

March 2013 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 40 378 candidates took the March 2013 MUET.

The performance of candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading 800/4 Writing and the subject, 800 MUET, according to bands is as follows:

| Band | 800/1 | | 800/2 | | 800/3 | | 800/4 | | 800 | |
|------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage |
| 6 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 5 | 2.41 | 2.47 | 0.93 | 0.99 | 2.92 | 2.99 | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.16 | 0.16 |
| 4 | 13.85 | 16.32 | 8.27 | 9.25 | 16.04 | 19.02 | 1.41 | 1.51 | 4.10 | 4.26 |
| 3 | 16.76 | 33.08 | 34.70 | 43.95 | 37.45 | 56.47 | 8.36 | 9.87 | 26.64 | 30.89 |
| 2 | 29.51 | 62.59 | 41.93 | 85.88 | 35.50 | 91.98 | 37.10 | 46.97 | 46.76 | 77.65 |
| 1 | 37.41 | 100.00 | 14.12 | 100.00 | 8.02 | 100.00 | 53.03 | 100.00 | 22.35 | 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 a talk on *How to Become a More Confident Person*. Items ranged from short-answer questions to table completion and multiple-choice questions.

PART 2

The task demands the ability to follow an interview with a university counsellor on *Counselling as a Career*. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART 3

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of texts; two documentaries and one news items. Items were of the short-answer question 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

- missing verb – *good leaders*
- wrong form – *a good leader, are good leader*

Question 2

- missing word – *experiences*
- wrong spelling – *live experiences*
- wrong information – *their life experiences*

Question 3

- wrong information – *improve better*
- wrong tense – *be improve*

Question 4

- wrong information leading to distortion – *can change outcome, ambitious in a realistic way, ability to change things around.*

Question 5

- wrong information – *prepare earlier, be prepared before the speech, prepare for it early*

Question 6

- wrong information leading to distortion – *being positive, concentrate to be positive, being positive*

PART 2

Answers ranged from some correct answers to some incorrect attempts. Most candidates could only obtain two correct answers. Generally Q9, Q10, Q11 and Q13 were incorrectly answered. The inaccurate attempts could be due to poor comprehension of the text or no attempt.

PART 3

Answers ranged from a few 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.

Majority failed to answer questions 15-20.

Question 15

Answers could be obtained from the text but some answers were unacceptable because of the distortion of information, e.g. *carbon emission into the atmosphere, huge amount of carbon, carbon emission is increased, releasing carbon into the atmosphere.*

Question 16

Some candidates could not answer correctly due to grammatical error, e.g. *block*; wrong information, e.g. *disposal of plastic bottles, filled with plastic bottles, blocked by plastics*

Question 17

poor comprehension, e.g. *find food, mouth south for food, search for food, change their habitat*

Question 18

wrong information, e.g. *human hunter, climate change and human hunters*

Question 19

poor paraphrasing, e.g. *at places they supposed to, at supposed places, at places to stop, at the right place, at parking places for them*

Question 20

poor paraphrasing, e.g. *park at the building, park at the right place, double park, walk further distance, walk a long distance*

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:

- Made notes (instead of writing full sentences) in preparation of Task A
- Organised the ideas around main points
- Developed their ideas by elaborating on each of their main points
- Used their general knowledge as supporting ideas while elaborating on their main points
- Rarely spoke less than one and a half minutes in Task A
- Used clear linkers such as *firstly, secondly, to conclude, etc.* to enhance the coherence and cohesion of their presentation in Task A
- Responded actively to the viewpoints
- Had good control of language structures and a wide range of vocabulary, including some good use of words, phrases and idioms

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 the current issues in their presentation (Task A & B)
- Did not relate their points to the situation given
- Did not respond directly to the viewpoints raised by the others in Task B
- Could not respond to ongoing discussion
- 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

PAPER 800/3 (READING)

Answer key

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

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-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 of common knowledge to most candidates. Depth and maturity of thought to present a discussion on *Man's careless attitude is the main cause for the destruction of the environment*, or otherwise, is sought. A clear, consistent, authoritative voice is expected here. The task is challenging and the subject matter known to all.

