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YOU CAN'T ASK THAT

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English tests fair for all

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Can you ask this?

- (Essay) *Young drug abuse is a serious problem nowadays in many countries, what are the reasons for this and what can be done to combat it?*
- (Speaking) *Would you rather have a dog or a cat as a pet?*
- (Speaking) *What will you do if you fail IELTS?*

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Over 1.4 million tests in 2009

Recognised by universities globally, including
Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom,
United States

Recognised for immigration to Australia, Canada,
New Zealand and United Kingdom

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Who are the candidates?

Abdullah is 22 and lives in Jeddah. He has just finished doing an Engineering degree there and now wants to do an MSc in Chemical Engineering in the USA.

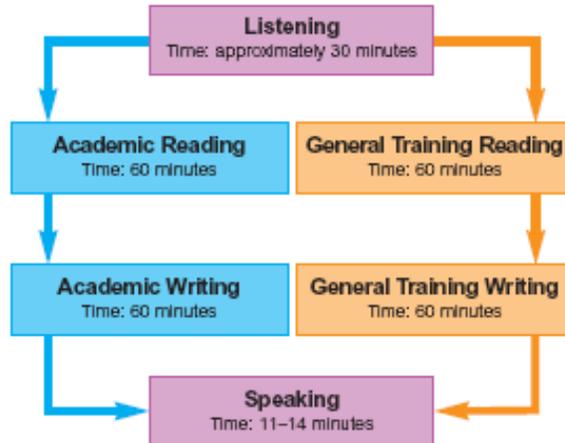
Li-li is 20 years old and lives in Shanghai. She wants to do a Business Studies Degree in Australia.

Trung is 31 and comes from Vietnam. He has a degree in Computer Science and at present is working in software development in London. He would like to move to Canada and live there permanently.

Keiko comes from Osaka. She's 24 and is studying English at a Language School in London. She wants to do a BA in Art Practice at Goldsmith's College.

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Question Paper Production Process

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COMMISSIONING

- Teams of writers in:
 - Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, USA.
- Selection process
- Training and support
- Regular commissions

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PRE-EDITING

- Is the content and treatment appropriate for the candidates?
- Are the texts and items clearly expressed?
- Will it work as a test of English? (e.g. Is it at an appropriate level of difficulty? Will it discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates?)

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1 Speaking Part 2 task (two-minute talk)

Describe a recipe for something you enjoy eating.

You should say:

what the dish is

what ingredients are used

how it is made

and explain why you like it.

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2 Extract from a Listening tapescript

Now, this [corporate crime] is one area that much less is generally known about than conventional or traditional crime. It's been relatively ignored by the mass media – for example, it tends to be under-reported in comparison with conventional crime in news broadcasts and in crime serials and films and so on – they very rarely deal with corporate crime. And it also tends to be ignored in academic circles – there's been far more research on conventional crime and far more data is available.

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3 Speaking Part 2 task (two-minute talk)

Describe an important choice you had to make in your life.

You should say:

when you had to make this choice

what you had to choose between

whether you made a good choice

and explain how you felt when making this choice.

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4 Extract from a Listening tapescript

The first study was carried out in 1977, and the main aim was to investigate how different types of rodent living in the desert affect each other. There were three groups of these already in the area the scientists had chosen to work on. First of all there were five species of small mice... then there were three species of kangaroo rat – you may have seen pictures of these, they get around by jumping on two legs. Both the mice and the kangaroo rats are seed eaters. Then thirdly, there were two species of so-called grasshopper mice, which feed on different species of insects. To carry out their investigation the scientists divided up the area into 24 separate plots. Four of them were to be the experimental plots, and the remaining twenty were the control plots, which would be used for comparison. Then they regularly measured the numbers of the small mice, both in the four experimental plots and in the other plots where the kangaroo rats still lived.

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5 Extract from an Academic Reading text

Countries still trade disproportionately with their geographic neighbours. Over time, however, world output has shifted into goods whose worth is unrelated to their size and weight. Today, it is finished manufactured products that dominate the flow of trade, and, thanks to technological advances such as lightweight components, manufactured goods themselves have tended to become lighter and less bulky. As a result, less transportation is required for every dollar's worth of imports or exports.

