

Sub-topic: Use of assessment in decision making

The Importance of Obligating General Studies Subject in Malaysia Higher School Certificate (STPM) to Inculcate Nationhood Knowledge, Skills, and Values Amongst Pre-universities Students in Malaysia

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Introduction

National Philosophy of Education is a policy to all education systems in Malaysia in which it means all educational activities in Malaysia, whether they are at the pre, primary or secondary schools, pre-university, or even university levels; all of them should be in accordance with the National Philosophy of Education.

“Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort to develop the full potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a belief in and devotion to God. Such efforts are designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being in addition to being able to contribute to the improvement of the family, society, and the nation at large”.

Contents of the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) syllabi conducted by Malaysian Examinations Council offered at the sixth form education are also in accordance with the NPE, in order to ensure that a holistic education system can further enhance the sixth form students' ability.

Malaysian Examinations Council

The Malaysian Examinations Council, which was established on 1 February 1980 under the Malaysian Examinations Council Act (Act 225), is a statutory body which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Malaysian Examinations Council is tasked to conduct specified examinations and all other matters necessary or related to such examinations namely the Malaysia Higher School Certificate (STPM), Malaysian University English Test (MUET), and Test of Malay Language Competency for Foreign Citizens.

Malaysian Examinations Council is managed by the Board of Administrators that is known as the 'council'. Based on its act of establishment, the council comprises of the following members: all Vice-Chancellors of public universities, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Director General of Education, Director of Examinations, Examination Syndicate, Five members appointed by His Majesty, The King and Chief Executive of Malaysian Examinations Council.

STPM certificate is one of the medium for pre-university students to further their studies at the tertiary level in local public universities or even abroad. This certificate is equivalent to an A-Level exam administered by Cambridge Assessment International Education, United

Kingdom. This recognition has been given by Cambridge Assessment International Education, United Kingdom since 1982. The recognition given by Cambridge Assessment International Education, United Kingdom to the STPM certificate is shown at the back of the STPM certificate with the following statements:

“Cambridge Assessment International Education, England has advised the Malaysian Examination Council on standard since 1982. The minimum standard to obtain a full pass in a subject in the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) examination is broadly equivalent to the standard for a pass at Gred E in the corresponding subject in the GCE Advanced Level examination conducted by CAIE. A partial pass in a subject in the STPM examination is broadly equivalent to a Gred C pass at GCE Ordinary Level IGCSE conducted by CAIE”.

General Studies Examination Syllabus for STPM and how it is being used as a decision-making tool by the Malaysian Examination Council?

General Studies is a subject that has been made compulsory for all STPM candidates. STPM is a certificate open to all Malaysians and General Studies is the core across all other subjects. This subject will also be used as a basis for analysing the overall achievements of candidates in STPM regardless of science or humanity streams. In addition, this subject is also intended to produce fully-developed pre-university students, a united community, a knowledgeable human capital, skilled workforce, and contribute to national development as a whole.

The contents of General Studies Examinations Syllabus integrate various areas of knowledge, skills, and values into the lifelong learning process. This subject covers topics, such as nationality, law, judiciary, national governance structure, history, geography, economics, politics, social and cultural, security, religion, technology and so forth. In terms of skills, this subject emphasises critical thinking, creative, and innovative thinking skills, capabilities of carrying out scientific research, and utilisation of various forms of communications in STPM candidates' learning and daily lives.

The contents of this subject for Semester One (900/1) that should be studied by the STPM candidates in Topic 1: Learning Skills deal with information seeking skills, questioning skills, analysing skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and effective communication skills. In Topic 2: Malaysia's Sovereignty, STPM General Studies candidates will learn about country's sovereignty, Federal Constitutions, Governance, and Malaysia sovereignty.

