LAPORAN PEPERIKSAAN
STPM & MUET
2020

MUET (800)

CONTENTS

MUET SESSION 1 (2020)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

For Session 1 2020, 41 831 candidates sat the test.

The percentage of the candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading, 800/4 Writing, and the subject, 800 MUET, 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	1.61	1.61	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5	11.92	13.53	3.81	3.98	3.57	3.75	0.17	0.17	0.81	0.81
4	24.63	38.16	25.27	29.25	20.12	23.86	2.79	2.96	14.68	15.49
3	18.99	57.16	50.63	79.88	43.84	67.71	35.06	38.02	49.41	64.90
2	24.52	81.68	18.35	98.23	28.13	95.84	56.13	94.15	31.74	96.64
1	18.32	100.00	1.77	100.00	4.16	100.00	5.85	100.00	3.36	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 (*Listening*)

General Comments

PART I

The task demands the ability to discern and reconstruct required information from a given text to note form. The listening text is a talk on *ways to declutter homes effectively*. The items ranged from short-answer questions, to table-completion, and multiple-choice questions.

PART II

The task demands the ability to listen to a radio interview with a doctor on *habits of drinking cold water,* a topic which Malaysians in general can easily relate to. The items were of multiple-choice questions whereby candidates needed to assess every option before choosing the best answer.

PART III

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of texts; a documentary, a short talk, and a conversation. The documentary is on *grasshoppers being a menace,* while the short talk is about *microfiber cloths,* followed by a conversation on *swimming and scuba diving*. The items consisted of short-answer questions whereby the candidates are required to answer within a five-word limit for each question.

Specific Comments

PART I

Answers ranged from all correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts could either be due to writing more words than is required, inability to rephrase correctly, spelling errors leading to a change in meaning, partially correct information, missing required information and wrong information. There were candidates who made no attempts to answer some of the questions.

The following are some examples of the candidates' incorrect attempts:

Question 1
• wrong spelling – *furnitures/shoesboxes*

Question 2
• omission of significant preposition – *are ＿＿ sentimental value (of)*
• wrong spelling – *valueble/exspensive*

Question 3
• wrong collocation / choice of word – *feel organised*

Question 4
• confusion between adjectives and verbs/nouns – *give away to others people*
• wrong verb – *get away of unwanted things*

Question 5
• missing object for a transitive verb – *sell ＿＿ to second hand shop*
• confusion between adjectives and verbs/nouns – *sell to other*

Question 6
• wrong spelling of a word leading to a different meaning – *stationary*

PART II

Answers ranged from a few correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The objective questions seemed to be the easiest for the candidates as most of them could answer all the questions correctly. For Question 11 and Question 12, candidates are required to write the letter of the answer.

PART III

Answers ranged from a few correct answers to all inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, poor comprehension of the short text, poor paraphrasing, grammatical and spelling errors. This section proves to be the most difficult for most candidates as only a handful of them managed to answer all the questions correctly.

The following are some examples of the candidates' inaccurate attempts:

Question 15
• overgeneralising responses or adding own information – *eat all types of plants*

Question 16
- wild guesses and nonsensical answer – *inserted spray organic spray*
- confusion between adjectives and verbs/nouns – *grasshoppers spray*

Question 17
- wrong spelling – *holles/crakes*

Question 18
- flouting rule of using modal verbs – *can absorbs*
- wrong spelling – *absorbe*

Question 19
- overgeneralising responses or adding own information – *carrying heavy equipment*

Question 20
- using verbs instead of gerunds (nouns) – *swim and float*
- exceed word limit – *200 meters swim and float for 10 minutes*

PAPER 800/2 (*Speaking*)

General Comments

On the whole, the questions were suitable for Pre-U students. Questions for both Tasks A and B were appropriate for assessing MUET candidates, within their understanding and general knowledge. Candidates were able to discuss and interact with one another. There was a balance of easy to difficult questions.

Specific Comments

The strengths of proficient candidates were as follows:
- Made use of the preparation time to make short notes of main points which they would then elaborate.
- Able to fully utilise the two-minute presentation time given to provide in-depth and mature treatment of the topic.
- Points raised were well-organised and elaborated.
- Able to link current issues and personal experiences to the topic being discussed.
- Fluent and confident, and were able to use words and phrases and idioms effectively to convey their ideas.
- Able to use complex structures accurately, as well as a high command of vocabulary, to not only convey their own views but to justify, convince, and persuade.

