

## MANIPAL UNIVERSITY

## FIRST SEMESTER M.A. (FM) DEGREE EXAMINATION – NOVEMBER 2017

## SUBJECT: MAFD 503 – PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Monday, November 13, 2017

Time: 10:00 – 13:00 Hrs.

Max. Marks: 50

✍ Answer All Questions.

1. Reading and Comprehension:

Read the following passage and answer the questions given at the end:

The deserts, which already occupy approximately a fourth of the Earth's land surface, have in recent decades been increasing at an alarming pace. The expansion of desert like conditions into areas where they did not previously exist is called desertification. It has been estimated that an additional one-fourth of the Earth's land surface is threatened by this process.

Desertification is accomplished primarily through the loss of stabilizing natural vegetation and the subsequent accelerated erosion of the soil by wind and water. In some cases the loose soil is blown completely away, leaving a stony surface. In other cases, the finer particles may be removed, while the sand-sized particles are accumulated to form mobile hills or ridges of sand.

Even in the areas that retain a soil cover, the reduction of vegetation typically results in the loss of the soil's ability to absorb substantial quantities of water. The impact of raindrops on the loose soil tends to transfer fine clay particles into the tiniest soil spaces, sealing them and producing a surface that allows very little water penetration. Water absorption is greatly reduced; consequently runoff is increased, diminished ability to absorb water results in the further loss of vegetation, so that a cycle of progressive surface deterioration is established.

In some regions, the increase in desert areas is occurring largely as the result of a trend toward drier climactic conditions. Continued gradual global warming has produced an increase in aridity for some areas over the past few thousand years. The process may be accelerated in subsequent decades if global warming resulting from air pollution seriously increases.

There is little doubt, however, that desertification in most areas results primarily from human activities rather than natural processes. The semiarid lands bordering the deserts exist in a delicate ecological balance and are limited in their potential to adjust to increased environmental pressures. Expanding populations are subjecting the land to increasing pressures to provide them with food and fuel. In wet periods, the land may be able to respond to these stresses. During the dry periods that are common phenomena along the desert

margins, though, the pressure on the land is often far in excess of its diminished capacity, and desertification results.

Four specific activities have been identified as major contributors to the desertification process: over cultivation, overgrazing, firewood gathering, and overirrigation. The cultivation of crops has expanded into progressively drier regions as population densities have grown. These regions are especially likely to have periods of severe dryness, so that crop failures are common. Since the raising of most crops necessitates the prior removal of the natural vegetation, crop failures leave extensive tracts of land devoid of a plant cover and susceptible to wind and water erosion.

The raising of livestock is a major economic activity in semiarid lands, where grasses are generally the dominant type of natural vegetation. The consequences of an excessive number of livestock grazing on an area are the reduction of the vegetation cover and the trampling and pulverization of the soil. This is usually followed by the drying of the soil and accelerated erosion.

Firewood is the chief fuel used for cooking and heating in many countries. The increased pressures of expanding populations have led to the removal of woody plants so that many cities and towns are surrounded by large areas completely lacking trees and shrubs. The increasing use of dried animal waster as a substitute fuel has also hurt the soil because this valuable soil conditioner and source of plant nutrients is no longer being returned to the land.

The final major human cause of desertification is soil salinization resulting from overirrigation. Excess water from irrigation sinks down into the water table. If no drainage system exists, the water table rises, bringing dissolved salts to the surface. The water evaporates and the salts are left behind, creating a white crustal layer that prevents air and water from reaching the underlying soil.

The extreme seriousness of desertification results from the vast areas of land and the tremendous numbers of people affected, as well as from the great difficulty of reversing or even slowing the process. Once the soil has been removed by erosion, only the passage of centuries or millennia will enable new soil to form. In areas where considerable soil still remains, though, a rigorously enforced program of land protection and cover-crop planting may make it possible to reverse the present deterioration of the surface.

