



GCSE

BENGALI

8698/SH: Speaking Higher Tier
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The overall performance this year was very good and students responded very well to the demands of the new examination.

The new specification saw a significant change in the format of the exam. The inclusion of role-plays and photo cards have given an extra challenge to students to show their linguistic and communication skills in this exam.

The standard of students' performances varied, but all students were able to communicate something over the three parts of the exam.

There were instances where the teacher-examiner omitted some tasks in the Role-plays and Photo cards. As a result, some students could not score full marks.

Recordings were generally clear. However, there were many instances of incorrect passwords provided for encrypted CDs and memory sticks. More care is needed in this aspect of the administration.

Most students were well prepared and were able to fulfil the tasks confidently, using accurate language to communicate their answers. Pronunciation and grammar were of a good standard and students were confident in their use of different time frames where necessary.

It was also important for teacher-examiners to be aware that the aim of this examination is to allow the students to demonstrate their speaking abilities in standard Bengali. Some teacher-examiners used the Sylheti dialect without reading the questions properly and so hindered the responses of students.

There were some instances of teacher-examiners not following the instructions in the *Instructions for the conduct of the examinations*, available on the AQA website. It is essential that all teacher-examiners are fully prepared to conduct tests and are familiar with the instructions to ensure students are not disadvantaged by poor conduct of the tests.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2019 mark scheme.

Schools/colleges are reminded that a breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test per student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only, and therefore is not provided for every teacher-examiner.

Role-plays

The role-plays at Higher tier are designed to be more challenging than those at Foundation tier. Most students did well in this part of the test. Each of the role-plays asked for more details to be given than in the Foundation tier and one of the tasks in each role-play elicited a response which referred to a past or future event.

Teacher-examiners should keep to the script of the role-play because failure to do so may result in a student's response to a particular task not being credited. If students have prepared sufficiently well in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have notes which they can read from.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

Below are more detailed comments on each of the role-plays:

Role-play 7

Task a

This was done well overall. Most of the students' answers were “আমি গানের সিডি কিনতে চাই।”

Task b

A problem with this unprepared task, which had two questions, was that teacher-examiners often asked both questions together. The first part of the question was answered well, but some students then did not go on to answer the second part. Some teacher-examiners prompted “কেন?” which led the student to answer the whole question.

Task c

There were some strong responses to this task well, whereas others asked vague and irrelevant questions about music in general. These responses scored one mark.

Task d

Most students did well, however some mentioned only one opinion. In this case, some of the teachers asked “আর কিছু?” and then the student answered with another opinion.

Task e

Most of the students did well, but some students appeared not to understand “সম্প্রতি” and “সঙ্গীত অনুষ্ঠানে” and so some of the teacher-examiners rephrased the question, for example “আপনি কয়েকদিন আগে একটি গানের অনুষ্ঠানে গিয়েছিলেন, সে সম্পর্কে কিছু বলুন” which could then not be credited.

Role-play 8

Task a

The aim of this task was to make a phone call to book a table for a friend's birthday in the future. Some of the students said “আজ আমার বন্ধুর জন্মদিন” which was still accepted if they said “আজ রাতের জন্য একটি টেবিল বুক করতে চাই।”

Task b

Students were familiar with asking a question about any party facilities in the restaurant. However, some of them asked a question about the restaurant food.

Task c

Types of food and drink was a very familiar question and most students answered this correctly.

Task d

For this unpredictable task, three things were required and this was stated in the Teacher's Role. It was perfectly acceptable for the teacher-examiner to ask individually “কবে, কখন এবং কতজনের জন্য” if the student only gave one detail initially.

Task e

Students appeared to find the first question challenging because of the word “অগ্রিম”, but the second part, “কবে এবং কীভাবে” was done much better.

Role-play 9

Task a

This task was done well.

Task b

The question was, “এবার তুমি কী ধরনের জায়গায় বেড়াতে যেতে চাও? কেন?” Some students only mentioned the name of the places but did not mention why he/she wants to visit these places. These responses achieved only one mark.

Task c

The question required **two** opinions about staying in a hotel. Most students did well but some only mentioned one opinion, therefore the messages was only partially conveyed and so achieved one mark.

Task d

This task involved asking a question about the hotel and travel costs. Some students only asked a question about the hotel cost and hence achieved one mark.

Task e

This was done well.

Role-play 10

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

The majority of students asked a very simple question “তুমি কি ধূমপান করো?” but achieved two marks.

Task c

This was done well. Some students only said “জিমে যাওয়া ভালো।” which was credited.

Task d

This answer required a past tense and there was no problem with the use of tense and vocabulary which was pleasing.

Task e

This was done well.

Role-play 11

Task a

This was done well. Some students only said the subjects, which was credited.

Task b

This was done well.

Task c

Most students said the benefits of a university degree instead of opinions about studying at a university, which was still credited.

Task d

This was done well overall.

Task e

This was done quite well, and most students asked a common question, “তোমার জিসিএসইর ফলাফল কী ছিলো?”

Role-play 12

Task a

Most students answered this task well by giving personal views about his/her plans after GCSEs.

Task b

This was done well by the majority, however some students appeared to be confused about higher education opportunities.

Task c

Students scored highly on this task, predominantly giving their own opinion, such as “পড়াশুনার ফাকে পার্টটাইম কাজ করা ভালো, এতে অনেক অভিজ্ঞতা হয়।”

Task d

The first question proved quite demanding, but the second question whereby an explanation was required, was done much better.

Task e

This was done well.

Photo cards

This task is a new task. Most of the students performed well but some students were unable to justify their opinions appropriately. It was clear that teachers had trained their students to talk about the photo and, in so doing, use several clauses.

