

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Urdu (6UR01) Paper 1A

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Spoken Expression & Response

General

This is the third year in which candidates have been examined for this unit based upon the new GCE A/S level (8UR01) syllabus. There were approximately 900 entries.

It is pleasing to be able to report that the Examining Team has been able to mark a great majority of centres where the examination has been properly conducted.

There were only a very few centres where the conduct of the examination has jeopardised the performances of the candidates.

Experience informs us that when the tests are well conducted, the candidates score well, within their individual expertise; but if the tests are not properly conducted, the ability of the candidates concerned to maximise their potential is compromised. In such cases, the team of Examiners have had to deal with them and to concentrate on the job of trying giving a fair mark to the candidates' performances, with the proviso that candidates can only be judged upon the recorded evidence presented.

Format

Each candidate is given one of two written stimuli based on their chosen Topic Area. They are given 15 minutes to look at it and make notes and then the exam commences.

There were two stimuli for each of the four Topic Areas: "Lifestyle, Health & Fitness", "The World Around Us", "Youth Culture & Concerns" and "Education & Employment."

The candidates will have previously chosen one of these general topic areas earlier in their course and will, at least in theory, have studied it in some depth.

Part (i) 4 Set Questions

The Teacher/Examiner starts by asking 4 questions set by the board on the stimulus. These questions should NOT be rephrased.

The Teacher/Examiner starts by asking the four set questions. Where this has been done, most of the candidates can score 4 marks. The candidates are expected to respond, in depth where appropriate, basing their answers mainly on the stimulus text, although expanded responses will score well under the Response heading on the mark grid. This section should not take more than a minute or two.

Part (ii) Expanded discussion

In the second part, the Teacher/Examiner has to spend about 6-8 minutes using questions they have prepared to broaden out the discussion. There are two key points here:

- a) that the Teacher/Examiner has prepared a range of questions on that topic area and
- b) that candidates are able to respond at length and to the point to the Teacher/Examiners' questions on their chosen topic.

For the former, the Teacher/Examiner has normally spent time with their students discussing and working on their chosen Topic Areas. They should know what they are interested in and are able to talk about, and equally importantly, know their level of linguistic competence. For the latter, of key importance is the candidates' understanding of their particular Topic Area, which they are meant to have been studying in depth for a year. It is very gratifying to note that the great majority of Teacher/Examiners have done this more than adequately, and, in some cases, very skilfully.

Problems

The problems arose in the first part for some candidates because a few Teacher/Examiners did not ask these questions at all or, in some cases, did so in the middle of the test. There were cases where Teacher/Examiners read the stimulus out to the candidate and then asked 4 questions, and then did the same with another stimulus from a different topic area.

Teacher/Examiners have a responsibility to prepare themselves as well as their students. That means familiarising themselves with the requirements of the examination and to fully understand their role and the basic conduct procedures.

Unfortunately, a small number of centres sent in recordings that consisted of candidates answering only the four set questions on the stimulus and nothing else. The maximum mark they could achieve would be 20 out of 50. Centres are reminded that these four questions only form the first section of this examination.

Other problems arose in the second part where Teacher/Examiners had not appropriately prepared challenging questions for their candidates in order to allow them to demonstrate both their understanding of the Topic Area and their linguistic ability. Simplistic questions do not elicit extensive responses or require great understanding of the topic; neither do ones that do not broaden out the scope of the discussion.

In oral examinations, at both GCSE and GCE level there has been a long-term issue which merits some comment. While it is to be expected that candidates will practice talking about their chosen topics, this component of the examination is a discussion. It is **not a monologue** or a speech and should not be prepared or delivered as such. Candidates who did so were not able to score highly in the Response grid on the mark scheme.

Teacher/Examiners have a very hard job but they must prepare themselves as well as their students if they are to allow the candidate to achieve their full potential. By reading the Specification, using the Edexcel Website to find out more information, and preparing suitable questions for their candidates, they will be better able to conduct a successful Oral Examination. It must, however, be emphasised that the vast majority of Teacher/Examiners performed their task professionally and with great preparedness.

Materials for Centres

The main job of the Examining team is to assess and mark the candidates' performance and that is a job requiring intense concentration. When material arrives from centres with tapes that are un- or partially labelled, it is extremely time-consuming and wearisome to sort out unlabelled cassettes. When recording candidates, clearly state the candidate's name and number before starting each examination. While it is clearly unrealistic to expect only one candidate on each side of a tape, it is possible to use c60 cassettes that can comfortably fit two candidates on each side. The increasing use of CDs and USBs to record material is to be strongly encouraged.

Conclusion

Despite the problems mentioned above, which, it must be stressed, affected only a small minority of centres, the overwhelming majority of the tests were very well conducted by well prepared Teacher/Examiners with well prepared students. All the members of the examining team reported how well-prepared most of the centres were to undertake this examination under the new format. It is very pleasing to record another successful session of this new exam.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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