The weaknesses of less proficient candidates were as follows:
- Hardly related their task/points to the situation given.
- Lacked command of basic structures.
- Lacked appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning and presenting ideas. Some merely mentioned the main ideas/points as they could not develop or elaborate on their ideas well. This had led to superficial and disorganised presentation.
- Many global errors, i.e sentence structures/grammar.
- Lacked general/prior knowledge of current issues. Hence, their presentations were monotonous and lacked maturity of thought.

- Lacked confidence and participation especially in Task B. So repetition of the same ideas/points in Task B was common. As a result, they were not able to respond directly to the viewpoints raised by other group members. Some could not even respond well to ongoing discussion and were merely stating memorised phrases.

PAPER 800/3 (*Reading*)

Answer Key

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

PAPER 800/4 (*Writing*)

General Comments

The kind and standard of writing expected in the performance of the two tasks are of form six and pre-university level as candidates are assessed on their mastery of not only grammatical and rhetorical devices, but also of conceptual and judgmental elements for writing. The ability to analyse and synthesise information (for Question 1), and the ability to discuss, explain and justify viewpoints as well as to link ideas to the topic convincingly (for Question 2) are skills at post-intermediate to advanced level of writing. The topic given was familiar to the candidates and it demanded knowledge of the topic, maturity of thought, analytical-reasoning thinking, ability to present stand and thoughtful planning. It is a good test of candidates' analytical-critical thinking and organisational skills, general knowledge, and their level of maturity in presenting viewpoints.

Specific Comments

Question 1

The task requires candidates to analyse, synthesise, and organise required information from given non-linear texts into a coherent report. It demands the ability of candidates to analyse the choice of accommodation by travellers in 2017 and 2019 in Figure 1 and link to the features of accommodation in 2019 given in Table 1 and write a report of not more than 200 words. It also requires the candidates' ability to provide accurate data from Figure 1 and link this information to Table 1, hence determining the correlation between the features of accommodation in 2019 and number of travellers choosing different types of accommodation in that year.

Figure 1 and Table 1 display very clear information regarding the number of travellers choosing different types of accommodation in 2017 and 2019 and how features of these accommodations influenced the travellers' choice of accommodation in 2019. The visuals carried sufficient information and therefore, did not overwhelm the candidates and this is evident in the answers given. Types of accommodation such as hotel, homestays, serviced apartments and dorms are within the candidates' schemata or world knowledge.

Question 2

The question requires candidates to discuss whether our positive attitude towards health is influenced by the way we were brought up. For this question, candidates are given the liberty to agree, disagree or partially agree with the statement and substantiate their viewpoints with explanations and suitable examples. In disagreeing, they are allowed to offer reasons why our positive attitude towards health is not influenced by the way we were brought up. The question is straightforward and candidates should be able to respond correctly using at least 350 words.

EXPECTED ANSWERS

Question 1

Candidates were expected to analyse and compare the salient key features given in both visuals. Data and time frame used must be accurate. In addition, candidates were expected to be able to use accurate and appropriate trend words. They were also expected to include the four elements of an analysis – key features, trend, time frame and data and to be able to use the correct subject reference.

The candidates were required to perform the following abilities:
• write a suitable title to summarise the given information.
• write a complete introduction of the two visuals.
• write an overview showing the general correlation between the number of travellers who chose a type of accommodation and the features preceded with the adverb *generally, overall,* or *in general.*
• analyse information in which significant data should be highlighted with all four elements present; the correct subject, correct main verb or trend word, data, and time frame. Any missing element will render the statement incomplete.
• synthesise information in which care must be taken to ensure the links are logical.

In following the conventions of report writing for the MUET, it is preferable that candidates write in three paragraphs:

Paragraph 1: introduction and overview

Paragraph 2: analysis and synthesis

Paragraph 3: conclusion

Question 2

The nature of the question clearly requires candidates to have a stand and to be able to defend that stand throughout the essay. The topic, which is on positive attitude towards health and how it influenced the way we were brought up, is a very common topic and many candidates were able to relate to it. If candidates failed to give a good response, this is most probably due to their poor language proficiency and not so much on their ability to provide relevant points. On the whole, Question 2 is also considered as thought provoking. Thus, mature and proficient candidates should be able to present their viewpoints reasonably well.

