GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8009/01
Paper 1

Key messages

Content

- Take time to fully understand a question before choosing it
- Address the question and focus closely on its key words
- Cover every aspect of the question
- Analyse and evaluate instead of cataloguing
- Develop each point and use examples or illustrations
- Introductions should be to the point
- Conclusions should not simply re-work the question

Use of English

- Check carefully for errors in grammar and expression
- Use vocabulary precisely and appropriately in context
- Correct punctuation and paragraphing are essential for well-structured discussions

General comments

Content

Many candidates wrote structured arguments with clear topic sentences and specific examples which were often developed to support their points. They looked at both sides, but genuine evaluation or rebuttals were much rarer; there was a tendency to inform rather than argue. Stronger responses came from those who took a narrower range of points, and developed arguments of their own based on specific examples, rather than those who tried to cram as many examples as possible into each paragraph.

Some candidates wrote well, but did not gain the high marks they might have been expected to attain because their answers included materials that was irrelevant or tangential and which could not be awarded marks in the higher bands because it did not address the specific question asked. To ensure they can access the highest marks, candidates need to deconstruct the chosen question to identify the key terms and then ensure that every paragraph is relevant to one or other of those key terms. Candidates who wrote in general, stating all they knew about a topic, needed to focus their evidence on answering the question and not simply recounting knowledge. To gain higher marks, aspects of questions such as ‘How far do you agree …’, ‘Which type of …’, ‘Is this a positive development…’ should always be dealt with: simply giving information is not sufficient, the specific question asked should be answered.

A plan is a good idea, but it is better in note form. There is no need for extended sentences or paragraphs in a plan. Numerous essays had plans which extended over several pages and were more detailed and comprehensive than the final answers. Candidates may gain higher marks if they spent more time writing their final answer. However, many unplanned responses were repetitive and candidates struggled to provide appropriate and relevant illustration and examples to support their answer. Therefore, a balance is required when planning.

To access the highest marks, candidates should ensure that the organisation of their writing is clear. Some candidates could have gained higher marks had their paragraphs been carefully and logically organised; some presented ideas in a confusing order, and with many deleted or inserted words, which made ideas difficult to follow. It would have helped some candidates had their introductions been more focussed. Some introductory paragraphs were lengthy and of a very general nature, defining, for example, the nature of crime
or the history of the internet, which is not needed. It would have been better had these introductions outlined
the argument the candidate intended to follow in relation to the specific question asked. Candidates who
addressed the key words and explained how they were going to approach their argument often gained marks
in the introduction and the rest of the essay. Candidates who just repeated the question, made general
points, or attempted to cover the whole question in one paragraph did not gain many marks in their
introduction.

There were many varied and interesting responses which exhibited understanding of the questions and were
able to develop a relevant argument. Although good local knowledge was often shown, some essays were
over-long and could be too anecdotal. These candidates might have scored higher marks had they perhaps
written less, but spent more time focussing what they had written carefully around the question asked.
Candidates must ensure that their specific arguments are support by examples relevant to the exact point
they are making. Some answers lacked exemplification or used vague arguments which highlighted obvious
points. Weaker responses were assertive and employed phrases such as ‘everybody believes’, ‘there is no
doubt’ and ‘it is always true’. Such sweeping statements needed to be crafted into nuanced phrases for
them to be credited. Some candidates combatively for an absolute position where there are possible
arguments to be considered for both sides.

Some scripts were illegible in places due to poor handwriting, unnecessary flourishes that can obscure the
text or over-writing in ink on text that had already been written in pencil.

Use of English

The majority of essays seen were moderately well communicated. A large number could have been
improved with careful construction of tenses and correct pluralisation. Sentence structure could have been
improved in many answers, as many candidates wrote very long sentences that did not have enough
punctuation, particularly commas, to aid the reader. Although there were accurately-written responses, with
wide vocabularies and precise phrasing, many answer contained grammatical inaccuracies which disrupted
the flow or fluency. However, very few had severely flawed sentences or so many errors that meaning was
obscured.

