



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Polish 1685** *Specification*

**PLSH1      Reading and Writing**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## General Comments

An increase in entries this year was again observed, especially at AS level. The number rose from 346 taking POL1 (old specification) and 638 candidates taking PLSH1 to 1330.

There was a wide range of ability among candidates. There were a number of well prepared candidates with excellent Polish who knew what was expected of them and who produced good quality papers. Most of them attended Polish Saturday school, or had some form of tuition and had studied the texts thoroughly. Some of them had an excellent command of Polish and some did not, but both groups knew the requirements of the exam and were well prepared.

There were many more candidates than last year, many of whom arrived in England some years ago. These candidates missed their schooling in Poland and have chosen not to practise their Polish since being in the U.K. Some of them thought that what knowledge they had brought with them from Poland would be sufficient for success in the exam. That was not so. Many of them did not study for the exam or even familiarise themselves with the specification. The result was that they did not do themselves justice in the examination. This was especially evident in PLSH2. The essays produced were lacking in factual knowledge, references to the texts read, proper analysis and evaluation.

There were many essays without any source references at all where the candidates simply tried to fill the empty lines and give the impression that they knew something about the text. What was written made it clear that the candidates had not read the texts.

Some stated right at the beginning of the essay that they had not watched Wajda's films, or said that they had not really understood them but would try to produce an essay nonetheless. More candidates than in the past left blank pages.

The lack of a serious approach was also evident in the free essay where some candidates wrote very short essays of very little merit.

There were many untidy, badly written scripts, which made scrutiny more difficult. A paper cannot be marked if it is barely legible.

It is of paramount importance that, prior to entering candidates for the A-level exam centre's make sure that their candidates read the specification and are aware of the exam's requirements.

## Section 1

### Comprehension

The PLSH 1 paper contains a comprehension with set questions based on the text, for which candidates may obtain a maximum of 30 marks and additional 5 marks for true/false/not in text questions. There are also 10 points for language. The maximum mark the candidate may obtain for section 1, therefore, is 45. Section 1 is not difficult if the technique involved is understood and it is appreciated what is expected.

Most of the candidates did very well, losing only about 5 or 6 marks in total. There were, however, some candidates who, because of carelessness, ignorance or simply because of their young age, did not do as well as they could have done, had they been better prepared and had they done some pre-exam practice. Their answers were not based on the text, but on their own opinion or knowledge of the subject discussed in the text.

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## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1(a) (i)

The following are examples of answers based not on the text but on the candidate's own opinion: *trzeba się pozbyć wad/ prowadzić spokojny tryb życia/będziesz mieć lepszą pamięć i nie będziesz się spóźniać.*

### Question 1(a)(ii)

*Jakie cechy są często powodem naszych sukcesów?* also produced inappropriate answers, such as: *Upartość w realizowaniu naszych planów/opanowanie, odwaga i pewność siebie/ cechy humoru, spóźniałstwo/melancholia:* rather difficult to imagine how that could help our success.

Some gave the answer expected in question 1(a) (i).

### Question 1(a)(iii)

*Zapanować nad naszym zachowaniem/ być zrelaksowanym.*

### Question 1(a)(iv)

Most candidates answered this question correctly, but some had their own ideas, for example: *zazwyczaj ludzie, którzy mają dużo na głowie i ich psychika nie wytrzymuje/ ludzie tacy jak aktorzy.*

### Question 1(a)(v)

This question produced correct answers. There was just one which was incorrect: *nieśmiałość.*

### Question 1(a) (vi)

Most answers were correct, but there were some more imaginative ones such as: *bo to źle wpływa na sprawy w pracy/ bo chcą mieć spokojne życie/ bo to prowadzi do frustracji/ bo się nie chcą bać.*

### Questions 1(a) (vii), (viii), (ix), (x) and (xi)

None of these questions caused any difficulty for most candidates but there were still some interesting answers, such as, for Question (vii): *Co lepiej przewidują neurotycy? - lepiej przewidują pogodę!*

Some candidates used materials intended for question (x) to answer question (ix), and vice versa. This was acceptable as long as the same information was not used twice.

### Question 1(a) (xii)

Here some candidates chose the wrong information: *to jest normalne starsze rodzeństwo jest zazdrosne o młodsze/lub gdy nie posiadamy czegoś co mają inni.*

### Questions 1(a) (xiii) and (xiv)

With reference to the above two questions, most answered very well, scoring full points.

## Question 1(a) (xv)

This year candidates' responses to this question were rather short. Because not many developed what they wrote, they often did not score full marks. Well prepared candidates knew that four pieces of information were required to score 4 marks and those who only gave one sentence in response usually lost one or two marks.

