

Read the following two passages and complete the writing tasks in your own words. You are encouraged to draw on your knowledge of the topics and your personal experiences. This test is 100-minute long.

PASSAGE A

[Excerpted from “College is a Waste of Time and Money” by Caroline Bird (1975)]

A great majority of our nine million college students are not in school because they want to be or because they want to learn. They are there because it has become the thing to do or because college is a pleasant place to be; because it's the only way they can get parents or taxpayers to support them without getting a job they don't like; because Mother wanted them to go, or some other reason entirely irrelevant to the course of studies for which college is supposedly organized.

The premise—which I no longer accept—that college is the best place for all high school graduates grew out of a noble American ideal. Just as the United States was the first nation to aspire to teach every small child to read and write, so, during the 1950s, we became the first and only great nation to aspire to higher education for all. During the '60's we damned the expense and built great state university systems as fast as we could. And adults—parents, employers, high school counselors—began to push, shove and cajole youngsters to “get an education.”

Nowadays, says one sociologist, you don't have to have a reason for going to college; it's an institution. His definition of an institution is an arrangement everyone accepts without question; the burden of proof is not on why you go, but why anyone thinks there might be a reason for not going. The implication is that an 18-year-old is too young and confused to know what he wants to do, and that he should listen to those who know best and go to college.

I don't agree. I believe that college has to be judged not on what other people think is good for students, but on how it feels to the students. I believe that people have an inside view of what's good for them. If a child doesn't want to go to school some morning, better let him stay home, at least until you find out why. Maybe he knows something you don't. It's the same with college. If high-school graduates don't want to go, or if they don't want to go right away, they may perceive more clearly than their elders that college is not for them. It is no longer obvious that adolescents are best off studying a core curriculum that was constructed

when all educated men could agree on what made them educated, or that professors, advisors, or parents can be of any particular help to young people in choosing a major or a career. High-school graduates see college graduates driving cabs, and decide it's not worth going and drop out.

Of course, most parents aren't thinking of the "higher" good at all. They send their children to college because they are convinced young people benefit financially from those four years of higher education. But if making money is the only goal, college is the dumbest investment you can make. I say this because a young banker in Poughkeepsie, New York, Stephen G. Necel, used a computer to compare college as an investment with other investments available in 1974 and college did not come out on top.

In fact there is no real evidence that the higher income of college graduates is due to college. College may simply attract people who are slated to earn more money anyway; those with higher IQs, better family backgrounds, a more enterprising temperament. No one who has wrestled with the problem is prepared to attribute all of the higher income to the impact of college itself.

John Shingleton, director of placement at Michigan State University, accuses the academic community of outright hypocrisy. "Educators have never said, 'Go to college and get a good job,' but this has been implied, and now students expect it.... If we care what happens to students after college, then let's get involved with what should be one of the basic purposes of education: career preparation."

And it's not at all apparent that what is actually learned in a "Professional" education is necessary for success. Teachers, engineers and others I talked to said they find that on the job they rarely use what they learned in school. In order to see how well college prepared engineers and scientists for actual paid work in their fields, the Carnegie Commission queried all the employees with degrees in these fields in two large firms. Only one in five said the work they were doing bore a "very close relationship" to their college studies, while almost a third saw "very little relationship at all." An overwhelming majority could think of many people who were doing their same work, but had majored in different fields.

The conclusion we can reach is that college probably has very little, if any, effect on people and things at all. Today, the false promises are easy to see: first, college doesn't make people intelligent, ambitious, happy, or liberal. It's the other way around. Intelligent, ambitious, happy, liberal people are attracted to higher education in the first place. Second, college can't claim much credit for the learning experiences that really change students while they are

there. Jobs, friends, history, and most of all the sheer passage of time, have as big an impact as anything even indirectly related to the campus. Finally, a college diploma no longer opens as many vocational doors. Employers are beginning to realize that when they pay extra for someone with a diploma, they are paying only for an empty credential. The fact is that most of the work for which employers now expect college training is now or has been done in the past by people without higher educations.

College, then, may be a good place for those few young people who are really drawn to academic work, who would rather read than eat, but it has become too expensive, in money, time, and intellectual effort to serve as a holding-pen for large numbers of our young. We ought to make it possible for those reluctant, unhappy students to find alternative ways of growing up, and more realistic preparation for the years ahead.

Writing task (50%)

- 1 Briefly summarize the main ideas of the passage in around 100 words. (15%)
- 2 Do you agree with the author's point of view about the value of college education? Explain why you agree or disagree with the author in around 300 words. (35%)

PASSAGE B

[Excerpts from "Fighting fake news: societies using technology to search for truth," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2017.]

Fake news has been accused of influencing election results and giving rise to populist movements. Is there anything governments - and citizens - can do to fight back?

Some interesting responses to the fake news phenomenon are now in place around the world. The Czech government's interior ministry, for instance, has opened a Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats in a bid to fight fake news. The centre was set up after 40 Czech language websites emerged containing false stories, predominantly about migrants. Specialists working for the centre are attempting to counter false information via a dedicated Twitter account, as well as a website devoted to communicating the government viewpoint.

Of course, there are ethical issues around removing content, so governments must tread a fine balance. Rather than eliminating the stories altogether, the ministry said it aims to work alongside technology companies and news organisations to help citizens make more informed choices.

Meanwhile, the German government is hoping social media sites and their users will help in

the battle against fake news. Claire Wardle, research director at First Draft News, says fake stories can be identified using similar methods to those deployed by companies that work with brands to make sure adverts don't sit beside problematic content.

Community involvement is a common theme in the battle to tackle fake news. In Taiwan for example, Taiwan is a government initiative that uses a range of digital tools to involve citizens. Government departments are signed up to answer queries, while larger consultations, on topics like the sharing economy, also use social media to direct participants to the project.

Governments are starting to tackle false online stories, but there are challenges to overcome. Part of the problem is technology: analytics tools are not yet sophisticated enough to handle the complex nature of identifying fake news, says Jamal Elmellas, chief technology officer at Auriga Consulting. "In order for the tools to work, you would need to have artificial intelligence nailed. It's not. We can solve rudimentary puzzles, but nothing as granular and wide as fake news."

Mike Upchurch, co-founder of data analytics firm Fuzzy Logix, cites the example of a US government programme to mine news stories from around the world to identify insurgencies or the spread of disease. "It's actually really difficult to extract information from news sources and social media at the kind of scale involved," points out Upchurch. "Now imagine that some material percentage of the data is fake. The challenge of weeding out fake news makes the job of understanding and predicting events that much harder."

At First Draft News, Wardle says collaboration between governments, technology companies, news organisations and citizens is necessary. "Everyone needs to work together. The whole system, not one institution, is needed to solve this."

And the real answer may be even more deep-rooted and long-term. Daniel Faraci, a director at Grassroots Political Consulting, believes in education so users can debunk false stories themselves. "Education should be more localised and of a better standard," he says. "Then people can self-determine where they get their news from."

Writing task (50%)

Do you consider reading newspapers and watching news an important part of your daily life? What are your usual sources of learning about latest news? Do you rely on social media or more 'traditional' outlets like newspapers and television? Do you consider fake news a serious problem for society? Why has fighting fake news become important in many countries? Write a short essay (250-400 words) in which you express your opinions on the issue of fake news, preferably using your own experiences to support your arguments.