

SECOND LANGUAGE URDU

Paper 3248/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

There are five exercises in this paper, and candidates are expected to answer all the questions in every exercise.

Exercise 1 – (Question 1 – 6) consists of a comprehension passage. There are six questions worth one or two marks each, set on the information given in the passage, which require brief answers.

Exercise 2 – (Question 7 – 15) is a multiple-choice exercise, based on a text divided into four paragraphs i.e. **A-D**. Candidates have to identify where exactly different pieces of information are located in the text.

Exercise 3 – (Question 16 – 19) is a note making exercise. After reading the text passage, candidates have to select the required information for each question and reproduce it in the form of short notes.

Exercise 4 – (Question 20) is a summary writing exercise, based on the text given for **Exercise 3**. Rather than summarising the whole passage, there are specific instructions given regarding the points to be included in the summary. Focusing on the required aspects, candidates have to write a summary, keeping the response within the limit of one hundred words. Along with the content, candidates are also assessed on the style and accuracy of language.

Exercise 5 – (Question 21) is a directed writing exercise. Candidates are asked to write an email as directed. There are three prompts given to respond to in the content of the email, keeping the response within one hundred and fifty words approximately. Candidates are also assessed on both the content of their response, as well as the accuracy and style of language.

Candidates are expected to use their own words in their responses, rather than lifting directly from the passage. This approach allows candidates to showcase their comprehension and ability to express their ideas independently. While minor mistakes such as spelling errors are not penalised in comprehension tasks, writing exercises have marks allocated for style and accuracy of language. It is crucial that candidates' handwriting remains clear and easy to read throughout the paper. Additionally, candidates should ensure that their responses are in the designated spaces provided for each question. There is sufficient space allocated for each answer, but if a response exceeds the available space or if a candidate wishes to amend an answer by continuing in a blank page or in an additional sheet, this should be clearly indicated in the answer space to prevent any misunderstanding. Candidates are advised to make an attempt at every question rather than leaving any sections unanswered, as no marks are deducted for incorrect responses on this paper.

Teachers should focus on helping candidates develop a strong grasp of the language used in the questions, as well as practising how to select relevant details for their answers. Where time permits, candidates should be encouraged to review their responses to ensure nothing has been overlooked and also to correct any accidental mistakes.

General comments

The examination was well-balanced and thoughtfully designed to address the requirements of candidates across the full range of abilities. The paper encompassed a broad range of syllabus topics and presented an appropriate level of difficulty to engage candidates. The content included in the question paper reflected a comprehensive approach, touching upon varied syllabus elements and offering a suitable level of challenge for candidates. On the whole, they demonstrated a strong performance, suggesting that the majority found the questions accessible and manageable.

Generally, candidates excelled in comprehension tasks, while activities such as note-making and summary writing proved to be somewhat more demanding for those with lower proficiency. This difficulty was often attributed to either a limited familiarity with the language or insufficient practice in these specific skills. Although many candidates secured good marks, achieving scores above 45 marks was confined to those with the highest levels of ability. The top score attained in this examination was a perfect 50 out of 50 marks.

During the marking process, it became evident that a significant number of candidates have the tendency to lift their answers from the source text when tackling inferential questions, particularly in summary writing. This approach often leads to the inclusion of unnecessary details and lengthy information, adversely impacting both the word count and the overall quality of their written responses. It is important that candidates interpret and understand the questions carefully and select the relevant information from the text to write their answers effectively.

Another observation was that some candidates chose to leave certain questions blank. Given that there is no penalty for incorrect answers and candidates have sufficient time, it is recommended that they are encouraged to make an attempt at every question, maximising their chances to achieve higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

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

The text passage about a mountain peak in Nepal, called Machapuchare, was accessible and easy to comprehend for most candidates. In general, this exercise was well understood by a large majority of candidates and many candidates scored full marks.

Question 2 was answered exceptionally well by all ability level candidates.

