Examiners' Report
GCE O Level Bangladesh Studies (7038)

June 2006

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BANGLADESH STUDIES 7038, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

Paper 1

General Comments
The standard set by candidates in previous sessions was maintained in this examination. In general, candidates displayed sound knowledge of many areas of the syllabus. However, some candidates appear to rely, to a great extent, on learnt responses, and seem to have memorised sections of the Student Study Guide. The answers were therefore reproduced, at times almost verbatim. Teachers and candidates should be aware that higher bands in the mark scheme cannot be achieved in this way. Candidates must focus on the precise demands of the question if they wish to receive higher grades.

The majority of candidates tackled questions 9, 10, 11 and 16. There was an impressive understanding of events surrounding the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, and the subsequent unrest that developed in East Bengal. Similarly, there was a clear understanding of the events leading to the outbreak of the War of Liberation in 1971. However, candidates need to consider the precise demands of the questioning in each case, rather than simply describing events. Explanation requires an understanding that some events are more significant than others. Understanding of the sequence of these events, and how they are linked together, are also required.

Question 16 was also very well answered. Candidates understood the importance of Tagore to Bengal and Bangladesh in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More able candidates were aware of Tagore's contribution, apart from literature. Greater focus on how his work helped to create a sense of national identity would also have led to higher marks.

It was encouraging to find good, well-informed answers to questions 2 and 3. Candidates were familiar with the contribution of Iliyas Shah to the creation of the Bengali Sultanate, but were less confident when writing about Jalauddin. There were also some sound answers on the development of Dhaka in the seventeenth century. However, candidates should note that answers to the first question in each section would be advised to make use of the three pieces of stimulus in their answers.

Teachers and candidates now have the benefit of papers from three sessions, and should have evidence of style and demands of possible questions. Greater attention to the precise focus of questions will allow candidates to produce answers of a higher standard and, consequently, to achieve higher grades.

Paper 2

Section A

Q.1, the compulsory question, seeks to test more general knowledge of Bangladesh. In (a)(iii) rather than responding with 'mangrove' as the correct answer, candidates cited crops, whilst in (v) the city (Bogra) was mis-identified. In (b)(iv) few candidates recognised the landslide hazard; most were content to mention floods or cyclones. In (c)(i) a significant number of candidates offered solar and hydro sources; this choice made for difficulties in (ii). It would have been much easier had they recognised the paramount importance of thermal (coal- & oil-burning) electricity.

Section B

There were two worrying traits in the attempted answers to Q2(a), namely the apparent inability to read the simple graphs and the failure to realise the significance of the monsoon in explaining monthly variations in rainfall. Part (b) proved too challenging, but in (c) most latched onto two reasons, namely the low-lying nature of Bangladesh and its high population densities.

A reasonable level of knowledge and understanding was shown in Q3(a). In (b) candidates relied on Figure 3 in their search for two human hazards. Few realised that there was an opportunity here to write about water and air pollution, or indeed traffic accidents. Some candidates failed to notice the switch between (b) and (c) from 'human' to 'natural' hazards, and wrote about the former.

Section C

Q.4 was much less popular than Q5. In (a)(i) there was a tendency to cite specific locations of high or low density rather than describe the general distribution pattern (occurrence) of each. There was much vagueness in (ii). The key terms in (b) were not known. Responses to (c) were more encouraging. It was noticeable that candidates tended to chose two similar migrations: for example, migrating overseas for work and migrating overseas for education.

Work in response to Q.5 was generally stronger. In (a)(i) it was not always understood that A = capital city. In (c) some potentially good material was not exploited because candidates were content to simply list (rather than examine) possible ways of reducing wealth.

Section D

The work was mainly secure in Q.6(a). In (b) few candidates were able to come up with more than 'saves on imports' and 'creates exports'. The link between raising agricultural productivity on the one hand and human health and well-being on the other was not grasped. In (c) the focus tended to be on just one aspect of the labour problem, namely the lack of skills training.

Q.7 was a popular choice. Part (a) was handled quite competently, except for (ii). Knowledge of the Green Revolution, as shown in (b), was distinctly thin, whilst in (c) there was some spurious thinking as to the disadvantages of irrigation.

BANGLADESH STUDIES 7038, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	57	48	40	35	24

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.