

Assessment Instrument

Code : 1119/1
Marks : 85
Time : 1 hour 45 minutes

Assessment Design

Paper 1 comprises 2 parts: Section A and B. All questions are to be answered.

Constructs assessed are as follow:

In Section A: Knowledge & Understanding (Reading Skill)

Application (Writing Skills)

In Section B: Application (Writing Skills)

The assembling of the instrument (test paper) is based on the Table of Specification and constructs are being assessed in all contexts. The level of difficulty is based on expert judgment.

Type of instrument	Subjective written test	
Type of items	Open response	
Section	A: Directed Writing	B: Continuous Writing
Number of questions	1 question	5 questions (choose one)
Marks	35	50
Scoring	Holistic marking	

SECTION A (QUESTION 1): DIRECTED WRITING

In this section, candidates are 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 2013, the task required the candidates to write **a formal letter of complaint to the Town Council to complain about unsatisfactory conditions in a recreational park**. Based on the rubric, the candidates were expected to provide details on the poor condition of the park.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS

Candidates who scored high marks 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 an intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation and paragraphing. They were able to use cohesive and logical connectors to link sentences. Candidates in this group had no problems with the format. Ideas were well-developed and the response had appropriate tone and style. Overall, the reader would be convinced that the response could be a real letter of complaint to an officer in the Town Council. Most if not all of the content points were included in the response.

Candidates with average performance showed understanding of the requirements of the task but lacked the linguistic ability to write effectively. They were unable to sustain accuracy throughout. However, most of the errors were single word errors. Vocabulary was limited and sentence structures repetitive. Answers generally displayed a lack of organisation and coherence. The content points were expressed clearly with most candidates including nearly all of them in their response. Ideas were developed but were at times disorganised. The correct format, a formal letter, was used but might not have been presented correctly.

Candidates who scored low marks lacked the language competence and gave Section A 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 opportunity for the candidates to answer because some guidance/ points/ key words were provided. For candidates of this group, format might be completely missing or incorrect. Response was not organised. Ideas were not developed or lifted without proper context. Some resorted to stringing or using words with little or no understanding. In very weak scripts, there was a noticeable use of Bahasa Malaysia and interference from mother tongue.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CANDIDATES

This candidate is able to provide a proper format for a formal letter. Proper addresses of sender and recipient, date, salutation and title are given:

155-18-4 Menara Outa,

Jalan Hartamas,

50480 Kuala Lumpur,

Town Council,

Jalan Indah 24B,

50550 Kuala Lumpur.

7 NOVEMBER 2013

Dear Sir,

Poor Condition of Indah Recreational Park.

From another example, there is a suitable introduction to the letter. The tone is formal and respectful:

With reference to the above, I would like to express my concern on the ~~com~~ poor conditions of the facilities at Indah Recreational Park. My recent visit to the park drove me to write this letter of complaint.

In the next example, there is an appropriate closing to the letter. There is a suitable close, *Yours faithfully*, signature and the writer's full name.

would look into this matter. Thank You.

Yours faithfully

Shankari

(SHANKARI GUNASEGRAN)

With regards to content, a good candidate should be able to include all the content points. These content points are the details to be included in the letter based on the question. The 12 points are:

- C1 *not enough facilities*
- C2 *no restaurants*
- C3 *rubbish everywhere*
- C4 *not enough dustbins*
- C5 *dirty public toilets*
- C6 *smelly*
- C7 *grass not cut*
- C8 *snakes*
- C9 *information lacking*
- C10 *no signposts*
- C11 *vandalism*
- C12 *public telephones not working*

Language accuracy is also important. This candidate is able to produce a piece of writing that is almost entirely accurate (see example below). Very few errors are made as the candidate understands the rules of the language. As a result, the meaning is brought across clearly and effectively. The reader has no difficulty understanding the letter:

6. There is also information lacking regarding the park itself. As the park consists of many twists and turns, it is often difficult to find one's way to the restrooms, carpark and entrance. This is caused by the fact that there are no signposts ~~but~~ erected around the pathways, leading to much confusion among visitors. A few arrows or signboards would suffice to direct the people using the park and put them on the right path.

Besides, sentence structures should be varied and sophisticated, showing the ability to use sentences of different length and type to achieve an intended effect. In the following example, the candidate employs different sentence structures to make the complaint clear and effective. The short simple sentence, *It was a terrible sight*, serves to highlight and give emphasis to the problem. The candidate is also at ease using complex sentences.