Question 3 (What was the result of the attempt to climb the Machapuchare in the past?) was a direct question and had a simple answer that the team did not reach the peak or that they came back without conquering the peak. Some candidates got distracted with the information about restriction on climbing attempts by the government and lost a mark. Some information was confused with the answer for **Question 4** as well, which was worth two marks and required two pieces of information about how James Roberts helped the government of Nepal during his service. Quite a few candidates could not identify the correct answer and either gave ambiguous answers or provided only one of the two valid points. The second point about pioneering the first trekking company was misinterpreted with the distractor that he initiated the

use of the term 'trekking' for mountaineering (ٹریننگ کی اصطلاح کا استعمال). **Question 5** asked about the impact of the presence of mountain ranges in Nepal on the country's economy. Quite a few limited ability candidates could not grasp the word معیشت (economy) and gave ambiguous answers.

Many candidates struggled with **Question 6**, which was about the reason for the preservation of the natural beauty of Machapuchare. The reason is clearly described in the text that while natural beauty of other mountains is largely compromised due to excessive tourism, Machapuchare's natural beauty is preserved due to the restriction on climbing this mountain. Candidates who tried to lift the answer directly from text missed the required answer and only mentioned that mountains are affected by excessive tourism and trekking or they simply repeated the statement from the question without mentioning the reason, which could not qualify for a mark.

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

This multiple-choice exercise was based on a passage about Parrots. The passage contained four paragraphs (A – D). Candidates had to identify which paragraph contained the selected pieces of information for each question. This exercise was very well attempted by candidates and a large majority successfully scored full marks on this task. **Question 8, Question 9, Question 10 and Question 12** were answered exceptionally well by almost all ability level candidates.

While attempting a multiple-choice exercise, candidates must always be careful to clearly select only one out of the four given options. If they change their mind afterwards, they must cross out the previous answer before they select their final answer. If more than one box is ticked, the answer will be disqualified.

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

This was a note making exercise, based on a text passage about the history and development of Advertisements. This comprehension exercise posed comparatively more challenges to candidates.

For **Question 16**, candidates had to write three consecutive developmental stages of advertisements, i.e. Printing Press/Newspapers and Magazines, Radio/Television, Internet/Social Media. Some limited ability candidates lost marks due to their lack of understanding of the text, or they were only able to reproduce one or two points instead of the three required.

Question 17 was worth two marks, which proved challenging for some higher ability candidates as well. It required two pieces of information about the making of modern advertisements. Many candidates confused the required answer (i.e. making advertisements specifically for social media users and use of people's online data to assess their preferences/showing advertisements based on their personal preferences) with use of human psychology while designing advertisements, which has always been an effective tool of trade and not a modern development.

Question 18 was worth two marks and candidates had to mention two points about economic importance of advertisements, i.e. source of income for different forms of information media and employment opportunities for the public. Candidates who relied on guess work and lifted long sentences from the text to use as their answers, gave ambiguous answers and consequently lost marks.

Question 19 was worth two marks also. The question asked about two negative aspects of advertisements. It was generally well attempted by most candidates, who were able to score full marks. The candidates who lost marks either could not comprehend the meaning of منفی (negative) or they gave two details related to the same point and scored one mark only.

Exercise 4 – (Question 20) – Summary

The summary task is based on the passage for **Exercise 3**. Candidates were clearly guided that they can use some of the notes they made for the previous exercise. However, candidates had to decide which part should be used according to the instructions given for the summary. Unlike the previous format – where summaries covered the entire passage – this version requires candidates to focus on 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 distinct points for the content of the summary. The refined mark scheme successfully supported differentiation across the ability range, rewarding content and linguistic proficiency separately.

There were plenty of opportunities for candidates to score maximum marks in this part. The points given for discussion were specific and clear and demanded exact information. The overall performance in this task was good, and there were a few outstanding responses, showing a thorough understanding of the text as well as an excellent command of the language and delivering the required information in a concise manner, complying with the length required.

