

May 2014 subject reports

Malay A: literature

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 17	18 - 31	32 - 45	46 - 58	59 - 70	71 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

All works submitted were appropriate within the PLA. Passages given to candidates were almost of equal challenge be it prose or poetry. It was observed that the majority of students presented satisfactory responses in their commentaries on prose and poems. Most candidates successfully situated the extracts within the body of works to which they belonged and presented sound knowledge of the major and significant themes.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Most candidates were fluent and articulate in their presentation. Teacher/examiners had posed effective questions in probing the candidates' knowledge and understanding. The majority of candidates performed very well in all criteria. The difference in achievement levels between candidates was small.

For Criterion A: Most candidates had shown very good knowledge and understanding of the extract, be it prose or poetry.

On Criterion B: Most candidates articulated on the literary features and also related them to the appreciation of writer's choice.

Criterion C was not much of a problem for the candidates. Most candidates delivered structured and well organized commentaries.

Criterion D saw an overall high achievement. Most candidates had a good command of the language showing clear, accurate and often time varied usage.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

I would like to repeat my previous year's recommendations. Students should be encouraged to do further studies of one or more works of the writers used for IA. Students should also read some form of critiques of the writers' works. This will provide more ideas on the writers' struggles, opinions, attitudes and writing styles, which in turn help in further understanding and appreciation of the writer's choices in his/her works.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

On the whole, the range of work submitted was suitable for producing individual well informed essays. The selection of topics and treatment of themes were satisfactory and acceptable. There were some similarities in chosen aspects and also the same method of treatment. This may be due to almost similar works studied at different schools. Dominant ideas were well discussed with a generally effective formal structure.

However, some candidates still lacked the appreciation of relevant cultural settings in their assignments. Quite a number of candidates showed a somewhat surface level or superficial understanding of the cultural context.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement became the main weakness of the majority. As mentioned above, the statements mostly show limited or superficial understanding of the culture and context. Majority only scored 1 or 2 for this criterion. Quite a number of statements presented do not answer very clearly the key question: 'how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the interactive oral?' Most reflective statements were merely recollections of the goings-on during their discussions among peers without any conclusive statement showing understanding or criticism related to their topics or essays. Candidates should understand what is cultural and what is contextual. For example, the inhabitants of Midaq Alley maybe Arabs and the culture that define their values and action derived from Arabic, but contextually, they were living in a deprived neighbourhood, each struggling for survival. Furthermore the story is set during the British occupation of Egypt, not now nor during the days of the pharaohs. That's what candidates should be

aware of. Baotown was in Communist China, so do not compare the characters with overseas Chinese. Research the social policies of PRC before giving any opinions to the contrary. Jay Gatsby was an American in New York during the roaring 20s and not a Muslim, so do not make the characters' drinking and partying such a big issue. That's their culture, understand it and don't be judgemental.

There was strength shown by candidates in criterion B: Knowledge and Understanding of works. Candidates were quite well prepared and able to prove through their presentations of their careful reading of the selected works, sound comprehension of the significant themes. This was further boosted by their mastery of Language (Criterion E). This helped the better students to present good, strong arguments.

For quite a number of candidates the Appreciation of Writer's Choice was an area of weakness. In some cases, the topic or essay title chosen was still not well defined resulting in candidates not being able to articulate effectively. Discussions tend to be more thematic or based on plot development, rather than evaluating the techniques used by writers.

Candidates did not articulate on the reasons or rationale and to what effect of the writer's choice of certain types of characters, certain background or setting, etc.

Most candidates scored quite well on Organization and development, since they are used to writing essays for other components or papers too. However, only a handful score 5 for this criterion, while 3 and 4 are common.

Criterion E: Language proved to be of help in salvaging the lower marks scored for A and C for most candidates. Apart from being native speakers, the quality of language presented is commendable and a large number scored 5 for this criterion.

However, quite a number of students were not careful with spellings and typing conventions. Some may not be aware that they should turn off the English spell-checker or select Malay language from the language window of their word processor. Such oversight has resulted in a number of Malay words to be spell-corrected inaccurately. Example: 'datang' auto-corrected to 'dating', 'sesama' to 'sesame', 'hampir' to 'hamper' and many others.

There is also an increase in the usage of loan words over the original Malay words. The encroachment of Arabic words and words from languages other than English into the assignment is getting worrisome. This is a group 1 subject, so please adhere to the guidelines.

Another matter of contention is typing convention, especially on the placement of fullstop and comma, which should be immediately after the last letter of the word. There should not be any space between the last word of a sentence and a fullstop (or period). Proper nouns such as names of countries, cities, ethnicities should start with a capital letter. It should be Melayu not melayu. It is frustrating reading a good essay splattered with typos and mis-spellings. This will cost the candidate marks on the Language criterion.

Many students also have the tendency to provide definitions for the obvious. Lengthy definitions for terms such as 'personality', 'friend', 'character', etc. should be avoided. These are common everyday words, which do not need to be defined. Such practice takes up the word count, leaving the candidate less space for meaningful arguments and discussions.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is recommended that schools give more attention to students' understanding of the cultural and contextual elements found in the works studied. The student's discussions and subsequent reflective statement should be related and focused to the eventual essay. It would be helpful if candidates are made aware of the writers' backgrounds too. Understanding the writers' perspectives will help in appreciation of their choices.

