

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF PAKISTAN	
EXAMINERS' COMMENTS	
SUBJECT Functional English	SESSION Foundation Examination - Autumn 2013

General:

In spite of the observations by all the examiners that the Paper was rather easy, the performance did not measure up to the expectations. Questions which are designed to test the abilities to express ideas and thoughts in grammatically correct and coherent manner continue to pose difficulties for the students due to insufficient writing practice and limited vocabulary. In this paper, inadequate preparations and lack of knowledge of the basic principles of grammar were also apparent.

Comments on the replies to the individual questions are given below:

- Q.1 (a) In this question, the students were required to select the appropriate idioms from the given list and match them with the relevant sentences. Due to insufficient exposure to good reading material and lack of understanding of the inherent meaning of the idioms, quite a number of students resorted to guesswork. Idioms such as - draw the line, burn our boats, call a spade a spade - are widely used and students are expected to score high marks.
- (b) The performance in this question regarding replacing of the incorrect words was disappointing.
- (i) historical means a series of past events- the correct word is historic which means an event of great consequence or significance.
- (ii) medical refers to the field of knowledge relating to the discipline of medicine- correct choice is medicinal which signifies that the ingredients have curing properties.
- (iii) amount is usually used to quantify money matters and its use in the context of computer files is incorrect – should be number of files
- (iv) unsatisfied means a state in which the need(s)/desires still remains unfulfilled – the correct choice is dissatisfied which means that the individual is unhappy or disappointed with someone or with the state of affairs.
- (c) Limitations of vocabulary were apparent in this question. Meanings of the words charisma and impunity were stated correctly by a significant number of students. Guesswork in the matching of the remaining words was observed in most of the other replies.
- Q.2 Punctuations posed problems for many students. Besides lack of understanding of the principles of punctuations, there were numerous instances of carelessness like failure to place a full stop at the end of a sentence. Such lapses are indicative of a casual attitude.

In part (b) the inverted commas were not placed at the beginning and end of the direct quotes.

In part (c) an apostrophe is not required in the word theirs as it is a plural pronoun and does not bear a possessive connotation.

In part (d) after the word increase, a semi-colon should be inserted to separate two sentences which have a strong relationship with each other.

A good understanding of the rules of punctuation is essential not only for scoring marks in the examinations but also for developing good writing skills.

- Q.3 (a) The words bargain, exhibit and progress were required to be used as nouns and verbs in sentences. The performance was average as quite often, the students wrote the sentences correctly but did not mention the part of speech, in spite of specific instructions.
- (b) This question required changing of adjectives into nouns. Correct answers were stated by a good number of students. However, the nouns tenacity and provocation were misspelled in several replies.
- Q.4 (a) In this question regarding identification of Parts of Speech, which carried five marks, a large number of students were able to give the correct replies. However, in a few cases, the students were not able to differentiate between conjunctions and prepositions.
- (b) In this question, the students were required to insert the appropriate prepositions in the blanks in the sentences. Although the replies were generally correct, there was confusion in replies to parts (ii) and (iii) of the question.
- Q.5 (a) Majority of the students were able to identify correctly the parts of speech and scored 3-4 marks in this 5 mark question.
- (b) An overwhelming number of students were able to state the correct meanings of the grammatical terms and obtained full marks.
- Q.6 (a) The students were required to identify the correct tenses in the given sentences. In this question, which carried five marks, the replies were generally correct. However, in a number of cases, the students wrote more than one tense and therefore the answer was considered to be incorrect.
- (b) Questions pertaining to Direct and Indirect Speech are asked regularly in this paper. Students must, therefore, be well-prepared to respond to the questions on this topic. It is, however, observed that the students flounder frequently and write incorrect answers. It is essential that the students develop sound understanding of the basic concepts of changes in pronouns, tenses of verbs and adjectives due to conversions from direct to indirect speech and vice versa.

- Q.7 This question pertained to writing of a dialogue between two friends on the problems of unrestrained increase in the number of men, women and children seeking alms and charities on the streets of our cities. It was observed that the arguments offered by the students were generally not convincing, incoherent and lacked direction. Inadequate vocabulary, tense inconsistencies and grammatical errors all contributed to the rather unsatisfactory performance and loss of opportunity to score high marks.
- Q.8 This letter to a school class friend required expression of the right degree of warmth and cordiality mixed with some measure of restraint as the writer had not spoken to the President of Pearl Bank for the past 10 years. The format of the letter was not correct in several replies. The street address of Pearl Bank was not written with capital letters and the closing salutations of 'Yours faithfully' and 'Yours affectionately' were both inappropriate. Yours faithfully is not the appropriate salutation for an old friend, nor is Yours affectionately for a friend whom one has not met for the past 10 years. Yours truly and Yours sincerely are the recommended salutations. Incorrect construction of sentences and inadequate vocabulary were apparent in many answers. More dedicated efforts are required to improve the writing skills.
- Q.9 This question on comprehension and précis was important as it carried 15 vital marks and was designed to test the level of grasping and understanding abilities of the students by reading the given passage. In part (b) and (c) majority of the students were not able to discern between the correct and incorrect statements.
- A number of Précis of the passage missed the key points and only a few replies were written in one's own words in grammatically correct sentences. A number of students reproduced the words from the given passage. In spite of the explicit instructions that word count carries marks, a large number of students did not state the word count and consequently lost marks.
- Q.10 In the essay question, Measures to resolve the problem of load shedding and Menace of population explosion in the country were the popular topics among the students. The thread of poorly constructed sentences, grammatical errors and inappropriate punctuations were apparent in a large number of essays. Concerted efforts are essential to improve writing skills among the students. In the essay on measures to resolve the problem of load shedding some of the ideas were, indeed, really good, but could not carry the thrust due to inadequate vocabulary and lack of writing skills. Concerted efforts are essential for developing good writing skills. Instructions regarding word count were ignored by a large number of students.

(THE END)