In Semester Two, STPM General Studies 2 (900/2) students will focus on Topic 3: Transferring Forms of Communication, which entails them to transfer data or information to non-linear forms. Under Topic 4: Developed and Prosper Malaysia, which includes Indicators of developed and prosperity, Ideology, vision, and national development policies, and challenges and solutions. Topic 5: Coursework, STPM General Studies 4 (900/4) candidates will apply their study skills to produce a genuine and quality written assignment and then present it verbally in a meaningful.

In Semester Three, STPM General Studies (900/3) candidates will study Topic 6: Interpreting Communication, which is to transfer non-linear to linear information. For example, candidates will interpret data or tables, make calculations, and make assumptions about the data or tables provided. For Topic 7: Malaysia and Foreign Affairs the subtopics cover the aspects of diplomatic relations, involvements, roles, and Malaysia contributions, issues, and challenges.

STPM General Studies assessment schemes

With regards to its assessment scheme, a written test is used to measure the learning outcomes for 900/1 in Semester One in which it comprises three main parts namely Part A, Part B and Part C. In Part A, 15 multiple choice questions are given and candidates are required to attempt all questions. This section carries 15 marks. In Part B, four structured questions are given and candidates are required to attempt all questions. This section also carries 15 marks. Meanwhile, in Part C, three essay questions will be given and candidates are only to choose only two out of the three questions in their attempts. This section carries 50 marks, 25 marks for each essay chosen. The total overall marks for this test is 80% (29% weightage) and 2 hours are allocated for the candidates to sit for this test centrally.

In Semester Two, a written test format is used to measure the learning outcomes learned in this semester which is 900/2. This test consists of three main parts namely Part A, Part B, and Part C. In Part A, four structured questions with a total of 15 marks are given and candidates are required to attempt all questions whilst in Part B, candidates are required to attempt one out of the two transferring forms of communication questions which carries 20 marks. In Part C, two essay questions are given and candidates are required to attempt only one which carries 25 marks. As a whole, 60 marks is allocated for this semester with a weightage of 22% and 1 hour and 30 minutes is allocated for the candidates to attempt this paper which is conducted centrally at exam centres across the country.

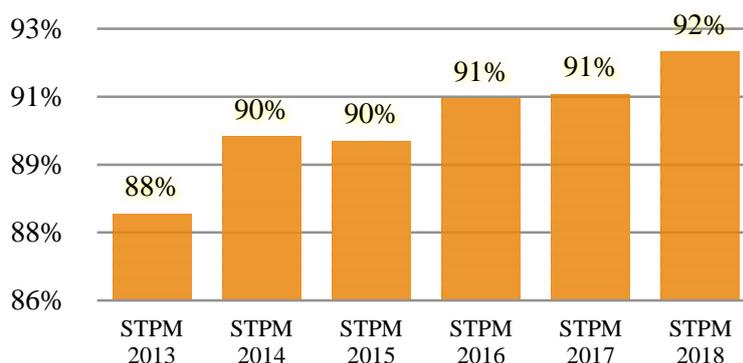
General Studies coursework is also conducted in Semester Two whereby candidates are required to produce a task based on a theme from the two themes given by the Malaysian Examinations Council. The themes given by the Malaysian Examinations Council are based on the topics stipulated in the syllabus. 55 marks with 20% weightage is allocated and it is implemented throughout Semester Two. For the government and government-aided schools, the assessment of the coursework will be carried out by the subject teachers while for private candidates, the assessment of the coursework will be carried out by the examiners appointed by the Malaysian Examinations Council.

In Semester Three, a written test format is also used to measure the learning outcomes learned throughout this semester which is 900/3. The test consists of three parts; Part A, Part B, and Part C. In Part A, 15 multiple choice questions will be given and candidates are required to attempt all questions. This section carries 15 marks. In Part B, two transferring forms of communication are given and candidates may choose to attempt only one which carries 15 marks. In Part C, candidates are required to attempt two out of the three essay questions given. This section carries 50 marks. As a whole, 80 marks with a weightage of 29% and 2 hours are allocated for this paper respectively.

