BANGLADESH STUDIES

The strengths of the answers were more in their knowledge, often very detailed, than on the explanations and judgements required. There were many good accounts which did not attempt to go up a level and relate what they knew to the actual question. There were a few attempts at sustained judgement on the relative significance or importance of factors or explanations. Some more consideration of the importance of what has been studied would result in much stronger answers and higher marks. There was greater confidence in conveying information in **Questions 1** and **2** than in **Questions 3** and **4**, but the problem noted in a previous report of too much time spent on **Question 1** remains. More consideration needs to be given to planning time and there should be less reliance on recounting factual information which often has a limit in terms of marks if not accompanied by analysis.

Question 1

This question is headed 'The Culture and Heritage of Bangladesh' and candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of the term 'culture' rather than relying on biographical knowledge or general factual content about elements of culture. The tendency for unfocused description limits the marks that can be awarded. Attempts to explain the cultural significance of Begum Rokeya tended to be limited by a largely descriptive approach. Similarly, the importance for Bangladesh culture of the different elements needed to be explained more.

(a) There was some sound knowledge shown in this multiple choice question. It is always worth attempting to answer each question, rather than leaving blanks.

Only a few got 'The Comet' as the answer to **(iii)**.

(b) Everybody knew who Begum Rokeya was. Many wrote out her biography without explaining directly enough why she was considered to be such an important cultural figure. Candidates need to offer more direct statements about significance, as well as the basic facts.

(c) As with part **(b)**, virtually all the candidates could write a paragraph about each of the three topics. To access the higher marks candidates needed to assess the importance of the medium given and make a valid comparison between the choices. Judgement and explanation of the relative importance of different elements are higher level skills which do need to be practised as preparation for the examination. It is a more straightforward task to learn the elements of different aspects of culture than to consider why these elements are of significance and which might be more important. There is no set answer expected and candidates should have considered the criteria for the importance of, for example, dance and drama.

Question 2

This was by the far the most popular choice and most candidates attempted the question.

(a) Knowledge was somewhat uneven, especially on **(iii)** – **(v)**, but stronger on **(i)** and **(ii)**.

(b)(i) Most candidates had learned the story of the taking of Nadia and there were generally high marks for this.

(ii) This question needed focus on reasons rather than a narrative. Candidates should be aware that different skills are required for explanation than for recounting a sequence of events.

(c) Many candidates wrote a short narrative for this question. The focus of the question, which was about the religious development, was addressed by few. It is very important for information to be selected appropriately and that the question is read carefully. Description tended to predominate,

though there was some explanation – mainly about the Sufis. As with 1**(c)**, more atte... ...
be paid to making judgements about why one of these elements could be seen as more...
This skill needs to be much more developed and candidates should always make some a...
judgement rather than simply writing about the three elements.

Question 3

This was not answered by many candidates. There was reasonable knowledge in **(a)** though **(ii)** was not always answered well. There was some very good knowledge shown by some about the Cabinet Mission plan. All the **(b) (i)** answers showed a lot of knowledge about key events.

To answer **(b) (ii)** candidates needed to actually explain the violence as opposed to writing about it. Part **(c)** produced some variable answers with some misunderstanding of terms, especially the Muslim League. Answers were more generalised than similar answers to Part **(c)** in the other questions. Few offered much in the way of comparison or judgement about relative importance.

Question 4

Again, the question of choice for many candidates

(a)   Not many knew the name of the resistance movement, and yet many could then name it in part **(c)**

It was important to understand the meaning of the word 'allies' as there were some surprising choices.

(b)(i)   Most candidates could write enough about the Awami League to earn the five marks on offer for this question. Again factual knowledge was a strength here.

   (ii)   Many candidates wrote a lot on the language issue to the exclusion of all other issues, which while valid, prevented them then getting more than Level 2 marks. More able candidates still needed greater range and balance.

(c)   Many responses made an insufficient attempt to explain importance and some consisted of a couple of sentences on each of the three prompts.

Knowledge about the resistance movement was important in answering this question, many wrote solely about events during the language dispute, rather than in 1971.

Similarly, Indian intervention, which was probably vital, was treated summarily, as was international opinion. Stronger answers did offer sustained explanation.

Candidates need to answer the questions set, with better focus on analytical skills to enable them to explain what they are writing about rather than merely producing narrative.

