



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Urdu
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

It is noted with great pleasure that the standard of attainment at Higher Urdu continues to be excellent.

The examination related clearly to the prescribed themes and topics at an appropriate level of challenge. Texts generated by the Setters gave rise to a range of marks, with a number of candidates scoring full marks for the whole exam.

The Reading topic combined both the topics of career and personal interest, while the Listening topic referred to the Higher education of a Pakistani girl in Scotland and her plans for the future. The secondary topic referred to the advantages and disadvantages of large and small towns, leading to the stimulus for essay writing in Urdu. It was very satisfying to note that there was a significant rise in the number of candidates securing full marks in Writing.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The performance in Reading and Listening overall was very good, with a number of candidates scoring full marks in Translation, Directed Writing and the follow-up essay on the stimulus. The bold font for the Urdu script was used purposefully to make it easy to read; the paper may have appeared long but in fact was not. Candidates, in general, coped well with the Reading passage and the text for the Listening.

The candidates performed very well in the Listening paper; the majority scored full marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The Reading paper was demanding, which was a challenge for candidates, but many did very well.

Writing at Higher level could be improved through some examination of Writing at Standard Grade, because candidates do not feel it easy to write at the higher levels.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Although many candidates did well, there is always room for development. Candidates who arrive late from Pakistan may find writing easier, while candidates who begin learning Urdu in Scotland may find it more challenging. The Principal Assessor would be happy to offer support to any colleague teaching Writing.

Teachers should ensure that candidates should be very familiar with the vocabulary that could be expected to arise from the prescribed themes and topics within Reading and Listening; in particular, listening to numbers, school and leisure vocabulary, weather, common adjectives and other qualifiers requires thorough preparation.

Centres should give practice in the appropriate use of a dictionary for exam purposes.

Centres should be aware that excessive brevity in candidates' answers, or candidates who answer in note form rather than in sentences for Higher, can often make the answers ambiguous, which may lead to lost marks. Candidates should also be aware that, while they should not give excessive information, they are unlikely to get a mark for a one-word answer.

Candidates should also be given practice in dealing with longer passages in class and to be made aware that there is no need to translate the whole passage to answer the questions. Teachers should give practice on pinpointing answers according to the allocated marks and encourage candidates to keep to the lines written on the question paper.

Please note that the passage for translation comprises the complete underlined passage and not the first and the last part of the sentence.

Transliteration of answers at Reading, Listening and Translation is unacceptable. Teachers should make use of the marking instructions, published on the SQA website, to support the appropriate answering of questions.

In Writing, candidates should ensure that they address all bullet points in a balanced way, with a response which is neither too long nor too short. Candidates should read the scenarios and the bullet points very carefully and be wary of writing essays which may be too long, sacrificing accuracy for length.

Candidates must be aware that the Translation section is worth 10% of the examination and that at least 10 minutes must be spent on it. They should carefully look at every word and pay particular attention to tenses and structures. It should be made clear to candidates that a clear, precise translation of the section should be given and that this is a totally different exercise from answering questions in the Reading paper.

It would be helpful to candidates if teachers could support the improvement of English expression; in some instances it was difficult to ascertain meaning from a candidate's answer.

In general, centres prepared candidates very well.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	58
Number of resulted entries in 2010	89

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 100				
A	83.1%	83.1%	74	70
B	9.0%	92.1%	8	60
C	4.5%	96.6%	4	50
D	1.1%	97.8%	1	45
No award	2.2%	100.0%	2	–

General commentary on grade boundaries

While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.