In determining the overall candidates' grades for the General Studies subject, the Malaysian Examinations Council will add the marks obtained by the candidates for each semester.

The candidate's mastery of the knowledge objectives, skills, and values in the General Studies Exam Syllabus can be measured through candidate's achievement in the subject. The achievement of full-pass candidates (obtained grades C and above) from 2013 to 2017 has been consistently increased. This can be illustrated in the following graph: This shows that STPM students are increasingly mastering the knowledge, skills, and values that the subject is trying to apply.

**Full-Pass Achievement in 2013 to 2018
STPM General Studies Subject**



Source: *STPM Announcement (2013 – 2018),
Malaysian Examinations Council*

Perspectives of selected undergraduates at Malaysian Public Universities on General Studies paper in terms of nationhood, skills, and values

A study has been conducted on selected undergraduates from several public universities in Malaysia. The selected undergraduates were those who underwent the STPM system. The objective of the study is to identify whether knowledge in nationhood, skills and values incorporated in STPM can contribute to maturity, study skills and patriotism. The approaches used in this study were both quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys and open-ended questions were used as the research instruments.

For item analysis, Linacare (1994) suggested that a sample size of 50 is sufficient for Rash Model Measurement. DeMars (2010) opined that many studies, however, used between 100 to 200 samples to increase the confidence level of the research. According to Krejcie and Morgan's calculation (1970), in order for this study to achieve a 95% confidence level, the sample size must have at least 380 respondents. Hence, this study employed 501 respondents. Random sampling was used as the sampling method. The table below indicates the samples according to universities and gender.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Universities</i>	<i>Sample (n)</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
1	National Defence University of Malaysia	24	66	90
2	MARA University of Technology	92	70	162
3	National University of Malaysia	56	64	123
4	University Putra Malaysia	18	18	36
5	University of Malaya	6	12	18
6	International Islamic University of Malaysia	50	22	72
Total		249	252	501

From the analysis, the findings indicate that the STPM General Studies paper has increased the respondents' knowledge of nationhood. This is because 80% of the respondents believe that knowledge of nationhood is important in order for Malaysia to achieve Vision 2020, which is Malaysia's aspiration to become a developed country. 79.8% of the respondents believe that unity is important to stabilise the country. Besides, 79.8% of the respondents feel that they are proud to be Malaysians while 81.8% of the respondents believe that Malaysia needs their contribution to become a more harmonious country in the future.

In terms of skills, 80.8% of the respondents agree that transferring of information questions in STPM General Studies paper are still relevant in the future. This type of question requires students to analyse data, interpret information and produce appropriate graphs in accordance with the input given. 79.8% of the respondents agree that the STPM General Studies paper has successfully helped them to be more confident in studying at higher education institutions and conducting research. 81.4% of the respondents agree that the STPM General studies paper can also help in their intrapersonal skills.

For statements relating to patriotism and sacrifices for the country, 80.8% of the respondents agree with the statement. Besides, 80.4% of the respondents agree that in order to be good citizens, they need to believe in the teachings of religions. 79.5% of the respondents are confident that values and ethics are important for Malaysia to become a developed country. 81.8% of the respondents state that they are willing to contribute to the development of religion, race and nation.

Discussion and conclusion

The Malaysian Examinations Council policy dictates that the STPM General Studies is a compulsory subject for all sixth form students. This is because it is believed that this subject can contribute to the human capital development in Malaysia, especially in terms of racial integration and patriotism. In addition, this policy has contributed to producing more matured and knowledgeable undergraduates, skilled workers, and more harmonious societies. These aspects are crucial for the country's development.

Besides, more matured students with knowledge are produced through this subject. Moreover, the students can become better citizens who can contribute to self-development, race, religion, and the environment. In addition, through the coursework, interpersonal skills

can be developed such as teamwork, communicative ability, time management, and many more. Analytic skills can also help the students at the university level.

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