



## MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

# PSAC 2018

## ENGLISH

Subject Code: P110

Examiners' Report

April 2019

## **Introduction**

In 2018, a second cohort of students sat for the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Examination, as part of the ongoing Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform.

The assessment for English focusses on different linguistic competencies:

- Reading Comprehension (40%)
- Grammar and Vocabulary (30%)
- Writing (30%)

These assessment objectives are in line with the goals and objectives of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Primary Education. A variety of tasks were set at different levels underpinning the principle of greater fairness to allow students from the whole spectrum of the ability range to demonstrate their proficiency levels.

## **General Comments**

The performance of candidates in this year's examination session was satisfactory, with nearly 80% achieving at least numerical Grade 5. It is worth pointing out that most candidates have acquired the fundamentals for further learning. Most of them have displayed the ability to read with understanding and to write basic sentences in English, although a disparity can be seen in levels of achievement.

In reading comprehension, whether at an elementary level or advanced level, candidates perform well when it comes to the location of explicit information. However, in tasks requiring higher order skills such as making inferences, offering a personal response to the text or giving the meaning of vocabulary words, some candidates still struggle.

This year, while tasks requiring candidates to deal with common vocabulary were satisfactorily done, it was disappointing to see candidates' performance at tasks dealing with vocabulary in context and which required applying knowledge of vocabulary in writing.

Writing, on the other hand, continues to be the most challenging skill for most of our pupils. Many candidates have had difficulties in writing tasks, be it at the basic level where they have to, inter alia, produce negative and interrogative structures properly, separate sentences adequately, write individual sentences using given words or at a higher level, where they had to write composition creatively using correct grammar, rich and varied vocabulary and sophisticated sentence structures.

## Specific Comments

### Question 1

The purpose of this question is to assess candidates' ability to read at a basic level. This year, this task was set through candidates requiring to match a sentence to its corresponding sentence. It is to be noted that this question can also require candidates to match a sentence to the correct notice or to the corresponding picture, as specified in the specimen assessment materials.<sup>1</sup>

While the majority of candidates attempted the question successfully, some struggled with:

Item (ii) *My brother's room is untidy. His clothes are lying everywhere.*

and

Item (v) *It's very cold today. Make sure you wear warm clothes.*

This could be attributed to the fact that 'clothes' is used in both sentences causing confusion to some who would focus on specific words rather than deriving meaning from reading the sentences in complete.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://mes.intnet.mu/English/Documents/Examinations/Primary/PSAC/psac6/specimen\\_papers/2016/core\\_subjects/English.pdf](http://mes.intnet.mu/English/Documents/Examinations/Primary/PSAC/psac6/specimen_papers/2016/core_subjects/English.pdf)

## Question 2

A range of grammatical structures are tested through multiple-choice items in this question. This year, the use of tenses (simple future), prepositions, pronouns (personal, relative/wh-pronouns, reflexive), adjectives (including comparative and superlative forms), quantifiers, modal verbs and conjunctions were assessed.

### The best done items were:

- Item 1        She will join a new school next year.
- Item 3        My grandmother is a good cook. She always makes delicious cakes for us.
- Item 4        Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.
- Item 6        There is too much rice on my plate. Please take some back.
- Item 7        Every morning, Sam and Rita prepare their breakfast themselves.
- Item 9        Should I bring my sports shoes tomorrow?

### The following items were found challenging:

- Item 2        Hanna goes to work on foot. (Some candidates wrongly gave *by* as an answer. Candidates are reminded of the fact that *I travelled by car* can be said just as one can say *I came to work by bicycle*. However, in cases where walking is being referred to, on foot, should be used.)
- Item 5        The dress which you gave me is beautiful. (Few candidates still have difficulties with the use of relative pronouns, often using *who* for objects and *which* for human beings. Educators are advised to practise more items to bring about clarity in the use of both.)
- Item 8        Some stories are very exciting from start to finish. (Several candidates wrongly provided *\*excited* as an answer. *Excited* and *exciting* are both adjectives but in this context *exciting* would be the appropriate answer since a quality is being ascribed to *stories*, a non-living material.)
- Item 10       Samaira went out with her friends although she was ill. (Few candidates wrongly gave *\*even* as an answer. *Even if* would be a suitable answer rather than *even*. Some candidates still struggle with the use of conjunctions which is demonstrated in question 8B as well.)

