

Mid-year 2010 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 85 464 candidates took the Mid-Year 2010 MUET.

The performance of candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading, 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	0.18	0.18	0.23	0.23	0.19	0.19	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.00
5	1.75	1.94	1.62	1.86	3.73	3.92	0.98	1.03	0.74	0.74
4	6.09	8.02	9.83	11.69	15.66	19.58	5.29	6.31	6.62	7.36
3	8.98	17.00	29.40	41.09	34.97	54.55	21.97	28.28	26.52	33.88
2	25.54	42.54	35.27	76.36	36.52	91.07	45.73	74.01	45.02	78.90
1	57.46	100.00	23.64	100.00	8.93	100.00	25.99	100.00	21.10	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 (LISTENING)

General Comments

PART I

The task demands the ability to comprehend and reconstruct required information from a given oral text. The text is an interview between a dance instructor and a newspaper reporter on *ballroom dancing*. The items require candidates to answer within the word limit and to display their ability to transfer information from a linear to a non-linear text.

PART II

The task demands the ability to comprehend part of a speech and an interview on *one of Malaysia's leading architect - Dato' Hijjas Kasturi*. The items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART III

The items are based on a mixture of different texts: a talk on *microscopic creatures, side stitch and exercising*, and *safety in Japan*. The items require candidates to answer within the word limit.

Specific Comments

PART I

Answers ranged from some correct answers to incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts were due to writing more than the three words required, spelling errors leading to a change in meaning, partially correct information, missing required information, wrong information and no attempt. Following are some examples:

Question 1

- one word answer which is insufficient – *muscles* (for ‘muscles and bones’);
- ignoring the plural form – *muscle and bone*;
- incorrect information – *muscles and leg*.

Question 2

- incorrect information – *thinner waist, thinner waste line, timmer waist line* (for ‘trimmer waistline’);
- poor spelling – *slimmer waste line* (for ‘slimmer waistline’);
- two answers – *slimmer waistline and hipline*

Question 3

- one word answer given - insufficient information
– *stamina* (2 qualities required of the answer – ‘stamina and endurance’)

Candidates were unable to transfer information to non-linear form (Questions 4-6), either due to poor paraphrasing skills, poor spelling, excessive word count, inaccurate information, non-specific information, or poor listening skills. For examples:

Question 4

- incomplete information – *hold the upper body* (for ‘hold your upper body upright’)

Question 5

- non-specific information – *keep the balance*;
- incorrect information – *balance with your partner* (for ‘keep your balance’)

Question 6

- incorrect information and excessive word count – *music and take the first step*;
- incorrect information – *turn to the music* (for ‘take the first step’)

PART II

Answers ranged from some correct answers to incorrect attempts.

Question number	Key	Question number	Key
9	C	12	C
10	D	13	A
11	A	14	B

PART III

Answers ranged from a few correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly due to writing more than the five words required, missing required information, wrong meaning, spelling errors, incomprehensible attempts, and no attempt.

Questions 15

- Answers included a range of incorrect attempts (e.g. *survive with the microscopic/have the microscope creatures/grab at place all time/rob the sand in the toes, grab something*, etc. for ‘hang onto something’)

Question 16

- Incorrect answers (e.g. *tiny skin and spires/ face and sticky lips/adrenal and toes/kidney and lungs* for ‘spikes and tiny claws’)

Question 17

- *is no longer there when examined* (excessive word count); *not there when doctor examined* (ungrammatical) for ‘is no longer there’

Question 18

- Incorrect answer (e.g. *two hours before exercising* for ‘heavily before exercising’)

Question 19

- Wrong information (e.g. *increasing of transport/more translated of information/their save a world/ transformation of transport*, etc for ‘the crime rate has increased’ or ‘it is not safe anymore’)

Question 20

- Incomplete information (e.g. *shout loudly* for ‘shout fire! fire!’) incorrect answer (e.g. *shout fight! fight!*) excessive word count (e.g. *shout fire! fire! to attract attention*)

