

URDU

Paper 8686/01

Speaking

Key messages

In order to do well in this exam, candidates should:

- Choose a particular aspect of a topic rather than deal superficially with a wide area in **Section 1**.
- Be prepared for spontaneous conversation in **Section 2**.
- Be clear about all components of the examination.

Examiners should:

- Ask questions which allow the candidate to fulfil the assessment criteria.
- Give candidates enough opportunities to ask questions of the Examiner.
- Discuss more than one topic in **Section 3**.
- Ask questions that make candidates defend their point of view or hold a debate.

General comments

Assessment

In general the overall assessments were close to the agreed standards. Examiners should ensure they follow all of the assessment criteria consistently. Significant differences in the final marks awarded by the Examiner and the Moderator can be caused by one or two unwarranted additional marks under a few of the criteria.

Recordings and documentation

The test recordings were audible and the time restrictions were adhered to. The accompanying paperwork was generally clear and accurate. Both were, on the whole, in line with good practice. However, the Examiners should ensure that all CDs are clearly labelled with the Centre number, syllabus and candidates' details.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

Most of the topics presented by candidates were appropriate according to the syllabus requirements, the most popular areas being *education*, *food* and *religion*. Some candidates took a very general approach and tried to deal superficially with a very wide area, for example education or religion. In order to allow the development of ideas and conversation, it may be better for candidates to choose one particular aspect of a topic. This could be an area in which they have a personal interest, or in which they have some experience, so that they are able to share their opinion and ideas. This worked well for some candidates who chose specific topics and were able to develop the conversation through their personal interest in the subject.

In general candidates should provide merely an overview of their chosen topic in the presentation and not offer too much detail. This will help them stay within the suggested 3 – 3.5 minute time limit, and prevent them from rushing to try and fit in a great deal of content. The Examiner should encourage the development of ideas during the conversation by asking appropriate questions. The majority of candidates were aware of the need to focus their presentation and reflect their knowledge of contemporary society where the target language is spoken.

Section 2: Topic conversation

Examiners are reminded to ask open questions to lead the discussion away from the factual matters to more abstract areas. Most candidates had adequate material and information to respond to the Examiner's questions. In some cases there was a tendency to allow the candidate to give a series of seemingly prepared learned statements, or ask basic questions but without development or encouragement to discuss or debate the topic in depth. The Examiners should ask unexpected questions in order to meet the assessment criteria within the mark scheme, because for the comprehension and responsiveness scores to be in the top band, responses should be natural and spontaneous – pre-prepared answers do not allow for this.

In **Sections 2** and **3** the candidates are required to ask questions of the Examiner (to seek an opinion or information). The candidates are required to ask more than one or two questions as there are five marks available for this in each section. Some candidates were able to do this, while others were limited in their use of questions. In these circumstances the Examiners should encourage candidates to ask them questions by leading them with statements such as 'Do you have any more questions?' or 'You can ask me questions.' This would encourage the candidate to meet the criteria if they have sufficient knowledge, as without asking questions candidates cannot be awarded marks for seeking information and opinion.

Section 3: General conversation

In this section the candidate and Examiner should engage in a conversation which lasts 8 or 9 minutes. The Examiner may begin this section by asking straightforward questions about the area of interest and move on to develop the discussion into three or four topic areas explored in depth. Examiners need to be ready to react to what candidates say and lead the conversation into new and less expected areas. In some cases the candidates only discussed one topic, and therefore did not demonstrate the necessary breadth of knowledge.

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Paper 8686/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- read the passages and the questions carefully
- write concise responses, answering the questions in their own words
- stay within the prescribed word limits.

General comments

This paper is designed to test candidates' understanding of written Urdu, their ability to write accurate responses to text-based questions and their ability to write accurate and concise Urdu in response to given stimuli.

There are two passages of about three hundred and fifty words each on a related theme. The general theme this session was "friends and enemies".

Based on the quality of the responses, it was considered that this session's paper was no harder than previous sessions

The overall written performance of candidates was good, with an usual proportion of excellent scripts. The problem for most candidates is not writing in correct Urdu but answering the questions in accordance with the given rubric.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1:

This required candidates to write their own sentences illustrating clearly the meaning of words taken from the first text. This was mostly well done, with most candidates scoring 4 out of 5 marks.

