

EXAMINERS' COMMENTS

SUBJECT	SESSION
Functional English	Foundation Examination - Spring 2008

General Remarks:

The overall remarks expressed by all the examiners were that the Paper was rather easy as it purported to assess the basic understanding of grammar, vocabulary and written business communication skills. The salient aspects of the students' performance in the various questions are described in the followings paragraphs:

- Q.1 (a) This question was designed to test the knowledge of vocabulary. The performance was unsatisfactory due to lack of exposure to quality reading material. It may be mentioned that a good vocabulary is inextricably linked with regular reading habits acquired over a period of time. Most of the students indulged in guesswork and consequently lost marks.
- (b) The performance in the question regarding identification of the meanings of the idioms was quite satisfactory and a number of the students were able to score passing grades.
- Q.2 (a) This question pertaining to homonyms posed problems for a large majority of the students. These students were unable to differentiate the meanings of words affect and effect and principle and principal.
- (b) The performance in the question on antonyms was below the mark and guesswork was observed in most of the replies. The students were unaware of the meaning of words such as exalted, fallow and contaminated which are so commonly used in newspaper articles and discussions on various TV programs.
- Q.3 (a) Replies to this question of eight marks were generally satisfactory as the students were able to decipher the jumbled phrases and come up with logically correct sentences. Only in sub-part (ii), the number of errors was quite high.

Most of the students structured the sentence as "People of all professions went to him at his dispensary for medical treatment". Instead, the correct answer was "People of all professions went to him for medical treatment at his dispensary".

- (b) Only a few students were able to perform well in the question pertaining to conversion of simple assertive sentences into exclamatory sentences. Most of the students inserted words such as Wow, Alas and Ah which were certainly incorrect. In a number of cases marks of exclamation were either placed in the middle of the sentence or not considered at all.

- Q.4 The question pertaining to punctuations was very basic and students with even rudimentary knowledge of grammar were able to achieve passing grades. The overall performance was good.
- Q.5 (a) The question on superlatives was quite simple and students were generally able to score high marks. The superlative form of “vertical” is “vertical” and not “most vertical” as stated by a number of the students. Incorrect spelling of the superlative word “latest” was observed in quite a few instances.
- (b) Replies to this question were generally satisfactory as most students were able to select the correct form of verb in the given sentences.
- Q.6 The performance in this question on letter writing was highly disappointing. Lack of awareness of the proper format of a formal letter, incorrect placement of the address of the recipient, inappropriate salutation and closing were observed in most of the cases. Incoherent thought process, poor expressions and inadequate vocabulary contributed to the overall unsatisfactory performance. Only exposure to quality reading material and diligent efforts can achieve improvements in writing skills.
- Q.7 (a) The Parts of Speech were correctly identified by quite a number of the students. However, in sub-part (v) a number of students incorrectly identified sweet to be an adverb, whereas it is an adjective.
- (b) The students usually faced problems in the following singulars/plurals:
- medium/media
 - father-in-law/fathers-in-law
 - mouse/mice.
- In spite of the fact that this question was very simple, a number of the students were unable to make the most of this rather easy marks scoring opportunity.
- Q.8 (a) **Conversion of Direct Speech into Indirect Speech:** The performance was most disappointing and it was apparent that the students lacked the basic knowledge of the concept of direct and indirect speech. Improper use of pronouns, inappropriate matching of subject and its verb, alterations in the basic construction of the sentences were the common mistakes. The students need to make concerted efforts to improve their understanding of the basic principles of direct-indirect speech.

- (b) **Changing of adjectives into verb forms:** The performance was once again unsatisfactory and the students were wholly unaware of the basic concept of conversion of adjectives into verbs. The replies to sub-part (vi) relating to the adjective 'movable' were mostly correct but in all other cases the students floundered and resorted to guesswork resulting in loss of marks.

Q.9 This question for evaluating the comprehension skills of the students was, in fact, both simple and to the point. Since the question carried 16 valuable marks, it provided a good opportunity to the students to score high marks. The responses to the portion of the question which required an appropriate title for the précis were quite satisfactory and so were the answers to the parts pertaining to comprehension of the essential thoughts conveyed in the passage. However, the performance regarding the drafting of the précis was below standard and a number of the students merely reproduced selected extracts from the original passage in order to reduce its size. The lack of writing skills, limited vocabulary and poor expressions were observed in a large number of the replies.

Q.10 The topic My Country-Pakistan was selected by most of the students. The common thread evident in the essays were reference to the Founder of the Nation, narration of the date of independence, demographic pattern and the rich natural resources available in the country. The points relating to the inherent strength of the country attributable to the size of its population, its defence capability, strategic geographical location and the predominance of Islam as a major force were also highlighted by nearly all the students.

Once again, lack of good writing skills, limited vocabulary and lack of coherence in the presentations were apparent in most of the answers. Only few students were able to score high marks in this question which carried 16 valuable marks.

(THE END)