

SECOND LANGUAGE URDU

Paper 3248/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

The format of this paper has undergone significant changes and, since the June 2024 series, candidates are assessed in a different scheme of assessment. However, the overall standard, quality, and linguistic demand remain consistent with previous years and are appropriate for the level of this examination. The topics selected for this assessment were engaging, informative and approachable for the majority of candidates. The questions maintained an appropriate level of difficulty to effectively differentiate among variable levels of candidates' performance.

Exercise 1 – Short-answer questions

This section includes a comprehension passage with six questions, worth one or two marks each. These questions require concise answers based on the passage.

Exercise 2 – Multiple matching

This multiple-choice section is based on a text divided into four paragraphs (A–D). Candidates must identify the location of specific information within the text.

Exercise 3 – Note-making

In this note-making exercise, candidates are required to extract and condense essential information from a given passage.

Exercise 4 – Summary

In this exercise, candidates write a summary, based on the text given for **Exercise 3**. Rather than summarizing the whole passage, there are specific instructions given regarding the points to be included in the summary. Concentrating on the required aspects, candidates have to write a summary, keeping the response within the limit of one hundred words. Candidates are not only judged on the content of the summary but also on the style and accuracy of the language used.

Exercise 5 – Writing exercise

This is a directed writing exercise that requires candidates to compose an email based on three provided prompts. The response should not exceed one hundred and fifty words and is assessed on the content, style of language and linguistic accuracy used by candidates when producing their answers.

Candidates are expected to use their own words while answering questions to demonstrate their understanding and therefore, should avoid lifting sentences directly from the passage and using them as their answers.

While spelling errors are not penalized in comprehension exercises, there are language marks allocated for writing tasks. Nevertheless, it is important that candidates' work is legible throughout. It is also important that candidates write their answers in the correct spaces provided. There is an adequate provision of space for each response in the question paper. However, if the candidates find that an answer is exceeding the given space or they change their mind after writing an answer and want to utilize the blank pages or continue the answer on an extra sheet, they should clearly mention this in the answer space to avoid any confusion. It is recommended to always attempt an answer rather than leaving a blank space.

Candidates need to have a good understanding of the vocabulary of the questions and to practice writing their answers using their own words by choosing appropriate information from the passages. To be successful on doing this, candidates need to work on expanding their vocabulary, practice their critical comprehension skills and ensure they adhere to the questions' requirements. Additionally, candidates should allocate enough time to review their responses to prevent errors or omissions.

General comments

This paper was well-balanced, catering for candidates across all ability levels. The content covered a broad syllabus range while maintaining a fair level of challenge. Most candidates performed well in this paper, with many excelling in comprehension exercises. Conversely, lower-ability candidates found the summary and the directed writing tasks more challenging, this could be either due to limited language exposure or lack of practice.

Although numerous candidates achieved high marks, only the most proficient attained scores above 45 marks. The highest score recorded was a perfect 50 out of 50 marks.

A few recurring challenges were observed during marking:

- Direct Text Lifting

Some candidates copied answers verbatim for inferential questions, particularly in the summary writing, leading to irrelevant details, exceeding the word limit, and reduced linguistic quality.

- Overwriting

Double writing with pencil and pen created legibility issues, which could disadvantage candidates.

- Unanswered Questions

Despite sufficient time and no negative marking, some candidates left questions unanswered. Teachers should emphasize the importance of attempting every question.

These observations highlight that candidates need to better familiarize with exam techniques and practice the presentation of effective answers.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – (Question 1 – 6) – Short-answer questions

The text passage about Dr. Mae Jemison was accessible and easy to comprehend for most candidates. In general, this exercise was very well understood by a large majority of candidates and many candidates scored full marks. **Question 2** and **Question 5** were answered exceptionally well by all ability level candidates. **Question 1** (Why was Dr. Mae Jemison interested in studying science?) was generally well attempted however, some candidates gave only one of the two required answers, they mentioned that she wanted answers to the questions that popped up in her mind from her childhood days, but did not write the second point that she wanted to become a scientist. Similarly, for **Question 4**, which was also worth two marks, quite a few candidates could not identify the key information required and either gave ambiguous answers or provided only one of the two required points.