### Question 3A

This question assesses candidates' knowledge of basic vocabulary used in common daily life. The fundamental objective of this question is to encourage teaching of vocabulary words while reinforcing correct spelling.

#### The best done items were:

Item (ii)      This vehicle carries sick people to the hospital.      **ambulance**

Credit was also given to:      **aeroplane**

Item (iii)      You use it to clean your teeth.

*Toothbrush* and *Toothpaste* were both accepted as correct answers. It is worth pointing out that many candidates used *\*teethbrush* or *\*teethpaste* resulting in loss of marks.

Item (v)      This person flies aeroplanes.      **pilot**

#### Candidates had greater difficulty with the following items:

Item (i)      You use it to protect yourself from the rain.      **umbrella**

Although a common word in English, several candidates wrongly wrote *\*umbralla* resulting in loss of marks.

Item (iv)      You use it to boil water.      **kettle**

Many candidates mistakenly considered *\*kooker* as an answer. Alternatively, several wrongly wrote *\*kettel*.

### Question 3B

The purpose of this question was to assess candidates' ability to deal with vocabulary in context. This was examined through open-ended items requiring the correct definition to the word 'trunk' to be given to each item from a given list of definitions.

Many candidates struggled to provide the correct definitions. A large majority wrote sentences or their own definitions instead which were self-penalising.

Educators are advised to encourage the practice of vocabulary-based questions in context. Some exemplar tasks are presented in the Specimen Assessment Booklet for English.

**Item (a)**      **Tom opened the trunk of his car and removed his bag.**

The expected answer was: 4. *The luggage compartment of a vehicle*

**Item (b)**      **In the accident, he suffered many injuries to his trunk.**

The expected answer was: 5. *Part of a person's body, apart from the head, arms and legs*

**Item (c)**      **The animal used its trunk to pick up its calf.**

The expected answer was: 2. *The nose of an elephant*

**Item (d)**      **My mother always keeps my toys in a beautiful blue trunk.**

The expected answer was: 3. *A large box used for storing things*

**Item (e)**      **The leopard climbed up the trunk and sat on a branch.**

The expected answer was: 1. *The main stem of a tree*

## Question 4A

Question 4A assesses the ability to read and comprehend at an intermediate level, focussing specifically on the skill of location of information. This year, a factual text on 'Ants' was set and a satisfactory performance could be noted in general. As far as the basic skill of literal understanding is concerned, candidates show sufficient control.

As compared to the previous year, candidates performed well and limited cases of indiscriminate lifting were observed which was encouraging.

Nevertheless, marks could not be awarded to candidates who used their background knowledge to answer some questions instead of answering the questions whose answers were found in the text. The importance of answering the questions based on the information provided in the text cannot be over-emphasised.

Though most items were generally well answered by candidates, the following items were less well done.

### Item 1      **The two most common types of ants.**

The expected answers here were (i) Red ants  
(ii) Black ants

Some candidates wrongly gave *\*small but very intelligent ants* or even *\*hardworking and organised ants* which in fact referred to some characteristics of ants and, hence, were not awarded marks.

### Item 6      **Function of (i) the worker ants (ii) the soldier ants**

The expected answers were: (i) To look for food or even to store food was accepted.  
(ii) To protect the anthills or their homes from attack.

While some indiscriminately lifted

- (i) *'Worker ants spend most of their time looking for food. They use some of their rooms as storehouses to keep that food.'*
- (ii) *'Soldier ants protect the anthills from attack. They have separate rooms in the anthill.'*

a few paid less attention to the word **function** in the question and wrongly provided:

*\*'They use some of their rooms as storehouses to keep that food.'*  
*\*'They have separate rooms in the anthill.'* entailing a loss of marks.

### Item 7      **Two words that describe the life of ants.**

The expected answers were (i) busy  
(ii) peaceful.

Other answers describing the life of ants were also accepted including, inter alia, *organised, harmonious, hard, difficult, active, happy.*

However, adjectives describing ants in general rather than the life of ants such as *hardworking, small, black, red, intelligent* were not accepted.