Candidates are strongly advised to spend some time at the end to check their work carefully for basic errors.

The most common errors that could be improved are as follows:

- Non-agreement of subject and verb where plural subjects were often used with a singular verb
- Grammatical disagreement of pronouns in the same sentence e.g. ‘they’ used with ‘its’
- Misuse of apostrophe e.g. ‘wear’s’, ‘take’s’ and ‘talk’s’
- Inappropriate use of linking words e.g. ‘moreover’ instead of ‘however’
- Use of a past continuous tense when a past or pluperfect tense would have been more fluent, e.g. ‘in
  the past, young married couples were having many children’.
- Incorrect syntax e.g. ‘have also negative effects’; ‘affects severely our eco system’
- Incorrect use or omission of definite and indefinite articles
- Incorrect comparatives and superlatives e.g. ‘more strong’ or ‘more stronger’
- Government is singular nor should the government be called ‘him’ or ‘he’ as in ‘the government must
  send some of his agents’
- Confusion between use of ‘who’ and ‘which’
- Omission of ‘and’ before the final item in a list
- Faulty expression such as ‘to upbring’; ‘to aware’; ‘sensibilise’; ‘but however’
- Words not separated, e.g. ‘alot’ and ‘infact’
- Garbage, waste, smoke and dust are all uncountable nouns
- Misspellings ‘imprisonned’?‘mentionned’

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question elicited a range of quality in the responses. Weaker answers were descriptive or assertive, for
instance, suggesting that the death penalty would be the answer to all the problems associated with crime.
Sometimes, responses focused almost entirely on prevention rather than on catching criminals. There was
much generalisation and many candidates focused on terrorist crimes, often at the expense of other more
ordinary crimes. Better answers were able to go into some detail about the ways and benefits of preventing crime, as well as the pros and cons (personal, social and economic) of catching and punishing criminals. Good responses were aware that catching criminals and punishing them might be a form of prevention as it may deter others. Candidates tended to favour one of the two options and rarely argued that they were complementary. Costs of imprisonment, prisons as ‘schools of crime’ and post-release stigma were seen as negatives of jail in the better responses, while the limitations of educational campaigns and rehabilitation were also noted.

Question 2

Answer to this question often included a technical or theoretical economic focus and not always with clear reference to Mauritius. A weakness of some answers was that they contained more description than argument, and in some, the scope was rather narrow, concentrating just on poverty for example, or reducing the matter of income inequality to a single issue such as gender. The weakest responses diverged into the consequences of the problem – crime, delinquency and child labour. Better answers were able to consider a range of groups affected, with specific examples from Mauritian society, and to assess the proposed measures for success and limitations, rather than simply assuming that unexplained policies such as free education or changes to taxation would instantly fix the problem. A few perceptive responses questioned whether true income inequality was even desirable.

Question 3

Successful responses to this question required the candidate to understand/define their terms. Many candidates did not define the concept of ‘democratic community’ and some did not tackle it at all. There were a lot of essays on the history, advantages and disadvantages of the internet, but this was not the question. Better answers were able to identify features of democratic communities, such as access to information and free exchange of views, and to consider how far the internet facilitated these, sometimes with examples. A few perceptive responses questioned the desirability of full, unregulated freedom of speech online in terms of cyberbullying, trolling, the spread of hate-filled ideologies and the use of the ‘dark web’.

Question 4

Successful responses to this question required the candidate to understand/define their terms. Many did not express an understanding of the idea of ‘public service broadcasting’, and wrote about the importance of public services (fire or ambulance service) or about different broadcasting media, rather than evaluating the importance of MBC media against other broadcasters or assessing the quality of its programmes. There were stronger essays which helpfully explained the importance of the multicultural nature of MBC programmes in reflecting the nature of Mauritian life though many responses could have been improved had they offered examples of specific channels or programmes.