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### Questions:

1A. The word 'threatened' in the passage is closest to

- i) Restricted      ii) Endangered      iii) Prevented      iv) Rejected



- 1B. According to the passage, the loss of natural vegetation has which of the following consequences for soil?
- i) Increased stony content
  - ii) Reduced water absorption
  - iii) Increased numbers of spaces in the soil
  - iv) Reduced water runoff
- 1C. The word “delicate” in the passage is closest in meaning to:
- i) Fragile
  - ii) Predictable
  - iii) Complex
  - iv) Valuable
- 1D. According to the passage, in dry periods, border areas have difficulty
- i) Adjusting to stresses created by settlement
  - ii) Retaining their fertility after desertification
  - iii) Providing water for irrigating crops
  - iv) Attracting populations in search of food and fuel
- 1E. The word “progressively” in the passage is closest in meaning to:
- i) Openly
  - ii) Impressively
  - iii) Objectively
  - iv) Increasingly
- 1F. According to the passage, which of the following is often associated with raising crops?
- i) Lack of proper irrigation techniques
  - ii) Failure to plant crops suited to the particular area
  - iii) Removal of the original vegetation
  - iv) Excessive use of dried animal waste
- 1G. The phrase “devoid of” in the passage is closest in meaning to
- i) Consisting of
  - ii) Hidden by
  - iii) Except for
  - iv) Lacking in
- 1H. According to the passage, the ground absorption of excess water is a factor in desertification because it can
- i) Interfere with the irrigation of land
  - ii) Limit the evaporation of water
  - iii) Require more absorption of air by the soil
  - iv) Bring salts to the surface
- 1I. All of the following are mentioned in the passage as contributing to desertification except
- i) Soil erosion
  - ii) Global warming
  - iii) Insufficient irrigation
  - iv) The raising of livestock
- 1J. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage?
- The extreme seriousness of desertification results from the vast areas of land and the tremendous numbers of people affected, as well as from the great difficulty of reversing or even slowing the process.
- i) desertification is a significant problem because it is so hard to reverse and affects large areas of land and great number of people
  - ii) Slowing down the process of desertification is difficult because of population growth that has spread over large areas of land

- iii) The spread of deserts is considered a very serious problem that can be solved only if large number of people in various countries are involved in the effort
- iv) Desertification is extremely hard to reverse unless the population is reduced in the vast areas affected

( $\frac{1}{2}$  mark  $\times$  10 = 5 marks)

2. **Interpretation:**

**Identify the tone and voice of the speaker in the following poem.**

Theme for English B

Langston Hughes

The instructor said,

*Go home and write*

*a page tonight.*

*And let that page come out of you –*

*Then it will be true.*

I wonder if it is that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.

I went to school there, then Durham, then here

To this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored in my class.

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,

through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,

Eight Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,

the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator

up to my room, sit down and write this page.

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me

at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I am what

I feel and see and hear. Harlem, I hear you:

hear you, hear me – we two – you, me, talk on this page.

(I hear New York, too) Me – who?

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.

I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.

I like a pipe for a Christmas present,

or records – Bessie, bop, or Bach.

I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like

The same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?

Being me, it will not be white.

But it will be  
a part of you, instructor.  
You are white –  
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.  
That's American.  
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.  
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.  
But we are, that's true!  
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me –  
although you are older – and white –  
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

(2½ marks × 2 = 5 marks)

3. **Read the following speech and**

3A. Write a summary of it

3B. Write a response to it

Banmali Agrawala, President & CEO, GE South Asia  
Convocation Address at Manipal Institute of Technology  
November 2014

My teacher, Prof KJ Kamath, who is present here with us today, Hon'ble Chancellor Dr. Pai, Pro Chancellor Dr. Ballal, Vice Chancellor Dr. K Ramnarayan, dignitaries, parents and dear students!

At the outset let me start by first congratulating the outgoing class of 2014 for your remarkable achievement in graduating from this phenomenal institution that is the Manipal Institute of Technology. When I got a call from Registrar Prabhu, the first thing that crossed my mind was a call from Manipal? Did I do something wrong in my last year of college? Are they going to take back my degree? But then soon I came to my senses and realized that it's been thirty years since I passed out and I could not have done something so wrong to be called back for punishment after three decades!

Registrar Prabhu then asked me if I could speak at the forthcoming Convocation.

