



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Bangladesh Studies (4BN1)

Paper 01: History and culture of Bangladesh

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Publications Code 4BN1_01_2506_ER

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General comments

Once again, performance on the paper was impressive, with a number of candidates producing excellent responses to all three of the questions they answered. As pointed out in previous reports, the most significant differences between those candidates who scored the highest marks and those who score less well was the approach to answering Questions (c) and (d). Consequently, it may well prove useful to centres to reiterate the advice given last year on those two questions:

- Q(c) is a causation question. Candidates need to explain 'why', rather than write about 'what'. It is very good technique to use the words of the question in writing an answer. Had candidates begun their response to Question 5 (c) by saying '*The reason why there were difficulties faced by Congress and the Muslim League in accepting the Government of India Act was*', then there would, undoubtedly, have been fewer answers just giving details of the Act.
- Q(d) is a judgement question. Candidates should consider a number of factors and decide which was the most important/main etc. Best rewarded responses look at three factors. So in Q1(d) where candidates were asked whether the Language Movement was the main reason for the outbreak of the War of Liberation in 1971, candidates should have provided an analysis of the importance of the Language Movement and two other factors. To score the very highest marks they were required to make a judgement on the relative importance of those three factors. Such an approach requires more than saying why one factor was the most important. Candidates have to explain why the other factors were not as important.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

Responses to the compulsory section of the paper were, generally, very strong. Most candidates were able to provide the correct date for the resignation of Ayub Khan in 1(a) and features of the 1974 Special Powers Act were also well-known in 1(b). The significance of the issue of Kashmir in discussions about the establishment of an independent Pakistan was explained well in 1(c) and 1(d) was well-answered with candidates displaying a high level of knowledge of the reasons why relations between East and West Pakistan broke down in 1971. Most candidates argued persuasively that unfair treatment of the people of East Bengal, particularly after the 1970 election, was the main contributing factor. The best responses explained that the Language Movement was a product of that unfairness.

Question 2

A very small number of candidates attempted this question. Those that did showed a good understanding of the work of Gopala in 2(a), Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in 2(b) and the importance of Sufi leaders in 2(c). Question 2 (d) proved more challenging, with some candidates concentrating solely on the extension of territory and neglecting the impact of the rule of Hussain Shah on culture and trade in Bengal

Question 3

This was a very popular topic, though the work of Shaista Khan 3(d) was less well-known than was expected. However, the vast majority of candidates knew the date of the second battle of Panipat in 3 (a) and two reasons why Siraj ud-Daulah was defeated at the battle of Palashi in 3 (b). Responses to question 3 (c) on the reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire were particularly impressive, with candidates providing an explanation of the impact of internal weaknesses, opposition from the Marathas and others, and the arrival of the British.

Question 4

All parts of this question were well answered. Almost all candidates knew about the founding of the Serampore Mission Press in 4(a) and the activities of the Swadeshi Movement in opposing British economic policies in 4 (b). Question 4(c) produced some very good responses, though some candidates tended to focus on what the Faraizi Movement did, rather than explaining its importance to the revival of Islam. Question 4(d) was particularly well answered, with responses demonstrating a very thorough understanding of the causes of the War of Independence. All responses explained how the greased cartridges issue was the trigger for the war, but the vast majority of candidates were then able to explain how longer-term causes, such the British disregard for local customs and culture laid the foundations for future conflict.

Question 5

This was the more popular question of the two options in Section C. Candidates had little difficulty giving the date of the Morley-Minto reforms 5(a) and the terms of the Rowlatt Act were well-known 5 (b). Less impressive were responses to 5(c) where candidates seemed to have a good understanding of the terms of the Government of India Act but often were unable to explain why those terms were unacceptable to the Muslim and Hindu communities. Question (d) produced some very interesting responses with some candidates scoring well by pointing out that the 3 June Plan was just the mechanisation for bringing about partition. What had caused the need for partition was the British decision to leave India and the hostility between the

Muslim and Hindu communities which prevented them from being able to agree on how they might co-exist peacefully in a single nation.

Question 6

This was the less popular of the two questions in Section C and performance on it was mixed. Almost all candidates knew the year in which the UN Mother Tongue Day was established 6(a) and the accomplishments of Zainul Abedin 6 (b). Responses to 5(c) reflected an understanding of General Ershad's problems in that opposition to his government represented a wide variety of sections of Bangladeshi society, such as doctors, lawyers and intellectuals. They did not always, however, explain why such opposition led to his resignation. On 5 (d), responses tended to divide into those who believed the question was solely about relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan and those who realised that what was required was an analysis of the relative success of Bangladesh's relations with other countries, compared to its success in relations with Pakistan. Those who adopted the latter approach scored much more highly.