Question 5

Many responses to this question listed what politicians did, and whether they were needed or not (to represent all classes of people, as international communicators, to provide stability, or to control finance). More successful responses also provided counter arguments to suggest that charities, pressure groups and community organisations were more needed, with some arguing that politicians were only needed to fund hospitals, education and alleviate poverty. Weaker answers tended to outline at some length the role of government in helping a country to function, so there was a lot of material about building infrastructure as well as the sort of work that could be done by competent civil servants. The best answers had a sense of politicians having a vision and changing the destiny of their countries.

Question 6

Responses to this question were much more successful if ‘the worst problem’ was quickly defined. That narrowed the debate down and allowed evaluation of the significance of particular problems and the success of specific measures taken recently. However, in many of their answers, candidates described the remedial measures but did not get to that crucial level of judging how successful they are, or indeed will be, which was needed to gain higher marks. Weaker responses did not clearly identify a single form of pollution, or diverged into deforestation and global warming, which meant that the response was not appropriately focussed.

Question 7
Many responses to this question asserted in general terms what can be learned from history, but for higher marks, more specific arguments were needed. There was not always a good understanding of what constitutes an ‘ancient civilisation’ with some weaker responses focusing on the Victorian or post Second World War period. Responses were frequently fragmented lists of deeds or discoveries by previous civilisations.

**Question 8**

Most responses considered diet and lifestyle today in the context of fast food, obesity and exercise whilst tending to ignore comparisons with ‘traditional’. More successful responses did make a comparison with a traditional lifestyle but very few gave examples of traditional diets. Such responses tended to be descriptive of what one should and should not do to remain in good health but usually there was some balance. The most successful answers addressed ‘true’ and ‘vital’ suggesting that a traditional diet in Mauritius involved sugar, causing a growth in diabetes, and that this was damaging for health. The most perceptive considered other factors affecting health, such as access to medical care, genetics, poverty, environment and education, any of which might limit the effects of a good diet and lifestyle on one’s health.

**Question 9**

This question was best answered by candidates who gave specific examples from the arts. However, those who chose it were usually able to engage with the statement and make some comment on the value of both participating in and spectating the arts, but detailed discussion of supporting examples, which would have improved responses, was not always given by all candidates, while relative benefits of both were also not always assessed. Good answers often had knowledge or experiences which candidates deployed as specific example, and were written with passion.

**Question 10**

Many candidates either ignored or did not understand the word ‘undermined’. Some candidates took it to mean almost the opposite and wrote about the way that technology has improved sporting performance, perhaps in sports science or more well-designed equipment. The key to this question was to see that there was a suggestion that sporting performances do not carry the same magnitude of achievement because things have been made easier for athletes. There were relevant examples of doping in athletics and cycling and the suggestion that performances and records could no longer be taken at face value. Another relevant line of argument was that richer countries are able to achieve higher standards than poorer ones because they have access to the best that modern science and technology has to offer. Therefore, the fewer successes of poorer countries and their athletes are all the more to be applauded.

**Question 11**

This question drew many responses where candidates made wide generalisations such as that ‘everybody in the past had large families’, that ‘nobody wants to have children today’ or that there is the danger that humans will die out because children are not being conceived. Answers would have been greatly improved if candidates had qualified their opinions with modifiers like ‘some’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘in many cases’. Some unconvincing arguments were put forward, such as that many people remain childless because they worry that any child that they were to have would become a juvenile delinquent or an addict. Such arguments require evidence to show that they are widespread to be convincing.

China’s one-child policy was often written about, but this was a law imposed upon people, not a personal choice, so the relevance of this example to the question asked was not strong. Answers could have been improved if examples were less general and looked at certain categories of people, such as discrete income groups, or different countries. There are some countries which would favour couples having fewer children. There are others which need to improve their birth rates. Some relevant arguments that were credited in answer include arguments about the ways children might make a couple feel complete or those that said that couples today are often too busy with work, or too engaged in hobbies or leisure activities to have children. The best responses did evaluate ‘positive’ in the context of a wider perspective considering emotional, practical and global aspects.

