

URDU

Paper 9686/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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

- Read all passages and questions carefully.
- Write concise responses, answering the questions in their own words as much as possible. Some candidates wrote well but their responses did not meet the precise requirements of the question.
- Adhere to the word limits specified in the questions.

General comments

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

While most candidates demonstrated effective use of their time and skills by answering all questions correctly, some relied too heavily on copying content directly from the inserts without using their own words. In certain instances, responses were unnecessarily extended with irrelevant details, indicating a lack of understanding of the question's intent and resulting in overflow beyond the allocated answer space. Additionally, some candidates showcased strong vocabulary and grammar but failed to address the specific details required by the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates did well with this question. There were very few incidents of lifting. The words were understood and then used in sentences correctly. The word *aadee* was sometimes confused with *aadat*. A few candidates used the plural for *sahoolat* instead of the singular. Otherwise, this question was generally well-understood and well-answered.

Question 2

Most candidates answered most of the parts in this question successfully. The word that caused the most confusion in this question was *muwaafiq aata hai* where candidates were expected to write *saazgaar hota hai*. Other than this, one of the most common mistakes was missing the word *say* at the end of 2(e).

Question 3

Many candidates performed very well across the questions.

- (a) Candidates generally performed very well. Only some candidates missed out the *aasaanee* point.
- (b) Candidates also generally performed very well. Some candidates did not get the third mark as they did not mention the meaning of waiting correctly.
- (c) Many candidates missed out on full marks because they focused their answer on the harms of home-cooked food instead of mentioning the benefits of takeout.
- (d) Many candidates missed out one of the first two points.

- (e) Generally, candidates did well. Only some candidates missed the third mark.

Section 2

Question 4

- (a) Very few candidates were unable to get full marks here.
- (b) This was answered well but some candidates missed either *khatarnaak ajzaa* or reference to obesity.
- (c) This question was also answered quite well overall.
- (d) This question was also answered quite well overall.
- (e) Many candidates did not get the mark for *gunoodgi*.

Question 5

- (a) A large proportion of candidates responded to **Question 5(a)** correctly and with confidence. Some candidates started off their answer with a general introduction, which, although made for pleasant reading, did not contribute to their marks. Most candidates were able to stay within an acceptable margin of the word count.
- (b) Most of the candidates found it easy to write their opinion in response to the question asked. Many candidates were able to pick up the full allocation of marks for this question. Some candidates only mentioned the points from within the text and therefore only got 4 marks instead of 5.

Quality of Language

The majority of candidates demonstrated strong language skills and scored full marks for the quality of the language used in their responses throughout the paper.

Minor errors were observed, but overall, the writing was clear and legible. Candidates are encouraged to continue practicing accurate spelling and grammar to maintain high standards.

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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 that 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 and clearly reflected an in-depth study of the chosen title. A significant number of scripts, however, did not fully engage with the precise wording of the question or appeared to misinterpret the task, 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 link 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 good 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 with 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 demonstrated limited grammatical and structural awareness and there were inaccuracies with irregular verbs, subject-verb agreement, articles and basic grammar. Candidates are strongly advised not to use English words within their Urdu essays and to ensure spelling is accurate.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the most popular question, and many candidates produced thoughtful, well-structured essays. The topic resonated strongly, prompting clear arguments supported by relevant examples.

Most candidates acknowledged the important role parents play, especially in early childhood, where decisions about schooling, routines, and behaviour are necessary due to the child's lack of experience. These responses reflected a sound understanding of parental responsibility in early development.

However, many candidates also expressed concern about parents continuing to control decisions as children mature. Common examples included choices around education, careers, friendships, and marriage. Candidates recognised that such control, particularly in cases such as forced marriage, can lead to emotional distress, rebellion, or strained family relationships.

A number of responses also explored the impact of excluding children from decisions, noting that in today's digital age, young people are more informed and opinionated. Several candidates warned that a lack of involvement can lead to serious consequences, including poor mental health or engagement in harmful behaviours.

Most essays concluded with a balanced perspective, suggesting that while children may have a better understanding of modern life, parents should still guide rather than impose. Encouraging decision-making through support and reflection was widely recommended.