5. However, the one thing which made me ~~am~~ come to the decision ~~that this~~ to raise the awareness of our Town Council was the cleanliness of the park. ~~It is~~ It was a terrible sight. There was rubbish everywhere, be it plastic bags, broken toys, leftover food or even polystyrene food containers. At first glance, I thought that the public was to be blamed for ^{all} their irresponsible actions. However, I soon noticed that ~~the~~ rubbish bins available

In addition, vocabulary should be wide and used with precision. The phrases, "rectifying these problems" and "extremely appreciated" are used accurately and carried the precise meaning that is required. In the second example, the words *appalled* and *dismal* help make the complaint clear and effective. The reader knows exactly what the candidate is trying to convey.

8. I would like to request that the Town Council be swift in rectifying these problems so as to make Indah Recreational Park safer, cleaner, more accommodating and overall, better for its visitors. All consideration given is extremely appreciated, and I hope to see the quality and condition of the park improve soon

4. Furthermore, I was appalled to see the dismal conditions the public toilets were in. It was obvious that the public toilets are not regularly cleaned.

In a well-organised essay, paragraphs are planned, have unity and are appropriately linked. In the example below, the use of connectors such as **In addition** and **However** helps in the organisation of the writing. The ideas flow smoothly and the reader is able to follow the ideas expressed easily.

6. In addition, Bukit Indah Recreational Park is very wide and spacious. However it is lacking of proper information of the park itself. There are no signposts or maps or trail markers to show the visitors where they are or where to go. The existing signboards have been vandalised

In a good piece of writing, punctuation is accurate and helpful to the reader. In the example below, the candidate is able to punctuate accurately, making good use of the comma, semi-colon, question mark, quotation mark and full-stop to aid in the reading of the letter.

available for the huge crowd, ~~of benches~~. It was bad enough that the ~~number~~ ^{number} of benches provided could be counted with my ten small, stubby fingers; the fact that there were no restaurants ^{present} nearby shocked me. How could the public enjoy their time in the park if they could not buy food? ~~I~~ I remember that there was an old saying which ~~went~~ ~~was~~ went, "~~There~~" a hungry man is an angry man."

Spelling should be accurate across the full range of vocabulary used, especially with difficult words. Words that are often spelt wrongly by students, such as **polystyrene** and **irresponsible**, are spelled correctly by this candidate.

cleanliness of the park. ~~It~~ It was a terrible sight. There was rubbish everywhere, be it plastic bags, broken toys, leftover food or even polystyrene food containers. At first glance, I thought that the public was to be blamed for their irresponsible actions. However, I soon noticed that ^{all} the rubbish bins available

As required, the style and tone is appropriate – formal and respectful. The reader is convinced that this could be a genuine letter of complaint to the Town Council.

8. Lastly, I wish to thank you in advance for giving me your time and consideration. Bukit Indah Recreational Park is a fantastic park that is in a very bad condition. However, with a little time and money, it can be brought back to stunning condition. I hope the Town Council would look into this matter. Thank You.

On the other hand, there are candidates who do not fulfil the requirements of the task. They may not include all the elements of a formal letter (addresses, date, salutation and title). The letter may also not be concluded appropriately.

With reference to content, ambiguous content points are not accepted. In the example below, meaning expressed for the content point "information lacking" is unclear.

and very smelly. The grass not cut. and I saw snakes in
they and information lacking. don't have They have no signposts.

In the following example, the same point, "information lacking", is also not accepted as the meaning is distorted.

thirdly, when i walking around a park i never see
information lacking and no signposts. That's a never mind

For some candidates, content points are mentioned but meaning does not come through to the reader as shown in the following example.

I not enough facilities is a no restaurants. Then day,
I want^{is} do a rubbish everywhere in Indah Recreational Park.
because not enough dustbins my.

Language inaccuracy is a serious problem to many candidates reflecting a lack of understanding of grammar items. Common errors made by candidates include wrong tenses. In the following example, the candidate is not consistent in the use of the tenses.

Recently I have visited to Indah Recreational Park, I
found that the park is in a poor condition. I wrote
this letter is to complain about the poor condition of
Indah Recreational Park.