PAPER 800/2 (SPEAKING)

General Comments

The questions included a wide range of common and current local and global issues.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following abilities:

- Showed encouraging ability in speaking fluently and confidently from short prepared notes or mind maps
- Demonstrated ability in relating personal experience and knowledge of current issues to the topics in their presentation and discussion
- Showed evidence of wide reading
- Showed comfortable control of the language, with good control of a wide range of structures, vocabulary and idiomatic expressions
- Gave well-developed and structured presentations, supported and illustrated by relevant examples and arguments

Demonstrated good interaction skills in Task B, especially skills in expressing agreement and disagreement, explaining, defending or justifying viewpoints and managing or supporting interaction

The less proficient candidates' weaknesses are summarised as follows:

- Lacked the ability in linking their ideas to the task requirement. As an illustration, instead of explaining how recycling and reusing household items could help reduce the family's expenditure (Booklet 9), the candidates would explain what items could be recycled in the household without linking the ideas to the task
- Spent their preparation time writing whole sentences from which they then read
- Could not develop ideas or give appropriate examples
- Displayed little knowledge of current issues or were unable to display their knowledge because of poor language skills
- Could not sustain their presentation in Task A beyond one minute
- Lacked interaction skills and were not able to respond to viewpoints raised beyond some memorised formulaic expressions. Many could not follow the ongoing discussion in Task B
- Demonstrated limited command of the language, with problems in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation

PAPER 800/3 (READING)

Answer Keys

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

PAPER 800/4 (WRITING)

General Comments

Generally, candidates were modest users. The quality of answers produced ranged from **no** answer to **partial** (response to one visual only) to **modest** (inadequate development of points presented) and **satisfactory** answers (adequate development of points). Only a small percentage of the candidates performed well in both tasks.

Question 1 necessitates analysis and synthesis of data presented in the chart and table. It requires candidates to be selective, discriminating and analytical. The competent language performers were able to analyse the data presented and make connections between the input in the two visuals using correct language, highlighting differences of varying degrees in the trends of visits to the three music websites in lieu of promotional activities organised by the websites in attracting the teenagers. A clear introduction of the visuals is presented as point of reference, followed by an overview of the frequency of visits being influenced by the promotional activities offered by the websites and the analysis and synthesis of the key features showing the significant, moderate or slight change in the number of visits to the said websites throughout the month of August. For the weak language performers, the difficulty arose from poor knowledge of the requirements of the task, inability to present the frequency of visits accurately, inability to link the number of visits to the promotional activities organised, poor expression of frequency of visits, writing beyond the word limit, describing, and inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions.

Question 2 necessitates mature profound thinking of the stimulus presented. Generally, only a small percentage of candidates were correct in their interpretation of the task, that is, to give an opinion about whether the growing trend of turning to electronic communications is healthy and beneficial to its users or otherwise. Many missed out on the pertinent aspect of 'growing trend'. Many only managed to give an opinion of the benefits or the harms of using electronic communications. Overall, candidates could only glean over the justifications made, without adequate support to elaborate and further explain how and why turning more to Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, e-mail, SMS, etc, have been beneficial to them. Evidence of planning, organisation and development of ideas, with examples, are shown in some of the good essays. In the poorer essays, the candidates with limited language ability either misinterpreted the task or had little ability to develop and support the opinion held.

Specific Comments

Strengths and Weaknesses in Candidates' Answers

Question 1

There were fewer above average than below-average performers and their voices were faintly consistent. Answers were only a partial fulfillment of the task. A satisfactory number of candidates fulfilled the requirement of an objective tone in reporting, with a slight percentage keeping to a persuasive/argumentative tone. A satisfactory percentage of candidates conveyed the required introduction, 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 overview/overall trend and the connection between the frequency of visits to the three music websites by teenagers throughout the month of August and promotional activities by these websites to attract the visitors. This goes to show that candidates need further training in answering Question 1.

