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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Urdu (5UR04)

Paper 4: Writing in Urdu.

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GCSE Urdu

Unit 4: Writing in Urdu

Examiners Report

The current Edexcel GCSE in Urdu Unit 5UR04 features controlled assessment writing tasks in Urdu. The assessment that accentuates on active use and manipulation of language represents 30% of the GCSE Full Course (Written Language) and 60% of the GCSE Short Course (Written Language) qualifications. It is an internally assessed but externally marked Unit and the prescribed themes for the unit are 'Sport and Leisure', 'Travel and Tourism' 'Media and Culture', and 'Business, Work and Employment'. Candidates are required to submit two pieces of work written under controlled conditions. For weaker candidates there is another option available, i.e. to complete two shorter tasks rather than a longer one, thus submitting four pieces of writing. These two/four pieces have to be produced in two one-hour assessment sessions. All candidates are asked to write 100+ words per task for grades F-C. Candidates who are aiming for grades C-A* will have to demonstrate extended writing skills while composing written assignments containing 200+ words per task. Candidates must complete each task individually, and following the preparation period (up to 6 hours) they have up to one hour to complete the task. Total number of marks for this unit is 60 (30 for each task) and are awarded for communication and content, knowledge and application of language and accuracy in the target language.

The two pieces of work have to differ in purpose and content as well as from the speaking assessments (Unit 2). Candidates may choose the same topics **for Unit Two (Speaking) and Unit Four (Writing)** as long as the purpose of the tasks are different e.g. if a candidate has spoken about his/her holidays to Pakistan under the prescribed theme of Travel and Tourism, he/she may be allowed to choose Travel and Tourism again for Unit 4 but he/she cannot write about the holidays for this unit. He/she may write a complaint letter to a hotel management instead, for example.

- **Tasks**

- Edexcel provides a new set of tasks every two years and there is an adequately large bank of tasks that already exists. Also, there is no time bar on selecting the previous tasks. The centres are also free to modify or even produce their own tasks in order to meet the different needs of their students more closely, however, it will be beneficial to make the new tasks in line with the already existing tasks and set them seeking the use of two tenses at the least for better grades. **Please remember that an inappropriate task stimulus will result in constraining or compromising the performance of the students and must be avoided.** Here, the teachers' guidance plays a crucial role in order to reach the maximum potential of a candidate.

The stimulus

It could just be a title, or it could include bullet points written either in English or in target language. Bullet points are expedient in order to instruct the candidates if they could or should respond to some or all of the points. .

It was noted during marking of students work that absence of bullet points in stimulus (title only option) and inclusion of too many bullet points per tasks both were not constructive to the candidates. Extraneous information required in the stimulus prevented students from gaining better grades. This was more obvious when the candidates used **centre-devised options** and attempted to produce a piece of writing without task and no bullet points. Here, the candidates wrote liberally without even sticking to the topic, for example, under the heading of '**My Town**' most of the work was about personal information e.g. appearance, family introduction with detailed information about their present achievements plus future inspirations, their own/siblings/parents education/employments, subjects, school, teachers, friends, school life and future planning concluding in one sentence about the name of the town. Teachers should note that this practice is self-penalising as it does not do justice with very capable students by not providing them with clear instructions on what to add in their assignments hence the practice proves to be self-penalising. The predicted disappointment and frustration of the candidate is comprehensible and the teachers are urged to be more wary and vigilant while submitting these tasks as such works indicate very lucidly that the candidates – for some reasons - have not availed the opportunity of the preparation period (up to 6 hours) pooled by teacher's guidance and consequently achieved very low grades. Such essays often lacked in opinion or justification and resulted in lower marks.

Comments on the submitted work

Overall, the candidates submitted a diverse and exciting range of written tasks which was fascinating as well as pleasant to read. In keeping with the previous years' traditions, both **Travel & Tourism** and **Media & Culture** topics attracted more candidates. Sport & Leisure and Business, Work & Employment, on the other hand, were attempted by comparative fewer candidates. In the light of the fact that fewer schools are sending the students for work experience recently, it is perceptible that students, lacking in first-hand experience, do not know what to write on this theme. The marks were awarded for communication and content, knowledge and application of language and accuracy in the target language. On the whole, the work was well-presented and comprehensive showing that many candidates were duly prepared for their written controlled assessment tasks.

