

# **BCU ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST**

## **ONLINE TEST**

### **INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

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**\* Please note;**

- i)     *These are available in paper-based format only, though the question types are the same for both online and paper-based tests.***
- ii)    *For online Listening and Reading tests, answers are not transferred to answer sheets.***

## INTRODUCTION

The Birmingham City University English Proficiency Test is used to assess your English language ability in the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

The tests are designed to activate the language skills you will need to begin a course of study at Birmingham City University, and it will report on your current skill level. The test can be used as evidence of English language ability for the majority of the undergraduate or postgraduate courses at Birmingham City University.

There is no single pass mark for everyone; different courses will require you to achieve a different level in the test.

The following sections give you an overview of the test and information about each section of the test in the same order that it is administered. Please note, the Speaking section will take place on a different day to the Listening, Reading and Writing sections.

## BCU English Proficiency Test Online Test Overview

	Listening (page 5)	Reading (page 7)	Writing (page 10)	Speaking (page 13)
Timing	Approximately 30-35 minutes	60 minutes (1 hour)	45 minutes	11 – 13 minutes
Task(s)	<p><b>4 sections</b> (progressively increasing in difficulty)</p> <p><b>40 questions</b> (10 questions in each section)</p>	<p><b>3 reading passages</b> of approximately equal length and difficulty</p> <p><b>40 questions</b> (with 13-14 questions on each passage)</p>	<p><b>1 question</b> which requires an essay answer of 250+ words.</p>	<p><b>A one-to-one video conversation</b> with the examiner in 3 sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Questions on common topics</li> <li>2) Speak about a given topic</li> <li>3) Follow-on questions on the section 2 topic</li> </ol>
Additional information	You will hear each section <u>once</u> only.		You should spend some time planning and checking your work.	<p>The examiners enjoy meeting potential students and hearing what they have to say. Try to relax.</p> <p>The test may be recorded.</p>

# LISTENING TEST GUIDELINES

## Format

The listening test consists of four sections, each with ten questions. The questions are designed so that the answers appear in order in the listening. You will hear each section once only. Please note that the test becomes more difficult as you progress through it.



The recording for the first three sections deals with various situations set in an educational or an everyday social context. For example, in each of these sections you may hear the following:

- A conversation between two speakers set in an everyday social context (e.g. conversation in a travel or an accommodation agency etc.)
- A monologue set in an everyday social situation (e.g. speech about local facilities, an audio guide to a university's library etc.)
- A conversation between up to four people (e.g. students discussing an assignment, a radio interview etc.)

In section four, you will hear a monologue on an academic subject (e.g. a university lecture).

## Timing

The recording lasts for approximately 30-35 minutes. During this time you need to type your answers on the screen as you listen. You will be given 30 seconds at the end of each section to check your answers. The end of the recording is also the end of the Listening test.

## The questions test your ability to understand:

- The main ideas and factual information.
- The opinions and attitudes of speakers.
- The development of ideas.

## How can I do my best in the test?

- You will be given some time to read through the questions before you listen. Try to predict what the speaker will say. Remember that this will require concentration.
- Do not worry if there is a word you do not understand – you may not need to use it.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, try to answer it but do not waste too much time on it – move quickly onto the next question.
- Do not get frustrated if you think the topic is too difficult or the speaker is too fast. Stay focused and positive.
- Prior to the test, practise reading, writing and listening at the same time.
- You will hear the **exact** word(s) you need to use in the recording. You will not need to change the form of the word(s) you hear.
- Pay attention to the word limit in your answers.
- Attempt all questions. You will not lose marks for answers that are incorrect.
- Always check your answers in the time given to do this.

## How can I improve my listening skills?

The first thing to do is learn to listen actively – you need to make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that someone is saying but, more importantly, pay attention, and try to understand the complete message behind the words.

Watching films, TV shows or videos is a good start. Audio versions of your favourite book can also be a relaxing way to develop your listening skills.

# READING TEST GUIDELINES

## Format

The reading test consists of three texts of approximately 650 – 850 words each. Each text has 13 or 14 questions, and the total test contains 40 questions.

The texts are on topics of general interest, usually adapted from journals, books, magazines and newspapers.



## Timing

The total time allowed is 60 minutes, so you should allow about 20 minutes for each text and the corresponding questions.

## Question order

The questions usually follow the order of the text. If they don't, you will see this advice:

***These questions/statements do not follow the order of the text.***

So, in this case you will need to scan the whole text. Otherwise, you can continue to read from where you found the answer to the previous question.

## Question types

A variety of question types is used, including multiple choice, short-answer questions, sentence completion, notes/summary/flow-chart/table completion, classification, matching, choosing suitable paragraph headings from a list, identification of a writer's views/claims (yes/no/not given), and identification of information in the text (true/false/not given).

These questions are varied and designed to test your ability to:

- Understand the main ideas of paragraphs and the main points in the text.
- Find and understand key details.

These are both essential reading skills for university study.

### **How can I improve my reading skills for the test?**

Read plenty of general interest texts in English language newspapers and magazines. Try to read actively – for example:

- Write a heading for each paragraph.
- Think of questions that are answered in the paragraphs.
- Write short summaries of the whole text, and sections of the text. When you do this, remember that you don't need to worry about grammar for this particular activity, as you are training your brain to read the texts the same way that you need to read them to succeed in the test.

### **What tips can you give me for during the test?**

Stay calm!

- Don't try to read the whole text in detail - you don't have time for this!
- First, skim read the text (first and last paragraphs, and the first sentence of each of the other paragraphs). This will help you to have an overall understanding of it.
- Look at the questions. Only read the parts of the text that are necessary to answer the questions.
- Watch the time; after about 20 minutes try to move on to the next passage, you can always return to a text if you have time at the end.
- Put an answer for all the questions – you don't lose a mark if it's wrong.
- If you find a question is too difficult, move on to the next one and come back to it at the end.

Continued ....

