

URDU

Paper 9686/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- Most responses were generally very good.
- Candidates who did not do well needed to look at the **focus** of each question by reading the question/rubric carefully before answering the question. Some candidates wrote well but the response did not meet the precise requirements of the question.
- Some candidates did not answer clearly and expected the reader to work it out for themselves.
- It was felt that with **Question 5a** throughout, many candidates failed to read and understand the focus of the question and in average of 5 – 6 marks were gained.
- Any other or irrelevant or superfluous information other than what was being asked in the question was not acceptable.
- A few candidates did not attempt some questions in **section 3** and **4**, which led to automatic deduction.
- Some candidates gave their own personalised answers instead of taking them from the insert.

General comment

The overall performance was good, and most candidates handled both **Sections 1** and **2** of the paper well.

In order to do well in this examination, candidates must:

- Read the passages and the questions carefully.
- Write concise responses, answering the questions in their own words as much as possible.
- Stay/keep within word limit.

In this session, most candidates managed their time well to answer the questions with an appropriate amount of detail. There were only a few cases where responses were unnecessarily long due to a lack of understanding. In some cases, there were usual errors in spelling and grammatical structures in scripts.

Most candidates answered **Question 1** very well.

Again, most candidates gave good responses to **Question 2**. However, some did not seem to have read the rubric carefully and wrote antonyms for the words provided in the question paper. Others provided their own versions of the answers instead of using the text as required.

Many candidates performed well on **Questions 3, 4, and 5**. However, some misunderstood the questions or did not include the necessary details to receive full marks.

In answer to **Question 5(a)**, a small number of candidates did not adhere to the word limit and therefore scored fewer marks. In **Question 5(b)**, many candidates engaged very well with the question and provided interesting personal opinions, especially about the **اپنے اسکول میں غیر ملکی زبانوں کی تعلیم**.

Although the paper was straightforward and contained no surprises in the content of Passages 1 and 2, the overall standard, quality, and linguistic demand were consistent with previous years and appropriate for this level of examination. The theme of the passages, 'the positive and negative aspects of learning foreign languages', was highly interesting and informative for most candidates. Average candidates needed to be particularly careful when reading the comprehension questions to respond precisely and appropriately. This required candidates to be extra vigilant in selecting their responses for each question.

Although most candidates used their time and skills effectively to answer all questions correctly, some copied responses from the inserts indiscriminately. In some cases, they extended their responses with unnecessary details due to a lack of understanding of the question's focus, leading to overflow in the answer spaces. In other cases, some candidates demonstrated strong vocabulary and grammar but unfortunately did not focus on the specific details requested in the question.

Some weaknesses and errors in spelling and grammar were noticeable among lower-ability candidates.

Comments on specific questions

The following points should help candidates and their teachers prepare more effectively for the future.

Question 1

Most candidates were able to construct sentences with the given words effectively.

In response to writing sentences with the given words, most candidates understood the meanings of the words and provided correct answers. Some candidates did not know the meaning of words like ذریعہ and used ذریعے instead, which affected their scores. Similarly, some candidates used موقع instead of موقع. Most candidates answered the words فارغ پڑھنے and پڑھنے very well.

Question 2

Many candidates did well on this question and were able to answer all questions correctly. A few candidates either did not read the rubric carefully or did not fully understand the task, which required matching the given phrase exactly with the equivalent phrase in the text. Some wrote their own phrases or identified incorrect phrases in the text. Some candidates used the phrases in their own sentences for the given words, which was not the requirement for this question.

Correct spelling was missing on some of the required words, but phrases like میسر آئے بین and تہذیب/ ثقافت کام سے متعلق were the most challenging.

Question 3

- (a) Done well. The main mistake was not making mention of تہذیب/ ثقافت.
- (b) A few candidates were confused about how to answer this question and wrote the opposite to the straightforward answer expected (write difficulties) due to lack of word focus کیا مشکلات پیش آسکتی ہیں and lost marks. Another difficulty occurred because some candidates wrote لوگوں سے بات چیت مقامی لوگوں سے دوستی instead of as it is not same.
- (c) A few candidates lost marks because they used the phrase 'national language' instead of 'mother tongue'. مادری زبان کی جگہ قومی زبان لکھا
- (d) Some candidates wrote the answer which was correct for **Question 3c**. Although there was no ambiguity as **Question 3d** clearly asked the opinion of Meh Naz in the rubric. A few candidates also lost marks in the third point because they did not write دوسرا مضمین.
- (e) Most candidates did well in answering this question.

