

# CERTIFICATE IN BILINGUAL SKILLS 2008

## WRITTEN MARKERS' REPORTS

### ARABIC

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

In general, candidates have demonstrated a good grasp of the main concept of transferring the content of the source text into the target language and have also shown awareness in their translation of cultural differences, as well as the structural difference between the source and target language. Most candidates have performed satisfactorily in this task. One candidate demonstrated a high level of linguistic competency in both the translation and the writing of the letter. There was a good grasp of the Arabic language and the techniques of both writing and translation. Although there were a few minor issues relating to one candidate, the overall performance was satisfactory.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

Candidates should be made aware of the contextual use of the Arabic language. Arabic semantics is quite rich and a word can have a wide range of meaning depending on the context in which it is used. It was apparent from one of the papers that the student struggled with the use of some lexis in the appropriate context.

Focus on grammar and sentence structure. The agreement between the verb and subject remains the main grammatical matter.

Awareness of the role of cohesive devices and their functions in writing should be focused on. One of this year's candidates seemed unsure of the function of the connectors he/she used in the text.

Writing letters: focus on the main elements of writing Arabic letters, structure and phrases that are used for writing formal letters.

It appears that candidates are not well-trained on how to write formal letters. I suggest that additional contact hours should be allocated to this matter.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

Candidates should work on the use of dictionaries and on the use of words in different contexts.

Revise grammatical concepts such as verb-subject agreement; number-noun agreements.

Work on stylistic features. This could be done by focusing on cohesive devices, as well as constant reading of Arabic texts and literature.

Candidates should revise their work prior to submission. Some errors could have been avoided if candidates had checked their work before submission.

### CANTONESE

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

There was only a small number of candidates, some stronger than others.

Strengths were in good vocabulary and appropriate terms being used. Cohesive texts were delivered with clear and legible presentations for both tasks.

Weaknesses included omissions and errors (e.g. terms such as “valued”, “union”, “against the law”, “uniform”, “attend”, “minutes” were either translated inaccurately or omitted from the translated text (Task 4B). Errors with the usage of Chinese characters were also observed. This resulted in a lack of effectiveness as the importance of the message of the original text was not communicated to readers.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

1. Encourage candidates to use the correct and appropriate Chinese characters.
2. Encourage candidates to ensure the translated texts are comprehensive.
3. Encourage candidates to pay attention to the consistent usage of pronouns throughout the texts, not switching between you, they etc.
4. Encourage candidates to consider the intended purpose of their translated texts. Perhaps then they would pay more attention to delivering “effectiveness of communication”.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

1. Errors with the use of Chinese characters equated to inaccurate spelling. If not 100% sure, check first or use alternatives.
2. Try to provide your translated texts as fully and comprehensively as possible. Remember, your readers do not have the advantage of reading the original texts.
3. Try to picture that your translated texts will be read not just by the marker but could be used to communicate to many readers. Consider their effectiveness, style and presentation carefully.

### **ENGLISH TASKS (3A and 4A)**

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

The level of candidates was generally markedly higher this year than in some recent years, with only a very few weak scripts. Most candidates seemed well prepared for the examination.

#### **Task 3A Translation into English**

Candidates were required to translate a letter to a council housing department requesting rehousing for a couple. Most candidates found this task well within their ability and produced translations which were mostly quite adequate, and in some cases excellent.

#### **Grammar**

Errors were mostly non-impeding, in that they did not affect the understanding of the text. These included:

*Errors with articles*, especially from Polish candidates. This generally involved either omission of the article, or use of the wrong one: "I live in the council flat".

French candidates also made errors with articles, sometimes using the indefinite article with an uncountable noun which is countable in their L-1: "a treatment", "a cancer", "an employment".

For the same reason, uncountable nouns were sometimes made plural: "public transports".

#### *Tenses:*

The commonest tense error was the use of the present tense instead of the present perfect continuous tense: "My husband is not working since 6 months".

Russian candidates had problems with prepositional choice, e.g.: "treatment from cancer".

#### *Vocabulary*

Errors included various "false friends" e.g. from a French candidate: "our *revenues* are small" (= our income, *nos revenus*).