## What do I do if I don't understand a word?

You will not need, or be expected, to understand every word in the text. If you do need to understand the word, try looking at the information that comes before and after it; you can often help your understanding if you do this.

Example:

*There is great prosperity in the country but many citizens are extremely poor.*

You might not know the word “prosperity”, but if you read on you will see: **but** many citizens are extremely **poor**. ‘**But**’ shows that the information contrasts or is surprising, so we might be surprised that there are many poor people in ..... probably a wealthy country. So we can guess that “prosperity” is related to being rich, or wealthy.



# WRITING TEST GUIDELINES

## Format

The writing test consists of one question only, which requires a 250-word essay answer. The writing test is 45 minutes long, which includes 5 minutes to plan your answer and a few minutes to check your work after you have completed your essay.

The questions usually consist of a statement concerning an issue of contemporary interest which indicates that people have different opinions on the topic (for example, education, health, the environment etc.). In your essay you are expected to discuss these differing viewpoints and to come to a conclusion or give your opinion. You are also asked to support your argument with examples and your own experience.

For example:

*Television has had a significant influence on the culture of many societies. To what extent would you say that television has affected the cultural development of your society?*



## Writing your essay

Four criteria are used to mark the essay:

### **Task Achievement**

This looks at how developed your response to the question is. Make sure you answer all parts of the question and that you develop your ideas and support them with examples and a clear opinion.

### **Coherence and Cohesion**

Coherence refers to how convincing your answer is. Your argument needs to be clear, well- structured and persuasive.

Cohesion refers to the flow of your writing. Your sentences and paragraphs should be well- structured and linked together in a clear, logical way.

### **Lexical Resource**

This is your vocabulary. Try to use a good range of appropriate words, and be careful with spelling. You will get credit for using more unusual vocabulary, but this must be completely appropriate in the context. If you are not sure, it is better to use more common words which are correct.

### ***Grammatical Range and Accuracy***

Your grammar and punctuation. Of course you will make some mistakes; the important thing is to try and avoid the basic errors that you *know* are wrong and to avoid any mistakes which make your writing difficult to understand.

### **Possible essay structure**

- A short **introduction** showing you understand what the topic is about (maybe indicating why it is important/relevant) and that there are different opinions on it. You could then indicate what your argument is going to be. You can paraphrase parts of the question, but don't copy any of it word for word.
- A paragraph or two focusing on the side of the argument you **don't** agree with.
- A paragraph or two giving the **counter-arguments** to the above.
- A short **conclusion**.

### **General tips**

- Spend around five minutes thinking about your answer and writing a short plan in the planning box on the screen before you start typing your answer in the answer box. This will help with the structure of your answer and ensure that you don't forget any good ideas you originally had. Please note: anything you write in the planning box will **NOT** be marked.
- Give yourself at least two or three minutes to check your answer when you have finished, particularly your grammar, spelling and sentence structure/punctuation.
- Don't use lots of memorised phrases, which may be inappropriate in context. In particular, don't use clichés such as "every coin has two sides" – your examiner has seen these hundreds of times and they carry no real meaning! Memorised language is easy to spot, and could make the examiner think that you don't really understand, or that you aren't able to produce your own language.
- It doesn't matter what opinions you give, as long as they are well expressed. You can be as controversial as you like. The important thing is to try and convince the reader that your opinion is correct.
- It's OK to use some personal language in this type of essay, but not too much. Try to keep your writing style quite formal.
- Quality is better than quantity – you won't get extra marks for writing more than 250 words.

## **How to improve your writing**

- Do lots of reading – anything (as long as it is in English!). Simply reading will improve your writing, but you could also make notes on how ideas are expressed in writing or write down new vocabulary (preferably in context). You could also do a more extensive analysis of part of a text. Then try to write in this way yourself and to use the new words you have read.
- Take part in online discussion groups etc. Start your own blog, maybe with friends.
- Work together with friends and colleagues, reading and commenting on each other's writing.

## **Common mistakes that you should avoid making**

- No introduction or conclusion (or neither).
- Answer not relevant to the question. If you do not answer the question (perhaps by reproducing a memorised irrelevant or vaguely relevant essay) you will fail, even if the English is perfect.
- Basic grammatical mistakes which you should be able to easily correct yourself (and therefore should avoid in the first place).
- Few or no linking words, or these are used incorrectly.
- Poor sentence/paragraph structure.

# SPEAKING TEST GUIDELINES

**Please note: your speaking test will take place on a different day to the other parts of the test. After completing the Listening, Reading and Writing tests, you will receive an email with instructions on how to book your Online Speaking Test.**

## Format

The speaking test comprises three parts and lasts for around 11 – 13 minutes. It consists of a one-to-one interview (conducted by video call) between you and the examiner.

**Part 1:** you will be asked some general questions about yourself, where you are from, your interests etc. This part lasts 3-4 minutes.

**Part 2:** you will be given a topic to prepare and talk about. There is 1 minute to think about this and note down some ideas, and then you are expected to talk for around 1 to 2 minutes.

**Part 3:** the examiner will ask you some questions to elicit more detailed discussion on the topic. This part should last about 5 minutes.



## How your performance is assessed

### *Fluency and Coherence*

This is the ability to speak at length, with as little repetition and hesitation as possible. You should try to link your ideas with connecting words and phrases, and stay focused on the topic that the examiner has asked you about.

### *Lexical Resource*

This is your chance to show how many different words you know related to the topic you are discussing. The examiner is also interested in your ability to paraphrase (say something in a different way if you can't think of particular words), this is an important real-life skill.

### *Grammatical Range and Accuracy*

Try to use a range of grammatical structures accurately and appropriately.

### ***Pronunciation***

This refers to your pronunciation of both individual sounds and your intonation. This doesn't mean that you need to sound like a native speaker, it is just important that your speech is clear and easy to understand.

