

Examiners' Report January 2009

GCE

O Level Urdu (7648)

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Paper 1

The overall standard and demand of this paper was broadly similar to previous years. The majority of candidates produced a good standard of responses and scored high marks. In questions 1 and 2, the two unconnected passages given for translation were within the level of this examination. Some outstanding pieces of accurate Urdu to English translations were seen from large centres. A marginal improvement was also noticed within English to Urdu translation and letter writing.

The translation passage in question 1(a) appeared to be more accessible and straightforward for the majority of candidates, whilst question 2 (a) responses suggested that candidates found it a little more demanding. This provided a good overall balance in the paper and allowed for differentiation. The majority of candidates produced good pieces of translations. A marginal improvement was also noticeable in Urdu writing as compared to previous years, however, many candidates continued to lose marks for simple spelling mistakes and also for writing numbers and dates in reverse order.

A tendency of phonetic Urdu writing was still evident, indicating that the candidates understood the text, could translate it into Urdu, but struggled to write it in Urdu correctly.

By far the best pieces of translations are those where proper translations are carried out as complete sentences within the context of the passage.

QUESTION ONE: Translation from Urdu to English

- (a) This passage was about the *'World's tallest tower'* and carried 15 marks. The general information of the text was adequately conveyed by most candidates, and was well translated. Many candidates continued to write Urdu numbers but in reverse order making it meaningless for the purpose of the examination. It has been strongly advised in the past that writing numbers in English is sufficient and acceptable for this examination and do not cause any reduction in marks. Many candidates continued to misinterpret straightforward words, e.g. *'in the era of inflation/credit crunch'*; *'unusual/extraordinary buildings'*; *'faded/diminished'* and used alternative translations instead: e.g. *'useless buildings'* *'disappeared'*. A few candidates even managed to translate the phrases *'billionaire'* as *'Arab husband'*; *'the tallest tower'* as *'the longest tower'*; and *'the seaport of Jeddah'* as *'the monkey house of Jeddah'*.
- (b) This was a short passage about *'The Asian workforce'* and carried 10 marks. The passage contained an average level of difficulty. Some words and phrases which proved to be stumbling blocks were *'United Nations'*; *'200 million and also 2 billion'*. In a few cases, the glossing over of certain keywords and phrases was also evident. The writing of numbers and dates were used as a way of differentiation during marking.

QUESTION TWO: Translation from Urdu to English

- (a) This passage was about *'Shalimar Gardens'* and carried 15 marks. It described some of the history of Shalimar Gardens. This passage was straightforward for producing a good piece of translation. A few words such as *'noble'*; *'donated'*; *'Ishaq Pura'*; *'under the control of this family'*; proved little bit demanding for many candidates.

There was also evidence of shallow reading before translating and glossing over certain words and phrases.

- (b) This short passage was about *'Mango DNA'* and carried 10 marks. It was a straightforward passage, very easy to access and translate. However, in a few instances, candidates used a variety of wild guesses to translate *'low yield'*; *'increase in the production'*. Many candidates made basic errors in the spelling of simple Urdu words.

QUESTION 3: Translating grammatical sentences

This section was well attempted by the majority of the candidates and marks gained were above average.

- (a) This sentence was usually well attempted by most candidates except some who struggled with the phrase *'your exam'* and translated it as *'your exams'*.
- (b) In this sentence, many candidates made a variety of guesses about the phrase *'important than achievement'*.
- (c) The most difficulty was noticed around the phrase *'I take this opportunity'*.
- (d) This was usually well attempted by most candidates except some struggled with the phrase *'So far'*.
- (e) Mostly well done but a few candidates struggled with the phrase *'can't refrain from doing it'*.

QUESTION 4: Essay or Letter

In this question, there was a choice of three topics for essays and one letter based on a given stimulus as usual and asking reasons to justify their opinion or choice.

Question (d), writing *'a letter to your friend explaining whether you think it is better to live in Pakistan than abroad'*, proved to be the most popular option for the majority of candidates. Most of them wrote letters responding very well, adhering to the task set and offering a variety of reasons to justify their opinion. However, only a few candidates lacked good arguments and reasoning in their writing and appeared to be fulfilling a kind of a formality.

The second most popular topic was (a) *'How to make friends'*. This provided some good and interesting reading. The candidates seemed to be enjoying writing on this topic.

The third popular choice was (c) *'In our view every child should be educated'*. Some good pieces of essay writing were seen here, but lacked any evidence or sparkle from real-life situations or experiences.

The last choice was (b) '*How can I improve my English?*' There were good pieces of composition with a few sparkles on how to pick and remember appropriate use of English words and phrases from English TV programmes.

Some candidates lost marks due to too many mistakes in translating and through poor quality of written language.

The ability to plan and present a balanced essay, with an introduction, argument/reasoning and a conclusion, as well as a good command of the Urdu language and a coherent approach, was evident in the majority of cases. It helps to maintain a realistic, natural and systematic approach in essay and letter writing to avoid confusion and loss of focus on a specified topic.

Statistics

Paper 1

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	71	62	53	48	40

Note:

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

Grade boundaries: these may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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