

URDU LANGUAGE

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 and concise responses to text-based questions and given stimuli.

There are two passages of about three hundred and fifty words each on a related theme. The general theme this series was 'museums and culture'.

The overall written performance of candidates was good, with a significant proportion of excellent scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question required candidates to write their own sentences illustrating clearly the meaning of words taken from the first text. This question was generally well answered, with most candidates scoring nearly full marks. The problem for some candidates was clearly illustrating the meanings. For example, sentences like '*surat e hal acchi hai*' do not illustrate the meaning of the word *surat e hal*. On the other hand, a sentence like '*pychle sal Karachi ki surat e hal qadre behter ho gayi hai*' illustrates the meaning perfectly. Lifting sentences from the text would not gain any marks.

Question 2

This question required candidates to find synonyms for the given words. A very significant percentage of candidates, however, did not know the difference between antonyms ('*mwtazad alfaz*') and synonyms ('*mwtaradyf alfaz*'). Candidates need to take the context into account when looking for synonyms.

Changing the part of speech is not acceptable in this question. For example, the noun *waqyf* 'known' is not a synonym of the verb '*janna* 'to know'. On the other hand '*janne wala*' is acceptable.

Some candidates wrote one or more alternative words as an answer. This is not acceptable either. It shows merely that they are not sure of the correct answer themselves.

Question 3 consists of a series of items designed to test the candidates' careful reading and comprehension of the first passage, which was on differing attitudes to a country's cultural heritage being held in another country's museums.

It was clear from the candidates' responses that, for the majority, understanding the text was a reasonably straightforward task. Candidates are expected to write concise answers as far as possible in their own words ('*jahan tak mumkyn ho apne alfaz men likhiye*').

The examining team consider that there are still too many answers that are simply lifted from the text with minimal alteration. In addition to this, in some cases responses were well over 100 words. Writing out the

whole paragraph in which the answer lies does not demonstrate comprehension, simply that the correct answer lies somewhere in that paragraph, and as such, the candidate's response will not be awarded the mark.

The strongest candidates answered these questions in a relatively concise manner and in accurate, fluent Urdu.

Question 4 consists of a series of questions designed to test the candidates' careful reading and comprehension of the second passage, which presents a different take on the ideas regarding museums and cultural heritage. The remarks for **Question 3** apply equally for this question but, overall, the responses were usually slightly better for **Question 4**. Again, it was evident that the weaker responses tended to be lifted almost entirely from the text with little or no attempt to paraphrase.

Question 5

While a majority of candidates were able to write at least five points for **Question 5 a**, two things need to be stressed. Firstly these points must come from the text, and secondly, in the case of these two texts, they must relate to theories and ideas (*nazriyat*), not mere facts. For example, it is a fact that cultural treasures are kept in museums, but a theory that they play an important part in the nation's cultural heritage.

There also seems to be an on-going misunderstanding as to the nature of a compare and contrast exercise (*mwvazana*) and a summary (*khwlasa*), which is what a significant number of candidates produced for this question. A summary may produce some correct responses but there will be far too much irrelevant material and the word limit will be reached before they would be able to accrue many marks.

Question 5 b was usually well performed and in this part it was not necessary for the points to be taken from the text, although many of them clearly were. The strongest responses contained a statement agreeing or disagreeing with the question, followed by two reasons.

Some candidates exceeded the word limit in **5 a**, which left little scope for part **5 b**. The rubric clearly states the word limit is 140 words.

Language

Fifteen of the marks for this paper are awarded for quality of language. At advanced level a high standard of linguistic accuracy is expected. In addition to this, creativity and fluency in the use of the language as well as a wide range of vocabulary and confident use of complex sentence structures differentiate between the good and the very good performance. When a candidate scores zero for a question in parts **3** or **4** they cannot be awarded the full five marks.

OVERALL

This year, candidates' performance was of the usual high standard. The vast majority were able to demonstrate their ability to understand and to respond appropriately to the two passages at the expected linguistic standard.

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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:

This paper is designed to test candidates' ability to write a composition in Urdu on one of a range of five topics. Overall, the performance of candidates was good, with a high proportion of excellent scripts. The strongest responses were well structured, written in fluent Urdu with minimal errors, and address the statement or the question asked. A small number of candidates wrote general pieces about the topic but did not address the question or the statement.

The wide range of topics allowed candidates the opportunity to choose one and demonstrate their linguistic skills in Urdu. At this level, not only is a high standard of written Urdu expected, but it is equally important that candidates are able to organise and structure their work, present a coherent argument where appropriate and do so in an interesting way.

This session, no one topic attracted far more responses than any other, but topics 3 and 4 were notably more popular.

'Rozmarra ki zindagi' 'Everyday Life'

1 **'Jadid dawr men bijli ke begheir zindagi namumkyn hai – bahys kijiye'**

'In the modern age life without electricity is impossible. Discuss.'

This essay produced a generally good set of responses. Perhaps it is the fact that this is a red-hot topic in Pakistan, where the daily disruption caused by load-shedding has become an integral part of modern city life. This means that the candidates are all too aware that the regular availability of a reliable electricity supply to one's home is a luxury to be appreciated. The best essays on this topic were very heartfelt and illustrated the points made with relevant examples from everyday life.