## Section 2

### Translation

In the past, students taking the AS examination have not always had the necessary English skills to execute the translation. This year a much lower proportion of candidates left the page blank. Most did at least attempt it in full, so in that sense there has been an improvement. There were still, however, fundamental errors showing a lack of knowledge of elementary English grammar, vocabulary and spelling. If students followed the basic rule of first reading through the text before beginning their translation, they would avoid many mistakes. For example, *pojazd* would not have been translated as 'car', if the passage had been read to the end before the translation was started.

There were some good and quite good translations where candidates generally managed to convey a satisfactory account in English, despite having difficulty with some vocabulary.

Below are some examples illustrating the above comments:

'Has build/ a cycles/ on making materials better, which were made of bikes/ the drive been seating two meters behind the ground.'

*Kierowca odpychał się od ziemi nogami*: 'pushing the ground with legs, you pushed the steering wheel away the ground, the driver pushed with their legs, the driver had to push away legs of the ground'.

*Dwa wieki dwóch kółek*: 'two periods of two circles'.

*Kierownica*: 'driving rounder, working mechanism, circle to change direction, drive circle, provider'.

*Pedały*: 'foot bars, place for the feet, two pushing things, blocks to speed up and slow down, stopping device, breaks'.

*Łańcuch* gave the widest range of translations: 'metal rope, special string, metal lace, necklace, leash'.

*Aryokratyczna młodzież*: 'son of the king, modern youth, posh teenagers, fashion teenagers'.

Many candidates did much better with the second paragraph than the first. It was surprising that candidates, who made mistakes in the first sentences, did not go back to rectify them after completing the text. Once they had realised that the text was about the bicycle, it was careless not to have edited out words such as 'remote' and 'car', which clearly do not have any association with the bicycle.

## Section 3

### Essay

The essays written this year made very interesting reading and were quite challenging to assess. The subject was emotive and personal to the individual. At times, candidates' answers appeared

less like essays and more like extracts from a diary. This topic, more than any other, gave a fascinating insight into the lives of the candidates who wrote them. A picture of isolation, frustration and loneliness emerged from many of them. Many students wrote very eloquently and sometimes movingly about the difficulty of adjusting to life in a new country before settling down and making the transition to a better and more stable life. Some were deeply sceptical about any such process of adjustment and considered they were destined to remain outsiders, no matter how much time should pass.

To quote examples: *Często siadałam na parapecie z kubkiem gorącej herbaty, patrzyłam naspyływające krople po szybie i myślałam o ciepłym i suchym lecie w Polsce.*

*Pierwsze dni w angielskiej szkole były jak piekło. Czulem się odrzucony od reszty nie wiedziałem gdzie iść, co ze sobą zrobić i co najgorsze czulem się samotny. Po jakimś czasie gdy się poduczylem angielskiego odkryłem, że większość uczniów nie lubi Polaków. Od tego momentu, czulem się krytykowany, nielubiany i stwierdziłem, że to miejsce nie jest dla mnie.*

Not everyone had a keen sense of their Polish identity. There were those, for whom Poland is just another country: *Dla mnie Polska to taki sam kraj jak i inne i nie ma dla mnie jakiegoś szczególnego znaczenia*, while for others, being or having been Polish is something they no longer think about. *Może jest we mnie 100% polskiej krwi, ale w sercu i w głowie jest Anglia nigdy to się nie zmienia.*

In spite of these occasional detached declarations, the overwhelming majority of candidates expressed a strong sense of affinity with their Polish roots. Of the many quality essays which were written, here is an extract from one, where a deeply patriotic sentiment prevailed strongly throughout: *Śmiało moge nazwać się patriotką. Uważam, że nią jestem, ponieważ kocham mój kraj i walczyłabym za niego, gdyby była taka potrzeba. Polska jest to mój dom ojczysty, do którego kiedyś wrócę a on będzie czekał na mnie z otwartymi ramionami. Odczuwam dużą więź z moim krajem, narodem, językiem i bez względu na to gdzie teraz przebywam, nie chciałabym tego stracić.*

There were also some humorous comments such as: *Polskość biega we krwi..Jestem patronką Polski...90% Polaków tresuje młodzież polską do spędzania wakacji w Polsce..Stoję na baczność, gdy słyszę hymn; mazurek Piłsudskiego.*

Equally good essays were produced by children born in England: *Dla mnie Polska to mój drugi dom. Nigdy nie mieszkałam tam na stałe, ale tam mieszka moja rodzina i z tamąd pochodzą moi rodzice. W moim domu obchodzi się polskie tradycje. To właśnie polska atmosfera w domu pomaga mi odczuwać moją polskość. Odczuwam swoją polskość jako dar....*

The final comment regarding this section concerns candidates who were less able to write on this topic. They produced short essays, just giving their life story without any analysis or personal opinion and thus not giving a clear answer to the question set. Prospective candidates should note that an A level paper requires some maturity and a serious approach. Numerous spelling mistakes in an essay without any structure or personal opinion will not secure a good grade on an A level paper.

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

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