Many candidates struggled with **Question 6**, despite being a direct question about Dr. Jemison's distinctive achievement as a woman. It was clearly mentioned in the text that she was the first African American woman to travel into space. Candidates who had a limited understanding of the target language lost marks for writing about her educational achievements or giving a general statement about her being a role model for others. Some careless attempts at reproducing the given information were also seen, where candidates lost marks for writing 'first woman/first American woman into space'; whereas the correct answer, clearly mentioned in the text, needed to include all aspects: the first African American woman to travel into space.

Exercise 2 – (Question 7 – 15) – Multiple Matching

This multiple-choice exercise was based on a passage about the ancient history and culture of the Persian Empire. The passage contained four paragraphs (A-D). The candidates had to identify which paragraph contained the selected pieces of information for each question. As a whole, this exercise was very well attempted by many candidates and the large majority of them successfully scored full marks on this task. **Question 8** and **Question 11** were answered exceptionally well by all ability level candidates. However, **Question 14** and **Question 15** proved to be more challenging for some candidates, who provided inaccurate answers.

While attempting a multiple-choice question exercise, candidates must always be careful to clearly tick only one out of the four given boxes. If they change their mind afterwards, they must cross out the previous answer before they tick another. If more than one box is ticked, the answer will not be valid.

Exercise 3 – (Question 16 – 19) – Note-making

This note making exercise was based on a text passage about the importance and management of time. This comprehension exercise posed comparatively more challenges:

- For **Question 16**, two things pointed out by Prof. Arnold regarding time were asked, i.e. even the least amount of time should be valued, and that time should never be wasted. Some candidates lost marks as they were not able to understand the text properly or they could only reproduce one point out of the two required.
- **Question 17** was also worth two marks. This question asked about two complaints made by the people who are always short of time, i.e. excessive workload and 24 hours do not seem enough to complete their work. This was generally well understood, and most candidates gave correct answers. However, some candidates gave only one valid answer and lost the other mark.
- **Question 18** proved to be challenging for many candidates. The question was worth two marks and the candidates had to mention two practical steps towards time management suggested in the text. It required some inference to answer the question, i.e. Punctuality and Time Planning. Candidates who relied on guess work and lifted long sentences from the text to use as their answers due to similarity of key words in question vocabulary, gave ambiguous answers and lost marks.
- **Question 19** was worth three marks and asked about three basic rules suggested by the text to implement good time keeping habits. It was a direct question and was answered remarkably well by a large majority of the candidates, who scored full marks.

Exercise 20 – (Question 20) – Summary

The summary task was based on the passage given for **Exercise 3**. Candidates were clearly guided that they can use some of the notes they made from the previous exercise. However, candidates had to decide which part should be used according to the instructions given for the summary. Unlike previous years' pattern of summary writing, where candidates needed to summarize the whole passage, this paper requires now a summary according to the given instructions, where only two aspects of the topic need to be covered and two points for each aspect have to be mentioned, making four clear and distinct points for the content of the summary. Four out of ten marks for this exercise are allocated for the content, while the remainder six marks are reserved for language style and accuracy.

There was plenty of opportunity for the candidates to score maximum marks in this exercise. The points given for discussion were specific and clear and demanded exact information. The overall performance of candidates on this task was good and there were a few very outstanding responses, showing a thorough understanding of the text, as well as an excellent command of the language, delivering the required information within the required word limit. However, the number of candidates scoring full marks on this task was very limited. It was observed during marking that some candidates were not familiar with this style of summary writing, and they tried to summarize the whole passage, as in the old scheme of assessment, and gave lengthy and irrelevant details, missing out the required information or neglecting the word limit. Moreover, as there is an allocation of marks for language also, relying on direct lifting of lengthy pieces of information from the text affects the language marks, as well as adding extra length to the responses that need to be concise. It was also observed that candidates tended to be less attentive to spelling and grammar when producing their answers, leading to several preventable mistakes, which have affected the marks for

language. As for this exercise, candidates are reproducing the information from the text provided, tailoring it to suit the demand of the topic and spelling and grammatical errors should be avoided to ensure they can secure high marks for language.

