November 2012 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 75 589 candidates took the November 2012 MUET.

The performance of candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading and 800/4 Writing and the subject, 800, according to bands is as follows:

Band	800/1		800/2		800/3		800/4		800	
	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage
6	0.63	0.63	0.15	0.15	0.57	0.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5	5.21	5.84	1.35	1.50	6.31	6.88	0.16	0.16	0.62	0.62
4	15.10	20.94	9.57	11.07	16.81	23.69	1.61	1.77	7.56	8.18
3	17.60	38.54	34.12	45.19	29.31	53.00	11.41	13.18	28.03	36.21
2	27.90	66.44	38.00	83.19	33.38	86.38	49.23	62.41	42.54	78.75
1	33.56	100.00	16.81	100.00	13.62	100.00	37.59	100.00	21.25	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 LISTENING

General Comments

PART 1

The task demands ability to discern and reconstruct required information from a given text to note form. The text is a talk on how to prevent blurry photographs. Items ranged from short-answer questions to table completion and multiple-choice questions.

PART 2

The task demands ability to follow a talk on yawning. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART 3

The task demands ability to follow a mixture of different texts, a radio announcement on *Safety Advice to Expensive Cat Owners*; and two news items – one on *Unemployment of Graduates*, and the other on *Buying Gold despite Its Soaring Price*. Items were of the short-answer type.

Specific Comments

PART 1

Answers ranged from some correct to incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts could either be due to writing more words than is required, spelling errors leading to a change in meaning, partially correct information, missing required information, wrong information and no attempt. Below are some of the unacceptable answers or errors made in their answers:

Question 1

No marker of possessive, e.g. *photographers poor techniques*; incorrect information, e.g. *low quality*; missing subject, e.g. *poor technique.*

Question 2

Wrong word form, e.g. *read the manuals*; wrong spelling, e.g. *read the mannuel*, wrong information, e.g. *read manual book*, *read the menu, use the manual, follow the manual.*

Question 3

Wrong information, e.g. *to move near, move as close, move closer.*

Question 4

Wrong information leading to distortion, e.g. *both feet in the ground, two feet on the ground, both feet underground*; ambiguous answer, e.g. *two feet, feet on the ground.*

Question 5

Wrong information, e.g. *with two hands, with one hand, with both hands steady.*

Question 6

Wrong information leading to distortion, e.g. *keep still, press the button, hold a little longer, wait and hold the phone.*

PART 2

Answers ranged from correct answers to some incorrect attempts. Most could only obtain 2 correct answers. Generally Q9, Q10, Q11 and Q13 were frequently incorrectly answered. The inaccurate attempts could be due to poor comprehension of the text or no attempt.

PART 3

Answers ranged from some correct answers to inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, wrong information, missing required information, spelling, meaningless text and no attempt. The majority of candidates failed to answer questions 15 to 20.

Question 15

Answers could be obtained from the text but some answers were unacceptable because of grammatical errors, e.g. *can cause thousands of ringgit, can costs thousands of ringgit, cost large of ringgit, are beauty*; wrong information, e.g. *are sold in black market, cost highly in black market.*

Question 16

Most could not answer correctly due to rephrased but distorted implication e.g. *having the cats indoors, implanting identity chips in them, keeping the cats indoor.*

Question 17

Poor paraphrasing, e.g. *bad English, poor communication skills, poor English language*; wrong spelling, e.g. *inadequet English skills.*

Question 18

Poor comprehension, e.g. *come to work, come for interview, turn up for interview, turn up for job, bother to inform staff, careless attitude.*

Question 19

Distorted intended meaning e.g. *it is a tradition, of high prices, people are buying up gold, of keeping up with tradition.*

Question 20

Poor comprehension, e.g. *buy something stable, prefer not to hold money, are buying up gold, buy gold*; wrong word form, e.g. *buy gold as save investment.*

PAPER 800/2 (SPEAKING)

General Comments

The question papers were of the appropriate level of difficulty and consistent with the task type in the previous session. The sub-skills tested also reflect those in the test specifications.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following abilities:
- Made notes rather than wrote full sentences as preparation for Task A and utilised the two-minute presentation time given.
- Ideas were also well-organised, with good use of discourse markers to signal transitions from one idea to the next.
- Able to link simple everyday current issues to the topic of discussion.
- Used a wide range of vocabulary and structures.
- Their argument and presentation came across as mature and well-developed.