In addition, the indiscriminate lifting of “*Ants lead a busy but peaceful life.*” *Each ant does the share of work and never fights with other members of the group* resulted in loss of marks.

It is worth reminding Educators that examination technique is an important component in this question. It is important for candidates to provide brief and accurate answers. Resorting to lifting of entire chunks of text is unlikely to be rewarding to candidates.

#### **Question 4 B**

This year, a narrative text was set assessing candidates’ ability in reading comprehension. This extended reading comprehension task goes beyond literal understanding of a text and a range of reading comprehension skills are assessed. This year, the text invited locating explicit information, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context, identifying central themes and ideas, inference-based questions, analysing aspects of character and to provide a personal response to the text types of questions.

This year’s passage was adapted from “*The Fairy Tree*” written by Wendy L. Schmidt. Cases where candidates failed to understand the passage completely were rare. On the whole, performance on the extended reading comprehension task reflected the performance of candidates in previous examination sessions. As usual, questions requiring literal understanding of explicitly stated information were well-tackled by most. However, questions requiring higher order reading skills proved to be problematic to a large number of candidates. Only candidates from the higher ability groups could demonstrate their ability of making inferences and reading between the lines.

Candidates performed poorly on the following items:

#### **Items 9      Mention two things which show that Viola liked Rainbow.**

The possible answers here included the fact that she decided to keep Rainbow as a pet; she put it into the small lake in the cave, she fed it with pieces of bread which she had saved from her breakfast; she would sing to the fish; she was heart-broken when she could not find Rainbow; she gave the fish a name; she treated Rainbow as a friend; she prayed for the fish to become a tree if it could not come back.

A common wrong answer was that *\*Viola was happy to have a friend.* Answers involving actions she performed to show she liked the fish were in fact being sought after rather than description of how she felt after having befriended the fish.

#### **Item 10      Circle two adjectives from the list below that best describe Viola’s eldest sister.**

cruel	stubborn	forgetful
lazy	unkind	



The expected answers were **cruel** and **unkind** which candidates were expected to get from:

*'The eldest sister was often wicked to her younger sisters'* (Paragraph 1) and from an understanding of *'While Viola was away in the forest, the eldest sister caught Rainbow and killed it.'* (Paragraph 5)

It was also noted that a considerable number of candidates circled less or more than two answers which resulted in loss of marks.

**Item 11      According to you, why was the tree colourful?**

The expected answers here were: It was Rainbow (the fish) born / reincarnated as a tree; the tree had the colours of the fish; Viola prayed/wished that the fish becomes a tree.

Many candidates who provided an entire verbatim lift of *"Rainbow, Rainbow, hear my cry, please come back. If you can't come back to me, I pray that you become a tree!"* without any explanation of Viola's wish becoming true put themselves at a disadvantage.

Answers such as:

*\*Because the rainbow is colourful or it was of the bright colours of the rainbow* were not given credit due to the lack of a clear reference to the fish.

## Question 5

This question evaluates candidates' knowledge of syntax in writing at sentence level. A variety of tasks was set on, inter alia, removing surplus words from a sentence, adding punctuation marks, transforming into the interrogative and negative forms, positioning of adverbs and writing a sentence using given words.

As in the previous year, only a small number of candidates could score the best marks. The influence of Kreol Morisien or French syntax were visible in the transformation into the negative and the interrogative, in the positioning of adverbs as well as in sentence writing.

### Candidates fared well in the following items:

**Item (i)**      ***Mary likes runs playing the piano.***

Candidates were expected to identify the surplus word which was *runs* that marred meaning of the sentence due to the flawed syntax.

**Item (ii)**      ***Tomorrow is the last day of school. I will then be on holidays.***

In this task, candidates were asked to add capital letters and full stops where required. Quite a few candidates struggled with the separation of sentences, often omitting the full stop between the two sentences.