### **General advice for the speaking test**

- Don't memorise long pieces of language (for example, about your city) and try to give a memorised speech. Your examiner will notice this immediately and ask you another question on a different topic.
- If you don't understand a question or an aspect of the topic you are given, don't be afraid to ask the examiner to explain. This is a natural part of communication.
- Try to develop your answers as much as possible. The fewer that we have to ask you, the better.
- Part 3 gives you the chance to show off a bit and impress your examiner – make sure you take full advantage of it.
- Don't ask the examiner at the end how you have done or if you have passed. We cannot tell you this; your results will be sent to you by our International Office.
- We want you to do well! Your examiner will try to make you as relaxed as possible and will encourage you throughout the test. Deep breaths can help with nerves. Just be yourself.

## General tips for the test

- Be ready at least 5-10 minutes before the scheduled examination time.
- Make sure you are prepared and have had something to eat and drink beforehand. You will not be allowed to eat food during any sections of the test. You may have a glass of water on your desk.
- **There will be no breaks between the Listening, Reading and Writing tests. This means you will not be able to move from your desk for around 2.5 hours, so you are strongly advised to go to the toilet before the tests start.**
- You will be asked to switch your mobile phone to silent mode and to switch off any other electronic devices. You will be asked to place these away from you.
- Make sure you have your passport or national ID card with you. If you do not have the necessary ID, you will not be allowed to attend the test.

**Good luck!**



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**English Proficiency Test**

# Listening

- Do not open this booklet until the recording tells you to turn to Section One.
- Listen carefully to the instructions.
- The recording will be played once only.
- You will have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet at the end of the test.
- Write in pen or pencil.

Name: .....

ID Number: .....

Test Centre: .....

Date: .....

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## BCU Listening Test – Section 1

*You will hear a recruitment agent talking to a woman who is looking for a job.*

*First you have 30 seconds to look at questions 1 – 6.*

### Questions 1 – 6

*Choose the correct letter A, B or C.*

- 1 What is Azni's email address?  
A midldeaz@gmail.com  
B middleaz@gmail.com  
C middleza@gmail.com
- 2 Azni is from  
A Indonesia.  
B Russia.  
C Malaysia.
- 3 In the Caledonian Hotel Azni was employed as a  
A bartender.  
B receptionist.  
C line manager.
- 4 Tayo Ollotu  
A is letting out his flat to Azni.  
B is Azni's former employer.  
C worked with Azni in a shop.
- 5 Azni did a training course in health and safety when she was  
A working at the Caledonian hotel.  
B working in a local pub.  
C studying in a college.
- 6 Azni says that she loves studying languages and that she is good at  
A German.  
B French.  
C Russian.



*Before you hear the rest of the conversation, you have 30 seconds to look at questions 7 – 10.*

Questions 7 – 10

Complete the table below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.



## Agency Central

Name	Location	Position	Salary	Special requirements
Britannia Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- close to the agency's office</li> <li>- located in the city centre</li> <li>- near the Bull Ring</li> </ul>	- receptionist	- from £18,000 to £23,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- flexibility</li> <li>- exceptional</li> <li>7 .....</li> <li>- basic IT skills</li> </ul>
Ramada Hotel	- countryside near Bristol	- housekeeping supervisor	- maximum pay of 8 £.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- previous experience</li> <li>- strong organisational skills</li> </ul>
Apollo Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wolverhampton</li> <li>- half an hour drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 .....</li> <li>- assistant chef</li> </ul>	- £24,000	- 10 .....



*You now have 30 seconds to check your answers.*

## BCU Listening Test – Section 2



*You will hear a radio interview in which an expert gives some tips to college students on what to wear to a job interview.*

*First you have 30 seconds to look at questions 11 – 15.*

### Questions 11 – 15

*Write ONE WORD ONLY for each answer.*

The radio interview starts by introducing Nicole 11 ....., a career expert for LinkedIn and founder of DOIT. Nicole's task is to tell you how to choose the best outfit for a job interview.

Nicole starts by saying that it is important to research the company before attending an interview. She says that this can be done by doing 12 ..... research, telephoning the company, contacting company's staff, or requesting information about the company's dress code.

Nicole believes that the way people dress for a job interview can differ from one place to another. This can be influenced by factors such as country, 13 ..... and industry. Therefore, if you are



not sure of what to wear, the best option is to go for something conservative. Men, for example, should dress formally and wear a suit, dress shoes, tie, 14 ..... shirt and black socks. They should choose colours which are subtle and solid.

Nicole also says that most companies have their own appearance guidelines on shaving and hairstyles. In general, a candidate with a beard may keep it if it's presentable. Also people who are not in contact with the 15 ..... and who do not work in an office can keep their hair long. However, she advises men with medium length hair to cut it short for the interview and grow it back out later.

*Before you hear the rest of the conversation, you have 30 seconds to look at questions 16 – 20.*

Questions 16 – 20

Complete the notes in the table below. Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.

DRESS CODE FOR WOMEN	
Interview attire	Pieces of advice
<b>Suit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>choose a neutral colour, for example navy, 16..... or black</li> </ul>
<b>Shirt or blouse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>colour that goes with the suit</li> <li>not too bright or patterned</li> <li>not low cut</li> </ul>
<b>Makeup</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>keep it 17.....</li> <li>no time to experiment</li> <li>if you wear a lipstick on a daily basis, then put it on for the interview too.</li> </ul>
<b>Hairstyle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>choose the one that you feel confident in</li> <li>keep it neat and 18.....</li> </ul>

DO'S and DON'TS	
<b>Nervous habits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>do a mock interview with a friend</li> <li>examine your 19.....</li> <li>don't play with hair</li> <li>learn how to keep your hands busy</li> </ul>
<b>Other DO's and DON'Ts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avoid wearing plenty of perfume</li> <li>try to match what other employees are wearing</li> <li>study employees profile 20 .....</li> <li>do not wear too much jewellery</li> </ul>

You now have 30 seconds to check your answers.



