

BENGALI

Paper 3204/01
Composition

Key messages

In order to do well on this paper, candidates need to demonstrate that they can:

- express thoughts, feelings and opinions in order to interest, inform or convince
- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- communicate effectively and appropriately
- demonstrate adequate control of paragraphing, vocabulary, syntax and grammar, punctuation and spelling
- show a sense of audience and an awareness of register and style in both formal and informal situations.

General comments

On the whole, candidates performed well this session. Most attempted both sections of the examination, regardless of their ability. The best answers were characterised by well-organised, logically-sequenced work in which paragraphing, varied vocabulary and apt idioms and proverbs were used effectively.

Some candidates scored low marks as a result of irrelevance, inconsistency and weak plots. A few candidates answered without referring to the bullet points in **Section A** and so did not score well, despite demonstrating reasonable command of the Bengali language. In **Section B** some candidates deviated considerably from the topic, which again limited their marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Letter, Report, Dialogue or Speech

Candidates were asked to write a response of approximately 120 words in Bengali to one of two given topics.

Question 1

This was the most popular question in **Section A** and overall performance was good. Almost all candidates interpreted the word বনভোজন as 'dining in the forest' rather than 'picnic', which meant that many candidates referred to either সুন্দরবন or বান্দরবন, thus leading to a deviation from the required theme. In many cases candidates gave an account of a recent holiday.

The majority of candidates tackled bullet point 1 reasonably well. A small number of candidates coped well with bullet point 2, mentioning things such as carrying different ingredients, the names of ingredients and cooking utensils, cooking at the chosen location and their opinion on the food. Many candidates touched only briefly on bullet point 2, writing about বাড়ি থেকে নেওয়া খাবারটা খলোম or স্থানে একটা হে টলে ভাড়াভাড়া খয়ে নলিমা for which only partial marks could be awarded. The response to bullet point 3 was varied. The bullet point asked candidates to describe a memorable funny event from the picnic and a few candidates portrayed this well. Others mentioned a memorable event that was not funny and this limited the number of marks awarded. Bullet point 4 was generally not handled well. The task asked কে তা কে তা সময়ে প্রবাসী বন্ধুর অভাবটা বেশি অনুভব করছিলি and this was often overlooked or addressed only very briefly. All bullet points must be addressed in order for access to the highest marks to be available.

Question 2

Some candidates performed quite well in this question. Those who used the bullet points as questions and gave appropriate answers often scored high marks. A few candidates gave a long and irrelevant introduction, which was not required.

In general, most candidates addressed bullet points 1, 3 and 4 appropriately. Some candidates encountered difficulty with bullet point 2, which stated "...কার এবং কীসরে ভূমিকা উল্লেখ্যে গব্য". Some candidates referred either to কার ভূমিকা or simply to কীসরে ভূমিকা, which resulted in a loss of marks.

Section B – Essay

Candidates were asked to write an essay of approximately 200 words in Bengali from a choice of three topics.

Question 3

This question asked candidates to express their opinion on whether or not pesticides should be banned during the production of food. A small number of candidates performed well on this question, giving their own opinion and providing a suitable debate or discussion of the topic. The majority of candidates wrote pros and cons of the use of pesticides, rather than trying to establish their own opinion as required by the question (তবে আমার মতামত কী?). Some candidates seemed to have misunderstood the meaning of কীটনাশক and wrote an essay about a new fertiliser with its own advantages and disadvantages. Examiners were looking for candidates' own views and for well-established arguments either in favour of or against the use of this particular chemical substance.

Question 4

This question asked candidates to compose an essay about their favourite personality, and this was a very popular question. A small number of candidates answered this question well, successfully portraying their favourite personality and explaining why his/her good qualities influenced them in real life. The majority of candidates wrote a lengthy biography of a famous person, or of someone they knew well, without providing reference to why or how this person became their প্রিয় ব্যক্তিত্ব. This lack of analysis or link to the candidate's own life inevitably limited the number of marks that could be awarded.

Question 5

This question asked candidates to compose an essay on a favourite event from their childhood. This proved popular with candidates and a range of performance was demonstrated here. Some candidates approached the question well and presented their answers skilfully. Others narrated a memorable event from their childhood which was not necessarily a favourite one, such as আমার স্বচক্ষে দেখা দাদীর মৃত্যুর সেই দিটি কখনও ভুলব না or সামান্য অপরাধে জন্ম সদিনে এমন বদেম মার খয়েছিলিাম যে আজও মনে পড়লে দুঃখ পাই. A "favourite" event is a positive experience, but a "memorable" one could be either positive or negative. Candidates need to ensure that they read the questions carefully, and understand them, before embarking on their essays.