Another common error is wrong subject-verb agreement. Here, the candidate should have written was instead of were.

floor. I, as a mother of two young children required the baby room to change my child's diapers but there were no such facility. The grass in Indah Recreational Park were long and not cut. This may lead to

Besides language inaccuracy, imprecise vocabulary is another problem faced by candidates. In the example below, there is evidence of wrong vocabulary used. The phrase broken heart is inappropriate and should be replaced with hurt your feelings.

Lastly, I just complaint what happenings at Indah Recreational Park. Im sorry if i have broken heart and you need to do something at the park for the best business.

In the following example, the candidate is repeating the phrase the park 4 times in just a short paragraph. This clearly shows his lack of vocabulary.

The park in vety poor condition ~~the~~ because no body or people want to clean the park. The park see very dirty and not clean can cause all people people do not to visit the park.

Sentences structures are also repeated, giving the following paragraph a monotonous effect. In the following example, the candidate relies on the structure "I found ..."

2. I found that there are not enough facilities around the park. I couldn't find a restaurant to have my lunch in this afternoon. I also found that there are rubbish everywhere in the park. It seems to have not enough dustbins in the park.

Frequent spelling errors are seen in some scripts. The scripts below show some examples of misspelt words: hygiene, maintained, disappointingly and pungent.

The ~~hygiene~~ hygiene of the park was not up to my personal standards. ~~The~~ ^{Some} public toilets were not maintained and had bad odour. It was a hassle for me to find a

3. The public toilets ~~we~~ are disapointingly dirty. They give out a really pungeon smell and it was absolutely discomforting to be in there. However, my sister and I had to close one eye and

Finally, in some scripts, the tone is not quite suitable. In the following example, there is a hint of impoliteness, instructing the reader what to do.

5. I can see many tourists visit Indah Recreational Park every day. If the condition is not ~~fix~~ fixed as soon as possible, people will think that our city is not good. Please pay more attention to this problem. I hope ~~next~~ my next visit to Indah Recreational Park, I can feel the fresh air there, restaurant for dinning, clean toilets. Thank you.

Recommendations for candidates

1. Read the instructions/rubric carefully before answering the question – be sure of the format and the task. Underline the key words or task that is required to be performed so that you do not forget to complete the task as you write the essay.
2. Use all the content points given in the rubric. Tick the content points you have used to ensure that all the content points are in.
3. Use appropriate tone: be aware of the audience so that you know whether you need to be formal or informal in your approach.
4. For good students, try to use sophisticated structures and precise vocabulary. For average students, do not write long sentences because the tendency to make mistakes is higher.
5. To prepare for the examination, candidates should
 - a. read widely to improve general knowledge and vocabulary
 - b. improve spelling – use a dictionary when necessary.
 - c. not take punctuation lightly. Punctuation errors can be serious errors.

Recommendations for teachers

1. Teach students to understand the task of the question and to identify the main content points.
2. Give sufficient practice on writing in different formats/layout like letter, report.
3. Remind the students to allocate the last 5 to 10 minutes for checking.
4. Teach students be taught to use Standard English.
5. Remind the students to use all the content points given in the rubric.
7. Devote more time on grammar so that the students will be able to write grammatically correct sentences.
8. Train students to write a variety of sentence structures. Teach them how to use the different types of structures appropriate to the tone required in the task.
9. Encourage reading

SECTION B (QUESTION 2) – CONTINUOUS WRITING

In this section, the main objective is to assess the candidates' ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It tests the candidates' ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a number of alternatives. As in each year, five varied topics are given and the candidate has to write a composition of about 350 words on one of the topics.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

Overall, candidates did not fare well in this section. The majority scored below the median while few belonged to the top range, that is the A band. This shows the weakness of the candidates in the writing skills. Some candidates did not even attempt this section. Increasingly, more candidates are resorting to memorized or prepared responses rather than providing a genuine attempt.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS

Basically, the general performance of candidates is 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 almost entirely accurate and very few errors which were first draft slips or minor errors were made. 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. Paragraphs were well-planned and the topic was addressed with consistent relevance. Ideas were well-organised, well-developed and coherent. Hence, the writer was able to arouse and sustain the reader's interest throughout.

