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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

URDU

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8686/02 and 9686/02

Reading and Writing

General comments

This is the sixth series of this examination; the first was held in June 2002. The November examination was taken by approximately 800 candidates, the majority from Pakistan and the rest from Mauritius and other countries with candidates of Pakistani origin.

This paper is designed to test candidates' understanding of written Urdu and 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 350 words each on a related theme. The theme this session is language, more specifically English language and the English attitude to learning languages. Overall, the written performance of candidates was good, with a high proportion of excellent scripts. The problem for most candidates is not writing Urdu but answering the questions in accordance with the given rubrics. As might be expected, Pakistan-based candidates did better than those from Mauritius or other countries.

It is appropriate to go through the questions one by one in order to discuss any important points.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This required candidates to write their own sentences illustrating clearly the meanings of words taken from the first text. This was mostly well done, with most candidates scoring at least 4 out of 5 marks. Where candidates lost marks was either if they copied a sentence directly from the text, such as *"wazarat e ta'lim ke mushir ne elaan kiya"* which is almost identical to the sentence in the text, or they wrote a sentence like *"vazir e azam ke mushir ek zimadar shakhs hona chahiye"* which does not illustrate the meaning. On the other hand a sentence like *"Vazarat e saht ke mushir ne panch saw daktaroN ko zilzile se mutasir elaqaN ko bhejne ka elaan kiya"* does illustrate the meaning.

Question 2

This required candidates to find phrases in the text which carried the same meaning as those given in the question.

Most candidates scored 4 or more marks. The phrase that caused most difficulty was *'ke 'etibar se'* and the corresponding phrase from the passage was *'hone ke nate.'*

Question 3

The five questions in this section were based on the given text in Passage A. The text was about the English attitude to learning foreign languages. It was clear from the candidates' responses that, for most of them, their Urdu was good enough to make understanding the text reasonably straightforward.

The quality of their responses depended on their following the rubric. Candidates are expected to write concise answers as far as possible in their own words. This point has been hammered home in Examiners' reports for Urdu over the last decade and, by and large, the situation is improving, but 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. This type of response did not get good marks at O Level, and has not been rewarded at A Level. All these questions can be answered simply and concisely in, at most, two sentences.

Taking part (ii) of **Question 3** as an example, the question asked: **“In the case of language learning, apart from the economic aspect, what other aspects of language are important?”** Put in English, the reply should be “Two important aspects are cultural (1 mark) and social (1 mark).” This response is sufficient to gain a full 2 marks. It is concise but gives every necessary detail. Some responses, however, were over 60 words. Some clearly misunderstood the meaning of ‘iqtisadi’ because they wrote ‘tijarati’ ‘trading’ which is of course an economic aspect.

In both parts (iii) and (iv) the answer can be written very concisely. In part (iii) a surprising number of candidates wrote that European countries’ behaviour in respect of language learning was that ‘angrezi janna hi kafi hai!’ This is of course the attitude of many English people but not most Europeans. The Europeans are keen on learning languages, while, by contrast, the English are not. A careful reading of the particular sentence in the text should have provided the correct response.

In part (iv) of there were similar incorrect responses. The point here is that in contrast to the ordinary English attitude, commercial and trading organisations are very keen to promote language learning and are trying to persuade the government to do more to promote it in educational establishments.

Part (v) asked candidates to explain why the English do not like learning languages. The main points here are historical and geographical and most candidates scored well here. Five marks were available in this question for overall linguistic standard. Most candidates scored 4, and a few got full marks. If they scored zero on a question they lost a mark from the overall language mark. While a high proportion of candidates could write excellent Urdu, if they did not use much of their own language they could not receive good marks for their use of language.

Question 4

As in **Question 3**, the candidates had to write responses to five questions based on Passage B. This passage was about the historical development of the English language and the connection between the English and the Indian subcontinent. Most candidates displayed more than adequate comprehension of the text but, once again, some let themselves down by not following the rubrics. A good example here is in part (i) of **Question 4** which asked **“Why are so many languages spoken in London?”** (“London meN itni sari zebaneN boli jati heyN?”). A concise response was “kyonky London bartania awr raj ka darulhukumat reha hai, is liye sadioN se log vahaN jaya kerte heyN awr un ke awlad skuloN meN perhte heyN”. Unfortunately, many candidates wrote out the final paragraph of the passage almost word for word. This response did not score highly.