Most essays were mainly first draft reports. In general, most of the candidates had difficulty giving the overview. Many were able to analyse individual visuals but many failed to make the necessary link between the two visuals, therefore, the lack of synthesis of data. Another weakness of the candidates was not adhering to the word limit. Many wrote more than the word limit. Thus, many of the key features that were analysed were not taken into consideration. Candidates were generally better at analysis than synthesis. Candidates were still making assumptions by offering reasons to support their analysis as well as providing elaboration that was not given in the visuals such as the names of singers.

On the whole, it is observed that:

- Answers are mainly first draft with a lot of cancellations and deletions.
- In terms of planning and presentation, many candidates failed to plan, rephrase and synthesize correctly, thus some information are misinterpreted, distorted and devoid of keywords.
- Candidates generally adhered to the report writing conventions
- One glaring weakness found in answers is that almost 90% of the candidates failed to include the concluding statement. Only a small number of the candidates had managed to include this information within the word limit.
- Some candidates failed to score good marks because they were only able to locate a few of the key features or were able to list them only. Some of the proficient candidates were also in the same predicament despite managing to identify most of the key features. They lacked the ability to analyse and synthesise the key features precisely and concisely. A lack of language control inhibited the writing of concise and coherent reports.
- Some of the points were arranged haphazardly.
- Some candidates listed all the key features instead of analysing or synthesising them. This is because they were unable to link the two visuals.
- Some candidates included their own ideas in the report, reflecting poor reporting skills. Weak candidates resorted to writing chunks of irrelevant and redundant information. Due to this, some other salient points were either omitted or not included within the 200 word limit.
- Some candidates showed a serious lack in the ability to use trend words and appropriate linkers. They merely listed the points without using appropriate linkers and connectors, resulting in answers that lacked synthesis. As a result, some of the better answers were presented without smooth transition of information.

Strengths

- The report was written in one paragraph.
- Use of discourse markers to show some cohesion
- The ability to pick up the key features and the more salient information
- The ability to plan and sequence responses accordingly
- The ability to analyse and synthesise information.
- The ability to establish relationship between data in the two visuals.
- The ability to analyse the key features comprehensively by giving the data and the synthesis.

Weaknesses

- Candidates wrote more than 200 words.
- Candidates wrote lengthy, irrelevant introductions, for example, *Music is an important element in the teenagers' world nowadays. They listen to music all the time because music helps them to release stress*

- Candidates were careless in relaying information and hence inaccuracies occurred, for example, *Music Network showed a decrease from 40 frequency of visits (Week 1) to only 28 in Week 2. Era Music has the highest number of visitors in August.*
- Candidates showed a tendency to omit words or phrases hence making sentences meaningless or incomplete. For example, *Music Network 40,000 teenagers, Era Music the same and Music Connect decreased.*
The frequency of Music Connect increased and then is decreased.
- Candidates' attempt to synthesise and analyse data led to distortion of ideas. For example, *There are no promotional activities in Week 3 and this caused Music Connect to be the most popular website for that week.*
- Assumptions dominated the candidates' report. For example, *Era Music doesn't have the financial stability to organize many activities;*
- 'Name that tune' is not an interesting activity because the teenagers do not like to answer phone-in quizzes.
- Candidates merely listed the data. For example, *In Week 1, Music Network has 40,000 visitors, Music Connect 15,000 and Music Era 10,000.*
- Candidates made general commentary remarks without data handling. For example, *Music Connect and Era showed an increase from Week 1 to Week 2; Era Music decreased slightly from Week 3 to Week 4.*
- Spelling errors and inappropriate use of common words. For example, *on the other words, but to different, to be on the other, fall down, goes up, comes down, fell forward, goes to.*

Question 2

In general, candidates did not perform well for the task. Many of them did not give a clear opinion. Their opinion on the topic had to be read between the lines. Most of the candidates were surprisingly unable to show a reasonably mature treatment of the topic, considering that this subject matter is something well within their sphere of experience. Some candidates struggled to find the appropriate vocabulary.