### The following items were found challenging by a significant number of candidates:

**Item (iii)**      ***He has gone to see his friend.***

In this item, candidates had to transform the given sentence into the interrogative form. The expected answer was *Has he gone to see his friend?*

As in previous years, transforming into the interrogative continues to be a challenge which requires more work in the classroom. Quite a few demonstrated a lack of familiarity with the syntax of interrogative structures and also difficulty in the verb form producing answers such as:

*\*Can he has gone to see his friend?*

*\*He has eas – ce – que gon to see his friend.*

*\*Does he has gone to see his friend?*

Candidates should be reminded that merely adding a question mark at the end of a sentence is not usually given credit.

**Item (iv)**      ***The girl helped kindly the old lady to cross the road.***

In this item, identification of the incorrect positioning of the adverb was required by candidates who then had to move it to a syntactically acceptable position in the sentence.

Several candidates showed that there was an influence of French and Kreol Morisien which hindered their ability to position the adverb correctly.

Expected answers included:

- *The girl kindly helped the old lady to cross the road.*
- *The girl helped the old lady to cross the road kindly.*
- *The girl helped the old lady kindly to cross the road.*
- *Kindly, the girl helped the old lady to cross the road.*

In this context, it is strongly recommended that Educators teach the syntactic difference between English and French so that students are clear on the positioning of adverbs.

**Item (v)      *He eats an apple every day.***

In this task, candidates were asked to transform the sentence into the negative form.

At least half of the total population of candidates assessed were unable to carry out the transformation correctly.

While expected answers were:

- *He does not eat an apple every day*
- *He does not eat any apple every day*

marks were also awarded to those who omitted the article 'an'.

- *He does not eat apple every day.*

Many candidates had a difficulty in making use of the correct verb form and syntax. This could be observed in answers such as:

- *\*He do not/don't eat an apple every day.*
- *\*He does not eats an apple every day.*
- *\*He did not eat an apple every day.*
- *\*He eats not an apple every day.*
- *\*He not eat an apple every day.*
- *\*He ne eat pas an apple every day.*

**Item (vi)      *bus – miss – late***

Candidates were expected to write a sentence with the given words in this item. Meaningful, syntactically correct and grammatically accurate sentences were positively awarded. One example of such a sentence was: *I was late to school because I missed the bus.*

Certain issues were visibly noticeable.

1. Some candidates mistook 'miss' for the honorific 'Miss' instead of as a verb. In cases of correct sentences in terms of syntax, grammar and meaning full marks were awarded despite the misunderstanding.

2. In some cases, candidates failed to conjugate the verb correctly resulting in loss of marks.
3. In a minority of cases, the adjective *late* was transformed to the noun *lateness* which resulted in the loss of marks.
4. Several candidates made use of the given words in different sentences instead of one sentence only, which is penalised.
5. Many candidates faced the difficulty of finding the appropriate preposition, often saying *arrived late for school* instead of *at*.

## Questions 6A and 6B

This question is a higher order reading task assessing the use of language which requires the ability to rely on the context to guess the suitable word, to fill in the gaps. Thus, to be able to work out this question, candidates need to have a substantial grasp of receptive and productive vocabulary.

This year, the passage set was an adaptation of Aesop's popular fable *The Goat and the Wolf*.

In Part A, candidates had to fill in the gaps with appropriate words from the list of words given. A satisfactory performance, with the majority scoring about 5 marks, was observed in this segment of the question.

In Part B, the gaps had to be filled in with words from candidates' own knowledge. It was noted with concern that a significant number of candidates failed to obtain even one mark in this task.

**Item 1** "You wont be able to eat / devour me as the thorn will get stuck in your throat" replied the donkey.

A number of options were acceptable here: consume / have / relish / chew / enjoy.

Frequent wrong answers included: *\*feed / catch / attack / take* which did not fit in the structure.

**Item 2** The wolf thought for a moment / second and realised that the donkey was right.

This item was found to be difficult by a large number of candidates who wrongly supplied *\*instant / long or little time / plan / solution* as answers.

**Item 3** So he decided to help him, thinking that he would eat him afterwards.

This item was one which was done satisfactorily. Yet, frequent wrong answers included: *\*her / me / dinner / meat* which were contextually inappropriate.

**Item 4** He bent towards the donkey's foot to remove / extract the thorn.

A number of answers were accepted such as: see / examine / scrutinise / find.

Common wrong answers included: *\*take out / pull out / detach / transfer*.

