



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

IM Systems of Knowledge

First Session 2019

Examiners' Report (2019): IM Systems of Knowledge

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for Systems of Knowledge was 1965, which is 78 candidates less than in 2018. There was a marked increase in the number of candidates who were absent for the exam, 99 in 2019 and 48 in 2018. Candidate numbers achieving between grades A to C has remained relatively stable, however there was an increase in candidates achieving grades D to E.

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
NUMBER	85	234	664	376	139	368	99	1965
% OF TOTAL	4.3	11.9	33.8	19.1	7.1	18.7	5.0	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Systems of Knowledge First Session 2019

B. GENERAL REMARKS

General Remarks on Coursework

The examiners moderated a total of 88 projects in 6 state, church and independent schools. In addition, 125 projects submitted by private candidates were corrected, and private candidates were called for an interview.

The following remarks reflect comments made by the moderators, these apply both to school and private candidates:

1. Most of the coursework submitted did not contain enough interdisciplinary understanding or evaluation. There is a general lack of critical analysis and reflection in the work submitted.
2. Few candidates offered logical and thought out claims that analyse the link between the work they undertook and the course content.
3. There is clear evidence that candidates are not looking at the official syllabus and incorporating the listed values into their coursework and their learning.
4. Candidates need to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the distinction between skills or attributes and values (political, social, ethical or cultural). This distinction should be also emphasised in the teaching and learning of the course.
5. The moderation exercise has shown that there is the risk of projects being in contravention of the SOK syllabus which clearly states that, 'The Project involves a hands-on task which should span over a substantial period of time. In total the task should comprise a minimum of 20 hours'. Tutors need to ensure that all criteria are followed by candidates.
6. Tutors need to follow the provided marking scheme more closely and ensure that the mark they give reflects the work provided by the candidate. Tutors also need to show and instruct candidates on how to follow and use the official marking scheme as guidelines for their work.
7. A large number of projects lacked a suitable bibliography using an approved referencing style. Many of the provided bibliographies, were merely a reproduction of the URL of the online source used. Candidates need to discriminate between sources, and to recognise the validity of the sources that they encounter. Many candidates are solely relying on popular online sources like Wikipedia as their source of information.

General Remarks on the Written Examination

The major issues encountered by examiners in all sections of the paper were the following;

1. Many of the answers provided do not follow a logical or structured sequence, at times resulting in disjointed arguments that have no link to the question that is being asked.
2. Many of the answers provided did not make use of, or incorrectly used the terminology related to the course content.
3. Many of the answers provided were relatively short for adequately explaining, elaborating, and discussing the concepts required by the essay questions. Although, there is the tendency that lengthier writing diverts from the focus of the sought answer, overall, lengthier essays were also more elaborate and detailed in terms of response.

C. COMMENTS ON QUESTIONS

Section A

The distribution of questions chosen by candidates under Section A was uneven. Question 1 was the most popular question, addressed by the large majority of candidates, with only a very small proportion opting to answer question 2.

In general, essays exhibited logical and systematic argumentation. In terms of writing style and presentation, however a good number of essays lacked an adequate structure. Syntax and grammatical issues arising from lack of good command of the English language but also from negligence were also evident in most of the essays.

Question A1:

In general, while most questions made reference to main principles of democracy and the importance of human rights, few provided an in-depth discussion of the links between protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and democratic rule. Despite demonstrating knowledge of the underlying concept of human rights, very few candidates made reference to the different categories of human rights and freedoms; ie; civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights as per provisions of the United Nations Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols. Even fewer essays made reference to the protection of human rights within national Constitutions. This omission negatively affected the efficacy of their explanation of human rights with reference to international charters, and existing legislation and implementation measures. This trend was also observed with regards to reference to the structures and processes in place to safeguard human rights. Indeed, very few candidates made any reference to supranational institutions like the European and International Courts of Justice or to human rights organisations such as Amnesty International. A good number of candidates supported and complemented their arguments through examples of human rights violations in dictatorial regimes.

Question A2:

In general, those who opted to answer this question, presented an adequate response by mentioning two NGOs, at least one of which is locally based, and making due reference to main defining criteria, role and objectives of NGOs. However, few candidates presented an in-depth analysis of the important and vital role played by NGOs in a democracy, by referring to pluralism and diversity of views and opinion. Moreover,

whilst most candidates highlighted the role of NGOs for safeguarding the natural environment and for protecting vulnerable groups, not enough attention was given to highlight the relevance of NGOs for democratic rule, in terms of awareness raising and advocacy work, and their role as pressure groups and agents for policy and social change. Despite the extensive and wide range of NGOs on both the local and international level, the essays offered a very limited variety of NGOs. Moreover, some candidates failed to mention valid examples of NGOs, instead referring to private companies or government funded entities or initiatives, such as 'Space X', 'L-Istrina', 'Sedqa' and 'Appogg'. This omission is particularly worrisome in terms of application of knowledge, particularly in view of the fact that as part of their Systems of Knowledge project, students are expected to carry out voluntary work experience with an NGO. In addition, no candidate made any reference to the 'Voluntary Organisations Act', and any of its provisions or structures such as the Council for the Voluntary Sector or the Commissioner for NGOs.