E.g. 1: *In my opinion, there are good things and bad things from this style of communication.*

E.g. 2: *Good or not it's depend how we use this modernity. Besides that, world now have a new way of communications.*

- In terms of planning, most of the candidates stated their views or stand and had presented some points based on the topic.
- Most scripts did not show proper planning as the views or issues discussed were rather disorganised and vague. Many scripts did not reflect convincing argument for the stand taken.
- The strengths that could be seen in the candidates' answers are mostly on their knowledge on *electronic communications*.
- Some candidates were able to give authentic examples to support their viewpoints.
- However, candidates still lacked the ability to justify their viewpoints and express their opinions. There was no in-depth development of ideas presented as candidates were incapable of developing viewpoints or evaluating and analysing situations to justify the stand they had taken.
- Weaker candidates' writing were incoherent and punctuated with language errors.

Strengths

- Some candidates chose to write on one view only. Many ventured to adopt a mix or impartial view.

- Paragraphs have opening topic statement and some form of concluding statement. Some degree of consistency in stand is shown throughout the writing.
- Candidates posed good rhetorical questions as attention getter.
- Candidates displayed good language control by constructing good phrases and using low frequency words.
- Candidates used discourse markers in an attempt to show cohesion of viewpoint development.

Weaknesses

- Candidates did not understand the term *growing trend*.
- Candidates had problems developing the topic. Instead, they discussed the use of e-mail, Facebook and Short Message System (SMS).
- Candidates were not able to present an argumentative or discursive tone in their essays. Some of the candidates were only able to produce a descriptive piece of essay. Many essays were superficially-handled.
- Only simple sentence structures and high frequency words were used by most of the candidates.
- ‘Touch-n-go’ ideas. Answers lacked illustrations and elaborations. Many candidates gave immature and flimsy reasons and listed viewpoints at sentence level without explanation.
- Sometimes candidates merely described the importance of electronic communications in general and failed to link it to the growing trend, the task that they had to address in the first place.
- Interference of Bahasa Malaysia in sentence structures and spelling
- Poor language control – Subject Verb Agreement, missing verbs, plural agreements, pronouns, spelling, wrong tenses and unclear point of reference.

Expected Answers

Question 1

The language test is that of analysing, interpreting and synthesising the required information in the chart and table related to teenagers’ visit to three music websites and promotional activities organised by these websites throughout August. The written piece has to be concise, yet compact and accurate. A title is preferred though not mandatory. A point of reference (i.e. the chart or the table) is preferred in the introduction, followed by the overall trend or pattern shown in the chart and table. Details to support the overall trend or pattern in the form of key features contributing to the trend are then required as justification of the statement given. An increase or drop in weekly visits substantiated with correct data should be linked to the promotional offers organised for the given period. A logical connection of data and the use of appropriate linkers is expected. Apt vocabulary and accurate data to highlight the increase or fall in visits is a requirement. The expected voice is one of clarity and conviction. Irrelevancies, data inaccuracies, missing data, repetitions and assumptions are not tolerated. No new information, outside that given in the table and chart, is to be included in the reporting. Correct point of reference (Music Network, Music Connect, Era Music, Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Week 4), accurate data and analysis is required for the award of marks. In cases where there was no reference or inaccurate reference of categories involved, it is taken to mean that the candidates had failed to understand the message in the table. Similarly, in cases where there was no link between information found in the chart and table, it is taken to mean that the candidates had 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 or justify a particular perspective held on the given issue that is, *The world today is turning more to electronic communications, such as the e-mail, facebook and Short Message System (SMS)*. Candidates have to state what their opinion and support it with appropriate reasons and examples. The reasons must be convincing to the reader. Candidates need to be clear on the opinion held in respect of the growing trend and to justify why it is a healthy or good thing or otherwise. In answering the question, various angles of discussion may be adopted. Candidates may either hold the opinion that the growing trend is good and healthy; or bad and unhealthy; or both good and bad or both healthy and unhealthy. Candidates may also agree to the growing trend being good because of various reasons.