**Item 5            The donkey then kicked the wolf in the face and ran away.**

Although a number of answers, inter alia, *powerfully / courageously / immediately / soon / violently / just / furiously / brutally / heavily / suddenly / angrily / cleverly / wisely* were accepted, many who provided: *\*so / hardly / fastly / unfortunately* lost marks.

**Question 7A**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of grammar and spelling in context. A short text with grammatical and spelling mistakes which had been underlined was set and those mistakes had to be corrected.

This question, one of the higher order tasks, was considered challenging by a vast majority of candidates.

**Item 1            Had twelve beautiful daughter.**

This item assessed the knowledge of plural words. Although a regular form of plural in English, many had trouble finding the correct plural form, providing *daughteres* as an answer instead of *daughters*.

**Item 2            They all slepped in one room.**

This item tested whether candidates could make the difference between the simple past of regular and irregular verbs.

This was the worse done item in the question, with many candidates failing to realise the simple past of 'to sleep' is *slept*. Some others left a spelling mistake giving *slepte* as an answer.

**Item 3            The doors was locked.**

This item assessed knowledge of subject-verb agreement, a fundamental rule of English grammar. Since the subject *doors* is in plural, the verb form has to be *were* and not *was*.

Although this was satisfactorily done by most, some candidates failed to understand that the tense had to be in the past itself wrongly giving *are* as an answer.

**Item 4            Every morning, however, there shoes looked like they had been used.**

This item tested whether candidates clearly understood the difference among *there*, *their* and *they're* which are homophones but differing in meaning that are frequently misused.

Only about half of the number of candidates managed to do so, suggesting that many have not yet mastered the correct use of possessive determiners, in particular the difference between *their* and *there*.

**Item 5            Yet, nobody knew how it hapened....**

Item 5 assessed the knowledge of the spelling of the word *happened*. Although a relatively common word in English, a significant number had trouble finding the correct spelling. It is worth noting that *had happened* was given due credit, provided that it was correctly spelt.

## Question 7B

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and application of word transformation rules in English. A short text was set with words requiring transformation within brackets.

Although a handful failed to obtain any mark in the question, the majority displayed a grasp of common word formation rules. Item 3 was regarded as the poorly performed one.

**Item 1      The World Cup is held in a different country.**

This item tested the transformation of the verb *differ* into the adjective *different*.

This item was well attempted by the majority of candidates, although incorrect spelling of the word *\*differant*, *\*diffrant* was commonly noticed.

**Item 2      The first winner of the tournament was Uruguay.**

In item 2, the transformation of the verb *win* into the noun *winner* was required.

This was also well done on the whole, although some candidates offered *\*winners* as an answer which would not be the correct subject form taking into consideration the ensuing verb agreement was in the sentence.

**Item 3      The World Cup was first shown on TV in 1954, when the competition was held in Switzerland.**

For item 3, candidates were required to transform the verb *compete* into the noun *competition*. It is worth pointing out that this was the item that posed the most difficulty in Question 7B. This could be attributed to the fact that wrong spelling of the word was often given where candidates omitted certain syllables. Certain examples of the wrong answers provided by candidates include: *\*competition*, *\*comtition*. Yet some others offered the wrong transformation '*composition*' which is derived from the verb '*compose*'.

**Item 4      The youngest player to take part in the World Cup was Norman Whiteside ...**

For this item, the superlative form of *young* was required. Although a third could give the correct answer, many struggled with its spelling. Some others wrongly gave *\*youth/youngster/younger* as answers. Educators are encouraged to give due attention to comparative and superlative forms of words in their teaching.

**Item 5      Brazil is the most successful World Cup team ...**

For this item, the transformation of the noun *success* into the adjective *successful* was required. An important number of candidates managed to provide the correct transformation, including the correct spelling of the word. Yet, frequent errors such as *\*succesfull*, *successfool*, *successesest* were also observed in many scripts.

## **Question 8A**

The question assessed candidates' ability of using simple cohesive devices such as adverbs of time, manner or place or coordinating conjunctions to write a short but coherent text. Three pictures and a set of words alongside were given. Candidates were required to use the given words in order to write one sentence on each picture while making sure that their three sentences made up a coherent story.

