

FORMAT OF THE QUESTION PAPER

This paper consists of two sections - Section A and Section B. Candidates are required to answer questions in both sections.

SECTION A – The candidate is required to write a response to a task in clear and accurate Standard English, using a style and tone appropriate to the task. For SPM 2007, the task requires the candidate to give a talk on a reference book that is useful for secondary school students. Based on the notes in the rubric, the candidate is expected to provide details of the book (title, author and publisher) and give reasons why the book should be useful: its attractive presentation, clear explanation, helpful diagrams, variety of exercises, sample answers, practice question papers and useful tips. Candidates are also required to give two reasons of their own. The total mark for this section is 35 marks.

SECTION B – This section tests the writing skills. It tests the candidate's ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It also tests the candidate's ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a number of alternatives. The candidate has to choose one of the 5 titles to write a composition of about 350 words in length. This section is allocated 50 marks.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

On the whole, candidates did not fare well in this paper as in Paper 2. This shows that the majority of the candidates have yet to master the writing skills in English.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS**Candidates in the high achievement group**

Candidates displayed very good linguistic ability and were able to address the task accurately and clearly. Few grammatical mistakes were made and a flair for the language was shown. Vocabulary was precise and varied. Varied sentence types and structures were employed to achieve intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation and paragraphing. An appropriate tone was also employed.

Candidates in the average achievement group

Candidates understood the task but lacked the linguistic ability to write effectively. They were unable to sustain accuracy throughout. Vocabulary was limited and sentence structures were repetitive. Answers generally displayed a lack of organization and coherence.

Candidates in the low achievement group

Candidates lack language competency and gave Sections A and B the minimal treatment. There was a high density of serious errors which caused blurring in meaning and in some places, meaning was hardly comprehensible. In extreme cases, candidates merely copied

the rubric or did not attempt the question. However, Section A did offer some opportunities for the candidates to answer because some guidance/key points/words were provided.

DETAILED PERFORMANCE

SECTION A (QUESTION 1): DIRECTED WRITING

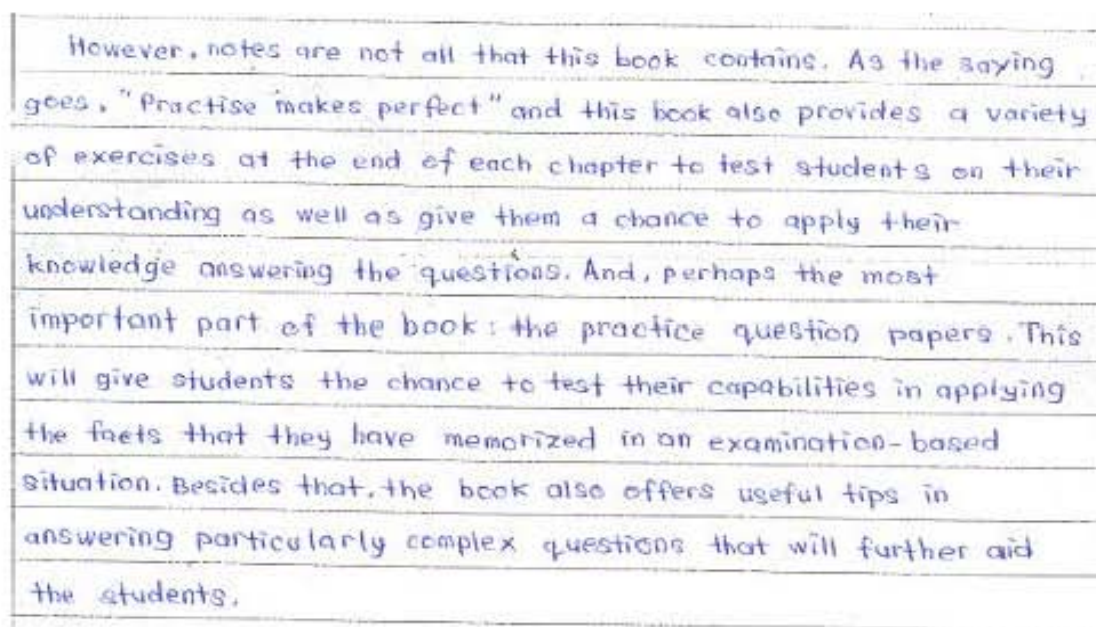
Performance of candidates in Section A and mistakes made

