

# Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE Urdu (8643/9643)



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## Unit 1 (6821) - Listening and Writing

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.

### Candidates' Responses

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

### Extract 1

As last year, this comprised an accessible question requiring the candidates to tick the 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 recognise the difference between the Urdu words for "short period and long period".

### Extract 2

This extract was based on information about the variety of red chillies.

The first part (2a) of the question 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 "many colours" and "spicy or hot"). By and large, this part of the question produced high scores.

Part (b) 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 scored full marks. For example, in the fifth sentence the correct word for 'precaution' was "ahtiat" and not "mohtaat". Teachers are requested to pay attention to these individual weaknesses of their students.

### **Extract 3**

This was an interview with Jamila who came from Delhi (India) 20 years ago and how she finds the atmosphere of travelling by public transport in London nowadays as compared with earlier times.

This extract as last year, had two exercises set on it, with a total of 28 marks. The first exercise involving accessible Urdu questions was generally well done. The test is marked positively and 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 "hard work" in Urdu. A variety of responses were accepted for (b) and most candidates scored well on this question. In the remaining questions, the majority of candidates scored full marks.

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 to write about the advantages of using modern equipments, the majority of the candidates discussed the use of exercise machines and only a few candidates gave their opinion about the use of computer and other modern technology. However, there were some excellent answers for this question and candidates scored full marks for the language and content. The second part of this exercise asked candidates' opinions about the diet care of younger generation. Some gave a comparative view about home cooking and fast food whilst others wrote their independent opinion in a general way. Again there was a mixture of poor responses to excellent answers.

### **Extract 4**

This extract was based on the legendary singer Noor Jehan of Pakistan.

The candidates were asked to list the main points in English (using no more than 60 words) under each sub-heading with a mark allocation for each section. A majority of the candidates found it easier to write the relevant points under each sub-heading

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 others wrote unnecessary details about Noor Jehan's acting career when they were asked to write about her popularity as a singer. 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 are requested to work along with their students even harder to achieve better results.



## Unit 2 (6822) - Reading and Writing

This year candidates displayed an improved performance over the previous years. Most candidates answered the various questions reasonably well and there were several outstanding performances. However, some answers were of poor quality because of their limited knowledge.

Q1 was a fill-in-the-blanks exercise. The majority of candidates managed to attempt this question reasonably well and scored full marks.

Q2 had two parts: A and B. Most candidates scored full marks and demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the passage in part A. However, the majority of candidates lost one or two marks because they misread the question.

Q3 was a very popular question and the majority of the candidates scored full marks and were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the passage. A very small number of candidates lost one or two marks due to limited vocabulary.

Q4 was again well attempted and the majority of the candidates answered this question correctly and scored full marks. A small number of candidates marks in this question. Those who had a very good command of both English and Urdu completed this question to the highest standard.

Q5 was also very well attempted. The majority of candidates with good writing skills were able to score high marks but even less able candidates were able to score quite good marks due to the help of the bullet points. A small number of candidates failed to score good marks because they did not follow the word limit instructions. A very few did not use all the bullet points in developing their essays.

### Advice and Guidance

Candidates need to be reminded that in order to score high marks they need to study the question paper properly and read the instructions very carefully before attempting to answer it. The examiners noted, however, that there were also some excellent candidates whose answers were full of good ideas, idiomatic language and appropriate vocabulary. The candidates need to spend more time on question 5 and use all the bullet points within the specified word limit.



## **Unit 3 (6823) - Prepared Oral Topic**

## **Unit 4 (6824) - Oral Discussion of Issues**

Most candidates again performed well this year. Credit must be given to the teacher examiners for conducting the exams at a high standard, keeping candidates at ease. The candidates from local colleges and faith schools have again achieved high standards.

Nearly all of the chosen topics for Units 3 and 4 conformed to the specification and they were presented and discussed well. Most centres adhered to the given time, resulting in minimal loss of marks.

### **Unit 3**

As the centres may be aware, this was the last exam in the current specification. As of next year, AS Level will be tested using a completely different format. Centres will have to ensure that candidates are prepared appropriately for this change in format.