Marks were lost either if candidates copied a sentence directly from the text, such as:

"Internet logon ke liye ek dusre se se rabta karne ka zabadast zeri'ya ban chuka hai."

which is almost identical to the sentence in the text.

or wrote a sentence like:

"Ahmad ne mahnat karne ka wa'da kiya."

which does not illustrate the meaning of the word *wa'da*.

On the other hand a sentence like:

"Jo koi wa'da karta hai use pura karna perega."

illustrates the meaning perfectly.

Question 2:

This required candidates to find antonyms to the given words. This was generally adequately done. candidates wrote synonyms (*mwtaradyf alfaz*) not antonyms, (*mwtazad alfaz*).

Others changed the grammatical form or part of speech, such as the singular *nwqsan* as the antonym of the plural *favaid* instead of *nwqsanat*. Some wrote the verbal form *tawwajoh dena* instead of the noun form *tawwajoh* as the antonym of the noun *nazar andaz*.

The most difficult one proved to be *majbur* the antonym of which is *azad* or *kud mwkhtar*.

Most candidates scored 3 or more marks.

Question 3 consists of a series questions designed to test the candidates' careful reading and comprehension of the first passage.

It was clear from the candidates' responses that, for some of them, their Urdu was not good enough to make understanding the text reasonably straightforward. The quality of their responses depended on their ability to follow the rubric. Candidates are expected to write concise answers as far as possible in their own words.

There are still too many answers which are simply lifted from the text with minimal alteration or more than six lines of response, and in some cases well over 100 words. All these questions can be answered simply and relatively concisely.

Taking each question in turn:

Question 3 – alyf

"Magar aaj koi kysi ka dost nahin?" Ys fyqre se mwsannyf ki kya murad hai?

What is the author's intention in using the phrase "But today does anyone have a friend?"

The good answers demonstrated that many candidates understood the author's point that nowadays people only made friends because they could get some practical or material benefit from the friendship and once they had achieved their purpose, they dropped them.

Question 3 – be

Internet ke bare men mwsannyf ki kya rai hai?

What is the author's opinion of the Internet?

This was a very straightforward question which was well answered by nearly every candidate.

Question 3 – jim

Mazmun parhne ke b'ad mwsannyf par kya asar hua?

What effect did reading the article have on the author?

The point here is not what the author said, which many candidates duly wrote out, usually word for word. What the question asked about was the effect on the author, which was that it made him think.

Question 3 – dal

Facebook ke bare men mwsannyf ne kyn mwshkylat awr khadshat ka yzhar kiya hai?

What difficulties and anxieties does the author express about Facebook?

This fairly straightforward question presented few problems for most candidates. More was required than merely copying parts of the text.

Question 3 – re

Aakhry paragraph men mwsannyf ne podon ki mysaal kyon di hai? wazahat kyjiye.

Why has the author given the example of plants in the last paragraph? Explain.

Again, this fairly straightforward question presented few problems for most candidates, but merely copying parts of the text as the answer was not enough to score the mark.

Question 4 consists of a series of questions designed to test the candidates' careful reading and comprehension of the second passage.

The remarks for **Question 3** apply equally for this question but, overall, the responses were not quite as good as for the former question.

Question 4 – alyf

Pahle paragraph men 'ham nyhad dost' se mwsannyf ki kya murad hai?

What was the author's intention in writing "so-called friend" in the first paragraph?

A straightforward response which nearly every candidate succeeded in answering correctly – "someone claiming to be a friend but likely or able to do you harm."

Question 4 – be (i)

Mwsannyf ne dusri jang-e-azeem ka zykr kyon kiya? Wazahat kijiye

Why does the author mention the second world war? Explain

The key point in the response was to demonstrate the saying "my enemy's enemy is my friend." USA and USSR were political opponents but combined to fight the Germans, which benefitted Europe and the UK.

Question 4 – be (ii)

Us ke b'ad kya hua?

What happened afterwards?

The answer is simple: "The cold war started – but later relations improved."

Many candidates wrote about the political situation but the political systems are irrelevant answers – they are not what happened

Question 4 – jim

Cricket ke mwta 1yq ybarat men di gei do mysaalon ka mwvazana kijiye.