General performance of candidates is analysed based on three ability groups:

- a) High achievement
- b) Average achievement
- c) Low achievement

Candidates in the high achievement group

Candidates in this group fulfilled the assessment objectives. The correct format was used. Candidates wrote in clear, accurate standard English with a wide vocabulary. They were competent in paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, and were able to use cohesive and logical devices to link sentences. Ideas were well-developed and the response had appropriate tone and style. Scoring 12 marks for content was the norm. Below is an excerpt taken from a candidate's answer script:



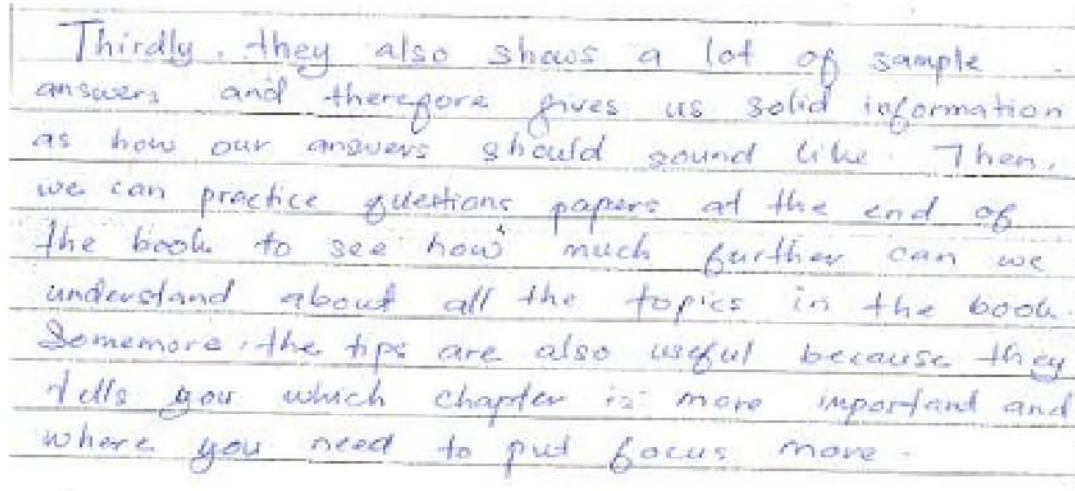
However, notes are not all that this book contains. As the saying goes, "Practise makes perfect" and this book also provides a variety of exercises at the end of each chapter to test students on their understanding as well as give them a chance to apply their knowledge answering the questions. And, perhaps the most important part of the book: the practice question papers. This will give students the chance to test their capabilities in applying the facts that they have memorized in an examination-based situation. Besides that, the book also offers useful tips in answering particularly complex questions that will further aid the students.

Candidates in the average achievement group

The candidates in this group did comprehend the rubric and showed understanding of the requirements of the task. Content points were easily located, with most candidates scoring an average of 10 marks. Response showed competence in the language. Correct format used but writing lacked accuracy. Ideas were only adequately developed and at times disorganized. Sentence structures lacked variety though there were attempts to use

ambitious structures. Meaning comes through despite frequent errors in spelling, tenses and sentence structures, resulting in an uninteresting and flawed essay. Tone of a talk was evident but not maintained. Most of the errors were single word errors.

A sample of a candidate's response:



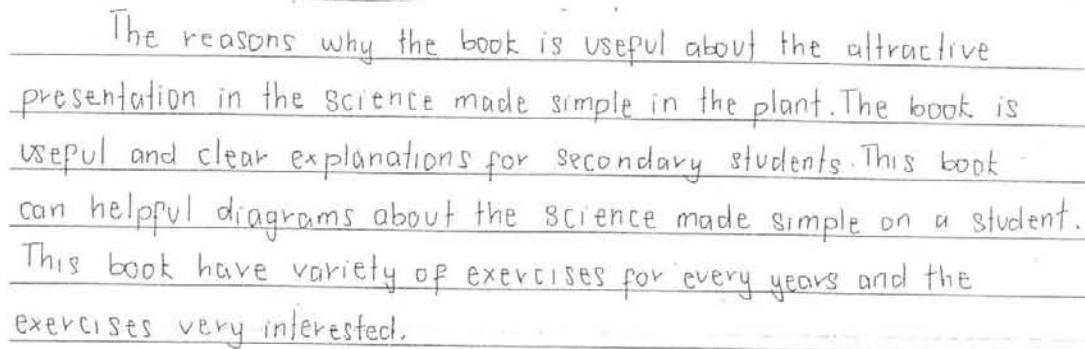
Thirdly, they also shows a lot of sample answers and therefore gives us solid information as how our answers should sound like. Then, we can practice questions papers at the end of the book to see how much further can we understand about all the topics in the book. Somemore, the tips are also useful because they tells you which chapter is more important and where you need to put focus more.

