

March 2012 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 34 196 candidates took the March 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	1.71	1.71	0.30	0.30	0.62	0.62	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01
5	10.56	12.27	1.99	2.29	6.11	6.73	0.28	0.28	1.03	1.04
4	18.28	30.55	12.74	15.03	17.41	24.15	2.78	3.06	10.74	11.78
3	15.06	45.61	39.58	54.61	31.86	56.00	18.52	21.58	32.34	44.12
2	24.12	69.73	34.44	89.05	33.59	89.59	58.86	80.44	42.34	86.46
1	30.27	100.00	10.95	100.00	10.41	100.00	19.56	100.00	13.54	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 LISTENING

General Comments

PART 1

The task demands the ability to discern and reconstruct required information from a given text to note form. The text is part of a talk on Global Food Crisis. Items ranged from short-answer questions to table completion and multiple-choice questions.

PART 2

The task demands the ability to follow a panel discussion between two speakers and a chairperson on the topic of improving life for the disabled. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART 3

The task demands the ability to follow a news report and two excerpts from a talk. 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. The following are some examples:

Question 1

Most candidates were able to answer with the correct spelling. One letter error was allowed, thus *malnutrision* was accepted. Only a few answered *lack of food*.

Question 2

Some gave *obese* but the form was incorrect, thus this was not accepted.

Question 3

The majority of the candidates were not able to answer correctly. The correct form should be in the comparative form. Most candidates gave the wrong answer – *demanding for better food*.

Questions 4, 5, 6

Well-planned answers were given but with spelling mistakes.

Questions 7, 8

Some candidates were not able to answer the multiple-choice items correctly.

PART 2

Answers ranged from correct answers to some incorrect attempts. Many candidates could answer correctly the multiple-choice items even though the text requires time to process. The inaccurate attempts could be due to poor comprehension of the text or no attempt.

Questions 9, 10

Candidates had to choose from a range of answers from A to F. Thus, it is difficult to weaker candidates as there were many options.

Questions 11 – 14

Some candidates had difficulty with the multiple-choice questions.

PART 3

Answers ranged from correct answers to inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, wrong information, missing required information, spelling and no attempt.

Question 15

Some candidates gave different answers, such as *domestic, native, foreigners*.

Question 16

Most candidates have difficulty answering as they need to include the verb *visit*, *watch*.

Question 17

The majority of candidates did not get the answers correct as they did not use the correct pronoun *they*.

Question 18

Many candidates had difficulties deciphering the words heard. For example, *mental* instead of *dental* and *bitch* instead of *speech*.

Question 19

This question requires careful listening. Candidates were not able to answer this question.

Question 20

Many candidates could not answer this question on main idea.

PAPER 800/2 (SPEAKING)

General Comments

The question papers were well-designed, of the appropriate level of difficulty and reflected the skills stated in the test specifications.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following abilities:

- Showed planning and organisation in their presentation, with a clear introduction, body and conclusion (Task A).
- Linked knowledge of current issues to the topics discussed (Task A & B).
- Read the question carefully and addressed the requirements of the question (Task A & B).
- Used a wide range of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions (e.g. “don’t see eye to eye”, “the fruit of labour is sweeter than the fruit of luck”).
- Demonstrated confidence and participated actively in discussion.
- Were able to respond to different viewpoints and to use language to persuade others.

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).
- Did not refer to current issues in their presentation (Task A & B).
- Addressed the topic but not the requirements of the question (Task A & B). For example, discussing what an artiste or fashion designer does, instead of explaining why the career is interesting (Booklet 6).
- Lacked command of basic structures and vocabulary; many errors in grammar.
- Lacked confidence and participation; tendency to avoid difficult options and hence repeated ideas in options already deliberated on.
- Could not respond to ongoing discussion (Task B).

PAPER 800/3 READING

Answer Keys

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

PAPER 800/4 WRITING

General Comments

Questions meet the test specifications and measure the language ability of prospective university students. Questions demand knowledge of topic, maturity of thought, analytical and critical thinking, organisational skills and 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.

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 choosing one's career and whether it should be determined by one's interest or otherwise, is sought. A clear, consistent, authoritative voice is expected here. The task and the subject matter is 'Education is the most important factor in the development of a country'.

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
- No conciseness
- 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 the changing pattern of parental and household responsibilities of young married professionals in 1990 and 2010* and to *link the selected data to information contained in the newspaper headlines*. Candidates are to write their report in 150 to 200 words. The overall trend shown is the drop in the share of responsibilities among the females in 2010 because more females were competing for jobs. 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 *education is the most important factor in the development of a country* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion on education and to discuss whether education is the most important factor in the development of a

country. 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 share of parental and household responsibilities among young married professionals in 1990 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 parental and household responsibilities 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. In considering *education as being the most important factor in the development of a country, candidates may reason out strong human capital base, research centres, life-long learning, gaining respect of colleagues, prepare and qualify individuals for work*, among others, as factors.

In considering the development of a country as being determined by other factors, candidates may reason out *cultural factor, social factor, geographical factor, political factors*, among others, as factors. 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.

Strengths in candidates' answers:

- Title is provided
- Clear introductions
- Paragraphing
- Length – within word count
- Logical link – associating the overall shift to the increasing number of female graduates seeking employment
- Clear and complete analysis highlighting differences or trends
- Links information in Table 1 to news headlines

Weaknesses in candidates' answers:

- Missing title
- Limited introduction – not including information in news headlines
- Copying the instructions as the introduction
- Missing overview
- Inability to interpret data correctly
- Inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions
- Using wrong prepositions to depict continuous movement of time
- Writing beyond stipulated word count

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 importance/non-importance of education in the development of a country.

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 notions *education* and *development* and the 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.