Course Report 2018

Subject	Urdu
Level	Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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

Summary of the course assessment

The content of the course assessment covered all four contexts of:society, learning, employability and culture across the three components. Markers noted that the question papers and marking instructions were fair and that the papers were accessible and offered an appropriate level of challenge at Higher. Candidates performed particularly well in the reading and directed writing question papers, and very well in the listening question paper.

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

The reading question paper (worth 30 marks), covered the context of employability. It consisted of balanced questions in terms of demand, and candidates performed very well.

Candidates are required to read one text in Urdu and then answer questions in English. In the text, a young boy discusses his experience of an apprenticeship in Pakistan. Candidates also had to answer one overall purpose question, which required them to demonstrate a good understanding of the details presented in the text, and how they interpret these. The text had a small section to translate into English, which required a level of sophistication and accuracy in the language. The translation passage measures literacy and high-order thinking skills. Full marks are available from the translation with a very good rendering of the text into English.

In the directed writing question paper (worth 10 marks), candidates were given a choice of two stimuli, each with four unseen bullet points to address. Candidates had to write 120–150 words, and had a choice between the contexts of learning or society.

In scenario 1: learning, candidates were asked to write about their experience of taking part in an exchange with a Pakistani school or college. The four bullet points were as follows: what part of Pakistan you went to and for how long, what you liked/disliked about the Pakistani school/college, how you got on with your exchange partner and if you intend to keep in touch with your partner in the future.

For scenario 2: society, candidates were asked to write about their visit to Pakistan when they stayed with a friend's family for a month. The four bullet points were as follows: how you travelled to Pakistan and what the journey was like, what you thought of your accommodation, what kind of things you did during your stay there, and whether you would recommend a trip like this to other people.

Most students chose scenario 2: society, and performed well.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Writing

The listening and writing question paper (worth 30 marks) consisted of section 1: listening (20 marks) and section 2: writing (10 marks).

The listening section of the question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue from the context of culture. The monologue, worth 8 marks, was on the topic of a visit to Kashmir, and the dialogue, worth 12 marks, was on the topic of movies.

The writing section of the question paper, required candidates to write about what kind of film they would like to make. Candidates were asked to write 120–150 words. The subject provided plenty of scope for candidates to apply their knowledge of a range of ideas to develop their response.

Component 3: performance–talking

A small number of centres were verified this year. Most of the candidates sampled did well. Centres provided evidence of internal verification showing brief written comments that helped the verifiers to assess the assessor's judgement. The audio provided was of good quality and in a suitable format.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

Overall, candidates performed very well in the reading question paper. Candidates related well to the relevant topic of work experience. Questions 2, 3, 5 and 6 were answered exceptionally well by candidates. The overall purpose question was managed well, with most candidates gaining at least 1 mark and many gaining the full marks available. This was commendable given the degree of challenge across the five sense units.

Candidates coped very well with the directed writing question paper. Scenario 2: society was by far the more popular of the two. Candidates seemed particularly at ease with the task of writing about their trip to Pakistan. In scenario 2: learning, responses were slightly weaker but most candidates coped well.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Writing

Overall, candidates performed well in the listening and writing question paper. The dialogue proved to be slightly more accessible than the monologue. In item 1, questions (b)(i), (b)(ii), and (e), and in item 2, questions (d) and (e) were answered exceptionally well by many candidates.

Most candidates coped well with the writing section of the question paper. There were examples of outstanding responses.

Component 3: performance–talking

The candidates in the sample verified performed very well in the presentation, often better or much better than in the conversation. Some candidates used language and structures going beyond the demand required at Higher. Pronunciation was overall better in the presentation than in the conversation.

Over all, almost all the candidates performed very well and secured high marks for the performance–talking.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

Candidates found some questions challenging, and in some cases did not answer the question fully.

In questions 5 and 9, some candidates did not give sufficient detail to access the full range of marks. Some confused these with the translation section.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Writing

In the listening section of the question paper, in item 1 question (a) and item 2 questions (b) and (c), candidates did not give sufficient detail to access the full range of marks.

In the writing section of the question paper, a number of candidates found it difficult to express a comparative in Urdu. There were examples of candidates making spelling errors.

Component 3: performance–talking

Some of the performances were too short in length and others were unnecessarily long. Some candidates took less than 1 minute for the presentation and some others talked for more than 3 minutes, which did not help the candidate e to discuss the topic in detail.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

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. Detailed marking instructions for reading and listening are available on SQA's website and show the level of detail required for answers at this level.

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

In the reading question paper, candidates should read the questions carefully and then re-read their responses to check English expression. The questions in the reading text offered candidates 'signposts' to answers.

Overall, in the translation, candidates performed well, but it is important to keep in mind that full marks in the translation are only available if there is a very good rendering of the text into English. Candidates should allow enough time to complete the translation where accuracy plays a very important role.

In the writing question paper, most candidates achieved the 6 marks threshold. Those who achieved 8 and 10 marks were able to demonstrate a flair for the language, and performed well across the three categories of content, accuracy and language resource.

Component 2: question paper 1: Listening and Writing

Centres should continue to allow candidates plenty of practice for the listening section of the question paper. Remind candidates to write notes for the first two or three questions after the first playing of the recording, and then write notes for the remaining questions after the second playing.

Centres should ensure that candidates have a good knowledge of the present tense for the writing section of the question paper, particularly irregular verbs.

It is also important to ensure that candidates know how to make use of their dictionary.

Component 3: performance–talking

The interlocutor should ask open-ended questions that enable the candidate to discuss the topic in detail. Interlocutors are encouraged not to introduce more than two topics from two different contexts as this leaves a very little room for a detailed discussion. The interlocutors should also be considerate when asking questions about the topic presented and avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	104

Number of resulted entries in 2018	103

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	80.6%	80.6%	83	72
B	9.7%	90.3%	10	61
C	5.8%	96.1%	6	50
D	1.9%	98.1%	2	44
No award	1.9%	-	2	-

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 which 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.

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 Business Manager 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.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.