"Income" was also rendered as "*our earnings*" which did not match with the facts, as the writer and her husband are both

mentioned as being unemployed.

"Our combined income is £109 a week" was rendered as: "We both *earn* £109 a week" which was ambiguous, as it could have been assumed that the combined income was therefore £218 a week.

One Panjabi candidate used the Anglo-Indian word "*dacoities*" for "robberies" which would not be understood.

"Wait" and "expect" were confused: "I am expecting to be treated for cancer".

#### **4A Letter in English**

Candidates were required to write a letter to a hospital, complaining about poor treatment in a maternity unit. Most understood the requirements of the task, and produced well-written letters in an appropriate style.

##### *Stylistic errors:*

A few candidates inappropriately used the first name for addressing the recipient of the letter: "Dear Jonathan" or "Dear Mr Jonathan Brown".

##### *Vocabulary errors:*

"Birthing pool" was rendered as "deep utensil" or "bedding".

"Painkillers" was translated as "anaesthetics".

A potentially confusing "false friend" error from a French candidate was: "They would not let my sister assist at the birth" (French: "assister à"= be present at). The hospital staff member reading this would consider that it was unreasonable to expect the qualified medical staff to accept an unqualified family member to take over midwifery duties!

##### *Spelling:*

"I just had a body/bady in your hospital".

##### *Task fulfilment:*

Most candidates accurately expressed the substance of the complaint, though weaker ones merely listed the complaints, without making it clear what action was required (though that was, arguably, implied in many cases). The better candidates presented a more expanded version, highlighting the mismatch between what had been promised and what actually occurred, and rounding off the letter with a clear but polite summary of what action could now reasonably be expected from the recipient.

Some candidates added the following sentence, presumably learnt as an all-purpose handy letter-writing expression: "Should you require any further details, please don't hesitate to contact me" which sounded inappropriately ingratiating at the end of a strongly-worded letter of complaint.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

This year it seems that centres had been very thorough in their preparation of candidates, and had absorbed recommendations from previous years.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

Be aware of the grammatical and vocabulary errors characteristically made by learners who speak your first language. For example, French and Spanish speakers should routinely check terms which occur in French, and not assume that a similar-sounding cognate word which exists in English means the same thing (as in the two examples already mentioned, "assist" and "revenue"). Polish speakers and those of other Slavonic languages e.g. Slovak, Russian, should aim to master the use of articles, which do not exist in these languages.

## **FRENCH**

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

There were only five candidates for French this year. Overall, the performance was not as good as last year, especially in the letter writing task which was not completed satisfactorily by any candidates.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

### **1- Accuracy and appropriacy**

In the translation, the general meaning was mostly understood. However, many candidates made serious mistranslations or omissions. For example, one candidate omitted the title altogether, which meant that the reader did not know who wrote the report, who it was about and which course it related to.

Some mistranslations often occurred when staying too close to the original text or when doing "word-for-word" translation; for example, "English for Academic Purposes" became "Anglais pour raisons académiques" which is rather nonsensical in French.

On one occasion, there was some conflicting information which should have alerted the candidate and made him/her realise that there was a mistranslation somewhere: "foundation course" (in the title) and "undergraduate course" (which the student would go to if he/she passed the examination) were translated by the same expression, meaning that the student would progress to the course he was already on! This is the type of error which can be avoided just by using common sense.

Most candidates handled grammar, syntax and spelling fairly well, with errors kept to an acceptable level, except for one candidate who produced sometimes as many as eight technical mistakes per sentence. Some errors were made in the conjugation of verbs.

Also, one candidate had a tendency to summarise rather than translate what was said, so had to be penalised for it.

In the letter writing, some candidates misunderstood the information given in the brief. For example, one candidate thought that the employee would have to obtain a HGV licence rather than a forklift truck licence. One candidate omitted vital information like the date for a Health & Safety training day and the request of the employer regarding what the employee should wear at work; in a real life situation, this could have got an employee in deep trouble with his/her employer.