As can be seen from the sample, meaning came through for content points 8, 9 and 10. However, language errors occurred. Types of language errors will be further discussed later.

Candidates in the low achievement group

For candidates of this group, format might be completely missing or incorrect. Response was not organized – hardly any accurate sentences. Ideas were less developed or undeveloped or lifted without proper context. No proper tone was evident. The word 'talk' was often misunderstood and the format of a dialogue was used. Candidates might have also been confused as to who would be giving the talk. Some resorted to stringing or using words which showed little or no understanding. Meaning was predominantly blurred. There were serious and persistent errors in tenses, word choice, word usage and sentence structures. There was a predominant use of Bahasa Melayu and interference from the mother tongue among very weak candidates. Some merely copied the questions.

Regarding content points, some marks could still be awarded even though the candidate had presented them in poor language as in the samples below:



The reasons why the book is useful about the attractive presentation in the science made simple in the plant. The book is useful and clear explanations for secondary students. This book can helpful diagrams about the science made simple on a student. This book have variety of exercises for every years and the exercises very interested.

Besides that, the science book are refer to variety of exercises. The students can practise to do the exercises. Its can get a good to students have a good result. To some students who will not understand in the science subject, you can read the sample answers to get the answers for a question papers.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses in candidates' language can be classified under the following headings:

1. Inappropriate format/greetings

a) Malay style of salutation

- ...I standing here on this lovely morning to give a talk....
- ... Peace be upon you.. Good morning principle, teacher and student.

b) Inappropriate complimentary close :

- ...I rest my talk now.
- ...if I wrongly talk, please forgive me...
- ...My talk are finished now. Thanks you

2. Errors of transposition :

- also can...
- I and my publisher ...
- me and sharifah shazana....

3. Subject-verb agreement / concord

- Therefore, the book have a clear explanation.
- everybody have friends
- senior teachers and students knows about the book
- Sharifah Shazana have a lot of experience.
- This book do contain specific information
- This book entitle 'Science Made Simple'
- The notes gives us specific information.

4. Incorrect use of preposition or omission of preposition

- everybody should be proud for you
- you must thank for god that we have good teachers
- that's all my opinion about the reasons
- you must be consistent for your studies
- the letter you write for me
- you are busy for the school exam
- ... buy this book in this week

5. Lexical distortion and wrong use of words

- *The book contents a lot of information*
- *The diagram is understanding.*
- *Many notes has given and simple to us reading carefully.*
- *This science has many useful.*
- *The noted that given are good.*
- *I know you are responsibility students.*
- *you won't feel regret for your choose*

6. Wrong use of cohesive devices (underlined)

- *The cloned PMR questions give me more confidence when I found so many similarities when I sit for my PMR examination last year. However, the sample answers helped me.*

7. Errors in punctuation

- use of commas where full stops are needed
- sentences that are not punctuated, etc., thus causing misunderstanding and ambiguity

8. Wrong pronoun

- *I want to know whether your have seen this book.*
- *Sharifah Shazana writes many books. She books are sold in many bookstore.*

9. Words misspelt

- *here is my advise*
- *your teacher advices you*
- *Good morning to the principle*
- *she has a lot of apperience*
- *congotation for you*
- *With riferance to this book*
- *I would like to amphasise*
- *Went you see the diagrams*
- *she has tought in many schools*
- *I hope you are happy in this shool.*
- *Please make a good dicision.*
- *I definatly agree if all of u buy this book.*
- *The next rezen is*
- *All of us are very inteligent students.*