### BCU Listening Test – Section 3

*You will hear a guest speaker talking to prospective BCU students.*

*First you have 30 seconds to read questions 21 – 25.*

#### Questions 21 – 25

*Complete the sentences below. Write ONE WORD ONLY for each answer.*

- 21 Christine obtained a degree in Jewellery and Silversmithing at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. She says that she did a lot of ..... before applying for her course.
- 22 Christine was pleased to live in the Jewellery Quarter. She could find there replacement for her broken tools and ..... polished gems for her work.
- 23 According to Christine, her design are inspired by .....
- 24 After graduation Christine was helped by her jewellery mentor who offered her fifteen hours of work. She could also attend some of the ..... in return for lecturing.
- 25 The same ..... and methods that were used in the past are still being used when making jewellery.



*Before you hear the rest of the discussion, you have 30 seconds to look at questions 26 – 30.*



Questions 26 – 30

Choose the correct letter A, B or C.

- 26 Christine buys silver and most of her jewels

A online.  
B from a local supplier.  
C from a gemstone polisher.



- 27 HS Walsh & Sons

A offers discounts on jewellery making tools.  
B was established nearly a decade ago.  
C is the only place where students can purchase tools for jewellery making.

- 28 Christine's jewellery is tested and hallmarked

A out of the Jewellery Quarter.  
B at the School of Jewellery.  
C at Birmingham Assay Office.

- 29 According to the most up-to-date figures ..... of British jewellery is still made in the Jewellery Quarter.

A 90%  
B 60%  
C 40%

- 30 Christine's work is mainly sold

A to the local shop.  
B on the internet.  
C to international customers.



*You now have 30 seconds to check your answers.*

## BCU Listening Test – Section 4

You will listen to a university lecture on body language.  
First you have one minute to look at questions 31 – 40.

Questions 31 – 35

Complete the notes below. Write **ONE WORD ONLY** for each answer.



### BODY LANGUAGE

➤ Eye movements:

- Can provide information about one's 31 ..... and untruthfulness
- Example:
  - the mind of a person looking to the right is 'creating' something
- Used to tell if someone is frustrated or excited

➤ Mouth movements:

- A person with a tight-lipped smile:
  - may have a 32 .....
  - may lack trust in others
- Show feelings of self-comfort, tension or frustration

➤ Arm movements:

- Associated with feelings of nervousness or insecurity
- Imply 33 ..... when hands and arms are kept behind a person's back
- Examples of defensive arm movements:
  - folding arms
  - keeping things in front of the chest
  - playing with bracelets or 34 .....

➤ Hand movements:

- The most researched aspect of non-verbal communication
- Suggests an array of emotional states
- Examples:
  - pulling one's ear indicates indecision
  - cracking knuckles signal the need for 35 .....
  - open palms can imply openness



Questions 36 – 40

Complete the sentences below. Write **ONE WORD ONLY** for each answer.

- 36 In his research Borg argued that ..... percent of human interaction is done by words.
- 37 Nowadays it's easier for people from different countries to understand non-verbal communication not because of the internet or ..... , but due to the effects of television.
- 38 The 'OK' sign often used by scuba divers can be interpreted as rude in a country such as ..... .
- 39 According to the speaker, the way in which people ..... each other is hugely influenced by factors such as gender and culture.
- 40 In order to feel more secure, people tend to create artificial barriers. For example, many of us tend to keep our hands close to our face which can be an indication of ..... .



**Thank you. That is the end of the test.**

**You now have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet.**



## Listening Practice Test – Answer Sheet

### Birmingham City University English Proficiency Test - Listening



Name: .....

Test Date: .....

ID Number: .....

Test Centre: .....

Make sure you write your answers in the correct boxes.

1		21	
2		22	
3		23	
4		24	
5		25	
6		26	
7		27	
8		28	
9		29	
10		30	
11		31	
12		32	
13		33	
14		34	
15		35	
16		36	
17		37	
18		38	
19		39	
20		40	

*For office use only*

*Total out of 40:*

*Band:*

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**Listening - Answer Key**

	<b>Listening Section 1</b>		<b>Listening Section 3</b>
<b>1</b>	B	<b>21</b>	research
<b>2</b>	C	<b>22</b>	buy
<b>3</b>	B	<b>23</b>	her new home city (or Birmingham)
<b>4</b>	A	<b>24</b>	workshops
<b>5</b>	A	<b>25</b>	techniques
<b>6</b>	B	<b>26</b>	B
<b>7</b>	communication skills	<b>27</b>	A
<b>8</b>	15,000	<b>28</b>	C
<b>9</b>	waitress	<b>29</b>	C
<b>10</b>	food hygiene certificate	<b>30</b>	B
	<b>Listening Section 2</b>		<b>Listening Section 4</b>
<b>11</b>	Forest	<b>31</b>	imagination
<b>12</b>	online	<b>32</b>	secret
<b>13</b>	culture	<b>33</b>	confidence
<b>14</b>	white/ long-sleeved	<b>34</b>	watches
<b>15</b>	public	<b>35</b>	attention
<b>16</b>	dark grey	<b>36</b>	7
<b>17</b>	simple	<b>37</b>	travelling
<b>18</b>	tidy	<b>38</b>	Brazil
<b>19</b>	body language	<b>39</b>	touch
<b>20</b>	photos	<b>40</b>	insecurity

## Birmingham City University

### English Proficiency Test

# Reading

- Do not open this booklet before the examiner tells you to.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Total time available: 60 minutes. No extra time is available for transferring answers to the answer sheet.
- Write in pen or pencil.

Name: .....

ID Number: .....

Test Centre: .....

Date: .....

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## Reading Passage 1

*You should spend about 20 minutes on questions 1 - 13, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.*

### From butterfly to caterpillar: How children grow up



**A** In the past 30 years, advances in scientific research have transformed our understanding of babies and young children. It has been discovered that babies know more and learn more than anybody had ever thought possible, and researchers are now beginning to be able to explain some of the processes that are involved.

