

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCSE in Urdu
(5UR04/01)
Paper 4: Writing in Urdu

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GCSE Urdu
Unit 4: Writing
Examiner Report

General Comments

Unit 4 is an internally assessed but externally marked unit that accentuates on active use and manipulation of language. 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.

Candidates are required to submit two pieces of work written under controlled conditions. All candidates are asked to write at least 100 words per task for grades F-C. Candidates who are aiming for grades C-A* will have to demonstrate extended writing skills producing 200+ words per task.

The prescribed themes for the unit are 'Sport and Leisure', 'Travel and Tourism', 'Media and Culture', and 'Business, Work and Employment'. Centre devised options are also available for the students as well as teachers in order for them to adapt the tasks according to the suitability and abilities of the candidates. Here, the teachers' guidance plays a crucial role in order to reach the maximum potential. The candidates must complete each task individually and, following the preparation period (of up to 6 hours), they have up to one hour to complete the task.

Centres are free to either use stimulus material published by Pearson Edexcel, or devise their own. The two pieces have to differ in purpose, content and from the speaking assessments (Unit 2). The stimulus could just be a title, or it could include bullet points written either in English or in target language. Bullet points are usually given in order to instruct the candidates if they could or should respond to some or all of the points.

Pearson 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. 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 assessment sessions.

Range and Suitability of topics/tasks

'Sport & Leisure' and 'Travel and Tourism' were the topics well received by candidates and there were some very coherent, interesting and engaging pieces of writing submitted. It was gratifying to note that a good number of candidates submitted work that was comprehensive, cohesive and well structured.

Somehow students found 'Business, Work and Employment' very daunting since very few candidates attempted this theme while 'Media and Culture' was also attempted by fewer candidates.

It is pleasing to note that most centres have now been applying the new specification since 2009 and having embraced the opportunities that it offers,

they have adjusted well to its demands. Most centres complied with the requirements and consequently their candidates produced qualitative and appropriate work and coping well with the demands of this unit secured good grades. Candidates, in general, had been well prepared by centres for this component.

Suitability of tasks

Teachers have a choice to adapt the existing tasks or produce their own. In this case an essay title supported by open-ended bullets could be a suitable task.

As the specification requires students to communicate in writing for a variety of purpose, teachers must ensure that the formal assessments used enable students to demonstrate their ability to use language for different purposes.

Although there is no upper limit, the centres must keep in mind the fact that it is the quality not the quantity that matters once the minimum target is met (i.e. 200 words).

Unfortunately, some centres - only a small minority - still seem to be unaware of the basic requirements of the assessment criteria. As a direct result the following points were highlighted where the candidates were unable to reach their maximum potential:

- a) Incomplete tasks were submitted.
- b) From the disparity in the quality of two pieces of work submitted by the same candidate it was rightly construed that one piece had been written earlier, while the other piece had been attempted later. In such cases, when the candidate had done better after practising the language for some time, for the benefit of the candidates the centres should defer taking up the control assessments towards the end of the course. Centres must remember that the students are allowed to undertake more than two controlled writing assessments and then the best out of them may be submitted to Pearson Edexcel for marking. As such, the centres will be able to secure better grades for their candidates.
- c) Only one task was submitted while the candidate was clearly capable of writing well for the examination purpose.
- d) Extraneously composed information prevented students from gaining better grades. This was more obvious when the candidates used centre-devised options and attempted to produce pieces of writing without task and no bullet points. Here, the candidate wrote liberally without sticking to the topic for example under the heading of 'My Town' three out of four paragraphs were on personal appearance, family introduction, education and finally the town was introduced in approximately twenty words. Such works indicate very lucidly that the candidates – for some reasons have not availed the opportunity of the preparation period (up to 6 hours) and consequently achieved very low grades. Such essays also lacked in opinion or justification and resulted in lower marks.

Legibility of the written work

Centres are advised to make sure that the students submit their work in a legible Urdu handwriting as some candidates' handwriting was too small to read and 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' advantage if they do some more practice and try to write their assignments as closer to Nast'aliq as possible in order to get better grades.

Topic-only option

This option is also acceptable however it was noted that generally the tasks submitted under such headings were just narratives; hence lacked in opinion and justifications.

Also, there were cases where irrelevant tasks were submitted e.g. 'a gutsy man can achieve anything', 'water'. Unfortunately in such cases even very capable students could not get good grades as the topics chosen by them would not fall into any of the above four themes. As such, teachers must be very mindful while approving the topics for their students and should follow exam board guidelines when choosing topics from themes provided. If in doubt, please feel free to consult Pearson Edexcel.

It is advised here that in order to take candidates' work to the higher band for marking, more than one tense should be used along with 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

Administration

It also came to light that in some centres teachers responsible for collating, organising and sending the candidates paper work to examiners had not followed exam board's instructions clearly. They did not complete the candidates CM4 form or tied candidates work in a secure manner. Some centres did not even attach the CM4 form and also did not include attendance register with candidate's work which resulted in extra work and subsequent delay in completing the marking tasks. Some centres used the forms which were very obsolete and finally, some centres submitted the work that was absolutely

outmoded and outdated. All the candidates prepared and submitted coursework assignments, duly marked by the teachers.

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) duly signed by the teacher and candidate

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

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>