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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

The passage in **Section 1** was slightly more challenging in terms of subject matter for candidates to comprehend and careful reading and thinking was required by candidates before attempting certain questions. The text passage in **Section 2** was relatively straightforward and accessible, thereby balancing the level of difficulty.

Some candidates lacked the appropriate skills to understand the meaning of the text closely enough to answer the comprehension questions precisely. In a number of cases, the same information was repeated in answer to different questions. Similarly, there were some instances of candidates lifting text directly from the passage for their answers.

Some candidates' scripts showed repeated misspellings and poor writing style some of which did not approach the minimum standard required for AS and A Level.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

The passage in this section was a good example of contemporary writing about the First and Second World Wars. Candidates understood the passage well and answered most of the questions fairly accurately, however some candidates struggled with the second and fourth questions.

Question 1 required five words to be used in complete sentences. The words were generally well understood, however, the word *mustaqil*, meaning 'permanent', was read as *mustaqbil*, meaning 'future', by some candidates. The second word *barpa hona*, meaning 'to happen', was not understood by many candidates and was incorrectly used in sentences. Few candidates were able to convey the meaning of the last word in their sentences.

In **Question 2** there were a few instances where candidates did not follow the rubric and wrote opposite words and phrases.

Question 3

In **(i)**, with the exception of a small minority, the majority of candidates provided one reason.

(ii) was answered well by the majority of candidates explaining that the sanctions on Germany, the demand to pay large sums of money, the failure of the League of Nations and finally the rise of Hitler were the main reasons for the Second World War. Many candidates however were not clear and did not identify these main points.

(iii) was straightforward, candidates selected the relevant information from the text and answered accurately.

(iv) proved tricky for some candidates but most managed to respond fairly precisely from the information available in the text, as there were many points to consider.

In **(v)** the effect of the cold war on other countries was well described by the majority of candidates. This was a straightforward question and there was plenty of information available in the text to select from.

Section 2

The overall performance of candidates in this section was very good. Candidates displayed a good understanding of the plight of third world countries under the burden of loans taken from developed countries as described in the passage.

Question 4

Almost all candidates answered (i) fairly accurately.

(ii) asked why loans and aid given by developed countries do not help underdeveloped countries. Many candidates answered this correctly.

(iii) asked how developed countries take unfair advantage of developing countries. This was well portrayed by candidates in their responses.

In (iv) the response of developing countries not to accept developed countries' unfair policies towards them was well understood and accurately answered by the majority of candidates.

(v) was about contradictions in the practice of 'Free Trade Policy' by developed countries who enforce too many restrictions on developing countries. This was well answered by the majority of candidates.

Question 5

(a) The responses to this part were wide ranging and presented in many different styles. Candidates covered points from the passages, analysed the role of developing countries and included their own understanding in their writing. It was essential for candidates to give their own opinion in answering this question, as there are no right or wrong answers.

(b) The majority of candidates answered this part well. Again a wide variety of styles were evident and responses varied dramatically. However, many candidates decided not to argue either way and remained neutral in their answers.

Papers 8686/03 and 9686/03

Essay

General comments

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. There were six given topics, on which candidates were expected to write between 250 and 400 words.

The topics were:

'Dunya ke mawjuda haalaat meN kya hwkumatoN ko zerai-e-yblaag par paabandi lagaani cahiyee?'

'In the current state of the world should governments restrict the media?'

'aap ki zindagi meN sab se gahra ta'aluq kys shakhs ka hai?'

'The person with whom you have the deepest relationship'

'geyr mulki siyyah taraqi pazir mulkoN ke liye faeda mand ya nuqsandeh sabyt hote haiN?'

'Are foreign tourists a benefit or a loss for developing countries?'

'Kya ta'alim ka sylsyla merte dam tak jari hai?'

'Should education continue until one's dying day?'

'jadid teknaloji – mahawliati tabahi ka sabab ya us ki hyfazat ka ba'es?'

'Modern Technology – is it the cause or the answer to environmental pollution?'

'jysm ke masnu'i pwrze nyzam-e-qwdrat se takrao ky nahiN?'

'Artificial body parts' unnatural or not?'

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 are awarded for quality of language and 16 for content, structure and organisation.

This session's most popular title was, unsurprisingly, the one on personal relationships.

'aap ki zindagi meN sab se gahra ta'aluq kys shakhs ka hai?'

'The person with whom you have the deepest relationship'

Approximately a third of candidates opted to write on this topic. It is a topic of broad appeal but too many were nothing more than rambling essays in praise of their mothers. While there were some excellent essays, rather too many got carried away with their feelings of love and gratitude and produced unstructured rather than organised essays in response to the topic. At this level something more is expected and some analysis of family or human relationships should be included before deciding upon whom the candidate will write.

