiners are clearly at ease in their role and familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE Arabic Speaking test. The role of the conducting Examiner remains crucial in terms of putting the candidate at ease and enabling him/her to work for the available marks. Examiners who have prepared their own roles fully and are confident in what they are doing are better able to help candidates who experience any difficulty. A well-prepared Examiner ensures that his/her candidates are given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. The following list of comments is intended to help all Examiners elicit the best possible performance from their candidates:

- **Preparation time**

The best examples of examining were in Centres which had clearly made good use of the 4 days available for preparation by the Examiner. During this time, Examiners had become familiar with the instructions, the paperwork, the Role play situations and their role in them. As a result, they followed the Role play cues/script provided in the Teachers' Notes booklet and did not confuse candidates by omitting one or more of the prescribed tasks and/or inserting extra tasks.

Examiners are reminded that they should cue all tasks as specified in the Role plays, that no section of the test should be omitted, that they should keep to the stipulated timings of 5 minutes per conversation section, and that they should give candidates the opportunity to respond in a range of tenses and to unexpected as well as predictable questions in both conversation sections.

Many Examiners are to be commended on their careful preparation of the Role plays. Some, however, had not familiarised themselves sufficiently with the Role plays and either miscued or missed out certain tasks. In such cases, candidates could not be awarded marks for tasks they had not attempted.

Examiners should ensure that they are familiar with the requirements of the Speaking test before embarking on any examining. The IGCSE Arabic Speaking test consists of three sections: **Part One** of the examination is two role plays. **Part Two** of the examination starts with a presentation by the candidate on a topic of his/her choice. The Examiner must allow the candidate to speak for 1–2 minutes on his/her prepared topic and then follow this up with specific spontaneous questions related to the topic. This section of the examination should last **about five minutes** in total. **Part Three** of the examination is a spontaneous conversation of a more general nature and should last **about five minutes**.

- **Timings**

It is helpful to candidates to know before the test that each of the two conversation sections will last for 5 minutes. Examiners should then adhere to these timings during the test. In the Topic presentation, it is always good practice to stop a candidate after they have presented for 2 minutes and to start to ask questions. The stipulated timings were often not observed and this can have a detrimental effect on candidates' performance: a Speaking test that is too short may not allow a candidate enough time to demonstrate his/her abilities, and a Speaking test that is too long may cause the candidate to become tired and therefore increase his/her chance of making errors.

- **Transition between different sections of the Speaking test**

Some Examiners made it clear to candidates when they were moving from one section of the test to the next. This helps to put candidates at their ease and Examiners should aim to include such transitions in all the IGCSE Arabic Speaking tests that they conduct. Such 'links' (e.g. "Now we'll start the general conversation") should be in Arabic rather than in English.



- **Questioning technique**

Examiners are reminded that questions to elicit different tenses must be asked in **both** of the conversation sections.

- **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

The recorded sample should be selected to represent the **full** spread of performance in the Centre. This enables the Moderator to check that the application of the scheme is fair and accurate throughout the Centre's mark range. The recorded sample should be selected to represent the whole Centre. Where more than one Examiner is used, the sample should, wherever possible, include examples from each Examiner. Centres should not select and submit a full recorded sample per Examiner.

In a small number of cases, the cassette/CD submitted by the Centre was blank. Centres are reminded of the importance of checking that the recordings are present on the cassette/CD, that all parts of the test have been recorded and that all recordings are audible before sending to CIE.

In general the quality of the recordings was better than in previous years, largely thanks to the more widespread use of digital technology. It is nevertheless extremely important to check the position of microphones and the quality of the recording, both during the tests (between candidates) and before samples are despatched to CIE. The best quality recordings were produced in small rooms in which phones had been switched off and which were not situated close to noisy areas. Where recordings are saved as .mp3 files, please ensure that these have been labelled in accordance with the naming convention stipulated in the Teachers' Notes booklet. **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.**

- **Coversheet for moderation sample**

Unfortunately many Centres forgot to include the cover sheet for the sample. This is provided in the Teachers' Notes booklet and should be completed in the Centre and submitted together with the recorded sample and other paperwork.

- **Internal moderation**

Where a Centre has a large number of candidates and wishes to use more than one Examiner to carry out the Speaking tests, the Centre **must** seek permission from CIE to use more than one Examiner **before** the start of the Speaking test period.

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by CIE to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the Examiners in the Centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to CIE. Details of the Centre's Internal moderation procedures must also be sent to CIE, as specified on the 'Cover sheet for moderation sample'. Guidelines for the Internal Standardisation/Moderation of Cambridge IGCSE foreign language Speaking tests are available from CIE. Guidelines on how to carry out

- **Clerical errors**

A number of clerical errors were noted this year. Centres are reminded to check all additions and transcriptions very carefully before submitting their materials to CIE.