Candidates need to practice more the new summary style, which differs from the old version of the syllabus, and ensure they present their answers efficiently. They need to ensure they have understood the question and what information the summary requests. There were some candidates who struggled to understand the requirements of this task and wrote more than the required word limit, using long paragraphs and covering the whole aspects of the text, despite the topic for the summary being clearly mentioned in the question (i.e.

تجویز کردہ اقدامات), which stressed the required specific information needed. The majority of the candidates were able to answer the first part, to which they used the points made in the previous exercise for **Question 19**; but they could not identify the information required for the following part:

- ہر کام کے لیے سستایا آسان طریقہ اختیار کریں جس سے وقت بچ سکے / ملاقات کی بجائے فون کی مثال
- اہمیت کے لحاظ سے کاموں کی درجہ بندی کریں

and merely repeated different answers from the previous exercise or gave ambiguous details.

Directly copying the introductory part from the passage, even when there is no relevance to the required task, is another matter of concern which affects the word count. If a candidate ignores the guidelines about the specific points to be included in the summary and starts writing a summary on the whole passage, the candidate will end up writing irrelevant details and valid points may come after the cut off word limit, which will not be credited.

The candidates should make sure that they read the passage very carefully and then choose the specific information according to the topic given for the summary. They should be able to extract the idea of the required information for their summary, separating the extended details in order to meet the word limit requirement (100 words). They must also be careful about the accuracy of the selected information in order to avoid losing content marks.

Exercise 5 – (Question 21) – Writing exercise

This exercise consists of a directed writing task. The candidates had to write an email to the manager of a restaurant, complaining about the improper arrangements for the birthday party celebrated there. There were three prompts given regarding the information they needed to include in their email:

- instructions given for birthday celebration
- attitude of the restaurant staff
- food service and its quality.

For each prompt, candidates needed to include at least two points to gain the full six marks for content. Many candidates successfully met the demands of this exercise and obtained good marks, while other candidates missed out one or more details and lost marks. The points discussed in the email should be clear and unambiguous. This exercise also has eight marks allocated to language style and accuracy; therefore, candidates should be careful with their spellings and the use of grammar when producing their answers. Some candidates lost marks for the last prompt, where they did not mention any specific food item ordered at the restaurant. Some other candidates demonstrated a limited knowledge of the target language and struggled to use it effectively, which led to weak expression attempts.

While some candidates appeared to be very well prepared for the task, there were other candidates that demonstrated lack of understanding of the requirements of the writing task and neglected all the directions about the content. If there is no valid point included in the content, no language marks can be awarded. Therefore, it is very important to tailor the response according to the instructions given in the question.

SECOND LANGUAGE URDU

Paper 3248/02
Grammar, Writing and Translation

Key messages

To achieve a good grade in this examination, the candidates should attempt all four exercises.

- **Exercise 1 – Sentence transformation:** In this exercise, candidates read five short sentences. They have to transform/complete the second sentence using the given prompts, without changing or altering the original meaning of the first sentence.
- **Exercise 2 – Multiple-choice cloze passage:** In this exercise, candidates are tested in the application of grammar within a context. Candidates read a short text with several gaps to be filled in with one of the multiple-choice options given to each gap.
- **Exercise 3 – Extended writing exercise:** In this exercise, candidates are asked to write a piece of continuous prose of approximately 200 words. A stimulus of short prompts is also given to aid candidates, if they wish to use them to complete their essay.
- **Exercise 4 – Translation:** Candidates translate a short passage of approximately 150 words from English into Urdu.

General comments

This paper consists of four exercises which include seventeen questions and the total mark for the paper is 50 marks.

For **exercise 1** and **exercise 2**, candidates' performance was very good, where most candidates achieved full marks.

For **exercise 3**, the extended writing question, some candidates could not reach the top levels of the mark scheme for content and for language as they could not develop their ideas effectively and distinctively in their own words within the appropriate length.

For **exercise 4**, candidates were required to translate an English passage of 150 words into Urdu. The performance on the translation question in this series continues to show improvement on candidates' performance. However, some candidates showed some difficulties in translating the text, as they either translated the English words incorrectly into Urdu, omitted/missed the main key messages or transliterated some of the words, and therefore could not score full marks.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – (Questions 1 to 5) Sentence Transformation

The primary objective of this exercise was to assess the candidates' grammatical understanding. They were asked to complete the second sentence without changing or altering the meaning of the original sentence. The completed sentence needed to be clear, legible, and convey the intended meaning without ambiguity.