A number of issues were noted:

- Some candidates used the given words in different sentences.
- In some cases, candidates wrote correct sentences omitting one of the words given.
- Many candidates wrote independent sentences on each picture, not paying attention to the importance of having a short, coherent story with the three sentences.

### **Item 1 – Saturday – zoo**

This was the best done item in Question 8A. Candidates produced simple sentences such as *Last Saturday, Sara went to the zoo*. Nevertheless, some issues were noted with grammar and syntax. In several cases, candidates produced flawed sentences such as: *\*Saturday, we went to the zoo*, showing the influence of KM syntax, instead of *Last/On/One Saturday, we went to the zoo*.

### **Item 2 - all of a sudden – monkey**

This item posed some difficulty to candidates, with many struggling to find the right vocabulary or to make use of apostrophe to show possession or making correct use of possessives or even suitable prepositions to write grammatically correct sentences. Few used the synonym *suddenly* for *all of a sudden* which was not discredited, if the sentence was correct. However, educators and candidates are reminded that the given words need to be used. Certain examples of sentences produced include:

*\*Suddenly the monkey take my ice-cream.* (use of the synonym/incorrect tense used).

*\*All of a sudden a monkey took Sara ice-cream.* (apostrophe not used).

*\*All of a sudden a monkey who was watching. Dina graped her ice-cream* (lack of familiarity with vocabulary words).

*\*It was a Saturday morning Sara went to the zoo with her father.* (words used in different sentences)

*\*All of a sudden a monkey catch his ice-cream.* (incoherence in the use of tenses)

*\*In the end father buys an ice cream for her.* (incoherence in the use of possessive determiner)

### **Item 3 – In the end – ice cream**

The given words invited a complex sentence such as: *In the end her father bought another ice cream for her*.

Many candidates struggled with vocabulary and syntax, giving answers as: *\*In the end Dad take an ice cream for we*.

*\*Finally in the end his father repaid an ice cream.* (It is worth noting that although repaid is a valid term, it is used to refer to paying back a loan, paying back money borrowed from someone or to do/give something as recompense for (a favour or kindness received. In this context, the candidate should have rather used '*bought another ice cream*')

*In the end of their visite, her father bought another ice cream her.* (In this example, the syntax is incorrect firstly because *at the end of their visit* should have been used and secondly, the preposition *for* is absent from the clause *\*bought another ice cream her.*)

*In the end father bought a new ice cream.* (In this example, the candidate should have used *another ice cream* rather than *\*a new ice cream*. It is noteworthy that answers such as *In the end, father bought a better ice cream. were not penalised.*)

## Question 8B

This question assessed candidates' ability to use link words appropriately through the transformation of simple sentences into complex ones to make a short paragraph.

The performance on this task suggests that candidates are still struggling with the skill of writing complex sentences using conjunctions. To be able to earn full marks in this question, candidates are expected to demonstrate the correct use of the linking word while focussing on all other transformations required in order to have syntactically and semantically correct sentences.

Certain issues entailing the loss of marks have been observed.

- Several candidates used the linking words correctly and made all the necessary changes but left full stop between clauses which is heavily penalised.
- In few cases, linking words were correctly used but capital letters in the middle of a sentence could be seen.
- The omission of key words led to incorrect sentences.

### Item 1      **On that day, Samy woke up early. He wanted to get *everything* ready. (as)**

The expected answer here was:

- *On that day, Samy woke up early as he wanted to get everything ready. or*
- *As he wanted to get everything ready, Samy woke up early on that day.*

Some candidates lost marks by having capital letter between clauses.

- *\*On that day, Samy woke up early as. He wanted to get everything ready.*

Little credit could be given to the sentence:

- *\*As on that day, Samy woke up early, wanted to get everything ready.*

- since
1. The meaning of the sentence has been altered.
  2. Omission of the key word 'he' has led to the sentence being incorrect.