Language control varied across responses. Stronger candidates demonstrated fluency and clarity through well-developed sentence structures and accurate grammar. Others showed limited control, with issues in tense consistency, subject-verb agreement, and cohesion. An over-reliance on basic vocabulary and repetitive phrasing occasionally affected precision and impact.

Overall, the question enabled candidates to demonstrate critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to construct reasoned arguments supported by appropriate examples.

Question 2

This question attracted a substantial number of responses, with candidates offering a broad range of perspectives on whether true happiness comes from wealth. Many responses were clearly organised and engaged with the topic thoughtfully.

Several candidates maintained that financial resources play a crucial role in achieving happiness by providing comfort and security. They argued that wealth allows people to enjoy luxuries such as designer goods, holidays, and homes, which can enhance life satisfaction. Additionally, some suggested that money can help sustain social bonds by enabling generous spending on loved ones.

In contrast, numerous candidates emphasised that genuine happiness is more complex and cannot be purchased. They defined happiness as a state of emotional well-being, rooted in inner peace and meaningful connections rather than material possessions. Examples were given of less affluent individuals who find joy through family and friendships, while some wealthy people may suffer feelings of loneliness or dissatisfaction. Spiritual fulfilment and acts of kindness were also frequently cited as important contributors to true happiness.

Conclusions often reflected a balanced stance, recognising that while money can alleviate hardship and contribute to happiness, it does not guarantee it or serve as the sole source. More accomplished candidates used varied vocabulary and sentence forms with confidence and accuracy, enhancing clarity and engagement. Others displayed weaknesses in grammatical accuracy, coherence, and expression, sometimes relying on repetitive language and simple structures.

This question provided candidates with an opportunity to explore abstract ideas and present nuanced arguments, showcasing their critical thinking and expressive abilities.

Question 3

This question garnered significant attention from a large number of candidates. Many offered balanced and well-structured responses, presenting coherent arguments about the challenges of maintaining a healthy balance between work and leisure in today's fast-paced world.

Candidates acknowledged that the demands of modern work life, including longer hours, increased workloads, and the rise of digital technology, have made it more difficult for individuals to disconnect and find time for relaxation. They discussed how smartphones, emails, and remote work often blur the boundaries between professional responsibilities and personal time, contributing to stress and burnout.

Many candidates also highlighted the growing pressure to succeed professionally, which can lead individuals to prioritise work over leisure activities. This, in turn, affects physical and mental well-being, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction. Some responses noted that economic factors, such as the need to work multiple jobs or long hours to meet financial obligations, further reduce leisure opportunities.

On the other hand, several candidates emphasised the importance of leisure for maintaining mental health and productivity. They argued that taking time to rest and engage in hobbies or social activities can improve focus, creativity, and overall happiness. Some responses suggested that employers and individuals alike need to recognise the value of work-life balance and implement strategies to protect leisure time.

The strongest essays provided a nuanced discussion, recognising both the external pressures that make balancing work and leisure difficult and the individual and societal benefits of achieving this balance. They also mentioned the role of effective time management, prioritisation, and boundary-setting as possible solutions.

Overall, candidates demonstrated thoughtful analysis, critical evaluation, and the ability to address the question directly, exploring the complexities of modern work-life dynamics.

Question 4

This question attracted considerable interest from many candidates, who produced coherent and thoughtfully organised essays on the increasing significance of vocational education in the modern era.

A number of candidates emphasised the practical benefits of vocational training, pointing out that it equips learners with specific skills tailored to particular professions. They argued that such education often offers a faster and more direct pathway into the workforce, especially in industries experiencing skill shortages.

Several essays highlighted how vocational courses can be a more affordable and accessible option compared to traditional academic routes, appealing to those who prefer experiential learning or who aim to start their careers early. Candidates also noted that in fields such as engineering, healthcare, and technical trades, vocational qualifications are highly regarded and can lead to stable employment opportunities.

At the same time, some candidates recognised the continued importance of academic education for careers that require deep theoretical knowledge or advanced study. Several responses suggested that a diverse education system should accommodate both vocational and academic pathways to meet the varied needs and interests of students.

The most effective essays presented a balanced perspective, acknowledging the rising demand for vocational education while respecting the value of traditional academic qualifications. They also discussed the necessity of changing public attitudes towards vocational training and enhancing collaboration between vocational and academic sectors.

