

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE Urdu (4UR0)
Paper 1

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General Comments

The paper was well balanced and provided ample opportunities for differentiation. The majority of candidates attempted the paper very well and scored good marks. In questions 1 and 2, the two unconnected passages for translation were interesting, informative and well within the level of this examination. As usual, Urdu to English translation was well attempted by the majority of candidates.

The English to Urdu translation did not show any significant improvement at all from previous years. Only some pieces of good English to Urdu translation were seen. For tasks such as letter writing, the majority of the candidates used fairly accurate language relevant to the task and gave a realistic and creative account of the event of their grandparents' celebratory event. Only a few candidates failed to do justice to this part of composition writing. Some candidates turned this event into a wedding function, which was inappropriate to the task required. In some cases, there was a lack of accurate and fluent language, not enough use of appropriate vocabulary and connectives. Adherence to the topic giving a realistic looking account with some flavour of creativeness was being sought for scoring high marks.

The translation passages in questions 2(b) and 3(a) appeared to be a little more demanding when compared to questions 2(a) and 3(b). This provided an overall balance in the paper for differentiation. There were some key words imbedded in the passages to allow further differentiation. The majority of candidates produced good pieces of translations, while some candidates continued to lose marks for poor spellings and for translating directions incorrectly.

In few cases, a tendency to use phonetic or Roman English was also seen, indicating that the candidates understood the text and knew how to translate it into Urdu, but struggled to write in Urdu correctly.

The best pieces of translations were those where proper translation was done for complete sentences within the context of the passage.

Question 1: Translating grammatical sentences

In this question, there were five sentences for English to Urdu translation. The section was well attempted by the majority of candidates. Those with good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary performed very well and achieved almost full marks. Many of candidates found sentences (a, c and e) difficult and lost one or two marks. The overall performance of candidates was not too bad.

- (a) This sentence was usually well attempted by most candidates. Some candidates struggled with *'now becoming'*.
- (b) In this sentence, a few candidates made a variety of guesses about the phrase *'unsure'*.
- (c) Many candidates translated the word *'or'* as *'and'*.
- (d) This was usually well attempted by most candidates. Only a few candidates struggled with *'delighted to see me back'*.
- (e) Most candidates found it tricky and struggled with phrase *'flew around the nest'*.

Question 2: Translation from Urdu to English

(a) This passage was about *'Healthy lifestyle'* and carried 15 marks. This question was the test of candidates' bilingual skills. The majority of candidates with good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary tackled the passage very well. They demonstrated their bilingual ability and scored good marks. A small number of candidates with poor bilingual skills found the passage challenging. Only a few candidates struggled to produce a good piece of translation. Many candidates continued to misinterpret certain key words and phrases within the text e.g. *'former'*; *'TV presenter'*; *'Anaemia'*; *'iron level'*; *'positive person'*; *'stressed'*; *'distracted and irritable'*; *'balancing work home life'*; *'a battle between ending to do list'*; *'my strength and my nerves'*. On the other hand, some candidates decided to use alternative translations for many of the above words and phrases and ended up with entirely different translation for parts of the passage. Ironically, some candidates decided to skip certain sentences from the translation where they felt they could not translate them properly, hence they ended up losing marks.

(b) This was a short passage about *'Increased recycling'* and carried 10 marks. The passage was a little more demanding than usual but very relevant to their daily life. Translations containing poor spellings, grammatically incorrect sentences ended up scoring low marks. Some words and phrases which proved challenging for many candidates were: *'waste paper'*; *'recycled'*; *'decreases'*; *'world's newspaper industry'*; *'fresh fibres'*; *'freshly felled trees'* and *'make a difference'*.

Question 3: Translations from Urdu to English

(a) This passage was about *'Increasing inflation'* and carried 15 marks. It was conveying a realistic picture of present day economic situation of most households. This passage was accessible by most candidates who managed to produce a good piece of translation. The words which caused difficulty in translating were *'amarat'*; *'tawazan'*; *'mutwassat tabqey'*; *'hunar'*; *'good jobs'*; *'scholarships'*. These words and phrases proved rather challenging for some candidates. There was also evidence of shallow reading before translating and glossing over certain words and phrases.

(b) This short passage was about *'Harry Potter theme park'* and carried 10 marks. It was slightly more demanding and candidates had to be a little more careful in translation. In many instances, candidates struggled with phrases like *'seyyahon'*; *'char million'*; *'azafa'*, *'mehngai key doar mein'*; to translate into English correctly and lost few marks. A number of candidates made basic errors in the spelling of common Urdu words.

Question 4: Essays or Letter

In this question, there was a choice of three essays and one letter based on a given stimulus; candidates were asked to write on any one of the given topics for essays or a letter. They were expected to either justify their opinion or choice within the essay topic; or write an interesting account of an event with a bit of creativity for the letter, in order to demonstrate their good language skills.

The majority of the candidates who had good vocabulary and language skills performed very well. They demonstrated their knowledge of the subject and tackled the topic very maturely. They

gave very good reasons to justify their arguments for or against in very convincing manner and were able to score good marks. A small number of candidates with poor vocabulary and language skills struggled to do well and scored less marks.

The first most popular topic was (d), writing a letter, *'Your two brothers live abroad. Write a letter to them, telling them all about your grandfather's golden wedding anniversary, which you attended'*. This provided some good reading from the work of many candidates, but some candidates described the event in an interesting account of their grandfather's Golden Wedding Anniversary celebration. This letter provided a test to check their target language writing skills. The majority of candidates performed very well and demonstrated good letter writing skills and achieved good marks both in content and quality of language.

The second most popular composition was (c) *'How can we make our area look more beautiful?'* This topic required a good account of the practical ways of ensuring that your area looks clean and beautiful. It was well attempted by candidates who came up with good reasoning on how to improve, housing, health, education and employment opportunities for the people to help them get better jobs. A few candidates lacked the flavour of a good and realistic argument and reasoning in their writing and appeared to be fulfilling more or less a formality.

The third most popular topic was (b) *'Should we cast our vote sensibly or emotionally?'* This topic provided some good and interesting reading with a good number of accounts describing reasons and experiences to ensure that you vote sensibly and elect good leaders. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing on this topic as it helped them to let off emotional steam.

The last choice was (a) *'Why are there no suitable job opportunities for the educated?'* This topic brought one or two good pieces of composition explaining the benefits of keeping away from bad friends. Many candidates lost marks due to too many grammatical mistakes in their written work, poor quality of language or lack of fluency in written language.

The ability to plan and present a balanced essay, with an introduction, argument/reasoning and a conclusion or opinion, as well as demonstrating a good command of the Urdu language and a coherent approach, was evident from the majority of essays.

It always helps to maintain a realistic, natural and systematic approach in writing an essay or a letter by avoiding confusion and loss of focus within a specified topic.

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