



GCSE

Urdu

8648/SH Paper 1 Speaking Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

8648
June 2024

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General comments

This year students have performed well in all three parts (role-play, photo card and general conversation) of the assessment for this tier. This was clearly evident as generally good marks were achieved in the role-play, photo card and general conversation. It is extremely pleasing to note that most teachers (especially where Urdu is taught in the curriculum) conducted the tests in a highly professional way, closely following the guidelines laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. However, some exams had been carried out by non-specialist Urdu teachers who had very little knowledge of the specification and may have been employed as examiners due to speaking the language. This negatively impacted the performances of some very capable students.

In circumstances where the examination guidelines had been followed accurately, the tests ran smoothly, something which put the students at ease. The prescribed combination of Role-play, Photo card and General Conversation in the sequencing grid was adhered to by the vast majority of teachers. 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.

It was also noted that some teachers used English during the test. 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.

Most students performed in a way that justified their tier of entry. There were, however, some lower attaining students entered at Higher tier where a Foundation tier entry would have been more appropriate.

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.

Conducting the Role-play task in the speaking assessment, most teachers adhered to the Teacher’s booklet and followed the guidance perfectly. 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 eg one detail or two details etc. There were also some cases where teachers missed some questions eg unpredictable element or didn’t give students an opportunity to ask a question. Teacher examiners are reminded that all tasks in the role-play should be completed, so students are not disadvantaged.

Teachers who did not follow the guidance from the specification struggled mostly with the element involving the student asking a question. In some instances, the question was completely missed out while in other cases, students were encouraged to ask any question and this did not follow the script of the role-play. Some teachers asked the student question which resulted in the response being invalidated and marks impacted adversely. A few teachers turned the role-play into a general conversation and had detailed discussions with the students.

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, teachers gave extended answers when a student asked a question. Schools/colleges are reminded that teachers need to give a brief answer because they are not being assessed.

In role-play 7, students were asked how the waiter could help them. Some students struggled with this question and were unable to explain that there had been an issue with the food. The teachers need to prepare students for these types of questions because we have used these questions in different scenarios.

Here is the translation of Urdu phrases, which some students found very challenging. Problem with food, solution, birthday celebration other tasks that are not mentioned were generally completed well, especially those asking for opinions and, where appropriate, reasons.

To summarise, students' performances were affected due to:

- missing out the student question or asking an irrelevant question.
- using the wrong tense.
- not following tasks given in the role-play
- teachers asking a question which was supposed to be asked by the student.
- using English/Mirpuri/Punjabi words

Part 2 - Photo card

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Just under 60% of students achieved a mark in the top band (13 – 15) and a further 30% accessed the 10-12 band. Some students gave over-long responses where a lack of clarity had an impact on the mark awarded.

Most students were able to give a reasonably well-developed response to the first prepared question (What is in the picture?). Responses were enhanced where students had used the 'PALMS (Physical, Action, Location, Mood, something else)' technique to develop their answers.

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.

Here are the tasks (translated into English), which some students found challenging.

- Why did the population of the world increase? (Card I)
- How does your school celebrate the student's successes? (Card K)

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.

The following questions in Urdu (translated into English) were read by some teachers asking students to give their response in present tense. Teachers are reminded that they cannot change the tense.

- Why did the population of the world increase? (Card I)
- What changes recently did take place in your area? (Card J)

Most teachers conducted the photo card test very well, however, 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 all 3 tenses.
- not using 3rd person verbs.

Part 3 – General Conversation

For most students, the Conversation element of the test was where they performed best. Just about 57% and 62% students achieved a mark in top band 9-10 for communication and range and accuracy of language. 71% and 76% students accessed a mark in top band 5 for pronunciation and intonation and spontaneity and fluency. Their performance in communication was affected by combination of wrong themes, poor timing and not asking question. There were many impressive and spontaneous conversations from the highest-achieving students. Although, some students' performance was affected due to:

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

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
- 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 must use Urdu not English. They won’t be credited for English.
- Ensure the exam is conducted by someone who knows the requirements of the AQA specification
- Use a timer to monitor the duration of the general conversation and adhere closely to timings.
- Invite the student to ask a question in the Conversation in good time rather than at the very end.
- Teachers must read and follow all types of guidance provided by the exam board.

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