Part (ii) was well answered. The historical events were the Roman, Saxon and Norman invasions, bringing with them their languages. That would have score three marks. The fourth mark was available for those who mentioned the influx of Indian words into the language.

Part (iii) was also well answered but needed to be put in different words to avoid overlap.

Many of the responses to part (iv) were spoiled because the candidates who wrote out the text from line 12 to line 16 could not score much because they did not use their own words.

The final question was reasonably well done, but rather too many candidates were guilty of simply writing out verbatim the last paragraph of the passage, which, again, did not score highly.

Again, five marks were available for linguistic accuracy. Most candidates scored 3 or more because a good proportion of them could write excellent Urdu.

Question 5

This last question required candidates to write a response to a question referring to both texts and their opinion on a question arising from the texts, but not directly so. The quality of these responses was, in some cases, excellent, and the majority of candidates performed at least adequately in these tasks.

The first task was to compare and contrast the two passages. Since the thematic relationship between the passages was close it was a highly appropriate task. Unfortunately rather too many candidates did not compare and contrast them, they merely summarised the two. This of course prevented them from achieving high marks. They must be taught to understand the difference between a summary, "*khulasa*" and a comparison or review, "*jaiza*." which requires them to reflect on the similarities and differences between them.

The second task was to give their opinion as to whether the influence of the English language on Urdu was positive or negative. This was usually well done but some candidates failed to understand the meaning of the two words, '*masbat*' and '*munfi*.'

The candidates clearly understood the tasks in most cases and most were able to write an appropriate response. The opinions given on the effects of English on Urdu were very varied and interesting, especially to someone from an English-speaking background.

What let many down, however, was the fact that they ignored the rubric to write about 140 words overall. Many candidates wrote well over that *on each task*, which reduced their chance of scoring the highest marks.

Conclusion

While the overall performance was good, and in some cases, excellent, with many candidates displaying very good comprehension skills and good writing skills, overall performance would have been much improved by stricter observance of the rubrics relating to the use of candidates' own language and sticking to the prescribed word limits.

Papers 8686/03 and 9686/03

Reading and Writing

General comments

This winter's examination was taken by approximately 800 candidates, the great majority coming from Centres in Pakistan and most of the rest from Mauritius and other countries with students of Pakistani origin. This is a slight decrease on the previous session.

This paper is designed to test candidates' ability to write a composition in Urdu on one of a range of six topics, selected as being relevant to their countries of origin. Overall, the performance of candidates was good, with a high proportion of excellent scripts. The problem for most candidates is not writing Urdu but responding to the stimulus topics in an organised and well-structured way. As might be expected, Pakistan-based candidates did better than those from other countries. There were six given topics, on which candidates were expected to write between 250 and 400 words.

Comments on specific questions

The topics were:

- ***Dunya meN beyn ulaqwami adaroN ki heysiyet***
The condition of the world's international organisations
- ***mukhtalif mazahib ke logon meN dostana ta'aluqat kys tarah behter kiye ja sakte heyN?***
How can friendly relations be made between people of different religions?
- ***mulk ki taraqi meN seir o siyahat ki ahmiyat***
The importance of tourism in a country's development
- ***Larkiyon ki sanavi ta'alim laazmi honi cahye?***
Should secondary education for girls be compulsory?
- ***Aap ke mulk meN mahawliati aludagi ki rok tham ke sab se zaruri aqdamat***
The most urgent steps to stop environmental pollution in your country
- ***Aap ke kheyal meN bisviN sadi ki sab se ahm sainsi ijad kya hai awr hamari zindagi paer us ke kya aasrat haiN?***
What is the most important invention of the twentieth century and what are its effects on our lives?

The wide range of topics allowed most candidates the opportunity to choose one and demonstrate their linguistic skills in Urdu. Of course, at this Advanced Level, not only is a high standard of written Urdu expected but candidates also need to be able to organise and structure their work, present an argument where appropriate and do so in an interesting way.

This component is marked out of 40. 24 marks are awarded for quality of language and 16 for content, structure and organisation.

This session's most popular title was, unsurprisingly, the one on education:

Larkiyon ko sanavi ta'lim lazmi honi cahiye – Aap ka kya kheyal hai?
Should secondary education be compulsory for girls?"