In **Question 4**, again, most candidates were able to give correct answers for all parts of the question. These candidates were able to achieve language marks of 5.

Question 4

- (a) Most of the candidates were able to give all three points for this question.
- (b) Candidates who could not answer all the three points missed one or two points. حکومت کے اخراجات and قابل لوگوں سے محروم. This question was somewhat problematic for many candidates.
- (c) Most candidates answered this question well by writing all three points. However, a small number wrote only 2 points and missed بالکل شوق نہیں.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered this question very well.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well. However, some candidates lost the mark because they missed the point about the difference in standard of education in English medium and Urdu medium school.

Overall, in **Question 3** and **4**, some candidates lost marks because they were not able to pick out the straight answer from the text. This was due to lack of exam practice either because candidates were unable to answer part of the question or due to lack of understanding and processing the information.

Question 5

- (a) In **Question 5a** candidates were asked to write about people's positive and negative views about learning foreign languages. Instead of addressing the topic, some candidates wrote other information and not people's views. Instead of summarising the text, they wrote their own version of the text using a few bullet points and did not gain marks. It is strongly advisable that candidates should read the question better to make sure they understand what exactly is being asked before writing their responses.

Some candidates began their answers with a general introduction. While this made for pleasant reading, it did not score any marks. In some cases, it also caused candidates to exceed the permitted word count, resulting in valid points made after the cut-off point not being credited.

There were some instances where candidates genuinely related to the topic but gave personalised answers. However, most candidates were able to achieve 5 to 6 marks in **Question 5a**.

- (b) Most candidates were able to give their own opinions about the اپنے اسکول میں غیر ملکی زبانوں کی تعلیم کے بارے میں اپنی رائے and gave interesting explanations.

However, a significant number of candidates received one mark less due to not mentioning their own school میرے اسکول اپنے/بمارے اسکول.

The majority of candidates gained high marks due to inclusion of question demand غیر ملکی زبانوں کے بارے میں رائے. اپنے اسکول میں within their response.

There were infrequent minor errors, and in several cases, although the structure and spelling were correct, the writing was not easily legible.

A variety of writing styles appeared in response to this question. Most candidates included one or both opinions from outside the passages. A small number provided only an opinion with one explanation, while a few gave either just an opinion or just an explanation.

A large majority of candidates received full marks for language, which is great to see.

A variety of writing styles appeared in response to this paper. Most candidates responded well for the whole paper.

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Paper 9686/03

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- Plan their essay before they start writing in order to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments.
- Write a composition on the essay title, not the general topic heading.
- Stay within the prescribed word limit.
- Ensure their response is relevant and relates to the exact essay title/question. If the broad topic area is addressed but the essay does not refer in any way to the exact essay title, then candidates will not be able to secure higher marks.

General comments

Overall, the performance of candidates was good, with a high proportion of excellent scripts. The best candidates showed a genuine interest in the question they had selected and were able to produce an extended piece of writing that was relevant, detailed and showed a solid understanding of the issues raised in the question. Their essays were mature and thoughtful, clearly reflecting an in-depth study of the chosen title. A significant number of scripts, however, did not address the precise wording of the question or misunderstood the task set, leading to generalisations and irrelevant answers. It is particularly important that essays should target the precise terms of the question and not merely relate to the general overarching topic area.

Planning is a useful step in writing a good essay as evidenced by the scripts. Candidates who organised the material and their ideas, even briefly, before writing, tended to gain higher marks for content and were more likely to present their arguments logically, using paragraphs and a range of linking words. Candidates who were not as deliberate in their planning ended up repeating points already made which affected the overall structure of the essay.

Quality of language

The best essays demonstrated a high level of grammatical accuracy and variety in the choice of vocabulary and structures, including topic-appropriate vocabulary and thoughtful use of linking words, which enabled candidates to communicate their ideas effectively.