- **Administration**

On the whole, the administrative tasks relating to the Speaking test were completed very well. When despatching the materials to CIE, please ensure that a copy of the completed Working Mark Sheet(s) is enclosed in the parcel, together with the recording and other paperwork.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

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

- the award of marks for Role play tasks which had not been attempted or which were only partially complete
- the topic conversation was not conducted

- the brevity of the conversation sections meant that candidates did not have the opportunity to demonstrate the range of vocabulary and structures required to score marks in the top bands
- candidates were not given the opportunity to use a range of time frames in both conversation sections
- candidates did not have the opportunity to present a topic of their own

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation. Where the stipulated tasks are changed or omitted and/or extra tasks are added this will confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. Candidates should be trained to include a greeting and thanks where appropriate. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of three. Although full sentences with a conjugated verb are often not required to complete a task, should a verb be used by the candidate it must be correct for a mark of 3 to be appropriate. If the verb is incorrect, the maximum mark that can be awarded for the task is 2. Dubious pronunciation should be queried as communication may be affected when pronunciation is unclear. Candidates are allowed to self-correct but cannot be given marks if the Examiner completes the task for them (e.g. if the Examiner provides an item of vocabulary which the candidate merely repeats).

If a candidate misses out a task, the Examiner should try to guide him/her back to it, in as natural a way as possible. Some Examiners did not introduce Role plays, and others created additional Role play tasks. In the interests of international standards, and in fairness to candidates, Examiners should not miss out parts of the Role play tasks nor replace parts with alternative or different tasks.

If only one part of a task is completed, only one mark can be awarded. Please remember that the mark scheme does not contain any half marks and that a maximum of 3 marks can be awarded for each task in the Role play. Where a candidate makes no response to a task, no marks can be awarded for that task. The Examiner should not offer vocabulary items or options, unless these appear in the Teachers' Notes – candidates must be allowed to work for their marks.

Each candidate should be examined in two Role play situations (one 'A' Role play and one 'B' Role play), using one Role play card only, which should be selected at random by the Examiner from the cards supplied by CIE. Candidates should be given 15 minutes' preparation time just before the test to allow them to familiarise themselves with the settings of the Role plays.

A Role Plays

The A Role plays are designed to be easier than the B Role plays. Most Centres conducted this part of the exam successfully.

B Role Plays

As always, the B Role plays were more demanding in that they required candidates to respond spontaneously to an unexpected question, provide a reaction to a situation, and operate in a tense other than the present. Again, most Centres conducted this part of the exam well.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

Candidates had chosen a wide range of topics for their presentation, many of which were interesting and lively. Some topics were rather ambitious but these were generally handled well by the candidates who had chosen them, demonstrating their mastery of the Arabic language.

Some Examiners forgot to allow their candidates to present their topic. It is very important that no part of the test is omitted, as this can severely limit a candidate's marks.

Examiners are reminded that, where a candidate presents his topic for two minutes and shows no sign of finishing his/her Topic presentation, the Examiner must interrupt and start the Topic conversation.

Some Examiners were well aware of the need to ask questions which could elicit past and future tenses, and did so to good effect. A few Examiners did not allow the candidate time to expand his/her answer, interrupting after every sentence.

On the whole, the timing of this section was either too short or much too long. A Speaking test that is too short may not allow a candidate enough time to demonstrate his/her abilities, and a Speaking test that is too long may cause the candidate to become tired and therefore increase his/her chance of making errors.

Examiners are reminded of the importance of indicating to candidates that the Topic conversation has finished and the General conversation is about to begin.

General Conversation

Many Examiners were aware of the need to cover 2 or 3 different topics in this section of the test, though it is worth bearing in mind that it may be necessary to cover more topics with weaker candidates who will not be able to answer in as much depth. The topics discussed in this part of the test should not be the same as those discussed in the Topic conversation and should be chosen by the Examiner, rather than by the candidate.

It is helpful to the candidate if the Examiner guides him/her smoothly between topics. Questioning that moves abruptly from topic to topic can be confusing or unsettling for candidates. It is better to let the conversation flow rather than asking a series of unconnected questions.

In order to award marks in the Satisfactory band or above, the candidate must show that s/he can use past and future tenses accurately. It is not sufficient for Examiners to ask questions to elicit past and future tenses if the candidate cannot use these tenses successfully in his/her reply. It is useful to practise adverbs of time in the classroom as familiarity with these will help candidates identify the time frame in which they should be operating.

Questions should invite candidates to talk. Where questioning restricts candidates to short or 'yes'/'no' responses, they will not have the opportunity to use the range of structures necessary for access to the higher mark bands.