10. Use of e-mail and SMS language

- *ok(okay)*
- *u(you)*
- *i(I)*
- *bz(busy)*

11. Colloquialism :

- *...reading the book is cool...*
- *...the presentations are so happening...*
- *...helped improve my science stuff...*
- *...has the coolest pictures...*
- *you wanna see this book*
- *you gonna have to scrutinize the chapters*

12. Stringing of words (making meaningful sentences or otherwise)

- *This reference book is useful because it has attractive presentation, a clear explanations, helpful diagrams, a variety of exercises, sample answers, practice question papers, useful tips and cheap.*
- *Science Made simple sample answers, practice questions, attractive presentations, useful tips and helpful diagrams. Beside that, cheap many can have this book.*

SUGGESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Read rubrics carefully to comprehend fully the requirement of task set.
2. Be well versed with the format of the different types of writing e.g. formal letter, informal letter, articles, newspaper report.
3. Use accurate Standard English and not slang or text language
4. Be competent in basic writing skills
5. Cultivate good reading habits
6. Be ambitious enough to generate ideas from notes given
7. Direct translation from the mother tongue should be avoided
8. For weak candidates, write in simple English. Keep the sentences short to reduce the high incidence of grammatical errors.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

1. Teach candidates basic writing skills
2. Make sure that candidates use the correct format when task is set
3. Stress the importance on the need to fully comprehend requirement of task
4. Train candidates to make full use of notes given
5. Instill in candidates the habit of writing in clear accurate language
6. Encourage candidates to read widely
7. Remind candidates to underline keywords and phrases in the rubric to ensure they do not deviate from the task required
8. Identify weaknesses of candidates and plan remedial exercises

SECTION B – CONTINUOUS WRITING

This section tests the candidates' writing skills. Its main objective is to assess candidates' ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It also tests the candidates' ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a number of alternatives. Five interesting topics are given and each candidate has to write a composition of about 350 words on one of the topics. The candidates are advised to spend one hour on this section and the mark allocated for it is 50.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

Overall, it is rather significant that the candidates did not fare very well in this paper. A big proportion scored below the median while only a handful achieved the top range of marks. This clearly shows that the majority of the candidates are still weak and have yet to master the writing skills in English.

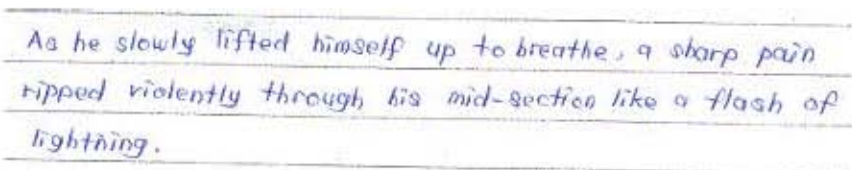
GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS

Basically, the general performance of candidates is analysed based on three ability groups:

Candidates in the high achievement group:

This group showed a marked linguistic ability and creativity. They were able to produce a relevant and creative piece of continuous prose. They also displayed a good flair of the language. The language used was entirely accurate with very few errors, which were first draft slips or minor errors. Sophistication, maturity of thought, creativity and originality were clearly visible when they put their ideas and thoughts onto paper. Vocabulary and expressions were apt, precise, stimulating and inspiring. Word choices were not only wide but also used with precision. Paragraphs were well planned and the topic was addressed with consistent relevance. Ideas were well-organised, well-developed and coherent. Hence, the writing was able to arouse the reader's interest and was sustained throughout.

Below are some excerpts taken from the candidates' responses:



As he slowly lifted himself up to breathe, a sharp pain ripped violently through his mid-section like a flash of lightning.



The cold wind was howling ferociously and rushing in through his shattered window and opened door, chilling him to the bone.

The whole place was a glittering sea of lights. The younger generation swarmed the place. As midnight approached, confetti felt like snowdrops and the whole sky was lit by colourful fireworks. The cheers and applause of the excited crowds was deafening.

Memory crept in from the back of my mind and in her embrace, I feel secured.

The town was just beginning to stir from its sleep as he swerved into one of the many parking lots available at that wee hour of the morning.

Candidates in the average achievement group:

Candidates in this group showed an adequate understanding of the requirement of the task. Development of ideas lack creativity, depth and maturity. Vocabulary lacked precision with a tendency to use repetitive words and structures. This was mainly due to lack of the linguistic ability to write effectively. They were not able to sustain accuracy throughout. Linguistic errors were sufficiently frequent and serious. The writing in this category often displayed a lack of organization and coherence, making the composition uninteresting or lacking in liveliness and interest value.

