

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCE
in Urdu (6UR0/01) Paper 1

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6UR01/01 Examiner's report 2014

General:

This unit of the GCE A/S level (8UR01) syllabus is now well established. The increased familiarity of the component has led to an on-going reduction of problems arising from inadequately prepared candidates and centres where the Teacher/Examiners have been unfamiliar with the procedures of conducting the test.

When the tests are well conducted the vast majority of the candidates have scored well, within their individual expertise, but if the tests are not properly conducted, candidates cannot reach their potential however linguistically able they may be. In such cases, the examiners' job is to try giving a fair mark to the candidates' performance, but of course candidates can only be judged upon the recorded evidence presented. Overall, it is fair to state that increased familiarity with this examination has resulted to increased level of performance by most centres.

The Format

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

There were four stimuli for each of the four Topic Areas: "Lifestyle, Health & Fitness", "The World Around Us", "Youth Culture & Concerns" and "Education & Employment." The candidates need to previously choose one of these general topic areas earlier in their course and study it in some depth.

Part 1. 4 Set Questions

The Teacher/Examiner starts by asking 4 questions set by the board on the stimulus. The key point about these questions is that they **MUST NOT** be rephrased. If they are, the candidate cannot be awarded marks for their responses to them.

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:

- a: that the T/E 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 T/E's questions on their chosen topic.

For the former, the T/E needs to discuss and work on the candidates' chosen topic areas. They should take into consideration what the candidates' are interested in and are able to talk about and their level of linguistic competence.

For the latter, the candidates' understanding of their particular topic area is of key importance, which they are meant to study in depth for a year.

Performance

The marking team reported that the standard of performance of most of the candidates that they have examined 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 and conduct of the exam itself.

Stimulus Cards

Since all stimuli are issued by the board the matter of popular choice does not come into it, but since more candidates have chosen to study the Lifestyle Health and Fitness topic, the four stimulus cards on this topic have been more frequently covered than the others. It is therefore appropriate to start with that topic area.

Lifestyle Health & Fitness

Stimulus 1

The text was about working late in the office. The text-based questions were well answered. The general questions on healthy living were, as usual, well answered. The quality of response depends on the linguistic capability of the candidate. It worths mentioning that discussion on diet did show some candidates' ignorance of proteins, carbohydrates, etc. Candidates are expected to have done some in-depth study of their chosen topic, and knowing that eggs, butter and meat are protein rich foods is a basic requirement of that topic.

Stimulus 2

The text was based on the health benefits of being beside the sea. The text-based questions were well answered and the general questions produced some interesting discussions about the relative benefits and disadvantages of urban and rural life.

The world Around Us

Stimulus 1

This was a topic about Monday being unjustly considered the worst day of the week. The text specific questions caused very few problems. The general questions worked well to generate discussion on the benefits of tourism to foreign countries.

Stimulus 2

The text was on the new uses of mobile phones as a means of transferring money. This was a very relevant text and was well understood by the majority of candidates, most of whom who could discuss the effects of new technology extensively.

Youth Culture & Concerns

Stimulus 1

This topic focused on the importance of music which is of great interest to most candidates, although there were a few candidates who said they did not listen to music on religious grounds. 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.

Stimulus 2

This was about a rural school in Pakistan that has produced many international class hockey players and was well introduced by most candidates. There were plenty of interesting opinions expressed about having to play sports. The question in stimulus card 2B, expressing opinions on the past Olympics was a bit difficult for some candidates.

Education & Employment

Stimulus 1

This was on the topic of Work Experience and particularly the use of 'free' labour by companies. Questions on this topic produced some excellent discussions. This is, of course, a topic which had received quite a lot of media interest recently. A question on fees was particularly well answered because it is a very important issue amongst young people today.

Stimulus 2

The topic was focusing on 'Success in exams' in which the importance of drinking water was emphasized. It was a straightforward text and was well understood by most candidates. The other questions covered revision, the desirability of university degrees, which are very relevant to students.

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

Points worth considering

In general, as long as a candidate is 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 an A/S standard, and who therefore did not seem to fully understand the text.

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.

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 nor 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 when T/Es ask 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 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 prepared to conduct a successful Oral Examination.

It must, however, be emphasized that the vast majority of Teacher Examiners performed their task professionally and were well prepared.

Organisation of Material in Centres

The main job of the examining 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

There are instances where the examiner has 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 not or partially labelled, and it is extremely time-consuming to sort out unlabelled cassettes. When recording, teacher examiners clearly need to state the candidate's name and number before starting each examination. CDs and USBs are highly recommended, but it is very important that teacher examiners check them before sending them off, as sometimes empty or faulty CDs have had to be returned.

Conclusion

Despite the problems mentioned above, it is important to mention that only a small minority of centres got affected. 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 new examination format. It is very pleasing to record another successful session of this new exam.

<p>NB: Please note that following notification on the qualification page of the Pearson/Edexcel website, and via the updates from the Subject Advisor, Mr Alistair Drewery, we will no longer be accepting audio cassettes for assessment from September 2014 onwards.</p>
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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 (this includes 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 for Accuracy, they should be given 5, if they would have scored 6, they should be given 4. A similar adjustment should be made for Range and for Response. 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/sense group.

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

Spontaneity/Response

If a test appears to lack spontaneity in large part to the extent that significant sections *appear to have been pre-learnt*, the mark for **Response** will be limited to a maximum of 8 marks. It may be that intonation is also impaired; however, poor intonation would not, on its own, suggest pre-learning.

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

When marking the oral exam, examiners are advised to immediately allocate a mark for Section A, prior to allocating marks for the rest of the test (Section B).

It is important that the PE and team leaders can see clearly the justification for marks awarded and examiners should note briefly on the OR1 form the reason for any caps which are applied in marking an oral test.

If a score of '0' is awarded for any of the assessment grids, the oral recording should be referred to your Team Leader.

Grade Boundaries

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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