Overall, performance was very good in this section of the test. In a very small number of cases, the Examiner swapped his/her role with the candidate, and obliged the candidate to ask questions of the Examiner. This does not form part of the IGCSE Arabic Speaking test.

Regrettably, many of the General conversations heard by the Moderators were too brief to warrant the award of the highest marks. Examiners are reminded that this section of the examination should last approximately **5 minutes**.

Impression

At the end of the test the Examiner must make an assessment of the candidate's pronunciation, accent and fluency based on his/her overall performance. Banded descriptors are enclosed in Table C of the Marking Instructions in the Teachers' Notes booklet. In general, Examiners awarded appropriate marks for this aspect of the test.

ARABIC (Foreign Language)

Paper 0544/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates need to demonstrate that they can communicate in writing, showing knowledge of a range and variety of vocabulary and applying the grammar and structures of the target language correctly.

When a choice of questions is offered, candidates should select the question they consider to be the best suited to their knowledge of Arabic. This may not always be the one they find the most interesting. Then they should prepare a brief plan of their answer in accordance with the set tasks. As the recommended length is 140 words, they should plan to spread the answer fairly evenly over the tasks set out in the rubric. If they devote too much of the answer to the first one or two tasks they may not have enough words left to complete the later tasks. If they cover all the points in 100 words they might be reduced to padding out the ending to reach 140 words, so they should look to identify the areas where they can expand their response with examples. Examiners will not mark anything which occurs outside the word count. Where candidates write answers which are shorter than 130–140 words they are likely to restrict their chances of gaining the maximum mark available for language.

Candidates should remember that the rubric is not a rough guide but that it sets out a number of required elements, each of which carries one or more specific communication marks. They should read the question carefully and keep to these tasks, avoiding irrelevance. If the tasks require a certain tense then they should stick to that tense and not drift into inappropriate tenses.

Candidates should compose each sentence carefully. Good spelling gains marks, incorrect spelling does not. Candidates should take their time. The time allowed for the paper is normally ample. When they have finished they should make full use of the time left to check their work for errors.

Within the limits on content imposed by the set tasks, the paper is an exercise in free composition so candidates should write that which they are confident is correct Arabic and avoid what they do not know. They should be encouraged to present their best Arabic to the Examiner.

Presentation is very important. If the Examiner cannot read what the candidate has written, no marks can be awarded. Handwriting must always be legible.

Some candidates tend to include long lists of proper nouns such as place names or personal names. This practice is to be discouraged as the mark scheme does not allow the award of accuracy ticks to such lists and they can take up a significant proportion of the word allocation.

General comments

The Continuous Writing paper requires candidates to respond to two questions. Candidates could choose to answer either **Question 1(a)**, which asked them to write a letter to a foreign journalist about their country, or **Question 1(b)**, which asked them to write a letter to their uncle in the USA. In addition, all candidates were required to answer **Question 2**, which asked them to write about the environment in their region.

As in previous years, the mark scheme for each essay was divided into marks for Communication (5 marks), Language (15 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

The quality of candidates' writing skills varied significantly. 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 common errors which included:

- writing the ends of verbs with *Ta Marbouta* (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. *و* instead of
- using a written form of colloquial spoken dialect rather than Modern Standard Arabic

Weaker answers were often characterised by simple and unvaried sentence structures.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally attempted well and the majority of candidates achieved very good marks. Most candidates showed evidence of having read the question and prompts carefully and this helped them to formulate an appropriate response.

- (a) Most candidates who opted for **Question 1(a)** addressed all of the bullet points appropriately. A small number of candidates misinterpreted the third bullet point which asked about weather for the next two months, and instead wrote about the weather in general. Some candidates forgot to provide an appropriate beginning or ending to the letter.
- (b) This was the more popular of the two options available for **Question 1**. There were many good responses to this question. Some candidates forgot to describe their qualifications and a few did not mention their work experience.

Question 2

This question allowed more scope for the candidates' imagination as it asked them to describe changes to the environment, current problems and possible improvements. Most candidates attempted this question well and wrote in an appropriate style, with some showing strong creative flair (especially when they were asked to think about how to improve the environment). Some candidates used the form of dialogue and came up with some thoughtful questions themselves.

Many candidates tackled this question with confidence and were able to explain the impact of greenhouse gases, acid rain and rain forest destruction as well as explaining the process of global warming. Such candidates wrote a clear, relevant narrative using accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation, and this earned them high marks.

Less successful answers were characterised by confusing or rambling stories, usually due to the misinterpretation of the word 'environment'. A few could not mention, describe or explain the main environmental problems today. Some essays were linked so poorly that the Examiner could not understand what the candidate intended.