Specific Comments

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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
- Lack conciseness
- Distortions
- Hanging sentences
- Repetitions
- Vague statement
- Missing data
- Limited vocabulary
- Informal tone

Question 2

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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 a comparison of life expectancy among men and women in the three regions and in three years, 1990, 2000 and 2010 and to link selected data to information about causes of deaths among men and women in the three regions in 2010, contained in the bar chart.* Candidates are to write their report in 150 to 200 words. The overview is the longer life expectancy of women compared to men in all three regions and three years and fewer deaths of women from communicable disease in 2010. 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 overview and to link the key features to information contained in the chart.

Question 2

The task requires candidates to present an opinion on whether *Man's careless attitude is the main cause for the destruction of the environment* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion on the causes for the destruction of the environment and to discuss whether Man's careless attitude is the main reason, or otherwise, for the destruction of the environment. Candidates are to give a strong commitment to the view held. The candidate has to state what that 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 life expectancy among men and women in the three regions and in three years, 1990, 2000 and 2010 and information about causes of deaths among men and women in the three regions in 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 overview should be conveyed, followed by key features in support of the overview.

Logical connection of data and use of appropriate linkers is expected. Appropriate vocabulary to highlight the changing pattern of life expectancy in the different regions and different years between men and women is a requirement. The expected voice is one of clarity 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 (year, gender, region) 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 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 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 Man's careless attitude being the main cause for the destruction of the environment (be it physical, social political or economic), candidates may express greed, disrespect for others, arrogance, ignorance of the law, among others, as reasons.

Alternatively, candidates may discuss other factors contributing to the destruction of the environment. Strong justification must be made supported by evidence, and argued 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. Many could not analyse information contained in the table correctly, much worse, could not present an overview of information presented in the two visuals. Many interpreted the data as a continuum of time from 1990 to 2010 when in actuality specific time frames of 1990, 2000 and 2010 were presented. Because of the misinterpretation of the time frame, a change in life expectancy for the given years were expressed in terms of movement in words such as 'an increase, a drop, a fluctuation, remained steady' ; when the expected words were 'higher, lower, more, fewer, highest, lowest,' etc. Most answers were only a partial fulfillment of the task. A low percentage of candidates conveyed the required overview, which is the point of reference for the analysis and synthesis of the required information. This goes to show that candidates need further training in answering Question 1.

STRENGTHS:

- Title is provided
- Clear introduction
- Paragraphing
- Length – within word count
- Logical link – associating life expectancy in 2010 in the different regions with the causes of deaths in 2010
- Clear and complete analysis highlighting differences in life expectancy
- Links information on life expectancy to causes of deaths among genders and in different regions in 2010

WEAKNESSES:

- Missing title
- Incomplete introduction – not including information in Figure 1
- No introduction
- Missing/ poorly constructed overview
- Poor analysis of Table 1/Figure 1
- Inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions
- Wrong use of trend words depicting movement (increase, decline, fluctuation)

- Wrong use of preposition depicting duration (from ... to)
- Distortions and assumptions
- Poor synthesis
- 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 Man's careless attitude, or otherwise, being the main reason for the destruction of the environment.

Modest answers barely developed the opinion held on the destruction of the environment being caused by Man's careless attitude. 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 generic term Man. 'Man' is taken to mean the distinction between gender, thus many essays had male/female stance being responsible for the destruction of the environment.

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. Overall, what is lacking in the essays are maturity of ideas and adequate control of the language for clear expression of ideas.

July 2013 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 70 058 candidates took the July 2013 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 MUET, according to bands is as follows:

| Band | 800/1 | | 800/2 | | 800/3 | | 800/4 | | 800 | |
|------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage |
| 6 | 0.29 | 0.29 | 0.23 | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 5 | 2.89 | 3.18 | 1.46 | 1.69 | 2.40 | 2.61 | 0.73 | 0.74 | 0.65 | 0.65 |
| 4 | 8.46 | 11.65 | 8.79 | 10.48 | 9.29 | 11.90 | 4.84 | 5.58 | 5.73 | 6.38 |
| 3 | 11.15 | 22.80 | 27.91 | 38.39 | 24.83 | 36.73 | 23.77 | 29.35 | 22.16 | 28.54 |
| 2 | 31.77 | 54.57 | 37.32 | 75.71 | 44.96 | 81.68 | 53.00 | 82.35 | 49.09 | 77.63 |
| 1 | 45.43 | 100.00 | 24.29 | 100.00 | 18.32 | 100.00 | 17.65 | 100.00 | 22.37 | 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 a talk on 'How do barcodes work?'. 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 'Light Pollution'. Items were of the multiple-choice type.