The best essays were error-free and showed evidence of a wide range of clause structures and complex sentences being used. Candidates who achieved the highest marks were very deliberate in their use of sophisticated idioms and metaphors to further enhance their essays. Some candidates showed limited grammatical and structural awareness and there were inaccuracies with irregular verbs, subject-verb agreement, articles and basic grammar. Candidates are strongly advised to avoid using English words within their Urdu essays and to ensure spelling is accurate.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Topic area: Urban and rural life.

This was the most popular question answered on the paper and several candidates were able to attempt it successfully. The best candidates presented a well-balanced argument evaluating life in both the village and the city and were able to link this to a person's level of happiness.

These candidates demonstrated a deep understanding of the topic and could effectively analyse the various factors that influence happiness. They argued that both city life and village life provide opportunities for happiness and offered their own opinions in the conclusion, providing good examples and justifications.

They acknowledged that village life allows an individual to experience a much calmer way of living, away from the fast-paced, hustle and bustle of cities. The best candidates substantiated their arguments with relevant examples and insightful reasoning. They recognised that in today's day and age, people working and living in cities struggle to find time for themselves and their families whereas rural life prioritises connecting with nature, other people and oneself. However, they also emphasised that there were more facilities, job opportunities and leisure activities in the city which contribute to a person's overall happiness and enhance one's quality of life.

Some candidates wrote essays that gave a comparison of city life to village life without directly addressing the essay title which required them to comment on which of the two environments offer more happiness. While these essays offered valuable insights into the differences between urban and rural living, they were unable to connect these differences to the central theme of happiness which was the crux of the essay prompt.

Overall, the best candidates skilfully demonstrated analytical thinking, critical evaluation and wrote relevant essays that directly addressed the question. They provided insightful and thought-provoking conclusions such as suggesting that some people thrive in the serene communal setting of a village while others find joy in the vibrancy and opportunities of city life. These candidates were able to explain that ultimately, the degree of happiness derived from either environment depends on individual preferences and lifestyle choices.

Question 2

Topic area: Food and drink

This was the second most popular question attempted and garnered significant attention from a large number of candidates. These candidates displayed a balanced argument that was coherent and well structured. They were able to comment on the growing popularity of fast food and how it is replacing the need for home-made, traditional dishes.

The candidates acknowledged that the rise of fast food and online food delivery platforms has made convenient dining widely accessible to people from all walks of life. They highlighted how individuals can utilise fast food outlets, online ordering, and food delivery apps to quickly obtain meals, catering to their fast-paced lifestyles and busy schedules. They recognised that these resources have revolutionised dining habits, breaking down barriers such as time constraints and the need for meal preparation and replacing the need to cook meals from scratch, which is a more traditional approach.

Moreover, the candidates discussed the profound benefits, flexibility and convenience that fast food and delivery services offer, often enabling individuals to enjoy a variety of cuisines from the comfort of their homes. Candidates also mentioned that women would traditionally be responsible for cooking meals for the family but as gender roles are quickly changing, women are now also working which again makes traditional cooking less popular.

The best responses provided a balanced argument and also highlighted the potential limitations that arise from relying heavily on fast food and delivery services. They considered the missed opportunities for home cooking and emphasised the value of preparing and sharing home-made meals, which can foster social connections, cultural preservation, and healthier eating habits. The best responses further developed this point and mentioned the impact of frequent fast-food consumption on an individual's physical and mental

health, such as an increased risk of obesity, poor nutrition, and reduced emotional well-being due to lack of social interactions during meal preparation and consumption.

Overall, the best candidates skilfully demonstrated analytical thinking, critical evaluation, and wrote relevant essays that directly addressed the question, recognising both the advantages and drawbacks of the growing popularity of fast food and its impact on traditional meals.

Question 3

Topic area: Sports

This question was attempted by some candidates who demonstrated sound knowledge by providing well-structured and coherent arguments. The best responses addressed the specific question and considered all aspects in a relevant manner, with points that were elaborated and justified. Many candidates were able to identify that women's sports do not garner as much attention from the public compared to men's sports. They argued that greater efforts should be directed towards ensuring that women have access to the same training facilities, funding, and media coverage as their male counterparts. They suggested that this approach would naturally lead to greater representation based on merit.

