



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Bengali 2636** *Specification*

**BENG2      Reading and Writing**

# **Report on the Examination** *2010 examination - June series*

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## General Comments

It was the first BENG2 exam under the new specification. There have been some important changes in mark allocations for the specification. Comprehension and translation marks have gone up, but essays now have 20 fewer marks.

From the performance of candidates, the proportion of mature candidates was much higher this year. This year these mature candidates not only had far higher abilities in Bengali, but they displayed a good grasp of English as well.

The trend of answering non-literary questions instead of questions from literary topics continued this year. As candidates have first-hand knowledge of the country they are living in, the non-literary topic, 'Bengalis in Britain', proved to be the most popular. Another topic that was equally popular was 'Cinema and Music'. Even where candidates answered literary questions most appeared to have relied on the movie version of texts, for example, for Rabindranath's *Nastoneer* they relied on Satyjit Ray's film *Charulata* and for Sarat Chatterji's *Devdas* or *Mejdidi* on the two films based on these two novels.

Mature candidates who were fully or partly educated in Bangladesh or West Bengal showed sound understanding of literary points and good command of language. They were also well aware of the spectrum of Bengali culture and society. On the other hand, some candidates, particularly those educated solely in Britain, appeared not even to be aware of the fact that Bangladeshis alone did not constitute the Bengali-speaking people. While preparing candidates, centres should place emphasis on the heritage of wider Bengal and its language and literature.

Even though most candidates 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 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 candidates 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. The use of a dialect at this level is unacceptable. Candidates 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 range of vocabulary, idioms and structures, than just for accuracy. Candidates who were able to show their linguistic ability were awarded high marks.

While most candidates were able to show their ability to write a structured essay and to answer the question set, some were unable to write essays of an acceptable standard and gave irrelevant as well as inadequate answers. Candidates who showed maturity and originality in their answers were naturally awarded the highest marks. Candidates should remember that an irrelevant answer gets little or no credit. In previous years there were a good number of candidates who ignored the rubrics and wrote more than two essays. This year there was an improvement in this area. However, a small number of candidates chose to write both essays from the same topic area, or wrote more than two essays.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

This question had three parts - the first one being short comprehension questions, the second one on accuracy and details, and the third one on substituting synonyms. While the answers showed that candidates well understood the passage, many of them failed to answer accurately. In fact, some 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. This was more common among the mature candidates than those educated in this country. Many candidates found the third component of the question challenging.

### Question 2

This question required candidates to translate about 150 words from English to Bengali. Most candidates coped well with this section. As mature candidates have now better skills in English and the rest were either born or brought up in Britain, they appeared to understand the passage, but many found it hard to transfer ideas from English to Bengali. A few words and phrases caused problems. For example, most candidates failed to translate 'the highest concentration of Bangladeshis', 'distant land of Bengal' and 'a centre of Bangladeshis'. The Bengali word order also caused some confusion.

### Questions 3(a) & 3(b)

These two questions were on Bengali fiction - the first one on novels and the second one on short stories. The number of candidates that chose to answer Question 3(a) – on comparing two novels written by the same novelist, chose Humayun Ahmed. However, they based their answers on the drama version of two novels rather than the written version. Some candidates just chose to write on one novel rather than two. Again many candidates relied on the film version of the novel rather than the texts.

### Questions 4(a) & 4(b)

The question on Bengali poetry attracted only a small number of candidates, and the quality of responses was low. On the contrary, Question 4(b) proved to be very popular, although many candidates were confused between plays and cinema. Apparently they were not aware of the playwrights and considered the director as such. When centres prepare their candidates, they should explain the differences between a playwright and a director and actors and actresses.

### Questions 5(a) & 5(b)

Question 5(a) was on aspects of the emergence of Bangladesh and Question 5b on Bengalis in Britain. Both questions proved quite popular. However, many candidates responded inadequately to Question 5(a) - as they failed to make it clear why even after Bengali was accepted as one of the state languages of Pakistan, Bengalis went on to form an independent country called Bangladesh. Answers to Question 5(b) were more relevant. A small number of candidates wrote good quality answers illustrating facts.

### **Questions 6(a) & 6(b)**

As already mentioned, the topic 'Cinema and Music' proved very popular. It was pleasing to note that the essays on cinemas were not just impressionistic, but contained a lot of information, although many candidates failed to distinguish between movies and TV serials.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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