



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Bengali

BENG2

(Specification 2635)

Unit 2: Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

This year's BENG2 examination was the second under the new specification, in which there have been some important changes, particularly in mark distribution. Marks for the first two sections, namely comprehension and translation, have increased and those for Section 3, which includes two essays, have decreased by 20 marks.

The total number of students this year was slightly higher than last year. The performance of the more able students was more or less similar to last year but the number of students at the lower end of the mark range increased and their performance was very disappointing, with many, unfortunately, not being adequately prepared.

There was a marked departure this year from the trend of answering non-literary questions rather than literary questions. More students chose to answer questions from literary topics. The non-literary topic, *Emergence of Bangladesh and Bengalis in Britain*, proved to be the most popular.

Bengali Cinema and Music was also very popular but many students who attempted the question on music wrote disappointing essays with little relevant content and hardly any reaction.

Where students answered literary questions on a novel or a play, most appeared to have relied on the film version of these texts. For example, for Sarat Chandra Chatterji's two novels *Devdas* and *Porinita*, they wrote answers based on the two films with the same name. This also happened in the case of Humayun Ahmed's popular novels.

Many students showed sound understanding of literary points and good command of the language and were well aware of most aspects of Bengali culture and society. Some students, however, seemed not to be aware of the fact that Bangladeshis do not solely constitute the Bengali speaking people. While preparing students, centres should put more emphasis on the heritage of the wider Bengal and its language and literature.

Although most students showed their linguistic ability, both in their extensive vocabulary and complex sentence structures, some were significantly influenced by the dialect of the Sylhet region of Bangladesh. They showed a lack of awareness of Bengali orthography. Highly influenced by this dialect, they very often confused aspirated with unaspirated sounds. Consequently, they wrote *k, g, ch, j, t, d, p* and *b* respectively in place of *kh, gh, chh, jh, th, dh, ph* and *bh*. They were also confused with *r* and *rh*, and the three Ss. Most students also wrote in a mixture of the *sadhu* (literary) and *chalit* (colloquial) styles. The influence of the Sylheti dialect was also evident in grammatical components such as verb endings. The use of a dialect, at this level, is unacceptable. Students should not only write in standard Bengali but they should also try to write in their own style. They should remember that more credit is given for Quality of Language, including the range of vocabulary, idioms and structures, than for Accuracy. Students who were able to show their linguistic ability were rewarded appropriately.

While about half of the students were able to show their ability to write a structured essay and to give a relevant answer, others were unable to write essays of an acceptable standard and gave irrelevant, inadequate answers. Students who showed maturity and originality in their answers were given the highest marks. Students should remember that an irrelevant answer will gain little or no credit. In previous years, there were a good number of students who infringed the rubrics and wrote more than two essays. This year there was an improvement in this area and the layout of the answer script clearly indicated that students should only write two essays. Although the rubrics clearly instructed students that they must write only one essay from each topic, one or two students were still confused and chose to

write both essays on the same topic and some wrote more than two essays. Students should be thoroughly prepared for the requirements of the examination.

Question 1

This question had three parts, the first one comprising short comprehension questions, the second one a multiple choice question on accurate understanding of the text and the third one on substituting words with synonyms. While the answers showed that students well understood the passage, many of them failed to give a relevant answer. A minority of students wrote extended answers with their personal observations and some, in spite of the warning to the contrary, copied chunks of text from the passage for their answers. Many students were unable to answer the third component of the question.

Question 2

This question required students to translate about 150 words from English to Bengali. Most students coped well with this question and understood the English passage but many found it hard to accurately transfer ideas from English to Bengali. A few words and phrases appeared to have been problematic for them. For example, most students failed to translate *economic migrant*, *There is now a large community of Bangladeshis living in Britain, who mostly migrated from Sylhet* and *The emergence of an independent Bangladesh facilitated this process of migration*. The Bengali word order also caused some confusion.

Questions 3(a) and 3(b)

These two questions tested knowledge of Bengali fiction - the first one relating to novels and the second one relating to short stories. Many students who chose to answer Question 3(a), comparing two novels written by the same novelist, chose works of Humayun Ahmed. However, they based their answers on the dramatised version of two novels rather than the written version. Some students chose to write about one novel rather than two. Students who chose Question 3(b) were confused about what 'short story' meant and did not distinguish between a novel and a short story. Some wrote about two events in their personal lives or tales they had heard from their parents, which could not be credited.

Questions 4(a) and 4(b)

The question on Bengali poetry attracted only a small number of students and they too wrote disappointing answers. On the contrary, Question 4(b) proved to be very popular, although many students were confused between plays and films. When centres prepare their students, they should explain the differences between playwrights, directors and actors.

Questions 5(a) and 5(b)

This year, the question on why Bengali women living in this country are mostly unhappy was answered by a dozen or so students. The alternative question on the *Struggle for Independence of Bangladesh and India's contribution* was far more popular, although most answers lacked depth and students seemed confused about the War of Independence and the Language Movement.

Questions 6(a) and 6(b)

As already mentioned, the topic *Bengali Cinema and Music* proved very popular. It was pleasing to note that the essays on plays were not just impressionistic, but contained a lot of information, although many students failed to distinguish between plays, films and television serials.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below:

UMS conversion calculator: www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.