

Mid-year 2011 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 85 044 candidates took the Mid-Year 2011 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	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage	%	Cumulative Percentage
6	2.36	2.36	0.28	0.28	0.37	0.37	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.01
5	9.69	12.05	2.02	2.30	6.20	6.57	0.91	0.94	1.35	1.36
4	16.16	28.20	11.48	13.78	18.37	24.94	5.17	6.11	11.54	12.90
3	12.72	40.92	29.89	43.67	30.32	55.26	21.18	27.29	28.91	41.81
2	21.46	62.38	33.98	77.65	33.17	88.43	42.17	69.46	36.38	78.19
1	37.62	100.00	22.35	100.00	11.57	100.00	30.54	100.00	21.81	100.00

CANDIDATES' RESPONSES

PAPER 800/1 LISTENING

General Comments

PART I

Task demands ability to comprehend and reconstruct required information from a given oral text to note form. The text is a discussion between two friends on training experience at a bank and details of the bank's *Financial Literacy Campaign*. The questions require candidates to answer within the word limit and to display their ability to transfer information from linear to non-linear form.

PART II

Task demands ability to follow a talk on *Allergy*. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART III

The questions are based on a mixture of different texts: an announcement on *celebrating Father's Day*, an excerpt from a talk on *an excavation discovery in the Bujang Valley*, and a talk on *the results of a learning experiment in America*. The questions require candidates to answer in their own words within the five word limit.

Specific Comments

PART I

Answers ranged from correct answers to some incorrect attempts. The inaccurate attempts were due to writing more words than 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

- incorrect information – workshop at schools, campaigns (for *workshops for students/schoolchildren*).
- exceeding word count – good money skills to young people

Question 2

- incomplete information - save/ invest (for *Save Spend Share*)
- wrong tense thus altering meaning – spent (for *spend*)
- wrong word – safe (for *save*)

Question 3

- similar to Question 2
- incomplete information
- wrong tense thus altering meaning
- wrong word

Question 4

- incorrect information – different departments/ different supervisor/ Human Source Department (for *Human Resource Department*)
- wrong spelling – Human Resourse Department;

Question 5

- incorrect information – to every department (for *from every department*)

Question 6

- incorrect information and excessive word count
- incorrect information – bank corporat financial/ financial literacy campaign (for *bank's corporate social responsibility*)
- incorrect spelling – cooperate and socio repnsibility

PART II

Answers ranged from correct answers to some incorrect attempts.

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

Questions 13-14 – Some candidates wrote the answers but along the process copied the answers incorrectly, thus lost marks as meaning was distorted.

PART III

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

Questions 15

- Some incorrect answers included a range of grammatically incorrect constructions to incorrect information (e.g. the lagoon hotel/celebration for Father's day/laguna hotel on Sunday/. (for *celebrate Father's Day*).

Question 16

- incorrect answers (e.g. mystery price/mysterious prize(s) (for *exciting mystery prize*)

Question 17

- wrong spelling – Srivijaya Empayar
- wrong information – 800 years ago (for *other well-known civilizations*)

Question 18

- incorrect answer – would involves in international train (for *were involved in international trade*)

Question 19

- wrong information – Internet bus/ wireless school Internet/ wireless Internet in the bus (for *wireless Internet connection*)

Question 20

- poor construction – increase in the studying/ to complete homework (for *completed their homework*)
- vague information – good in education

PAPER 800/2 SPEAKING

General Comments

The topics for the Mid-Year 2011 Malaysian University English Test (MUET), Speaking paper were appropriate in relation to the maturity and background knowledge of the intended candidates.

Specific Comments

Proficient candidates demonstrated the following ability:

- made short notes (rather than wrote complete sentences) of the points to be delivered during the preparation time.
- signalled the organisation of their ideas in Task A clearly by using discourse markers/linkers such as "There are three reasons why...", "I'm going to provide three reasons why...", "My first point...", "The second reason...", "To conclude, there are three advantages of...", etc. Such use of linkers helped the audience, including the examiners, to follow the candidates' presentation and enhanced the candidates' performance under 'Task Fulfilment'.
- developed their main ideas with elaboration, supporting ideas and examples or illustrations. Such development of ideas added depth and maturity to the candidates' presentation in Task A or arguments in Task B and again, enhanced the candidates' performance under 'Task Fulfilment'.
- demonstrated ability in linking their presentation or discussion to current issues and developments. Such ability requires not only language proficiency but also wide and consistent reading.
- displayed a high level of fluency and confidence in their presentation that could have been developed only through regular practice.
- showed good mastery of the language, with good control of structures and a wide range of vocabulary.
- demonstrated good interaction skills in Task B. Candidates responded actively to on-going discussion, giving reasons for or elaborating on their viewpoints.