The task requires the candidates to write an essay on the following statement: *Our positive attitude towards health is influenced by the way we were brought up* with relevant points. Candidates need to elaborate their points with relevant examples. Candidates are expected to:
- make a clear stand on the issue (to agree, disagree or partially agree).
- write a clear thesis statement to indicate the direction taken.
- write an argumentative or discursive essay on how our upbringing had influenced our positive attitude towards health (if the candidate agrees with the statement). If not, then mention other factors and provide explanations and examples. In taking a neutral stand, one may have both upbringing and other factors as points for discussion.
- provide 3 points (or at least 2) and develop them with reasonable depth.
- explain or justify viewpoints with appropriate examples.
- treat the subject with a certain level of maturity: no unsubstantiated claims or sweeping statements should be made.
- organise ideas in paragraphs, showing evidence of planning and knowledge of the conventions of academic writing.
- use a variety of sentence structures.
- use varied and appropriate vocabulary.
- use the appropriate cohesive devices or connectors to link sentences.
- write in no fewer than 350 words.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

There was an attempt to answer the task even if the answers were modest in nature. Candidates basically have a fair understanding of the task. Most candidates showed a commendable understanding of the format of the answer required, the formula for analysis and synthesis, and the presentation of the answer. An attempt to provide an answer was seen in many of the scripts and this was evident even among the weaker candidates.

Although the key features in the bar graph and the table are simple and straightforward, the majority of the candidates were not able to produce satisfactory reports. Though many of the candidates were able to interpret the data in Figure 1, they were not able to link it effectively to Table 1. They were not able to link features of accommodation for 2019 given in Table 1 to the number of travellers who

chose different types of accommodation in 2019. The common error made by most of the candidates is the use of wrong subject reference (WSR). In addition, many candidates also used the passive sentence structure and wrong trend words when writing the report.

Another key factor was the candidates' inability to use the correct trend word. Although the majority of the candidates used trend words such as 'highest/lowest' and 'most/least' in their analyses many also used incorrect trend words like 'increase/decrease'. Analyses were done in isolation therefore, most of the information presented were merely descriptions. For those candidates who attempted to analyse the information, the analyses were done with little success and there were many others who were merely describing or listing out the key features given.

The lack of essential details such as data and trend word caused candidates to lose marks. In addition, there were frequent assumptions and irrelevant details. Due to that, the overall quality of the candidates' answers was far from satisfactory. The majority of them fell into Band 2 and 3 while the few who were familiar with the framework of report writing were able to produce satisfactory or good reports.

STRENGTHS
In terms of strengths, the candidates generally were able to:
• present a title, introduction, overview (with missing information) and conclusion.
• attempt to analyse and synthesise almost all of the key features.
• make comparison between both Figure 1 and Table 1 (limited).
• present an overview with missing information (mainly the year).
• write within the word limit.
• use linkers.
• use language which is simple, easy to read and appropriate for a report.
• use appropriate and significant reporting voice as well as passive voice in writing a report.
• use appropriate vocabularies (trend word) to present analysis and synthesis of data such as 'higher', 'highest', 'lowest', 'least' and 'more'.

WEAKNESSES
In terms of weaknesses, it was noted that candidate answers had the following flaws:

Introduction	• incomplete introduction – highlighting only one visual; mostly mentioning Figure 1 without introducing Table 1 or vice versa • attempt introduction
Overview	• missing overview • attempt overview • inaccurate – linking 2017 and 2019 number of travellers to features in 2019
Analysis and Synthesis	• wrong subject reference • distortions • missing out the data/incorrect data • wrong trend word used • assumptions • irrelevant information
Conclusion	• missing conclusion • inaccurate conclusion

Language use	• repeated structures • limited variety in terms of vocabulary use • spelling errors • inconsistent use of tense

- Candidates exceeded number of words allowed (more than 200 words).
- Missing time frame/years in the title, introduction and overview.
- Inaccurate overview.
- Overview was missing in many scripts.
- Overview was misinterpreted as analysis (highest and lowest number).
- Candidates did not link information, i.e. separate analysis of Figure 1 and Table 1.
- Assumptions were committed when candidates failed to link the features of accommodation influencing travellers' choice of accommodation. Candidates used 'such as', 'like' and 'including' when mentioning features.
- Wrong use of trend words – increase/decrease.
- Candidates wrote a narrative or descriptive essay on travelling and choice of accommodation in general.
- Wrong subject reference (WSR) and various errors in analysis and synthesis were identified.

