



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

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 third under the new specification, in which there have been some important changes, particularly in mark distribution. Under this specification, marks for the first two sections, namely comprehension and translation, went up and those for Section 3, which includes two essays, went down by 20 marks. As a result, demands on students' writing ability is now slightly less than it was before.

From the performance of students, it became obvious that the proportion of mature students, educated partly or fully in Bangladesh or West Bengal, fell suddenly and significantly. On the other hand, the number of students educated in this country rose sharply. The number of total students this year was, however, slightly lower. In earlier years, mature students used to obtain very high marks resulting in pushing the percentage of A grade students up. That did not happen this year and performances by the top quarter of students were worse than those of last year. Surprisingly, the number of students in the bottom quarter also fell significantly. There was a handful of students who were extremely badly prepared.

The trend of answering non-literary questions instead of literary questions underwent a noticeable change. This year, more students chose to answer questions from literary topics. Even though students this year had first-hand knowledge of the country they were born and brought up, the non-literary topic, "Bengali newspapers in Britain," did not prove to be very popular. Even the question on music attracted only a tiny number of students. However, the question on a play based on the life of Bengalis in Britain, was very popular indeed.

Where students answered a literary question such as a novel or short stories, most students appeared to have relied heavily on the movie version of these texts. For example, for Sarat Chandra Chatterji's novels *Devdas*, they wrote answers based on the Hindi version of the movie with the same name [which was hardly a true reflection of the original novel].

A small number of mature students who were fully or partly educated in Bangladesh or West Bengal showed sound understanding of literary points and good command over language. They were also well aware of the spectrum of Bengali culture and society.

Even though most students showed their linguistic ability both in their extensive vocabulary and complex sentence structures, some of them were significantly influenced by the dialect of the Sylhet region of Bangladesh. They clearly 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 from such grammatical components as verb endings. It goes without saying that the use of a dialect at this level is unacceptable. Students should not only try to write what is traditionally known as "correct" Bengali, but they should also try to write in their own style. They should remember that more credit is given for the quality of language, including the range of vocabulary, idioms and structures, than just for accuracy. Students who were able to show their linguistic ability were awarded marks quite generously.

While about one third of the students were able to show their ability to write a structured essay and to answer to the point, the rest were unable to write essays of an acceptable standard and gave irrelevant as well as inadequate answers. Students who showed maturity and originality in their answers were naturally given the highest marks. Students should remember that an irrelevant answer is hardly worth writing as it would get little or no credit. In previous years there was a good number of students who violated the rubrics and wrote more than two essays. This

year there was an improvement in this area, perhaps because of the layout of the answer script, which clearly showed that students could only write two essays.

Question 1(a)

This had ten components altogether. Whereas the first four components were answered correctly by almost all students, the following four components proved to be harder and (v) and (v)i were considered to be the hardest by most students. Questions 1(b) and 1(c) were both correctly answered by most students. While the answers showed that students understood the passage well, many of them failed to answer concisely and to the point. In fact, a small number of students wrote extended answers with their original observations and some, in spite of the warning to the contrary, copied chunks of text from the passage for their answers.

Question 2

This required students to translate about 150 words from English to Bengali. Most students coped well with this question. As mature students have now better skills in English and the rest were either born or brought up in Britain, most students more or less 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, the first and the penultimate sentences were found to be difficult to answer.

Questions 3 (a) and (b)

These two questions were on Bengali fiction - the first one on any novel that the student liked and the second one on any striking character the student came across. The number of students who chose to answer Question 3(a) chose popular works by novelists such as Humayun Ahmed. However, they based their answers on the film version rather than the written version of these works. Disappointingly, a small number of students chose to write on short stories instead of a novel; and one even chose an English movie. Some students who chose 3B, were confused about what 'short story' meant and based their answers on stories they once heard from their parents or other relations.

Questions 4 (c) and (d)

The question on Bengali poetry attracted only a tiny number of students, and they too wrote poor answers. On the other hand, Question 4(b) proved to be very popular, although many students were confused between plays and cinemas. Apparently they were not aware of the playwrights and considered directors as such. While schools/colleges prepare their students, they should explain the differences between a playwright and a director and actors and actresses.

Questions 5 (a) and (b)

This year the question on the Independence Movement in East Bengal leading to the creation of an independent Bangladesh proved to be very popular, but most students concentrated on the Language Movement of the early 1950s and neglected the latter part of the Movement. The alternative question on Bengali periodicals, published in Britain, was answered by a small number of students. These students wrote more or less inadequate answers.

Questions 6 (a) and (b)

As already mentioned, the topic “Cinema and Music” proved very popular. Most students, however, answered the question of a well known movie director. These answers lacked both information and analysis. The question on music attracted a very small number of students. In previous years it used to prove quite popular.

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