PART 3

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of texts; two news items and a documentary. Items were of the short-answer question 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:

- The responses given by candidates were the proof that candidates could not clearly comprehend the questions or could not listen appropriately.
- Questions were arranged in sequence and candidates were expected to write down answers to Questions 1-6. Most candidates did not answer Question 1, 2 and 3 correctly. Candidates found these 3 questions difficult because of their inability to provide their own answers, to rephrase effectively to meet the word limit or to spell correctly, for instance, *'like'*, *'for example'* (Question 1), *'check price accurately'* (Question 2), *'checking out'*, *'check up'*, *'quickly check up'* (Question 3) and parallelism errors, for instance, *'bar and spaces'*, *'bar and space'* (Question 4), *'items sold and price'*, *'prices of item sold'*(Question 5).
- Question 6 posed a problem to many of the candidates as they were not able to distinguish between a camera phone and a camera.
- Most candidates were able to answer Question 7 and 8 correctly because these were multiple-choice questions.
- The responses were out of context and more often than not had resulted in severe distortions in either the meaning or the language aspects.

PART 2

- Part 2 consists of multiple choice questions. As such, most of the candidates managed to answer correctly all the questions in this section.
- However, for questions 9 and 10, quite a number of candidates wrote out full answers instead of the given letters. A few candidates even gave multiple answers to each question (Question 9 and 10).

PART 3

- Most candidates gave extremely poor responses in this section. Candidates had to listen and comprehend the text, paraphrase the information into not more than five words, and then to spell the words correctly.
- By and large, many candidates could not process the information given, hence, many questions were not attempted, and for those candidates who attempted to answer, their responses were either distorted or inaccurate, displaying poor proficiency and limited vocabulary of the language.
- Candidates, generally were weak in subject verb agreement, for instance, *'shows accurate pricing'*, *'has accurate pricing'* (Question 2) and *'find record or barcode'* (Question 5), *'are the same'*, *'remain the same'* (Question 17), *'was not linked'* (Question 18) and *'have separated after 115 years'*.
- Gross spelling errors were also common, for instance, *'acurate'* (Question 1), and *'seperated'*, *'totise'*, *'pare'* (Question 19). Candidates misinterpreted word, for instance *'price'* instead of *'prized'* (Question 2) and *'check up'* instead of *'check out'* (Question 3).

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:

- Able to organise the ideas around main points
- Developed their ideas by elaborating on each of their main points
- Used their general knowledge as supporting ideas while elaborating on their main points
- Participated actively in the discussion
- Used clear linkers
- Showed good understanding of the question
- Displayed wide range of vocabulary

Weaknesses of the less proficient candidates are summarised as follows:

- Lacked planning and organisation; lacked transitional markers from one idea to the next. Inability to respond to viewpoints raised
- Did not respond directly to the viewpoints raised by other candidates in Task B
- Could not respond to ongoing discussion
- Lacked command of basic structures and vocabulary
- Lacked confidence and participation

PAPER 800/3 (READING)

Answer key

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

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-critical thinking and organisational skills and the ability to express opinion. Both questions require candidates to think profoundly, critically and maturely.

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 of common knowledge to most candidates. Depth and maturity of thought to present a discussion on *Everyone should aim to become a millionaire by the age of 35*, or otherwise, is sought. A clear, consistent, authoritative voice is expected here. The task is challenging and the subject matter known to all.

Specific Comments

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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
- Chippy sentences
- Description/commentary
- Unclear statements
- Inability to reconstruct information
- No report writing skills
- Not concise
- Distortions
- Hanging sentences
- Repetitions
- Vague statement
- Missing data
- Limited vocabulary
- Informal tone

Question 2

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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 charts about the dominant pastimes of youths in 2004 and 2009 between Singaporeans and Malaysians*. 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 overview and to link the key features to information contained in the chart.