Candidates in the average achievement group:

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

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 sometimes resulted in giving the topic minimal/partial treatment. 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 order and sentence structures reflected mother tongue interference. As a result, the responses were disoriented, disorganised and almost incomprehensible with frequent extended errors which made 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.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CANDIDATES

In a good script, language is entirely or almost entirely accurate except for very occasional first draft slips that are generally not reflective of the candidate's overall ability. The following is a good example of this. The candidate is telling a story of someone being alone.

Victoria had enjoyed being alone for as long as she could remember. There was something refreshing about the peace and serenity that came with solitude and the quiet that enveloped her senses when she was on her own. The silence that came with being alone was always a cushion, a shield and a barrier between herself and the rest of the world, and it protected her. It was probably her love of being alone that molded and shaped her into a quiet child.

Besides, sentence structure is varied and sophisticated showing the candidate's proficiency in the language as well as the ability to use varying sentence length and type to achieve an intended effect. The following examples show the candidate's marked ability to use varied sophisticated sentence structures to make writing effective. There is a good range of well-structured sentences including complex sentences.

"Loner! Weirdo! Freak!" Each word was like a dagger, ~~stabbing~~ stabbing Victoria when she pushed past giggles of giggling students on her way to class and shattering her fragile heart. With each passing day, the corrosive words wormed their way inside of her, slowly breaking her down and pulling her apart. Tears stung at her eyes ~~with each taunt~~ as her classmates hurled insults at her, taunting her with heart-wrenching words and reducing her to a distressed bundle of nerves. She tried to ignore them, but each time she attempted to turn a deaf ear to the shouts, they seemed to grow and multiply until they filled her entire head.

As the day drew closer to ~~the~~ the start of Victoria's term at her new school, however, the enthusiasm began to ebb away, replaced instead by apprehension and petrification. What if the people at her new school laughed at her, too? What if they were even worse? Slowly, ~~terror~~ a mortifying terror began to mount and build within Victoria's heart, threatening to consume her completely. She did not want to be alone anymore, if it meant that she was ~~going~~ only setting herself up for hurt.

In a good piece of writing, vocabulary is wide, sophisticated and used with precision. The following candidates employ words/expressions like swimmingly, made acquaintances, bubbly character, adrenaline rush, Pathetic, bloodcurdling scream and shards to put forward ideas clearly.

It was easy at first, and things moved along swimmingly for Victoria as she made acquaintances with her loud, bubbly personality and satisfied her parents with her quiet one, but as the months passed, the adrenaline rush of her success, which had fuelled her up till then slowly faded away. She realised that she was extremely unhappy. She could no longer be herself,

"See? You are so lonely until you demand loneliness! Pathetic!"

~~My~~ A high-pitched, bloodcurdling scream ripped from Anya's throat, until her vocal chords broke and shattered into a million pieces, everything shattered, leaving only shards and pieces.

Furthermore, punctuation should be accurate and helpful to the reader. In the following example, the candidate uses a range of punctuation marks (the speech marks, exclamation mark, comma, full-stop and question mark) and this helps in the reading as well as the understanding of the response.

"I have to go overseas again, honey," Anya's father said to her for the third time that year. "You take care of yourself, okay? Call your classmates or Mrs. Riddle if you need anything."

Spelling should be accurate across the full range of vocabulary used. Here, the candidate is able to handle commonly mis-spelt words like Unfortunately and preferring.

Unfortunately, the problem with constantly being a quiet person was that it was difficult to make friends. The other ~~the~~ children at school teased her and called her out for preferring to keep to herself. At first, Victoria did not really mind the name-calling and harassment, because

A good candidate is able to arouse and sustain the interest of the reader throughout the writing. The following example shows a lively discussion on one of the topics, Reality Shows.

Reality shows. Just hearing those two \$ words
brings to mind images of cat fights and fighting
and people crying. Despite all that, we still end
up on the couch at exactly the same time
everyday to catch our favourite reality shows.
Why is this so? What is it about reality shows
that ^{is} taking the world by storm? The answer is
simply.... drama. It is not an unknown fact that
reality shows are infamous for their huge amounts
of drama. Often, an episode does not go by
without someone fighting with another person,
or someone throwing a tantrum.

On the other hand, some candidates show a lack of proficiency in the language which is reflected in the various types of errors made. Common errors made by the candidates include wrong tenses. In the following example, the past tense should have been used in these two places:

1. ... she smiled upon waking up and keeps (kept) in mind that...
2. She started to ... and look (looked) at them all as ...