In summary, candidates demonstrated analytical skills and presented well-founded viewpoints, reflecting awareness of the changing educational environment and its implications for future employment.

Question 5

This question was not attempted by many candidates but those who did respond handled it very effectively. Candidates demonstrated a clear and nuanced understanding of how deforestation significantly contributes to climate change and alters weather patterns.

The strongest responses outlined the environmental consequences of forest loss on the atmosphere. Candidates explained how cutting down vast areas of trees reduces the planet's ability to absorb carbon dioxide, leading to increased greenhouse gas levels and global warming. They described how deforestation disrupts the balance of natural processes that regulate climate, contributing to rising temperatures worldwide.

Several responses focused on the direct effects on weather, including changes in rainfall patterns, increased droughts, and more frequent extreme weather events such as storms and floods. Candidates showed awareness of how the loss of forest cover alters evaporation and moisture circulation, which can destabilise local and global climates.

Overall, the best candidates recognised deforestation as a key factor driving climate change and its related weather disruptions. They provided clear explanations and relevant examples, effectively emphasising the urgent need to address forest loss to help mitigate these environmental challenges.

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Paper 9686/04
Texts

Key messages

Candidates should:

- Select texts they can handle conceptually and prepare them thoroughly.
- Manage their time carefully in the examination room and answer only three questions.
- Ensure they do not answer two questions on the same text.
- Read each question carefully before writing, and focus directly on what is required.
- Estimate word counts sensibly rather than spending time counting words line by line or recording interim totals.
- Avoid long, generic introductions about the text or the author, and instead respond directly to the requirements of the question.
- Choose carefully either option **(a)** or **(b)** and invest in providing a complete and relevant answer to the chosen question.
- Refer specifically to the appropriate text when developing their answers.
- Write their chosen question numbers clearly in English as mentioned in the answer booklet.
- Answer the question precisely, stating in the introduction what will be said and coming to interim and final conclusions to secure the top band marks.
- Explore all elements of the questions to understand and address the focus of the question.
- Take a clear stance, giving opinions and justifying them with references or examples to strengthen their responses and achieve higher marks.

General comments

It was noticed throughout the paper that majority of the candidates developing their answers based on the focus of the questions. However, for some candidates it is advised that they should not write an opening paragraph which addresses in rather general terms the author, his or her works or the audience that he or she was addressing. Candidates should just answer the question rather than writing about the life and achievements of that author.

Candidates should select the question they choose to answer carefully and ensure that their material is relevant. Sometimes the material was tailored efficiently and relevantly to this session's questions, but at other times, there were resounding echoes of previous years' questions. There were hardly any scripts with any irrelevant responses, though in some cases candidates' responses showed lack of understanding of the focus of the question.

The best responses were those that were carefully planned (rough notes often show on the answer paper, although it is helpful if these are crossed through to avoid any misunderstanding) and which led to a clear conclusion. Candidates are advised to leave time to re-read, check, and edit their work.

It was seen in some scripts that the candidates started with questions from the top and wrote answers for every question on the question paper. This hindered their opportunity to develop their answers which meant they only wrote very briefly for each question and could not secure good marks. Candidates should answer only the required number of questions.

Comments on specific questions

Following the marking, these are the few issues highlighted that can help candidates to prepare better in future.

Question 1

- (a) (i) A large number of candidates attempted this question and secured good marks in both parts. Many candidates managed to address the focus of this question very well. This is a passage-based question, and all the answers **(part i)** should be given with reference to the extract mentioned in the question. Most candidates managed to answer part one very well. Those who answered part two in detail secured very good marks. In some scripts, a clear repetition of ideas/words and phrases was seen which could have avoided.
- (ii) Many candidates reproduced the explanation of the same couplets **(a)(i)** and did not concentrate on the focus of this section with reference to the whole 'Gazal'. the شاعری میں محبت کا رنگ نمایاں ہے۔ candidates who focused on the requirement secured better marks than those who just reproduced the information from **part (i)**.
- (b) This is an essay type question where candidates are asked to discuss their point of view about a statement highlighting the only ONE aspect of Galib's poetry with reference to the focus in the question. Some candidates attempted this question and secured relatively good marks if they had discussed the concept of, 'ترنم' but those who wrote a general essay on the poet could not score higher marks.

