FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 0508/01
Reading

Key messages

Candidates should be able to understand the ideas of the writers, and the messages that they are conveying in both texts.

In answering the questions, candidates are encouraged to use their own words, avoid copying whole sentences or paragraphs from the texts, and respond with only relevant information.

In the summary question, candidates are urged to succinctly convey relevant main ideas from both texts and exclude any secondary ideas that the two writers may have provided to further expand their ideas.

General comments

The following was observed:

- An increasing number of candidates are using their own words when responding to questions; however, more training should be provided to ensure language accuracy.
- There remains a need for candidates to show control of a more varied range of language and structures in their writing. Further support of candidates with grammar, spelling and varied vocabulary is essential in this regard.
- Summary skills are improving; however further training is required as some candidates tend to include ideas and/or examples that are irrelevant to the demand of the summary question.
- More support is needed to help candidates produce focused, wholly relevant summaries through appropriate and varied linkage, coherent paragraphs, and correctly punctuated sentences.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Most candidates gave the right definition according to the text.

(b) This question asked candidates to distinguish between the sentimental and financial impacts of the act of giving. Some responses included two points without clarifying which pertained to which effect, while others addressed only the sentimental or only the financial aspect. Training candidates to target the relevant information in the question should be given some attention.

(c) Candidates should read the question carefully to ensure they include only relevant information. Some noted the two key words in the question, sooner and later, and their answers were correct.

(d) This question was somewhat challenging as it asked for an example. Some candidates were aware of this while others did not provide a relevant example. Additionally, some did not realise that sacrificing one's life for the sake of the country can be made by either a rich or poor person.

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(e) Even though the question is about 'the act of giving', most candidates did not make the distinction between this requirement and the description of the 'generous person' himself. Their answers included 'he does not have any enemies' or 'he gives to those around him'.

(f) Many candidates gave the correct answer.

(g) Many candidates scored the full mark. Those who only scored one mark did so because they gave the same answer twice; they mentioned that people continue talking about him both during and after his life without distinguishing between these two timeframes.

(h) Many candidates scored the full mark.

(i) Many candidates missed that the question asked for effects on society, not on the individual. For example, some responded by saying 'it makes the generous person less selfish'. This is the effect on the person which was not relevant to the demand of the question.

(j) These types of questions need clear understanding of the writer's point of view with evidence. Most candidates gave the correct answers. Those who only scored one or two points either said that the writer agrees with the statement but did not provide relevant evidence or gave only one correct evidence.

(k) Most candidates gave the right answer.

Accuracy of the language

The answers to **Question 1(a) – (k)** were also assessed together on the quality of the language used to answer them, specifically their linguistic accuracy and appropriateness of style. The focus here is on testing candidates' ability to use their own words when answering comprehension questions. A range of linguistic ability was observed, from answers expressed entirely in candidates' own words with excellent effect to answers consisting almost entirely of text lifted from the source text.

Candidates must understand that copying entire sentences verbatim can undermine both the meaning and grammatical clarity of their answers, thereby affecting their credibility. To avoid this, they should carefully analyse each question and tailor their language to address the specific details being asked. For instance, when answering **Question 1(c)**, those who failed to rephrase the source material produced incorrect responses, as their answers suggested that the generous individual was bestowing blessings rather than receiving them from those he had helped.

A few important notes regarding language accuracy are as follows:

1. **The distinction between Attaa' Almarbouta (ـة) and Alhaa' (ـه).**

   Candidates should ensure they correctly differentiate between these two letters.

2. **Correct usages of common words and expressions:**

   Candidates should pay close attention to the proper spelling and usage of words, for example:

   هذا/ذلك /إلى إضافة /لكن

3. **Variety in linking words:**

   Candidates should avoid overusing the same linking word repeatedly. Instead, they should demonstrate a variety of linking words appropriate to the context.

4. **Maintaining the correct linguistic references:**

   Candidates should ensure correct gender and number agreement when referring to people or things (e.g., the use of nouns, pronouns and verb conjugations) to avoid ambiguity.

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5. Coordination and linguistic agreement:

Candidates should pay close attention to various linguistic aspects of coordination (semantic, syntactic, lexical, morphosyntactic, etc.). The following are some major notes:

5.1 Proper use of conjunctions (و and فـ)

Candidates should understand the difference between these conjunctions and use them appropriately.

5.2 The conjunction (و)

The conjunction (و) cannot appear independently or stand alone in a phrase. It must be immediately connected to the word that follows it, without any space.

5.3 Errors in Verbal Sentence Agreement

A recurrent issue concerns inaccurate verb agreement in verbal sentence structures.

