THE UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

DEPARTMENT OF ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION 2009/2010

TITLE OF PAPER:	ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS
COURSE CODE:	ACS1 (S)
TIME ALLOWED:	THREE (3) HOURS
INSTRUCTIONS:	**WRITE THE NAME OF YOUR FACULTY ON THE ANSWER SCRIPT** ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS
TOTAL MARKS:	100

This examination paper contains 9 pages including the cover sheet.

DO NOT OPEN UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR

QUESTION 1: Essay (30 marks)

Write at least a page, but not more than two pages, on ONE of the following topics.

1. Assume you are the Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs and you have been called upon to address the nation on preparations your ministry has made to attract tourists to the country during the World Cup soccer competition taking place in South Africa in 2010. Write an essay presenting your report.

2. A range of personal interests, personal choices and life experiences adds value to the educational mix. Describe how this mixture has helped you adjust to university life.

3. The following three positive developments have had great impact on human affairs, governance and international relations:

a. The release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the subsequent elimination of apartheid, and the first democratic elections in South Africa.

b. Granting South Africa the role of host for the FIFA Soccer World Cup for 2010, making it the first African country to host this event.

c. The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States in 2008.

What, in your opinion, has been the impact of ONE of these developments, both in its respective country and on international relations?

4. Write a comparative essay in which you analyze the advantages and disadvantages of some new form of technology with the form that preceded it – for example, cell phones versus land-line telephones or email versus letters sent through the post.

QUESTION 2: 30marks
Read the following passage 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 extraordinarily 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 lackluster 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 Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Maryland, reported in June that liver tumours in mice virtually vanished when treated with genetic snippets called microRNAs. "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 Mendell, one of the astounded authors of the paper.

7. Drug companies are on the case, because ageing 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 the research is being done in academic and company labs; numerous organizations, such as the Maximum Life Foundation (mission statement: where biotech, infotech and nanotech meet to reverse ageing by 2029), are marshalling biologists, futurists and doctors in their quest to extend lifespan.

8. Some researchers believe that if senescence (the ageing 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 for 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 "transhumanists", 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 (someone living to 1 000) because of the SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) project to prevent and cure ageing. It is not just an idea: it is a very detailed plan to repair all the types of molescular and cellular damage that happen to us over time – and each method to do this 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-ageing therapists will improve faster than we age, so that a young person today will be able to stave off ageing almost indefinitely.

10. The real goal for anti-ageing re-searchers would be to find the master mechanism in the body that controls ageing. 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 the bones of a 10 year old (in cellular age, not size). She cannot talk or swallow normal food: she is fed through a tube to her stomach. Her condition, named Syndrome X, is thought to be unique and possibly results from the absence of a master gene that regulates how the body grows, develops – and ages.

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 scientists, transhumanists and ageing billionaires may yet encounter: be careful what you wish for.

Life Style *Sunday Times* September 27, 2009.

Questions on the Passage, "Live for 1000 Years"

1. Suggest another title for this passage that summarizes the main idea of the text. (2 marks)

2. According to the passage, who is Dorian Gray? (2 marks)

a) the writer b) Oscar Wilde c) Colin Firth d) None of the above

3. Why has the writer put the term *"disease"* in inverted commas? (One sentence) (2 marks)

4. Choose any three of the following people and explain, in one sentence for each person, their contributions to the debate on extending human life. (3 x 3 = 9 marks)

a) Steve Austad b) Joshua Mendell c) John Sperling

d) Aubrey de Grey e) Richard Walker

5. What do you think the example of Brook Greenberg (paragraph 10) can teach people who desire to live a thousand years? (One sentence) (2 marks)

6. What do the following terms from the passage have in common? (3 marks)

a) regenerative medicine b) tissue engineering c) bio gerontology

d) the elixir of youth

7. Explain in your own words the meaning of each of the following words/expressions as used in the passage: (2 x 5 = 10 marks)

a) master gene (par. 10) b) decrepitude (par. 1) c) lackluster (par. 5)

d) the point of ultimate biological surrender (par. 5) e) rack up (par. 5)

QUESTION 3: Summary (20 marks)

Read the following passage and, in not more than 100 words, write a summary of the author's most important ideas and information.

November 20, 2009

The Wet Side of the Moon

By WILLIAM S. MARSHALL
Op-Ed Contributor

PICTURE a habitat atop a hill in warm sunlight on the edge of a crater near the south pole of the Moon. There are metal ores in the rocks nearby and ice in the shadows of the crater below. Solar arrays are set up on the regolith that covers the Moon's surface. Humans live in sealed, cave-like lava tubes, protected from solar flares and sustained by large surface greenhouses. Imagine the Moon as the first self-sustainable human settlement away from Earth and a high-speed transportation hub for the solar system.