Question 2

In general, candidates responded to the task, although the responses differed in terms of quality. Very few responded well by giving reasons which were matured. Most candidates gave modest opinions.

Most of the candidates had difficulty in presenting their viewpoints and ideas presented lacked maturity and planning. Often, there were simplistic ideas, superficial discussion or repetitive statement/phrases, and general examples. The ideas were not developed and the link was not made clear. Therefore, the discussion lacked depth and was not interesting at all. It was very challenging for the average and weak candidates because many of the candidates did not have the language proficiency, examples, and justifications to effectively discuss the issue.

Most candidates' language proficiency was of modest ability and candidates were not able to structure their sentences well and many of them had problems with word order causing intended meaning to be distorted. A few had first language interference as literal translation from the mother tongue to English could be seen. There was also a lack of concrete logical details in the discussion. Discussion of ideas was superficial, at times lacking in focus due to scarcity of knowledge. There was no variety of sentences due to candidates' limited vocabulary. As for the weaker candidates their poor mastery of the language hampered their efforts to formulate ideas and justify them. Glaring errors such as direct translation, inconsistent pronoun reference, and major errors in structures caused meaning to be blurred. They also gave very general and shallow statements without specific or real-life examples.

The question 'Our positive attitude towards health is influenced by the way we were brought up' should provide plenty of ideas and materials for candidates to combine their current experience with their prior knowledge to give their opinion. However, the candidates displayed weaknesses in dealing with the task. The majority of them only focused and dealt with one part of the argument. Positive attitude was briefly stated but not developed, or was a mere mention and, more often than not, was not stated at all or it was discussed superficially.

STRENGTHS

In terms of strength, candidates understood the requirement of the question and were able to provide some relevant points. Most candidates were able to provide relevant points and there were attempts to elaborate the points with simple and relevant examples.

The writing convention was evident in many scripts; introduction, stand, thesis statement, topic sentence and conclusion. Even the weaker candidates were able to present some relevant information required although they have grappled poorly with the language.

There were a few candidates who displayed very confident use of language. Appropriate phrases, idioms, and low frequency words were used, and their arguments were compact and precise.

Other strengths noted were:
• Candidates had three or more points with some development and examples.
• Planning was evident – each paragraph discussed different points.
• Candidates made a stand and provided thesis statement.
• Candidates discussed and elaborated three points which were consistent with the stand taken.
• Candidates gave relevant examples and real-life examples.
• Candidates have the ability to use appropriate vocabulary and varied sentence structures.
• Mechanics of writing were seen in many scripts.
• Attempt was made even if answers were vague or filled with multiple language errors.

WEAKNESSES

In terms of weaknesses, many candidates were unable to clearly show how/why our positive attitude towards health is influenced by the way we were brought up. They were able to discuss positive attitude in general and 'positive attitude towards health' but could not link to 'influence' and/or 'the way we were brought up.'

Discussions generally were superficial and lack depth. Points given were very predictable such as parents playing a significant role in bringing up children, parents instilling good values towards health during a child's formative years, creating awareness towards medical and dental check-ups, and exercising personal hygiene at home.

Although there was some evidence of planning in most of the candidates' answers, many of them were unable to express their ideas coherently and effectively. Arguments to support their stand were tainted with grammatical errors and meaning was often distorted. This may be because of their lack of vocabulary and content knowledge on the issue being discussed. The tone at times was inappropriate as some **candidates ended on an advisory tone.**

In terms of language use, only simple sentence structures and high frequency words were used by most of the candidates. There were some scripts where language was incomprehensible. Generally, it was noticed that many candidates made serious language errors such using wrong choice of words, spelling errors, S-V-A errors, and pronoun errors.

There were candidates who did not give an introduction to their essays. Many started off by stating their stand and immediately moved on to elaborating their points. Even if an introduction was given, it was abrupt and too short. Even conclusions were short and abrupt.

