UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

DEPARTMENT OF ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

FIRST SEMESTER RESIT/ SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION, JULY, 2017

TITLE OF PAPER: ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)

COURSE CODE: ACS 111 / ACS 102

TIME ALLOWED: 2 (TWO) HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Write the name of your Faculty and Programme on the cover of your answer booklet.
2. Answer ALL questions.

TOTAL MARKS: 100

This examination paper contains 8 pages including the cover sheet.

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QUESTION 1: COMPREHENSION (50 Marks)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Live to 1000 Years

Oscar Wilde's creation found eternal youth; now science is reaching for the same goal. **Anjana Ahuja** asks how long our children will live.

1. In the past decade, the concept of not growing old has crept from the pages of fiction into the mission statements of some of the best research institutions in the world. The branding is different — they speak of "regenerative medicine" or "tissue engineering" or "biogerontology" rather than "the elixir of youth" — but the basic idea is the same: decrepitude is not inevitable; science will help us to stop the rot.

2. By the reckoning of some scientists, there is a real-life Dorian Gray among us. That person may not be a beautiful young man with a mysterious portrait in the attic: in Oscar Wilde's dark tale, which has also been made into the new film *Dorian Gray* starring Colin Firth, the portrait ages and withers in Dorian's stead, allowing him to remain perpetually handsome despite a life of debauchery. Rather, it is someone who, through a mixture of good genes, healthy lifestyle and timely medical interventions, will give every illusion of staying young throughout an extra ordinarily long life.

3. While in the developed world every succeeding generation has enjoyed a longer life expectancy than the one before it – thanks primarily to modern sanitation, nutrition disease control and a virtual end to infant mortality, which has stretched life expectancy from under 50 years to more than 75 in the past century – it is only this generation that has really dared to think of ageing as a **"disease"** that requires curing.

4. So while the middle aged of today can look forward to notching up about 80 or 90 years, some biologists have speculated that our children will routinely surpass the 120 year-mark with their faculties intact. And although a double century still seems optimistic, some, such as Professor Steve Austad, of the University of Texas, think that the first person destined to reach 150 years is already alive. Austad's optimism is based mostly on the incremental advances in life expectancy that accrue as society advances.

5. Ageing results from wear and tear on our cells; our bodies repair easily when young but their patching- up abilities become lacklustre as the years rack up. It is the relentless accumulation of cellular onslaughts that eventually overwhelms us, often in the form of age-related diseases such as cancers (which occur when faulty cells fail to self-destruct and gather to form tumours), arthritis and Alzheimer's. Sometimes death just happens; it is the white flag of old age, the point of ultimate biological surrender.

6. There are armies of researchers studying how to repair the onslaughts and eradicate diseases of old age. The John Hopkins University School of Medicine, Maryland, reported in June that liver tumours in mice virtually vanished when treated with genetic snippets called micro RNSs. "Since we were able to demonstrate such dramatic therapeutic benefit in this extremely aggressive model of human liver cancer, we are hopeful that similar strategies will be effective for patients with this disease", said Dr Joshua Mendlell, one of the astounded authors of the paper.

7. Drug companies are on the case, because aging afflicts everyone and makes every person a potential customer. Factor in the substantial number of billionaires who decide they don't want to die (such as John Sperling, the $3-billion education-for profit magnate who tried to buy the company that cloned Dolly the sheep) and you have a very competitive, fast-moving, well-funded research field with ready custom. Not all research is being done in academic and company labs; numerous organizations, such as the Maximum Life Foundation (mission statement: where biotech, info-tech and non-tech meet to reverse aging by 2029), are marshalling biologists, futurists and doctors in the quest to extend lifespan.

8. Some researchers believe that if senescence (the aging of an organism) can be reduced or even reversed, its end point – death – is no longer inevitable. The controversial British researcher Aubrey de Grey sees no reason why the human body cannot last 1000 years (barring accidents). He believes that such a modern-day Methuselah already walks among us. De Grey's vision is close to that of "trans-humanists", people who believe in using science to transcend the limitations of being human.

9. As de Grey puts it: "I claim that we are close to that point because of the SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) project to prevent and cure aging. It is not just an idea: it is a very detailed plan to repair all the types of molecular and cellular damage that happen to us over time – and each method to do this is either already working in a preliminary form (in clinical trials) or is based on technologies that already exist and just need to be combined." His argument is that anti-aging therapists will improve faster than we age, so that a young person today will be able to stave off aging almost indefinitely.

10. The real goal for anti-aging researchers would be to find the master mechanism in the body that controls aging. Some clues may come from the American teenager Brooke Greenberg, who is the nearest that science has to a real-life Dorian Gray. The 16 year old is the size of an 11 month old baby. She stopped growing in the conventional sense while still a baby, although some parts of her anatomy continued to mature, Brooke has baby teeth but bones of a 10 year old (in cellular age, not size). Her condition, named Syndrome X, is thought to be unique and possibly results from the absence of a master gene.

11. Without being sensational, I'd say that this is an opportunity for us to answer the question (of) why we are mortal or at least to test it," says Professor Richard Walker, a specialist from the University of South Florida, College of Medicine, who, along with geneticists and other developmental experts, is baffled by the cause of Greenberg's condition. "If we are wrong, we can discard it. But if we are right, we have the golden ring."

12. Brooke may be frozen in childhood but her inability to age normally has a price. She has suffered strokes, seizures and tumours, and has been close to death on several occasions. Her existence teaches us something that Wilde's Dorian quickly discovered, and that the scientists, trans-humanists and aging billionaires may yet encounter: be careful what you wish for.