Recommendations

1.   As there is a limit to what can be gained by description alone in part **(b) (ii)** and **(c) Questions 2-4** and in part **(b)** in **Question 1**, candidates should not spend excessive time writing everything they know. They should consider starting sentences with 'X is significant because' rather than with factual knowledge and adding some comments, or leaving it to the reader to find the significance. 'There was so much violence because' might be a better start than simply outlining facts.

2.   Explanation should be much more developed in part **(c)** questions. There is no need for long descriptive answers and again answers which started by 'The rule of Congress was important because...' would be more likely to achieve explanation than those which started 'Congress ruled between 1937 and 1939'.

3.   There should be more preparation for assessing relative importance and this should always be attempted. If candidates thought about which order they would put the factors, or mentally awarded them marks out of 10, and as a matter of course offered a view that 'X is the most important factor because......' then this would encourage attempts at analysis. Three blocks of description will only get Level 1 marks no matter how detailed. It is well worth attempting a judgement and well worth Centres considering how to encourage explanation and judgement much more.

BANGLADESH STUDIES

Key Messages

Candidates who achieve high marks on this paper generally demonstrate the following:

- Sound knowledge of the content of the syllabus and a good understanding of the principles and processes that are set out in the syllabus.

- Familiarity with a wide range of maps and diagrams so they can readily interpret whatever figures are included in that year's examination paper.

- A consideration of issues relating to the syllabus such as green revolution, migration, global warming, sources of funding for education and health. In addition, they can express judgements about these issues and give evidence to support their statements.

- Careful reading of the questions before any attempt is made to answer them. This avoids the problem of candidates starting off a question well and then realising that they cannot answer the later parts of the question. Choosing the right questions in relation to their knowledge and understanding is a crucial part of success in any examination.

- The inclusion of specific information about the topic being examined and the avoidance of vague generalisations such as 'better standard of living' or 'good education'.

General comments

Resource Skills

The graphs of urbanisation, climate, cash crop production, education and employment were well interpreted by most candidates; likewise the map showing distribution of cash crops. Good candidates are able to extract accurate information and identify patterns and/or trends.

The photograph was well used by most candidates, although some failed to give any detail, merely giving general overall impressions.

The weakest aspect of the use of diagrams is the need to pay attention to the units used for the scales. Scales will often be measured in thousands of tonnes or takas or numbers of teachers. To gain marks for extracting information, candidates must express their answers in the correct units.

Knowledge and Understanding

Many candidates showed a very good understanding of the monsoon and depressions, urbanisation, cash crops and the informal sector. Braiding, causes of landlessness and sources of finance were less well understood. Better candidates clearly understood these topics and could apply their understanding to the questions set. Weaker candidates tended to write pieces of learned information but without much reference to the questions.

Judgement and Decision Making

For these last parts of questions, better candidates were able to identify evidence for parts **(i)** and **(ii)** without going into too much detail as these questions are only worth one mark each. They saved the detail and elaboration for part **(iii)** which usually carries four marks. These candidates also tended to explain not only

why they had chosen, say, statement A, but also why they had not supported statement B. In other cases they gave reasons why they could support both statements. These are all valid ways of gaining marks.

Specific Questions

Question 1

For part **(a)**, the rivers were usually well known, particularly Karnaphuli, but for part **(b)(i)** there were some rather weak descriptions of both the patterns of water channels and vegetation.

In **(b)(ii)**, the idea of flooding and its effects were well known, but many did not pick up on the bank erosion shown on the map. For part **(b)(iii)**, there were some surprisingly weak descriptions of braiding and the process of deposition.

For **(c)(i)**, the effects of deforestation were well known but this knowledge was not always transferred to the effect it may have on rivers. This part tended to score more highly than that on barrages. The use of barrages was generally known but the effect they had on rivers was mixed, with some believing they caused pollution.

For **(d)**, the judgement and decision making section, rising sea level and flooding were the most common answers to part **(i)**. In **(d)(ii)** there was a tendency to repeat the question but some good knowledge was demonstrated about summits at Copenhagen, etc. For the last part, most chose statement A and wrote about rivers drying up, salinity and flooding.

Question 2

This was an extremely popular question, done by the majority of candidates.

Part **(a)(i)** showed accurate readings of the graph with many scoring full marks. Weaker candidates either did not mention the nature of the increase and/or omitted the estimated 2015 figure. The idea of landlessness was understood for **(a)(ii)** but many candidates failed to expand on why it led to migration. For part **(a)(iii)** the pull factors of better health/education facilities and the push factors of natural disasters were well expressed. Unfortunately, many concentrated on the idea of better jobs and earnings in cities and did not link that to 'other reasons' for leaving.

