

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF PAKISTAN

EXAMINERS' COMMENTS

SUBJECT

Functional English

SESSION

Foundation - Autumn 2007

General Comments:

Out of the 3672 students who appeared in the examination, 2110 students obtained passing grades i.e. 57%. The overall performance in the Questions which were designed to test the skills of comprehension, writing and coherent presentation of ideas was below the mark. This trend has also been observed in the previous examinations and is indicative of absence of a culture of reading of good quality material and more importantly lack of commitment to improve skills of written communications.

The comments on the individual questions and their replies are presented below:

- Q.1 (a) The replies to the question pertaining to the matching of the idioms with their meanings were generally satisfactory and the opportunity to score marks was availed by most of the students.
- (b) Responses to this part of the question regarding Exclamatory Sentences showed lack of basic understanding of the requirements. A number of students thought that the insertion of words such as Ah, Wow and Oh will convert the sentences into Exclamatory Sentences. Many of them placed the exclamation sign at inappropriate places.
- (c) This part required conversion of singular into plural nouns. Although performance was generally satisfactory, some students were unaware that nouns such as poultry and furniture are used in both singular as well as plural forms.
- Q.2 In this question the candidates were required to punctuate a given passage. Many candidates included unnecessary punctuations in addition to the correct ones. Very few students came up with perfect responses.
- Q.3 (a) This part of the question requiring the examinees to change verbs into nouns was also simple and the overall performance was satisfactory. However, the noun "explanation" was erroneously spelt as "explanation" in a number of instances.
- (b) In this question candidates were asked to fill in the blanks using appropriate pronouns. Most of the students performed well.

Q.4 The first part of the question relating to conversion of Direct Speech into Indirect Speech carried five marks. Lack of knowledge of the basic concepts was evident as there were numerous instances of incorrect use of pronouns and tenses, besides distortions in the construction of original sentences. It appears that a number of students were not conversant with the underlying concepts of direct and indirect speech. Many students used the word "asked" instead of "told" and vice versa. Consequently, only a limited number of the students were able to score high marks in this question.

Part (b) related to identification of part of speech and was done well by most students.

Q.5 This question relating to a student's request to a former Class Teacher for a letter of reference, was handled unsatisfactorily by most students. The typical errors were as follows:

(i) The letters were addressed to the school and not to the relevant Class Teacher

(ii) A number of students thought "a prestigious business college" was the name of the college in Australia .

(iii) A significant number of the students claimed extraordinary academic achievements and also outstanding performances in sports and extra-curricular activities at school. These claims not only sounded to be unrealistic and highly exaggerated but also conveyed impressions of self-aggrandizement. Request for a Letter of Reference from a student to a former class teacher for seeking admission in a college is considered as a normal requirement and is invariably granted unless there are serious deficiencies in academic performance or in cases of unsatisfactory conduct. A student does not have to be exceptionally brilliant or extraordinary to make such a request.

(iv) The construction of sentences lacked coherence and poor grammar and writing skills were observed in most of the replies

Q.6 This question required matching of Antonyms and Synonyms. Whereas the performance in the matching of synonyms was good, most of the students fared poorly in the matching of antonyms. It appears that many students were not aware of the meaning of the word antonym and therefore resorted to guess work.

Q.7 (a) This question regarding the selection of grammatically correct words was rather simple and answered correctly by most of the students.

(b) This question required the identification of subject and predicate in the given sentences. A considerable number of the students were able to correctly separate the subjects and the predicates except in the last sentence where the response was quiet poor.

Q.8 This question relating to the girl falling from a mango tree was misinterpreted by a substantial number of the students. Approximately, 15% of the students did not attempt this question. Most of the students tried to answer this question in the form of a dialogue between the father and her daughter. What was required in this question were expressions of feelings of the girl in two extremely different situations. The daughter's feelings could be in the form of guilt, remorse, self-pity, financial burden on parents, neglect, being overwhelmed by paternal love and affection, etc. The inability to empathize with the girl's feelings was observed in most of the replies. Barely 13% of the students who attempted this question were able to secure passing grades.

Q.9 The question carrying 16 marks offered choice to the students to write an essay on any one of the three topics. A considerable number of the students selected the topic... "A major cause of our present problems is the increasing lack of discipline at school, home and in the community".

The performance in this question was much below expectations. Nearly 8 % of the students did not attempt the question. Only one third of the students who attempted it managed to obtain passing marks.

The writing of good essays requires considerable practice of skills of written communications, knowledge of basic grammar and ability to organize and express one's thoughts in a logical and coherent manner. These skills can be acquired only through sound reading habits, ability to express one's thoughts in writing and knowledge of rules of good writing skills.

It is important that the students realize that writing and comprehension skills are given considerable weightage in this paper and concerted efforts are necessary to acquire and upgrade these skills.

Q.10 This question regarding comprehension of a given passage and writing of a précis carried 16 marks. Although the test of comprehension abilities as required in parts (b), (c) and (d) was rather simple, a number of students were unable to score high marks. This is attributable to lack of ability to read with concentration and identify the salient points in the passage.

The part of the question relating to the précis once again showed the inadequacy of the writing skills. Lack of presentation skills, poor vocabulary and grammar jointly contributed to the unsatisfactory performance in this question. A large number of the students did not write the word count, which was specifically required.

(THE END)