### **Unit 4**

This year produced outstanding quality of work. 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.

There are still some issues with international centres, namely not paying due respect to the specified time restrictions. Also, in most cases, Unit 4 was conducted as a general conversation rather than justification and debate. Candidates were thus deprived of the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

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.

## Unit 5.1 (6825) - Topics and Texts

### Assessment Principles

In this unit candidates are required to answer two questions in Urdu on prescribed topics and texts. Candidates must remember that they cannot be rewarded for writing two answers on the same topic or text. Candidates are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the culture and/or society of Urdu speaking countries or communities, and of the topics/text which represent them. They are also required to demonstrate the ability to organise and develop their ideas on the chosen topic/text and to show the ability to write accurately and effectively in Urdu in response to attempted questions. Candidates' answers are assessed using the grids given in the specification and up to 45 marks are awarded for each question. Credit is given for:

- the knowledge and understanding of the chosen question;
- ability to evaluate and form independent judgement and
- organisation of material and development of argument.

### Candidates' Response

The overall standard of performance this year was of a higher standard than last year. Most candidates had good knowledge and understanding of the relevant topic/text and were able to organise the material and develop argument and ideas in fluent and accurate Urdu. However, a wide range of standards continues to be encountered; there were many very pleasing and well constructed answers, however, some candidates produced largely irrelevant answers not to be A2 standard. A large number of candidates did not respond particularly well to the evaluation element of the questions and were unable to show a degree of independent judgement.

A fairly large number of candidates opted for topic-based questions believing that these would be an easy option because of their limited knowledge of Urdu speaking countries and/or communities. As a result, most of them wrote general essays without tackling the task mentioned, showing considerable lack of detailed knowledge and almost no understanding in some cases.

Following are a few responses of such examples:

Q1(b) - Quaid-e-Azam got a degree in law from Cambridge/ Oxford.

Q1(b) - Allama Iqbal proposed the name of the new country i.e. Pakistan.

Q1(b) - Performance of Anarkali/Dilaram/Akbar in the film i.e. not knowing the names of actors.

Q3(b) - Shalwar - Kamees is a dress for muslims only.

Q3(a) - Candidates' chosen region e.g. England/Britain was not among those listed in the specification.

In general answers to topic-based questions were not done as well as on literary texts. Many candidates were unaware of the syllabus parameters and hence were unable to answer the questions set.

As in previous years, candidates showed evidence of producing pre-learnt answers for their chosen topic or text. It does not help candidates to produce identical answers and they risk losing marks for inability to analyse and independent judgement.

Questions 1(a), 5(a&b) and 9(a&b) were the least popular questions and of those who attempted them, only a few got reasonable marks.

### **Advice and Guidance**

Teachers are strongly advised to train candidates to:

- (a) thoroughly read the assessment principles and grids;
- (b) read the questions carefully and answer them concisely and to the point;
- (c) address all parts of the question particularly the evaluation element;
- (d) show a degree of independent judgment and attempt only two questions on different topics/texts.

## Unit 6a (6826) - Listening and Writing

It is pleasing to note that a large number of centres are becoming aware of the fact that GCE Advanced level Unit 6(a) is part of a much wider Unit 6, which encompasses three skills; listening, reading and writing. It is also encouraging that many teachers have taken into account the modification in its mark grid i.e., there are no extra marks for the quality of Urdu in question 1. In question 2, up to 15 marks are awarded for an English summary of the extract and 5 marks are allocated for English grammar. This realisation on the part of centres was reflected by 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 life of a porter in Northern Pakistan.

Q1 The first question was divided into seven sub-questions. All the sub-questions (in target language) were an open-ended style requiring candidates to extract information from the listening extract about the life of Rajab as a mountaineer and a porter. The majority of candidates performed well in answering these questions. However, there were some answers which included irrelevant information and in a few cases candidates transcribed the relevant part of the recorded text in answer to these sub-questions. In the past, attention of centres has been drawn to the fact that at GCE Advanced level, the candidates are expected to have skills such as extracting, deducting and predicting facts and accepting or rejecting information.