We can finally begin to think seriously about establishing such a self-sufficient home on the Moon because last week, NASA announced that it had discovered large quantities of water there. While we have known for decades that the Moon had all the raw chemicals necessary for sustaining life, we believed they were trapped in rocks and thus difficult to extract. The discovery of plentiful lunar water is of tremendous importance to humanity and our long-term survival.

There have been 73 missions, manned and unmanned, to the Moon, and understanding its chemical composition, particularly finding water, has always been a priority. So why haven't we seen significant amounts of water until now?

The answer lies in the Moon's rotation. Unlike Earth, which rotates on a significant tilt to the Sun, the Moon is barely tilted at all. At the poles, some hills remain in permanent sunlight while some troughs are always in shadow. When water lands in sunny spots, perhaps carried by comets or asteroids, the water transforms directly into gas; if it lands in shadow, the water freezes and can remain indefinitely. The lack of light explains why spectrometers — instruments that can be used for remote water detection but rely on reflected light to do so — never picked up on the water.

This changed last month, when NASA shot a satellite into a permanently shadowed region on the Moon's surface, throwing a plume of material containing water up out of the shadow. From the perspective of human space exploration, that water is the most important scientific discovery since the '60s. We can drink it, grow food with it and breathe it — by separating the oxygen from the hydrogen through a process called electrolysis. These elements can even be used to fuel rocket engines. (Discovering water on Mars was not quite as significant because the major hurdle to establishing permanent settlements there is the eight-month journey.)

Creating a permanent lunar habitat is important primarily for our species' survival. Humanity needs more than one home because, with all our eggs in one basket, we are at risk of low-probability but high-consequence catastrophes like asteroid strikes, nuclear war or bioterrorism. But it would also lead to valuable technological and other advancements. Consider the side-effects of the Apollo program: it drove the development of small computers, doubled the number of doctoral students in science and math in about a decade and marked a new stage in relations between the Americans and Soviets.

Imagine what we could learn from living on the Moon permanently. On its far side, shielded from the Earth's radio noise, there is a quiet zone perfect for radio astronomy — which allows us to see objects we can't from Earth. Out of necessity we could develop bacteria to extract resources directly from the regolith — a useful technology for Earth as well. And an international venture could open a new era of global cooperation.

Almost as surprising as NASA's announcement is the lack of attention it has received. Thirty years ago, a development like this would have been heralded as one of humanity's greatest discoveries. Perhaps the indifference is partly because of the disappointment of astronomers, amateur and professional, who tried to watch NASA's October blast through their telescopes, but couldn't see the plume. Or perhaps it's a symptom of our age, that the problems that bedevil us on Earth limit our interest in other worlds — just when we need them (and the inspiration they offer) most.

William S. Marshall is a staff scientist with the Universities Space Research Association based at the NASA Ames Research Center.

QUESTION 4: Cloze Test [20 marks]
Write numbers 1-20 in a column on your answer sheet. Next to each, write ONE word that will correctly fill the gap in the passage below.

LETTER OF COMPLAINT

Dear Sirs,

Your shipment of twelve thousand 'Smart' watches was received by our company this morning. However, we wish to make a number of complaints concerning the serious delay in [1 ....] and your failure to carry out our explicit instructions with regard to this order.

It was stressed from the outset that the delivery [2 ....] had to be less than six weeks from the initial order, in order to comply with our own customers' requirements. While we appreciate that [3 ....] in production are occasionally inevitable, we must point out that the major reason why the order was placed [4 ....] your company was because we were assured by you of its straightforwardness, and that your existing stocks [5 ....] sufficiently high to ensure immediate shipment. Late delivery of the [6 ....] has caused us to disappoint several of our most valued customers, and is bound to have an adverse effect on potential future orders.

The second complaint concerns the discrepancy in colour between the watches we [7 ...] and those delivered. It was stated clearly in the original order that watches in combinations of green/purple and orange/purple only were required. However, only half the watches in the delivery received are of the [8 ....] specified. Our Hong Kong agent assures us that she stressed [9 ....] you the importance of following our instructions precisely, since we consider there to be only a limited market in [10 ....] country for watches of other colours [11 ....] the present time. Any watches that are not of the specified colours will, of course, be [12 ....] to you.

We are also somewhat concerned [13 ....] the rather poor quality of the goods 14 ...., since it is apparent that the watches that finally arrived have [15 ....] produced from inferior materials and have been manufactured to a lower standard than those in the sample. We have also found [16 ....] a number of the watches do not appear to be functioning. Whether the latter problem is due [17 ....] poor manufacture, damage in transit or defective batteries is not yet clear, but we should like to [18 ....] out that we feel this matter to be entirely your responsibility.

As a result of the above problems, therefore, [19 ....] feel that the most suitable course of action is to return to you unpaid any of the goods considered unsatisfactory, and to deduct any costs incurred [20 ....] our final settlement. We shall also, of course, be forced to reconsider whether any further orders should be placed with your company.

We look forward to your prompt reply.