**B** New research reveals that the key to understanding human intelligence may be found in watching what humans do as children, rather than by observing adult behaviour. The long, protected period of time that we call childhood may be the starting point for our human capacity for learning and imagination, as well as our ability to change our behaviour according to our environment, and to change our surroundings to meet our needs.

**C** This fundamental link between childhood and intelligence can be found across a wide variety of species, with classic examples seen in birds. In biology, the term 'precocial' refers to species in which the young are relatively mature and mobile from the moment of birth. The opposite developmental strategy is called 'altricial', where the young are born helpless. 'Precocial' birds, such as chickens, become mature much more quickly, have much less flexible behaviour and poor learning abilities. In contrast, 'altricial' birds, such as crows, are immature for an extended period of time. In other words, they have a long 'childhood', and these birds demonstrate learning abilities similar to those of apes. While chickens seem to rely on the very specific abilities that they are born with and that are suitable for one particular environment, such as scratching in the ground for food, crows are much more flexible. For example, crows can learn how to turn an item that they find, such as a piece of wire, into a new tool. New research indicates that this ability to create and learn is a direct result of the lengthy period of time they spend as young birds.

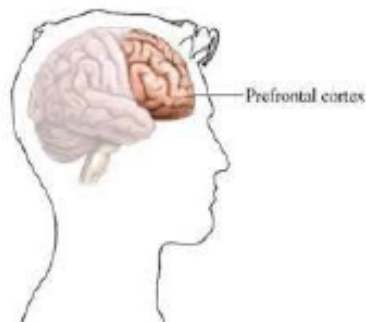
**D** The development of a learning strategy has many advantages because it lets an animal survive in many more environments, and even modify those environments. However, there is one major disadvantage, which is that until learning takes place, these animals are helpless. This has led to a division of roles between the younger and older members of the populations of these species. The young are protected, which gives them time to learn and imagine, and the adults take care of them during this period.

**E** Human beings are the most extreme example of the strategy of extended childhood. We remain dependent on adults for longer than any other species, and we invest especially heavily in our young. Recently, researcher Sarah Blaffer Hardy, who studies humans, monkeys and apes, has suggested that this period of intensive care we receive when we are young may

be the reason for our distinctive human capacities for cooperation and altruism (thinking about others before ourselves). By being looked after, we learn how to care.

**F** Our lengthy childhood may also be necessary in order to develop our human intelligence, powers of reasoning and social skills. The link between childhood activities and learning is evident when observing children's typical daily behaviour. Recent studies show that the two types of play that children engage in have different functions in terms of learning. 'Exploratory' play – the desire to push every button and pull every string - helps children to discover how the physical world works. 'Pretend' play – imagining that they are a character in a book or film – helps them to understand all the possible ways that people could be.

**G** In the past, it was claimed that babies and children were merely imperfect adults, but this new research reveals that they are in fact very different from adults. They have equally complex and powerful, but very different, minds, brains and lives, which suit their role. Babies actually have more connections between different parts of their brains than adults. They begin by making many weak connections, and proceed by losing the unused links and strengthening the useful ones. The human prefrontal cortex, which is different from other animals' brains, takes a particularly long time to mature: this part of the brain may not be complete until the mid-twenties. The adult capacities for focus, planning and action that are governed by the prefrontal cortex depend on the long learning that takes place in childhood. In simple terms, babies are brilliant learners, but they are incapable of planning. They are fantastically creative and have incredible imagination, but absolutely no capacity to make their dreams a reality.



**H** The changes in the human brain from immaturity to adulthood are much more intricate than the simple growth that is seen in other species. Babies are like exploratory, bright butterflies, while the adults are caterpillars, moving slowly along narrower paths. Science will not tell us how to make babies smarter - they are already as smart as they could be - but it can help us to understand the importance of childhood and its crucial role in the lengthy and complicated development of the adult brain.

**Questions 1 - 7**

*Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 1?*

*In boxes 1 - 7 on your answer sheet, write*

**TRUE/ T**                      *if the statement agrees with the information*

**FALSE/ F**                    *if the statement contradicts the information*

**NOT GIVEN/ NG**        *if there is no information on this*

- 1      Researchers have been studying how babies learn for thirty years.  
Answer .....
- 2      Studying childhood behaviour is the only way to understand human intelligence.  
Answer .....
- 3      Humans begin to learn how to modify their behaviour to suit their surroundings during the lengthy childhood period.  
Answer .....
- 4      Altricial animals are completely incapable of looking after themselves when they are born.  
Answer .....
- 5      Chickens are born with the ability to change their behaviour to suit different environments.  
Answer .....
- 6      Altricial birds all have the ability to make tools and change their surroundings.  
Answer .....
- 7      Altricial animals are helpless because the adults protect them.  
Answer .....



**Questions 8 - 11**

*Choose the correct letter A, B, C or D. Write the correct letter in boxes 8 - 11 on your answer sheet.*

- 8 According to Sarah Blaffer Hardy, what is one of the results of an extended childhood period?
- A Humans make a deep investment in caring for their young.
  - B People remain immature for longer than many other animals.
  - C Adults are more able to work together effectively.
  - D Children can spend more time learning through playing.
- 9 What does the writer say about childhood activities and learning?
- A Pretend play enables children to try out different identities.
  - B Children learn by watching other children playing.
  - C Exploratory play should be combined with pretend play.
  - D Manipulating objects is an important aspect of pretend play.
- 10 What does the writer say about the brains of babies and adults?
- A They are equal in size, but have different abilities.
  - B They both remove any links in the brain that have no function.
  - C Adult brains are better at planning because they are poor at imagining.
  - D Adult brains do not have as many connections as babies' brains.
- 11 According to paragraph H, what does research show us?
- A That adults move more slowly than children and do not like to explore.
  - B That the human brain's development process is highly complex.
  - C That human babies and butterflies develop in similar ways.
  - D That there are ways to make babies more intelligent.