Question 2

The task requires candidates to present a discussion about *Everyone should aim to be a millionaire by the age of 35* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to give opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of aiming to be a millionaire at such a young age and the reasons. Candidates are to give a strong commitment to the view held. The candidate has to state what that 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 *The dominant pastimes of youths in 2004 and 2009 between Singaporeans and Malaysians* and information about the percentages of youths involved in a variety of dominant pastimes. A report format is sought and the maximum word count is 200 words. The report has to be concise, yet compact and accurate. An overview should be conveyed, followed by key features in support of the overview.

Logical connection of data and use of appropriate linkers is expected. Appropriate vocabulary to highlight the changing pattern of life expectancy in the different regions and different years between men and women is a requirement. The expected voice is one of clarity and consistency. Irrelevancies, inaccuracies of data and assumptions made are not tolerated. No new information, outside of that given in the question, is required.

Correct point of reference (percentage, year, dominant pastimes, region) 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 charts. Similarly, in cases where there was no link to information found in the chart, 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 everyone should aim to be a millionaire by the age of 35, candidates may express money is important for life, family and future, as reasons. While those who proposed the ways to be rich gave rather insipid ideas like study hard, work hard, save more money and do business.

Strong justification must be made supported by evidence, and argued 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

Generally, Question 1 was quite poorly answered. Requirements of the task were very modestly-fulfilled as many of the candidates presented the information in the form of description rather than analysis and synthesis. Though attempts had been made to analyse the information, candidates analyses were mostly inaccurate due to the wrong choice of words or wrong subject reference which distorts the meaning. Moreover many candidates had given assumptions such as possible reasons why certain pastimes were more dominant than others, for example, why Singaporean youths preferred certain pastimes compared to Malaysian youths or vice versa. Some even rated or ranked the pastimes. All these were inappropriate and irrelevant to the task.

Most of the answers presented were first draft reports as there were some cancellations of words in candidates' writing. However, there was some form of structure in their report as the majority of the candidates had written the report in three paragraphs. The first paragraph consisted of mostly an incomplete introduction, often without mentioning the countries involved, followed by an inappropriate or inaccurate overview. The analysis and synthesis, which were mostly weak and vague, were written in the second paragraph while the conclusion was in the last paragraph. Very often, there was no conclusion within the 200-word limit.

STRENGTHS:

- Title is provided
- Clear introduction
- There is a need for an overview
- Report written in one paragraph
- Length – within word count (200 words)
- Use of discourse markers/linkers
- Demonstrate ability to plan and sequence their response accordingly

WEAKNESSES:

- Missing title
- Incomplete introduction – not including information in Figure 1
- No introduction
- Missing/ poorly constructed overview
- Poor analysis of Figure 1/ Figure 2
- Inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions
- Wrong use of trend words depicting movement
- Distortions and assumptions
- Poor synthesis
- Writing beyond stipulated word count
- Leaving out the required information like the names of the countries and the years has been observed too

Question 2

The majority of the candidates' essays ranged from poor to modest responses. In terms of planning, many candidates had stated their opinion or made a stand, and they had presented some ideas related to the topic. However, most of their ideas were limited to vague generalities without clear, adequate explanations and justifications. Furthermore, ideas presented were simplistic and shallow. For example, candidates wrote: "A millionaire can buy anything he wants such as a big house, an expensive car, branded clothes, etc."

Many of the ideas were also disorganised and poorly-linked. For instance, candidates mentioned that a millionaire can increase the economy of the country. However, there was no clear explanation as to how it can be done. Besides, there were repetitions and overlapping of points as well as cancellations. This shows that the answers presented were first draft essays. Nevertheless, the candidates had some kind of planning as they had written their essays in a few paragraphs with an introduction, body and conclusion, so order and structure were mostly present in their essay.

November 2013 MUET (800)

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

A total of 72 063 candidates took the November 2013 MUET.

