MSAP IRELAND
Mature Students Admissions Pathway

Sample Questions

Module 1 – Written English (1 hour)
Module 2 – Reasoning in the Humanities and Social Sciences (1 hour)
Sample Topics for MSAP Module 1 – Written English

**Directions**

You are required to produce two pieces of writing – one in response to a topic from Task A, and one in response to a topic from Task B.

- Task A is a more formal public affairs issue that invites argument.
- Task B is a less formal topic that invites more personal reflection.
- One hour is allocated for this test, with an additional five minutes reading time.
- Your responses to the topics are written directly onto the test paper. You should write your essays neatly in pen.
- Use a planning page to organise your thoughts before you commence writing.
- Write the number of the topic you are responding to at the top of each response. **NB: Do not try to address all of the other topics in your response.**
- Give each piece of writing a title that will help orient the reader to the approach you are taking.
- No extra paper is to be used. Only one test booklet is permitted per candidate.

The following themes and topics indicate the kind of stimulus material that will be offered in the real test.

**Topics**

**Task A: Discussion of a current affairs theme – Respond to one (1) topic from Task A.**

| 1 | Our society is changing a great deal, but change is not always progress, and there are some ways in which our society is changing for the worse. |
| 2 | There has never been a time in human history when so many people have been able to live a safe and secure life, and we have science and technology to thank for such benefits. |
| 3 | Science and technology have brought many benefits, but they have also brought problems that may eventually negate those benefits. |
| 4 | Science has made great progress in understanding the physical world, but science has not made much progress in understanding the human world. |

**Task B: Personal point of view – Respond to one (1) topic from Task B.**

| 5 | Friendship is something that most people see as very important, but most friendships turn out to be superficial and fragile. |
| 6 | Romances come and go, but it is friendship that remains. |
| 7 | It is important that we learn to be confident within ourselves rather than dependent on the good opinion of others. |
| 8 | You have to work at a friendship, because without tolerance and respect, even the best friendships soon disappear. |
MSAP Module 2 –
Reasoning in the Humanities and Social Sciences
Sample multiple-choice questions
UNIT 1

Questions 1 – 5

This unit is based on the diagram on the opposite page.

1 The El Niño phenomenon is first indicated by variations in
   A water currents.
   B storm clouds.
   C jet streams.
   D winds.

2 The cross-section diagrams to the right of the main map draw attention to the effects of
   A cold water in creating rough seas and rain-bearing storm clouds.
   B unnatural increases in water volume on overall sea levels.
   C global warming on the average temperature of the ocean.
   D warm water fluctuations on weather and the food chain.

3 In an El Niño year, absence of warm water is likely to cause Indonesia to experience
   A storms.
   B reduced rainfall.
   C cold wind blasts.
   D stronger jet streams.

4 One effect of El Niño in 1982 was to destroy the anchovy fishing industry in Peru. According to the
   information given in the diagrams and text, the most likely reason for this was that
   A stronger trade winds off the coast of Peru made fishing hazardous.
   B the fish were driven away by cold water welling up from below.
   C jet streams redirected to the south caused havoc.
   D the fish were deprived of food.

5 In an El Niño year floods are caused in desert regions of South America because
   A the southerly jet stream from Indonesia has caused more wetness and cold.
   B deep cold water has risen abnormally to flood proportions.
   C large areas of warm water have settled along the coast.
   D overall sea levels have dropped due to trade winds.
Normal Year: The trade winds blow from east to west, pulling warm water behind. The warm upwelling pushes south, taking cold water south. Fish stocks fall.

El Niño Year: Stationary warm water prevents upwelling. The Pacific food chain is disrupted, bringing rains to Indonesia. The warm water sloshes east, taking the storms with it. Fish stocks fall.

Normal Year: Cold water sits off Indonesia, bringing rains to the region. A pool of warm water wells up from below, supporting the Pacific food chain.

El Niño Year: Mysteries remain. Winds slacken, for largely unknown reasons. Cold water is pulled west, pushing warm water east. The jet stream shifts north, and so do the rains.
UNIT 2

Question 6

6 Which two of statements (i) – (iv) below are most similar to each other in the attitude to equality presented?

(i) Although people possess unequal powers, they nonetheless deserve equal rights.

(ii) People are made by nature unequal. It is vain, therefore, to treat them as if they were equal.

(iii) Kneeling ne’er spoil’d silk stocking; quit thy state;
     All equal are within the church’s gate.

(iv) The wealth of a nation consists more than anything else in the number of superior people it harbours.

A statements (i) and (iii)
B statements (ii) and (iii)
C statements (i) and (iv)
D statements (iii) and (iv)
The following passage is from a social history of an inner suburb of Melbourne, Australia.

