BENGALI

| Paper 3204/01 |
| **Composition** |

Key message

To do well on this paper, candidates should:

- write accurately
- use a wide range of vocabulary and structures
- provide a range of well-developed ideas
- ensure their essays are fully relevant to the chosen topic, well organised and coherent.

General comments

Most candidates performed quite well this year. All candidates attempted to answer the essay questions in both parts of the question paper. Many presented work of outstanding quality and achieved high marks as a result. Others struggled for a variety of reasons, including: forgetting to refer to all the bullet points in *Section A* or to all parts of the question in *Section B*; irrelevance to the task set; major spelling errors; the use of informal language, including colloquialisms; and unidiomatic words or phrases. A large number of candidates ended up crossing out several parts of their work for the sake of staying within the limit, especially in *Section A*. In some cases important parts were deleted as a result, which could have been avoided by devising an essay plan before starting to write.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidates were required to write a letter of complaint to a hotel, expressing frustration with the poor service received and demanding compensation. The vast majority of candidates referred to bullet points one and two to good effect, although some responses to bullet point three were not quite as convincing or well considered. In response to bullet point four, a large number of candidates neglected to specify the three ways in which they wished to be compensated for the poor service and suggested how the service could be improved instead, which was not what was asked. It is therefore crucial that candidates are reminded to read the all parts of the question thoroughly if they wish to achieve full marks for the content of their answer.

Question 2

Candidates needed to write a speech on the computer as a tool for providing entertainment. Whilst some candidates referred to all bullet points, addressing possible advantages and disadvantages of the computer as a source of entertainment, others appeared to have overlooked the word 'entertainment' and wrote on three unrelated aspects of computer usage, which inhibited their marks for Content. Not everyone was able to formulate a suitable conclusion to their speech in response to the fourth bullet point. Some ended their speech without a conclusion or simply wrote 'thank you for listening to my speech,' preventing the award of full marks. As mentioned under **Question 1**, candidates must read the question very carefully if they wish to achieve the highest marks.

Question 3

Candidates were required to write an essay on a solitary midday. Among those who attempted this topic, many ignored the word 'solitary' and described a more vivacious noon-time atmosphere. A few others wrote a narrative about an outing with friends or family or even described a 'memorable day'. It is therefore important to reiterate that candidates refer to all parts of the question to ensure their response is fully relevant, not just to certain aspects of it.

Question 4

In this question candidates were expected to write about the importance of Bengali language and culture. Strong candidates managed to establish their argument in a logical and convincing way. Some of the weaker candidates started their essay with an appropriate introduction but soon tended to drift away from the theme. Others didn't engage with Bengali culture or the Bengali language but focused their efforts on writing on episodes in Bengali history, especially the Bangladesh War of Independence, which shows how important it is that candidates take the time to read and reflect properly on the essay question set.

Question 5

Candidates were required to discuss whether physical education should be compulsory at school. Candidates were also expected to express their personal opinion with valid and logical arguments. Some candidates wrote essays on the general importance of sports that lacked sufficient reference to task set. A proper essay plan and careful consideration of the specific demands of the question would very likely have boosted the score of these candidates.

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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

The overall standard of performances was encouraging. There were a few outstanding performances. In some cases, performance could have been improved by closer familiarity with relevant examination technique for this paper, for example the need to comply with the question paper rubrics.

The majority of candidates attempted all parts of the paper. There were very few examples of unfinished or partially answered questions.

Generally speaking, candidates coped quite well with the more straightforward grammar tasks. Performance in the comprehension exercises was varied. There was wide variation in the quality of candidates' written Bengali. Some candidates demonstrated the ability to manipulate the language very skilfully. There were also instances where less able students struggled to write answers in their own words, even at a very simple level. In **Exercise C6**, some candidates were heavily reliant on word-for-word copying from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Exercise A1
This exercise comprised the task of combining part/s of words into whole words. In general, candidates found the task quite straightforward and performed well. However, a number of candidates struggled with **Questions 1**, **2** and **5**. Many candidates answered at least three questions successfully; however, only the strongest candidates scored full marks in this exercise.

Exercise A2

Relatively few candidates scored full marks in this section, but the majority of candidates were able to answer most of the questions correctly. **Question 9** in particular proved to be challenging to some candidates. In a number of cases, candidates selected the wrong idiom/proverb here.

Exercise A3

This was a sentence transformation exercise. In general, candidates attempted this exercise very well. However, the frequency of minor spelling mistakes was high.   A number of candidates struggled with **Question 15**. Very often this was due to the omission of the appropriate punctuation mark. In some cases candidates manipulated the sentence in an affirmative or even a negative sentence, which could not qualify for the marks available.

Most candidates handled the transformation from reported to indirect speech form well, by changing the relevant word. A handful of candidates simply copied out the original version of the sentence, including the speech marks.

Exercise A4

In general, candidates seemed to find this exercise quite accessible. Many candidates scored 16 marks or higher. Relatively weak candidates often struggled with **Questions 16** and **21**.

Section B

Exercise B5 (MCQ comprehension)

Performance was generally strong, with many candidates achieving full marks and all candidates answering at least some of the questions correctly. Less able candidates tended to struggle with **Question 28**, often choosing option (2) instead of the correct answer (3). Some candidates also had difficulty with **Question 29**. For **Question 32**, a number of candidates opted for option (3), whereas the correct answer was option (4).

Section C

Exercise C6 (OE comprehension)

This exercise comprised a reading comprehension passage followed by open-ended comprehension questions. This was the section of the paper that candidates seemed to find the most challenging. There was a wide range of performance. **Question 35** proved to be straightforward for most candidates, with a majority scoring the full 6 marks available. However, many candidates mixed up their answers for **Questions 33** and **34**, and for **Questions 36** and **37**. In general, weaker candidates struggled with **Questions 34** and **38**.

Many candidates had difficulty answering questions in their own words and there were frequent instances of lifting. However, some candidates showed great skill in manipulating the wording of the text. Even in the stronger performances, candidates tended to make many grammatical and syntactical errors.

Exercise C7 (Vocabulary)

Here candidates were expected to give the meaning of five specified words from the comprehension text. Candidates generally made a good attempt to provide the appropriate meanings, and scores of 6 or higher were frequently seen. Many had difficulty with **Questions 40** and **41**, and candidates often seemed to be resorting to guesswork here, providing answers which had no relevance to the actual meaning of the words.