The performance of candidates for each paper, 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading 800/4 Writing and the subject, 800 MUET, according to bands is as follows:

| Band | 800/1 | | 800/2 | | 800/3 | | 800/4 | | 800 | |
|------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage | % | Cumulative Percentage |
| 6 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 5 | 2.00 | 2.20 | 1.21 | 1.37 | 2.45 | 2.58 | 0.66 | 0.68 | 0.42 | 0.42 |
| 4 | 7.57 | 9.77 | 9.08 | 10.45 | 12.78 | 15.36 | 4.45 | 5.13 | 5.26 | 5.68 |
| 3 | 11.75 | 21.52 | 33.78 | 44.23 | 35.75 | 51.11 | 21.42 | 26.55 | 27.52 | 33.20 |
| 2 | 33.19 | 54.71 | 40.20 | 84.43 | 39.77 | 90.88 | 50.71 | 77.26 | 50.89 | 84.09 |
| 1 | 45.29 | 100.00 | 15.57 | 100.00 | 9.12 | 100.00 | 22.74 | 100.00 | 15.91 | 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 a radio talk on *Feel Good Today*. It was a topic that most candidates were familiar with and could relate to. Information is presented in easy to follow, reader friendly structures. The topic is interesting and the input predominantly new information. 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 Dreams. Items were of the multiple-choice type and this is the majority of the candidates to obtain some marks through multiple-choice options given.

PART 3

The task demands the ability to follow a mixture of texts; a documentary and two news items.- the first was a news item on *Africa*; the second on part of a story on *Judgment on shoplifting at a supermarket*; Items were of the short-answer question type; and the third on a research finding on *The nail-biting habit*.

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

- missing verb – *optimistic*
- missing pronoun – *improve mood*

Question 2

- missing modal word – *encourages stress*
- wrong word – *is encouraging stress*
- wrong information – *leads to stress, encouraging mood*

Question 3

- wrong information – *rub the palms*
- vague information – *rub them*
- wrong aspect – *close your eyes*

Question 4

- wrong information leading to distortion – *focus on yourself*
- wrong pronoun – *concentrate on myself*
- vague information – *concentrate*

Question 5

- missing article – *practice palming method*

Question 6

- wrong information leading to distortion – *making friendship, nurturing friends, nurturing relationship, loving others*

PART 2

Answers ranged from some correct answers to some incorrect attempts. Most candidates could only obtain two correct answers. Generally Q10, Q11, Q12 and Q14 were incorrectly answered. The inaccurate attempts could be due to poor comprehension of the text or no attempt.

PART 3

Answers ranged from a few correct answers to inaccurate attempts. The inaccurate attempts were mainly writing more words than is required, poor comprehension of the short text, poor paraphrasing, spelling errors, meaningless text and no attempt.

Majority failed to answer questions 15-20.

Question 15

Many candidates failed to comprehend the text and supply the correct answer to complete the stem. Where candidates attempted, the answer were unacceptable because of distortion of information, e.g. *how the media showcase them*, vague information, e.g. *the news, the report, world media, the media*, wrong information e.g. *HIV, AIDS, scam, war, corruption*.

Question 16

Some candidates could not answer correctly due to wrong information, e.g. *work with dignity, stand on their feet, live in dignity, help them to be independent*.

Question 17

poor comprehension of text, e.g. *the thief smiled, he pretended to agree, the lawyer smiled, the judge smiled*; wrong tense, e.g. *steal the cigarette*; wrong spelling e.g. *cigarete, cigarate, ciggarete*.

Question 18

wrong information, e.g. *he pretended to agree, he pretended to believe, the lawyer smiled, walked out from the court*.

Question 19

wrong article leading to distortion of information, e.g. *mental, emotional and (or) physical disorder*.

Question 20

vague information, e.g. *your resolution*; wrong information e.g. *remind* (remember) *not to bite nails*.

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:

- Able to respond well to the task
- Points raised were well organised and elaborated
- Able to refer to specific current issue reported in the media
- Fluent and confident and were able to use words and phrases and idioms effectively to convey their ideas.