Compare the two examples relating to cricket.

Many candidates wrote long replies including every detail of the meeting between India and Pakistan at the World Cup, but that is not to the point. Here the comparison is the point: one is rivalry and wanting to get the better of the other, while the second, India and Pakistan, is political and is like war.

Question 4 – dal

World Cup semi final ke mawq'a par kya khas bat hui?

What special thing happened in the World Cup semi final?

A very straightforward account was required here and most candidates responded well to a strictly factual question.

Question 4 – re

Ys y'barat men ybtyda se ykhtytam tak dosti ke barye men mwsannyf ky kheyalat men ky aai?

What changed in the author's ideas about friendship from start to end of the passage?

Many candidates struggled with this question. Some wrote long summaries of the passage, but that was not what was required. Quite simply, the authors ideas changed from being cynical and negative about friendship and thinking true friendship was impossible in the modern world, to a more positive stance, thinking it possible for enemies to become more friendly.

Question 5

This question is, in effect, a mini-essay in two parts.

Question 5 – alyf

Donon yqtybasat ke hawale se dosti ke masbat awr manfi pehluon ka muwazana kijiye.

Compare the positive and negative aspects of friendship with reference to both passages.

Question 5 – be

Aap ki rai men dosti barqarar rakhne ka raz kya hai?

In your opinion what is the secret of maintaining a friendship?

Most candidates were able to produce a good list of both positive and negative points but it needs to be stressed that these points must be derived from the text and not from the candidate's own ideas, which could not be awarded marks.

The second part was usually well performed and in this part it was not necessary for the points written to be taken from the text, although many of them clearly were.

Here the problem for some candidates was writing far too much for part one, which left little scope for the second part. The rubric clearly states the word limit is 140 words.

Language

Two thirds of the marks for the essay component are awarded for language. Clearly, at advanced level a high standard of linguistic accuracy is expected, but in addition to this, a degree of fluency, use of appropriate idiom, advanced vocabulary and confident use of complex sentence structures is going to differentiate between the good and the very good performance.

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Paper 8686/03

Essay

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- write a composition on the essay title, NOT the general topic heading
- stay within the prescribed word limits.

General comments

This paper is designed to test candidates' ability to write an essay in Urdu on one of a range of five topics, selected as being relevant to their countries of origin. Overall, the performance of candidates was good, with a high proportion of excellent scripts.

There were five given topics, on which candidates were expected to write between 250 and 400 words. The topics this year were:

"kam awr tafrih" - "Work and Leisure"

1 "Har shakhs ko munasyb mwlazymat faraham karna hakumat ki zymadari hai."

"It is the responsibility of government to provide suitable employment for everyone."

"zara iy e iblagh" - "The Media"

2 "Aaj kul Internet yblagh ka sab se mu'asar zeriya hai."

"These days the Internet is the most influential means of the media."

"tahaffuz" - "Conservation"

3 "Maghryb men janvaron ke tahafuzz ko had se ziada ahmiyat di jati hai – bahs kijiye."

"The west gives too much importance to conservation of animals – discuss."

"t'alim" - "Education"

4 "Skulon ka mawjuda nysab 'amli zyndagi ke liye nakafi hai – bahs kijiye."

"The current schools syllabus is not sufficient for practical life – discuss."

"saqafati zindagi awr varsa" - "Cultural life and heritage"

5 "Mahngai ke dawr men saqafati adaron par kiye jane wale akhrajat gheyr zaruri hain"

"In the age of inflation it is unnecessary to spend so much on cultural institutions."

There were three essay titles this year which were markedly more popular than the others, namely, topic 4, on Education, topic 2 on the Media, and topic 1 on Work and Leisure.

Comments on specific questions

"Skulon ka mawjuda nysab 'amli zyndagi ke liye nakafi hai – bahs kijiye."

"The current schools syllabus is not sufficient for practical life – discuss."

Although many candidates chose to tackle this topic, generally speaking it was not necessarily very well attempted. As seems too common, many candidates write a pre-prepared essay on the general topic area, in this case, education, and then tweak it with a paragraph or two on the specific title. This type of essay cannot be awarded high marks for content.