- moved the discussion in Task B forward by initiating new topics or by suggesting new directions in the discussion (e.g. “We’ve discussed this point at length; should we examine the other options?”)

The less proficient candidates’ weaknesses are summarised as follows:

- spent too much of the preparation time in Task A writing complete sentences (rather than short notes) on what they wanted to say. These candidates would usually read from whatever little they had prepared after which they could not continue their presentation.
- did not show any attempt at planning or organising their ideas.
- did not/could not elaborate on their ideas. Their ideas were either limited to a one-sentence statement without elaboration or a mere “I agree/disagree” without giving reasons for their point of view. These candidates were usually marked down for superficial treatment of ideas under ‘Task Fulfilment’.
- failed to directly address the requirements of the task. The question on how the Internet has revolutionised our lives (Booklet 2) for example, would require the candidates to compare life before and after the introduction or wide use of the Internet. Many candidates instead discussed the various uses of the Internet without showing how modern life has been changed.
- lacked fluency and vocabulary, with long pauses in between sentences. They also lacked confidence and many spoke so softly that they were hardly audible. Such performance reflects a lack of regular practice in using the language.
- ended their presentation too early (below 1 minute) and hence lacked content in their presentation. These candidates were usually marked down for ‘Task Fulfilment’.
- could not form proper sentences. They demonstrated limited command of the language, including wrong pronunciation of common words and use of L1 (first language) structures.
- did not participate actively in the group discussion in Task B.
- could not respond immediately to an on-going point raised. Such candidates usually took time to write their response to a point raised but by the time they could read from their written response, the topic of the discussion would have changed.

PAPER 800/3 READING

Answer Key

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

PAPER 800/4 WRITING

General Comments

Questions demand knowledge of topic, maturity of thought, analytical-critical thinking, organisational skills and the ability to express opinion.

Question 1 – Task demands ability to analyse, synthesise and organise key information from given tables into a coherent piece of writing. Accuracy of information, conciseness and correctness of language of reporting and logical connection between given information are the requirements.

Question 2 – Task demands ability to give an opinion on a given stimulus. Depth and maturity of thought on whether friendship is the most valuable thing in life, or otherwise, is sought. A clear, authoritative voice is expected here.

Specific Comments

Question 1 – The question requires candidates to write and link data presented on the main goals for the year ahead for two different groups of professionals and their profiles. This entails skills which include identifying relevant information, analysing and synthesising information. Candidates are to use apt words, transitional markers to achieve conciseness, coherence and cohesion. The key to answering lies in selective analysis and synthesis of required information.

Candidates are tested on the ability to provide an overview, analysis and synthesis of key features presented, and observation of the mechanics of reporting the results of the study in an appropriate voice, correct and appropriate language, and precise and concise use of words.

This test of academic writing taps candidates' knowledge, analysis, synthesis and evaluative skills.

Question 2 – The question taps candidates' higher order thinking ability to critically give an opinion on whether friendship is the most valuable thing in life. Candidates are expected to engage in a mature discussion of the issue, giving good justification and illustrations from whichever angle of discussion is preferred and within the stipulated word count of 350 words.

Comments on candidates' answers in general

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

Task 1 necessitates analysis and synthesis of data presented in the tables. It requires candidates to be selective, discriminating and analytical. The competent language performers were able to analyse the data and make connections between the inputs in the two visuals using correct language, highlighting differences in ranking of the seven main goals in relation to the professionals' profiles. A clear introduction of the visuals is presented as point of reference, followed by an overview of the differences in ranking of the seven main goals between the two age groups, followed by highlights and synthesis of the key features showing the significant differences in ranking of goals and the possible justification for such rankings. In the poor language performers, the difficulty arose from poor knowledge of the requirements of the task, inability to present the required key features accurately, inability to link the prioritization of goals to background of

professionals, writing beyond the word limit, describing instead of analyzing and linking profiles to goals, and inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions.