Question 2

- (a) (i) A very good number of candidates have attempted this question and performed well.
- Majority of candidates have secured better marks in both parts if they have given due attention to the focus of the **(ii)** developing their arguments on the focus highlighted in the given poem. The candidates who focused their responses only on the given extract did not score well.
- (ii) Some candidates focused on the required aspect of the response; however, a few candidates just reproduced the explanation of the same couplets **(a)(i)** and did not concentrate on the focus of this section with reference to the whole poem. The candidates who focused on the required aspect with reference to the whole 'Nazam' secured better marks. The candidates who understood the question demands and addressed (نظم میں موجودہ دور کے نوجوانوں کے لیے بھی ایک پیغام ہے) secured top band marks. Some candidates highlighted the universality of the message and managed to compare its relevance for the youngsters of the past and of the present era.
- (b) This question was the most popular in section one. Majority of candidates have explained well with regards to the demand of the فیض کی شاعری امید اور جدوجہد کا پیغام دیتی ہے۔ Whereas some only discussed poet's life experiences than being specific about the poems where he gives the message of hope and continued struggle whilst addressing the question. Those candidates who understood the question demands and stayed on the focus of the question secured top band marks. Like every year, there was a phrase (فیض کے اشعار کے حوالے سے) in the question, which did not limit candidates' scope to give references from the poems in their syllabus. However, most candidates elaborated on mainly the poems included in the syllabus in their answers.

Question 3

- (a) (i) Some candidates attempted this question. Majority of the candidates simply explained the extract from the poem. Only a tiny minority have addressed the focus of the question in their discussion in respect to the given poem.
- (ii) This was a specific aspect – منظر کشی کے فن کا مظاہرہ – of this poem as only few candidates understood that they only have to discuss the focus with reference to this poem only. Many candidates wrote about living conditions in India/Pakistan. There were very few attempts to answer this question with focus. The candidates who have attempted the question and analysed the poem in the light of the focus of the question, gained good marks.
- (b) There were hardly any candidates who attempted this question.

Question 4

- (a) A large number of candidates have attempted this question. The question has a negative statement of the 'depiction of realism in the novel'. The candidates were asked to make a stance either against or for the statement. Most candidate discussed the story and right from the beginning took a stance against the statement to show that it does show the reality (holds the mirror to the society).

Many candidates defended their stance with examples secured marks in the upper bands.

- (b) Many candidates attempted this question too. This was also a popular choice and many candidates picked two main characters اصغری اور اکبری – to show the importance of education. The candidates who compared both characters with reference to their education and how they led their lives to demonstrate benefits of education and its impact on real life secured top band marks.

Question 5

- (a) This was the fairly popular option in **section 2** most of those who attempted this question, secured good marks. The question was so open that any argument to justify the quotation in either way could be considered for awarding marks. Hardly any candidates struggled to discuss the demand of the question with focus/keywords (کس حد تک معاشرے کی صحیح تصویر) and secured good marks. In some instances, the candidates discussed the society in the 'past' and justified the incidents as they were timebound before the Indo Pak partition. Most candidates discussed its relevance in the modern society.

This was another popular option in **section 2** and many candidates have attempted this question and wrote detailed responses to this question and secured top band marks.

This question asked candidates to take a stance about the decision made by Khurshid Alam 'نور شید عالم کا لباس بیگم سے شادی کرنے کا فیصلہ درست تھا'

Many candidates argued and gave example to show that it was a right decision in the given circumstances and stayed within the focus of the question. These candidates secured top band marks.

Question 6

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse انارکلی شہزادہ سلیم کی محبت نہیں بلکہ وہ اس کی ضد تھی within the drama in the light of events. Those who understood the focus of this question and included their own opinions with reference to the text secured the top band marks but those who simply described the character or the story could not score high marks. Overall, most candidates stayed within the required focus and scored good marks.
- (b) Majority of the candidates who attempted this question secured good marks by analysing the king Akbar either as a brutal king (negative) or as a kind father (positive) character of the drama. This was done in the way to compare both aspects of his character which gave candidates good marks. Some candidates argued that his decision about Anarkali was a positive decision in relation to the state affairs whereas others saw this as a negative aspect of his character.