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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

Paper 9686/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

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

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 from the text, such as:

شراب پیتے کہ ہاتھی استمال۔

which is almost identical to the sentence in the text, or wrote a sentence like:

بھاری بھاری ہاتھی استمال کرتا ہے۔

which does not illustrate the meaning. On the other hand a sentence like:

آمال کی سرلی آراشے شے سے استمال کیا۔

does illustrate the meaning.

One word in particular caused problems for candidates. This was:

تاقب

Many read it as either:

تعب

or:

بے محسوس اور بے لگن سے تاقب ہے۔

Question 2

This required candidates to give the opposite of five given words. Most candidates scored 4 or more. The word that caused most difficulty was:

عجش

This is a noun meaning 'excitement' or 'passion'. The best and most appropriate opposite is:

عجش

Question 3

The five questions in this section were based on the given text in Passage A, which was about the princely Indian pastime of fighting elephants. 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.* The importance of observing this rubric cannot be over-stressed, as 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. These questions can be answered simply and concisely in a few sentences.

Taking (i) as an example, the question asks: 'Why has the author mentioned Europe?' Put simply, in English, the reply should be:

'Because animal fights started in Europe (1 mark) and there were fights between animals (1) and between animals and humans (1).'

کیونکہ جانوروں کی لڑائیاں یورپ میں شروع ہوئیں اور انسانی لڑائیاں بھی اور جانوروں اور انسانوں کے درمیان لڑائیاں تھیں۔

Even when, as in (ii) the question asks for details, it is not necessary to spend eight or ten lines writing out everything in the text.

تو اب بھی اگر کوئی شخص لکھتا ہے کہ ان کے پرانی دوستوں نے انہوں نے ان کا منتظر یورپ سے ساتھ لے گئے تھے۔

This is concise but gives all the necessary detail.

In both (iii) and (iv) the difficulties were in comprehension as very few candidates scored full marks on either of these two questions.

In (iii) very few candidates mentioned that 'the elephants were goaded by the mahouts with the Ankus.'

انہوں نے انہیں گھسیٹتے تھے، انہیں لگانے پر مجبور کرتے تھے۔

In (iv) very few candidates included all three possible outcomes, in fact quite a few wrote only one.

The three outcomes were: 'Loser elephant was killed, loser elephant runs away but is caught and then killed, and lastly the loser elephant runs away and escapes.'

(v) asked candidates to give their own title for the passage and this was generally well done.

Five marks are available in this question for overall linguistic ability. Whilst a high proportion of candidates are able to write in excellent Urdu, in order to receive good marks for language they needed to demonstrate their ability by writing *in their own words and language.*

Question 4

As in **Question 3** candidates had to write responses to five questions based on Passage B, which was about bullfighting in Spain. Most candidates displayed more than an adequate comprehension of the text but many did not follow the rubric.

A good example here is in **(i)** which asked:

'What special characteristics of bullfight fans are mentioned?'

قریباً ہر شخص کے پاس خاصیت ہے اور ان کو پورا پورا ہے

A concise response is: *'As soon as a bull enters the ring they can tell which farm it has been raised on.'*

کلیں گھبراہٹ میں آتے ہیں اور جانتے ہیں کہ کون سے کون سے گھرانے سے آیا ہے

Rather too many candidates wrote out, more or less verbatim, the sentence that runs from the second half of the second line of the passage until the start of line three. This does include the answer but not all of it is relevant to the question. On the other hand, quite a few candidates merely wrote out the second sentence of the passage:

ہر گھرانے کی بولیں اپنی اپنی خصوصیات اور عادات رکھتی ہیں

This means *'Each farm's bulls have their own characteristics and habits.'* This did not answer the question and consequently got no marks.

The same problem occurred with many of the responses to **(iii)** and **(iv)**. These two questions were answered in the same way by many candidates but there should have been a clear distinction between them, like this:

(iii) *'Bulls were raised away from humans so that they would not become familiar with them, lose their fear of them and still keep their wild nature.'*

In **(iv)** *'they were killed because they were now experienced in the ring, they knew what to expect and would almost certainly kill the bullfighter if they fought again.'*

The final question was reasonably well done, but rather too many candidates wrote something like:

"ہم ان کو مارنے کے لئے تیار ہیں"

instead of

"ہم ان کو مارنے کے لئے تیار ہیں"

which lost a mark. It was not because people were killed but because nobles were killed that the Pope threatened to excommunicate bullfighters!

Again five marks were available for linguistic ability and whilst a high proportion of candidates were able to write in excellent Urdu, in order to receive good marks for language they needed to demonstrate their ability by writing *in their own words*.

Question 5

In this question candidates are asked to compare and contrast the two passages. Some candidates did not compare and contrast them, but merely summarised the two passages which prevented some candidates from achieving high marks.

The second task was to give their opinion as to whether animal fights should be banned. The candidates clearly understood the tasks in most cases and most were able to write an appropriate response. The opinions given on animal fighting were, in almost every case, in favour of banning them and some were very cogent.

Many candidates however ignored the rubric to write about 140 word overall. Many candidates wrote many more words than that on each task, this resulted in a lack of conciseness and focus in their answers reducing their ability to score the highest marks

Paper 9686/03

Essay

General comments

Candidates' performance ranged from the excellent to the ordinary. While the weakest contained spelling errors, narrow vocabulary and poor syntax, serious language errors were rare. The standard of language used was nearly always adequate for this level and most marks were lost in the layout, organisation and content of the essays.

