

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE

GCE Urdu (8643/9643)



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AS Unit 1 (6821) - Listening and Writing

General comment

Candidates are required to listen to authentic target- language material and to retrieve and convey information given in the recorded material by responding to a range of mainly target-language questions, and by producing a guided summary in English requiring transfer of meaning from the target language. The questions elicit non-verbal responses, target language answers and two personal responses in Urdu of 30-40 words each.

As mentioned in the last examiner's report, Unit 1 is not simply a listening paper as it also includes writing which accounts for 32% of the total marks.

Candidates' Responses

In general, the candidates' answers reflected a positive response to the Listening and Writing test .The Feedback and Guidance events organised by Edexcel (3 last year) have proven to be very useful for the teachers . Quite a large number of centres had clearly prepared candidates well and most scripts reflected an appropriate level of competence and knowledge.

Extract 1

As last year, this comprised a simple question (based on a conversation about a wedding in Lahore) requiring the candidates to tick a correct box against one of the three statements. Most candidates demonstrated understanding of the spoken passage and selected the correct boxes in the four sets of statements. However, a small number failed to differentiate between the Urdu words "same day" and "next day".

Extract 2

Part (a) was based on information about the hand woven carpets in Pakistan and required candidates to recognise the given statements as being the "correct", "incorrect" or " not mentioned in the extract". Whilst several candidates scored well in this exercise, others had difficulty in identifying some of the key words (eg Urdu words for "carpet weavers" and "foreign countries").

Some candidates did not follow or could not read the instructions properly and put ticks and crosses against the given statements at random. By and large, this part of the question produced high scores.

Part (b) was about the "Kuwait city" and comprised of fill in the blank questions. This section demanded not only the correct use of vocabulary but also an understanding of Urdu grammar. Only a small number of candidates managed to score full marks. These types of questions demand, not only the selection of the correct Urdu word but also correct grammatical structure. For example, in the second sentence the correct Urdu word for" welcome" is "istuqbal" and not "khush aamdeed". The candidates must learn to link the last two words before and after the gap fill in order to produce a correct grammatical structure. Teachers are requested to pay attention to these individual weaknesses of their students.

Extract 3

Extract 3 was about Fatima who migrated from Turkey to UK, her initial struggle in this country and her views about the local younger generation.

This extract had two exercises, with a total of 28 marks. The first exercise involving straightforward Urdu questions was generally well done. The objective is to communicate the correct response but not to reproduce the original text word for word. All irrelevant and superfluous information is disregarded, unless it adversely affects the target information. Nevertheless, there was evidence of many weaker candidates attempting to transcribe the material without really understanding it.

For (a) most candidates gave a correct answer, although quite a large number failed to write the correct spelling of "syasi haalat" in Urdu. A variety of responses were accepted for (b) and most candidates scored well on this question. For (g) some candidates could not differentiate between economical and home responsibilities of Fatima and lost marks. Questions (d) and (h) although very clear, were misunderstood by a number of candidates resulting in overlapping answers. For (y) nearly all candidates gave the right answer but some transcribed the whole sentence which was unnecessary.

The second exercise, requiring candidates to write personal responses arising from the listening extract produced a wide range of answers. For the first part where they were asked if they would agree or disagree to look after an elderly person, a large number of candidates said yes to the option and gave some lovely, very sentimental and mature opinions. There were some excellent and positive answers for this question indicating the love and respect that our younger generation have for their elders. Some candidates said no to the option but gave solid and mature reasons for not being able to look after an elderly person and scored full marks for the language and content.

The second part of this exercise asked candidates' opinion about the life style of elderly people in India or Pakistan. There was a mixed response to this question. The majority of the candidates were of the opinion that the elderly people have a much better life in their own country. Again there was a mixture of poor responses to excellent answers. Some candidates lost marks for writing longer than the permitted 40 words. Some candidates had an excellent command of Urdu language but the content of what they wrote was poor and vice versa: both resulting in them scoring lower marks.

