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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in Bangladesh Studies (4BN0/01)

Unit 1: The History and Culture of Bangladesh

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General comments

There was an increased entry figure this year compared to 2015 which was very pleasing. The entry has now doubled in the past 2 years. The standard of work presented this year by candidates was comparable to that of last year. All the candidates answered the required three questions and few if any displayed signs of problems relating to time or rubric infringement.

As with last year, most candidates tended to write about or describe the topics/characters/events listed in the question rather than focussing on the question posed. It appears that candidates know their history of Bangladesh and can describe what happened but many are unable to explain and comment on the importance of individuals or events. This pattern was reflected in most answers. The content suggested in the question is merely there to guide candidates rather than be prescriptive and few candidates used other knowledge. The most popular questions were 1, 2 and 3.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

There were a number of good attempts at question 1 in which candidates could explain the ways in which Bengal developed under the control of Muslim leaders. Many answers tended to be descriptive with little emphasis in the way of explanation of how the Turkish invasion, Sufis and the Bengal Sultanate contributed to Bengal coming under Muslim rule. However it was noticeable this year that there was a cohort of candidates who were able to explain their answers well and as a result achieved very high marks.

Question 2

Question 2 was a popular question that again attracted mainly narrative responses. The question required candidates to explain why Islam Khan was able to gain control of Bengal. Aspects suggested in the question included the role of military tactics, Dhaka and administration. Most candidates described these aspects well but there was little explanation of these or other aspects of their knowledge of the period. However again, there was a small group of candidates who clearly understood the importance of explanation and as a result scored high marks.

Question 3

This was also a popular question on the way in which the British were able to take control of Bengal between 1750 and 1800. The legislation required in the question was well known but most responses were descriptive of these factors involved in taking control of Bengal rather than addressing an explanation of these reasons. As a result few candidates were able to score more than half marks.

Question 4

This was a somewhat popular question on the reasons why opposition to British rule grew between 1905 and 1919. Although the detail of the role of the partition of Bengal, the Morley-Minto Reforms and the Government of India Act were well known, attempts in relating these factors to the reasons why opposition grew were less good and as a result good marks were very limited.

Question 5

There were a few good attempts at this question. Many candidates were able to describe the factors that included the language Movement, Ekushey February and the 1956 Pakistan Constitution but few were able to explain how these factors were important in the growing demands for self-government in East Pakistan during the 1950s.

Question 6

The role of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was well known with a good level of detail being displayed in candidates' description of him in the creation of Bangladesh between 1971 and 1973. However few candidates were able to relate the other two given factors of the Bangladesh Constitution and the 1973 general election to an explanation of their effect in creating Bangladesh.

Question 7

There were few or no attempts at question 7, which was concerned with the ways that media, music and education have developed in Bangladesh since 1975.

Question 8

Several candidates answered question 8 on the importance of a number of factors in the development of Bangladeshi culture and heritage. These stated factors included the influence of religion on architecture, folk literature and the Garo. Most of the candidates could describe these factors in some detail but very few were able to explain their importance in the development of Bangladeshi culture and heritage and as a result no more than half marks were scored for such answers.

The overall impression given in this year's examination is that some Centres have begun to instil in their candidates the need to explain their answers as required by the questions, but this trend needs to be repeated by other Centres if their examination results in this subject are to be improved.