Most candidates were able to write the prescribed number of words (250 - 400), although some essays were far too long at over 600 words. It is important that candidates follow the rubric closely, by writing concisely and staying within the word limit. Candidates who write in excess of the limit do, in effect, penalise themselves because they cannot complete their essay with an appropriate summarising paragraph within the prescribed limits and their writing tends to depreciate in focus and quality.

Planning, structure and argument are essential components of essay writing, and though it is not necessary for candidates to write planning notes, many in fact did, and it seems indicative that many of those who did, were the ones who went on to write well planned compositions.

The linguistic standard of compositions was good, with only a very few candidates unable to write Urdu sufficiently accurately or coherently to score good marks. It is the use of a wide range of structures and appropriate lexis that lifts an ordinary essay above the rest and there were some candidates who wrote beautiful Urdu, illustrated with relevant quotations.

Unfortunately, there were a few candidates who misunderstood the examination paper itself. Each essay title is written under a general heading, such as 'Health and Fitness':

صحت اور تندرستی

Under this is written an essay title relating to this topic heading such as:

"روایتی علاجوں کا روز بروز زوال ہے۔ اسے اپنے کامیاب بنانے کے لیے"۔

'Traditional remedies are declining daily - give your opinion.'

Unfortunately a few candidates wrote essays based on the topic heading, writing generally about health and fitness and made no mention of the specific issue in the essay title.

Comments on specific essays

The most popular title this year was: 'What is the secret of the successful family?'

"تعمیرانہ کی کامیابی کا راز کیا ہے؟"

Although this topic produced some very satisfactory responses, ones that stood out were few and far between. In most cases the candidates' language was at least adequate and frequently good, but only a small proportion demonstrated any individuality. One feature that was good was the fact that many candidates were able to give this topic a coherent introduction and conclusion, but generally the main body of the composition lacked flair.

The next most popular topic was:

تerrorism کی وجوہات

'The causes of terrorism'

This title produced some excellent essays; the topic was clearly something that was all too familiar to the candidates, and this immediacy showed in their compositions. Some of the outstanding ones demonstrated a very mature understanding of the issues. They introduced their essay by defining or describing terrorism, gave a variety of cogent reasons and summed up their essay with, very often, a call for everyone to stand against terrorism. There were a few weak essays on this topic, by candidates who seemed to have misunderstood the meaning of the word:

اگر

because they wrote a lot about acts of terrorism and how it should be tackled, but did not mention any possible causes.

Similarly, some of the essays on '*The importance of the freedom of the media*':

میں نے

contained a lot of writing on radio, TV, newspapers, the internet, etc., but many did not get to grips with the issue of freedom or lack of it. Few essays considered censorship issues, rather most candidates concentrated on the fact that nowadays, with the advent of the computer, communications were much quicker and easier. Some candidates however showed an ability to introduce the topic, explain the situation, discuss several factors, expand on them logically and draw a clear conclusion.

Paper 9686/04

Texts

General comments

The majority of candidates performed reasonably well. Some candidates produced work of a high standard. These candidates, who appeared to be well prepared, showed that they had read the set texts thoroughly, understood them in depth and had considered the issues that the texts raised. They were able to apply their understanding and present a discussion relating directly to the question being asked. Some candidates however, showed little knowledge and understanding of the set texts. These candidates had difficulty putting across essential information and ideas and showed a lack of analysis technique. In some cases it was clear that some candidates had not read the set texts themselves and were relying on pre-learnt material about the text that was produced, but which bore no relevance to the specific question being asked. Marks cannot be given for material that is irrelevant to the question.

Some scripts were very difficult to read because of poor presentation by the candidates, and in some cases hand writing was illegible. Some candidates crammed their answers into a very small space, then crossed the answers out and made scribbled corrections, making it very difficult to get a clear picture of their writing. Many candidates greatly exceeded the recommended word limit. These lengthy responses often included much material that was irrelevant and candidates' writing tended to deteriorate in terms of both quality of content and language. Candidates should be given practice in applying their understanding to the specific requirements of the question, and in bringing a focus to their answer.

Some answers relied too much on narrative and memorized oddments. Candidates are required to discuss evaluations of the texts and be able to support their ideas and responses with close reference to the texts. Some candidates gave too much emphasis to the introduction rather than on the tasks to be accomplished according to the question.

Paper 9686/05

Prose

General comments

This short passage for English to Urdu translation was within the general understanding of most candidates and was about teenagers' attitude towards their parents.

The highest marks are given for translation of sentences which convey good meaning within the context of the given passage. Reliance on only a literal translation of the words takes away the real essence of the passage and can distort the meaning.

The overall performance of the majority of candidates was very good. There were however candidates who made mistakes in writing commonly known and simple Urdu words. These must be avoided at this level of examination.

There were a number of key words and phrases which required careful translation within the context of the passage. Difficulties tended to focus around the following: 'At day break' (translated as 'a break during the day' rather than 'early morning'); 'town' (translated as 'village', 'division', 'area', rather than 'small city' etc.); 'discovered' (translated as 'discovery', rather than 'found out'); 'Town Hall'; 'note' (translated as 'letter', 'notice', 'chit', 'poster', 'piece of writing' etc.); 'unfortunate children'; 'and be merry' (translated as 'get married'); 'admonishing' (translated as 'brought up', 'love', 'looked after' rather than 'to warn, caution firmly but not harshly').