There were cases of misinterpretation of the keywords in the given statement. Among the various **misinterpretations** were as follows:

- **'The way we were brought up'** was thought of as the environment in which we were raised which includes the home, the school, the neighbourhood, the community and the society as a whole. Due to this misunderstanding, candidates who **agreed** with the statement would provide points which are **not congruent with their stand.**

  Examples:
  Our positive attitude towards life is influenced by our upbringing because our parents are our role models health education is taught in school we follow what our peers/friends do to keep healthy

- '**Positive attitude'** was simply understood as '**habitual actions'** or **'habits'**

Other areas of weaknesses:
- There were gaps in the discussion. The examiners had to read between the lines to understand what the candidate was trying to say.
- Candidates did not state their stand clearly.
- Candidates also had a distorted idea of positive attitude towards health and upbringing.
- Choice of vocabulary was mainly simple.
- Spelling errors were noted.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

For Session 2 2020, 74 188 candidates sat the test.

The percentage of the candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading, 800/4 Writing, and the subject, 800 MUET, 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	0.91	0.91	0.20	0.20	1.26	1.26	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
5	10.07	10.98	4.24	4.44	11.66	12.92	0.73	0.74	3.18	3.20
4	21.90	32.88	24.80	29.24	24.89	37.81	9.16	9.90	23.07	26.27
3	17.37	50.25	47.75	76.99	32.67	70.49	50.91	60.81	41.79	68.06
2	24.55	74.79	20.46	97.45	24.72	95.20	34.74	95.55	27.76	95.81
1	25.21	100.00	2.55	100.00	4.80	100.00	4.45	100.00	4.19	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 (*Listening*)

General Comments

PART I

The task demands the ability to discern and reconstruct required information from a given text to note form. The listening text is a candidate-friendly interview talking about *living a happy life;* a topic everyone can relate to. The items ranged from short-answer questions, to table-completion and multiple-choice questions.

PART II

The task demands the ability to listen to a *talk by a child psychologist on how to choose a good pre-school.* The content may not appeal to young candidates but nonetheless, it is good for them to know. The items were of multiple-choice questions whereby candidates need to assess every option before choosing the best answer.

PART III

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of texts; a conversation, a documentary and a short talk. The conversation is between a customer and a mechanic about *maintaining car tyres*. The second piece of the text of Part III is a documentary on *yoga*. Lastly, the short talk is about *emotional intelligence (EQ)*. The items consisted of short-answer questions whereby the candidates are required to answer within a five-word limit for each question.

Specific Comments

PART I

Answers ranged from all correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts could either be due to writing more words than is required, inability to rephrase correctly, spelling errors leading to a change in meaning, partially correct information, missing required information and wrong information. There were candidates who made no attempts to answer some of the questions.
The following are some examples of the candidates' incorrect attempts:

Question 1
• wrong spelling – *bihaviur*

Question 2
• omission of words – _____ *happy (will be)*

Question 3
• mishearing information (regret **it**) – *regretted*

Question 4
• wrong spelling – *except you have problem*

Question 5
• wrong spelling – *negitif*

Question 6
• wrong preposition – *ask people about their opinion*
• omission of possessive apostrophe – *Ask other people opinions*

PART II

Answers ranged from all correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The objective questions seemed to be easy and straightforward for the candidates to answer as a majority of them were able to score at least four out of six answers correctly. For Questions 11 and 12, candidates are required to write the letter of the answer.

PART III

Answers ranged from a few correct answers to all inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, poor comprehension of the short text, poor paraphrasing, grammatical and spelling errors. This section is relatively the most challenging part for most of the candidates as only some managed to answer all the questions correctly.

The following are some examples of the candidates' inaccurate attempts:

Question 15
- wrong preposition – *take for them up*
- agreement problems – *take it out*

Question 16
- wrong part of speech (using a verb in the place of an adjective) – *a save drive*
- exceed word limit – *a smooth and comfortable drive to the destination*

Question 17
- ignorant of usage of nouns as adjectives – *improves muscles and joints flexibility*
- distortion of meaning – *build muscles*

Question 18
- wrong spelling – *toturial*
- using a comma instead of a conjunction – *yoga classes, online tutorials*

Question 19
- providing more than **one** answer – *understanding emotions and recognising emotions*

Question 20
- omission of the auxiliary verb – _____ *strong motivation (have)*

PAPER 800/2 (*Speaking*)

General Comments

On the whole, the questions were suitable for Pre-U students. Questions for both Tasks A and B were appropriate to the level, and were suitable to be applied to the candidates understanding and general knowledge. Candidates were able to discuss and interact with each other.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following abilities:
- to make use of the preparation time to make short notes of main points which they would then elaborate.
- to fully utilise the two-minute presentation time given to provide in-depth and mature treatment of the topic.
- to raise well-organised and elaborated points.
- to link current issues and personal experiences to the topic being discussed.
- to use words and phrases, and idioms effectively in conveying their ideas.