Many candidates use plural verb forms even when the subject follows the verb, resulting in grammatical inconsistency. In Standard Arabic, the verb in such constructions typically remains in the singular form, and this deviation affects the accuracy and coherence of their writing. For instance:

– فقد يستفيدون المحتاجون من هذا العطاء. ☒

– فقد يستفيد المحتاجون من هذا العطاء. ☑

Question 2

The summary Question

1. Content, where candidates are expected to:

– Discuss equally ideas from both texts to support their summary.
– Link ideas in an organised and logical way.
– Use their own words and avoid direct lifting of phrases from both texts.
– Disregard ideas that do not address the requirement of the question, e.g., how the generous person benefits from his generosity, and/or the personal characteristics of a generous person.

Many candidates tried to satisfy these demands but there is still some evidence that summary skills and techniques need further improvement.

2. Style and Organisation, where candidates are expected to:

– Express and focus relevant ideas with assured use of their own words.
– Present these ideas in a good summary style with orderly grouping of ideas using linking words.

There was some improvement in responses this series, but there is still a need to train candidates to use paragraphs and sentences that are correctly punctuated.

3. Accuracy of Language, where candidates are expected to:

– use the correct verb tense
– conjugate verbs in the correct form (e.g., plural, dual)
– use hamza appropriately
– use possessives, prepositions, definite/indefinite articles, idhafa etc., correctly.

Centres are strongly advised to address accurate spelling more directly in class, as many candidates who otherwise expressed themselves quite clearly unfortunately struggled to write words as they ought to appear in writing, including some basic words.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 0508/02
Writing

Key messages

To achieve high marks on this paper, candidates should focus on the following areas:

1 Understanding and Approaching Tasks

- Read each question carefully before choosing one to answer.
- Pick tasks that match your strengths.
- Stay focused on the question – avoid irrelevant details or generic introductions.

2 Writing Skills

Descriptive Writing

- Use vivid sensory details, imagery, and metaphors.
- Keep the focus on the main subject; avoid long backstories or unrelated events.

Argumentative Writing

- Present your opinion clearly at the start.
- Support your argument with reasoning, examples, and counterarguments.
- Avoid simply listing opposing points without forming a clear stance.

Narrative Writing

- Plan your story with a clear beginning, development, climax, and resolution.
- Build tension and suspense to make your story engaging.
- Keep events connected; avoid disjointed sequences.

Cohesion and Clarity

- Use connectors and paragraphing to make your ideas flow logically.
- Leave time to proofread your work to correct errors and improve clarity.

Language and Presentation

- Use formal Arabic; avoid colloquial or foreign expressions.
- Write neatly, with legible letters and correct dot placement.

3 Grammar and Language Accuracy

- Case Endings: Use correct case for subjects, objects, and predicates.
- Verb Conjugation: Practice dual and feminine plural forms; match verbs to subject gender and number.
- Verb-Subject Order: If the verb comes first, use the singular form.
- Weak Verbs: Apply rules for dropping weak letters in the jussive (*majzoum*) case.
- Relative Pronouns: Match gender/number and avoid using with indefinite nouns.
- Particles (إنّ، لأنّ، كأنّ): Follow these with nouns or pronouns, not verbs.
- Hamza Rules: Distinguish between Hamzat al-Qaṭ’ and Hamzat al-Waṣl; spell medial and final hamza correctly.

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- Alif Variations: Write the 'soft' alif (الألف اللينة) correctly at the end of words.
- Tā' Variations: Know the difference between (تاء مربوطة vs. تاء مفتوحة).
- Plural Rules: Distinguish human and non-human plurals; non-human plurals are treated as singular feminine.
- Prepositions: Use correct prepositions with verbs; avoid incorrectly attaching multi-letter prepositions to words.
- Pronouns with Prepositions: Attach pronouns correctly.
- الاسم المنقوص: Write it correctly (without the yā' when indefinite) in nominative and genitive cases.
- Spelling Accuracy: Distinguish long vs. short alif. Learn how to correctly write commonly confused words (e.g., هاذا / هذا, لاكن / لكن, إلا / إلى).

4 Key Habits to Improve

- Plan your writing before starting.
- Focus on quality and clarity, not word count.
- Proofread carefully before submission.
- Practice grammar and spelling regularly.
- Keep your writing neat and legible.

By focusing on these recommendations, candidates can significantly improve their performance and increase their chances of success on this exam.

General comments

In the first section of the exam, **Question A** emerged as the most popular choice among students. **Question B** came second, though it was noticeably less popular than **Question A**. In contrast, **Questions C** and **D** attracted very little interest, with only a few candidates opting to answer them.