Several candidates did not master properly basic letter writing conventions, such as correct opening and closing statements. One candidate completely omitted the opening statement.

### **2- Cohesion, coherence and genre conventions**

There were a few mistakes there for some candidates; for example, there was conflicting information between the opening and closing statements, with one containing the name of a person and the other the name of another person when they should both refer to the recipient of the letter, then the signatory was the person mentioned in the opening statement.

The use of cohesive devices was generally correct, although occasionally placed incorrectly in the sentence.

### **3- Effectiveness of communication**

Most of the letters were not usable in a professional context, either because some vital information was missing or because of a major lack of coherence as in examples given above.

There were very few problems with the register used; however, one candidate used "ça" instead of "cela" (this/that) which should not be used in a report or a letter and is normally used in spoken French.

Presentation was generally ranging from acceptable to good.

## **Recommendations to Centres**

Candidates need to be taught what is expected in a translation and be aware that they cannot summarise the information conveyed; on the contrary they need to render it as faithfully as possible. They also need to learn some translation techniques.

For the letter writing task, being able to write correct opening and closing statements is a basic skill. Then, one needs to make sure that all of the information contained in the brief has been understood and is included in the letter.

### Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates need to manage their time well and save a short moment to check the translation/letter over to make sure that all the information is there and that everything makes sense. They must avoid "word-for-word" translation and try to figure out how they would word the idea in the target language; they can then check that the result corresponds to the original; this is a good way to ensure that the correct meaning is conveyed, it is then easy to adjust what is wrong.

## GUJARATI

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The performance of candidates compared to previous examination sessions is excellent. The group has shown a good grasp of both languages and the resulting material is of a very high quality.

### Recommendations to Centres

It is a real pleasure to see that previous recommendations have been implemented and the result is quite pleasing. Professionalism shows through in the work of candidates. To improve upon this, I would recommend the centres to instil in the candidates the necessity to recheck what has been written and eliminate minor errors like missing diacritic marks, punctuation and above all to reduce errors that are likely to affect the professional presentation of the work.

### Recommendations to Candidates

In an examination like this, candidates are required to carefully read the instructions and act upon them. Time-management is of utmost importance.

This link is vital for students: <http://www.gujaratilexicon.com/index.php?action=londonLaunch>

This site lists online papers: <http://gujarati.indiapress.info/>

This site gives yet more online papers: <http://www.gujaratis.org/html/gujarati-newspapers.htm>

This site hosts many newspapers: [www.samachar.com](http://www.samachar.com)

This site is for a Gujarati newspaper published from London: <http://epaper.gujarat-samachar.com/?gclid=CKjGo9CzvJQCFQRfugodtUYvUQ>

## ITALIAN

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The Italian entry this year showed similar weaknesses to last year's, such as the use of accents at the end of words ('puo' should have been 'può', 'perche' should have been 'perché', 'piu' should have been 'più', 'e', the third singular person of the present tense of the verb 'essere', should have been 'è'). The Italian texts suffered from interference from English as evidenced by a) spelling mistakes such as 'comunicato' which should have been 'comunicato', 'iscritto' which should have been 'iscritto', or 'arrangasse' which should have been 'arrangiasse'; and b) transliterations such as 'finalmente' to translate 'finally' ('per concludere' or 'infine' would have been appropriate) or 'molto valutato' ('very valued') which should have been translated with 'molto apprezzato'. A case of transliteration was the use of the verb 'bocciare' (to fail an exam) which in Italian is not a transitive verb as it is in English ('è stato bocciato all'esame' and not 'ha bocciato l'esame', as a candidate wrote). Unlike in last year's exam, there were not as many problems with agreements. In fact only two such problems were noted: 'intenzioni academicci' ('intenzioni accademiche') and 'Egregio Signora' ('Egregia Signora' or, better still, 'Gentile Signora'). There were also too many possessive adjectives used in Italian ('il suo cellulare', 'i suoi abiti') when, in reality, it is not necessary and sounds awkward.

### Recommendations to Centres

It is important to carry on working on Italian grammar and spelling rules as well as on fundamental translation skills as they are the basis of the Certificate.

### Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates are advised to keep focusing on Italian grammar and to work on avoiding transliterations (books like 'Bugs and Bugbears' would be of assistance here). They are also advised to manage their time more effectively and to have enough time to read their translation/letters before handing them in to avoid some avoidable mistakes such as accents.

## PANJABI

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The performance of candidates is very poor this year. Most of the candidates demonstrated poor translation and letter writing skills. Some of the candidates seemed to have no idea of how to write a letter, the style, register and required formality of the text. The original meaning of Task 4B was lost; some candidates expressed their own opinions rather than the manager's views and could not differentiate between EMPLOYEE'S and EMPLOYEES. The overall weakness seemed to lie in encoding the original text and the written skills. Far too many spelling and grammatical errors. Lack of terminology, understanding the text and written skills are the main weaknesses.

### Recommendations to Centres

Centres should encourage more letter writing and work on improving candidates' general written skills. Extra translation course work should be provided for candidates and particularly letter writing exercises. Perhaps candidates should be better informed about the structure of the exam and what is required of them. This year's group lacked an understanding of Task 4B completely. Centres should also make sure of the level of candidates' other language, ie they might be okay to speak the language but writing it seems to be a difficult task for so many. Candidates should be encouraged to use dictionaries but make sure they use the correct word for the context. Centres should have a higher standard for the candidates' written skills to enter for these exams. More mock exams would be useful which can prepare candidates for the real exams.

### Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates should take time to understand the text. Take extra care when writing Panjabi as missing or the wrong use of any vowel symbol can be a serious mistake. Practise more writing and try to read as many newspapers and magazines in your own language as possible. Always use the correct word for the context and take extra care about spelling and the right use of vowel symbols. Any English text or abbreviations should be translated or explained. Always recheck the translations.

## POLISH

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Please note that I cannot compare to last year as I have not been involved in CBS previously.

#### TASK 3B - Translation of tutor's report

Out of the cohort of candidates, only one had problems understanding the English source text fully and correctly. A huge majority rendered all information (although not always using the most appropriate register, style and terminology). Those who made distortions seemed to do so through lack of care/concentration rather than misunderstanding the source text, or perhaps they were unaware of the importance of accuracy.

What most of the candidates did have problems with was writing well and correctly in Polish. Very often the final text did not read as authentic or did not read well/correctly.

Following English syntax word-for-word was a common mistake. Specifically, sentences with the conjunction *however* were often translated using archaic conjunctions and curious grammatical structures. The English constructions with present participle (*to see him working*) also were generally not handled well.

Punctuation was remarkably bad. While a lack of a comma is not a serious mistake, a complete disregard for commas or inserting them in random places has to be reflected in awarded marks. Some candidates made serious spelling mistakes which should not happen to anybody with a flair for linguistics.

While the English terms *assignment*, *tutor*, *class* or *student* can refer to any stage in the educational system, in Polish there is specific vocabulary used in the Higher Education context. This is different from terminology used with reference to primary or secondary education. Given that a foundation course is an in-between stage, both variants would have been acceptable; however, some candidates mixed the two. *Student*, *wykładowca*, *zajęcia*, *koledzy z grupy* refer to a university; *uczeń*, *nauczyciel*, *zadanie domowe*, *lekcje*, *koledzy z klasy* refer to school. Mixing these terms impairs cohesion.

*Undergraduate course in business studies* was a troublesome expression to translate, as was *foundation course*. This was due to the specifics of the British system. Some candidates dealt with these really well; some translations were, however, not acceptable at all (e.g. "będzie mógł uczęszczać na kursy w Szkole Biznesu").

Names of courses are not capitalised in Polish.

It is very good practice, only demonstrated by a few candidates, to keep English proper names, or names of institutions, in brackets, following a translation.

#### TASK 4B - Letter

Candidates were asked to write a letter to a new employee of a supermarket on behalf of his/her manager. The letter was to cover several areas of concern.

Several candidates started by explaining "I have been asked by your manager to write this letter...". This was made even worse by then signing the letter with the manager's name → confusion of roles!

