
GCSE

URDU

8648/SH: Speaking Higher tier
Report on the Examination

8648
June 2019

Version: 1.0

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General comments

It is pleasing to note that most teacher-examiners conducted the tests in a highly professional way, following closely the guidelines laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. This allowed the smooth running of tests, something which puts the student at ease and helps the marker at a later stage. The prescribed combination of Role-play, Photo card and General Conversation in the sequencing chart was adhered to by the vast majority of teacher-examiners.

Unfortunately, there were some instances when the wrong combination was used, resulting in the theme of the Photo card being duplicated in the General Conversation. These are mainly those schools/colleges where Urdu is not taught as part of the curriculum and students have been entered on the basis of their Urdu background. In such cases, the maximum mark for Communication that can be awarded is 5 out of a possible 10.

A significant number of teacher-examiners did not follow the instructions for the recordings, eg the introduction to each new student must include the role-play number, photo card letter and nominated General Conversation theme. It is particularly important to announce a change of theme during the General Conversation.

Part 1 - Role-plays

In the role-play, the prescribed role in the Teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teacher-examiners. In the minority of cases where teacher-examiners re-worded the script, any subsequent response by the student was invalidated. Teachers are reminded that the target language phrases provided can only be changed if a student's response makes them inappropriate.

In the case of two-part unprepared questions, often ones requiring an opinion and reason, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately to ensure the task is fully completed. A few teacher-examiners timed the role-play which was not required. In some cases, students were allowed to give extended answers for which they were not credited. It is important to adhere to the requirements of the role-play task as written on the card eg one detail or two details etc.

There were also some cases where teacher-examiners missed out some questions eg the unpredictable element or did not give students the opportunity to ask the question task. Teachers are reminded that all tasks in the role-play should be completed, to allow students access to the full range of marks available. Most students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question task. Some students were not able to respond appropriately to the unpredictable task, which revealed a lack of ability to deal with language in a spontaneous way. In a few cases, teacher-examiners gave extended answers when a student asked them a question. Teacher-examiners should only give a brief answer because they are not being assessed.

Here are the Urdu phrases, which some students found very challenging. Other tasks that are not mentioned were generally completed well, especially those asking for opinions and, where appropriate, reasons. More detail on the individual role plays can be found in the mark scheme.

مستقبل کا پیشہ۔ کس قسم کا ٹکٹ۔ کہاں جانا۔ انٹرنیٹ کی ضرورت۔ اسکول میں پڑھائی کے علاوہ سرگرمیاں

Part 2 - Photo cards

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Most students were able to give a reasonably well developed response to the first prepared question؟ اس تصویر میں کیا ہے؟ In the case of less able students, this tended to give very brief descriptions of the photo. Responses were enhanced when students had used 'PALMS (Physical, Action, Location, Mood, Something else)' اس تصویر میں (Card H)۔ ایک خاندان ہے۔ وہ کھانا کھا رہے ہیں۔ وہ پارک میں ہیں۔ وہ خوش ہیں۔ لگتا ہے کہ کوئی خاص موقع ہے۔

There were a small number of cases where students spoke only briefly about the content of the photo before giving a personalised response. A good number of students invented a present continuous form to describe activities in the picture. For example, in Card I: 'یہ لوگ پودے لگا رہے ہیں۔ یہ'۔ Understandably, responses to the three prepared questions were usually more developed than those to the two unseen questions. Many students developed all answers and in some cases responses, were too long. Teachers are reminded that three to four relevant details are sufficient to score marks in the higher band for each question.

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. There were still, however, a few students who were restricted to the 1-3 band through the failure to offer an opinion, or could not access the 10-12 band because no opinion was explained. Some teacher-examiners missed some questions out and some used only the three questions on the student card which disadvantaged students. Teacher-examiners are reminded that all questions (five) should be asked.