Q2 This question asked candidates to summarise the extract in English in continuous prose, addressing the difficulties involved in the life of a porter in Northern Pakistan. 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. Others wrote either very little or a long essay covering points not mentioned in the extract.

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



## Unit 6b (6826) - Reading and Writing

The overall performance of the candidates in this paper was very good. The paper was accessible to the majority of candidates. They were fully prepared and obviously spent time practising the essential techniques this year. However there were a very small number of candidates who did not do well in question 2 and simply copied the Urdu text from question 1.

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

Q2 In this question candidates were required to render an English passage in 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 or part of the passage. As the passage was on Jashn-e-Baharan, the majority of candidates scored full marks.



## Unit 6c (6826) - Writing in Registers

### General Comments

This year paper proved a good test at this level and produced a wide range of marks. Most candidates performed reasonably well on the various questions and there were several outstanding performances. However, as usual, there were a number of poor efforts too, which gave clear indication that such candidates were not prepared for a test at this level. Many candidates showed a great deal of linguistic ability in answering various questions. As last year, the paper contained a wide range of questions giving both strong and weak candidates the opportunity to show their linguistic skills. The overall standard of candidate's performance was better than previous years.

The majority of candidates showed an improvement in their linguistic ability which was reflected both in their use of complex vocabulary and sentence structure as well as in greater linguistic accuracy. However, some scripts showed a lack of awareness of Urdu orthography. It is important that candidates try to write what is traditionally known as "correct" Urdu but they should write in their own style as well.

Most candidates made a conscious effort to respect the word limit for each task and those who did not appear to do so were often penalised themselves by making more spelling mistakes and also leave themselves insufficient time to finish the task.

### Creative Writing

In this part of the test candidates are expected to write a creative essay by making good use of stimulus. They need to know that marks are rewarded on the basis of their creative ability and not for narration.

The majority of candidates attempted this section and question1 appeared to be the most popular choice. The overall response to this section was good with variable level of creativity. However, linguistic accuracy of most candidates was limited. Many candidates showed a lot of regional influence, including inaccurate orthography and spellings. In order to score high marks candidates are required to show a high degree of sophistication in the manipulation of the structure of the language. In many cases candidate's use of language was very simple and unadventurous.

According to the marking criteria, the examiners ignored some minor spelling and grammatical mistakes, but some mistakes were considered to be of serious nature

and candidates were penalised for accuracy in those cases. A number of candidates ignored the recommended words limit and wrote at such a length and presumably speed that they needlessly sacrificed marks for accuracy.

### **Discursive essays**

Almost all topics in this section were intended not only to test candidate's understanding of language but to give a personal response to the issue.

Majority of candidates who chose to write a discursive essay performed better than those who opted for creative writing. From the point of view of language, many candidates wrote fluently using a range of complex structures and sustaining a high level of accuracy. It was evident that candidates who attempted this section appeared to be those who either came to England from Urdu speaking countries or they speak Urdu as their mother tongue. Once again many candidates appeared to be uncertain about the recommended lengths of their chosen essay. Some essays were too short, but most were too long. Almost all essay topics in this section require a great deal of general knowledge and research. Few essays showed any research or advanced reading while most essays were generally descriptive in nature.

### **Task - Based Assignments**

This part of the test attracted a significant number of candidates this year. Candidates were quite right in making their choice as majority of candidates, including with moderate linguistic skill, managed to score good marks. This section proved to be quite popular among candidates who had most part of their education in this country. On the other hand those candidates who's English was not of a reasonable standard, did not comprehend the task in English fully and scored low marks despite their remarkable linguistic ability.

However it was encouraging to see candidate's showing improved technique and greater grasp how to meet the demands of the test.

### **Conclusion**

Candidate's performance in all three sections of the test appeared to be significantly better than previous years. It is only fair to add a positive note of congratulation on the good preparation given by many centres, where candidates were well prepared to cope with the demands of the test.

# Statistics

## Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	41	36	31	27	23
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	67	59	51	43	35
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	64	57	50	43	36
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	74	67	60	53
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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