



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Urdu (6UR01) Paper 1A

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General

There was further reduction in the student numbers this year, reflecting a steady decline over the last five years or so. Once again, the standard of performance has slightly increased, probably reflecting the increased familiarity of the format.

Standardisation

The assessment team was the same as in the previous several years and were all highly experienced professionals. The only tricky issue raised at standardisation related to length of response in section 1. The first two questions require very short responses, while Q3 and Q4 are slightly longer, their length being determined by subject knowledge and the linguistic capacity of the student. The handbook states the first part of the test should be about two minutes but most students complete this section in less than a minute. As long as the questions are responded to, no difficulty arises unless the overall time of the test fails to reach the required length.

Comments on Individual Questions:

There were, as usual 4 Topic areas with four stimulus cards provided for each topic area. The choice of topic is determined by the student at the start of their course, while the choice of stimulus card is determined by the board from a list.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness

Stimulus Card 1 was a passage on the link between people's choice of music and their intelligence. The first two questions, common to both cards A and B directly concerned with the particular stimulus were in the most part well answered. The third and fourth questions in each card were broader based ones relating to the general topic area. Most students were able to respond at length to these questions.

Stimulus Card 2 related to the effect of social media on young people. The general questions were designed to provide students to talk at length about their chosen topic and then the examiner could broaden out the discussion. Very few students were unable to maintain a conversation for the required eight minutes or so.

Youth Culture & Concerns

The topic for Card 1A and 1B was about smoking in public places. The first two questions, being directly text based were straightforward and very few problems were reported. On both cards, the general questions on this related to the laws about smoking and advice to parents about smoking in cars while travelling with children.

Stimulus Cards 2A and 2B were based on a passage about diabetes in UK. It was well received. However, Q4 in card 2b was difficult to answer by many students.

The World Around Us

Stimulus Card 1A and 1B was based on a passage about fastest journey from London to New York by aeroplane. The direct questions were straightforward and only proved tricky for those few students whose reading skills were not really up to the required level for this examination. Q4 on 1A was not so well answered by some students. It was about the advantages of travelling to foreign countries.

Stimulus Cards 2A and 2B were based on a passage about new method of water treatment. The first two text-based questions were straightforward for nearly every student. Q3 and Q4 on Card 2A, related to student's opinion about taking care of the environment, appeared to cause no problems. Q4 on Card 2B, however, produced a wide variety of responses concerning the facilities to keep your local area clean

Education & Employment

The passage on Cards 1A and 1B was about the importance of reading books for students. There were no notable problems for students here. Neither were there for the further questions on either card. In Card 1A students were able to discuss the importance of reading books during holidays.

The second stimulus was based on an innovative way of getting admission in universities, which again is directly relevant to the students' own experience. Q1 and Q2 were very straightforward. The more general questions on both cards were also relevant and were well answered by most students.

Part 2 General discussion

This part of the examination is heavily dependent on
a: the ability of the teacher-examiner to prepare suitably testing questions on the topic,
and b: to respond flexibly to the students' responses, thus trying to maintain a naturalistic discussion rather than a list of stilted disconnected questions.

(There were a very small number of centres where the teacher-examiner asked only the first four questions from the stimulus and ended the test without any further discussion. Such students could score a maximum of only twenty marks.)

Many teacher examiners do this job very conscientiously and respond to their students' answers with appropriate questions. It is only when the questions are too rigid that the students' performance can be compromised. Some questioning does seem to me more appropriate for a GCSE level student and does not provide the student with the scope to demonstrate the full range of their linguistic ability, which is in many cases well above the standard required at A/S Level.

Conclusion

The overall level of performance is extremely high this year as students and teachers become more familiar with the format. As long as the test is conducted correctly most students are achieving extremely high marks.

Administrative Matters

As usual, the centres' ability, or otherwise, to complete and send the correct paperwork is one of the major grumbles of the examining team. The time spent chasing up the right documents, or getting signatures on the Oral Forms is extremely frustrating. Contacting centres is not easy and getting to speak to the examinations officer can be very time-consuming. Many centres are still using the old Oral Form but, for the sake of saving time and trouble, as long as there is a signature they were accepted. A more awkward issue is non-functioning CDs. We are aware of the many different formats of CDs that can be produced and that one of the main difficulties is producing CDs that work on the machine in which they were recorded and thus, when tested by the centres, work perfectly but have not been finalised properly for use in other machines. This examiner has three different computers, two Audio CD players and a CD player in the car so if something does not work on any of them there is usually something wrong with the CD at source level. I would prefer to see the greater use of USB drives. Overall they are more reliable and less likely to be inappropriately formatted.

Finally, would like to express my appreciation for the work of the examining team and of our Subject Leader Rachel Edge who has supported us very ably.