Section B

Many candidates did not place artistic periods in the right chronology, e.g. placing the Renaissance in the 17th or 18th centuries. Artworks are not attributed to their respective artists. Students tend to confuse modern and post-modern contexts and artworks. When appreciating the works of art, candidates do not always mention the artist, context and meaning of the artwork, they only describe in a general manner what is found in the artwork. Most responses lack basic art appreciation skills.

Question B1

A fair number of candidates were not familiar with the 'religious and the political context' of the artistic periods they chose. The responses did not connect the purpose of the art in the context of their particular times – what actually gave rise to the style. Some candidates either mentioned only political or only religious contexts and not both (as required in the question). Most ignored to explain the functions of art in general.

Question B2

When it came to compare and contrast, the comparing of similarities was often left out. Candidates tended to look for differences and contrasts but ignored common characteristics, ex. between Classical and Renaissance. There was confusion between the Renaissance and Baroque periods, ex. many referred to Caravaggio as a Renaissance artist. Also Renaissance paintings were attributed to the Baroque and vice versa. Again, candidates found it difficult to explain the context of particular artistic or historical periods.

Section C

Question C1

Question C1 asked candidates to discuss how the marine environment can be conserved and sustainably used. Many responses showed a lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Reference was made to some threats faced by the marine environment, but very often there was no discussion following up. Many candidates also failed to address ways how these dangers can be mitigated or avoided.

Many responses also showed a lack of familiarity with the SDGs and lacked the ability to assess the importance of the implementation of the SDGs as a way of conserving the marine environment. Many responses show a lack of application and comprehension of the content covered in the subject.

Question C2

Question C2 asked candidates to discuss the work of four waste management stakeholders with reference to the Maltese Islands. Most responses were a list of initiatives taken up by the government with little or no discussion on the role of the various stakeholders mentioned in the question itself. The discussion offered by candidates was restricted to the role of the state in setting up laws and initiatives, and how citizens have the duty of obeying these. There was some mention of the role of education, such as the role of Systems of Knowledge in increasing awareness or the role of eNGOs, and their initiatives like clean-ups. However, there was little discussion on how waste management strategies are key to sustainable development and how waste management should be addressed as a chain, starting at source.

Section D

Question D1

Very few candidates chose this question. The majority scored slightly below average marks as candidates seemed to distinguish properly between positivism and post-positivism. Most of the answers were incomplete as the comparison was not exhaustive presenting only one or two distinctive points whereas the title requested at least three. Additionally, most candidates gave only one major exponent of the thoughts in question, whilst the question requested at least two.

Question D2

The vast majority of the candidates sitting for the exam chose this question for this section. The marks scored were generally poor and of low level. Many candidates presented a generic response with a minimal alteration to fit the title. The structure of the title with the respective instruction was generally ignored and candidates presented a structure very often incompatible with the title.

The definitions concerning science and technology presented were typically very poor and very often committing the general features of science, technology or both. Even though candidates were prompted to give differences between the two areas, very few answered exhaustively this point giving superficial points of consideration. Candidates were also requested to state the impact of science and technology on each other. This instruction, was generally omitted, and when tackled was very often related to the impact of either science on technology or vice versa but very rarely both. Additionally, the answers related to this point were very superficial and poor, showing a significant lack of knowledge about the impact of science and technology on each other.

Candidates scored some of their marks in the last parts of the question related to two prominent contributors for science and technology. The level was however, superficial very often stating that a particular technology is important and accommodating in today's world. The details given about science contributors was also quite poor, sometimes attributing theories of one scientist to another.

Generally, the structure of the essay did not quite follow the instructions of the title. Language used was typically very informal. The terminology and vocabulary adopted was generally superficial and not very appropriate. Most of the essays lacked a clear understanding and focus of the knowledge entailed.

D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The examiners note that candidates need to make sure that they read the questions carefully and make sure that in their response they are addressing the requirements that are mentioned in the question. Examiners' have shown concern that many candidates only offer superficial knowledge of the course content, and that often times candidates memorise generic essays that they reproduce without acknowledgment of the question in the exam. This panel recommends that candidates need more instruction and practice in essay writing skills and language proficiency that is fitting for candidates who are following a post-secondary education.

Chairperson
Examiners Panel 2019