Course report 2019

Subject	Urdu
Level	Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The 2019 Higher Urdu course assessment offered flexibility, personalisation and elements of choice for candidates.

The question papers performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team and teachers suggested they were comprehensive in terms of concept coverage, and appropriately demanding. Some questions were accessible to all candidates while others were more challenging.

Most candidates performed well in the listening question paper. Candidates also completed the directed writing question paper and the assignment–writing to a good standard.

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in this question paper. Candidates attempted most questions, with many providing detailed responses.

Markers felt the questions were accessible, and the marking instructions were fair. There was a balance of high, low and average demand questions.

Candidates were presented with an article about a young boy visiting a village who writes about his experience, how this village looked different and was developed.

The translation proved to be moderately demanding for a few candidates, with complex and detailed language presented in an accessible manner. Some candidates applied their translation skills and knowledge of language successfully.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates were given the choice between two scenarios: scenario 1 (culture) on attending a wedding in Pakistan, and scenario 2 (learning) on attending a course in a school in Pakistan.

Both scenarios and their bullet points were designed to be open to allow candidates an element of personalisation and give them more control over their writing.

There was a strong preference of scenario 1 (culture) compared to scenario 2 (learning). Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible and accommodated a range of candidates and gave candidates the freedom to add information and demonstrate their writing skills.

Many candidates addressed each of the six bullet points provided in the scenario. The first bullet point contained two pieces of information. The remaining five bullet points contained one piece of information. The markers assessed candidates' ability to use appropriate past tenses and at least one other tense (for example, conditional or future).

The principle of choice in the directed writing question paper has proven to be worthwhile for candidates with many of them accessing the majority of available marks.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper presented candidates with a monologue on a part-time job, and a dialogue on the topic of a work/job experience in Pakistan. The contexts for both listening items consisted of common topics covered as part of the Higher Urdu course.

The listening question paper, in its structure and content, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and course topics. The principle of coherence has proven its value and resulted in some good and very good responses by candidates.

Assignment–writing

Candidates submitted a piece of writing in Urdu focusing on a context of society, culture or learning. Candidates performed well, with most achieving 16 marks or more. Candidates were well prepared for the assignment and some produced interesting pieces of writing.

Performance–talking

The centres verified for the performance–talking, had used SQA's course assessment task effectively and assessed candidates appropriately.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Most candidates performed particularly well in the reading question paper. Candidates answered questions 1 and 7 well.

The translation was generally well done, and most candidates gained at least half of the available marks. Sense units 2 and 3 were particularly well done by all candidates.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Both scenarios were fair and accessible to candidates and related to course content. Most candidates opted for scenario 1 (culture) rather than scenario 2 (learning). The majority of candidates were able to tackle all the bullet points and only a few omitted bullet points.

Most candidates wrote accurately, demonstrating that they could use a wide variety of structures and range of tenses.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates related well to the topic of work experience and jobs, and performed better in the dialogue than the monologue. There were very few instances of candidates failing to answer questions and most candidates were able to gain at least half of the available marks.

Questions which required little detail, were particularly well answered. Many candidates gained marks in questions 1(b), 2(b) and 2(d).

Assignment–writing

The overall presentation of the candidates' work was very good. Most candidates had well-structured essays written in paragraphs with a clear beginning and a conclusion. Most assignments had a range of vocabulary, including tenses, and used longer and detailed sentences, using a wide range of reasons, ideas and opinions.

Many candidates gave a good introduction and then drew a conclusion to their writing pieces, giving details in favour or against their topics.

Performance–talking

Some of the candidates in the sample verified performed well, using detailed and complex language and a variety of tenses with accurate grammar.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

In the reading question paper, some candidates failed to achieve full marks for a few questions, as they did not write enough detail in their answers. Some candidates lost marks by giving incomplete answers. In some instances, candidates lost marks due to poor English expression, which left the meaning of their answer unclear and difficult to understand.

In question 3, some candidates could not tell the difference between the Urdu words for a booklet or a leaflet and did not provide enough detail in their responses which resulted in them failing to gain full marks for this question.

In question 11, some candidates could not translate some parts of the translation section and lost marks.

Questions 3(a), (b), 5(a) and (b) proved to be a little challenging for some candidates.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

In the directed writing question paper, there were many good responses and very few poor responses. However, a small number of essays lacked the detailed and complex language, and a range of tenses, required at this level to gain high marks.

Question paper 2: Listening

Most candidates performed well in the questions asked from the employability context. Candidates provided the level of accuracy in translation required and allowed most candidates to gain marks. The topic area was accessible for most candidates. Many candidates found questions 1(d), 2(e) and (g) challenging and could not answer them properly.

Assignment–writing

Some candidates did not write a topic for their assignments. In terms of the topics addressed, markers noted that some topics tended to lend themselves to basic language, which did not reflect the level of detailed language required for Higher Urdu. For example, the topic of 'my holidays' proved to be, for some candidates, a topic which may not lend itself to enough variety in language resource, or enough range of reasons/opinions/ideas.

In some other assignments, candidates addressing the topic of school or studies or free-time tended to go off this topic and ended up writing about other areas.

Performance–talking

A small number of candidates' performances displayed grammatical errors and lacked depth and complexity.

It appeared that some candidates repeated themselves and presented the topic where it was not a requirement anymore.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

In both the reading and listening question papers, candidates should read the questions carefully, and respond giving the correct amount of information, ensuring they give enough detail.

The *Higher Modern Languages Course Specification*, available on SQA's website, has detailed marking instructions for reading and listening and shows the level of detail candidates are required to give in their answers.

Candidates should be familiar with the approach, for example they must provide the appropriate level of detail to access the full range of marks. Candidates can also practice questions in past papers which can be accessed from SQA's website.

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates should be familiar with and recognise the structures, grammar and detailed language appropriate for this level. It is also important to ensure that candidates know how to make use of their dictionary and to take care when they use words while translating.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The overall performance in this part of the course assessment shows that centres prepared candidates very well. Candidates should develop ways of addressing the bullet points, which allow them to use a range of vocabulary and structures, as well as applying knowledge of verbs, persons of verbs and tenses.

Candidates should be able to provide at least one accurate sentence for each of the six bullet points. Centres are strongly encouraged to allow candidates to practise manipulating the language in a wide range of unfamiliar bullet points.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, candidates should be familiar with a range of basic vocabulary from the four broad contexts of: society, learning, employability, culture. As well as knowledge of words and phrases, they should also know and understand a range of tenses and verb forms. Attention to detail is also key, and centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the difference in meaning for certain words.

Assignment–writing

Candidates should aim to have a strong focus on one of the contexts and a topic; they should ensure they include a range of ideas, opinions and reasons.

Candidates should also ensure that there is a clear introduction and conclusion to the piece of work, which should also include a range of verbs, verb forms and some tenses to show markers their ability to use language resource and variety.

Candidates should structure the assignment–writing in paragraphs and the title should clearly relate to the content of the overall piece of work.

There should also be a conclusion in the last paragraph giving personal views.

Performance–talking

The assessor can ask questions to initiate the conversation. Candidates are only required to give the name of the chosen topic and the context; no presentation is required. There should be no repetition of the same information.

Two different topics from two different themes should be covered out of four contexts at Higher of: society, learning, employability, culture.

The revised marking instructions shows acceptable answers and the level of detail required to gain full marks at Higher.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	103

Number of resulted entries in 2019	92

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	81.5%	81.5%	75	84
B	12.0%	93.5%	11	72
C	4.3%	97.8%	4	60
D	1.1%	98.9%	1	48
No award	1.1%	-	1	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.