Some candidates produced really good letters, which, however, did not conform with instructions for this task (a lot of information omitted or a generic new-starter letter was produced, ignoring any issues relating to this particular individual).

Most candidates demonstrated familiarity with Polish letter writing conventions, including in terms of layout which differs from the English norm.

Overall, the letters were much better written than the translations for Task 3B. This shows that candidates need to concentrate on producing target language oriented, authentic texts – which proved difficult when concentrating on adhering closely to the English source text in Task 3B.

Many candidates left some information out – while it may be acceptable up to a certain level in this particular task, it is definitely good practice to get into a habit of ensuring that all details are conveyed.

Forklift truck *licence* is not correctly referred to as *licencja* in Polish – *uprawnienia* is more appropriate. English *training* is correctly rendered as *szkolenie*, not *trening*.

*Full-time* work seems to be perceived as synonymous with *permanent* work. Many candidates omitted either one or the other term.

Some candidates invented fictional names/addresses for the employee and the manager; others used the generic *Pan*, *Pani* or *Pan/Pani* form (*Sir*, *Madam*, or *Sir/Madam*). While any of these approaches are absolutely fine, consistency is needed. If a male name was used for the addressee, there is no need for using male-slash-female verbs and pronouns in the body of the letter. Similarly, some candidates gave a female name for the manageress, but then used male (or inconsistently mixed) verb forms in the narration. Obviously, changing from male to female at some stage in the letter is wrong. Finally, if *Pan/Pani* is used, also verbs and adjectives should have male-slash-female endings.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

Could the centres please remind candidates to write on one side only and leave a margin for markers annotations?

It was clear that the candidates were well prepared for letter-writing. The majority were familiar with the appropriate conventions.

Centres should highlight to candidates that writing well in their mother tongue is as important as understanding the foreign language. As mentioned above, most candidates had no problems whatsoever understanding English source texts; however, plenty of them failed on technicalities like grammatical weakness or appalling spelling. Additionally, the style of some of the candidates implies that they have not written essays in Polish since their school days. Candidates need to work on their writing skills if they wish to work with languages.

Please also stress the importance of accuracy. Candidates must be aware that one meaning-changing mistake could be fatal if it potentially leads the recipient to acting incorrectly. Many candidates seemed to take the source text quite light-heartedly, as long as they roughly conveyed the main points.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

Please remember that a good translation is not just about conveying the information – it also needs to read well in the target language. If you live in the UK and speak English in your everyday life, you should ensure that you regularly read quality texts in Polish to keep your Polish fresh and correct.

Please ensure that you follow the instructions for each task!

### **PORTUGUESE (EUROPEAN)**

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

As this was my first time marking the CBS exam, I have no basis for comparison with last year's candidates overall performance. However, this year's entry demonstrated a great lack of knowledge in terms of the general conventions of the target language. The written skills were very poor and need a great deal of improvement. The group was not able to respond reasonably to what was being requested, especially in Task 4B, when candidates were supposed to write a letter, proving to be unattainable. General rendering in both tasks was very weak and consistently inadequate. A lot of grammatical, syntactical and lexical mistakes were made. As a whole, the work produced was far from corresponding to a native speaker's level.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

Candidates should be taught some basic translation techniques and theory of translation to better understand the importance of achieving a coherent faithful text. Language tutoring (English and the other language) would be a solution to addressing most common weaknesses. They should be encouraged to do simple rephrasing exercises on both source and target language to get used to searching for alternatives and different vocabulary. Research enlarges the lexicon of the individual and it also exercises logical thinking.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

Being a native speaker of a language does not necessarily mean mastering the language or having good written skills. Practise manual writing as much as possible. Since computers have integrated software that will automatically correct your spelling, you won't be made aware of areas that need improvement. Reading in both languages (Source and Target Language) is most definitely another way of learning new vocabulary and assimilating writing techniques. Do not limit your reading to specific material on your chosen topics. I would also strongly advise candidates to revise grammar rules: tenses of verbs, gender, plural, syntactical constructions as these are important evaluation points.