Extract 4

Extract 4 was about the TV dramas in Pakistan. This year the candidates were asked to list the main points in English (using no more than 60 words). Some very good summaries were an indication that more and more teachers are clearly seeing the need to teach summary skills as part of the preparation for this exam. Many candidates lost marks for writing longer than 60 words, whilst some candidates translated the whole text into English and lost valuable marks. Producing an English summary is an integral part of this Unit and teachers along with their students have definitely worked much harder this year and achieved better results.

AS Unit 2 (6822) - Reading and Writing

General comment

The paper was accessible to the majority of candidates and proved to be of an appropriate level of difficulty. Candidates responded very well. On the whole this paper was done well by the majority of candidates who appeared to have been adequately prepared for the examination and have a grasp of vocabulary required to tackle the paper.

Candidates' Responses

Q1 was intended for candidates to find out three wrong sentences out of five and give the reasons reading the text. The majority of candidates managed to attempt this question reasonably well and scored full marks while a very few did not score full marks due to filling in incorrect sentences.

Q2 had two parts (A) and (B). Most of the candidates showed their ability to use a variety of texts in answering part (A) of the question. Those who demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the passage scored full marks in this part, however, there were a very few candidates who either did repetition or gave the wrong answer scored less marks.

In part (B) only a few candidates scored full marks. Candidates did not read the question carefully and instead of writing the synonyms, they wrote opposite of the given words in the question.

Q3 was very well done. The majority of candidates scored full marks for this question showing their knowledge of the passage. A very small number of candidates lost one or two marks due to limited vocabulary.

Most candidates scored very good marks for this Q4. The passage was in Urdu with questions in English requiring the candidates to answer in English, demonstrating their ability to comprehend the Urdu text and convey its substance in English. Those who had a very good command of both English and Urdu completed this question to the highest standard. A small number of candidates lost one or two marks in C and D part of the question.

Q5 was well attempted and helped to boost the total for a majority of the candidates. Some candidates lost marks in content and language as they failed to address all bullet points.

Candidates need to be reminded that in order to score high marks they need to study the question properly before attempting to answer it. It was, however, very pleasing to note that there were also some excellent candidates whose answers were full of good ideas, well organized and containing a variety of structures, idiomatic language and appropriate vocabulary.

AS/A2 Unit 3 and 4 (6823/6824) - Prepared Orals Topic and Oral Discussion of Issues

General comment

Most candidates displayed an excellent performance this year. Most of the teacher examiners conducted their exams well, helping candidates feel at ease contributing to a higher success rate. The INSET sessions which took place this year seem to have had a positive effect on the local centres.

Nearly all of the chosen topics for Units 3 and 4 conformed to the specification and they were presented and discussed well.

Unit 3

Most candidates performed very well in this unit, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding well on the chosen topic. Most candidates displayed evidence of thorough research. Attention needs to be given to the following:

- Please label cassettes and boxes correctly.
- Tests should last 10 - 12 minutes. Long tests give no benefit. Shorter tests may result in a reduction of marks available to the candidate.
- Discussion shouldn't be too general or remain at a factual level.
- "Unpredictable questions" should relate to the topic, not to the headings.
- Candidates are expected to give evidence from their research.
- The Examiner's input should be kept to a minimum.

Unit 4

The overall performance this year was very impressive. The issues chosen by most candidates were appropriate to the task. The quality of language was at a very high standard, with responses being spontaneous and appropriate. The majority of candidates demonstrated thorough and detailed knowledge while debating their issues. Attention needs to be drawn to the following:

- Tests should last 14 - 15 minutes. Long tests give no benefit. Shorter tests may result in a reduction of marks available to the candidate.
- Presentation of stance should be no longer than one minute. Over long presentation should be interrupted.
- Initial issue needs to be "arguable". Candidates should have the opportunity to use the language of argument and debate.
- At least two further unpredictable topics should be covered where the candidate justifies opinions, although argument is not required.
- Some teacher examiners focused on the initial issue for too long, causing a loss of possible marks for the candidate.

A2 Unit 5 (6825) - Topics and Texts

General Comments

On the whole, candidates displayed an improved performance over the previous year. However, examiners encountered a wide range of standards; there were many very pleasing scripts but some deemed not to be of A2 standard. Many candidates did not respond particularly well to the 'evaluation' element of the questions.

