



GCSE

Urdu

8648/SF Paper 1 Speaking Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

8648

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General comments:

As always, there was a wide range in the standard of work produced by students and their performance was generally good. Great credit for this goes to the students themselves and also to the hard work and skills of their teachers. This was seen most clearly in generally good marks achieved in the role-play. Practice with past examination papers had clearly prepared students very well for this part of the test.

The general conversation and photo cards were, on many occasions, not as strong as the role-play but there were still some excellent conversations for this tier. These conversations showed good interaction between student and teacher. However, there were occasions when this was not the case and where students found it a challenge to maintain a conversation. In spite of this, the standard overall was good.

Correct conduct of the test by teachers is crucial and many teachers conducted the exam well. There were many schools/colleges where exams were conducted by a native speaker/teacher who did not have sufficient knowledge of the AQA specification/language skills, and they did not follow the sequence provided by AQA. This adversely affected students' marks. Poor timing, especially of the general conversation, sometimes led to a loss of marks.

Teachers should not use English during the course of the test. The mark scheme says: 'If, in any part of the test, the teacher either asks a question or gives a prompt in English, you must ignore the student's reply'. In the role-play, it is acceptable for the teacher to prompt the question task by saying to the student (Have you got a question in Urdu? or something similar in Urdu). However, if the teacher asks in English 'Have you got a question?', whatever the student says will score zero, as clearly stated in the mark scheme. It was not uncommon for that to happen.

Examiners used a Speaking Scoresheet (SSS) in order to arrive at fair and consistent marks for all students. A copy of this can be found at the back of the mark scheme.

Part 1 – Role-plays

It was pleasing to see good performances of the students in role-plays. Their performance in the task requiring students to ask a question was less successful than the other tasks.

Considering the conduct of the role-play task in the speaking assessment, most teachers adhered to the Teacher's booklet and followed the guidance perfectly.

In many cases where teachers re-worded the script, any subsequent response by the student was invalidated. Many students' performance was affected due to:

- using English/Mirpuri/Punjabi words
- missing out the student question or asking an irrelevant question.
- using the wrong tense.
- not following the tasks given in the role-play
- a teacher asking the question which was supposed to be asked by the student
- allowing the students to give lengthy responses
- the teacher providing detailed and lengthy responses to student questions.

In role-play tasks, some students struggled to read the following phrases in Urdu (translated into English): Garden, taxi fare and plans after GCSE

Part 2 - Photo cards

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Just under 32% of students achieved a mark in the top band and a further 26% accessed the 10-12 band. Most students were able to give a reasonably well-developed response to the first prepared question (What is in the picture?). In the case of lower attaining students, the responses to this question were brief and very basic. Responses were enhanced where students had used the 'PALMS (Physical, Action, Location, Mood, Something else)' technique to develop their answers. At Foundation, many students also invented a present continuous form to describe activities in the picture.

Questions discriminated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but there were some that were done noticeably less well than others. They had clearly understood and applied the criteria on page 20 of the mark scheme, which deals with the marking of the photo card, and passed this information on successfully to their students. Any teachers who are not fully aware of how the photo card is marked are strongly recommended to read page 20 of the mark scheme and to look at the examples that are given for the award of different marks in pages 21 - 28.

The following questions were the ones which students found most challenging (translated into English),

- What is your opinion about using social media by the students?
- What are main issues for young people in your area?
- How do you help a local charity at your school?
- What should be in your area?
- What school subjects do you find hard and why?
- What is your opinion on running your own business?

Most examiners conducted the photo card test very well. Some students' performances were affected due to:

- using the students' card to assess the student and as a result missed out questions 4 & 5 completely.
- allowing students to go into far too much detail with 12, 13 pieces of information for some questions. **Only three pieces of information are required.**
- not asking the questions in the correct order.
- not using the required tense/s.
- not using 3rd person verbs.
- using English/Punjabi/Mirpuri words/phrases by the students and teachers.

Part 3 - General conversation

Students' performance in the general conversation is very good. 38% and 41% of students achieved a mark in the top band 9-10 for communication and range and accuracy of language. 41% and 37% students accessed a mark in the top band 5 for pronunciation and intonation, and spontaneity and fluency. Their performance in communication is affected by a combination of wrong themes, poor timing and not asking questions. Some students' performances were also affected because teachers did not use the appropriate questions according to their ability. Some teachers conducted the exam in English.

For many students, the conversation element of the test was where they performed well. Although, some students' performance was affected due to:

- teachers only covering one theme with students which meant that some very capable students lost half of their communication marks
- use of English and other languages instead of Urdu.
- not being well prepared for the 2nd theme allocated by AQA.
- not asking a question in the general conversation.
- not asking questions to assess a range of skills (opinions, justifications and use of tenses).
- no real interaction between teacher and student.
- asking very closed questions and not giving an opportunity to students to extend their answers.
- giving lengthy responses.
- using the same questions for both Foundation and Higher students
- not using differentiated questions
- not conducting the general conversation for the minimum length.

Advice to teachers

- 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 student voices clearly.
- 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 must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to the Irregularities Team at AQA, as will instances where it sounds as though something is being written down.
- 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.

Key aspects of good practice for teachers

- Train native speakers to ensure they follow the AQA specification ie use of correct themes, timing, use of Urdu throughout the assessment and not re-wording the script
- Check recording equipment before the day of the first test.
- Check sound levels are adequate and that a suitable application, website or programme is used.
- Respond to a student's question briefly.
- Have all the required material in front of you. For example, the role-play card, photo card etc...
- Conduct the whole of the test in Urdu, including the introduction of the different sections. Don't use English words/phrases in questions and remind students that they use Urdu not English. They won't be credited for English.
- Ensure the exam is conducted by a qualified/trained teacher with good Urdu language skills.
- Have a clear idea of how the exam should be conducted and how they can help students achieve higher marks by asking relevant questions
- Use a timer to monitor the duration of the general conversation
- At the start of the test, announce the Role play, Photo card and nominated Theme for the Conversation chosen by the student.
- Pay attention to what the student says. In the most recent exams, some teachers asked a question which the student had just answered. This clearly bewildered some students.

- Adhere closely to timings.
- Invite the student to ask a question in the Conversation in good time rather than at the very end.
- Examiners are provided with a grid showing the Role play, Photo card and nominated Theme for each student. Teachers must ensure that they keep to the Sequence Chart, printed at the back of the Teacher’s Booklet.
- Examiners must read and follow all types of guidance provided by AQA.

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 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 what, how, where, when, why?
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Urdu. You can say “ please could you repeat the question? 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.