

July 2012 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 60 551 candidates took the July 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 |
| 6 | 0.39 | 0.39 | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.29 | 0.29 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 5 | 2.95 | 3.34 | 1.25 | 1.39 | 3.52 | 3.82 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.40 | 0.40 |
| 4 | 8.46 | 11.80 | 7.75 | 9.14 | 11.04 | 14.86 | 1.49 | 1.67 | 5.06 | 5.46 |
| 3 | 10.04 | 21.84 | 28.08 | 37.22 | 24.87 | 39.73 | 9.49 | 11.15 | 18.48 | 23.93 |
| 2 | 26.06 | 47.90 | 36.67 | 73.89 | 42.41 | 82.13 | 42.58 | 53.73 | 42.90 | 66.83 |
| 1 | 52.10 | 100.00 | 26.11 | 100.00 | 17.87 | 100.00 | 46.27 | 100.00 | 33.17 | 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 the hospitality industry. Items ranged from short-answer questions to table completion and multiple-choice questions.

PART 2

The task demands the ability to follow a talk on laughter being the best medicine. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART 3

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of different texts, an announcement on the 24th Annual Fraser's Hill International Bird Race; a news item on the increase cost of energy production in Malaysia; and a talk on advertisements. Items were of the short-answer type.

Specific Comments

PART 1

Answers ranged from some correct to more 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. The following are some examples:

Question 1

Inability to use adjectives to complete sentence; e.g. *full of information, bring much information's*; incorrect adjectives e.g. *impressive, knowledgeable, exciting, brief, wonderful, surprising*; more than 3 words e.g. *good for job opportunity*.

Question 2

Wrong tense form e.g. *can be earn, were earn, can made*; distorted meaning e.g. *he will get, he can earn, are provided*.

Question 3

Answers are not related to hotels e.g. *meeting people, marketing department*.

Question 4

Ignoring the plural form e.g. *customer*; wrong spelling e.g. *costumers*.

Question 5

Answers are not in the imperative form e.g. *to satisfied*.

Question 6

Many missed the mandatory *favourable first*.

PART 2

Answers ranged from more correct answers to some incorrect attempts. Most limited users could select 3 responses correctly. Generally Q11, 12 and 13 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 more inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, wrong information, missing required information, spelling and no attempt. Majority of the candidates failed to answer questions 15-20.

Question 15

Answers could be obtained from the text but some answers were unacceptable because of missing word/ incomplete phrase/ no plural 's' e.g. *many birds as possible, as many birds possible, as many bird as possible*.

Question 16

Most could not answer correctly due to; missing parallel e.g. *going out and enjoy nature*, rephrased but distorted implication e.g. *enjoying nature and going out*, use of article 'the' e.g. *teams to enjoy the nature*, wrong preposition e.g. *the love of nature*, wrong point of reference e.g. *people* instead of *participants*.

Question 17

Confusion of mandatory comparative word e.g. *high cost of natural gas* instead of *higher cost of natural gas*.

Question 18

Poor spelling e.g. *biomask/ bionest/ biomes/ biomax* (for *biomass*).

Question 19

Distorted intended meaning e.g. *product not as good as advertising, encourage us to spend more, make us want to shopping, people can be cheat*.

Question 20

Missing mandatory verb *help*.

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:

- Provided well-organised and developed arguments on the topics assigned.
- Able to relate their arguments and viewpoints with their knowledge of current issues.
- Used a wide range of vocabulary and structures to convey mature ideas.

The less proficient candidates' weaknesses are summarised as follows:

- Lacked planning and organisation; lacked transitional markers from one idea to the next. Spent too much time on the introduction and could not elaborate on ideas (Task A).
- Lacked vocabulary to express their viewpoints and therefore did not develop their ideas beyond mere listing of the main points.
- Some groped for words, showed poor control of language structures and made numerous grammatical errors that sometimes impede comprehension.

PAPER 800/3 READING

Answer Keys

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

PAPER 800/4 WRITING

General Comments

Questions were challenging and 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 as well as the ability to express opinion.

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. Topic is contemporary, and input predominantly current. The overall trend is easily discernible.

Question 2

The task demands the ability to address and express an opinion on an issue affecting most candidates. Depth and maturity of thought to present a discussion on university entry and whether co-curricular activities should be made a requirement or otherwise, 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 how income levels in 2010 influenced primary and secondary school enrolment in three regions*. 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 making co-curricular activities a requirement for entry into university is a good thing or otherwise* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion on university entry requirements and to discuss whether making co-curricular activities as a requirement is a good move or not. 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 changing pattern in school enrolment in the three regions between 2006 and 2010. 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 changing pattern of school enrolment is a 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 chart and table. 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 changing pattern in school enrolment between 2006 and 2010, some using apt vocabulary of change, such as *significant increase*, *a slight increase*, *remained stable*, *more*, *lesser*, *higher*, *lower percentage*, etc., while some others failed to use appropriate vocabulary, using general words such as *going up*, *going down*. Some used wrong prepositions of time, e.g. *at year 2006*, *on 2010*; some had insufficient vocabulary to describe trend, e.g. *growly up*, *increase rally to*, *slug to*, *is maintain in their percentage*; much worse, others did not furnish data in their analysis. Inability to interpret data correctly is a problem. Another is inaccuracy of information. Another is missing the year that distorts the meaning of the report.

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 appropriacy of using co-curricular activities as a university entry requirement.

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.