### **RUSSIAN**

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

On the whole the Role Play Task was performed better than the other tasks. The main problems lay in the use of vocabulary, poor knowledge of grammar, the use of linking devices in the written task, keeping to the appropriate register and the overall lack of linguistic competence in both languages. In some cases the pronunciation was so unclear that it would have been difficult to know what was meant without the written text.

Candidates had difficulty in translating some fairly ordinary vocabulary. For example, 'push chair' was translated as 'little car', or 'meals' as 'dishes'. 'Trauma' became 'incident', which in this context would lead to ambiguity. Some phrases were translated too literally, as in the case of 'establish a routine'.

Lack of precision is another common fault. In Task 2B the depressed patient is advised to sit by the window if they 'can't face walking'. The candidate translated this as 'if you don't like walking' which distorted the meaning.

In the written tasks the main problems lay in candidates being unable to choose an appropriate linking device, as in translating 'however' in Task 3B. This was translated in three different ways, none of which were appropriate in the given context, being either simply incorrect, or belonging to a wrong register.

In Task 3B there was evidence of insufficient knowledge, or understanding, of the fact that a Foundation course allows the candidate to start a degree, and there was considerable confusion in the translation as a result.

In both of the written tasks there were problems with register, with candidates slipping into a much more colloquial way of expression than the task required, and often mixing the formal and the colloquial together.

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

It is important to remind candidates to be more precise in conveying the information. This is often confused by candidates with being literal, and translating the language rather than the meaning, which results in clumsiness. Clarity in the transfer of information is paramount.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

Speaking a language fluently sometimes gives one a slightly distorted idea of one's linguistic competence. It is important to read as many different texts as possible, of different style and complexity, paying particular attention not only to the vocabulary, but to how sentences are structured. There are few cases of direct correspondence in different languages, so make sure the word or expression, or a linking device you have chosen, is appropriate to the given context. Make sure the information has been transferred correctly, and there is sufficient clarity in the end result.

## **SLOVAK**

#### **Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

Three candidates entered for this language combination this year and the quality (or resulting translations) was quite variable. The strongest task was 3B for all candidates and the letter writing task (4B) caused most problems to all candidates. There were issues with conventions (appropriate formulaic language to begin and end a formal letter in Slovak was an issue, as well as the use of capital letters in *Vy*, *Váš* etc., names of the months written wrongly with capital letters).

#### **Recommendations to Centres**

More attention needs to be given to letter writing conventions (as above) and, very importantly, to grammar. Extensive technical faults let down all candidates in Task 4B. This included spelling (the correct use of *i/y* in our language is very important and gives a bad impression to the intended user when not understood correctly), use of diacritics (one candidate extrapolated the use of accents from a different Slavic language with serious consequences). Reading of Slovak newspapers, texts, etc. would greatly aid in this in addition to formal revision of grammatical rules.

#### **Recommendations to Candidates**

It is important to build your confidence and vocabulary in both languages by reading as much relevant text in both languages as possible. The web enables access to Slovak newspapers and TV news can also be very useful in building up vocabulary. Serious problems with spelling and/or the use of diacritics affected the performance of every candidate, particularly in Task 4. Incorrect choice of *i/y* in Slovak gives an impression of unprofessionalism, which I am sure you would not like to convey. *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu* can be very useful in checking the correct forms and reinforcing the grammatical rules of our language – a good investment for the future life of a bilingual worker. Finally, always read the translated text at the end of the task and check whether it reads as a native Slovak text (rather than a translation from English).

## SOMALI

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

This year the candidates were few in number. Some weaknesses arose from Task 4B (letter writing task). Candidates had difficulty producing a coherent letter from the points given relating to the issues, problems and suggested solutions.

### Recommendations to Centres

An introduction should be made by invigilators at the beginning of the exam. It is important that candidates are given a brief explanation of the structure of the exam. The atmosphere of the venue should be one which is free from noise such as fire alarm and disturbances. Candidates should feel relaxed and comfortable. Invigilators must ensure that everything is on the table before the exam begins.

### Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates should be aware that good handwriting, paragraphing and using appropriate punctuation marks are essential to their own success.

