



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**



Examiners' Report

IM Systems of Knowledge

First Session 2024

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for Systems of Knowledge was **1716**, with **135** marked as absent because they did not sit for the written exam, nor present any coursework. Most of the candidates sitting for this session are registered as school candidates. The majority of candidates chose to reply in English and only a few individuals responded in Maltese. Of these most were unable to write coherently and resorted to inserting English terms or phrases in the middle of a sentence.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades of the examination for the First Session 2024.

Grades	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
Number	108	271	582	282	139	199	135	1716
Percentage	6.3	15.8	33.9	16.4	8.1	11.6	7.9	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for IM Systems of Knowledge, First Session 2024

B. GENERAL REMARKS

General Remarks on the Coursework

1. As part of the moderation process all post-secondary schools offering Systems of Knowledge were visited for moderation purposes. The process was seamless, and no issues were recorded by the moderators. School tutors follow MATSEC guidelines and policies, and their corrections and marking are in line with MATSEC's expectations and standards.
2. Private candidates in general are guided according to MATSEC guidelines, however there are instances where candidates are either misguided or do not follow guidance, thus submitting work that is not in line with the expected standards.
3. Many candidates are not looking at the official syllabus and incorporating the listed values into their coursework and their learning. Furthermore, many candidates are ignoring the course content and not incorporating concepts and knowledge from the course content into their coursework.
4. Most candidates do not offer logical and thought out claims that analyse the link between the work they undertook and the course content.
5. Some candidates are engaging in activities that are short term and within a very limited timeframe, this goes against the suggested practices and is not conducive to the growth and learning process that the coursework is designed to impart.
6. Some 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.
7. Many 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.

8. Some of the presented projects did not undergo a proof-reading exercise and were replete with spelling and grammatical mistakes.

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.
2. Many of the answers provided did not make use of, or incorrectly use the terminology related to the course content.
3. Many of the answers provided were relatively short to adequately explain, elaborate, and discuss the concepts required by the essay questions. Although, there is a tendency that lengthier writing diverts from the focus of the sought answer, most of the lengthier essays were more elaborate and detailed in terms of their response.
4. A number of candidates are basing their studies on the memorisation of model answers, which are publicly available, and attempting to make these answers fit at all costs to suit the requirements of the questions asked in the exam. This incorrect method of preparation goes against the very aims of the subject and is also proving to be a futile exercise since these types of responses are mostly out of point and therefore only leading to a failing mark.
5. Some candidates are providing answers that have no relation or connection to the question they are attempting to answer.
6. There are many instances where it is evident that the candidates lack the basic knowledge of the course content and are therefore unable to respond successfully. For example, some answers showed a complete lack of knowledge of basic course content such as 'scientific values' or 'globalisation'.
7. Many candidates are hindered in achieving their potential in the exam because of their poor command of English or Maltese. It is evident in both languages that there is a deficiency in their ability to express themselves and communicate effectively through writing.

Section A

The majority of candidates opted to answer question A2.

The essay questions were designed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of prominent issues related to democratic governance by focusing on either the lack of tolerance and respect in the escalation of conflict (Question A1) or the impact of globalization on culture, society and the economy (Question A2).

The questions were focused and straightforward, addressing highly topical and relevant issues from within the SOK syllabus. Though essay questions were quite specific, they still provided candidates with a certain amount of liberty to interpret the questions posed. Apart from their factual knowledge of the subject, candidates were also assessed in terms of the essay's use of language, structure and organization, and flow of ideas and arguments.

Question A1

By addressing the issue of tolerance and respect and how these contribute to the creation and escalation of conflict, the question was very relevant to the current international scenario, characterized by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on Palestinian people in Gaza by Israel. Yet, many of the responses did not make any direct reference to these contemporary conflicts, with many referring to World War I and World War II. Despite the clear reference made in the question for the respondents to refer to real-life examples, many did not refer explicitly to any such examples, focusing rather generically on issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion such as racism and sexism.

Many respondents demonstrated a shallow understanding of 'tolerance' and 'respect' and did not embed such understanding within a human rights framework nor within the context of international law. Indeed, very few made any reference to the role played by the international community in intervening in conflicting situations between nations. In addition, those who specifically referred to contemporary conflicts demonstrated limited understanding on the underlying structural factors contributing to the conflict or their historical evolution, with many faulting the personality of the leaders of the involved nations.

Of concern is the fact that despite the proximity of the aforementioned ongoing wars, the media attention and the mobilization of stakeholders on such conflicts within the local context, many candidates referred to such conflicts inaccurately. In this regard, for example Palestine was incorrectly referred to by some candidates as Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia and in one instance, reference was even made that the war is being carried out in the country of 'Hamas'.

Of concern is also the fact that despite voicing themselves against war and conflict, very few gave any or adequate attention to the wide and grave consequences and repercussions of war on different aspects of humanity and social life or what could be done to prevent and address such conflicts on an individual, national, and international level.

Question A2

Though the essay question presented an open and wide analysis of globalization, which in itself emphasizes the connectedness and interdependence of world cultures and economies, many respondents chose to focus their response specifically on the impact of globalization within the local context.

As requested by the essay question, candidates had to refer to three examples to support their analysis on the positive and negative impact of globalization on the areas of culture, society, and the economy. Indeed, many respondents referred to how Malta is becoming increasingly multicultural in terms of cuisine, religious belief and lifestyles. Most respondents highlighted the advantages offered by globalization in particular as a result of social media and online fora, easier opportunities of visiting other countries and buy materialist goods online at a cheaper price. Though as requested by the essay question, respondents had to discuss both the positive and negative impact of globalization on the areas of culture, society and the economy, the majority of candidates presented a more in-depth discussion on the positive rather than negative aspects of globalization, with many expressing and demonstrating a more optimistic stance. Nonetheless, a number of respondents made reference to negative by-products of globalization including rise in racism and xenophobia, the loss of local cultures and the dissolution of local enterprise who are at a disadvantaged competition to multinational corporations.