A second issue with this topic is that there seems to be a good deal of variation in the candidates' understanding of what is meant by the word 'syllabus'. This understanding is of course crucial to a candidate's response to the topic stimulus. Technically speaking, the syllabus is a descriptive list of the content of what is to be taught and to a certain extent, how it is taught and, in many cases, examined.

It was expected that Advanced Level candidates would have a clear understanding of the term and respond with essays based on this definition, but many candidates clearly did not understand this and wrote at length about government and private schools, mixed education, religious schools, etc.

The best essays were by candidates who did talk about what was taught and how suitable or "fit for purpose" the current syllabus was. Many candidates were forthright about their views, which led to some interesting discussions, particularly over the lack of religious, moral and cultural matters in some schools which they considered essential tools to practical living in society. Others wrote well on the old fashioned imperial education system of Macauley: that it was designed to provide clerks to administer the British Empire and that the needs of the modern world are far more technical and practical.

The second most popular was unsurprisingly on the Media.

"Aaj kul Internet yblagh ka sab se mu'asar zeriya hai."

"These days the Internet is the most influential means of the media."

Although there was less misunderstanding of the nature of this topic, there was again a wide variation in the quality of response.

The weaker essays often consisted of a general review and in some cases little more than a list of the different use of the Internet, and in particularly social media such as Facebook, Google, Skype, etc. and did not come anywhere near attempting a more mature response to the title.

Those candidates who did focus on the growing use and influence of the modern media wrote some very interesting essays, which discussed the political as well as social aspects of the topic. Some, quite rightly and topically, brought up the concept of foreign and international influence on countries via the Internet. The key point was that they focused on the set essay title and then introduced the topic, produced an argument or discussion relevant to it and then wrote a concluding paragraph.

The third most popular topic was on Work and Leisure:

"Har shakhs ko munasyb mwlazymat faraham karna hakumat ki zymadari hai."

"It is the responsibility of government to provide suitable employment for everyone."

Again, there were rather too many essays which seemed, by the regular inclusion of paragraphs on being a necessary balance to work for a good life, to be a response to the general topic area of "Leisure" rather than to the specific title set for this topic. If this is a far too regular comment from Examiners every year, it is necessarily so because far too many linguistically able candidates write general and seemingly pre-prepared essays, and thus deprive themselves of the opportunity to score high marks. This year this title brought a higher than normal incidence of general essays.

The intention of the question was to initiate a discussion on the roles of government, the private sector and the individual in providing employment. The majority of candidates were quite clear in their response that it was the responsibility of the government to provide jobs for everyone. There were some cogent arguments on the necessity to keep people at work, providing for their families, in employment and off the streets, so not committing crime, and therefore contributing to the greater good of society. Many of course recognised that individuals too had their part to play to get educated and be able to make a positive contribution to their own improvement.

The remaining two topics were attempted by very few candidates.

"Maghryb men janvaron ke tahafuzz ko had se ziada ahmiyat di jati hai – bahs kijiye."

"The west gives too much importance to conservation of animals – discuss."

This topic produced some interesting discussions. It was noteworthy here to mention that the intention of the topic title was to stimulate a discussion of the conservation movement, and its attempts to save endangered species such as the tiger or the panda. Some of the essays focused on an aspect not intended by the Examiners, but not necessarily irrelevant to the title. Many people are quite surprised by the attitude of westerners to their pets and some candidates chose to write on that aspect of the topic and this was an acceptable interpretation. Most of the few essays on this topic were clearly written by candidates who felt very strongly on the issue, but the key point was whether or not too much importance was or was not placed on the conservation of animals. That focus would receive the highest marks.

The final topic was:

"Mahngai ke dawr men saqafati adaron par kiye jane wale akhrajat gheyr zaruri hain."

"In the age of inflation it is unnecessary to spend so much on cultural institutions."

As might be expected, only a handful of candidates attempted this topic, and those who did, clearly understood the topic and were able to provide a mature and thoughtful response to it, and consequently secured high marks for content.

Language

It is very pleasing to report that in this session of the examination, the great majority of candidates have demonstrated, in spite of errors of spelling or grammar, the communication skills in Urdu to achieve the marking criteria for the higher grades successfully.