## SPANISH

### Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Task 3B: candidates had to translate a tutor's report on a student who failed his end of course examination.

Task 4B: candidates had to write a letter to a new employee on behalf of a supermarket Manager. The letter should inform the Spanish-speaking employee on the issues arising from his/her performance at the end of a trial period of employment. A detailed list of issues, problems and suggested solutions was included in the brief.

Most candidates satisfactorily completed Task 3B. Some candidates lost marks because of weaknesses in grammar and syntax, particularly regarding verb tense agreements, use of the subjunctive, misuse of prepositions or its omission after certain verbs; misuse of "ser" and "estar". English interference such as "Curso-estudiante", "curso examen" and literal, non-idiomatic translations were also frequent. English interference was also noted in the erroneous capitalisation of the names of months. In some scripts, cohesion was impaired by the use of incorrect pronouns. In others, the omission of proper connectives prevented a coherent reading. There were also instances of institutional and/or specific terms that were not adequately conveyed: *Foundation Course* as "Curso de Fundación"; *Business Studies* as "Estudios Financieros", both inaccurate. *English for academic purposes* as "Inglés para objetivos académicos" is equivocal; *Student support* as "Suportado por estudiantes", plainly wrong.

The completion of Task 4B was not so successful. Some students did not achieve the grade because they failed to understand that the letter needed in fact to convey to a specific employee his/her performance review and treated instead the content as general advice for all workers at the supermarket. One candidate produced just a translation of the examination brief and another a summary of general advice so succinct and impersonal that it was incoherent in parts. Candidates that did so were unable to produce a letter that would provide the specific intended reader with the necessary relevant information to act appropriately: on this account they could not be awarded a Pass.

Grammar and syntax faults were also present, particularly in verb tense and mood, and a tendency to use of the Passive Voice when in Spanish it is better avoided. Regarding terminology and general vocabulary, the translation of "fork lift" as "carretilla", i.e., *wheelbarrow* was at odds with the assumed background knowledge of the recipient, who knows a licence is not necessary to handle such a simple tool; *licence* was rendered as "licencia" instead of "permiso"; *tied back* conveyed as "retirar" = withdraw; *Union* as "unión" instead of "sindicato"; *tinned goods* translated as "productos de acero", *steel products*. The English verb "to realise" was wrongly translated as "estar de cuenta" in one of the scripts.

Conventions of genre were not always observed: excessively formal opening, such as "Muy señor mio" and at the same time informally addressing the recipient as "tú", using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular for pronouns and verbs is not acceptable. Most scripts failed to specify the matter of reference.

**Recommendations to Centres**

Candidates should be made aware of the format of this exam and be fully trained in the formalities and conventions of letter and report writing. All relevant elements of the brief should be conveyed to the intended reader so that he or she can act appropriately, but please ensure that candidates are reminded to write a letter and not to produce a translation of the brief. Centres should provide enough practice material to ensure familiarity with all the vocabulary areas covered by this test. Also they should be reasonably certain that the linguistic standard of the candidates is of the required level.

**Recommendations to Candidates**

Do not provide alternative translations for the same word or alternative tenses in the case of verbs. This is not acceptable and candidates using this practice are bound to lose marks. Dictionaries should be used wisely: looking for words is time consuming and the time to complete the tasks is limited. Besides, no dictionary is ever a substitute for sound background knowledge of all areas covered by the examination. Candidates need to show they are able to manipulate information and language: the letter is a composition and not a translation of the brief.

**URDU****Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group**

Given the small entry for the 2008 CBS Urdu examination it is not possible to assess overall performance. There was a tendency to use too many English words in both the Tasks 3B and 4B and this was penalised.

**Recommendations to Centres**

Centres are advised to alert the candidates not to use or transcribe too many English words in their Urdu translations.

**Recommendations to Candidates**

Candidates are advised to avoid using or transcribing English words when there are plenty of equivalent Urdu words available in the Urdu vocabulary. There is no harm in using those English words in Urdu tasks that have become part of the Urdu language. Also candidates are advised to read the instructions and the given text carefully when handling the task of letter writing.