Overall, the best candidates skilfully demonstrated analytical thinking and critical evaluation, writing relevant essays that directly addressed the question. They recognised both the arguments for and against the need for more representation of women in sports, and ultimately advocating for a merit-based approach while ensuring equal opportunities for all athletes.

Question 4

Topic area: Cultural life/heritage

Although this question was not attempted by a large majority of candidates, those who did raised some insightful and relevant ideas. The best candidates highlighted that historic monuments attract tourists, both domestic and international, which can significantly boost the local economy. They argued that an influx of tourists creates a demand for various goods and services, ranging from accommodation and transportation to restaurants, souvenir shops, and local attractions. This increased demand encourages the establishment of new businesses, thereby contributing to the economy and creating new job opportunities.

Candidates also noted that historic monuments play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and identity. These sites serve as tangible links to the past, offering educational opportunities and fostering a sense of pride within communities. By maintaining these monuments, societies can protect their cultural narratives and attract visitors interested in exploring and understanding these heritage sites.

Question 5

Topic area: War and Peace

This question was not attempted by many candidates but those that did answer it, performed very well. Candidates demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding war and peace.

The best responses considered the significant problems that war can create. Candidates highlighted that war often leads to widespread destruction, loss of life, and severe human suffering. The aftermath of war can result in long-term trauma, displacement, and the destabilisation of regions, which can undermine the very peace it seeks to achieve. They pointed out that war can create more problems than it solves, exacerbating issues rather than resolving them. Candidates emphasised the importance of seeking diplomatic solutions and conflict resolution through peaceful means. They argued that negotiation, sanctions, and international pressure can often be more effective in resolving disputes without the devastating consequences of war.

Overall, the best candidates recognised that while war might sometimes be considered necessary to maintain peace and as a means of self-defence, it often creates more problems and should be seen as a last resort. These candidates effectively articulated the importance of weighing the costs and benefits of war, considering ethical implications, and advocated for prioritising diplomatic and peaceful solutions to conflict. They were also able to provide examples and justifications where relevant to further emphasise their points.

URDU

Paper 9686/04

Texts

Key messages

Teachers should

- Think carefully about which texts to prepare and aim for ones that their candidates can handle conceptually.
- Train their candidates to:
 - Manage their time effectively in the examination room and answer ONLY three questions.
 - Avoid answering two questions on the same text.
 - Carefully consider what each question is asking before they start writing.
 - Estimate word count instead of wasting time counting words and writing the number of words up to that point.
 - Focus directly on the requirements of the questions, avoiding lengthy or generic introductions about the overall text or the author.

Candidates should:

- Choose either **(a)** or **(b)** carefully and provide a complete and relevant answer to that question.
- Reference the appropriate text in their answers.
- Clearly write their chosen question numbers in English as specified in the answer booklet.
- Answer the question precisely, stating what will be covered in the introduction and reaching interim and final conclusions to achieve top band marks.
- Explore all elements of the questions and understand their focus.
- Take a stance or give opinions, and provide justifications or references to expand their responses for better marks.

General comments

Candidates should avoid writing an opening paragraph that addresses the author, their works, or their audience in general terms. Instead, they should focus on answering the question directly and refrain from discussing the author's life and achievements.

It was evident that centres had used past questions for training, and detailed knowledge in these areas was apparent. Candidates should carefully select the question they choose to answer and ensure their material is relevant. While some candidates tailored their material efficiently to the current session's questions, others included content from previous years' questions.

The best responses were those that were carefully planned, with rough notes often visible on the answer paper (it is helpful to cross these out to avoid misunderstanding), and that led to a clear conclusion. Candidates are advised to leave time to re-read, check, and edit their work. Right-hand answer booklets are very useful for following the flow of Urdu text.

Candidates should always state the focus, provide evidence with reference to the text, and then explain the argument. This approach helps candidates get straight to the point and achieve top marks.

It was also evident from the scripts that candidates were overly concerned with the total number of words. They frequently counted and recorded the number of words after each paragraph. Candidates should be informed that there is a certain allowance for additional words. Lack of this knowledge has led to some candidates ending their responses inconclusively. Additionally, it is important for centres to prepare learners

to estimate word count accurately. This will save time and help learners execute their writing plans without the fear of exceeding the permitted word count.