**Questions 12 - 13**

*Which TWO of the following statements are mentioned in the passage?*

*The statements do not follow the order of the text.*

*Choose TWO letters from A - E. Write the correct letters in boxes 12 - 13 on your answer sheet.*

- A There is a connection between length of childhood and adult ability in a range of animal species.
- B Crows develop their intelligence by copying the behaviour of apes.
- C Most animals are born with a natural ability to modify their environment.
- D Studying the human brain is the only way to observe how human learning develops.
- E The prefrontal cortex does not fully develop until people are about 25 years old.

Source: Gopnik, A. (2009) From butterfly to caterpillar: How children grow up. *New Scientist*, [online] 4 August. Available at: <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20327191.700-from-butterfly-to-caterpillar-how-children-grow-up.html> [Accessed 16 January 2014]



## Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on questions 14 - 27, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

### Mission to Mars

- A The Mars One Project, founded by Dutch businessman Bas Lansdorp, aims to start a colony of four people on the planet of Mars by 2030. Lansdorp also plans to send another four volunteers on a one-way ticket every 26 months to spend the rest of their lives on the red planet, with no option to return. The entrepreneur believes that the mix of nationalities of the voyagers to Mars will lead to improved communication and collaboration across geographical borders on Earth. His other aim for the landings is to inspire people to believe that anything is possible if you are willing to work hard for it.
- B Lansdorp recently announced that Lockheed Martin, the same company that builds spaceships for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is working with Mars One to build a satellite to put into orbit around Mars by 2023. The satellite will enable the space travellers to communicate with and broadcast images to Earth. Edward Coxley from Lockheed said that no major innovations are necessary as the company will develop already existing technical knowledge and machinery for this mission. Starting this work is a strong sign that the project is serious about achieving its aims, but there is no doubt that there are still many difficulties to overcome.
- C The main issue facing the project seems to be how to finance the mission. Mars One already has some corporate sponsors who pay to promote their product on the project's website, or have their company logo on products and clothes that the astronauts will use in their living quarters. However, it aims to raise the majority of its estimated \$6bn costs by getting one of the main television channels to pay for permission to film the selection process, and a live broadcast of life on Mars.
- D The second man to walk on the Moon, Buzz Aldrin, thinks that one day people will land on Mars, but he is not sure that the timings given by the Mars One Project are accurate. He says: "I don't think technology has advanced enough yet to get four people to Mars by 2030." According to Aldrin, while private corporations do have an important role to play in space exploration, international cooperation is essential for something as monumental and significant as sending people to Mars.
- E Meanwhile, finding people to go on the trip has not been difficult; so far 200,000 volunteers have applied to go. From these initial applicants, they have chosen just 1058 candidates, who will take part in a selection process that will be shown on television in 2019 and 2020 to find the first 40 people to send to Mars. It is not yet



known what these applicants (who include the three below) will have to do in order to be successful, but it will probably be very interesting television.

- F Maggie Lieu, 23, is doing a PhD with the Astrophysics and Space Research Group in Birmingham, UK. She wants to go to Mars because she thinks it will have a major impact on the whole world, and she will benefit from working with people from other countries. Most importantly for Maggie, she believes that by going to Mars she will become a better scientist than she could ever hope to be on Earth. Ms Lieu hopes that this mission will inspire younger generations to become interested in science. She says



that the project is feasible, but that it will be difficult and they need to stick to a strict schedule. Her only criticism of the project is that it seems to be minimising the scientific importance by promoting it as a TV programme, which she thinks is a waste of resources. However, she says that once she is on Mars she will ignore the cameras and concentrate on her own science and research.

- G Ryan Macdonald, 20, is a physics student at Oxford University. He believes that he can achieve more on Mars than he could on Earth. He says that the Moon landings inspired a generation of scientists and engineers on Earth to develop the computers, smartphones and other technology that have improved our lives. He thinks that these Mars landings could inspire the next generation of technology on Earth. Ryan believes that his age is an advantage because his mind is young and fresh, and he has many years of life left to contribute to the project. He thinks he will live longer on Mars than he would on Earth because the diet of the people who go and the air they breathe are going to be strictly controlled. He would miss tea the most, and says he wants to find a way to grow it on Mars.
- H Alison Rigby, 33, is a scientist from London. She believes that the project will enable her to do a more interesting and in-depth study of human behaviour in extreme conditions than would be possible on Earth. She thinks she is suitable for the project because she is a trained scientist, and she is naturally curious and creative. If Alison goes, she says that she will miss the variety of food that is available at home. On Mars, the diet will consist of fresh produce that the colonists grow, insects and vitamin supplements.

Source: Davis, J. (2014) Why we want to spend the rest of our lives on Mars. *The Guardian*, [online] 18 January. Available at: [www.theguardian.com/science/2014/jan/19/mars-one-project-human-colony](http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/jan/19/mars-one-project-human-colony) [Accessed 21 January 2014]

#### Questions 14 - 21

Complete the sentences below. Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 14 – 21 on your answer sheet.

- 14 The deadline for the first arrivals on Mars is .....
- 15 There will be a gap of ..... between each trip.
- 16 International relations will be ..... as a result of the mission.
- 17 Lockheed Martin is going to collaborate with Mars One on the construction of a .....
- 18 Building the equipment is a ..... of Lansdorp's commitment to the goals of the project.
- 19 The main source of funding for the project will be a .....
- 20 Aldrin believes that the project is only possible if there is .....
- 21 The initial forty travellers will be chosen during a televised .....

#### Questions 22 – 23

Which **TWO** of the following statements are mentioned in paragraphs A – E?

The statements do not follow the order of the text.

Choose **TWO** numbers from i – v. Write the correct letters in boxes 22 – 23 on your answer sheet.

- i The Mars One Project is Bas Lansdorp's only business.
- ii The development of new technology on Earth is only possible through space exploration.
- iii Lockheed Martin will not need to invent new technology for the project.
- iv Online advertising will provide some of the funding.
- v The live broadcast from Mars will be broadcast in every country on Earth.