Approximately a quarter of candidates opted to write on this topic. It is a topic of cultural significance and was clearly strongly felt by many of the candidates who wrote fervently in agreement of the question. While there were some excellent essays, rather too many got carried away and produced unstructured rather than organised essays in response to the topic. Many used the words from the Islamic quotations such as "Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China" and "Getting education is a duty for every Muslim man and woman". The relevance of the former is not necessarily clear in this context but using the latter is obviously highly relevant. At this level something more than just stating that women are better than men or that it's not fair is expected and some analysis of historical and cultural background of female education should have been included before arguing the case.

The second most popular title was almost equally divided between:

Aap ke mulk ki taraqi meN seir o siyahat ki ahmiyat
The importance of tourism in your country's development

It was the view of almost every candidate who chose this essay that tourism is beneficial to a country's development. Most wrote competently but quite a few concentrated on listing what tourists like to do and some of the good things about tourism rather than linking this directly to the title and discussing the effect of tourism on the country's wealth, culture, etc which may of course not be all positive. It seemed that some of the essays were almost identical to the ones set last year on a similar topic. The best essays were very well written and some made good points such as the point that concentrating on tourism may be good for a country's income but isn't always so good for the local people.

and:

Aap ke mulk meN mahawliati aludagi ki rok tham ke sab se zaruri aqdamat
The most urgent steps to stop environmental pollution in your country'

This was, in most cases, adequately performed. The best candidates presented the issue, discussed the causes and some remedies for the problem, in cases using Pakistan or their own country as an example and came to their own conclusion, usually that much more needs to be done. In such essays, mention was made of economic factors, especially for developing countries. Quite a few, however, gave far too much space to the causes and only briefly wrote about prevention of or cleaning up the pollution, such as that the government must do something like put out more rubbish bins, which is not adequate at this level of examination. Such essays would clearly not have received the highest marks for content.

The fourth ranking topic was:

Aap ke kheyal meN bisviN sadi ki sab se ahm sainsi ijad kya hai awr hamari zindagi paer us ke kya aasrat haiN?

What is the most important invention of the twentieth century and what are its effects on our lives?

This was not very well attempted by some candidates because of the way they approached the topic. In the very first sentence they stated that something, very often the computer, was the best thing and then rambled on for several hundred words on the wonders of the computer, with little reflection on why this machine was so important. The best essays gave an introduction about the century being one with the most amazing and world-changing inventions and mentioned some before giving their opinion as to which one was the most important. In fact, most of the candidates plumped for the computer.

Almost equal with the above was the topic:

mukhtalif mazahib ke logon meN dostana ta'aluqat kys tarah behter kiye ja sakte heyN?

How can friendly relations be made between people of different religions?

The ones who attempted this topic were, on the whole, able to produce an excellent composition, with an introduction about religions and their social and cultural traditions of peace and friendship towards all peoples, following with some historical and contemporary difficulties, and presenting ways in which good relations might be encouraged. A few were substandard saying not much more than we should be nice to each other in a variety of ways.

The remaining topic was less frequently attempted. For **Topic 1**, about the status of international organisations, some candidates wrote very lucidly about the role of the UN, UNESCO, WHO etc., but some completely misunderstood the topic and wrote about multinational companies and trade, which was not appropriate.

Conclusion

The same comments to summarise the performance of this component of the examination have been written in every report on this examination since it began nearly four years ago. However, it is still necessary to reiterate them in order to show Centres ways in which their students' performance in this examination can be improved.

While the overall performance was good, with most candidates displaying very good writing skills, many essays would have been much improved by stricter observance of the rubrics relating to the prescribed word limits. The language of most candidates was, in the vast majority of cases, more than adequate at this level. Most candidates are obtaining 16-20 marks for language. It is the second part of the assessment criteria, on content, planning and organisation, where candidates tend to lose marks.

Part of this is in conforming to the rubric which requires candidates to be able to write content within a particular topic. Failure to contain the essay within the prescribed word-limit reduces marks for content. This means that candidates who write too much are penalised for content and planning because they are unable to have reached a concluding paragraph within the word limit. That being said, very many candidates wrote well-planned and interesting essays in excellent Urdu.

Another point that needs to be mentioned is that a few candidates wrote essays in response to the general topic headings above each essay title. For example, some candidates wrote on the general topic heading of 'Human Relations' rather than on the title "*How can friendly relations be made between people of different religions?*"

This means that they were not able to score many marks for content. It is up to teachers to ensure their candidates write on the correct topic title. They should be made familiar with the layout of past papers.

Papers 8674/04 and 9686/04

Texts

General comments

The report, which follows, has been compiled on the basis of the Principal Examiner's own marking experience and after consultation with the Assistant Examiners. It is designed to be of value and interest to the Centres and their candidates.