I was overwhelmed with a number of mixed emotions. Overwhelmed because there can be nothing more rewarding than one's alma mater appreciating what one has done in life. I mean it's the same place where one has also done a lot of mischief! I felt like a child basking in the warmth of a parent's approval. Mixed emotions because while I was delighted with the invite, I also felt guilty that I had not visited Manipal after I had passed out. I had taken my learnings at MIT for granted. This is indeed something I will certainly correct in the years to come.

Dear Friends, MIT of today is a lot different than what it was 34 years ago, when I had entered college. I joined MIT in 1980 and yes to be honest, I had failed to clear the other so



called blue chip engineering colleges – a fact which at that time had disappointed me but today makes me deeply grateful. I came from a very well educated family and both my parents were distinguished Professors of Law at the Poona University. My father was educated at Harvard and my mother at Yale. Being the only child and to prevent me from getting spoilt, I was dispatched to the boarding school at the Scindia School Gwalior. I could stay there for just two years – in class 3 and 4 – before returning to the comforts of home. I joined Loyola High School, a Jesuit school, in Poona and was a fairly good student, consistently ranking among the first five throughout my schooling years (yes, we did have ranking in school in those days!). For some strange reason, I lost focus on studies in class 11 and 12 and did not secure adequate marks to get admission into a desired college. My inability to succeed in an entrance exam was further magnified given the fact that my parents were successful and well-known academicians.

So, Finally I started my life in Manipal, somewhat dejected and hurt. I found it difficult to cope with some subjects in my first semester and could not clear Metallurgy. But I did make some great friends who are with me – even today. They bucked me up and I soon started to enjoy what I was studying. Even thirty years ago, the one thing that MIT was known for was its practical approach towards engineering. I studied Mechanical Engineering and Professor Karanth ran the Mechanical workshop like a temple. I enjoyed doing things with my hands and my understanding of engineering became a lot more real in the workshop. The Mechanical workshop was one of my favourite places. In one of the later semesters, in a class on Operations Research, I asked a question of Professor KJ Kamath. He found the question to be so brilliant that he went on to acknowledge that as the most intelligent point that any student had ever made in his class. I'm not sure if the question was really that smart but Professor Kamath's encouragement did a lot for my confidence. Prof Kamath had pushed the right button in me to get me going. During my stay at MIT, I got selected in the Hockey team, won a few singing competitions and even became the President of the Rajdhani club. I graduated with a distinction which was in fact, an average of the last four semesters back then. My experience in running a Club was my first lesson in leadership. In short, I finished college on a rather good note.

My first job was as an engineer trainee at Bajaj Auto and I must have been one of the few interns who was very comfortable working on machines and doing things with his own hands. Professor Karanth had trained me well. My hands-on approach helped me endear myself to the workers on the shop floor. I was off to a good start. I subsequently worked in organisations like Tatas in India and multinational corporations like Wartsila and General Electric. I lived abroad in Finland working for Wartsila for over five years. Slowly but surely, I grew in confidence and overcame my mental block of being a "disappointment". Along the way I was fortunate to have found my life partner and friend who made huge sacrifices to help me succeed and tolerated all my idiosyncrasies.

As I look back, I take a lot of pride in the fact that I learnt from my mistakes and it is this alma mater that gave me the confidence and ability to do so. Life has turned a full circle for me and here I am standing at the altar of the same alma mater, thirty four years later,



transformed from a so-called failure, to a so-called successful officer of the world's largest infrastructure company.

As I look ahead, I see a very bright future for all of you. The MIT of today is a much sought after institution and the environment is brilliantly conducive for high quality learning. It is also an environment which could make you complacent or perhaps, even arrogant. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to share the learnings of my life with you and as a fellow MITian I seek your indulgence in hearing me out.

I wish to make five points.

First: No human being can be branded a failure or a success. It was wrong on my part to have thought of myself as a failure thirty four years ago. It would be equally wrong for me to think of myself as a success today. The circumstances around us keep changing and if anyone believes they can control their destiny to guarantee success, they are mistaken. We have seen many "successful" people fall from grace and many "failures" recognized as successes, later on in their lives. It is impossible to live life without failing at something. Unless of course, you live so cautiously that you might as well have not lived at all. And in that case you have certainly failed! In the words of Churchill, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, and it is the courage to continue that counts".