There were also some instances when attempts at paraphrasing did not maintain the exact original meaning of the question and therefore invalidated any subsequent response by the student. Teacher-examiners are reminded that repetition of a question is allowed, and that the original question can be rephrased in the second asking; however, a full question must still be asked that maintains its original meaning.

Moreover, a question should not be repeated if a complete response has been given by the student. In such cases, the student response to the repeated question is disregarded for assessment purposes. No supplementary questions must be asked. Despite this clear instruction, there were a surprising number of additional questions asked. All student responses to such questions were not considered for assessment and simply served to reduce the amount of time available for the student to answer the prescribed questions as fully as possible.

Here are the tasks, which some students found challenging. Tasks that are not mentioned were generally executed well, especially those asking for opinions and, where appropriate, reasons. Reference to a lack of knowledge of use of 3rd person verbs and past verbs are not made repeatedly but should be understood.

کون سی سرگرمیوں میں حصہ لیا؟ آپ کے دوست / سہیلیاں سالگرہ کی پارٹی میں جانا پسند کرتے / کرتی ہیں؟ آپ نے حال ہی میں اپنے دوستوں کے ساتھ مل کر کون سی سرگرمیوں میں حصہ لیا تھا؟ کیا آپ کے دوست / سہیلیاں سالگرہ کی پارٹیوں میں جانا پسند کرتے ہیں۔ کیوں / کیوں نہیں؟ آلودگی کو کم کرنے کے لیے کیا کیا؟ علاقے میں کون سے بڑے مسائل ہیں؟

Part 3 - General Conversation

For most students, the Conversation element of the test was where they performed best. This was to be expected as it is the section with the greatest continuity from the previous specification. There were some impressive and spontaneous conversations from the highest-achieving students.

For some students, there was an imbalance between their exploration of their nominated theme and that of the second theme in terms of quality of communication. Where there was a great imbalance in the time spent on the two Themes, a deduction of two marks may have been incurred. Please see the mark scheme for details.

In their questions, some teacher-examiners strayed beyond the theme which was being discussed. It is important that teacher-examiners are clear about which sub-topics fall into each theme to avoid this. Where only one theme was covered in the Conversation or where a theme was discussed in the Photo card task and then again in the Conversation, a maximum of five marks could be awarded for Communication out of a possible ten.

There was often a sense of a set list of questions being asked without consideration of the ability of a particular student. Some teachers asked challenging questions which some students struggled with. On the other hand, for some tests, questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary for accessing the Higher tier top band for Communication.

Probably the greatest challenge of the new-style speaking test for teacher-examiners is the need to employ a questioning technique through which students are clearly able to demonstrate spontaneity. Most tests were conducted in such a way that allowed this to happen and the result was a conversation that had a pleasing feel of authenticity and totally reflected the spirit of the new examination. There were even moments of humour shared spontaneously between the teacher-examiner and student.

Unfortunately, some tests were conducted using a set list of questions to which students gave pre-learned lengthy responses. At Higher tier, this resulted in more able students being awarded a comparatively low mark for Spontaneity and fluency. It is necessary for some teacher-examiners to consider their practice in this regard and to realise that top marks can be achieved by students across all areas if appropriate techniques are employed. Evidence of spontaneity should not be considered as something beyond the capability of the student. Some teacher-examiners asked only a few questions from both themes and did not give opportunities to their students to perform and fulfil their potential.

Another new aspect of the General Conversation is the need for the student to ask a question. Most students either asked the question at a moment of their choice or it was elicited by the teacher-examiner at the end of the test. Unfortunately, and particularly at Higher tier, this led to some questions not being asked within the maximum time limit and a consequent one-mark penalty being applied to the mark for Communication as outlined in the mark scheme.

In some cases the teacher-examiner gave very lengthy answers. Teachers are advised to encourage students to accomplish this routine task early on in the conversation to ensure it does not fall outside the time allowed. Teachers are also advised to respond briefly to the student question because they are not being assessed.

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 Urdu 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 Urdu 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 is not going to 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 Urdu.
- 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 in Urdu.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Urdu.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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