Life Style, *Sunday Times*, September 27, 2009.

1. Suggest another title for this passage **(2 marks)**

2. According to the passage who is Dorian Gray?
   a. The writer
   b. Oscar Wilde
   c. Colin Firth
   d. None of the above **(2 marks)**

3. Drug companies have shown interest in anti-aging research because (2marks)
   a. Billionaires don't want to die
   b. There is a wide customer base
   c. Academic laboratories cannot do the research
   d. It is a competitive field **(2 marks)**

4. The writer believes that young people today can prevent aging.
   a. True
   b. False **(2 Marks)**

5. According to the passages person who will live to be 150 years already exists
   a. True
   b. False **(2 marks)**

6. Why has the writer put the "disease" (Par. 5) in inverted comas? (One sentence) **(3 marks)**

7. What does "that point" in Paragraph 9 refer to? **(3 marks)**

8. What do you think the example of Brook Greenberg (Par. 10) can teach people who desire to live a thousand years? **(4 marks)**

9. Choose any three of the following and explain, in one sentence for each person, their contribution to the debate on extending human life. **(3 x 4 = 12 marks)**
   a. Steve Austad
   b. Joshua Mendel
   c. John Sperling
   d. Aubrey de Grey
   e. Richard Walker

10. What do the following terms have in common?
    a. Regenerative medicine
    b. Tissue engineering
    c. Bio gerontology
    d. The elixir of youth **(3 marks)**

11. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following words / expressions as used in the passage.
    a. Decrepitude (Par. 1)
    b. Lacklustre (Par. 5)
    c. rack up (Par. 5)
    d. The point of ultimate biological surrender (Par. 5)
    e. Master gene (Par.10) **(3x 5 = 15 marks)**

Question 2: Summary (50 Marks)

Read the following passage and in not more than 200 words write a summary highlighting the problems of the one child policy then give the steps taken to solve the problem.

Note: Marks will be awarded for clarity of expression and orderly presentation of ideas. Do not copy sentences from the passage.

It's a Boy, What a Surprise

By Abbie-Kate Apsley, Preston Bond and Winegar Preston

As Americans, many of us take our unique and valuable freedoms for granted, including the opportunity to decide the size of our family. No government should be allowed to limit the choices of its citizens, especially when it comes to something as personal and universally important as family. China has been doing just that. It has been enforcing its own will on the country with its One-Child policy, taking the agency of the people in their personal family decisions. While there are many reasons for implementing this law, it does not compensate for the numerous problems and controversies that it has caused. The One-Child policy should be slowly weakened until, eventually, it is completely eliminated.

Introduced in 1979, the One-Child Policy was created to curb the population. Three years after the Chinese president, Mao's death, the Chinese government agreed that it would be a good idea to enforce the policy considering the population at the time had ballooned to the enormous number of 975 million. The policy was introduced initially to be a temporary law, but unfortunately, the fears of population growth convinced the government to continue the law to this day. Currently, the policy has been eased and some families, under certain specified circumstances, are now permitted to have two children. However, the issue of controlling the personal rights of the people is still at hand.

China's government boasts that they have averted over 400,000 births. However they neglect to mention the adverse effects of the policy. Due to the brutality of enforcement, 336 million children were aborted, 196 million women were surgically sterilized, and over 400 million others used other means of preventing child birth. Because of this, many lives have been lost and the suppression of the rights of mothers is overwhelming. Many government officials will coerce mothers into having an abortion because of quotas they must keep. The harsh alternative is job loss, fines, or even physical harm. In extreme cases, some mothers are even forced to abort. In 2012, mother Feng Jianmei was forced to abort in her seventh month of pregnancy (Chai). Though cases as egregious as these are not as common, they do happen and it needs to stop.

Not only has the One-Child Policy negatively affected mothers, but it has had an extensive effect on the overall population. A massive gender imbalance has occurred and may become irreversible. Currently there are 32 million more men than women under the age of twenty (Scutti). This imbalance was caused by the desire for male children over female. Family honour is very important in Chinese culture and the men carry on the family name. Since families were limited to one child, it meant having a girl was detrimental to the family name. Boys often also proved to be more helpful in household chores and caring for older family members. This lust for boys led to very devastating actions. "Gendercide," a made up term, describes the mass elimination of female babies so families could continue to attempt to have males. This traditional preference has caused parents to dispose of girls through gruesome methods such as abortion, abandonment and infanticide (Chai).

The One-Child policy is an obvious problem that needs to be solved. Fortunately, some attempts have already been made to relax the policy in past and current years. In 1984, it was made possible that some families could obtain permits for a second child. Qualifications differed from province to province and were very inconsistent. Parents were at the mercy of local officials who decided whether or not permits would be granted (Chai). They were based on different demographics and ultimately did not end up helping as much as it was hoped. Currently, the policy has been even further "relaxed."

Now parents with one child are allowed to have two children. Still, the policy is controlling and places unnecessary limits upon the rights and liberty that parents, especially mothers, should have.

This lingering problem has not yet been solved due to the fear of an immediate "baby boom" that will reverse the problem they have been trying to solve for over a quarter of a century. However, the easing of the policy recently has had no such effects. Birth rates have remained consistent and statistics suggest that they will remain that way for a number of years. Dissolving this policy would be the best solution for giving the personal rights back to the parents.

Adapted from: *kentonrwinegar.weebly.com/uploads/4/5/4/2/45427955/chinakidsk.doc* Retrieved on 10/10/2016