BENGALI

Paper 3204/02

Language Usage and Comprehension

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates need to make sure that they express themselves in clear, correct and concise language.

In addition, candidates need to:

- show that they can understand and adequately convey information
- understand, order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- evaluate information, select what is relevant to specific purposes and express it in their own words
- exercise control of appropriate structures
- understand and employ a range of apt vocabulary
- recognise implicit meaning and attitude
- demonstrate an awareness of the conventions of paragraphing and sentence structure
- demonstrate adequate control of vocabulary, syntax and grammar, punctuation and spelling
- ensure that their handwriting is legible.

General comments

Candidates were tested on their knowledge of grammar, their ability to manipulate sentences and their comprehension skills in a variety of tasks. It was pleasing to find that the majority of candidates had completed the paper within the allocated time, and there were very few examples of unfinished or partially answered questions. The work of several candidates was outstanding, though there were examples of candidates who might have achieved a better result if they had been more familiar with the required exam techniques. Generally speaking, candidates excelled in the grammatical tasks in **Section A**. The comprehension questions in **Section B** and **Section C** were attempted with a more variable degree of success.

The quality of the Bengali used in the answers varied widely. Some candidates demonstrated the ability to manipulate the language very skilfully. There were also instances where candidates were unable or not confident enough to write answers in their own words in exercise **C6**. It should be noted that candidates who rely too heavily on lifting from the text cannot gain access to high marks for the quality of their language. In contrast, attempts to write answers which made an effort to manipulate language were awarded higher marks, provided the wording did not interfere with comprehension.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Exercise A1

Candidates had to separate five words. This task was quite straightforward. A small number of candidates struggled to separate the word correctly in **Question 4**.

Exercise A2

The majority of candidates were able to answer the questions in this exercise correctly, though there were some instances where a number of weaker candidates struggled to choose the correct idiom, proverb, or word-pair. **Question 7** was found to be the most challenging.

Exercise A3

In this task candidates are asked to transform sentences using an original sentence and clues given at the beginning or at the end of the sentence they have to produce. Candidates did very well, apart from some of the weaker candidates who struggled with **Question 13**.

Exercise A4

Most candidates scored full to near-full marks for this exercise. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled with **Questions 17, 20, 22** and **25**. Candidates are advised to read through the text first to get a feel for overall meaning of the passage and also to avoid choosing the same word for more than one gap.

Section B

Exercise B5

The examination becomes more challenging in this section, and **Question 27**, **Question 30** and **Question 31** in particular were not always answered correctly by the weaker candidates. Better candidates achieved either full marks or only answered one question wrong. As with **Exercise A4**, candidates are reminded that they should read through the whole text thoroughly before they tackle the questions. Candidates are also advised to read each question carefully and to select the correct answer from among the distracters by a process of deliberate verification against the text and careful elimination of the incorrect options.

Section C

Exercise C6

The majority of candidates performed well in this open-ended comprehension exercise, particularly in response to **Questions 33-36**. Some candidates confused their answers to **Question 37** and **Question 38**. It is therefore advisable for candidates to read through all the questions first before they start answering the first question to avoid unnecessary overlap between answers. As mentioned before, weaker candidates tended to copy sentences or large chunks of sentences from the text without making an attempt to manipulate the language used in the source. This not only affected the linguistic quality of weaker candidates' answers, it also rendered the majority of their answers incorrect as the language was not or was insufficiently tailored to the phrasing of the question. As a result, the meaning of many weaker responses was often in doubt and it was not always clear whether some of the weaker candidates had properly taken on board what some of the questions asked them to do.

Exercise C7

Candidates were asked to give the meaning of five words from the comprehension text. The meaning of these words depended on their use in the text. As it is open-ended and tests productive knowledge of Bengali, this question is aimed at the stronger candidates, many of whom did very well. **Questions 39, 42** and **43** in particular posed problems for weaker candidates. Candidates are therefore advised to read widely in order to develop a strong vocabulary and to practise defining Bengali words.