**Question 12**

Most responses to this question considered the problems of immigration, but these arguments could have been better had they distinguished between refugees and economic migrants and discussed the differences between them. Candidates tended to show good knowledge of this topic with reference to Syria, Mexico and
Europe although with little reference to local issues. Associated problems were seen in terms of financial pressures, terrorism and cultural dilution as well as law and order. More successful responses did address 'border control', often with reference to issues like the ‘Mexican wall’, patrolling borders, stop and search and rigorous anti-immigration policies. The best responses addressed ‘only’, concluding that it could only be solved by alleviating the source problems and engaging in global co-operation. Other suggestions included making access to citizenship, benefits and services in the host country more limited. More liberal options put forward included amnesties and increased quotas for legal migration and refugees.
Key Messages

One of the skills examined by this paper is the ability to write economically. Where a question stipulates word length as part of the rubric it must be followed; material beyond it is not credited. Lengthy introductions to an answer are not required and should be avoided.

Since the revised syllabus was introduced in 2012 certain questions have allowed candidates to answer in bullet point format. Surprisingly few candidates do so when the opportunity is there to present a series of points in a clear and concise fashion.

In answering the multiple-choice questions, candidates are asked to write their answer on the dotted line provided. A number of candidates circle a letter or make some other mark as well as writing on the line; sometimes these are different and an ambiguous response cannot receive credit.

It is essential that material is read with care and, as far as possible, candidates should establish the significance of each piece of information.

General Comments

Although written English is not awarded in a separate mark on this paper, the standard of candidates’ expression remains commendably high. Writing was clear and legible and it was rare to encounter a script where meaning was not clear.

Comments on Specific Questions

Questions 1 to 3

These were well answered by the majority of candidates. Most saw that the colour of the Kumalas’ car was unimportant, that a DVD player in the driver’s line of sight would be a hazard and that more electric cars on the road would not reduce congestion in towns and cities.

Question 4 (i) and (ii)

As these questions covered the same material in the Insert, they will be taken together.

The questions were generally answered well, as the majority of candidates found the material accessible and were able to engage with the situation. The highest marks were awarded to those who were able to show evidence of their ability to relate the features of the car to the needs, interest and circumstances of the family. Weaker answers simply selected features from the information given on their car and consequently few marks could be awarded. A high proportion of candidates wrote at great length about matters that were not required to answer the question, and beyond the stipulated word limit. In such cases it was usual for the stated disadvantage in (i) and the advantage in (ii) to lie over the word limit and, as a consequence, one of the criteria was not fulfilled, leading to the award of a lower mark. Where a word limit is stipulated, candidates must take care to ensure that their answers are within that word limit. They can do this by including only the information that is required to answer the question.
The material in the Insert was presented in such a way as to offer a prospective purchaser a genuine choice between the cars under consideration: each model had features which would appeal to certain family members yet also presented certain disadvantages.

In choosing the ‘Geronimo’ most candidates cited its spaciousness, off road ability and DVD player as major advantages. Only a minority of candidates discussed its high performance appeal to Mercutio.

Those who chose the ‘Ecodream’ invariably discussed its strong environmental credentials as appealing to Mrs Kumala. The lack of road tax was usually quoted, but many candidates could have developed the point by linking it to the family budget. References to the car’s use of both petrol and electric technology were often made, but only in the stronger answers was it explained how this was advantageous and there were many instances of unsupported claims about economy. Stronger answers often also included reference to the home-to-work distances of the Kumalas and linked these to the range of the car in electric mode. Most candidates referred to time wasted at the filling station, but many wrote about it in a rather vague way; these answers could be improved had the advantages for time saved been developed by linking this to a specific advantage that this presented the Kumala family.

Candidates who thought Mercutio would find the Ecodream attractive needed to say why this may have been so, for example by referring to the new technology.

The Cuboid, in some respects the compromise choice, was seen to have specific points in its favour in many answers. The roof rack was invariably quoted as a major benefit given the family’s lifestyle and, whilst the parking sensors and seven year warranty were seen as useful features, many candidates could have improved their answer by linking them to Mr Kumala’s accident and the lack of mechanical know how in the family.