Candidates' Response

It was pleasing to note that some centres have taken notice of last year's Examiners' Report, as indicated by some scripts with excellent and to the point responses both on topics and texts. The feedback and guidance events organized by Edexcel (there were 3 last year) have also helped the teachers particularly the new ones to understand the key elements underlying the set questions for this unit and to work closely with the candidates from beginning of the academic year. This was reflected by the fact that this year there were far better answers to questions on topics than the previous years. Also, teachers have taken on board the advice given by the Principal Examiner to help candidates and look at past papers to analyse the evaluation elements of questions.

Unfortunately, as always, there were some inappropriate entries for A2 level. As a result, several candidates chose to attempt questions which they had not studied at all but got tempted by the topic e.g. Films and Dramas or Urdu in Britain. Some centres are still not advising their candidates to write in pen and to answer only 2 questions. Consequently there were scripts scribbled in pencil and / or with 18/20 answers. It was frustrating and time consuming for examiners to mark such scripts and obviously candidates lost valuable marks.

There were some examples of totally irrelevant or confused answers, for example for Q1(b), one candidate wrote that Tehrik-e-khilafat was led by Qaid-i-Azam against Hindus and for Q4 (a) another candidate wrote that the future of Urdu in the UK is bright because it is a useful language in Pakistan.

Q2(a), 2(b), 3(a), 4(a), 4(b), 6(a), 7(a), 8(a), 8(b) and 10(a) were the most popular and Q1(a), 1(b) and 3(b) were the least popular. As in previous years, most candidates chose at least one of the topical questions, but only a few were able to display a sound knowledge and understanding of the attempted question.

Some candidates produced pre-learnt essays which did not directly address the question set. Centres are advised to discourage candidates from preparing and producing pre-learnt essays.

A2 Unit 6a (6826/01) - Listening and Writing

General Comments

Although the quality of Urdu is no longer assessed in Q1, candidates will still be disadvantaged by poor writing ability. In Q2, up to 15 marks are awarded for an English summary of the extract and 5 marks are allocated for English grammar. This year, there were quite a large number of good summaries with average to good grammar.

The paper consists of two main questions together with their sub-questions on two listening extracts based on the same topic-the Festival of Kite flying in Lahore (Pakistan).

Q1 was divided into seven sub questions. All the sub questions (in target language) were an open-ended style requiring the candidates to extract information from the listening extract about the celebration of kite flying or the festival of "Basant". The majority of candidates performed well in answering these questions. However, some fairly easy questions requiring 2 marks (e.g. Q1(b), 1(j) and 1(h)) were answered incomplete or there were some answers including irrelevant information. In a few cases the candidates transcribed the relevant part of the recorded text in answer to these sub questions.

At GCE Advanced level, the candidates are expected to have skills such as extracting, deducting and predicting facts and accepting or rejecting information.

Q2 required candidates to summarise the extract in English in continuous prose, addressing the cultural and controversial issues of "Basant" and the harmful impacts of kite flying in Lahore .There were some very good summaries this year with average to good grammar. However, a substantial number of candidates failed to keep the content of their answer within the prescribed limit of 100 words in English and lost marks. A few candidates wrote about 100 words just to cover the first 2 bullet points and got penalised for covering the second 2 bullets points outside of the word limit. Others wrote either very little or a long essay covering points not mentioned in the extract. Kite flying is a well known festival in Pakistan and many incidents relating to the festival get reported in newspapers each year. It's possible that some candidates used this information to write their own summary and failed to understand or extract relevant points from the listening extract.

The overall performance of candidates was slightly better this year and there were many scripts with excellent answers in the target language and good summaries in English.

A2 Unit 6b (6826/02) - Reading and Writing

General Comments

The overall performance of the candidates in this paper was very good. The paper was accessible to the majority of candidates. Many had come to the examination very well prepared and had obviously spent time practising the essential techniques this year.

Q1 carried 15 marks: 8 marks for content and 7 marks for quality of language. Most candidates performed quite well. Those who answered the questions using their own words scored full marks. Candidates who 'lifted' answers lost marks in language.