Some of the excerpts taken from the candidates' responses are as follows:

This kind of activities also making the teenage take the right choice in the matter whatever they do. Actually this kind of entertainment really help the teenagers to cope with stress.

He never know sometimes his answer were wrong, he always checking his answer by tomorrow, when we exam, every students do not know how to answers the questions, we do the exam very badly.

Tomorrow I and my family want to go to oversea because my father have a work at there.

Candidates in the low achievement group:

The candidates' responses showed minimal understanding of the requirement of the task. They displayed poor linguistic ability. Lack of language competency forced the candidates to give minimum treatment to the topic. Their ideas were hardly developed. The content may be comprehensible but high incidence of serious errors often made the meaning blur. In some cases, the word choice and sentence structures reflected their mother tongue interference. As a result, the responses were disoriented, disorganised and almost incomprehensible with frequent or dense extended errors which make reading the script difficult. In extreme cases, candidates merely copied all the 5 topics or the rubric from Directed Writing. Some did not even attempt the question at all.

Below are some excerpts taken from the candidates' responses:

Doctor say he one friend and her for no nervous and no scarx for what he do ago tomorrow.

Tomorrow Malaysia good dey in you SPM. I no see what did you n your book science made simple. Stress I big is your big and our big.

Kim remember work Kim in paved no house school very big city for ago and opened the door.

Remeber have't a one time, I gonna grandmother house beautifull and release my early years from yesterday.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CANDIDATES

STRENGTH

The strength of the candidates' language can be classified under the following headings:

1. Ability to use good vocabulary

- *Kim had not felt so claustrophobic before and the pitch black, stuffy atmosphere in the crypt added to the feeling of her insecurity.*
- *Tiny crocuses can be seen emerging from the frosty ground, minute rosebuds will begin to sprout and sound of chirping fill the air as the robin's eggs begin to hatch.*
- *...attended a boisterous party.*
- *...looking at the scrawny neck of the old man.*
- *The thick burnt scent of roasted coffee tickled the tip of my nose just seconds before the old, faithful alarm blared a distorted top-forty from its tiny top speaker.*
- *Grabbing the apricot, terry-cloth robe, recently bathed in fabric softener and April wind, I knotted it tightly on my waist like a prestigious coat...*
- *Despite relentless commitment by the government, the habit of reading has yet to be fully rooted among the minds of the grassroots.*
- *To those with terminal diseases, tomorrow is something they always yearn for as their lifespan can be counted and they feel grateful for each and every day they live through.*

2. Ability to use idioms/idiomatic expressions

- *Life is like a rubbish tip, when you get rid of one embarrassment, you pick another.*
- *...a picture is better than a thousand words.*
- *...bellows of laughter.*
- *She looked a little under the weather.*
- *I felt goose pimples rising in my skin.*
- *Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue...*
- *All of us are in the same boat and we will sink or swim together comes what tomorrow.*

3. Ability to use appropriate linkers.

- *Hence, as long as one allocated time for both entertainment and revision, entertainment is certainly not a waste of time and money.*
- *Therefore, what we can do is to forget about yesterday, treasure today and hope for the best tomorrow.*
- *At first, she refused to answer the phone but as the phone continued ringing the Kim-Jim songs by Shane Ward, she finally gave up.*

4. Ability to communicate sense clearly even though there are many errors.

- *The man want to kill everybody in Kim house.*
- *Now the killer dead and Kim was happy.*
- *She knew it all from the eyes that has caught her heart the instant she sees them.*

5. Ability to be creative and humorous

- *Dentists are weird, they ask you question that needs more than one syllable answer while they are working in your mouth”*

6. Ability to use idioms, sayings and proverbs

- *There is no use to cry over the spilled milk.*
- *Better late than never.*

WEAKNESSES

Weak candidates were found to make errors in various aspects namely:

1. Wrong use of Subject-Verb Agreement

- *Different people have different tomorrow.*
- *Some of them looks at tomorrow as hopes.*
- *At that time, Kim and her mother was watching news on television.*
- *Kim's brothers tries hard...*