The second most popular title was:

'Kya ta'alim ka sylysya merte dam tak jari hai?'

'Should education continue until one's dying day?'

It was the view of almost every candidate who chose this essay that we learn until we die and if we stop learning we start to die. Most wrote competently but quite a few concentrated on formal academic education, not on the different ways of learning that go on, informally as well as formally, throughout one's life. Learning comes from many life experiences but Examiners suppose candidates at this age have not yet had enough experience of them!

The next most popular title was more of a surprise. This was on the topic of tourism and its positive and negative aspects.

'geyr mulki siyyah taraqi pazir mulkoN ke liye faeda mand ya nuqsandeh sabyt hote haiN?'

'Are foreign tourists a benefit or a loss for developing countries?'

This was, in many cases, very well performed. The best candidates presented the issue, discussed both sides of the argument, in some cases using Pakistan or their own country as an example, and came to their own conclusion. Mention was made of economic and social factors, and some were concerned about the dangers of foreigners 'ruining' a culture. Most, however, gave only a positive perspective on the topic and did not even mention any negative factors. Such essays would not have received the highest marks for content.

The fourth ranking topic was:

'jadid teknaloji – mahawliati tabahi ka sabab ya us ki hyfazat ka ba'es?'

'Modern Technology – is it the cause or the answer to environmental pollution?'

This was not very well attempted because of the restriction some candidates placed upon themselves by writing only about cars and factories and not enough about the possibilities of alternative sources of energy and other solutions to the problems.

The remaining two topics were less frequently attempted. These were **Topic 1**, about the media and **Topic 4**, on artificial body parts. The former was not well done by those who attempted it as they seemed not to fully understand the ramifications of the question. They focused mainly on TV and the fact that people should be able to watch what they wanted – unless it was pornographic or blasphemous. It was expected that political censorship or otherwise would come under the spotlight but it did not appear. The latter, on artificial body parts, was done very well by those few who attempted it. They discussed the ethical and practical issues of the topic and came to appropriate conclusions. Interestingly, many seemed to think that artificial limbs were acceptable but not hearts.

Conclusion

As the previous several years' reports have shown, Examiners have written the same comments to summarise the performance of this component of the examination. 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 with most candidates 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 by not conforming to the rubric which requires candidates to be able to write concisely on any particular topic. Failure to present one's argument within the prescribed word-limit reduces marks. 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 'Education' rather than on the title 'Should education continue until one's dying day?' 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 layouts of past papers.

Papers 8674/04 and 9686/04

Texts

General comments

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 candidates. A wide range of language was used: ranging from candidates whose Urdu was fluent and idiomatic enabling those candidates to express their ideas effectively, to those whose knowledge of Urdu was very limited with weak vocabulary and insufficient command of basic grammar to express their ideas clearly. There was an increase in the number of candidates whose handwriting was difficult to decipher. There was evidence that candidates were spending too much time 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 word limit as prolonged and irrelevant material results in losing marks.

Most candidates were able to write extensively about their chosen text and were able to express original ideas and personal impressions in an appropriate register supported by their extensive vocabulary. However, a significant number of candidates whose vocabulary was weak were not able to do this. Examiners look for concise answers with justification as and where appropriate. To achieve this, candidates must practice regular essay writing.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

This section was very popular with almost the whole range of questions tackled. In general all questions were handled very well with candidates tending to prefer the (a) option to the (b) option. Candidates who showed a sound and detailed knowledge of the poems in question wrote exceptionally good answers. The main weakness of a number of candidates was the sketchy nature of their knowledge of the poet and their work. The majority of candidates gave a lengthy explanation of the poems using beautiful language but ignoring the evaluation part of questions which resulted in candidates losing more than half of the total marks available.

Section 2

Once again, all four parts of the section were attempted well and the majority of candidates displayed a high level of linguistic ability when expressing their ideas. There was an interesting and imaginative range of content and structure in candidates' work. There were some fine examples this year of candidates who had thoroughly mastered the necessary literature and who produced a high standard of work with an interesting and original slant. The majority of candidates were well prepared and tackled the tasks confidently, while some gave the impression that they had little prior experience writing in Urdu. Some, on the other hand, appeared to be churning out learned material with little real interest in the topic and often with a great deal of repetition. However, it is only fair to add a positive note of congratulation on the good preparation given by many Centres, where not only examination techniques are well taught but also it was felt that texts had been enjoyed.