The less proficient candidates' weaknesses are summarised as follows:

- Hesitant in their speech
- Lacked vocabulary in expressing themselves
- Failed to elaborate on their ideas; the elaboration, if any, was usually limited, too simple, disconnected ideas which appeared superficial and disorganised
- Lacked general knowledge of current issues

PAPER 800/3 (READING)

Answer key

| Question number | Key | Question number | Key | Question number | Key |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| 1 | C | 16 | A | 31 | C |
| 2 | A | 17 | C | 32 | C |
| 3 | A | 18 | A | 33 | B |
| 4 | A | 19 | C | 34 | A |
| 5 | A | 20 | A | 35 | D |
| 6 | B | 21 | B | 36 | D |
| 7 | B | 22 | C | 37 | C |
| 8 | B | 23 | B | 38 | A |
| 9 | A | 24 | A | 39 | B |
| 10 | A | 25 | B | 40 | C |
| 11 | A | 26 | C | 41 | A |
| 12 | A | 27 | A | 42 | B |
| 13 | B | 28 | A | 43 | D |
| 14 | C | 29 | B | 44 | C |
| 15 | B | 30 | B | 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-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. It is on *Pet Ownership*. Two visuals were presented; one, a bar chart on ownership of different types of pets, and a table depicting the reasons for keeping the pets. Accuracy of information, conciseness and correctness of language and logical connection between given information are the requirements. Topic is evergreen, and input predominantly current.

Question 2

The task demands the ability to address and express an opinion on an issue of common knowledge to most candidates. Depth and maturity of thought to present a discussion on *The most important factor which contributes towards a person's success*, is sought. A clear, consistent, authoritative voice is expected here. The task is challenging and the subject matter known to all.

Specific Comments

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

Question 1

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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 link to table
- Choppy sentences

- Description/commentary
- Unclear statements
- Inability to reconstruct information
- No report writing skills
- Lack conciseness
- Distortions
- Hanging sentences
- Repetitions
- Vague statement
- Missing data
- Limited vocabulary
- Informal tone

Question 2

STRENGTHS:

- Understands 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 bar chart on ownership of the different types of pets by the four groups of owners and to link the appropriate reasons for keeping those pet, contained in the bar chart*. Candidates are to write their report in 150 to 200 words. The overview is different groups of owners keep pets for different reasons. 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 overview and to link the key features to information contained in the chart.

Question 2

The task requires candidates to present an opinion on whether *the person himself or some other are contributing factors to his success* in not fewer than 350 words. Candidates are required to have an opinion and to discuss whether the person himself is the main reason, or, otherwise, for his success. Candidates are to give a strong commitment to the view held. The candidate has to state what that 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 A report format is sought and the maximum word count is 200 words. The report has to be concise, yet compact and accurate. An overview should be conveyed, followed by key features in support of the overview.

Logical connection of data and use of appropriate linkers is expected. Appropriate vocabulary to highlight the number and comparison of number of owners for the different pets such as highest, lowest, most, least, more, fewer, only, equal number, etc. is a requirement. The expected voice is one of clarity 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 (type of pet, number, reason) 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 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 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 the most important factor contributing to a person's success being the person himself, candidates may express, *motivation, confidence, attitude, resourcefulness, talent, appearance*, etc. among others as relevant points. Alternatively, candidates may discuss other factors contributing to a person's success such as *parents, teachers, friends, environment, support, role model, opportunity, luck, technology*, etc. Strong justification must be made supported by evidence, and argued 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. Many could not analyse information contained in the table correctly, much worse, could not present an overview of information presented in the two visuals. Most answers were only a partial fulfillment of the task. A low percentage of candidates conveyed the required overview, which is the point of reference for the analysis and synthesis of the required information. This goes to show that candidates need further training in answering Question 1.

STRENGTHS:

- Title is provided
- Clear introduction
- Paragraphing
- Length – within word count
- Logical link – associating life expectancy in 2010 in the different regions with the causes of deaths in 2010
- Clear and complete analysis highlighting differences in life expectancy
- Links information on life expectancy to causes of deaths among genders and in different regions in 2010

WEAKNESSES:

- Missing title
- Incomplete introduction – not including information in Figure 1
- No introduction
- Missing/ poorly constructed overview
- Poor analysis of Table 1/Figure 1
- Inclusion of irrelevant information and assumptions
- Wrong use of trend words depicting movement (increase, dropped, fluctuated)
- Wrong use of preposition depicting duration (on, by, with, for)
- Distortions and assumptions
- Poor synthesis
- 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 person himself, or otherwise, being the main factor contributing to his success.

Modest answers barely developed the opinion held on the person himself being the factor contributing to his success. 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, 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. Overall, what is lacking in the essays are maturity of ideas and adequate control of the language for clear expression of ideas.