- to use complex structures accurately, as well as a high command of vocabulary, to not only convey their own views but to justify, convince and persuade.
- to highly interact as the candidate could understand what was being said and could respond, impromptu, to viewpoints raised.

The less proficient candidates' weaknesses were summarised as follows:
- hardly related their task/points to the situation given.
- lacked command of basic structures.
- lacked appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning and presenting ideas. Some merely mentioned the main ideas/points as they could not develop or elaborate on their ideas well. This led to superficial and disorganised presentation.
- made many global errors, i.e. sentence structures/grammar.
- lacked general/prior knowledge of current issues. Hence, their presentation was monotonous and lacked maturity of thought.
- lacked confidence and participation especially in Task B. So repetition of the same ideas/points in Task B was common. As a result, they were not able to respond directly to the viewpoints raised by other group members. Some could not even respond well to ongoing discussion and were merely stating memorised phrases.

PAPER 800/3 (*Reading*)

Answer Key

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

PAPER 800/4 (*Writing*)

General Comments

The kind and standard of writing expected in the performance of the two tasks are of form six and pre-university level as candidates are assessed on their mastery of not only grammatical and rhetorical devices, but also of conceptual and judgmental elements for writing. The ability to analyse and synthesise information (for Question 1), and the ability to discuss, explain and justify viewpoints as well as to link ideas to the topic convincingly (for Question 2) are skills at post-intermediate to advanced level of writing. As such, the paper is appropriate for the level expected of the candidates.

Specific Comments

Question 1

The task requires candidates to analyse, synthesise and organise required information from given non-linear texts into a coherent report. It demands the ability of candidates to analyse the number of employed graduates according to their academic qualifications (2013–2017) given in Figure 1 and link to the factors contributing to employment in 2017 given in Table 1 and write a report of not more than 200 words. It also requires the candidates' ability to provide accurate data from Figure 1 and link this information to Table 1, hence determining the correlation between the factors contributing to employment in 2017 and the number of employed graduates according to their academic qualifications in the same year.

Figure 1 and Table 1 display very clear information regarding the number of employed graduates with different academic qualifications in five years and the factors that contributed to employment in only one year.

Question 2

The question requires candidates to discuss whether civic-mindedness is lacking in our society. For this question, candidates are given the liberty to agree, disagree or partially agree with the statement and substantiate their viewpoints with explanations and suitable examples. In disagreeing, they are allowed to offer reasons why/how civic-mindedness is not lacking in our society. The question was straightforward and candidates should be able to respond correctly using at least 350 words.

The nature of the question clearly requires candidates to have a stand and to be able to defend that stand throughout the essay. The topic is a very common one and candidates should able to relate to it.

On the whole, Question 2 is considered as demanding, thought-provoking and challenging. Any mature and proficient candidates should be able to present their viewpoints reasonably well.

EXPECTED ANSWERS

Question 1

The task requires the candidates to produce a complete report using the correct format and the appropriate language of reporting. They have to link Figure 1 to Table 1 and show how information in Table 1 influenced the data in Figure 1. The candidates are expected to show the following abilities:
- to write a suitable title to summarise the given information (although this is not compulsory but most encouraged).
- to write a complete introduction of the two visuals preferably in a compound sentence.
- to write an overview showing the relationship between the number of employed graduates in 2017 and the factors that contributed to their employment in that year.
- to synthesise information logically.
- to analyse information of significant data with four elements present (the subject, main verb/trend word, data, and time frame). Any missing element will render the statement incomplete or vague.
- to write in (preferably) 3 paragraphs:
  - Paragraph 1: introduction and overview
  - Paragraph 2: analysis and synthesis
  - Paragraph 3: conclusion
- to not include any opinion or new information beyond what is given.
- to use the correct verbs or vocabulary to indicate trends such as *increased, decreased, highest, lowest* and *remained unchanged*.
- to write in no fewer than 150 words but not more than 200 words.