In attributing the growing trend to be **good and healthy**, candidates may reason out *instantaneous communication, convenience, increased safety, affordable, connects people, increased connectivity, keeping up with the times, sharing of knowledge, research purposes, marketing and advertising, encouraging reading, special interest group and creation of a community of practice*, among others, as factors.

In attributing the growing trend to be **bad and unhealthy**, candidates may reason out *encourages petty crimes, hacking of data, invades privacy, alters the meaning of friendship, lessens traditional communication, reduces face-to-face interaction, forces older people to change their lifestyles, widens knowledge gap between the informed user and non-user, hazardous to health, breakdown of family, unsociable, deterioration of language, addiction, plagiarism, dehumanizing community life*, among others, as factors.

Clearly the question asks for the candidate's opinion on the link between the good or the bad of the growing trend and the reasons. The justification made will have to be supported by strong evidence, and presented in a persuasive voice. A minimum of three points, in support of the claim, is expected, and to be written in **not fewer than 350 words**.

End-year 2010 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 98 662 candidates took the End-Year 2010 MUET.

The performance of candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading, 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	0.86	0.86	0.36	0.36	0.24	0.24	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
5	6.42	7.29	2.02	2.38	4.18	4.41	0.76	0.78	0.97	0.98
4	18.57	25.86	10.85	13.24	17.06	21.48	5.69	6.46	9.56	10.53
3	19.64	45.50	33.77	47.01	33.99	55.47	26.77	33.23	35.48	46.02
2	30.53	76.04	36.06	83.07	35.83	91.30	49.17	82.40	40.70	86.72
1	23.96	100.00	16.93	100.00	8.70	100.00	17.60	100.00	13.28	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 (LISTENING)

General Comments

PART I

The task demands the ability to comprehend and reconstruct required information from a given oral text. The text is a documentary on *Turtle Islands National Park*. The task consists of two multiple choice questions and six questions that require candidates to answer within a certain word limit.

PART II

The task demands the ability to follow a radio interview between an interviewer and an invited guest on the topic of *National Handicraft Exhibition*. Items are of the multiple-choice type.

PART III

The questions are based on a mixture of different texts: a news item on *Sleeping patterns of young people*, an excerpt of a talk on *Obesity among Malaysian children* and an excerpt of a report on *The declining standard of English among Malaysian workers*. The questions require the candidates to answer within the stipulated word limit.

Specific Comments

PART I

Answers ranged from correct answers to inaccurate answers. The inaccurate answers could either be due to writing beyond the word limit, spelling errors leading to a change in meaning, partially correct information, missing required information and no attempt. Some examples include:

Question 1

- Missing required information – *watch turtles* (for ‘watch turtles nesting’)
- Incorrect information – *collect eggs, see turtles hatch*

Question 2

- Inability to recognise cue word – *July and October* (for ‘July to October’)
- Inability to observe the requirement of the question. The use of the word “from” in the question should suggest a “range” of months. Many candidates lifted the information word for word as given in the text “between July and October”, failing to see the presence of the word “from” in the question
- Wrong spelling – *Julai to Oktober*

Question 3

- Failing to maintain the meaning of particular relevant information – *turtles extinct* (for ‘the numbers dwindled’)

For questions 4 – 6, candidates were unable to transfer information to non-linear form possibly due to poor paraphrasing skills, poor spelling, excessive word count, inaccurate information, non-specific information, lack of linguistic competence or poor listening skills.

Question 4

- Failing to see the passive construction required – *Collect the eggs* (for ‘Eggs are collected’)
- Failing to follow the sequence of events in the process given – *eggs collected after visitors leave* (for ‘visitors leave after eggs collected’)

Question 5

- Failing to maintain the meaning of particular relevant information – *transplantation of fresh eggs* (for ‘transplantation of freshly-laid eggs’)
- Incorrect information – *eggs are transferred*
- Poor listening skills – *eggs are transported*

Question 6

- Missing the required information – *turtles are released* (for ‘baby turtles are released’)
- Wrong spelling – *turtles are realise/ relieve*

PART II

Answers ranged from incorrect attempts to all correct attempts.

