

Preparing for the IELTS test with Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

The listening component

The IELTS listening test takes approximately 30 minutes. The listening material is recorded on a cassette tape which you will hear only once. There are four sections in the listening test presented in order of increasing difficulty. The first two sections are on topics of general interest such as a report of a lost bag or an introduction to a public facility. Section one will be in the form of a dialogue, section two will be a monologue.

Sections three and four will have an education or training focus. There will be a lecture and a discussion between two and four people.

As you listen you should write your answers on the question booklet. At the end of the recorded material you will be given ten minutes to copy your answers onto the answer sheet.

Most candidates come out of the listening test not feeling very confident of their answers after listening to the recording only once. For this reason it is very important that you take a number of timed practice listening tests before the actual exam day to become familiar with the style of questions asked, the speed of the speech and to develop the skill of recording your answers as you listen.

Sample tapescript and questions

The following sample tapescript and questions are based on section four of the listening test (a short lecture with an education or training focus). Generally each of the four extracts will be divided into sections so that you will have only a few questions to answer at a time. You will be given a few seconds after each section to check your answers and read the next group of questions. In the real IELTS test the questions will not test your understanding of a point in the listening material more than once, as they may do here. For more information about the other sections of the test, consult the recommended IELTS guidebooks.

Tapescript

Good morning everyone. Welcome to the second year of your teaching degree. My name is Simon Taylor. I'm a second year lecturer in the education faculty. Today I'll be giving you an overview of the field trip to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, that you all registered for at the end of last year.

As many of you will be aware, the field trip is offered to student teachers in the second year of the teaching degree. The trip replaces the three week practical teaching placement in the second semester. But please don't get the impression that the trip will be a holiday. In fact you will do the same amount of work in Vietnam as your peers do in Australia. You will still complete 3 weeks practice teaching, but in a Vietnamese school rather than an Australian one. Each week you will need to teach 10 hours and observe at least 10 hours. Your class supervisor will be the student's normal teacher and so will most probably be Vietnamese. You will need to fit in with what the class supervisor asks you to teach and follow any instructions they may give you in terms of teaching methodology. You might find this difficult at first, especially if what the class supervisor asks you to do contradicts the methodology we have taught you here. But remember that whatever happens, it will be a learning experience. Actually in past field trips the Vietnamese supervisors have not interfered at all and our student teachers have found them very supportive.

You will be placed in classes at the University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City. This is the largest teacher training institution for secondary teachers in the south of Vietnam. It has a very good reputation within the country and with foreign universities. Cambridge University and Melbourne University and a number of others have developed good ties with the University of Education. Many of the staff have received their training in England, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

The section of the university that you'll be working in is the Centre for Foreign Languages. This is the largest English language centre in the country and enrolls up to 40,000 students across 12 campuses at any one time. The students in this section of the university are in fact not trainee teachers but members of the public who pay fees to study English.

The language centre runs in three shifts of four hours each day. They are from 7am to 11am, 1pm to 5pm and 5pm to 9pm. So each student will be in class for four hours in the morning, afternoon or evening. But they don't study every day. Classes run three times a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, which the Vietnamese call the even days, or on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday - the odd days. You will teach two hours of the morning shift each day except Saturday. You'll have two groups of students. One group on the even days and the other on the odd days. If you would like to get out your blank timetables I'll tell you your teaching commitments.

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On Monday you'll observe your first group (which we'll call group A) for the first two hours then teach from 9am-11am. Apart from Wednesday you'll be free during the afternoon shift to prepare your lessons. In the evening on Monday there'll be an official welcoming dinner put on by the university.

On Tuesday, you'll observe your second group (group B) from 7am till 9am and then teach the rest of the lesson. In the evening we will go out to dinner together on a floating restaurant.

On Wednesday you'll teach group A from 7am to 9am and then observe until 11am. A few of the students are planning to take you on a tour of the city in the afternoon. And we will take them out for dinner in the evening.

On Thursday it will be group B again. You'll teach them from 7am till 9am and observe from 9am to 11am. As yet we haven't made any plans for the evening meal on Thursday.

Friday, you'll teach from 7am to 9am and observe from 9am to 11am. And that will be group A again. In the evening we will travel by bus to Vung Tau which is a sea side city a couple of hours out of Ho Chi Minh City. We'll be staying in Vung Tau over the weekend. So Saturday and Sunday will of course be free.

In the classes you'll be teaching, there could be up to 70 students and the furniture which consists of long benches cannot be moved. So setting students into small discussion groups is quite difficult but not impossible. We'll talk more about some strategies for teaching large classes in our tutorials before the field trip.

Well, I think that's all I have to say at present about the field trip. Cathy Jones is here now to talk about the non-teaching arrangements such as your accommodation, sight seeing and so on.

