UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

ARTS-HUMANITES ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT (EDUCATION)

CONTENT SPECIFICATION

2019

Overview

The purpose of the Education Admissions Assessment is to determine a candidate's potential to achieve in an academically demanding undergraduate degree course. The assessment is designed to be challenging, in order to differentiate effectively between able applicants, including those who may have achieved the highest possible grades in school examinations.

The assessment will take two hours and consists of two sections:

Section 1

Section 1 is an assessment of candidates' reading skills, including their ability to read critically, understand main ideas in texts, analyse detail and grasp implicit meaning.

Section 1 is in multiple-choice format. 1 hour is allowed for this section of the assessment.

Section 2

For Section 2, candidates are required to write an essay in response to a short stimulus passage. This section is designed to assess candidates' ability to think analytically, produce a coherent argument, and write with clarity and precision under time pressure.

1 hour is allowed for this section of the assessment.

Dictionaries may **not** be used in any part of this assessment.

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Section 1

Section 1 of the Education Admissions Assessment assesses the ability to understand and draw meaning from texts in a multiple-choice format. This section of the assessment is not subject-specific, and texts included will be on a variety of topics and may be drawn from a range of sources.

All academic subjects require the ability to critically read a variety of sometimes challenging texts for meaning. Specifically, the tasks in Section 1 focus on identifying the way in which the texts are structured, the main ideas being presented, and the way in which these are supported and developed.

Section 1 consists of four tasks, based around text excerpts. Each task will have a set of multiple-choice questions with four options. Questions will not require specialist knowledge or any information beyond what is contained within the texts.

There are specimen questions for Section 1 in the Appendix of this document.

Content

Each task will use recently written texts, from authentic sources, in English. Sources may include works of non-fiction (at a relatively high level conceptually and linguistically but which do not assume specialist subject knowledge), newspapers, general interest magazines, book reviews, abstracts written for research papers or journal articles, and professional websites. Texts will not depend on the understanding of specific aspects of British culture.

Questions will require candidates to:

- look at the main ideas and focus of a text;
- analyse the detail and distinguish opinions and attitudes presented in the text;
- determine the writer's purpose in writing the text, including consideration of intended audience;
- extract implications and implicitly stated elements of the text;
- draw comparisons and contrasts within a text or between different texts.

For all tasks, the emphasis is on identification of opinion, attitude, purpose and inferred meaning rather than the retrieval of directly stated factual details. Questions may also focus on elements of text organisation which support meaning, such as the use of exemplification and comparison.

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Format

Section 1 consists of four tasks. **Candidates will be required to answer all questions in all of the tasks.** Each task will consist of one or more text excerpts and a set of four-option multiple-choice questions. There will be no overlap between tasks. Answers to questions will not depend on other questions.

Task 1: Understanding Short Texts

Questions in this task are on two short abstracts, or reviews on a common topic. Texts will be no more than 200 words each. The task assesses a candidate's ability to identify, compare and contrast features of two different texts. The candidate's understanding of the two texts is tested through discrete questions aiming to cover a wide range of focuses with the emphasis on identification of opinion, attitude, purpose and inferred meaning rather than the retrieval of directly stated factual details. Questions may also focus on elements of text organisation which support meaning, such as the use of exemplification, comparison and reference.

Task 2: Multiple-Matching

Questions in this task are on four short extracts, either from four different writers on the same theme or four extracts from the same source. Extracts will be no more than 200 words each. This task requires candidates to locate a text where a particular idea is expressed, discounting ideas in other texts which may appear similar but do not reflect the whole of the question accurately. Each question requires the candidates to scan the four texts to locate the area of text which appears to contain the answer, and then to read this carefully to check that it is the correct answer.

Task 3: Understanding Extended Text

Questions in this task are on one extended text (of no more than 1000 words). The task assesses the understanding of a longer stretch of academic text which may include argument, supported claims, and reference to previous work and ideas in a particular field.

Task 4: Understanding Extended Text

Like Task 3, Task 4 tests the understanding of a longer stretch of academic text (in this case, of up to 1200 words) which may include argument, supported claims, and reference to previous work and ideas in a particular field.

Scoring

All questions are worth 1 mark. Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers, so candidates are advised to answer all questions.

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Section 2

For Section 2 of the Education Admissions Assessment, candidates are required to answer one of four questions to produce a written response to a text extract.
This section is designed to demonstrate your ability to think critically about an educational issue. We do not expect you to have detailed factual knowledge or knowledge about the context but we will expect you to present an argument in your answer.

There is a specimen text extract and questions included in the Appendix of this specification. One hour is allowed for this section. You should spend 15 minutes reading and planning your answer and 45 minutes writing your response.

You should write in an essay style. Take time to think about the issues and plan your work. Construct an argument. You may bring in points from your own experience and cultural context if appropriate.

Your written response will be judged on the following criteria:

- Intellectual engagement with, and critical discussion of a source, giving a personal insight.
- Development and presentation of an argument, analysing a range of information.
- Evidence of an understanding of the purpose, and of the social and political contexts of educational practices.

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APPENDIX: SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

Section 1

Task 1

Read the two abstracts below, which give summaries of two academic articles relating to cities and urban development. For questions 1 – 6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the texts.