Question number	Key	Question number	Key
9	B	12	B
10	D	13	B
11	B	14	C

PART III

Answers range from correct answers to all incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing answers beyond the word limit, missing required information, wrong meaning, spelling errors, incomprehensible attempts, and no attempt.

Question 15

- Wrong meaning – biological program (for ‘biologically programmed’)
- Wrong spelling – *biological program* (for ‘biologically programmed’)
- Totally incorrect attempt – *talk with friends, surf the Internet, play computer games*

Question 16

- Failing to maintain the meaning of particular relevant information – *reduce their performance/ contribute emotional and behavioural problems* (for ‘show better performance’ or ‘perform better’)
- Answers beyond the word limit – *have less emotional and behavioural problems*
- Wrong word class – *performance better* (for ‘perform better’)
- Failing to maintain the meaning of particular relevant information – answer is accepted only if it refers to ‘**performance**’ during the day rather than ‘**in studies/college/academic**’.

Question 17

Question requires **only one** reason.

- Giving beyond what is required in the question – *unhealthy eating habits and lifestyle* (for ‘unhealthy eating habits’ or ‘less active lifestyle’)
- Using wrong collocations – *unhealthy lifestyle* (for ‘unhealthy eating habits’) and *poor eating habits* (for ‘unhealthy eating habits’)/ and *not active lifestyle* (for ‘less active lifestyle’)

Question 18

- Wrong meaning – *reduce diabetes and heart problem* (for ‘reduce risk of diabetes’ or ‘reduce risk of heart problem’)
- Wrong word class – *will developing health weight* (for ‘will develop a healthy weight’)

Question 19

- Wrong word class which changes the required meaning – *in international office* (for ‘with international links’)
- Inaccuracy in grammar – *..... international links*
- Wrong spelling of words – *with international lanes*

Question 20

- Wrong spelling of words – *English* (for ‘English’)
- Inaccuracy in grammar – *can’t speaking English* (for ‘poor communication skills’)
- Failing to maintain the meaning of particular relevant information – answers must refer to ‘skills’ in speaking or communication

PAPER 800/2 (SPEAKING)

General Comments

The questions included a wide range of common and current local and global issues.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following abilities:

- Showed good awareness of current issues
- Demonstrated maturity in their development of ideas
- Demonstrated good control of the language, with a wide range of structures and vocabulary
- Showed encouraging fluency and confidence in their presentation
- Demonstrated good interaction skills in Task B, especially skills in expressing agreement and disagreement, explaining, defending or justifying viewpoints and managing the discussion

The less proficient candidates’ weaknesses are summarised as follows:

- Could understand the questions but lacked the ability to elaborate on ideas or give reasons to support viewpoints
- Had limited command of vocabulary and therefore frequently groped for words, resulting in hesitations, incomplete sentences and ‘jerky’ presentations
- Made frequent errors in pronunciation, sentence structure and other grammatical features
- Could not relate their answers to the task assigned. For example, instead of discussing the challenges faced by parents in providing a good education for their children (Booklet 3), the candidates merely discussed the importance of education
- Read from prepared sentences and ended well before the allocated time
- Displayed little knowledge of current issues or were unable to display their knowledge because of poor language skills
- Lacked interaction skills and merely took turns to speak in Task B, thereby turning Task B into an extended version of Task A

PAPER 800/3 (READING)

Answer Keys

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

PAPER 800/4 (WRITING)

General Comments

Generally, candidates were modest users. The quality of answers produced by candidates ranged from **no** answer (only transcript of task management) to **partial** (only one question was answered) to **modest** (inadequate development of points presented) and satisfactory answers. Only a small percentage of the candidates were confident in both tasks.