Task 2 necessitates mature profound thinking of the stimulus presented. Generally only a small percentage of candidates were correct in their interpretation of the task, i.e., to give an opinion about whether friendship is the most valuable thing in life, or otherwise. Many candidates equate 'friendship' with 'friends', thus the tendency to describe the good features in friends. Many only managed to give an opinion of the good points of friends, such as dependable helpful, offers guidance, etc. Overall, candidates could only glean over the justifications made, without adequate support to elaborate and further explain why friendship is the most valuable thing in life. Evidence of planning, organization and development of ideas, with examples, is shown in some of the good essays. In the poorer essays, with limited language ability, the candidates either misinterpreted the task or have little ability to develop and support the opinion held.

Quality of answers including planning and presentation

Question 1

Most were mainly first draft reports. In general, most of the candidates had difficulty giving the overview. In fact, most had the overview embedded in their synthesis. Many candidates were able to analyse individual visuals but many failed to make the necessary link between the two visuals, thus the lack of synthesis of data. Another weakness of candidates was not adhering to the word limit. Many wrote more than the word limit. Thus many of the key features that were analysed and written beyond the word count 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 not given in the visuals such as offering reasons why they had prioritised their goals as such.

On the whole it is observed that:

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

STRENGTHS

Able to provide an overview although not stated clearly. Most of the overview was embedded in the synthesis given.

- Report written in one paragraph.
- Use of discourse markers to show some cohesion.
- Able to pick up the key features and the more salient information.
- Demonstrate ability to plan and sequence response accordingly.
- Able to analyse and synthesise information.
- Able to establish relationship between data in the two visuals.
- Some candidates analysed the key features comprehensively by giving the data and the synthesis.

WEAKNESSES

- Candidates inability to understand the task correctly.
- Candidates wrote more than 200 words.
- Candidates wrote lengthy, irrelevant introductions.
- Candidates described profiles separately, thus using up precious word count.
- Candidates were careless in relaying information and hence inaccuracies occurred.
- Candidates showed tendency to omit words/phrases hence making sentences meaningless/incomplete.
- Candidates' attempt to synthesise and analyse data led to distortion of ideas. E.g. *aged 18-27 were the most preferred in dreaming to increase their finance earnings also realised the importance of saving by putting save money ... is followed by allocating much time with family ... looked to be not focus in their career*
- Assumptions dominated the candidates' report. E.g. *18-27 age are young so they are more sociable and also need more money to live; young life style using credit cards... SM are getting older, so they do not need to make money*
- Candidates merely listed the data. e.g. *18-27 age ranking make more money number 1, followed by improving technology skills, communication, make new friends ... and last spend more time with family.*
- Candidates made general commentary remarks without data handling. e.g. *wealth are not important because even though you have a lot of money but you in a bad condition you cannot enjoy your wonderful life.*

Question 2

Many candidates equate 'friendship' with 'friends'. Therefore, they did not perform well for the task. Besides that, 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 unable to show reasonably mature treatment of the topic, considering that this subject matter is something that everyone has the experience and has some opinion to offer. Some candidates struggled to find the appropriate vocabulary. For example:

E.g. 1: *friendship is the most valuable thing in life because we life in a community*

E.g. 2: *we need the friendship because there were a lot of good manners in friendship such as tolerate, responsibilities and caring*
If someone said that friendship is not valuable, my face will be like the monkey's uncle because that statement was horrible.

- In terms of planning, most candidates have stated their view/ stand and have presented some points based on the topic.
- Most scripts did not show proper planning as the views / issues discussed are rather disorganised and blurred. Many scripts did not reflect substantial contents of solid or convincing argument for stand.

- 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.
- However, it is sad to note that candidates still lack the ability to justify their viewpoints and express their opinions. There was not enough explanation and elaboration of their viewpoints. Simplistic generalisations were rampantly promoted without examples and illustrations to support their points, resulting in vague ideas. Besides, 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.
- Generally, candidates were incapable of discussing issues put forward as part of the question. This is mainly due to limited ability to express oneself and the lack of strong vocabulary.
- Writing is at times incoherent and punctuated with language errors.
- Spelling errors, wrong word forms and wrong tenses are abundant in candidates' answers.