However, ***Section 2*** proved to be more balanced than ***Section 1***, with **Questions C** and **D** being slightly more popular than **Questions A** and **B**.

Broadly speaking, and in line with previous sessions, students' adherence to the required writing styles in the discursive and descriptive tasks has shown noticeable improvement compared with a few years ago. Many candidates are now able to provide a reasonable range of pros and cons that are generally relevant to the topic and appropriately framed. Encouragingly, a growing number of candidates have also avoided approaching the descriptive task in a narrative manner, demonstrating a clearer awareness of task requirements. However, there remains scope for further improvement in order to access the higher mark bands. Responses would benefit from presenting a more balanced and judicious selection of positive and negative points, as well as from developing these ideas in greater depth through explanation, exemplification, or justification, rather than relying on the simple accumulation of points with limited elaboration.

In descriptive writing, despite overall progress, some candidates continue to begin their responses with extended narrative openings, which detracts from the descriptive focus of the task and limits the effectiveness of the response. In addition, excessive peripheral detail or tangential descriptions that do not contribute directly to the central image or scene often weaken cohesion and impact. Candidates would therefore benefit from maintaining a sustained descriptive focus throughout, selecting details carefully, and ensuring that all descriptive elements serve the central purpose of the task and contribute to a coherent overall impression.

That said, challenges persist in both argumentative and narrative writing styles. Many candidates still struggle to distinguish clearly between discursive and argumentative writing. Presenting opposing viewpoints without constructing a clear, well-supported argument for one position does not fulfil the requirements of an argumentative task, and merely stating an opinion at the conclusion is insufficient to meet higher-level criteria. Effective argumentative writing requires the clear articulation of a stance, supported by relevant evidence and logical reasoning, alongside engagement with and refutation of opposing arguments in a structured and purposeful manner.

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Similarly, a significant number of narrative responses continue to lack a clear and impactful climax, which undermines both narrative tension and overall structural coherence. In some cases, stories end abruptly or resolve too easily, reducing their effectiveness and engagement. This highlights an ongoing area for development, particularly in crafting narratives with a well-defined progression, rising tension, and a convincing resolution that brings the story to a meaningful close.

A further area of improvement observed this session is the noticeable reduction in the use of colloquial language and foreign expressions compared with previous years. This suggests an increasing awareness among candidates of appropriate register and formal written conventions. However, language accuracy remains the principal area requiring sustained attention. Weaknesses in core aspects of the language – particularly syntax, morphology, and orthography – continue to limit overall performance.

In many cases, candidates who demonstrate strong ideas and good content development are prevented from achieving higher marks due to persistent grammatical inaccuracies. Addressing these issues is essential if learners are to progress beyond mid-level performance. Schools and teachers are therefore encouraged to place continued emphasis on the systematic teaching and reinforcement of fundamental grammatical structures over an extended period, well before the IGCSE stage. Long-term, cumulative language development is key to improving accuracy and enabling candidates to demonstrate their full potential in future examinations.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Questions A and B

In **Question A**, candidates were asked to discuss the pros and cons of children owning smartphones at an early age, while **Question B** presented the statement that the use of artificial intelligence by students to write their research papers is a double-edged sword, requiring candidates to discuss the views surrounding this issue. Both questions attracted a substantial number of responses, with **Question A** proving particularly popular and, arguably, attracting more candidates than the other three questions combined. This trend is unsurprising, as topics related to technology tend to resonate strongly with candidates' experiences and interests, making them especially accessible and appealing.

Both questions required candidates to adopt a discursive writing style, and the majority demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and the expected approach. Many responses successfully identified the most obvious advantages and disadvantages relevant to each topic. This was particularly evident in responses to **Question A**, where the points raised were often more concrete and impactful than those seen in **Question B**. This may be attributed to the more immediate and familiar nature of the topic, which demanded less abstract thinking and reflection than the discussion of artificial intelligence in academic contexts.

However, as observed in previous sessions, a significant number of candidates relied on the simple listing of positive and negative points, with limited engagement or development. Such an approach restricts the depth of analysis and weakens the overall quality of the essay, preventing candidates from accessing the higher mark bands. Stronger responses were characterised by explanation, justification, and the use of relevant examples to support each point.

In addition, persistent grammatical inaccuracies continued to detract from clarity and overall effectiveness. Even where ideas were relevant and well chosen, weaknesses in basic language structures often limited achievement and resulted in lower marks.

To improve future performance, candidates should be encouraged to develop their ideas more fully by explaining and exemplifying the pros and cons they identify, rather than merely listing them. Greater and more consistent attention to grammatical accuracy will also significantly enhance the quality of written responses and enable candidates to demonstrate their full potential.