The less proficient candidates' weaknesses are summarised as follows:
- More sensitive to topic familiarity, responding better to specific topics closer to their everyday experience than those that were abstract and further away from their experience.
- Because of their lack of vocabulary, they frequently groped for words and resorted to mere listing of ideas without elaboration or supporting details.
- Unable to relate current issues to the topic of discussion.
- Their presentation gave the general impression that they lacked general knowledge and maturity.

PAPER 800/3 READING

Answer Keys

Question number	Key	Question number	Key	Question number	Key
1	A	16	C	31	C
2	B	17	A	32	D
3	A	18	A	33	A
4	B	19	B	34	C
5	A	20	B	35	B
6	B	21	B	36	C
7	C	22	A	37	A
8	B	23	A	38	D
9	A	24	B	39	D
10	B	25	C	40	B
11	A	26	C	41	A
12	C	27	C	42	C
13	B	28	B	43	D
14	A	29	A	44	B
15	B	30	D	45	D

PAPER 800/4 WRITING

General Comments

Questions were appropriate for the pre-university level as they meet the test specifications and measure the language ability of prospective university students. Questions demand knowledge of topic, maturity of thought, analytical–critical thinking and organisational skills and ability to express opinion. Both questions require candidates to think profoundly, critically and maturely.

Question 1

The task demands the ability to analyse, synthesise and organise required information from given non-linear texts into a coherent report. Accuracy of information, conciseness and correctness of language and logical connection between given information are the requirements. Table 1 is on rating of college facilities at three colleges, while Table 2 depicts fees, scholarships and number of registered students at these colleges.

Question 2

The task demands the ability to address and express an opinion on an issue affecting most candidates. Depth of thought and maturity of thinking in presenting a discussion on whether women make better leaders than men is sought. A clear, consistent, authoritative voice is expected here.

Specific Comments

Strengths and Weaknesses in Candidates' Answers

Question 1

STRENGTHS:
- Understand task
- Plans and organises
- Lists/states key features
- Analyses data
- Presents overview
- Presents overall trend
- Uses apt vocabulary
- Uses correct structures
- Provides logical connection

WEAKNESSES:
- Writes beyond word count
- Limited information
- Inaccuracies
- Irrelevancies
- Assumptions
- No overview
- No overall trend
- No link to table
- Choppy sentences
- Description/commentary
- Unclear statements
- Inability to reconstruct information
- No report writing skills
- Not concise
- Shaky voice
- Distortions
- Hanging sentences
- Repetitions
- Vague statements
- Missing data
- Limited vocabulary
- Informal tone

Question 2

STRENGTHS:
- Understand task
- Kept to 350-word limit
- Planning and paragraphing

- Has an opinion
- 3 points conveyed with some development
- Relevant examples
- Appropriate vocabulary
- Sentence variety

WEAKNESSES:
- Ideas not developed, shallow treatment of topic
- Not able to present reasons and illustrations
- Lacks ideas
- Poor interpretation of task
- Rambles, no focus
- Poor vocabulary
- Not able to express opinion satisfactorily
- Inappropriate vocabulary and structures
- No unity and organisation of ideas
- Weak arguments
- Lacks variety in vocabulary and structures
- L1 vocabulary
- Transfer of L1 structures
- Non-committal voice
- Basic grammatical errors

Comments on Specific Questions

TASK

Question 1

The task requires candidates to *analyse and interpret the data on rating of facilities, fees per semester, scholarships offered per year* and *number of registered students at three colleges*. Candidates are to write their report in 150 to 200 words. In conveying the required information, candidates are required to integrate and interpret the data correctly, present an overview, highlight the key features in relation to the overall trend and to link the key features to information contained in the table.

Question 2

The task requires candidates to present an opinion on *whether women make better leaders than men* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion on good leaders and to discuss whether women make better leaders than men. Candidates are to give a strong commitment to the view held. A candidate has to state what the opinion is, explain why he/she holds that opinion and show that he/she has examined and evaluated other possibilities in this regard.