Compulsory education signified a massive intervention by the educated and the affluent in the private lives of the poor, and it is clear that many working-class families initially resisted. In 1882 Yarra Park had 1742 children on its rolls and an average attendance of a mere 872. And while truancy rates fell over the next thirty years, many Edwardian children were spectacular truants, often aided and abetted by parents who resented the schools that sought to deprive them of their children’s labour and company.

Many parents saw little value in education that, in their view, wasted time on subjects and skills that were not relevant to paid work. The very poor needed their children in the workforce as early as possible.

But as compulsory attendance became a fact of life, acceptance of the authority of the school grew, because working-class parents came to realise that their children’s best hope of escape from poverty lay in education. Nonetheless, some of the Victorian and Edwardian parents who resisted the school’s appropriation of their children’s time dimly perceived, perhaps, that it was an attack on the autonomy of the family. For all the benefits of the increasing role of the Welfare State and the explosion of the helping professions, there have been some losses among the multitude of gains. Poverty and helplessness have not been abolished, only mitigated. People and families in need have lost some of their autonomy and dignity as politicians, bureaucrats and professionals diagnose and decide for them without asking what they would like. Successful protest through the ballot box only replaces these decision makers with another team who are still politicians, bureaucrats and professionals. And it has been the people of the working class who are least equipped to defend themselves against the modern policing of the family. Their poverty prevents them from making private arrangements to service their needs; their lack of confidence inhibits them from battling the indifference of politicians and bureaucrats; their ignorance intimidates them in the face of doctors, social-workers and, of course, teachers.
Questions 10 and 11

10 The cartoon is a comment on

A corporate loyalty.
B the value of teamwork.
C the social implications of a casualised workforce.
D the social implications of a decentralised workforce.

11 The cartoon suggests that current work practices are

A quaint.
B congenial.
C unsatisfying.
D unproductive.
UNIT 5

Questions 12 – 14

The best way to grasp the human significance of photography is not to think of camera, film and tripod as something external to human nature, but as evolutionary developments — as much a part of human nature as one’s thumb. A deficiency existed, of sorts, in the way our sensory and information storing capacities functioned. They had limits, and photography was one way to overcome those limits. The limit in human functioning is simply this: though we can see things very well, we cannot reliably bring up the image for repeated viewing. Instead, visual images are incompletely stored in memory, often in a highly schematic form, and subject to decay and distortion.

Moreover, memory is private: it does not directly take the form of an external object that others can see. And when the person dies, all of the images stored in his or her brain vanish. It is the perishability of our visual experience that led humankind to seek to fix it by placing it on a more permanent record, more available to public scrutiny than the brain. A first solution to this problem came about through the development of skills in painting and drawing. Humankind had the capacity to depict what was seen by representing those forms and colours on an external surface, such as the wall of a cave, or papyrus, silk or canvas. But it required a special talent to do this, which only a few people possessed.

12 The limitation in human functioning referred to in the first paragraph is best described as an inability to

A view things accurately enough for all purposes.
B instantaneously process a complete visual image.
C store a detailed image of something one has seen.
D recall visual material accurately, particularly over a period of time.

13 The writer uses the example of a person’s thumb and evolutionary development (lines 2 and 3) to make the point that the camera

A has replaced part of humankind’s sensory capacities.
B is essentially an extension of humankind’s sensory capacities.
C has utilised sensory capacities in humankind which were previously undeveloped.
D has been so widely accepted by humankind that it has become a crutch on which we are dependent.

14 The additional limitations of memory described in lines 9–12 relate to humankind’s

A need for self-expression.
B insistence on the right to privacy.
C desire to communicate observations.
D need to keep detailed records on individuals.
UNIT 6

Questions 15 – 19

The following passage is from a novel set in 1920s America.

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men, and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn’t able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body.

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply – I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. It was on that same house-party that we had a curious conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man’s coat.

‘You’re a rotten driver,’ I protested. ‘Either you ought to be more careful, or you oughtn’t to drive at all.’

‘I am careful.’

‘No, you’re not.’

‘Well, other people are,’ she said lightly.

‘What’s that got to do with it?’

‘They’ll keep out of my way,’ she insisted. ‘It takes two to make an accident.’

‘Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.’

‘I hope I never will,’ she answered. ‘I hate careless people. That’s why I like you.’

Her grey, sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires, and I knew that first I had to get myself definitely out of that tangle back home. I’d been writing letters once a week and signing them: ‘Love, Nick,’ and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played tennis, a faint moustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding that had to be tactfully broken off before I was free.

Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

15 The narrator presents Jordan Baker’s dishonesty as a form of

A versatility.
B vengefulness.
C self-possession.
D self-preservation.