The three minute maximum time for the photo cards were adhered to for the most part at this tier. When the fifth question cannot be asked before the three-minute point, it means that a mark in the top band cannot be awarded because all five questions must be answered clearly to access this band.

Most teacher-examiners used the questions in the Teacher’s Booklet appropriately for the students. Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same

meaning must be maintained, or the student’s answer is not credited. There were instances where teacher-examiners missed out questions by mistake, therefore resulting in students not being able to access the higher mark bands.

In order to achieve a mark in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three answers by providing lots of detail. To securely be placed in the top band, some description was required in responses, with opinions and justification. Many students were able to do this.

Students need to respond in standard Bengali, instead of different dialects of Bengali (eg Sylheti). Most students did use standard Bengali.

The first question was always “ছবিতে কী দেখছেন?” and students generally described the people in the photo and/or what they were doing.

Other questions encouraged a variety of responses from students, with a wide range of quality. Inevitably, some questions proved to be more challenging than others.

The following questions are those that students appeared to find most challenging.

Photo card G

“প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহার মানুষের জীবনে ভবিষ্যতে কী ধরনের বিপদ আনতে পারে?” Many students appeared to find it challenging to compare using the present tense. Also the word প্রযুক্তি was not well-known.

Photo card J

“ছুটিতে যাওয়ার আগে কী ধরনের প্রস্তুতি নিতে হয় সে সম্পর্কে বলো।” Some students appeared to find it challenging to talk about the preparation needed before going on holiday.

Photo card K

“স্কুল ছেড়ে যাবার পর স্কুলের কোন স্মৃতি তোমার সবচেয়ে বেশী মনে পড়বে? কেন?” Those students who understood “স্মৃতি” answered this question well. However, many did not and it made little difference if the teacher changed it to “স্কুলের কথা”

Photo card L

“কাজের জায়গায় তুমি কী ধরনের সহকর্মী চাইবে?”

Many students appeared not to be able to answer this question because they did not understand “সহকর্মী” even if the teacher changed it to “কাজের জায়গায় তুমি যাদের সাথে কাজ করবে” Some teachers translated সহকর্মী to English for the student and this was not accepted.

General conversation

For the Higher Tier General Conversation, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. The timing of the conversation at Higher Tier is

between five and seven minutes. However, in some cases, the maximum time passed for students that were unable to answer the questions, and therefore these went over the maximum time. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme.

Pronunciation was consistently good and students tried to use standard Bengali. Many were able to use three tenses, give their opinions and also asked a question. Most of the teacher-examiners used only the example questions in the Teacher's Booklet and some teacher-examiners asked the same questions of all of their students on the different themes.

A small number of teacher-examiners did not read the questions properly and changed the meaning of the words. As a result, the students' responses were not in line with the expected answers. Some students were confused with the words গৃহস্থীন, তরুণ, মাদক মুক্ত in Theme 2, "Local, national, international and global areas of interest". Some teacher-examiners helped the students to understand these particular words. On the other hand in Theme 3, "Current and Future Study and Employment", when the teacher-examiner asked the students the question, "কোন বিষয়ের বাড়ির কাজ তোমার বেশি ভালো লাগে? কেন?" many students replied about `household` work. However, the answer should be regarding `school homework`. It is strongly advised that teacher-examiners explain the situation clearly, as then it is more likely that the student will achieve a better mark at the end.

There were examples of teacher-examiners who conducted the conversation in an exemplary way, asking questions aimed at the ability of the individual student and following up with additional questions after an extended response. A mixture of more open with some more closed questions worked best because usually this meant the student was on familiar ground with the open questions and could extend answers, whereas the closed questions, following up on what the student had just said, gave a more natural feel to the conversation and provided evidence for spontaneity.

The required length of the general conversation is between five and seven minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of two and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher-examiner asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher-examiner says 'End of test'

When moving from one theme to another, most teacher-examiners did as requested and referred to the change of theme on the recording. The best way to do this was, at the beginning of the conversation, to announce: এখন তোমার পছন্দের থিম ----- নিয়ে আমরা কথা বলবো and then, when the change of theme was about to happen: 'তোমার পছন্দের থিম ---- শেষ হলো এবার আমরা কথা বলবো থিম ---- নিয়ে। This was useful for the student and also for the examiner.

Another new aspect of the General Conversation is the need for the student to ask a question to the teacher-examiner. If the student did not ask a question, the teacher-examiner is allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying আমাকে কিছু জিজ্ঞেস করবে? Most teacher-examiners did this, but others did not. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher-examiner can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up and it is therefore too late.

For Range and Accuracy of language, students had to make a reference to past, present and future events. A few of the teacher-examiners did not give students the opportunity to respond in different tenses, meaning some students did not elicit references to the past, present and future.

Advice to teacher-examiners

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is in the Secure Key Materials (SKM) area of e-AQA, available via the AQA website. If you do not have access to SKM, ask your examinations officer to download the document for you. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the *Instructions* document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every candidate:

GCSE Bengali examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name ____. Role-play number ____, photo card letter ____, general conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.
- Use Bengali throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her role-play and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible.

Role-play

- Keep to the script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the three-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town may not be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Do not ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Bengali: এবার আমরা কথা বলবো থিম ---- নিয়ে।
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is seven minutes. Everything after that will **not** be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they do not do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you do not forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three prepared questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.

- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as কী, কবে, কোথায়, কে, কেন, কখন।
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Bengali. You can say প্রশ্নটা আবার বলবেন কি? for example.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA website.