Question 2

The task requires the candidates to write an essay on the following statement 'civic mindedness is lacking in our society' with relevant points. Candidates need to elaborate their points with relevant examples. Candidates are expected to:
- define the keywords in the given statement (preferably).
- make a clear stand on the issue (to agree, disagree or agree to a certain extent).
- write a clear thesis statement to indicate the direction taken.
- write an argumentative or discursive essay on why civic-mindedness is lacking in society today and how the lack of civic-mindedness is displayed (through examples of apathetic actions) if the candidate agrees with the statement. In disagreeing, he has to prove otherwise.
- provide 3 points (or at least 2) and develop them with reasonable depth.
- explain or justify viewpoints with appropriate examples.
- treat the subject with a certain level of maturity: no unsubstantiated claims or sweeping statements should be made.
- organise ideas in paragraphs, showing evidence of planning and knowledge of the conventions of academic writing.
- use a variety of sentence structures.
- use varied and appropriate vocabulary.
- use the appropriate cohesive devices or connectors to link sentences.
- write in no fewer than 350 words.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

There was an attempt to answer the task even if the answers were modest in nature. Candidates basically have a fair understanding of the task. Most candidates showed a commendable understanding of the format of the answer required, the formula for analysis and synthesis, and the presentation of the answer. An attempt to provide an answer was seen in many of the scripts and this was evident even among the weaker candidates.

Although the key features in the bar graph and the table are simple and straightforward, the majority of the candidates were not able to produce satisfactory reports. Though many of the candidates were able to interpret the data in Figure 1, they were not able to link it effectively to Table 1. They were not able to link factors contributing to employment for 2017 given in Table 1 to the number of employed graduates according to their academic qualifications in 2017. The common error made by most of the candidates is the use of wrong subject reference (WSR). In addition, many candidates also used the passive sentence structure and wrong trend words when writing the report.

Another key factor was the candidates' inability to use the correct trend word. Those who were able to use trend words correctly were using common trend words such as 'highest/lowest', 'most/least' and 'increase/decrease' in their analysis. Analysis was done in isolation therefore, most of the information presented was merely descriptions. For those candidates who attempted to analyse the information, the analyses were done with little success and there were many others who were merely describing or listing out the key features given.

The lack of essential details such as data and trend word caused candidates to lose marks. In addition, there were frequent assumptions and irrelevant details. Due to that, the overall quality of the candidates' answers was far from satisfactory. The majority of them fell into Band 2 and 3 while the few who were familiar with the framework of report writing were able to produce satisfactory or good reports.

STRENGTHS
In terms of strengths, the candidates generally were able to:
• present a title, introduction, overview (with missing information) and conclusion.
• attempt to analyse and synthesise almost all of the key features.
• make comparison between both Figure 1 and Table 1 (limited).
• present an overview with missing information (mainly the year).
• write within the word limit.
• use linkers.
• use language which is simple, easy to read and appropriate for a report.
• use appropriate and significant reporting voice as well as passive voice in writing a report.
• use appropriate vocabularies (trend word) to present analysis and synthesis of data such as 'higher', 'highest', 'lowest', 'least' and 'more'.

WEAKNESSES

In terms of weaknesses, it was noted that candidate answers had the following flaws:

Introduction	• incomplete introduction
	• attempt introduction:
	  – missing the word 'Figure 1' or 'Table 1'
	  – missing years

Overview	• missing overview • attempt overview – years are missing for both the visuals • inaccurate – linking trend from 2013-2017 (Figure 1) to factors in 2017 (Table 1) • instead of showing the link between the visuals, candidates provided analysis (highest and least number)
Analysis and Synthesis	• wrong subject reference • distortions – 'number of was increased…' • missing data/incorrect data • wrong trend word used • assumptions • irrelevant information • illogical link • inaccurate analysis
Conclusion	• missing conclusion or inaccurate conclusion
Language use	• repeated structures • limited variety in terms of vocabulary use • spelling errors • inconsistent use of tense • weaker candidates had very poor control of the language to the extent that answers were vague, fuzzy or incomprehensible • sentences were merely fragments • many candidates also had problems with word formation

• Candidates exceeded number of words allowed (more than 200 words).
• Missing time frame/years in the title, introduction and overview.
• Inaccurate overview.
• Overview was missing in many scripts.
• Overview was misinterpreted as analysis (highest and lowest number).
• Candidates did not link information, i.e. separate analysis of Figure 1 and Table 1.
• Assumptions were committed when candidates failed to link the factors contributing to employment for 2017 to the number of employed graduates according to academic qualifications in 2017
• Wrong use of trend words – 'increase'/'decrease'.
• Candidates wrote a narrative or descriptive essay on unemployed graduates in general
• Wrong subject reference (WSR) and various errors in analysis and synthesis were identified.

