Key Messages

Content

● Choose a question only if its requirements are fully understood
● Address the question and focus on its keywords
● Analysis and evaluation should be evident throughout the essay
● Avoid lengthy or digressive descriptions
● Develop points with explanations and examples
● Introductions should provide clear address of the question
● Conclusions should not simply reiterate the question

Use of English

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

General Comments

Content

Successful candidates chose questions where they understood all of the keywords. While may be tempting for candidates to select questions based on the extent of their topical knowledge, this often resulted in descriptive responses that lack sustained focus on the question. It is important that a range of ideas be raised and each point explained and linked to the question. It is essential to offer specific examples and these should come from a variety of local, regional and international sources where appropriate. Many responses simply list points, relying on description rather than on analysis and evaluation.

In many responses, candidates strived to offer balanced arguments and this is a good approach if there is a clear sense of the candidate’s final standpoint.

There were a large number of lengthy essay plans seen, and candidates would be well-advised to keep planning to a minimum and utilise their time on writing the essay itself. A notable number of candidates also began essays, only to abandon them halfway through in favour of another question. This also wastes time and candidates should consider their essay choices carefully.

Use of English

The most able candidates were highly fluent and employed sophisticated vocabulary and expression precisely. Weaker candidates made regular basic errors in grammar and their expression was clumsy and could be difficult to follow. Quite a few candidates attempted to impress with unnecessarily ornate language and should be aware that this approach is rarely successful.

The most common errors included:

● ‘for example’ often expressed as ‘for e.g.’ or ‘for examples’
● joining up words which should remain separate, e.g. ‘alot’ ‘aswell’ ‘infact’
● confusion between there/their to/too and hear/here
● incorrect comparative forms, e.g. more easier/cheaper/harder
● incorrect subject /verb agreements
- other examples of lacking agreement, e.g. one of the best politician instead of politicians
- many problems with the correct use of definite/indefinite articles
- incorrect use of prepositions and phrasal verbs
- the unnecessary addition of prepositions to verbs, e.g. to voice (out), to discuss (about), to boost (up)
- common misspellings: their/there, to/too, your/you’re, furthermore/furthermore, occurred/occurred, accommodation/accommodation and confusion between ‘practise’ (verb) and ‘practice’ (noun)

As even the best candidates can make careless errors, it is essential that everyone spends the last 10 minutes of their time checking and correcting errors. This simple measure could make a difference in the marks achieved for use of English and clarify the content.

**Question 1**

Many responses to this question gave examples from Mauritius, Germany and France. The majority of answers seen were very general, often making assertions which could apply to any government, so that it was not always entirely clear that the term ‘coalition’ was understood. There was also digression to political parties forming ‘coalitions’ to win elections. Most candidates remained negative in their views about coalitions and therefore essays tended to be imbalanced and quite assertive.

**Question 2**

Responses to this question were frequently either very strong or very weak. Good answers cited specific voluntary organisations working with youth, poverty, the environment or the elderly. Detailed examples of their efforts were provided, though there was little balanced analysis of their effectiveness or grasp of the issues affecting likely success or failure. Weaker responses did not name any voluntary groups and seemed more intent on discussing the plight of the less fortunate in Mauritian society.

**Question 3**

Most responses to this question were clearly made by candidates with some relevant knowledge of economics. Many responses would have benefitted had more real-life austerity measures been examined, as there was an over-emphasis on theoretical knowledge. Some candidates digressed to other economic issues, such as inflation or currency control. A few confused cuts in public spending with members of the public cutting personal expenditure.

**Question 4**

Many responses to this question listed all the sports they could think of and complained that the government did not back them. Popular suggestions for greater support included attention to infrastructure, paying players a living wage and more sport in schools with a view to improving the health of the young. Candidates seemed to overlook or marginalise the notion of popular support, except to comment on ‘empty stadiums’. Candidates talked about a range of sports, concentrating on the most popular sports of football and boxing. Discussions would have been more convincing if clear reasons had been offered for why such popular sports need extra help.

**Question 5**

Many responses to this question could have been improved had they focussed more on the specific terms of the question. It was not uncommon for more than half the essay to describe the benefits of social networks and/or the internet, which caused the essay to lose focus. Where dangers were considered, there was often lengthy and exaggerated narration of the problems, with insufficient evaluation of the extent of protection of young people. Responsibility was usually considered with more success, and parents, users, teachers, website administrators and governments were all seen to have a role to play. However, the measures outlined were frequently very simple and general, while their success was largely assumed. It was rare to see a candidate debating the merits of specific efforts and reaching a reasoned conclusion. There was no mention, for example, of the potential difficulty of regulating such a huge and international phenomenon as social networking.

**Question 6**

Most responses to this question argued the case either for or against vegetarianism. There was generally a clear understanding of the topic, with better candidates supplying not only a range of arguments but also
developed explanations. In their enthusiasm to promote vegetarianism, a number of candidates made very assertive claims about its benefits for one’s character; financial status and happiness. There were also a number of factual inaccuracies made about farm animals becoming extinct due to meat consumption, and to the curative properties of eating vegetables when suffering severe illnesses. A number of weaker candidates confused vegetarianism with the benefits of eating vegetables.