Some main issues which were encountered will be highlighted as below:

Of course the centres are free to modify or even create their own tasks; however, it will be beneficial to make the new tasks in line with the already

existing tasks. Certain issues came forth while going through the centre-devised tasks for some of the candidates and for the future guidance they are highlighted as below:

- In some cases, the candidates were not given clear and sufficient bullet points to develop on their chosen topics. This in turn prevented those candidates from reaching their full potential and attaining top marks due to marking criteria.
- Conversely, some centres went to the other extreme and produced stimuli with 7-10 bullet points which are a bit too many. In such cases, the candidates were unable to demonstrate an ability to expand on their responses well enough to reach a higher grade mark. In a desperate effort to include all the bullet points the responses were dealt too superficially even by more able candidates and consequently the work did not go beyond a minimal response.
- Some candidates were provided with the tasks that required the answers only in one tense which does not allow the candidate to show an ability to manipulate language. The specifications is very clear on the use of a range of tenses, a wide range of vocabulary and structure alongside some attempt to use ambitious structures using object pronouns, subordinate clauses , negative and superlatives in order to aim for the top marks band.
- Some students from certain centres seemed to be working from themes that were used for coursework. At the same time some centres allowed the students to use same type of tasks for both assignments, e.g. two assignments on two **Famous Personalities**. This practice resulted in repetitive phrases in the essays, hence lower grades overall. The centres must ensure that the tasks cover all the Assessment Objectives outlined by the specification.

In some cases the students misinterpreted certain questions and despite being capable of writing excellent essays, could not reach to a higher band mark. In such cases, it was quite transparent that somehow the students did not get sufficient coaching during their task setting and preparation period. Edexcel recommends up to 6 hours of preparation time before the formal assessment takes place.

Legibility of the written work

This highly important issue had been raised in the previous year's report and has been hoisted by several examiners/markers once again. There is a considerate number of students who apparently submitted good pieces of work, however the handwriting has been illegible due to the minuscule size of written words. When the work was enlarged after photocopying and putting it on a computer, the size had to increase so much that it turned into misshaped dots hence completely unreadable. There is no doubt that these candidates are capable to join letters to form words and can compose a perfectly good narrative but it is pity to lose

marks merely due to the size of the written words being too small. Centres are advised to make sure that the students submit their work in a legible Urdu handwriting (slightly bigger size of words) as if the examiner is unable to read this type of work; he/she is unable to do justice while marking it. Also, in some cases the work was also written in *Nasakh* or *Shikasta* script. As Urdu is written in *Nast'liq* script it will be in the candidates' own advantage if they do some more writing practice and write their assignments as close as possible to the *Nast'aliq* in order to get better grades.

Awarding

Edexcel GCSE Urdu Specification 2009 is very explicit in stating that Unit 4 is 'a non-tiered unit since the final mark will be determined by the variety, appropriateness and complexity of language used and the length of the submitted tasks'. Hence, the length was also taken into account while awarding marks both for Content and Communication and for Knowledge and Application of Language.

To ensure access to the higher mark bands, candidates have to use a greater variety of more complex language. The writing response must show that candidate can spell, punctuate and use grammatical structures that are accurate and appropriate for the purpose. At the top end there were some candidates who produced excellent pieces with a good analysis using a range of tenses. Regrettably very few candidates did this successfully. Here, two areas were identified where the teachers can put some extra emphasis prior to preparing candidates for their written assignments.

1. Many candidates appeared to have trouble with gender and agreements.
2. A number of candidates had a poor concept of the post positions and the consequential declension of the nouns, pronouns and adjectives.

While instructing the students for the assessment teachers must keep in mind that in order to take candidates' work to the higher band for marking, there should be some evidence of using;

- Present participles
- Present subjunctive
- Past participles
- Past infinitives
- Variety of tenses
- Subordination
- Past infinitives
- Present participles
- Present subjunctive
- Adverbial phrases
- Conjunctions
- Comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs

CA4 Form

CA4 form is not a requirement; it is there to help candidates during the assessment. This form allows candidates to write up to 30 words in the target language or in English. It should be used by candidates as a plan in order to aid them while they work on their writing tasks. However, the students are not allowed to write full sentences on them. It was also noted that some candidates used the whole form with no word limit and then using the same phrases in their written tasks did not do any favour to them either. Full sentences lifted from the CA4 forms are not taken into consideration while awarding marks to this type of script.

CM4 Forms

CM4 stands for Candidate Mark Sheet and centres **must** check that all the relevant parts are duly filled in by the candidate as well as the teacher. Use of CA4 form must also be indicated in the 'Y/N' box on this form. Generally, the following concerns were noted with the CM4 forms.

- No candidate number on the form
- Wrong candidate name/number on the form
- No centre name on the form
- Missing candidate's/teacher's signatures
- Missing CM4 form

For administrative purpose Centres should make sure that the below items are attached with each candidate's work:

1. **Two tasks** and **stimuli** along with **two** essays
2. CA4 - Candidate Notes Form (optional)
3. CM4 – Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4(compulsory) all columns filled in and duly signed by the teacher and the candidate.

All the above required forms are available online in the document Administrative Support Guide 2016-17 (**Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessment - ICE**).