Whilst this attention to the local context is lauded since it demonstrates applicability of theoretical knowledge, most of the responses lack a more thorough analysis of the impact of globalization on the wider scale, such as in terms of the North-South divide and the division and exploitation of labour on a global scale. As a result, most responses offered a very biased Westernized and Eurocentric view of globalization.

Whilst demonstrating knowledge of the main advantages and disadvantages associated with globalization trends, very few candidates backed up their arguments through theoretical analysis and even fewer presented a critical appraisal of how globalization is linked to issues of democratization, active citizenship, human rights, poverty and inclusion. Worrying is also the trend that most of the arguments did not question the proliferation of consumeristic and individualistic values arising as a byproduct of globalization.

Section B

Most candidates opted to answer question B1.

The questions asked were general questions that tackled concepts and themes that are part of the Systems of Knowledge syllabus. They did not ask about specific works of art, therefore allowing the candidates to utilise and apply any artworks that they are knowledgeable about.

The general impression derived from the answers provided is that there is a lack of cultural knowledge and cultural capital among candidates. The artistic references provided are generally inaccurate and reducible to very few works like Picasso's Guernica or the Da Vinci's Last Supper, with some candidates even incorrectly attributing these to other artists. Such limited knowledge disallows candidates to properly address the themes and content that are addressed in the question.

Furthermore, many candidates are relying on supposed model essays, that are replete with errors and inaccuracies.

Question B1

In this question candidates were asked to focus on two different artistic periods and discuss their relation to events or significant issues that dominated that artistic period. Candidates were expected to explore the defining characteristics of the artistic periods and to analyse the chosen works of art with regards to their

representation of these characteristics. Candidates had to also show how the events and issues of their time of production influenced and shaped the chosen works of art.

Many answers showed how works like the Guernica were the result of the adversities and carnage of the Spanish Civil War, or how works of the Renaissance were the direct result of the dominance of humanism. However, many answers did not show a deeper level of analysis, for example how Renaissance aesthetics was about the production of beauty and that beauty was conceived of as a virtue that is profoundly connected to other humanistic virtues such as courage.

Question B2

Very few candidates chose this question. This question asked about the link between morality and art and whether artists have a moral responsibility. Candidates were expected to refer to the moralising qualities or values represented by a painting and offering an analysis of the works of art with regards to their moralising character. The discussion should have also looked into whether the artist was guided by moralising qualities when creating the work of art and how successful or unsuccessful the work of art was in conveying forms of social responsibility.

Many answers found it difficult to show how works of art teach moral values or have the ability to offer moral teachings or judgments on social or other issues.

Section C

As in previous years, the examination scripts include a number of issues. The most prevalent issue is the lack of examples and case studies to reinforce the argument presented. Most essays were void of valid examples and analysis. The essay selected needs to be clearly indicated on the booklet as it has been omitted by some candidates. Some candidates did not present arguments appropriately in paragraphs and some essays even lacked a proper conclusion. Some answers were presented in an illegible handwriting and the presentation was poor. Essays require stronger argumentative, critical, and analytical skills. Most responses did not present a good and valid discussion.

The most popular was question C2. Few candidates attempted Question C1. Many essays lacked the required standard.

Question C1

This question asked candidates to explain the challenge associated with waste generation in Malta and provide two national strategies to address this problem, including socio-economic realities that hinder change.

Most responses did not tackle all the aspects of this essay. Most candidates explained the two national strategies, omitting the challenges in Malta and the socio-economic realities. Overall, the essays were of average quality with poor application and comprehension of the national context, lacking valid examples.

Question C2

This question asked candidates to explain two environmental issues associated with densely populated areas. Overall, the essays were of a good standard but lacked the necessary critical argumentation, supported with examples. Most essays did not substantiate their discussion with good examples. Also, most candidates did not discuss how urbanisation must be planned and sustainable.

Section D

In previous years, a lot of candidates would answer the part which required them to give two examples only. This year most candidates attempted all parts. Several responses were incomplete, and the essay just consisted of the introduction and/or a paragraph. Others wrote their essay in brief, suggesting that they did not allocate enough time for this essay.

Question D1

Many answers did not define or explain gene technology, with some answers discussing technology in general, therefore making the essay out of point. These essays cited examples such as X-rays, solar power, steam engines, MRI machines etc. Most responses referred to gene technology in medicine and agriculture. As an example of gene technology in medicine several candidates gave the production of insulin as an example however, then proceeded to give a wrong description of how it is made for example, an example of gene technology is the production of insulin which is collected from pigs (no mention of bacteria or insertion of genes).

Question D2

In answering D2 candidates wrote about human values such as kindness or ethics, rather than values in science. Most answers only described values in science without giving the name of the value. Few answers specifically referred to scientific values such as empiricism, objectivity, or replicability.

C. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Systems of knowledge is a comprehensive subject that offers candidates the space and opportunity to explore and evaluate the knowledge that forms the foundation of the modern world. It is unfortunate that many of the answers produced lack an understanding or comprehension of key aspects of our civilization. Furthermore, the communicative weaknesses and poor writing, are testament to a lack of twenty first century skills that are required for a candidate who has achieved the matriculation certificate. If we are to combat the social and political crisis that result from phenomena such as post-truth or mass alienation, then candidates must make more of an effort in understanding and comprehending the themes and content of systems of knowledge.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2024