Nevertheless, only a few candidates achieved the highest possible marks in this exercise. It was observed during marking that some candidates were still unfamiliar with this targeted summary style and instead reverted to the former approach, summarising the entire passage and including unnecessary details. In some cases, this led to omitting essential information or disregarding the required word count. Since language quality is also assessed, copying large sections directly from the text reduced the chances to obtain higher marks for language and often resulted in overly lengthy answers.

Additionally, a tendency toward carelessness with spelling and grammar was noticed, which impacted the language marks. As this task involves presenting information from the text in a way that matches the summary prompt, careful attention to language accuracy would allow candidates to avoid most spelling and grammatical mistakes.

A good number of candidates seem to be aware of the demands of the new pattern of summary writing and were comfortable following the instructions provided. However, many responses produced by candidates showed that they could not grasp yet the idea of writing a summary according to the instructions given in the question. They have gone overboard, writing long paragraphs and giving irrelevant details. The question is clearly directed to write a summary focusing on only two aspects of the given text about Advertisements

(اشتہار سازی میں عوامی نفسیات کی اہمیت اور آج کل دکھائے جانے والے اشتہارات کے منفی اثرات)۔ There were multiple valid answers to choose from for each part of the summary. Quite a few candidates answered only one of the two aspects of the topic and could score only two out of four marks for content. For the second aspect of summary, they could use the notes made for **Question 19**.

Directly copying the introductory part from the passage even when there is no relevance to the required answers is still a problem which affects the word count negatively. If a candidate disregards the directions about the points to be included in the summary and starts writing a summary of the whole passage, they will mostly end up writing irrelevant details in the main part of their answer and valid points may come after the cut off limit, which will prevent them to achieve the full marks. Consequently, the fact that candidates were not able to achieve higher marks for content also affected the provision of marks for style and accuracy of language.

To address these challenges, teachers should ensure that candidates receive ample practice with the new summary writing format. By modelling how to identify and select only the information relevant to the summary instructions, teachers can help candidates develop the skill of gathering key points from a passage. Explicitly explaining the need to present two distinct points for each aspect of the topic will help candidates in structuring more concise and focused responses. It is essential that candidates read the passage thoroughly and prioritise information according to the summary's requirements. They should practise extracting the main ideas while omitting extended or peripheral details, to ensure they can remain within the one hundred words limit. Encouraging candidates to paraphrase rather than copy from the text will not only improve the originality and clarity of their answers but will also have a positive impact on their language marks. Furthermore, teachers should highlight the importance of accuracy in the information selection, language usage and spelling.

Exercise 5 – (Question 21) – Writing exercise

This exercise consists of a directed writing task. The candidates had to write an email to a friend, expressing their thoughts about the holidays they spent recently with him/her. There were three prompts given regarding the information they needed to include in their email:

- Description of time spent together
- Activities they enjoyed the most and why
- Invitation to the next holidays and planned activities.

For each prompt, they needed to include at least two points to gain the full six marks for content. The points discussed in the email should be clear and unambiguous. There were also eight marks allocated for accuracy and style of language; therefore, candidates should pay attention to their spellings and grammar.

The majority of candidates successfully met the demands of this exercise and achieved good marks, especially in the content area. Only some limited ability candidates missed out one or more details and consequently were not able to achieve higher marks. Regarding the last prompt specifically, some candidates missed out on the second part, the activities planned for the upcoming holidays. The topic given for the email was generally relevant and engaging, which was shown by the engagement of candidates with this task. Candidates scored better in the content area, while language marks differed depending on various ability levels. Candidates with a limited knowledge of the target language were not able to reach higher marks in the language area due to their difficulty to express themselves in the language.

While some candidates appeared to be very well prepared for the task, there were also a few responses where candidates appeared to be insufficiently guided about the requirements of the writing tasks, and they 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 to be successful in this section.