There was good use of the photograph on the whole for **(b)(i)**, particularly in the description of the temporary housing. However, many were too concerned with why these houses were built and the lifestyle of the occupants and they wasted time writing about these aspects. For **(b)(ii)** the problems of urbanisation were better described than the benefits. There were vague references to 'better standard of living' and much was made of 'increased crime rates'.

The graph on migration required careful scrutiny for part **(c)**. The concept of net migration was, on the whole, not well understood. Most understood the benefits and problems of people leaving the country.

For **(d)**, the judgement and decision making section, in part **(i)** many mentioned that rural improvements were needed to avoid overpopulation/overuse of infrastructure in cities. For **(ii)** the link with the garments industry/industrialisation was well made. In the final part, **(iii)**, both statements A and B were justified satisfactorily.

Question 3

The interpretation of the climate graph was generally good, although answers to **(a)(ii)** were often incorrect. Some odd figures were quoted. Perhaps some confused rainfall with temperature. Better candidates easily scored 4 marks for part **(iv)** but for weaker candidates, the idea of a description of climate was often missing. A month by month account of the figures was a common way of describing the climate for these candidates. Again, some confused the temperature figures with the rainfall graph. Part **(a)(v)** gave rise to good answers generally, particularly on flooding and the disruption to travel.

For part **(b)(ii)**, a sound basic knowledge was shown but the detail required for full marks was sometimes lacking. Part **(b)(iii)** was very well answered and there was good use of annotated diagrams. Perhaps surprisingly, depressions seemed to be better understood by some candidates than monsoons.

For **(c)**, the judgement and decision making section, parts **(c)(i)** and **(ii)** were well answered by... perhaps gave too much information here which could have been used for part **(iii)**. For part **(c)...** were good justifications given for both statements with the occasional candidate putting both sid... argument.

Question 4

For part **(a)**, good distributions of both crops were given, a marked improvement on the situation a few years ago when candidates were asked to describe distributions. Many earned full marks.

For **(b)** parts **(i)** and **(ii)**, many failed to read the 000s tonnes on the graph or the millions of taka and therefore gave the wrong figures. Good use was made of the graphs for part **(iii)**.

For **(c)(i)**, the importance of cash crops was generally well known but few mentioned that they provided raw material for industry or the multiplier effect of their production. Part **(c)(ii)** relating to the problems of increasing production was only answered well by the better candidates. This part of growing cash crops was not as well known by average candidates. Many attributed the difficulties to poor farming techniques and subsistence farming.

Part **(d)(i)** showed sound knowledge of the uses of jute but part **(ii)** proved a more difficult concept with many saying jute was stronger or more durable rather than referring to its greater sustainability.

For **(e)**, the judgement and decision making section, many referred to foreign exchange earnings for part **(i)**, whilst for part **(ii)** most were aware of the needs of the growing population.

In the last part there were again good justifications for both statements A and B with some arguing the case for both statements. Many related the problems of jute production to a jute mill that had closed down.

Question 5

This was a very popular question attempted by the majority.

For **(a)(i)**, the primary sector was usually known, although occasionally informal jobs were listed. The secondary sector posed more problems with many just writing manufacturing and not relating it to an industry in Bangladesh, or giving a tertiary example. Most answered parts **(a)(ii)** and **(iii)** correctly. Part **(iv)** proved more challenging with more able candidates being aware of the impact of mechanisation and the concept of value added.

For **(b)(ii)**, once again many read the graph correctly but then said there were 340 primary teachers! Common sense should have told them that this was unlikely. Part **(b)(ii)** was usually correct but for **(b)(iii),** the idea of 'proportion' was not particularly well understood by many candidates with all the other options being given instead of Madrasah.

The informal sector was well understood for part **(c)** but for **(i)** many gave the answers to parts **(ii)** and **(iii)**, or examples of jobs, instead of its definition. There were thorough answers to parts **(ii)** and **(iii)** with a good knowledge correctly shown.

Whilst some answered part **(d)** very well, others struggled. Few picked up on the usual sources of finance to fund a service, instead giving a variety of answers including stocks and shares, MNCs, NGOs, family. Surprisingly few wrote about micro finance.

For **(e)**, the judgement and decision making section, there were many well organised answers considering both advantages and disadvantages. Candidates' knowledge of NGOs was thorough.