16 Jordan Baker most likely hates ‘careless people’ (line 19) because they

A limit her freedom.
B awaken her conscience.
C undermine her attention-seeking.
D are inconsiderate of others’ feelings.
17 The narrator recalls his relationship ‘back home’ (line 23) with a sense of
   A nonchalance.
   B apprehension.
   C responsibility.
   D powerlessness.

18 When he calls himself ‘honest’ (line 28), the narrator means that he is
   A magnanimous.
   B principled.
   C innocent.
   D selfless.

19 When he states, ‘I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known’ (lines 27 and 28), the
   narrator presents his own honesty as a
   A choice.
   B marvel.
   C limitation.
   D conceitedness.
UNIT 7

Questions 20 – 24

This unit is based on two extracts from a nineteenth-century novel. Lydgate is a young doctor who has recently come to the town of Middlemarch. Rosamond Vincy is the daughter of the mayor. The passage describes Lydgate’s and Rosamond Vincy’s early impressions of each other.

As he walked away from Mr Vincy’s, Lydgate thought of Rosamond and her music only in the second place; and though, when her turn came, he dwelt on the image of her for the rest of his walk, he felt no agitation, and had no sense that any new current had set into his life. He could not marry yet; he wished not to marry for several years; and therefore he was not ready to entertain the notion of being in love with a girl whom he happened to admire. He did admire Rosamond exceedingly; but that madness which had once beset him about Laure was not, he thought, likely to recur in relation to any other woman. Certainly, if falling in love had been at all in question, it would have been quite safe with a creature like this Miss Vincy, who had just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman — polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence. Lydgate felt sure that if ever he married, his wife would have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys.

But since he did not mean to marry for the next five years — his more pressing business was to look in Louis’ new book on Fever, which he was specially interested in, because he had known Louis in Paris, and had followed many anatomical demonstrations in order to ascertain the specific differences of typhus and typhoid.

He was an ardent fellow, but at present his ardour was absorbed in love of his work and in the ambition of making his life recognised as a factor in the better life of mankind — like other heroes of science who had nothing but an obscure country practice to begin with. Poor Lydgate! or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing. It had not occurred to Lydgate that he had been a subject of eager meditation to Rosamond, who had neither any reason for throwing her marriage into distant perspective, nor any pathological studies to divert her mind from that ruminating habit, that inward repetition of looks, words, and phrases, which makes a large part of the lives of most girls. He had not meant to look at her or speak to her with more than the inevitable amount of admiration and compliment which a man must give to a beautiful girl. But Rosamond had registered every look and word, and estimated them as the opening incidents of a preconceived romance — incidents which gather value from the foreseen development and climax. In Rosamond’s romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world; of course, he had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome; but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on the Middlemarchers.
20 What interests Rosamond most about Lydgate?
   A  his money
   B  his profession
   C  his social status
   D  his personal attractiveness

21 Lydgate imagines that his future wife will be
   A  passionate and desirable.
   B  able to share his interests.
   C  intelligent and challenging.
   D  admirable but undemanding.

22 In what sense does Lydgate feel ‘safe’ (line 8) about Miss Vincy?
   A  He is sure he will never fall in love again.
   B  He feels that women like her are not attractive to him.
   C  He feels confident that she would not make him lose control over his feelings.
   D  He thinks that he has at last found someone who will provide him with love and security.

23 Which one of the following best describes Lydgate’s motivation in his work?
   A  intellectual curiosity, ambition and altruism
   B  a fanatical obsession with fever research
   C  the need to establish himself financially
   D  a desire for status to impress Rosamond

24 Later in the novel Lydgate and Rosamond marry, and their marriage is a disaster.
What emerges most strongly from the passage to foreshadow difficulties in the marriage?
   A  The attraction between them is only physical.
   B  Neither appreciates the strengths of the other.
   C  Neither has given much thought to the future.
   D  Neither has any sense of the other’s inward life.
UNIT 8

Questions 25 – 31

The poems in this unit are on the subject of war.

Break of Day in the Trenches

The darkness crumbles away —
It is the same old druid Time as ever
Only a live thing leaps my hand —
A queer sardonic rat —
As I pull the parapet’s poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German —
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver — what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man’s veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe,
Just a little white with the dust.

Isaac Rosenberg

25 Consider lines 7 to 15. In the context of the whole poem, these lines primarily convey

A an angry assertion that both the enemy and the rat should be shot.
B a wry observation that the rat has a freedom denied to the fighting man.
C condemnation of the ‘haughty athletes’ being forced to fight in rat-infested trenches.
D underlying confidence that in this war German and English forces are evenly matched.

26 ‘In these lines the tone becomes more directly emotional and personal than elsewhere in the poem.’

To which part of the poem does this critical comment best apply?