STRENGTHS

- Scripts showed some semblance of essay structure/ shape with simplistic argument statement and modest support for viewpoints. Paragraph has 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 use discourse markers in an attempt to show cohesion of viewpoint development.
- Candidates quoted relevant wise sayings, quotes to support position taken.
- Repetitive statements in an attempt to indicate appropriateness of writing.

WEAKNESSES

- Candidates could not distinguish between 'friendship' and 'friend'.
- Candidates have problems developing the topic.
- Candidates were not able to present an argumentative/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.
- Strayed in writing. Sometimes candidates merely described the importance of friends/friendship in general and failed to justify why it is the most valuable thing in life.
- Interference of BM in sentence structures and spelling.
- Poor language control – SVA, missing verbs, plural agreements, pronouns, spelling, wrong tenses and unclear point of reference.

Comments on Specific Questions

Task

Question 1

The task requires candidates *to write about the results of a survey carried out on two groups of professionals to determine what they consider to be their main goals for the year ahead*. Candidates are to write in 150 to 200 words. The overall ranking of the main goals for the year ahead of the two groups of professionals is

to be explained in relation to their background details. In conveying the required information, candidates are required to integrate and interpret the data correctly, provide an introduction, present an overview, highlight the key features in relation to the overall trend and end with a conclusion.

Question 2

The task requires candidates to give an opinion *whether friendship is the most valuable thing in life, or otherwise, and to support the opinion held, giving explanations and illustrations*, in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion on the issue and be able to support that view citing various examples and contexts in which friendship plays a valuable part in one's life. Candidates are to give a strong commitment to the opinion held. The candidate has to state what the opinion is, explain why he/she holds that perspective and to 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 related profiles of two groups of professionals and their ranking of main goals for the year ahead. A 3-paragraph format is sought and the maximum word count is 200 words. 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 tables) is preferred in the introduction, followed by the overall trend/pattern shown in the tables. Details to support the overall pattern of ranking in the form of key features contributing to the rankings are then required in justification of the statement given. Highest and lowest rankings and comparisons between the two groups should be linked to their profiles. Logical connection of data and use of appropriate linkers is expected. Apt vocabulary and accurate data to highlight the highest, mid and lowest rankings 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 tables is to be included in the reporting. Correct point of reference, 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 candidate has failed to understand the message in the table. Similarly, in cases where there was no link between information found in the tables, it is taken to mean that the candidate has failed to understand the requirements 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 perspective held on the given issue. Candidates have to state what that opinion is and to support it with appropriate reasons and examples. The reasons must be good ones in order to convince the reader. Candidates need to be clear on the opinion held and to justify why it is the most valuable thing in life, or otherwise. In answering the question, various angles of discussion may be adopted. Candidates may either hold the opinion that friendship is the most valuable thing in life; or that other things are more valuable in life; or that it is the most valuable thing in life for a certain stage in one's life but not after that; or that there are other things more valuable in life from different people's perspectives.

In attributing friendship to be the most valuable thing in life, candidates may reason out a number of purposes such as for *personal growth, support, companionship, social symbol, networking, healthy competition, role model, motivation*, among others, as factors.

In attributing other things as most valuable in life, candidates may reason out *parents, love, wealth, health,*

happiness, wisdom, beauty, education, intelligence, self respect, career advancement, spiritual stability, among others, as factors.

Clearly the question asks for the candidate's opinion on the link between friendship being the most valuable thing in life 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.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

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. Only a negligible percentage was able to provide the overview/overall trend and the connection between the main goals of the two groups of professionals and their background.

Question 2

Only a small percentage of candidates can follow the task requirements closely and present a good discursive essay with good illustrations followed by some real and convincing examples. Some candidates were merely describing the positive aspects of friends. Many, however, were not able to state and present their opinion satisfactorily. Candidates should cite 3 points with explanations and illustrations of the importance of friendship. Frequently cited positive aspects of friendship were for *companionship, support and a place to confide and seek help*. Eighty percent of the essays agree to friendship being the most valuable thing in life.

Many ideas were vaguely expressed, invariably due to poor command of vocabulary and structures. There was poor understanding of the notion of *friendship* 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, there was a lack of maturity of ideas and adequate control of the language for clear expression of ideas and maturity of expression of opinion.