Comments on specific questions

Following the marking, here are a few key points that would help candidates and teachers prepare better in the future.

Question 1

(a) A reasonable number of candidates attempted this question. Most candidates managed to answer **Part one** well, but only those who answered **Part two** in detail scored good marks. This is a passage-based question, and all the answers should be given with reference to the ghazal mentioned in the question. Many candidates wrote the opening paragraph of part two about the poet, which takes away the focus of the question. Candidates need to keep referencing back to the focus (سادہ اور آسان زبان، جذبات کی ترجمانی) to get into the top of the marking band.

(b) This is an essay type question where candidates are asked to analyse the poetry of a given poet with reference to the focus (حقیقت کی ترجمانی) in the question. Only a select few have attempted this question and secured relatively good marks but those who wrote a general essay on the poet could not score well.

Question 2

(a) This was a popular choice. Most candidates attempted this question well and secured good marks. Most of the candidates secured better marks in part one compared to **Part two**. Candidates who attempted both parts in detail and explained the focus (مسلم نوجوانوں، سبق آموز پیغام) with evidence, secured marks in top bands.

(b) This question was the most popular choice in **Section one**. A good number of candidates answered this question intellectually and secured good marks. The majority of candidates explained well with regards to the demand of the question and secured good marks. However, some only discussed the poet's life and contributions rather than addressing the question. Candidates who understood and applied question's focus (اردو شاعری کو ایک نیا رنگ) secured top marks. Some candidates were confused about the focus of the question and did not expand their answers properly.

Question 3

(a) A very small number of candidates attempted this question. Some candidates simply explained the extract from the poem. Only a minority addressed the focus of the question (جذبات کا اظہار ایک نئے انداز) in their discussion with respect to the given poem.

(b) Rarely did any candidate attempt to answer this question. Some candidates who attempted this question and analysed the poetry in the light of the focus of the question (مشکل اور بناؤٹی زبان کی بجائے آسان زبان) (مشکل اور بناؤٹی زبان کی بجائے آسان زبان), gained good marks.

Question 4

(a) This question was popular among candidates. Many candidates addressed the focus, (مسلم معاشرے میں عورت کی حیثیت) but most candidates did not understand the true meaning of حیثیت in the focus. Some just wrote a generic story about the novel, Mira tul Uroos. Candidates who evidenced and explained the focus and defended it with quotations from the text secured marks in the upper bands.

(b) Rarely did any candidate attempt this question. A candidate or two answered this question highly intellectually with solid evidence to the focus (مردانہ کردار کتنی ابیت کے حامل). However, candidates who wrote about the male character rather than their importance could not score high marks.

Question 5

(a) This was the very popular option in **Section 2** and most candidates gave very intelligent answers keeping in line with the focus of the question (مشرقی شوپر اور بیوی کا مثالی رشتہ) and securing marks in

the top 3 bands. Some candidates struggled to discuss the focus and simply reproduced the story and characters of the Afsana, therefore not securing good marks.

(b) This was another popular option in **Section 2**. Many candidates attempted this question and wrote detailed responses, securing top band marks. This question asked candidates to explain how much this Afsana is still relevant and portrays our society today. Candidates who just wrote a summary of the Afsana could not secure top marks. Weaker candidates also appeared to be too dependent on narrative and memorised fragments. However, candidates who discussed, evidenced, and explained the focus (بمارے معاشرے کی کس حد تک عکاسی) secured top marks.

Question 6

(a) This question was a popular choice in the **Section one**. A good number of candidates answered this question highly intellectually and secured top marks. The majority of candidates explained well with regards to the demand of the question and thus secured good marks. Those candidates who understood and applied the focus of the question (اکبر اور سلیم کے درمیان بڑی بوئی دوریاں کم بوجاتیں) secured top band marks. However, some candidates just wrote the general analyses/story and did not address the focus.

(b) The majority of candidates who attempted this question secured good marks by explaining and evidencing how the writer portrayed reality in the drama. Some candidates analysed how the events, characters, and portrayal of the Mughal era by the writer created a realistic imagery for the reader, thereby securing top band marks.