**Item 2          Samy brought his fishing rod. He took a bucket as well. (and)**

This item was generally well done, with

- *Samy brought his fishing rod and a bucket as well.*
- *Samy brought his fishing rod and (he) took a bucket as well.*

as acceptable propositions. Credit was also given to the sentence:

- *Samy brought his fishing rod and a bucket.*

Few candidates, however, failed to earn marks with incorrect sentences as:

- *\*He took a bucket as well and Samy brought his fishing rod.*
- *\*Samy brought his fishing rod and as well he took a bucket.*

**Item 3          He also dressed up warmly. It was always cold in the morning near the river (because).**

This item proved to be the most difficult one in this question. The expected answer was:

- *He also dressed up warmly because it was always cold in the morning near the river.*

The answer:

*Because it was cold in the morning near the river, he also dressed up warmly.*

was also awarded full mark.

Wrong answers like:

- *\*Because he was dressed up warmly, it was always cold in the morning near the river.*
- *\*He also dressed up warmly because it always cold in the morning near the river*

were often seen.

**Item 4          Samy was excited about the fishing trip. His father was worried about the cold wind. (although)**

The acceptable answers for item 4 were:

- *Although Samy was excited about the fishing trip, his father was worried about the cold wind.*
- *Although his father was worried about the cold wind, Samy was excited about the fishing trip.*
- *Samy was excited about the fishing trip although his father was worried about the cold wind.*

This item was generally well done. Yet some common wrong answers could be noted:

- *\*Although Samy was excited about the fishing trip. His father was worried about the cold wind.*
- *\*Although Samy was excited, his was worried about the cold wind.*

## Question 9

Question 9 assesses candidates' ability to write a coherent piece of continuous prose. It assesses higher order writing skills, especially, candidates' ability to develop a given storyline creatively and coherently, use accurate grammar to express themselves, their ability to use varied sentence structures and the richness and appropriateness of the vocabulary used.

This year, a guided composition was given:

**You were at the beach when you noticed a crowd near the water.  
Write a story of about 120 words to say what happened on that day.**

The following prompts had been given to guide candidates:

- **What were you doing on the beach?**
- **What did you see?**
- **How did you react?**
- **Why was there a crowd?**
- **What happened in the end?**

Performance on this question was, on the whole, below expectations. A substantial number misinterpreted *crowd* which is a common collective noun for crow or an animal that led to their essays being partially, if not fully, irrelevant.

Other pertinent issues noted were:

A significant number of candidates still dwell on lengthy introductions which often do not address the question.

In some cases, rehearsed pieces of writing were produced which could not be given due credit due to lack of relevance.

Candidates struggled with:

- the coherence of tenses (mixing present and past tense inappropriately)
- subject-verb agreement
- the correct use of direct and indirect speech
- repertoire of vocabulary words
- the correct syntax due to L1/French interference
- spelling and punctuation.

The following sample of compositions is an illustration of the strengths and weaknesses encountered in this year's paper.

### **Composition 1**

The sun was shine in the sky. Me, my father, my mather was walking on the road. There was Tom who was enjoying the swim the sea. He very happy. I say mather if I swim. She yes You go? I am very happy for the day. My farther say come now we go home.

This composition is barely relevant, with its description of a day at the seaside and a lack of focus on the topic. As for the language, it is clumsy and uncertain throughout, making it difficult for readers to understand what the candidate wished to express. In addition, the essay is replete with numerous grammatical and orthographical mistakes which implies that it can only score very low marks.

### **Composition 2**

It was a Sunday morning. The weather was beautiful. My family and I decided to go to the beach. My mother and my father prepared the necessary to go to the beach. After preparing, my family and I took the car and went to the beach. It was beautiful outside. After two hours of travel, my family and I were at the destination. My mother prepared food to eat whereas my father bought some drink. My sister, my brother and I were swimming in the sea. I saw many people today on the beach. There was a react on the beach. When my mother finish to prepare the food, my family and I started eating. After eating, my family and I saw a crowd of people on the beach. At the end, the crowd of people had returned to their home. And my family and I returned to home.

At a first glance, this composition appears to be satisfactory in terms of language since only a few grammatical mistakes can be noticed. Yet, upon closer scrutiny, little attempt to develop the storyline is made and the content does not deal with the incident at the beach causing a crowd to be gathered near the water at all. As a result, it does not deserve to score highly as it is barely relevant.