A lines 3–6
B lines 7–14
C lines 19–22
D lines 23–26
27 The images of the poppy and the rat in this poem are best described as

A portraying the irony of man’s position in war.
B distracting attention away from the agony of war.
C symbolising the way all forms of life are equally threatened by war.
D dramatising parts of the war scene removed from the location of this battle.

28 In the poem as a whole, the poet places the emphasis on

A suggesting the strange conditions under which life continues in war.
B making explicit his sense of serenity despite the shattering experience of war.
C expressing his own sense of remoteness from nature as life is destroyed around him.
D presenting a description of the landscape in order to suggest the shattering experience of war.

Question 29 relates to the following poem.

Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo
Shovel them under and let me work —
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun
Shovel them under and let me work.

Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

Carl Sandburg

Note: The places mentioned in the poem were sites of battles involving a great loss of life.

29 Which one of the following best describes the tone of the poem?

A sympathetic, with a note of nostalgia
B bitter, with a note of derision
C compassionate, yet irritated
D contemptuous, yet humble
Questions 30 and 31 involve comparisons of the poems.

30 An important similarity between the two poems is that both poets

A present man at war as beyond redemption.
B stress that the real suffering in war is not found on the battlefield.
C accept war itself as unavoidable although it involves irretrievable losses.
D comment about war without considering the issue of which side is in the right.

31 Which one of the following indicates a significant similarity between the activity of the rat and of the grass, as presented in the first and second poems respectively?

A Their activity, though detached from man, is presented as continuing in the proximity of the war scene.
B Their activity is impulsive and random, reflecting the disruption of the countryside.
C Their activity suggests that they identify with and share in man’s suffering.
D Their activity indicates that they support man’s actions and presence.
UNIT 9

Questions 32 – 35

The following passage describes the experiences of a man who has undergone surgery that has given him vision after a lifetime of blindness.

One man when shown an orange a week after beginning to see, said that it was gold. When asked, ‘What shape is it?’ he said, ‘Let me touch it and I will tell you!’ After doing so, he said that it was an orange. Then he looked long at it and said, ‘Yes, I can see that it is round.’ Shown next a blue square, he said it was blue and round. A triangle he also described as round. When the angles were pointed out to him he said, ‘Ah. Yes, I understand now, one can see how they feel.’ For many weeks and months after beginning to see, the person can only with great difficulty distinguish between the simplest shapes, such as a triangle and a square. If you ask him how he does it, he may say, ‘Of course if I look carefully I see that there are three sharp turns at the edge of one patch of light, and four on the other.’ But he may add peevishly, ‘What on earth do you mean by saying that it would be useful to know this? The difference is only very slight and it takes me a long time to work it out. I can do much better with my fingers.’ And if you show him the two shapes the next day he will be quite unable to say which is a triangle and a square.

32 One week after beginning to see, the man
A related shape directly to visual images.
B formed visual impressions of shape indirectly.
C spontaneously reduced his dependence on his sense of touch.
D was developing a visual appreciation of shape through association with colour.

33 The man’s mistake about the square (lines 3 and 4) suggests that
A his eyesight was still impaired.
B he could not make full use of visual clues.
C the idea of shape was meaningless for him.
D colour makes shape perception more difficult.

34 The passage suggests that the man refers to the shapes as ‘one patch of light’ (line 8) because
A he does not know the names of shapes.
B he does not associate visual images with shapes.
C he wants to be precise in order to make his reasoning clear.
D he wants to choose wording which will convey the difficulty of his task.

35 The passage presents shape perception as generally dependent on
A experience.
B keen eyesight.
C inherited skills.
D colour perception.
## ANSWERS

| Unit 1: El Nino | 1 | D |
|                | 2 | D |
|                | 3 | B |
|                | 4 | D |
|                | 5 | C |
| Unit 2: Statements | 6 | A |
| Unit 3: Compulsory Education | 7 | B |
|                | 8 | A |
|                | 9 | C |
| Unit 4: Car Pool | 10 | D |
|                | 11 | C |
| Unit 5: Photography | 12 | D |
|                | 13 | B |
|                | 14 | C |
| Unit 6: The Great Gatsby | 15 | D |
|                | 16 | A |
|                | 17 | C |
|                | 18 | B |
|                | 19 | C |
| Unit 7: Middlemarch | 20 | C |
|                | 21 | D |
|                | 22 | C |
|                | 23 | A |
|                | 24 | D |
| Unit 8: War Poems | 25 | B |
|                | 26 | C |
|                | 27 | A |
|                | 28 | A |
|                | 29 | B |
|                | 30 | D |
|                | 31 | A |
| Unit 9: Lifetime of Blindness | 32 | B |
|                | 33 | B |
|                | 34 | B |
|                | 35 | A |
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