Question 2

Candidates generally understood the requirement of the task. Candidates made an attempt to answer the task although some candidates did not monitor their time and could only manage to write a few sentences. Candidates generally showed fair planning in their answers. Most gave an introduction, three points and a conclusion. Conventions of writing was seen in most scripts including the weaker ones. Candidates made a stand and gave thesis statement. Points were developed with details and examples, although most of the discussion were modest in nature.

Most of the candidates had difficulty in presenting their viewpoints and ideas presented lacked maturity and planning. Often, there were simplistic ideas, superficial discussion or repetitive statement/phrases and general examples. The ideas were not developed and the link was not made clear. Therefore, the discussion lacked depth and was not interesting at all. It was very challenging for the average and weak candidates because many of the candidates did not have the language proficiency, examples and justifications to effectively discuss the issue.

Most candidates' language proficiency was of modest ability and were not able to structure their sentences well and many of them had problems with word order causing intended meaning to be distorted. A few had first language interference as literal translation from the mother tongue to English could be seen. There was also a lack of concrete logical details in the discussion. Discussion of ideas were superficial, at times lacking in focus due to scarcity of knowledge. There was no variety of sentences due to candidates' limited vocabulary. As for the weaker students their poor mastery of the language hampered their efforts to formulate ideas and justify them. Glaring errors such as direct translation, inconsistent pronoun reference and major errors in structures caused meaning to be blurred. They also gave very general and shallow statements without specific or real-life examples.

The question whether 'civic-mindedness is lacking in our society' should provide plenty of ideas and materials for candidates to combine their current experience with their prior knowledge to give their opinion. However, the candidates displayed weaknesses in dealing with the task. A majority of them only focused and dealt with one part of the argument. Civic-mindedness was briefly stated but not developed, or was a mere mention and more often than not, was not stated at all or it was discussed superficially.

STRENGTHS
- Candidates understood the requirement of the question and were able to provide some relevant points. Most candidates were able to provide relevant points and there were attempts to elaborate the points with simple and relevant examples.
- The writing convention was evident in many scripts; introduction, stand, thesis statement, topic sentence and conclusion. Even the weaker students were able to present some relevant information required although they have grappled poorly with the language.
- There were a few candidates who displayed very confident use of language. Appropriate phrases, idioms and low frequency words were used, and their arguments were compact and precise.
- Candidates had three or more points with some development and examples.
- Planning was evident – each paragraph discussed different points.
- Candidates made a stand and provided thesis statement.
- Candidates discussed and elaborated three points which are consistent with the stand taken.
- Candidates gave relevant examples and real-life examples.
- Candidates have the ability to use appropriate vocabulary and varied sentence structures.
- Mechanics of writing are seen in many scripts.
- Attempt was made even if answers were vague or filled with multiple language errors.

WEAKNESSES

- Many candidates were unable to clearly show how/why civic mindedness is lacking in our society. They were able to discuss civic-mindedness in general but could not link to 'lacking or not lacking' in our society.
- Discussions generally were superficial and lack depth. Points given were very predictable such as parents playing a significant role in bringing up children, parents instilling good values and habits towards civic-mindedness during a child's formative years and creating awareness towards civic-mindedness at home.
- Although there was some evidence of planning in most of the candidates' answers, many of them were unable to express their ideas coherently and effectively. Arguments to support their stand were tainted with grammatical errors and meaning was often distorted. This may be because of their lack of vocabulary and content knowledge on the issue being discussed.
- The tone at times was inappropriate as some candidates ended on an advising mode.
- In terms of language use, only simple sentence structures and high frequency words were used by most of the candidates. There were some scripts where language was incomprehensible. Generally, it was noticed that many candidates made serious language errors such using as wrong choice of words, spelling errors, S-V-A errors and pronoun errors.
- There were candidates who did not give an introduction to their essays. Many started off by stating their stand and moved on immediately to elaborating their points. Even if an introduction did exist, it was abrupt and too short. Even conclusions were short and abrupt.
- Misinterpretation of the keywords in the given statement.
- There were gaps in the discussion. The examiners had to read between the lines to understand what the candidate was trying to say.
- Candidates did not state their stand clearly.
- Candidates also had a distorted idea of how civic-mindedness is lacking in our society.
- Choice of vocabulary was mainly simple.
- Spelling errors were noted.

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