In comparison with the previous year, the overall standard was maintained. There were some very good candidates at the top end of the scale and an encouraging increase in the proportion of good scripts. There was a wide range of language used. At the top end, the Urdu was fluent, idiomatic and very impressive. There was, however, still a disappointing 'tail' of candidates, with an extremely limited knowledge of the necessary range of vocabulary, who performed below the standard required. A number of candidates do not have a sufficient command of basic grammar to express their ideas. Once again, the accuracy of Urdu varied enormously. Candidates need to pay more attention to details and there is no excuse for wrong spelling of basic words. On the other hand, there is a significant increase in the number of candidates with very poor handwriting. Centres should draw the attention of candidates to the fact that unclear presentation can lead to loss of marks. There was evidence that candidates are spending too much time and effort in introducing their chosen topic and prolonging their writing task rather unnecessarily. Candidates need to be reminded that it is in their own interest to stick to the recommended limit as prolonged and irrelevant material results in losing marks. Surprisingly, a vast majority of candidates seemed to be relying heavily on their memorised and pre-learnt answers on various writers and their work. They wrote their answers without taking any notice of the demands of the tasks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Candidates attempted questions from all three parts of the paper. However, 'Muntakhab Ghazlain' appeared to be the most popular first choice and most candidates attempted two questions from this part. There was a surprising lack of clarity about the details demanded by various tasks. The vast majority of candidates mainly relied on explanation and ignored the rest of the task which was often about the writing style of the poet. One of the most disturbing features of this part of the test was the inappropriate use of proverb, idiom and phrases. Their use can be an invaluable asset to illustrate a point, and as such will merit due reward, but should be genuine and written in correct Urdu.

Section 2

This part of the test appeared to be the second in popularity. Most candidates found a great deal to say about their chosen topic. Many candidates showed a pleasing ability to express original ideas and personal impressions in an appropriate register and to use a wide range of language naturally. However, a significant number of candidates did not appear to have a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary. Many candidates lost marks due to using pre-learnt material and ignoring the actual demands of tasks. Candidates need to know the Examiners look for concise answers with justification as and where appropriate. To achieve this, candidates must study the whole text to cope with a variety of tasks which often do not match with their memorised versions.

Overall, however, Examiners again have to report a general deterioration as regards linguistic competence and accuracy. There were many answers of impressive length, which were ruined by inaccurate and poorly expressed Urdu.

The sad aspect of this report is an accurate reflection of the lack of appropriate responses offered, and should point candidates in the right direction in terms of what still needs to be done to prepare candidates adequately for the rigours of this type of test, which is never easy, but which has to be pitched at A Level standard.

Paper 9686/05

Prose

General comments

This examination consists of a short passage from English to Urdu translation. The passage was similar in standard to previous years. It was about the feelings and attitudes of a teenager towards his parents.

The overall performance of the majority of candidates was very good. The average marks scored were around 30 out of 40. Almost all candidates were from Mauritius. The overall grasp of the written Urdu language indicated that although the understanding was good, the literacy skills of the majority of candidates needed further development in Urdu (spellings, proper sentence construction, use of singular and plural forms in tenses) to perform better in such examinations.

Comments on specific questions

In this paper there was only one passage from English to Urdu translation. The level of difficulty was well within the standards and expectations of AS and A Level examinations.

There were a number of key words in the passage for careful translation within the context of the passage.

The real difficulties in translation were found around a few key words and phrases i.e. 'dressing gown' (translated as 'pyjamas' rather than transliterated); 'little kitchen' (translation of 'little' missed out); 'Not knowing what to do' was badly translated by many candidates.

The other words with strange translations were 'hung'; 'humble room'; 'a cottage'; 'shaded by a large tree' ('large' was missed out in the translation). Similarly, 'familiar furniture' and 'so to speak' were a real obstacle for many candidates who usually went for literal translation. In case of 'about ten' translation for 'about' was ignored by some candidates. Other difficulties in translation were noticed around 'tortured by thought'; 'old sick and tired of living'; 'nothing to do'.

The Examiners look for a good and proper translation of all sentences within the context of the given passage and award high marks. Usually, literal translation takes away the real essence of the passage and distorts meanings.

The overall performance of the candidates was similar to the previous examinations. Mistakes in the writing of commonly known and simple Urdu words should be avoided at this level of examination.