Sample question one: selecting topics

Task description

You will be provided with a number of topics, three of which summarise parts of the listening text. The others are not discussed in the listening text. Your task is to decide which three topics are discussed.

Sample task

Tick the three items which are discussed in the talk.

- | | |
|----|--|
| A. | Teaching schedule for student teachers |
| B. | Safety issues for student teachers on the field trip |
| C. | Accommodation |
| D. | How the field trip fits into the teaching degree |
| E. | Vietnamese students' level of proficiency in English |
| F. | How the work requirements for the field trip compare with the work requirements for student teachers who remain in Australia |
| G. | Quality of English language teaching in Vietnamese universities |
| H. | Textbooks commonly used in Vietnamese English classes |

Answer Key	
A.	✓
B.	
C.	
D.	✓
E.	
F.	✓

Sample question two: summary completion

Task description

The input for this type of question will be a summary of all or part of the listening text. The summary will contain a number of gaps. All of the information in the summary will be contained in the listening text although the words used may be different.

Your task is to complete the summary using not more than three words for each gap.

Sample task

Complete the notes below by writing no more than three words in the spaces provided.

Simon Taylor, a ... (1) ... from the education faculty, gave some information about the ... (2) ... to ... (3) ... which will be held in the ... (4) The student teachers will complete three weeks in a Vietnamese language centre involving ten hours of ... (5) ... and ten hours of ... (6)

Answer Key	
1.	lecturer/second year lecturer
2.	field trip
3.	Vietnam
4.	second semester
5.	observation

Sample question three: multiple choice

Task description

In this question type you will be given a 'stem' which may be an incomplete sentence (e.g. Questions 1 and 32 below) or a question (e.g. question 2 below). The stem will be followed by three or four options - one will be correct (the answer) and three may seem possible but are in fact incorrect in some way (the distractors).

In tackling this type of question it is very important to read the stem carefully. Candidates often make careless mistakes when they misread the stem and so choose the wrong option.

Sample task

Circle the appropriate letters A - D.

1. Participants on the field trip will be:
 - A. Vietnamese teachers
 - B. students of English
 - C. Australian teachers
 - D. trainee teachers

2. How long will the field trip run for?
 - A. 1 week
 - B. 3 weeks
 - C. one month
 - D. one semester

3. The Foreign Language Centre runs classes:
 - A. 7 days a week
 - B. 6 days a week
 - C. 5 days a week
 - D. 3 days a week

Answer Key	
1.	D
2.	B
3.	B

Sample question four: form completion

Task description

You will be provided with an incomplete form which covers information from the listening text. Your task is to complete the gaps in three words or fewer.

The information in the form will be presented in the same order as the information you hear. In other words, you will hear the answer to question one before the answer to question two. So it is very important that you use the time given to look at the question booklet to try and work out the order that you will hear the required information. In the case below, the questions are ordered vertically through the days of the week not horizontally. So you can expect to hear information about Monday first, then Tuesday etc. rather than mornings first then afternoons, evenings etc.

Sample task

Complete the form. Write no more than three words for each answer.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning 7-9	Observe group A	... (2) ...	Teach group A	... (5)...	Teach group A
Morning 9 -11	... (1) ...	Teach group B	Observe group A	... (6) ...	Observe group A
Afternoon	Prepare lessons	... (3)...	... (4)...	Prepare lessons	Prepare lessons
Evening	welcoming dinner	dinner floating restaurant	Dinner with students	No plans	travel by ... (7) ... to Vung Tau

Answer Key

1.	Teach group A
2.	Observe group B
3.	Prepare lessons
4.	City tour
5.	Teach group B
6.	Observe group B
7.	Bus

Sample question five: sentence completion

Task description

You will be provided with a number of incomplete statements which you need to complete using information from the listening text. Generally you must complete the statement in three words or fewer, but confirm this with the instructions.

The questions will be presented in the same order as the answers in the listening text. In other words, you will hear the answer to question one before the answer to question two.

Sample task

Complete the notes using no more than three words.

1. In the mornings the student teachers will
2. student teachers could be teaching large classes with up to
3. Discussion groups are quite difficult to arrange in Vietnamese classes but not

Answer Key	
1.	teach and observe
2.	70 students
3.	impossible

Sample question six: short answer questions

Task description

You will be provided with a number of questions which you have to answer. Generally your answers must be in three words or fewer, but confirm this with the instructions.

Sample task

Answer the questions using no more than three words

1. How many campuses does the Centre for Foreign Languages have?
2. How many hours does each lesson run for?
3. What will Cathy Jones talk about?

Answer Key	
1.	12
2.	4
3.	non-teaching arrangements/accommodation, sight-seeing, etc