SECOND LANGUAGE URDU

Paper 3248/02
Grammar, Writing and Translation

Key messages

To be successful in this examination, candidates must complete all four exercises in the question paper.

- **Exercise 1 – Sentence transformation:** In this exercise, candidates read five short sentences which they have to transform/complete using the prompts given, ensuring the meaning of the original sentence remains unchanged.
- **Exercise 2 – Multiple-choice cloze passage:** In this exercise candidates have to apply their grammatical knowledge within a context. Candidates read a short text with several gaps which need to be filled in with one of the multiple-choice options given for each gap in the cloze passage.
- **Exercise 3 – Extended writing exercise:** In this exercise, candidates are asked to write a piece of continuous prose of approximately two hundred words. A set of short prompts is also provided, which candidates may use to help completing their essay.
- **Exercise 4 – Translation:** Candidates translate a short passage of approximately one hundred and fifty words from English into Urdu.

General comments

This paper consists of four specific exercises, containing a total of seventeen questions, with a maximum of fifty marks. Candidates are assessed on their grammar, writing and translation skills.

Exercise 1 and **Exercise 2** demonstrated, in this November series, that some candidates struggled to understand the sentences and key vocabulary on both exercises, which prevented them to achieve higher marks.

In **Exercise 3**, the extended writing task, most candidates achieved good marks despite the minor spelling error in the print of the first prompt, which did not affect the candidates' performance. However, some candidates were unable to reach the top levels of the mark scheme and achieve full marks, as they struggled to develop their ideas effectively and efficiently, showing some difficulties on expressing their ideas clearly, by using their own words within the required word limit.

For **Exercise 4**, candidates were required to translate an English passage of one hundred and fifty words into Urdu. The candidates' overall performance on this task was very good, with the majority of candidates achieving high marks. Some candidates were unable to demonstrate strong translation skills, as they either translated certain English words inaccurately into Urdu, omitted key messages or relied on transliteration of certain words. Consequently, they were unable to obtain higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 – (Questions 1 to 5) – Sentence Transformation

The aim of this exercise is to assess the candidates' grammatical understanding. They were asked to complete the given sentences without changing or altering the meaning of the original sentence. The completed sentence needed to be clear, legible and convey the intended meaning without any ambiguity.

Candidates performed well in this exercise in this November series, with most of the candidates achieving full marks. However, **Question 2**, **Question 4** and **Question 5** proved to be challenging for many candidates, who struggled to use the correct word or verb tense to meet the grammatical requirement of each sentence, that accurately conveyed the intended meaning.

In **Question 2**, most candidates were unable to score a mark because they filled the gap with

پہلا تجربہ / موقع ہے which is grammatically incorrect. This phrase changes the meaning of the sentence by shifting it from the past tense to the present tense.

Similarly, in **Question 4**, instead of writing اس کے برعکس meaning 'on the contrary', most of the candidates wrote کے مطابق which means 'according to' and therefore were prevented from achieving the mark.

In **Question 5**, many candidates struggled to identify the correct word. Those who managed to recognise it still lost the mark because they used the singular form وقت (time) instead of the plural اوقات (times), which was grammatically required by the sentence.

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

In this exercise, candidates were provided with a short passage containing ten gaps, each corresponding to a question. They were instructed to read the passage thoroughly and select the suitable word for each gap from the four options supplied. Candidates indicated their responses by just ticking the box next to the option they believe was the correct answer, bearing in mind the context.

The majority of candidates exhibited a good understanding of the text as they mostly selected the correct answers. However, many candidates found **Question 6**, **Question 9**, **Question 10**, **Question 11** and **Question 13** more challenging due to their limited knowledge of the target language and key vocabulary. Consequently, they selected the incorrect options — most notably choosing option **D** instead of option **B** for **Question 6**, choosing mistakenly option **C** instead of option **A** for **Question 9**. The incorrect options were also erroneously chosen for **Question 10**, where they selected option **A** instead of the correct option **D**, for **Question 11** where most candidates have chosen option **D** in detriment of the correct option **B** and finally for **Question 13**, where candidates nominated option **D** as their answer instead of the correct option **C**.