In fully crediting advantages, examiners were looking for specific examples. Comments such as: ‘The Cuboid is a five seater model’ were too general to receive credit because they did not link to the specific requirements of the Kumala family members. Some candidates referred to the Ecodream’s three year warranty as an advantage in favour of this model, but this was not a significant advantage when one of the other cars has a seven year warranty. However, candidates could have received credit for this point had they stated, for example, ‘If the family were to keep the car for only three years, then the warranty could be long enough’.

In (ii) many candidates, in choosing the Geronimo, stated that the family could not afford it. The material makes it clear that a new Geronimo is beyond budget, but it is a pre-owned model that is under consideration. It is important that candidates read the material carefully; those who had understood the material were able to discuss the disadvantages of pre-ownership – less appeal than a new car, possibly lower reliability, and a limited warranty and thus potential expenditure on repairs. Some candidates also mentioned higher emissions, and linked this to higher costs of taxation and Mrs Kumala’s political preference for environmental concerns. Almost all candidates choosing the Geronimo referred to four-wheel drive or the DVD as the advantage.

Those choosing the Cuboid invariably discussed the car’s poor image with young people, but relatively few candidates developed the point by referring specifically to Mercutio’s reluctance to drive it and the worry it would cause his father. Other disadvantages were relative disadvantages such as tax and carbon emissions. The presence of a roof rack was invariably offered as the advantage.

The Ecodream’s lack of space was stated by many candidates as a disadvantage, together with the absence of DVD and unsuitability for off road driving. Mrs Kumala’s approval was usually seen as the most important balancing feature.

**Question 5**

Many candidates answered this question incorrectly because they offered points that had ‘a little’ (i.e. some) relevance, but the question asked for the point that had ‘little’ (i.e. almost no) relevance. It is important to read the question carefully to understand the precise meaning, in this case the function of the indefinite article ‘a’.

**Questions 6 to 9**

The series of multiple choice questions proved challenging for many candidates, although a number of candidates got each one correct. The majority of candidates chose the correct response in 7 and 8, but some
candidates appeared to misinterpret the figures used in the text and so selected the wrong answer in questions 6 and 9.

**Question 10**

In (i) most candidates were able to correctly identify a number of specific examples in the text to obtain a high mark. Some candidates wrote in very general terms about bad behaviour, whilst others tried to claim that an example of bad behaviour was being strung up from a lamp post, which was not creditworthy.

**Part (ii)** provided opportunity for candidates to use their own knowledge and understanding and many were able to list a range of benefits including physical, mental, environmental, social and economic. The candidates who did not receive much credit were those who recognised only one of these categories and consequently, for example, gave five different physical benefits on hearts, lungs, legs, muscles and so on.

**Part (iii)** was confidently handled by the majority of the entry, with most identifying the two techniques – registration and insurance – as well as the reasons why they would probably fail. Some candidates did not appreciate the word ‘fine’ in line 39, interpreting it as a measure which could be used to improve behaviour rather than the compulsory insurance which was mentioned by the author.

**Question 11**

In order to answer (i) candidates needed to understand the phrase ‘can do little more’. The final sentence, beginning with the word ‘however’ implies a contrast with what has gone before. In overlooking this, many candidates read this question as asking what more could an officer could do rather than why he could not do more. Consequently these candidates offered other things the officer could do such as taking photographs, calling for back-up, reporting the miscreant to the court and so on. Many of those who did understand the question could have gained more credit had they ensured that they listed three reasons, such as the lack of registration and the cyclist’s ability to escape into the crowd or down a narrow alleyway were often mentioned.

In (ii) the term ‘with a capital c’ was not widely understood and many candidates though it was simply a case of being a good or bad cyclist. Others interpreted it as the difference between professional and amateur rather than the obsessive or committed nature of the cyclist.

**Part (iii)** elicited some good answers from candidates who did appreciate that other cyclists would be hurt or offended by his remarks and might attempt some sort of retribution. Weaker responses explained ‘anonymously’ in a more simple manner, by saying that the author did not want his name known or struggled to find a convincing answer and simply said it was because he too was a cyclist or he too had ridden dangerously.