To see how this influences trade, consider the business of making disk drives for computers. Most of the world's disk-drive manufacturing is concentrated in South-east Asia. This is possible only because disk-drives are small and light and so cost little to ship. Computer manufacturers in Japan or Texas will not face hugely bigger freight bills if they import drives from Singapore rather than purchasing them on the domestic market. Distance therefore poses no obstacle to the globalisation of the disk-drive industry.

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6 Academic Writing Task 1

- The table below shows public health statistics in an Asian country. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

	1951	1981	2000	2003
Malaria (millions of people)	38.1	57.3	3.74	2.79
Leprosy (per 10,000 people)	75	2.7	2.2	1.78
Polio (number of people)	No data	26,709	265	53
Smallpox (number of people)	44,800+0		0	0
Aids/HIV (millions of people)	No data	No data	No data	7.6

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7 Extract from an Academic Reading text

The possibility that black holes might exist was actually pointed out in 1795 by mathematician Pierre Laplace. Knowing that the more massive a body the stronger its gravity, Laplace imagined a body so massive that its gravity would prevent everything – including light – from escaping. It would appear totally black.

Laplace was right about the possible existence of black holes – but for the wrong reasons. A proper proof that such objects could exist had to await the development of a more realistic theory of gravity than Newton's. And this happened in 1915.

Einstein's theory of gravity – the general theory of relativity – showed gravity not as a force but as a distortion or warpage of space-time. The Moon orbited the Earth, Einstein maintained, not because a force reached out to it across space, but because the Earth created a valley in the space-time around it. We cannot see it because we are three-dimensional creatures and the valley is in four-dimensional space-time. But the Moon can. It rolls around the edge of the valley like a ball around a roulette wheel.

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Pre-editing feedback (Academic Reading)

'Black Holes'

Text: We appreciate all the effort that has been made to try to make this text accessible, but it relies too much on assumed knowledge both of scientific terminology and astronomical concepts. It will be perceived as highly specialist and therefore favouring candidates with a scientific background.

Items: The items seem to be working well.

SORRY!

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General Training Writing Task 2

Many people complain about ‘junk mail’ – unrequested post sent by companies and others; but if they had the chance, few would cancel it because it brings colour and interest into their lives.

What is your own opinion?

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EDITING

Fine-tuning the texts and tasks

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GT Writing task 2 Submitted for editing

Junk mail – the unrequested post sent by companies and other organisations – is unpopular, but it brings colour and interest into people’s lives.

What is your own opinion?

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After editing

‘Junk mail’ – the unrequested post sent by companies and other organisations as advertising - is increasing in many countries.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of receiving this kind of post?

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PRETESTING

The task is done by volunteer students under exam conditions

Writing and Speaking – performance examined and reported on by a Principal Examiner / Assistant Principal Examiner

Reading and Listening – marks are analysed to provide information on difficulty, discrimination etc

Feedback is also requested from candidates and centres.

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Junk mail writing task – pretesting feedback

“Junk mail was, in many cases, taken to mean spam Other candidates, perhaps living in a hostel or room in a family house, said they did not receive any and did not know what it was.”

“Ideas were thin on the ground and students didn’t seem to engage very well with the task. Most ideas were based on the receipt of unwanted emails and the problems these can cause, e.g. viruses, sexual content etc.”

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Speaking Part 2 task

Describe an enjoyable time when you were away from home for more than a few days.

You should say:

where you were

how long you were away for

what you did while you were away

and explain why you enjoyed this time.

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'Away from home' speaking task – pretesting feedback.

“Both candidates seemed somewhat unclear about what they were required to talk about. We understood that ‘being away from home’ entailed spending at least a night in another place, but this didn’t seem to be understood by the candidates.”

“The Uzbek candidate didn’t seem to have spent any time away from home until his current trip. We thought that younger candidates might be at a disadvantage, being less likely to have spent time away from home.”

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