Questions C and D

In **Questions C** and **D**, candidates were presented with the statements '*The wealthy person is only one who possesses money*' and '*The electric car is the car of the future*', respectively, and were asked to explain their opinion and persuade the reader. Both questions attracted a very small number of responses. This may

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partly be attributed to the greater relatability and accessibility of the other questions, which addressed topics more closely aligned with candidates' immediate experiences and interests.

Both questions required candidates to produce a persuasive response, in which a clear viewpoint is established and convincingly argued. While most responses were broadly relevant to the task, many candidates adopted a discursive approach, focusing on listing advantages and disadvantages rather than constructing a sustained, persuasive argument. As a result, responses often lacked the depth of reasoning and rhetorical effectiveness required to fully convince the reader or to meet the demands of the task at a higher level.

This pattern reflects a continuing trend observed in previous sessions and highlights the need for more explicit teaching and practice in distinguishing between discursive and argumentative writing styles. Candidates would benefit from targeted training in developing a clear stance, supporting it with well-reasoned arguments and evidence, and engaging critically with opposing viewpoints in order to strengthen the persuasiveness of their responses. Improved awareness of these distinctions is essential for candidates seeking to achieve higher marks in future examinations. In addition, persistent grammatical inaccuracies continued to affect performance in **Questions C** and **D**, mirroring issues observed in responses to the previous questions. Even where candidates demonstrated relevant ideas and a clear understanding of the topic, weaknesses in language accuracy often undermined clarity and reduced the overall effectiveness and persuasiveness of the argument. Addressing these recurring language issues remains essential if candidates are to improve their written expression and achieve higher marks.

Section 2

Question A and B

In **Question A**, candidates were asked to describe a painting that won first prize in an art exhibition and to explain the emotions it evoked. **Question B** required candidates to describe an event in which their school had chosen them to present an award to a famous personality, focusing on both the event itself and their personal feelings during the occasion. Both questions attracted a reasonable number of responses.

These questions assessed candidates' ability to produce descriptive writing, which requires a clear focus on sensory detail, atmosphere, and personal response, rather than narrative development. Overall, many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the task and largely adhered to the required descriptive writing style. Successful responses maintained a clear focus on the central subject and used appropriate language to convey setting, mood, and emotion.

However, two recurring issues were observed. Firstly, a large number of candidates included irrelevant or peripheral details that did not contribute directly to the main task, such as extended descriptions of other paintings in the exhibition or secondary events that distracted from the primary focus. Secondly, introductions were frequently expanded into lengthy narrative accounts, particularly descriptions of journeys to the location, which reduced the descriptive value of the response and limited its effectiveness.

In addition, grammatical inaccuracies remained a persistent issue, mirroring patterns observed in previous sessions. These errors often detracted from clarity and, in some cases, undermined otherwise effective descriptions. Greater attention to language accuracy, alongside a sustained focus on relevant descriptive detail, would enable candidates to strengthen their responses and achieve higher marks.

Question C and D

In **Questions C** and **D**, candidates were required to demonstrate their narrative writing skills. **Question C** asked candidates to continue a story from the prompt '*The storm has calmed, and the waves have cast us onto a deserted island,*' while **Question D** required them to write a story about a property caretaker who helped the police uncover the circumstances surrounding a crime that occurred in a building. As with the earlier questions in this section, both tasks attracted a good number of candidates.

Many candidates showed clear creative potential and an ability to engage with the task. However, two major factors consistently limited the achievement of higher marks. The first was the lack of a well-developed plot and sustained suspense. In many responses, stories unfolded as a series of loosely connected events rather than as cohesive narratives with a clear direction. As a result, narratives often lacked rising tension, a meaningful climax, or a convincing resolution, which reduced their overall impact and effectiveness.

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The second key issue was language inaccuracy; a pattern also observed across responses to previous questions. Despite imaginative ideas and, in some cases, engaging story concepts, weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary choice, and sentence structure frequently hindered clarity and disrupted narrative flow. These inaccuracies often prevented candidates from fully conveying their ideas and from meeting the criteria required for higher mark bands.

To improve performance in narrative writing, candidates should be encouraged to plan their stories more carefully, ensuring a clear plot structure with a defined beginning, development of tension, and a satisfying resolution. Equal emphasis should be placed on improving language accuracy, as effective storytelling relies not only on creative ideas but also on precise and controlled use of language. With continued practice and targeted support, candidates can develop stronger narrative structures while refining their grammatical accuracy, enabling them to present more cohesive, engaging, and impactful stories in future examinations.

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