

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Urdu (6UR01)
Paper 1A

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Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Urdu

General:

This is the fifth 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 a positive sign of progress in this examination to report that the Examining Team has been able to mark the 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 affected the performances of the candidates.

When the tests are well conducted the candidates score well, within their individual expertise, but if the tests are not properly conducted, the candidates concerned cannot maximize their potential however linguistically able they may be. In such cases, the examiners' job is to try giving a fair mark to the candidates' performances, but of course candidates can only be judged upon the recorded evidence presented.

The 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 1

4 Set Questions

The Teacher/Examiner (T/E) 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 2

Expanded discussion

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

- that the T/E has prepared a range of questions on that topic area and
- that candidates are able to respond at length and to the point to the T/E's questions on their chosen topic.

For the former the T/E 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.

Performance

Most of the marking team report that the performance of candidates this year has been high, and certainly an improvement on previous years. Of course familiarity with the format has increased, as has expertise in both preparation for and conduct of the exam itself.

Stimuli

Since all stimuli are issued by the board the matter of popular choice does not come into it, but since more candidates have studied the Lifestyle Health and Fitness topic, the two stimuli on this topic are have been more frequently covered than the others.

Lifestyle Health & Fitness

Stimulus 1: was on the topic of cancer-sniffing-dogs. It was clearly accessible to most candidates and the text-based questions were well answered. The general questions on healthy living and the like were well answered, the quality of response dependent, of course, on the linguistic capability of the candidate.

Stimulus 2: was based on a text about the first Pakistani lady football coach. The text-based questions were well answered and the general questions produced some interesting discussions about gender issues in sport.

The world around us

Stimulus 1: was based on a popular children's show, "Sesame Street" being produced in Urdu in Pakistan. The general questions worked well to generate discussion on what was suitable for young children to be allowed to watch on TV. There was also interesting variety of types of shows they themselves watched. With the plethora of channels available on satellite, there is clearly a lot of choice!

Stimulus 2: was based on a text about emigration and its cultural effects, in this case about Afghans coming to Pakistan. In Q1 the phrases "*siasi halat*", 'political situation' clearly caused problems for some. The general questions produced interesting responses, and most of them were positive towards the arrival of many hundreds and thousands of Afghans in their country.

Youth Culture & Concerns

Stimulus 1: this was on the topic of Asian film music which is of great interest to most candidates, although there are a few who said they did not watch films. Here is where a good T/E will be able to use that response to ask questions on what the candidate does in their leisure time. One phrase on the text did seem to be tricky for many candidates, namely - *Dehi elaqe* rural areas.

Stimulus 2: this was about security cameras and was well done by most candidates. There were plenty of interesting opinions expressed about this use of technology! The question in 2B, about mobile phones generated a range of very interesting discussions, with all sorts of opinions expressed.

Education & Employment

Stimulus 1: this was on the topic of Exam Results, in particular the gender difference between boys and girls. Questions on co-education produced some excellent discussions. This is, of course, a topic of particular interest to the Urdu speaking community. The question on holidays too, produced a wide range of opinions.

Stimulus 2: was on the topic of learning Chinese in Pakistan.

In general I felt that all the stimulus texts and their associated questions were successful in that they generated a wide range of responses and discussions which enabled the candidates to demonstrate their linguistic capabilities.

Issues

In general as long as candidates were able to read Urdu to a reasonable standard there were few problems of comprehension of the initial text and text-based questions. Although there are some whose reading skills are not really up to A/S standard, and who therefore did not seem to fully understand the text.

The problems arose in the first part for some candidates because a few T/Es did not ask these questions at all or, in some cases, in the middle of the test. One T/E 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 doing their homework and finding out what they are required to do in the test!

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. It seems hard to comprehend that a teacher-examiner could consider 4 questions on a text to be a complete A/S level examination component!

Other problems arose in the second part where T/Es had not prepared appropriately 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.

The other aspect of this is T/Es asking questions which are not in the stated Topic Area chosen by the candidates. This may be related to the fact that the general discussion is almost pre-prepared by the centre, whatever topic area the initial stimulus may be in.

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 conversations with their teachers and their fellow students about their chosen topics, this component of the examination is meant to be a two-way dialogue. 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 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 more successful Oral Examination.

It must, however, be emphasized that the vast majority of Teacher Examiners performed their task professionally and with great preparedness.

Organization of Material in Centres

The main job of the Assessment team is to assess and mark the candidates' performance and that is a job requiring intense concentration. There are two factors which affect this:

1. Paperwork:

When they have to contact centres because the correct forms have not been sent or more frequently not signed by the candidate and the teacher. Many centres used the old Oral Form which does not have the boxes for signatures. The team had a set of blank forms to use in instances where centres sent no forms at all.

2. Recordings:

When material arrives from centres with tapes that are un-labeled or partially labeled, it is time-consuming to chase centres and may delay marking of candidates' work. When you start the recording and before you start the examination, please state candidate's name and number clearly. This must be done for all candidates. CDs and USBs are highly recommended, but it is very important that teacher examiners check them before sending them off, as sometimes empty or unplayable CDs have had to be returned. Please refer to the Conduct Of Oral Exam Guidance on Edexcel's website for detailed information.

Centres are reminded of the Edexcel Notice to Centres on the website to inform them that **audio cassettes will no longer be accepted for assessment after September 2014.**

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 my examining team reported how well prepared most of the centres were to undertake this new examination format. It is very pleasing to record another successful session of this new exam.

Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 7 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Quality of Language – Accuracy'
- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis'
- 'Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they should be given 5, if they would have scored 6, they should be given 4. This will not affect the other assessment criteria 'Understanding – Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding – General Topic Area'.

Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial stimulus sub topic

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score.

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' – limited to a maximum of 3 marks
- 'Response' – limited to a maximum of 8 marks
- 'Understanding - General topic area' – cannot score more than 0

Tests that are pre-learnt

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score.

- 'Response' - limited to a maximum of 8 marks

Please note:

Understanding – Stimulus specific should only be used to mark **Section A** of the oral test.

Understanding – General topic area should only be used to mark **Section B** of the oral test

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwant to/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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