**Questions 24 - 27**

*Look at the following list of people. Match each statement 24 - 27 with the correct person A – E. You will **NOT** use all of the letters. Write your answers in boxes 24 - 27 on your answer sheet.*

*The statements do not follow the order of the text.*

- A Maggie Lieu
- B Bas Lansdorp
- C Alison Rigby
- D Buzz Aldrin
- E Ryan Macdonald

24 The current timetable is not feasible and needs to be adjusted.

Answer .....

25 The mission will advance scientific and technical knowledge on earth.

Answer .....

26 It will be possible to do detailed research into human psychology.

Answer .....

27 Remaining on Earth will mean that there are fewer possibilities for professional development.

Answer .....



### Reading Passage 3

*You should spend about 20 minutes on questions 28 – 40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.*

#### Forget crispy duck: Regional Chinese food is taking over Britain

Kai Wang, 26, is a media professional who came to the UK from Beijing in 2008, first to study and then to work. Wang says, "When I arrived in London I thought I was really going to miss Beijing food. I love traditional Beijing cuisine, but also the spicy dishes that have become popular in recent years from regions such as Sichuan, Hunan and Hubei. When I came to the UK, the Chinese food here all seemed to be Cantonese style, which is too sweet, light and delicate for Beijing tastes. Cantonese immigrants who arrived decades ago brought Hong Kong flavours adapted to western tastes to the UK, but more and more authentic Chinese regional restaurants have opened in the past few years, not just in Chinatown but all over the city."



In the mid-1990s, a restaurant called Baguo Buyi opened in the Sichuanese capital, Chengdu. The chef created a modern version of traditional Sichuan cooking and started a nationwide trend for Sichuanese flavours. Following this, Hunanese food and the nutritious and filling dishes of the Dongbei region enjoyed a moment of fame in Chinese culinary fashion. More recent Chinese arrivals to the UK, who include not only students but also business-people and tourists, are just as likely to come from Fujian, Shanghai or Liaoning as the Cantonese south of China, which means that Chinese restaurateurs no longer need to adapt their tastes to an old stereotype of Anglo-Cantonese (a mix of British and Cantonese) food.

Many establishments, including Liao Wei Feng in Bethnal Green and Local Friends in Golders Green, have menus divided into two sections. They have one list of the usual Anglo-Cantonese



dishes, including lemon chicken and crispy duck, and another offering some of the most authentic Hunanese food available in the capital, with choices such as "stir-fried fragrant and hot fish" and "steamed belly pork, Chairman Mao-style". Non-meat eaters particularly like the range of traditional Hunanese options that Local Friends offers, such as kailan (Chinese greens) in garlic sauce.

Hunanese cuisine is not the only type of food being gradually introduced into British restaurant culture. Large numbers of Fujianese immigrants have joined the catering trade, like the Cantonese migrants did years ago. Fujian province lies on the south-eastern Chinese coast, and is known for its delicate soups, appetising street snacks and flavoursome oysters and other shellfish and fish found in the ocean. Currently, there is only one Fujianese restaurant in London, Fuzhou in Gerrard Street, which is particularly well-



known for its fishballs stuffed with minced pork, and cabbage-and-clam soup with slippery rice pasta.

Shanghainese food has traditionally been hard to find in Britain, even though the region is particularly famous for its food in China. The city itself is best known for the xiao long bao "soup dumpling", but the wider region is the source of delicious river food such as fish, crab, eel and shrimp, and famous dishes including "beggar's chicken" and "dongpo pork". In London, consultant chef Zhang Chichang creates elegant Shanghainese dishes at the Bright Courtyard Club in Baker Street. New Quebec Street is the location for The Red Sun restaurant, which is usually full of diners enjoying simple, home-cooked stir-fries such as green soya beans with pork and pickled greens, despite the restaurant's old-fashioned and worn out interior. This is a sure sign that the food is particularly good.

Sichuan and Hunan are China's best-known spice regions, but chillies are most widely used in Guizhou province. Maotai Kitchen in Soho, London offers traditional Guizhou food. The chef, Zhu Shixiu, grew up in the beautiful hills near the Guizhou-Hunan border, and, after years of working in Cantonese restaurants, is now allowed to put anything he likes on the menu. Many of his home-cooked style dishes share the sour-hot characteristic of Hunanese cooking, but the interesting lemongrass flavour in some of them comes from litsea oil (mu jiang you), a Chinese medicine used to improve the flavour of food in Guizhou and a few other regions.



While there has been a growth in the availability of regional cuisines in the capital, only Sichuanese cuisine has really become known in cities all over the country – a sign, perhaps, of its decade-long status as China's trendiest style of cooking. Red N Hot has branches in Manchester and Birmingham, while Red Chilli has expanded from Manchester into Leeds and York. My Sichuan has taken over the old school house at Gloucester Green, Oxford, where Zhou Jun from Chengdu runs a kitchen offering all the classic Sichuanese specialities.

As China's changing culinary fashions continue to create excitement in the restaurant scene in London, the range of regional flavours is likely to increase and spread across the country. In the meantime, Sichuanese cuisine has already completely changed the face of Chinese food in many parts of Britain. Now it is possible to try authentic Chinese food in many UK cities.

### Questions 28 - 35

Look at the following list of restaurants and regions. Match each statement 28 - 35 with the correct restaurant or region A - K. You will NOT use all of the letters. Write your answers in boxes 28 - 35 on your answer sheet.

The statements do not follow the order of the text.

#### Restaurants:

- A Baguo Buyi
- B Local Friends
- C Fuzhuo
- D Bright Courtyard Club
- E The Red Sun
- F Maotai Kitchen

#### Regions:

- G Sichuan
- H Hunan
- I Fujian
- J Guizhou
- K Hubei

- 28 This restaurant serves fish dishes from south-east China.

Answer .....

- 29 This restaurant first made Sichuanese food fashionable in China.

Answer .....

- 30 This region serves the spiciest dishes.

Answer .....

- 31 This London restaurant serves sophisticated Shanghainese food.

Answer .....