It is also important to point out that the title is for discussion, and those candidates who at least mentioned the alternative reality that in parts of Pakistan and other developing countries millions of people have no choice but to live without electricity were more likely to be awarded higher marks than those who focused merely upon the inability to use their mobiles or computers.

Some candidates came down on one side of the argument and paid little attention to the opposing point of view. At this level the Examiners expect a broader discussion of both sides of a topic if candidates are to achieve the highest grades.

'Qanun awr nazm e zabt' 'Law and Order'

2 'Qanun ki nazar men har shakhs kw barabar hona cahiye'
'Everyone should be equal in the eyes of the law.'

This topic produced, by and large, the most impressive responses. The proposition itself gave plenty of scope to cover different aspects of the issue. Candidates were able to present powerfully written arguments on behalf of the principle of 'Justice is blind!' Some wrote too much about the reality of the law being on the side of the rich and powerful but without describing the need for justice for everyone. Candidates who did best were the ones who developed a coherent discussion including the present reality whilst developing the argument that justice should be the same for everyone, regardless of wealth or position.

'Sahyt awr tandurusti' 'Health and Fitness'

3 'Vazan kam karna ek jadid fashion ban gaya hai – apni rai tafsil se izhar kijiye'
'Losing weight has become a modern fashion. Give your opinion in detail.'

Healthy lifestyles are a modern trend and people young and old are concerned about not just their health but about how they look, so it is not surprising topic 3 was popular. There were some very good compositions, which contained a balanced discussion of both sides of the argument, such as the fact that keeping one's weight under control was an integral part of healthy living, but it was not the only thing to worry about. Some did discuss the fact that for many young people looking good is more important than keeping healthy, and so can become an obsession.

The weaker compositions tended to be general essays on the topic of health and fitness, with a lot of detail about the benefits of exercise, getting up early and such like, with only a paragraph or two about the specific statement given. Examiners are aware that many candidates write essays on the general topic areas as part of their preparation for this examination, but they should bear in mind that it is not sufficient just to insert a paragraph addressing the statement.

'Rozgar awr berozgari' 'Employment and unemployment'

4 'har shahri ko rozgar faraham karna hukuumat ka farz nahin hona cahiye; bahys kijiye'
'It is not the duty of government to provide employment to every citizen.'

By and large, title 4 was reasonably well answered. This title lent itself to a balanced discussion of such points as the fact that we all need a job, and in a country like Pakistan or Mauritius, jobs are hard to come by. Nearly every candidate has some experience of work and there were many candidates who were able to express their opinions very eloquently about this topic. The proposition in the title was deliberately worded so that the candidates would have to come up with the counter argument that it was the government's responsibility and give reasons why. The key issue here was whether the government should take on the responsibility of providing jobs for all, or whether the need to go out and get a job on one's own initiative was better, either for the individual or the country or both.

The key point that made a good essay stand out was to focus on the main issue, namely should government provide everyone with jobs. It does not matter in an essay like this whether the writer agrees or not with the proposition, it is the balanced debate presented in an essay that will gain the highest marks for content.

The weakest responses concentrated on the difficulties of getting a job and not on the topic in question. That was not the issue, so they could not be awarded high marks for content.

What distinguished the very good from the good, in terms of content, was the ability to express points of view that were at least in part original, and also to be able to structure their compositions and their arguments into a coherent essay.

'Sains awr tybbi ijadat' 'Science and medical inventions'

5 'Kya tamam sainsi ijadat insan ke liye faeda mand hoti hain?'
'Are all scientific inventions beneficial for mankind?'

Relatively few candidates attempted this topic but most of the responses were of a good standard. As might be expected from young people, candidates wrote mainly about technological inventions that were

particularly relevant to their own interests, such as computers, mobile phones and the like, which naturally were very significant factors in their lifestyles. There was also, quite appropriately, much mention of life-saving developments in the medical field. Of course, this essay title does require the candidate to address the negative aspects of modern technology. Naturally, most of them did not hesitate to cover the life and-world destroying potential of nuclear and chemical weapons.

The most impressive essays covered both aspects of the question and many quite naturally concluded that the inventions themselves were not destructive, but that their users or those who controlled the technologies concerned determined whether they were used for constructive or destructive purposes.

CONCLUSION

These essays are marked according to two sets of criteria, namely content and language. The contents, discussed above, show that the best essays in any topic area were those which demonstrated the candidates' ability to write a structured and considered response to the statement given, with an introduction, several cogent points relating to the statement, and a concluding paragraph.

Linguistically, the best essays were almost error free, with an extensive Urdu vocabulary, demonstrating a competent and confident use of complex sentences, containing dependent clauses, use of the passive voice, appropriate use of idiom, metaphor and where appropriate relevant quotations.

It is the second part of the assessment criteria, on content, planning and organisation, where candidates tend to lose marks.

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.

Writing concisely on any particular topic is a skill that is required at this advanced level in any language. It is, in effect, simply conforming to the rubric, which requires candidates to be able to write within the prescribed word limit. If not, they will be subject to reduced marks for content. This means that candidates who write too much lose marks for content because they are unlikely to reach a concluding paragraph. That being said, very many candidates wrote well-planned and interesting essays in excellent Urdu.