Overall, candidates performed well in this exercise. Most candidates achieved full marks. However, some candidates found **Question 2** and **Question 3** more challenging as they struggled to complete the sentences using the appropriate words to convey the correct meaning.

Exercise 2 – (Questions 6 to 15) Multiple-choice cloze passage

In this exercise, a passage was provided with ten gaps, corresponding to ten different questions. Candidates were required to read the passage carefully in order to decide which option, from the four options given, would be the correct one. Candidates had to simply tick the box in front of the option they believed was the correct one.

The majority of candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the text and selected the correct answers. However, some candidates found **Question 8**, **Question 9**, and **Question 12** more challenging as they have selected incorrect answers. This was probably due to candidates' limited knowledge of the target language.

It was also noticed that some candidates ticked more than one option, which prevented candidates to gain a mark as it was not clear what option they had chosen. It is important while attempting a multiple-choice question exercise, that candidates are careful and clearly tick only one out of the four given options. If they change their mind afterwards, they must cross out the previous answer before they tick another option. When more than one box is ticked, the answer will not be valid.

Exercise 3 – Extended writing (Question 16)

In this exercise, candidates were required to write a piece of continuous prose of approximately 200 words based on the statement provided: *'Watching dramas and movies is the best use of free time.'*

Two stimuluses were provided to guide candidates' writing:

1. *'The use of new technology has changed the quality of films and dramas.'*
2. *'There is no difference in the stories of old and new films and dramas.'*

Marks were awarded according to the candidates' performance against the mark scheme's band descriptors, with ten marks allocated for content and ten marks available for language.

Most candidates approached this topic effectively, presenting balanced perspectives on whether watching dramas and films is the best way to spend free time. They supported their arguments with personal examples and insightful comparisons to other leisure activities. Additionally, many concluded their essays with clear, well-reasoned opinions, which allowed them to earn high marks for both content and language.

Many candidates have explored both stimuluses, sharing their perspectives on how advancements in technology have transformed the quality and standards of films and dramas. They have given various examples to demonstrate how innovations like high-definition visuals and immersive soundtracks have elevated the viewing experience. Additionally, these candidates effectively connected their insights to the main question, examining how modern technology influences people's enjoyment of films and dramas in their leisure time.

Some candidates explored the second stimulus by comparing the stories of both old and new films and dramas. They shared their personal opinions on the storytelling in both eras, reflecting on how narrative techniques have evolved over time. Some candidates were able to present basic relevant points, but their arguments lacked depth and development. As a result, they were not able to achieve the higher marks for content and language.

A few candidates struggled with language fluency and expression. Although their ideas were clear, they would have benefited from using more refined Urdu, incorporating a richer vocabulary and more complex sentence structures to enhance their responses.

Overall, candidates performed well in this exercise, demonstrating a solid understanding of the topic and an ability to express their thoughts clearly. To further enhance their performance, candidates are encouraged to develop and elaborate on their ideas more thoroughly, providing well-reasoned arguments supported by concrete examples. This approach will not only strengthen the quality of their essays but also help them to achieve higher marks in this exercise.

Exercise 4 – Translation (Question 17)

In this exercise, candidates were asked to translate a 150-words English passage into Urdu. The passage focused on global environmental issues such as global warming and air pollution, while also highlighting potential solutions through sustainable practices like cycling and walking.

The marks were awarded according with candidates' performance in the light of the band descriptors presented in the mark scheme. There were five marks allocated for **communicating key points** and ten marks for **applying linguistic knowledge and accuracy**.

Candidates who clearly communicated all the points received full marks for content and were able to achieve full marks for language. However, some candidates frequently transliterated English words and lost marks as they should have attempted using the correct Urdu words. Additionally, many candidates struggled to translate key words accurately into Urdu or omitted certain words and have therefore lost marks.

Overall, most candidates successfully conveyed the core message of the passage, demonstrating a solid understanding of its central themes and context. Many translations reflected a clear comprehension, with several candidates achieving high or even full marks.

Despite occasional spelling or grammatical errors, the performance indicated that candidates' communication skills in translating from English into Urdu were generally very effective.