EXPECTED ANSWERS

Question 1

The language test is that of analysing, interpreting and synthesising required information in the non-linear texts related to ratings of facilities, fees charged per semester, scholarships offered per year and number

of registered students per college. A report format is sought and the maximum word count is 200 words. The report has to be concise, yet compact and accurate. An overall trend or overview should be conveyed, followed by key features in support of the overall trend.

Logical connection of data and use of appropriate linkers is expected. Apt vocabulary to highlight the differences in rating of stated facilities for the different colleges and linking this with the fees, scholarships and registered number of students per college is the requirement. The expected voice is one of clarity, commitment and consistency. Irrelevancies, inaccuracies of data and assumptions made are not tolerated. No new information, outside that given in the question, is required.

Correct point of reference is required for the award of marks. In cases where there was no reference or incomplete reference of categories involved, it is taken to mean that the candidate has failed to understand the message in the tables. Similarly, in cases where there was no link to information found in the table, it is taken to mean that the candidate has failed to understand the requirement of the task.

Question 2

A discursive essay is expected in which the function of the language used here is to explain/justify a particular opinion held in relation to the context given. Candidates have to state what that opinion is and to support it with appropriate reasons and examples. The arguments must be really good ones in order to convince the reader. Candidates need to be clear on the requirement of the task. The justification made will have to be supported by strong evidence, and in a persuasive voice. A minimum of three points, in support of the opinion, is expected, and to be written in not fewer than 350 words.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

There were fewer above average than below-average performers and their voices faintly consistent. Most wrote beyond the specified 200-word limit, with the effect of the analysis and synthesis of required information, contained in the table, missed being taken into account. Answers were only a partial fulfillment of the task. Many fulfilled to the requirement of an objective tone in reporting, with a slight percentage keeping to a persuasive/argumentative tone. A poor percentage of candidates conveyed the required overview, which is the point of reference for the analysis and synthesis of the required information. Of these, only a negligible percentage was able to provide the overall trend and the connection between the two non-linear texts. This goes to show that candidates need further training in answering Question 1.

A small number of candidates were able to analyse and present the enrolment of students at the three colleges in relation to rating of college facilities, fees and scholarships offered, some using apt registers of rating, such as *good rating, poor rating, highly rated, topped the list, last on the list, low ratings, average ratings, rated good, most preferred college, least enrolment, highest enrolment*, while some others failed to use appropriate vocabulary, resulting in distortions, such as good college, poor college. The majority merely gave descriptions and included their own assumptions in the report. E.g. *College C got the best rating due to their well equipped wireless connection*. Candidates also did not use accurate words to convey their meaning. E.g. *College B has the cheapest fees between the three colleges. The most expensive college is College C.* The inability to interpret data correctly is a problem. Another is inaccuracy of information.

In the poor reports, weak expressions, weak vocabulary, inability to analyse, synthesise and highlight key features in the chart, failure to convey an overview and inaccuracies in data or missing data are factors worth looking into. There were very few good reports, attesting to a need to provide more training to students for report writing.

Question 2

On average, the task was modestly attempted. Candidates understood the demand of the question and were able to relate to the topic, i.e. to address the issue and to give an opinion on the statement. However, many were not able to state and present their opinion satisfactorily. Satisfactory/competent answers discussed 3 points with illustrations of the justifications of why one gender makes a better leader than the other.

Modest answers barely developed the opinion held on being guided by interest. Ideas put forward were often simplistic generalisations. Many ideas were vaguely expressed, invariably due to poor command of vocabulary and structures. In the poor answers, there was poor understanding of the stimulus and task. Ideas were shallow and immaturely developed, and there was a tendency to use vague-sounding words. Language also ranged from modest to poor control.

Structures and vocabulary lacked variety, basic grammatical errors of subject-verb agreement, wrong vocabulary, run-on sentences, wrong prepositions, omission of articles, wrong use of articles, missing words, wrong spelling, etc., are predominant. Overall, what is sadly lacking in the essays are maturity of ideas and adequate control of the language for clear expression of ideas.