### **Composition 3**

It was a Saturday morning at around ten o'clock. I was on the beach of Grand Baie. I was swimming in the calm and blue lagoon. After that, I went to make sand castles. Then I noticed a crowd near the water. I was surprised to see him. So, I went near him and I saw that it was searching for something which was shining. So I went to have a look and I saw his egg. I give the egg to the crowd and it puts it in his nest. After that I told my parents the whole story and they were surprised and they were proud of me.

This composition makes a noticeable attempt to develop the storyline. The grammar and overall English expression is generally sound as well. Some variety in sentence structures can be observed as well. However, *crowd* has visibly been mistaken for *crow* which renders the essay almost irrelevant. To gain high marks, examiners expect candidates to deal with the content relevantly and to have a sound grasp of language, along with variety in sentence structures.

#### **Composition 4**

One day I were on the beach. I was in vacances. As I passed my schooling exam. My father had decided to take me to the beach. I had saw some friends which has go to the beach. I decided to joined them. My friends was very happy to see me in the beach. We had played together a game. I was the winners of the game. We had passed a very excited day. When we had finished I decided to swim in the sea. When we were swimming. We saw a crowd we were scared.

This composition is relevant despite little attempt at developing the storyline. However, on linguistic aspects, it is problematic. The vocabulary is elementary and some interference of French can be seen. In grammar, the incoherence of tenses is glaring as is the poor control over subject-verb agreement. Therefore, while deserving some marks for being relevant, this work scores very low marks, particularly due to insecurity shown in the use of language.

#### **Composition 5**

It was Saturday afternoon. The weather was good. My family and I went to beach for a picnic. I sat under a big shady filao tree and read a book. After ten minutes, I saw someone drowning. I was shocked and I went helping him. After helping him, I was sat around a crowd of the people and the family of the guy who drown. After doing C.P.R the guy starting breathing and his family was happy and they gave me a reward.

Although quite short in length, this composition manages to get a mid-range score. This work scores slightly higher than Composition 4 despite being short in length. The story is complete, with enough relevant details. A variety in sentence types can be seen. However, an effort at writing more elaborate sentences with additional details while cutting down the avoidable grammatical mistakes would have earned this composition more marks.

## Composition 6

It was a Monday morning during the summer holidays. As the weather was sunny, my family and I went to the Blue Bay beach. Once arriving there my father Mr Sutchindin parked the car and went on the beach. Pranav the youngest of the family was playing with me on the sand. All of a sudden, something caught my attention. There was a crowd near the water. Then my family went to see what the matter was. They saw that a child was drowning. Without losing a single minute, my father jumped in the water and brought the child on the beach. After some minutes the child was brought on the beach. He was injured but safe and sound. His parents thanked my father who was completely wet.

In comparison to the previous composition, this essay scores above average marks since the storyline is complete with elaborate details. A variety in sentence structures can be observed. The language is generally secure despite some mistakes in punctuation in *Once arriving there my father Mr Sutchindin parked the car and went on the beach. Pranav the youngest of the family was playing with me on the sand.* Richness in vocabulary could have earned the candidate even better marks.

## Composition 7

It was a bright Sunday afternoon. I was at Flic-en-Flac beach. I was building a sandcastle when I noticed a crowd of people near the water. Curious by nature, I went there to take a closer look. To my great surprise, I saw a big shark with sharp teeth in the lagoon. The latter was trying to attack a child. Fearing that the shark would kill the poor boy, I quickly called the coast guards with my father's phone. They came at once with their big guns and tried to shoot the big animal. They finally managed to shoot it in its head. The shark died and the boy was saved. The coast guards went in the sea with the help of their small boats and brought the shark to the beach. Paralysed with fear, I went to hide behind my father. The coast guards cut it and discovered that it had ten baby sharks in its belly. The coast guards released the baby sharks in the deep sea. What a fearful beach trip!

This composition is a very good piece of work. It fulfils the objectives of this question which is to produce a piece of work using creativity and imagination while making use of rich and varied vocabulary as seen in this composition: *Curious by nature, To my great surprise, I quickly called the coast guards, Paralysed with fear.* There are numerous complex sentences used consistently and in a very natural way. All in all, it is as much as can be expected from a candidate at this level and this composition scores very highly.