Question 7

Responses to this question could have been improved had candidates made clear their understanding of the keyword ‘entitled’. Many simply described the kinds of lifestyle to adopt to maintain good health and avoid seeking medical care. Some candidates did not understand what they are required to do when a question states: ‘how far do you agree?’ There ought to be some sense of balance, whereby the discussion would include reference to ethical reasons for people being entitled to care set against those who are deliberately abusing their health and therefore not entitled. A more subtle approach might involve those who have dubious lifestyle choices being able to access health care, but at a financial premium compared to others.

Question 8

Most responses to this question had a great deal to offer about the cultural attractions of Mauritius. There was clear recognition of the multicultural and diverse Mauritian society and that its history had considerable appeal to the cultural tourist. Reference was made to a range of sites and attractions, including religion, music and the cuisine of the island. There was a proliferation of examples, though many were content to present a brochure-style list, without really explaining why the attraction would appeal to cultural tourists.

Question 9

Some responses to this question took the opportunity to explore a less predictable area for discussion. Less successful answers strayed from the question to describe pranks or bullying and its effects. There was little familiarity with forms of humour such as satire, caricature, slapstick or parody. A couple of able candidates illustrated discussions with modern satirical television shows or literary examples such as Molière.

Question 10

Many responses to this question could have been improved had the candidates written more about the specific characteristics and purposes of national lotteries, rather than about gambling in general. There were frequent lists of terrible social ills which purportedly arise from gambling, and there was over-reliance on assertion and exaggeration here. Candidates who stayed with the subject of lotteries often failed to address the ‘state involvement’, other than to say it was another way of taxing the public. Very few could address the moral issues that derived from the state sponsoring an activity that is potentially damaging or dangerous for significant numbers of people, though quite a few saw that lotteries are a form of regressive tax on poorer people.

Question 11

Most responses to this question demonstrated an understanding of the concept of artistic talent being innate or acquired, but candidates found it difficult to explain their ideas and to offer convincing discussion of examples, either mentioning none or filling the essay with names without relating these to any ideas. Technical ability was usually deemed to be something which can be gained or improved by practice and effort, but responses could have been improved had the angle of artistic innovation, inspiration and creativity been addressed. To gain the highest marks, responses needed to address the subtleties of the argument by explaining, for example that it was very difficult to say categorically that talent was inborn, or consider that the same practice/training would produce different results in different people. Arguments often contradicted themselves as candidates attempted to present both sides with no clear conclusion.

Question 12

Most responses named groups considered worthy of free admission, such as students, and the purposes of education and access to local or national heritage were frequently cited. Broader issues, such as taxation and government budgets, widening access to different social groups, maintenance and curation costs of collections, or issues such as whether tourists should contribute by paying entry fees, were raised but development was often superficial.
**Key Messages**

It is vital that candidates read the Insert material thoroughly and appreciate the relevance of the information provided.

Where word lengths are specified, candidates must understand that material over the limit is not credited. The spaces provided in the answer booklet are intended to be sufficient to accommodate all but the very largest handwriting.

In questions where 'in your own words' is stipulated little, if any, credit can be given for simple copying of the text. It is far better for candidates to attempt their own words, even if the resultant English is flawed.

All multiple-choice questions should be attempted as nothing is lost even if the candidate is unsure. Candidates should use the dotted line provided and ensure that the chosen response is unambiguous.

Usually, sweeping or dogmatic assertions are best avoided and candidates should be encouraged to use qualifiers (possibly, perhaps, etc.) and modal verbs (may, might, etc.)

**General Comments**

There is no evidence to suggest that time is an issue, as the overwhelming majority of candidates complete all of the questions. Increasing number of candidates are showing confidence in using bullet points in questions where this is allowed.

**Comments on Specific Questions**

**Questions 1–5**

The multiple-choice questions based on Passage A appeared to be of an appropriate standard: a small number of candidates scored full marks and very few candidates scored no marks.

**Question 2** proved difficult for many. Such questions are designed to examine candidates’ ability to understand data and interpret it; they are not aimed at mathematicians. Many candidates used a simple speed = distance/time equation to obtain the correct response but the relevant figures in the text did not demand such an approach. At a speed of just under 20km per hour, 200km would be covered in just over 10 hours. **Questions 3 and 5** had the most correct responses.

**Questions 6 and 7**

This was a style of question which may have been familiar to candidates in that they were asked to make a case for different options based on material provided in the passage. The profile of the two skippers revealed significant differences in character and personal circumstances. Stronger candidates could see that Moby was something of a risk taker, who was looking beyond fishing for future income, whilst Ahab was likely to be more conservative in his approach as a result of family and financial commitments and the memory of the misfortune that overtook his close friend.