Question 1 demands the ability to analyse, synthesise and organise key information from a line graph and a bar chart into a coherent piece of writing. Only 2 stimuli are given and the link between them is direct. This question tested students' ability to link information, in particular, the relationship between airlines' popularity with passengers' ratings of satisfaction with features of the airlines such as punctuality, service, price and safety. This entailed skills which include identifying relevant information, analysing and synthesising information. Candidates have to use apt words, transitional words or discourse markers to achieve conciseness, coherence and cohesion. Accuracy of information, conciseness and correctness of language of reporting and logical connection between given information are the requirements.

Question 2 requires candidates to express their opinions or views about a given statement. The view has to be clear and the candidates need to be committed to the stand made. Higher thinking order skills are required for this task.

Candidates are required to express their view on the practice of arranged marriage in which the choice of husband or wife is made by parents or elders in the context of today's society. Candidates have to rely on their own observation, background knowledge, readings, and to a certain extent their own experience, to explain or justify their views. Arranged marriage, its advantages, disadvantages and the

extent of its practice are matters that require the application of some critical thinking. It is related to local cultural practice. Most candidates showed their inability to go beyond a shallow presentation of ideas. This question requires candidates to justify their stand with relevant examples.

Specific Comments

Strengths and Weaknesses in Candidates' Answers

Question 1

In answering Question 1, candidates are required to write about the air travellers' choice of airlines and link the information to the travellers' degree of satisfaction with the airlines.

Strengths

- The report was written in one paragraph.
- Most candidates began their answers with an introduction – clearly stated in one complete sentence at the start of the answer.
- Use of discourse markers or linkers (common ones: besides, and, next, furthermore, in addition) were used to show some cohesion.
- Candidates demonstrated the ability to plan and sequence their responses accordingly. The better candidates could write analytically and provide the ratings for each airline.
- Candidates were able to identify the key features.
- Candidates wrote within the word limit of 200 words.

Weaknesses

- Another weakness of the candidates is the inclusion of irrelevant information. Many candidates provided assumptions and suggestions for their analysis and trend pattern. These irrelevancies therefore, added to the total word count.
- Most of the candidates also displayed poor control of the English language. Vocabulary was not precise, and the sentence structure was clumsy, resulting in distortions and vague answers.
- Many candidates lost marks for Task Fulfillment due to the fact that an overview, either clear or implied, was missing.
- Some candidates misinterpreted the graph (numbers in thousands) and overlooked that the chart given was only meant for 2008. This resulted in vast inaccuracy in the analysis. The candidates were not concise in their answers. There was frequent misinterpretation of information from the visuals. As such, analysis given was inaccurate.
- Most candidates were able to provide or answer only half of the requirements of the task within the 200 words limit.
- Inaccurate data, flawed grammar, for example:
 1. 200, 1500 ... [most common mistake]
 2. 200 000's
 3. 200 000 number of travellers
 4. 200 000 thousands of travels
 5. 200 numbers in 000's
 6. in 2003 years
- Some candidates were at lost in this section as they did not have a clue what report writing should be – the format, the overview, the key features, the trend, the analysis and synthesis.
- Some candidates merely listed the key features.

- Data was not sufficiently provided by the candidates.
- Some candidates could not provide the overall trend and/or a proper introduction complete with information on the two visuals.

Question 2

Most of the candidates stated their stand or view on arranged marriage, of which the choice of a husband or wife is made by parents or elders. Candidates are required to give their opinion of this practice in today's society, whether clearly, repetitively or in an embedded manner. Some candidates reinforced their stand in the concluding paragraph. Arguments were not effectively presented making the piece of writing shallow and immature. Some presented a good piece of discursive or argumentative essay with good illustrations followed by some real and convincing examples. Other candidates merely gave a commentary or described arranged marriages in general.