2. Inappropriate use of linking words/connectors.

- *Except this, teenagers today are only interested in entertainment.*
- *After finish eating my father bought an ice-cream for me. Suddenly my parents took me to watch animal concert.*

3. Wrong spelling.

- *The death of his grandmother is still in his mind.*
- *There was no texi on the road...*
- *Fortunally, with my saving, I opened a small shop in the village.*
- *...that is am embarrassing experient in my life.*
- *Teenagers today are only interested in entertainment.”*

4. Having problems with articles

- *When Kim at home, he changes a clother.*
- *...he chose a jeans and gave me.*
- *...she looked at the door and slowly opened a door.*
- *At the night, after the finished ate...*
- *I was excited because that was my time I went to the Port Dickson.*

5. Inappropriate use of words or phrases

- *...as a talker...*
- *Being a stardom...*

6. Wrong use of pronouns

- *The monster went away when him opened the door.*
- *Let's we look at the meaning of tomorrow...*
- *...tried to free heself from the monster.*
- *For teenagers, them think entertainment is good.*

7. Inability to use prepositions accurately

- *When they arrived to the hostel...*
- *This is because parents are always not in home, ...*
- *In the first day, they enjoyed the activities...*
- *In the other hand, the most unwelcome experience...*
- *In this time, we can see naked eyes...*
- *At the joumey. I was cried.*
- *I asked permission to my father to...*
- *In this addition, I think parents...*

8. Use mother tongue language due to lack of proficiency.

- *...that teacher is very loso and every day know how to talk only.*
- *Then, I storied to him, 'rupa-rupanya' I have wrongly enter the class and I see the environment is 'lain'.*
- *Many teenager terpengaruh dengan television because...*
- *A few days later a man yang merompak their house telah ditangkap.*
- *...play the tradisional game.*
- *Salman and friends tiba to school at 10 am and teacher telah bersiap result for students.*
- *Parents Kim are not at home.*
- *They went to wedding Uncle Kim.*

9. Wrong verb forms/tenses.

- *He never and ever try to flirted me.*
- *New sports is introduce by...*
- *...they were have an enjoyable.*
- *Kim try to attack the man when he saw a big shadow figure...*
- *Before she go to the trip, Kim's mother already help her to prepare a lot of food.*
- *After he leaved the house, his father was walked slowly to Kim's bedroom.*
- *One day, I with my family, planning went to the Port Dickson.*
- *I discover all my friends were laugh at me.*
- *I am not going to the night market since last year.*

10. Lexical distortion and blurring in meaning

- *My parents an on family in the Langkawi old family.*
- *My tomorrow of farive happy tomorrow the entertainment embarrassing.*
- *I and friends good the Pahang son romatin wes I go the monkey.*
- *It also you can't run to do a day because a time also run if you sick or no.*
- *But the doctor said about the grandma condition cannot went house soon, because she will lost he movement.*

- *He decided to had a see because of the reason why he can saw himself in this house that he haven't seem before.*

SUGGESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Candidates should learn how to write, e.g. parallel writing, paragraph writing, process writing, substitution paragraph,
2. Plan your answer by using mind mapping, brainstorming, etc.
3. Do more grammar exercises to improve accuracy.
4. Candidates should be encouraged to write the required number of words. Many candidates wrote only about 200 words.
5. Should enrich their vocabulary and improve their command of the language
6. Organize the answer in terms of paragraph development.
7. Edit the essay after completing it.
8. Place more emphasis on spelling
9. Journal writing could be a good way for candidates to express their ideas and by having more writing practices; they may not encounter writer's block.
10. Cultivate reading habit.
11. Listen to English songs, news.
12. Watch documentaries.
13. Candidates should try to be more ambitious in terms of :
 - variety use of language structure.
 - sophisticated and extended vocabulary
 - interesting expression

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

1. Teach candidates to read the instructions carefully before answering the question.
2. Expose the candidates with exercises on various types of writing such as expository, narrative, descriptive, argumentative and reflective.
3. Emphasize the use of a proper format for each type of writing.
4. Teach the basics such as spelling, dictation, grammar items, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures to establish a good foundation.
5. Do not encourage candidates to spot questions and memorise prepared texts.
6. Identify weaknesses of candidates and plan remedial exercises.