It was also noted that some candidates placed their ticks in more than one box for a single question, without a clear reference to what their final selected option was. This resulted in zero marks being awarded in these specific questions. However, if a candidate initially marked two options but clearly crossed out the incorrect one, the response was accepted, and the mark was awarded for the correct answer.

Exercise 3 – (Question 16) – Extended writing

In this exercise, candidates were required to write a piece of continuous prose of approximately two hundred words based on the statement presented: *'School uniforms should not be compulsory for children'*.

Two stimuluses were provided to support their writing:

1. *'Children can lose their identity because of uniforms.'*
2. *'Wearing a uniform makes all children look the same.'*

Marks were awarded based on the band descriptors, with ten marks allocated for **content** and ten marks for **language**.

Most of the candidates approached this topic reflectively, presenting sensible and well-balanced arguments on whether school uniforms should or should not be compulsory for candidates. Despite a minor spelling error in the first prompt in the question paper, none of the candidates were disadvantaged by it. They showed a clear understanding of the word, even being misspelt, and they were all able to achieve marks accordingly.

Most of the candidates argued that school uniforms should be mandatory because it is easier to identify which school a child attend and it helps to ensure a sense of uniformity among students.

Many candidates have used a range of examples to explain how wearing a school uniform might influence a child's identity. They talked about individuality, self-expression, and the psychological effects of everyone looking the same.

Many of them have also discussed the positive effects of wearing school uniforms, noting that a uniform can promote discipline within the school environment and reduce the social differences between students from different economic backgrounds.

Some candidates have also argued that children should be free to choose what they want to wear. They expressed that there should be no school uniform so that candidates can dress according to their own preferences, in order to look their best, and enjoy greater freedom in their appearance.

Overall, most responses demonstrated strong engagement with the material and an ability to consider both sides of the argument in a thoughtful, well-structured manner. Although a small number of candidates struggled with fluency and linguistic accuracy. However, they were still generally able to convey their ideas effectively.

To strengthen future performances, candidates should begin their essays by addressing to the main statement directly, so they can establish a clear focus. They should also aim to expand their ideas with well-reasoned arguments and relevant examples to the task required. Implementing this more structured and thoughtful approach will not only improve the coherence of their writing but also enhance their probability of achieving higher marks.

Exercise 4 – (Question 17) – Translation

In this last exercise, candidates were asked to translate a one hundred and fifty words passage in English into Urdu. The passage was focussing on the Media theme. In this task, candidates were expected to accurately convey the meaning of the text while maintaining the tone, style and context of the original passage throughout their translation.

The marks were awarded based on the criteria in the band descriptors, with five marks allocated for **communicating key points** and ten marks for demonstrating **linguistic knowledge and accuracy**.

Candidates who successfully conveyed all the key points of the passage were awarded with the full five marks for content and were able to achieve full marks for language, if the language used was at the same standard and was complying with the criteria of the higher band of the mark scheme for language. However, some candidates frequently relied on transliteration of English words rather than providing accurate Urdu equivalents, which prevented them to achieve higher marks for language.

In addition, many candidates found some of the key vocabulary challenging and consequently, either struggled to translate those correctly or omitted key words and phrases altogether. This affected not only the clarity but also the full completion of the translation task, which prevented candidates to reach the higher bands of the mark scheme.

Overall, the majority of candidates effectively conveyed the core message of the passage, demonstrating a strong understanding of its theme and context. Many translations exhibited a clear comprehension of the text and an appropriate use of the language, with several candidates achieving high marks in both content and linguistic accuracy.

Despite occasional spelling and grammatical mistakes, candidates generally demonstrated effective communication skills in translating from English into Urdu, indicating a sound grasp of both languages.