It is suggested that teachers also read the report on Extended Essays because most of the issues are quite identical, since WA is also essay based.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 20

General comments

For this session the majority of candidates chose to answer the prose question (Question No. 1) with less than a third responding to the poetry question. The standard of performance varied between candidates. However, the overall performance level was more than satisfactory.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Based on the more popular choice of question being the prose question, it can be said that poetry posed more challenge and difficulty to candidates. The poem used was not too difficult with a very logical and predictable flow of ideas. The choice of words was quite straightforward without presenting any ambiguity. The subject matter was also very common. The guiding questions provided tips on what to look at while doing a close reading of the poem. Yet, the number of candidates who commented/analysed on the poetry was relatively small. It can be concluded that poetry posed a bigger challenge to candidates of this paper.

Going through the assessment criteria, it can be concluded that generally candidates have difficulty in achieving high marks for Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer's choice. In fact there was no instance where any candidate would write, "the writer has chosen to use a certain technique (e.g. monologue)," or "the writer decided to develop the particular character by ..." Candidates are not very adept to literary techniques.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Overall, candidates were very well prepared in terms of Understanding of the passage given. This may be due to their mastery of the language. From their responses, it was very clear that they are well prepared in terms of language. Most candidates also scored very well on Criterion D: Language. The good command of language coupled with good understanding of the texts has resulted in very good essays.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

As mentioned above, especially for the prose passage (Question No. 1) candidates showed good understanding of passage. Adhering to the guiding questions, most candidates presented a reasonably acceptable analysis. However, their understanding was mostly at surface level. About half the candidates did not show their awareness to the inferences and implicit message that the author tried to impress upon the readers. Only a relatively small number of candidates could unravel the parody of the story.

For the poetry question, candidates who chose to analyze it showed a methodical approach, whereby the answer would start or end with the general perception or conclusion. Every stanza was analysed and discussed for meanings and also literary techniques. Most answers adhered to the guiding questions. However, there were cases where the candidate could not relate the content or themes to events happening around the world. They could not see that the poet was trying to portray how catastrophe affects innocent and defenceless children. Quite a number were angrily condemning parents for abandoning their children (which was not apparent at all from close reading of the poem).

Most of the candidates answering the poetry question were quite familiar with literary conventions such as alliteration, simile, metaphors, etc. They identified those accurately. However, most of them did not extend their discussion towards the effect(s) that these techniques or characteristics (writer's choices) have on the literary value of the poem.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is commendable that most candidates showed good understanding of the passages given. However, when it comes to interpretation, not all candidates can present their ideas cogently and insightfully. More study and practice could be given to the aspect of techniques.

I would like to see more candidates chose and attempt analyzing poetry in future. Studying poetry would enhance students' mastery of the language and encourage critical thinking because of the many nuances that you can find in poetry.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 25

General comments

This year almost all candidates chose questions from the section on novels for their essay. Two questions in particular (Q.8 and Q.9) stood out as popular choices. The standard of performance varied between candidates. However, the overall performance level was more than satisfactory.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

For almost all candidates it appears that Criterion C: appreciation of literary conventions proved to be difficult. Only a minority achieved high marks for this criterion. Quite a number also showed problems with Criterion B. This problem was mostly due to the lack of understanding of 'stereotypes'. In some ways this also affects the achievement level for Criterion D: organization and development. Quite a number of candidates showed some difficulty in giving good responses to the main implications of the questions.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Overall, candidates were very well prepared in terms of Criterion A: knowledge and understanding of the works studied. Most candidates also scored quite well on Criterion E: language. The good command of language coupled with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the texts have resulted in very good essays.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Of the 15 questions in 5 sections offered, almost all candidates selected only two questions from the section on Novels. Question no. 8 became the most popular, followed by question no. 9. In responding to the questions, candidates used works of prescribed authors as their source of arguments. The good responses used examples from the novels in putting forward their arguments especially in terms of techniques in characterizations and development of plot.

However, there were still quite a number of candidates who overlooked the literary techniques employed by the authors. Criterion C is still not well mastered by most students. There is a tendency to focus more on the elements from plot development as points of arguments. This tendency also led candidates to retell the story-line rather than to pin-point specific literary conventions that enhance the literary value of the works studied.

Peculiarities, if not weakness in the formal use of language were still evident in a few candidates' answers. There was a tendency to use words from English or Arabic excessively to the extent of not using the original or common Malay terms.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

For this session it is commendable that most candidates showed in-depth knowledge and understanding of works studied. However, there was still a number of candidates who were either not careful in reading the question or were not aware of the specific demands of the question. I would say that the teachers have done a commendable job in that area.

However, as mentioned in previous years, students should be trained to highlight the literary styles and techniques used by the authors. Students should be able to identify the techniques used and the effect of the technique in terms of their understanding and appreciation of the works. Again, it is a matter of noticing “what the author did” and “how does that affect the plot or the reader.”

Students should also be reminded at all times that writing the answer for Part 2 is actually writing an academic essay. The language should be precise and simple. There is no need to embellish with idioms and figurative speech to the extent of making the argument confusing and ‘blurry’. Please, teach them to write straight to the point.

As mentioned above, some form of Malayanization of English words (such as: konklusi, edukasi, bisnes, implementasi, legasi, etc) has been quite rampant among some candidates. This is unacceptable because the original Malay words are still widely used, therefore there is no such need to convert them into Malay. The introduction of Arabic words (such as izhar, intiha, kabir, ukhrawi, murabbi, etc) is also on the rise.

Higher level

At Higher Level there were just 7 candidates in May 14.

The Grade Boundaries for the Higher Level papers are to be found below.

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 18	19 - 33	34 - 46	47 - 59	60 - 72	73 - 84	85 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25