~~Everyday~~ Every day, she smiled upon waking up
and ~~keeps~~ keeps in mind that no matter what
happens, she will stay positive. She started to accept
all tragic experiences~~st~~ that happened and ~~fool~~
look at them all as life's lessons. She stopped

Another common error is the use of the wrong preposition. In the following example, the preposition for should have been used instead of to :

...necessary especially to (for) the weak students.

The tuition is necessary especially to the weak students.
Some of the students that cannot ~~are~~ alert on their
studies at the school, they can go to the tuition centre
and learn back on ~~their~~ what they have leave. Some

The incorrect verb form is sometimes used. In the following example, the candidate should have written "...began to change ..."

being. From that point on, I began to changed my manner of speaking and how I treated others. I was kinder to others and played

Some candidates use the wrong singular/plural form. In the example below, the candidate should have written "...different types of ..."

last but not least, our languages ^{Malaysia} the Malaysia
have different type of races and of course we have
different type of languages. For malay, ^{they} we use

The wrong part of speech is seen in some scripts. In the following example, hopeless should be replaced with hopelessness, that is the noun form.

Did you know the feeling when you ^{are} ~~were~~ in hopeless, then you a light come to you? I can feel the ~~happies~~ happiness when first feel the sunlight after days in dark. Some handsome gay police rescued me.

Another common error is in subject-verb agreement. In the excerpt below, ...Pulau Langkawi and Pulau Pinang are instead of is.

over Melaka for a period of time. Pulau Tioman, Pulau Langkawi and Pulau Pinang is well known for its water activities with a clean environment and beautiful scenery.

Apart from language accuracy, some students struggle to communicate meaning in their writing. Sometimes, meaning does not come across to the reader as in the example below.

Besides I will study for spm because..my friend ^{want} fight
examination paper English. but I very worry. One day I cant for
the best and so I became better person. The same time I cant
very heppy my parents for result spm. I hope my result spm
is good.

A lack of vocabulary is also another problem. In the following example, the candidate has to resort to repeating the phrase *well known*.

Malaysia is a well known tourist attraction because of
its heritage and beaches. Melaka is well known for A'
Famosa which was a ford built when ^{the} Portuguese took
over Melaka for a period of time. Pulau Tioman, Pulau
Langkawi and Pulau Pinang is well known for its water
activities with a clean environment and beautiful scenery.

In the example below, sentences structures are also repeated, giving the writing a monotonous effect. The candidate tends to begin the sentence with, "I like to ..."

~~I like change~~ I like to be a good person in my life and I start
to join my new good and studying friends now I like to study,
I like to follow my parent's intration. I didn't not friends with
my naught friends. I like to takecare of my parent's. I'm
very proud to take care of my parent's. when I good and
like to study my parent's. Parent Buy for me a new motorbike

Some scripts show frequent spelling errors. The following candidates struggle with the spelling of curiosity, comrades and beginning

way we want it to. All this restraint adds up to
our curiosity level and we end up wanting to
know what is it truly like to let loose. That is
together with 4 talented young men. Alan, Stevens, Henry and
Morcus were my comrades. It was the beginning of the world war,
Hitler was marching out causing havoc in Europe. We had to

In some scripts, the wrong punctuation is used. In the example below, *europa* should begin with the capital letter *E* as it is a proper noun.

captives. We heard loud cries coming from the tunnel. At that time,
Germans were killing Jews all over europa. This may be me

Candidates sometimes use text (SMS) language as in the following example.

At that, in my kitchen sumthg I heard
broken ady n i run inside the kitchen 2 c nothing
broken

Recommendations for Teachers

1. Incorporate different teaching strategies to teach writing especially for weak students e.g. parallel writing, paragraph writing, process writing.
2. Teach students to plan before they start to write. Use mind-maps etc.
3. Cultivate the reading habit among students to enrich their vocabulary.
4. Encourage students to write the required number of words, as some write far short of the required number of words.
5. Give more emphasis on grammar and spelling. Have sufficient grammar practice.

Recommendations for Students

1. Organise the essay in paragraphs.
2. Edit the essay after completing it.
3. Use of correctional fluid/tape is not encouraged as writing can be smudged or words omitted.
4. Remember to indicate the question number of your answer.
5. Try to be more ambitious in terms of :
 - variety of sentence structures.
 - sophisticated and extended vocabulary
 - interesting expressions