For Q2 candidates were required to translate an English passage into Urdu. Marks were awarded only for the transfer of meaning. The majority of candidates answered this question successfully. Some candidates, however, could not understand the English passage, therefore, were unable to score full marks. The given passage was on culture; therefore, the majority of candidates scored full 10 marks.

A2 Unit 6c (6826/03) - Writing in Registers

General Comments

In comparison with the previous year candidate's overall performance appears to be slightly better. There were many very good candidates at the top end of the scale and an encouraging increase in the proportion of good scripts. At the top end, Urdu was fluent, idiomatic and very impressive. There was however still a disappointing "tail " of candidates with an extremely limited knowledge of the necessary range of vocabulary who performed below the standard required and lost marks. A number of candidates did not seem to have a sufficient command of basic grammatical structure.

Once again the accuracy of Urdu varied enormously. Candidates need to pay more attention to details and there is no excuse for wrong spelling of basic words at this level of the test. Centres should also draw the attention of their candidates to the fact that unclear presentation and illegible writing can lead to heavy loss of marks. Centres need to know that examiners look for concise answers to specific questions, with explanation, justification and manipulation where appropriate. There was evidence of candidates spending too much time and effort on the introduction of their chosen topic and prolonging their writing task rather unnecessarily. Candidates need to be reminded that it is in their own interest to stick to the recommended words limit as prolonged and irrelevant material gains no extra marks. Candidates must know that it is not unreasonable to expect them to reach a good standard of grammatical accuracy at this level and working out linguistic rules for themselves is part of the language learning process.

Following is brief detail of candidate's performance in all three parts of the paper.

Creative writing

This section appeared to be number one in the order of popularity.

This part of the test was intended not only to test merely candidate's understanding of language but to produce a creative piece of writing using their own imagination by making good use of stimulus given for each question. Candidates at this level are also expected to use complex vocabulary and grammatical structures.

The majority of candidates appeared to be well prepared and deserved to be allocated reasonably high marks. Writing was fluent and showed a high degree of sophistication in the manipulation of linguistic structures. However, the main reason for candidates failing to score higher marks was their lack of imagination and clarity in places.

In some cases candidates used a good range of appropriate lexis but failed to use rich and complex language appropriately which resulted in many candidates not being placed in the top band.

In order to score high marks, candidates are required to show a high degree of sophistication in the manipulation of linguistic structures.

One of the disturbing features, which is commented on almost every year in report, was the inappropriate use of proverbial idiom. Candidates should be reminded that the use can be an invaluable asset to illustrate a point, and as such will merit due reward, but should be genuine and written in correct Urdu.

Discursive Essay:

The discursive essay appeared to be the second in popularity. Most candidates found a great deal to write on their chosen topic. Many candidates showed a pleasing ability to express original ideas and personal impressions in an appropriate register and to use a wide range of language naturally. However, a significant number of candidates did not appear to have a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary. Examiners look for concise answers with justification as and where appropriate and to achieve this achieve this, candidates must practice regular essay writing.

Most candidates appeared to be well prepared and deserved to be allocated high marks. The planning and writing of essay is, on the whole, well done and it was pleasing to note that the standard of sentence structure and spelling in Urdu is improving.

Task-Based Assignment:

Although this section was the least popular choice in previous years, the Task-Based assignment attracted a significant number of candidates this year, which, in view of many examiners is a good development as candidates often score reasonably good marks by attempting this part of the paper.

The standard of Urdu varied considerably from centre to centre. There was, as always a good number of excellent scripts where the candidates used standard Urdu and demonstrated an ability to manipulate and express their point of views in a sophisticated manner. While others gave the impression that they were inexperienced in essay-writing in Urdu. In some cases candidates appeared to have good understanding of question but failed to organise and develop their ideas in an imaginative way.

Candidates need to be reminded that they must read the tasks with great care before they start writing their responses.

Statistics

Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	38	33	28	23	18
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	64	55	46	37	28
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3 Prepared Oral Topic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	45	39	34	29	24
19Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	48	42	36	30	25
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5.1 Topics and Texts

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	62	53	45	37	29
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6 Listening and Writing, Reading and Writing & Writing in Registers

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	82	73	64	55	46
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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