On the whole it is observed that:

- Most of the candidates stated their views or stand and presented some points based on the topic.
- Most scripts did not show proper planning as the views or issues discussed were disorganised.
- Most of the candidates lacked the ability to express their ideas clearly and coherently. Arguments often lack focus and depth, and were thus, not convincing.
- The candidates' responses also reflected their inability to provide supporting evidence to justify statements made. Examples were either not given or they were not convincing. Many candidates were also hampered by limited vocabulary. Mostly, high-frequency words were used. In addition, words and phrases were often wrongly used, wrongly spelt or lacked precision, for example, 'choice' instead of 'choose' (and vice-versa); 'couples or coupling' instead of 'partners', 'made by parents or elders' instead of 'arranged by parents or elders'. Overall, the candidates' weak language proficiency had resulted in numerous linguistic errors and a poor progression of ideas in their writing task.
- Some candidates were able to give authentic examples to support their viewpoints.
- A minority of candidates were able to fulfill the task satisfactorily by giving at least 3 points with adequate elaboration and relevant examples.

Strengths

- Most candidates indicated stands and reiterated their views and opinions in the concluding paragraph.
- Most attempted to support view points or argument with at least 2 -3 examples.
- Basic organisation like paragraphing, cohesion with the use of common linkers as well as the development of ideas were evident in most answers.
- The better scripts had good points, complete with relevant discussions
- Some confident English language users chose to write on one view only. Many candidates ventured to adopt a mix or impartial view.

Weaknesses

- Most essays were not well structured and planned.
- Candidates arguments were loosely tied, based on common sense rather than rational and critical analysis.
- Opinions were poorly handled and conflicting views were abundant in the work of weaker candidates.

- Cases of task misinterpretation were also abundant.
- Language control - Poor syntax resulting in incomprehensible contents and meaning.
- Bahasa Malaysia spellings and common spelling errors abound in some scripts
- Rampant spelling errors – *dougter, tradisional*
- Inability to use more complex sentences
- Some candidates merely described the processes involved in an arranged marriage
- Others cited parents' rights in an arranged marriage
- The use of pronouns was not sound in most essays: misleading effect on who was arranging marriage for whom.
- Limited vocabulary – interference of L1- *sahsiah, sunnah Nabi, taste salt first, cerai, akad nikah* etc ...
- Some candidates could not give a solid stand.
- Few stated their own personal experiences of rejecting arranged marriages, and actions they took in that situation.
- Some paragraphs were too wordy....beating around the bush effect with futile effort in coming up with points and supporting details.
- The weaker scripts were haphazardly organised, points were scattered, and left unexplained.
- Some irrelevant content points were also included.
- Mixed pronouns used – when we made their choice by herself....

Expected Answers

Question 1

Candidates are expected to write about air travellers' choice of airlines and to relate the information to the travellers' degree of satisfaction with the airlines. A title is not compulsory and the maximum word count is 200 words. The writing has to be compact and include most of the key features for candidates to be in the higher band. Vocabulary has to be apt and relevant to the description of analysis of the number of air travellers and linking it to the satisfaction degree. Candidates can choose to write about the pattern in the number of air travellers as in Figure 1, but better candidates should be able to identify the link to Figure 2, thus providing a better synthesis. Irrelevancies and assumptions are not acceptable as well as any other new information. Many candidates were able to write within the word limit and most of the analysis was relevant and accurate. However, there were still candidates who failed to see the key word, 'number of travellers in 000's', thus their data became inaccurate. There were three categories of candidates: Very weak, weak, modest to good. Very weak candidates listed only some of the features from the visuals. Modest to good candidates were able to identify the more important key features in the visuals.

Question 2

Candidates are required to provide a discussion on the practice of arranged marriages by parents or elders in today's society. They should be able to provide their stand on such practice and also point out the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriages. Varied vocabulary and sentence structures are expected. Candidates should be fluent in their discussions of the advantages and disadvantages, providing various relevant explanations and elaborations. Examples should be realistic. Candidates are expected to give a minimum of 3 reasons with good development of ideas and examples in **not fewer than 350 words**.

Generally, most candidates were able to point out whether such practice is applicable in today's society, giving very solid and valid explanations. Yet, there are essays of very modest attempt, merely giving common and shallow explanations of arranged marriages.