Second: More important than your degree is your Attitude. It is tempting to believe that after four years of engineering and with a degree, you know it all. Far from it. This degree is only an entry pass into the real world. You now know the various terms that are used in real world to communicate but your true learning will only begin now – as you graduate. What matters in the real world is not how well you have learnt the jargon but your Attitude. Are you curious to learn more? Can you get along with other people? What are you passionate about? Are you humble enough to understand that there will always be something that you don't know? Do you want to make a difference? And so on...

Skills and knowledge can be acquired but Attitude is something that is difficult to change as age catches on. Whenever I recruit people, academic qualification, is perhaps the last thing I look for. I look for passion, humility and the curiosity to learn. Once, while making the selection for the Tata Administrative Service, there was this girl from Jammu, who had graduated from a small college near Jammu, with modest scores. Her English was not exactly Queen's English but we could understand her well enough. Her passion, however, to do something for the people of her State, and her pride was electrifying. Our panel of three senior Tata Directors immediately decided to take her into the TAS programme, selecting her over many others with perfect scores from famous institutions. Bottom-line is, it is choice and not chance that determines your destiny. A positive attitude is the most important thing in life and will always carry the day.

Third: Don't take your loved ones for granted.

In pursuit of our personal ambitions, we usually take our loved ones for granted. Soon after I got married, we moved to Jamshedhpur because I got a good career opportunity. While there, I had to send my wife, who was expecting our first child, to her parents' place because there was some disturbance in town. I however, decided to stay on in Jamshedhpur because I put my job before my wife.



We soon moved to Finland which is a bitingly cold place. Our son was born in Finland. I spent more than 200 days in a year travelling, leaving my wife behind to fend with two young children. Once again I put my career ahead of family. I did well professionally but only because my wife decided to sacrifice her present for my future. As you step into the real world and pursue your ambitions, I urge you to constantly remind yourself that there is someone out there who is giving up his or her today for your tomorrow. If nothing else, at least acknowledge that sacrifice and always remember it.

Fourth: Technology can solve many of the world's challenges.

You are graduating from the Manipal Institute Of Technology. The key word here is Technology. But technology has to have a purpose. The world today has about 8 billion people. It is said that global population will stabilize at around 11 billion. More than three fourths of the current global population does not have even basic amenities like clean drinking water, basic health care or electricity. We all know that the Earth has limited resources and our demands on those resources are constantly increasing. The only way to meet our ever increasing needs and with limited resources, is to leverage technology.

Consider these facts; more poverty has been reduced in the last fifty years than in the previous five hundred years and most of that has happened in the last twenty years. Your cell phone has more computing power than the Apollo space capsule. LED lights consume almost 70% less power than conventional bulbs. Cost of solar power in India has dropped by 40% over the last three years. The internet has revolutionised communication by making it affordable and faster at the same time. This festival season we found shopping malls relatively empty because people are buying online, etc. Technology has not only made our daily lives easier and more affordable but it has also altered our social behaviour.

You and I my friends, have an obligation to use our knowledge of Technology to improve the world and even more so, in our part of the world, where poverty is still so rampant. Remember, you have the power to make a difference so use that power well.

Fifth: You can never achieve success till you like what you are doing.

While you go about building your future, remember that you need to accomplish something before you demand respect. In order to accomplish something, you will need to focus on depth before breadth, take personal risk on what you believe in and live with integrity.

Dear friends, as you step out to face the world, carry your education with pride but humility, be confident but not arrogant, be grateful to your loved ones, remember their contributions in your growth and above all – have fun. The world will become a much nicer and more joyful place as you continue your climb. May you make many friends and may you meet them all at the top.

Let me finish with a small Irish prayer for you.

May The Road Rise Up To Meet You

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields



and until we meet again,  
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Thank you for listening and once again wish you all the best!