ABSTRACT ONE

Retrofitting cities: Local governance in Sydney, Australia
Robyn Dowling, Pauline McGuirk, Harriet Bulkeley
Transforming cities to a lower carbon future is a key challenge of contemporary urban governance. Retrofitting the city – or modifying existing urban infrastructures, buildings and daily life to suit different energy sources and expectations of energy consumption – is essential to this transformation. In urban studies, little focus has been applied to the shape and character of urban governance frameworks and mechanisms required to successfully retrofit cities. In this paper we address this lacuna by exploring the logics, practices and dynamics of retrofitting governance in the Australian city. Using a governmentality perspective, the paper identifies the involvements of different scales of government in retrofitting policies and mechanisms and connections between them. Based on our survey of carbon reduction initiatives involving government, business and community actors across Australia's cities, we outline the types of retrofitting solutions being proposed and enacted. Focussing on initiatives from Sydney, Australia's largest city, the paper documents four key techniques through which retrofitting is being governed – self-governing, holistic, facilitative and educative. The findings indicate that governance gaps remain in attending to the daily life of technologies and the materiality of daily life.

ABSTRACT TWO

Critical research on eco-cities? A walk through the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, China
Federico Caprotti
This article uses the narrative tool of a walk through Tianjin Eco-City, China, as an entry point in raising and discussing key questions in contemporary eco-city research. Eco-city projects are becoming increasingly prevalent in policy and political-economic discourses in a variety of locations as new urban spaces where blueprints for low carbon economies can be trialled. In light of this, the article highlights the necessity of, firstly, considering scale when analyzing eco-city 'futures'. Secondly, the article argues for the need to interrogate eco-cities' definitions, as well as their evaluation, performance and monitoring frameworks, as this will aid in critical analyses of the marketing and presentation of actually built eco-city projects. Thirdly, the question of internal social resilience needs to be assessed: this is of crucial importance in light of the exclusive, gated nature of several flagship eco-city projects under construction at present. Lastly, the article argues that research on eco-city projects needs to consider not only high-tech, new urban environments, but also the low-paid workers who form what the article calls the 'new urban poor', forming large, often transient populations on the edges of flagship 'sustainable' urban projects worldwide.

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1 According to Abstract One, what is the main aim of the article on retrofitting cities?

A to defend the idea of retrofitting

B to point out weaknesses in retrofitting technology

C to describe the technology required for retrofitting

D to look at methods of achieving retrofitting

2 Which word from Abstract One describes the theoretical framework used by the writers in their analysis of retrofitting in Sydney?

A 'lacuna'

B 'governmentality'

C 'holistic'

D 'materiality'

3 In Abstract One, the writers claim that one feature of their research is that

A they have engaged with an area representing a weakness in the field.

B they have proposed a way of integrating key techniques.

C they have identified potentially divisive underlying attitudes.

D they have employed a controversial methodology.

4 In Abstract Two, the writer says that eco-city projects are important because

A they show that low carbon economies are sustainable.

B they provide an opportunity for testing economic models.

C they offer new opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

D they encourage political involvement in environmental issues.

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5 In Abstract Two, ‘exclusive, gated nature’ contrasts with

A ‘internal social resilience’.

B ‘new urban environments’.

C ‘new urban poor’.

D ‘projects under construction’.

6 Which abstract or abstracts refer to the physical experience of a particular city being used as a stylistic device?

A neither abstract

B both abstracts

C Abstract One only

D Abstract Two only

Key

1 D **2** B **3** A **4** B **5** C **6** D

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Section 2

From your reading of the text on the opposite page, answer **ONE** of the following questions.

You may draw upon your own experiences to illustrate your argument.

1. What is the significance of the ‘whole language’ approach to reading in terms of meeting a diversity of learners’ educational needs and social backgrounds?

2. How does the ‘whole language’ approach to reading engage with issues around motivation and its role in learning?

3. Using some examples to illustrate your argument, in what ways might a ‘whole language’ approach be supported by different kinds of texts, both literary as well as non-literary?

4. What does a ‘whole language’ approach to reading imply about the way children learn?

From: Styles, M. and Drummond, M.J. (1993) 'Introduction' to The Politics of Reading. University of Cambridge IOE and Homerton College. p.7

By the 1980s there was a growing understanding of reading as part of a holistic approach to language. In other words, teachers came to reject a view of reading as a set of subskills to be learned in isolation, starting with the so-called pre-reading skills, which were then to be applied to a series of hierarchically graded texts. They came to see reading as intimately connected with the other language modes of talking, listening and, especially, writing. At the heart of all these processes is the desire to make meaning. Instead of phonic drills and low level texts for simple decoding, children were to be given quality literature from the start and encouraged to do what emergent readers have always done spontaneously: to make sense of text by using the context, the pictures, their previous knowledge of stories and their (mainly implicit) understanding of how language works. Put more technically, effective readers use graphophonic, syntactic, semantic and pictorial cueing systems as they read. They do so, for the most part, quite unconsciously; it is at the point of difficulty that conscious strategies need to be employed.

This 'whole language' approach, briefly summarised here, has been put into practice in classrooms by many teachers. Their practices have acquired popular labels: the 'real books' approach and 'apprenticeship reading' (Bennett, 1982; Waterland, 1985). The labels are less important than the impact of these methodologies on children, who are now enabled to draw on the whole range of reading strategies from the very beginning. Using and re-using familiar and meaningful texts, the more experienced reader gradually encourages the apprentice readers to take over the act of reading for themselves. The apprenticeship reader is being taught to behave like a reader, engaging with the meaning of the text, and responding to it, thoughtfully, as experienced readers do. Accuracy in decoding is just one tool in the task of understanding the text, not the primary purpose of the act of reading. Furthermore, these apprentices are treated like readers by being offered quality texts from the start, text that do justice to the beginning reader's well-developed capacity to make meaning. They are offered a variety of texts, so their reading diet is both rich and nourishing.