**Question 6**

A number of good answers to this question referred to Moby’s experience which would enable him to venture further out to sea and cope with potentially adverse weather conditions. The attraction of catching snapper...
and the potential for good profits was often raised, as were the links to tourism and the restaurant and hotel business. The idea that the ‘risk and reward’ element involved in fishing for the elusive snapper would appeal to Moby’s gambling instincts was identified only by a small number of candidates. More candidates did, however, make the very valid point that fewer skippers might be attracted to the less certain profits in the southern field thus reducing the competition. The majority of candidates, however, did not use the material to their advantage.

In the weakest responses, candidates simply copied material from the text, frequently misreading it to assert that it was Moby’s wife who was sick, or that he went to sea with only a single crew member. The second paragraph in the Material for Section A makes it clear that gnasher and nipper are prime fish as well as snapper. A significant number of candidates built their case upon the assertion that Moby would choose the southern field because prime fish were available, thus ignoring the fact that such fish were also available in the northern field. Little use was made by candidates of the material involving distance/fuel consumption, price/weight of fish or even the difference in profit between shellfish and prime fish. The distinction between permanent and casual crew members was not appreciated. A small number of candidates saw the catching and consumption of dolphins as a bonus even though point 20 in the text refers to ‘concern that dolphins [...] have been trapped in fishing nets.’

**Question 7**

Answers to this question were generally a little better than those to Question 6. A number were able to develop four points to achieve maximum or close to maximum marks by linking Ahab’s family commitments to the distance from harbour, his financial responsibilities to the fuel cost savings and his inexperience/memory of his friend’s misfortune to the distance and possible weather conditions. The linking of his family’s membership of Greenpeace to the presence of dolphins in the southern field then made it perfectly possible to achieve maximum marks. Few candidates seemed to appreciate that climate change could result in gnasher migrating to the northern field. Whilst almost all candidates picked up the point about catching shellfish and returning to harbour the same day, many did not develop the point to explain why this could be a benefit.

As in Question 6, many candidates misread the material or copied long narrative sections. Some went further and elaborated upon the details often fleshing out Ahab’s character at length: ‘A devoted husband and father who would…’; ‘he will never forget the day his best friend…’; ‘he is clearly making a great deal of effort for a beginner…’; etc. Unfortunately, such composition often bore no relation to the choice of field.

In Questions 6 and 7 a number of candidates wasted precious words by providing a lengthy introduction such as, ‘According to me Ahab might apply for a licence in the northern fishing field because it seems better for him and his family. For me, the northern field will bring greater advantages to Ahab than the southern field.’ In this example over a third of the allowable number of words would have been used in saying absolutely nothing about Ahab’s reasons for choosing a licence for the northern field.

**Questions 8–10**

Most candidates provided the correct answer for Question 10 though to Question 8, especially, and the answers to Question 9 proved difficult synonyms for many.

**Question 11(i) and (ii)**

The vast majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the passage as the reasons selected in each part were usually the correct ones. However some candidates either chose to ignore the rubric or were unable to use their own words. Some very competent candidates had little difficulty in identifying seven or eight valid points and finding alternatives for such phrases as ‘clogs up’ (blocks up), noxious smoke (toxic fumes) or ‘ubiquitous outdoor decoration’ (eyesore, unpleasant sight, visual pollution) but a significant number simply copied phrases or whole paragraphs. This was particularly the case with lines 7–11 and 26–31. Credit was not given to candidates who simply said, ‘Plastic is durable, flexible and light-weight.’ Those candidates who extracted words from the passage and offered some explanation were fully rewarded. ‘Plastic is durable and therefore lasts a long time; is flexible and can be made into various shapes; and light-weight so is easily carried,’ clearly identifies relevant properties and use of own vocabulary. There was some confusion with the meaning of plants which many took to be flora rather than buildings.

**Question 12**
The term ‘ethical products’ was generally not understood, nor was the fact that it referred to packaging. The relevant paragraph is concerned with plastic bags and packaging in general, yet only a small number of candidates appreciated that the author was giving examples of packaging that are environmentally friendly. As a result few responses gained maximum marks, though many candidates gained some marks for saying something about products that were produced with ‘moral guidelines’ in place, and there was an awareness that some companies were responding to pressures to improve working conditions or sourcing of materials to make products which do not harm people or the environment. The references to nappy bags and sandwiches led many to write about hygiene and/or everyday products.

Understanding the meaning of ‘hierarchy’ proved elusive for the majority of candidates. A few were partially correct when they claimed that it was a series of stages or steps, but the relative merits of the steps were not appreciated. Many were able to gain some credit for recognising that it was an attempt to improve the environment or to cut down on pollution, whilst some others were rewarded for recognising that it was a form of campaigning device or slogan. It was surprising that so many were able to quote ‘the three Rs’ yet did not appreciate what this meant. The weakest answers simply copied the reduce, re-use, recycle mantra.

In conclusion, virtually all candidates showed engagement with the paper and, with the exception of a small number of multiple-choice questions, it was rare to encounter a script where not all the questions had been attempted. The candidates’ grasp of the mechanics of language was remarkably good, with sound spelling and some sophisticated vocabulary. A further point is legibility; whilst the writing may not always have been elegant it was invariably easy to read.