(5 marks  $\times$  2 = 10 marks)

4. What is the importance of Human Communication and what are the barriers to communication?  
(10 marks)
5. Define "Argument". What are the parts of an argument and what are its purposes?  
(10 marks)
6. What are the elements of communication?  
(5 marks)
7. Read the following essay and attempt any ONE of the following forms of response: Analytical, Argumentative, Personal essay  
"Right to Die"

## *The Right to Die*

The world of religion and philosophy was shocked recently when Henry P. Van Dusen and his wife ended their lives by their own hands. Dr. Van Dusen had been president of Union Theological Seminary; for more than a quarter-century he had been one of the luminous names in Protestant theology. He enjoyed world status as a spiritual leader. News of the self-inflicted death of the Van Dusens, therefore, was profoundly disturbing to all those who attach a moral stigma to suicide and regard it as a violation of God's laws.

Dr. Van Dusen had anticipated this reaction. He and his wife left behind a letter that may have historic significance. It was very brief, but the essential point it made is now being widely discussed by theologians and could represent the beginning of a reconsideration of traditional religious attitudes toward self-inflicted death. The letter raised a moral issue: does an individual have the obligation to go on living even when the beauty and meaning and power of life are gone?

Henry and Elizabeth Van Dusen had lived full lives. In recent years, they had become increasingly ill, requiring almost continual medical care. Their infirmities were worsening, and they realized they would soon become completely dependent for even the most elementary needs and functions. Under these circumstances, little dignity would have been left in life. They didn't like the idea of taking up space in a world with too many mouths and too little food. They believed it was a misuse of medical science to keep them technically alive.

They therefore believed they had the right to decide when to die. In making that decision, they weren't turning against life as the highest

value; what they were turning against was the notion that there were no circumstances under which life should be discontinued.

An important aspect of human uniqueness is the power of free will. In his books and lectures, Dr. Van Dusen frequently spoke about the exercise of this uniqueness. The fact that he used his free will to prevent life from becoming a caricature of itself was completely in character. In their letter, the Van Dusens sought to convince family and friends that they were not acting solely out of despair or pain.

The use of free will to put an end to one's life finds no sanction in the theology to which Pitney Van Dusen was committed. Suicide symbolizes discontinuity; religion symbolizes continuity, represented at its quintessence by the concept of the immortal soul. Human logic finds it almost impossible to come to terms with the concept of nonexistence. In religion, the human mind finds a larger dimension and is relieved of the ordeal of a confrontation with nonexistence.

Even without respect to religion, the idea of suicide has been abhorrent throughout history. Some societies have imposed severe penalties on the families of suicides in the hope that the individual who sees no reason to continue his existence may be deterred by the stigma his self-destruction would inflict on loved ones. Other societies have enacted laws prohibiting suicide on the grounds that it is murder. The enforcement of such laws, of course, has been an exercise in futility.

Customs and attitudes, like individuals themselves, are largely shaped by the surrounding environment. In today's world, life can be prolonged by science far beyond meaning or sensibility. Under these circumstances, individuals who feel they have nothing more to give to life, or to receive from it, need not be applauded, but they can be spared our condemnation.

The general reaction to suicide is bound to change as people come to understand that it may be a denial, not an assertion, of moral or religious ethics to allow life to be extended without regard to decency or pride. What moral or religious purpose is celebrated by the annihilation of the human spirit in the triumphant act of keeping the body alive? Why are so many people more readily appalled by an unnatural form of dying than by an unnatural form of living?

"Nowadays," the Van Dusens wrote in their last letter, "it is difficult to die. We feel that this way we are taking will become more usual and acceptable as the years pass.

"Of course, the thought of our children and our grandchildren makes us sad, but we still feel that this is the best way and the right way to go. We are both increasingly weak and unwell and who would want to die in a nursing home?



"We are not afraid to die. . . ."

12

Pitney Van Dusen was admired and respected in life. He can be admired and respected in death. "Suicide," said Goethe, "is an incident in human life which, however much disputed and discussed, demands the sympathy of every man, and in every age must be dealt with anew."

13

Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live. The unbearable tragedy is to live without dignity or sensitivity.

14

(5 marks  $\times$  1 = 5 marks)