- 32 This restaurant serves food that is particularly suitable for vegetarians.

Answer .....

- 33 This is the only Chinese region that has its cuisine available in major cities throughout the UK.

Answer .....

- 34 This region's cuisine became trendy after that of Sichuan.

Answer .....

- 35 This restaurant serves food from Guizhou.

Answer .....

**Questions 36 – 40**

*Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 3?*

*In boxes 36 - 40 on your answer sheet, write*

**TRUE/ T**                      *if the statement agrees with the information*

**FALSE/ F**                    *if the statement contradicts the information*

**NOT GIVEN/ NG**        *if there is no information on this*

36     Most current Chinese immigrants to the UK are from the Cantonese south of China.

Answer .....

37     The Lemon Chicken served in Liao Wei Feng is an authentic Cantonese dish.

Answer .....

38     Many people moving to the UK from Fujian are working in Cantonese restaurants.

Answer .....

39     The Red Sun restaurant is popular because of its food and its cosy interior.

Answer .....

40     Zhu Shixiu is famous for adding a traditional medicinal ingredient to all of his dishes.

Answer .....

**THAT IS THE END OF THE TEST.**

**NOW TRANSFER YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ANSWER SHEET.**

Adapted from: Dunlop, F. 2014. Forget crispy duck: regional Chinese food is taking over Britain. *The Guardian*, [online] 29 January. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jan/29/regional-chinese-food-britain-sichuan-hunan> [Accessed 29 January 2014]



# Reading Practice Test – Answer Sheet

## Birmingham City University English Proficiency Test - Reading



Name: .....

Test Date: .....

ID Number: .....

Test Centre: .....

Make sure you write your answers in the correct boxes.

1		21	
2		22	
3		23	
4		24	
5		25	
6		26	
7		27	
8		28	
9		29	
10		30	
11		31	
12		32	
13		33	
14		34	
15		35	
16		36	
17		37	
18		38	
19		39	
20		40	

*For office use only*

*Total out of 40:*

*Band:*

Birmingham City University

**Birmingham City University**  
**English Proficiency Test**



**Reading - Answer Key**

	Reading Passage 1		Reading Passage 2 continued...
<b>1</b>	False (or F)	<b>21</b>	Selection process
<b>2</b>	False (or F)	<b>22</b>	(in any order)
<b>3</b>	True (or T)	<b>23</b>	iii, iv (3, 4)
<b>4</b>	True (or T)	<b>24</b>	D
<b>5</b>	False (or F)	<b>25</b>	E
<b>6</b>	Not Given (or NG)	<b>26</b>	C
<b>7</b>	F	<b>27</b>	A
<b>8</b>	C		Reading Passage 3
<b>9</b>	A	<b>28</b>	C
<b>10</b>	D	<b>29</b>	A
<b>11</b>	B	<b>30</b>	J
<b>12</b>	(in any order)	<b>31</b>	D
<b>13</b>	A, E	<b>32</b>	B
	Reading Passage 2	<b>33</b>	G
<b>14</b>	2025	<b>34</b>	H
<b>15</b>	26 months	<b>35</b>	F
<b>16</b>	Improved	<b>36</b>	False (or F)
<b>17</b>	Satellite	<b>37</b>	False (or F)
<b>18</b>	(Strong) Sign	<b>38</b>	Not Given (or NG)
<b>19</b>	TV Channel	<b>39</b>	False (or F)
<b>20</b>	International cooperation	<b>40</b>	False (or F)

## Birmingham City University

### English Proficiency Test

# Writing

- Do not open this booklet before the examiner tells you to.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Total time available: 45 minutes.
- You are advised to spend 5 minutes planning before you start to write.
- Try to leave time to check your writing carefully when you have finished.
- Anything written in the planning space will not be marked.
- Write in pen or pencil.

Name: .....

ID Number: .....

Test Centre: .....

Date: .....

Result (band):

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Present a written argument to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the topic below.

Use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with **examples** and **relevant evidence**.

Television has had a significant influence on the culture of many societies.  
To what extent would you say that television has affected the cultural development of your country?

You should write at least **250 words**.

Plan your answer below. This plan will not be marked.

SAMPLE

3

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal lines.

For office use only				
Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resources	Grammar and Accuracy	Overall

## Birmingham City University

### English Proficiency Test

# Speaking

The speaking test comprises three parts and lasts for around 11 – 13 minutes. It consists of a one-to-one interview between you and the examiner.

**Part 1:** you will be asked some general questions about yourself, where you are from, your interests etc. This part lasts 3-4 minutes.

**Part 2:** you will be given a topic to prepare and talk about. There is 1 minute to think about this and note down some ideas, and then you are expected to talk for around 1 to 2 minutes.

**Part 3:** the examiner will ask you some questions to elicit more detailed discussion on the topic. This part should last about 5 minutes.

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BIRMINGHAM CITY  
University

### **Sample Questions:**

#### **PART 1 (5 – 7 MINUTES)**

- What is your full name?
- Can I see you ID?
- Where are you from?
- Do you work or study?
- Can you describe your home town or village:
  - What kind of place is it?
  - Is it famous for anything?
  - Do you think it is a good place to live? (Why? Why not?)
- Let's talk about health:
  - Do you do anything to look after your health?
  - What kinds of foods are good for our health?
  - Describe a healthy meal that you enjoy.

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## **PART 2 (4 – 5 MINUTES)**

You should talk for about one and a half minutes about the topic below.

Before you start talking, you have 1 minute to think about what you are going to say and make some notes.

When I ask you to start, you should start talking and keep talking until I ask you to stop. After this, I will ask you one or two more questions related to this topic.

### **YOUR TOPIC:**

**Describe something you own which is very important to you.**

**Describe it and say why it is so important.**

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**PART 3 - Follow up questions (2 to 3 minutes)**

- Do you own anything that is important to you, but not worth any money?
- Do you think that people are too focused on owning lots of things?
- In your country is it more usual for people to buy or rent their home? Which would you prefer?

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