

108 學年度大學甄選入學英文讀寫能力測驗試題

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

[Excerpts from *The Guardian* “AI Can Write Just Like Me. Brace for the Robot Apocalypse” by Hannah Jane Parkinson, *The Guardian* February 15, 2019]

Elon Musk, recently busying himself with calling people “pedo” on Twitter and potentially violating US securities law with what was perhaps just a joke about weed—both perfectly normal activities—is now involved in a move to terrify us all. The non-profit he backs, OpenAI, has developed an AI system so good it had me quaking in my trainers when it was fed an article of mine and wrote an extension of it that was a perfect act of journalistic ventriloquism.

As my colleague Alex Hern wrote yesterday: “The system [GPT2] is pushing the boundaries of what was thought possible, both in terms of the quality of the output, and the wide variety of potential uses.” GPT2 is so efficient that the full research is not being released publicly yet because of the risk of misuse.

And that’s the thing—this AI has the potential to absolutely devastate. It could exacerbate the already massive problem of fake news and extend the sort of abuse and bigotry that bots have already become capable of doling out on social media (see Microsoft’s AI chatbot, Tay, which pretty quickly started tweeting about Hitler). It will quash the essay-writing market, given it could just knock ‘em out, without an Oxbridge graduate in a studio flat somewhere charging £500. It could inundate you with emails and make it almost impossible to distinguish the real from the auto-generated. An example of the issues involved: in Friday’s print *Guardian* we ran an article that GPT2 had written itself (it wrote its own made-up quotes; structured its own paragraphs; added its own “facts”) and at present we have not published that piece online, because we couldn’t figure out a way that would nullify the risk of it being taken as real if viewed out of context.

The thing is, Musk has been warning us about how robots and AI will take over the world for ages—and he very much has a point. Though it’s easy to make jokes about his obsession with AI doom, this isn’t just one of his quirks. He has previously said that AI represents our “biggest existential threat” and called its progression “summoning the demon”. The reason he and others support OpenAI (a non-profit, remember) is that he hopes it will be a responsible developer and a counter to corporate or other bad actors (I should mention at this point that Musk’s Tesla is, of course, one of these corporate entities employing AI). Though OpenAI is holding its system back – releasing it for a limited period for journalists to test before rescinding access – it won’t be long before other systems are created. This tech is coming.

Traditional news outlets – Bloomberg and Reuters, for example – already have elements of news pieces written by machine. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian* have experimented – earlier this month *Guardian Australia* published its first automated article written by a text generator called ReporterMate. This sort of reporting will be particularly useful in financial and

sports journalism, where facts and figures often play a dominant role. I can vouch for the fact newsrooms have greeted this development with an element of panic, even though the ideal would be to employ these auto-generated pieces to free up time for journalists to work on more analytical and deeply researched stories.

But, oh my God. Seeing GPT2 “write” one of “my” articles was a stomach-dropping moment: a) it turns out I am not the unique genius we all assumed me to be; an actual machine can replicate my tone to a T; b) does anyone have any job openings?

In a wider context, the startling thing is that once super-intelligent AI has been created and released it is going to be very hard to put it back in the box. Basically, AI could have hugely positive uses and impressive implications (in healthcare, for instance, though it may not be as welcomed in the world of the Chinese game Go), but could also have awful consequences.

The stakes are huge, which is why Musk – again, in one of his more sensible moods – is advocating for greater oversight of companies well on their way in the AI race (Facebook, Amazon and Alphabet’s DeepMind to take just three examples. AND TESLA). Others have also stressed the importance of extensive research into AI before it’s too late: the late Stephen Hawking even said AI could signal “the end of the human race” and an Oxford professor, Nick Bostrom, has said “our fate would be sealed” once malicious machine super-intelligence had spread.

At least as we hurtle towards this cheering apocalypse we’ll have the novels and poetry that GPT2 also proved adept at creating. Now you just need to work out whether it was actually me who wrote this piece.

Writing Tasks (50%)

1. According to the author, what makes the development of GPT2 so unnerving? Explain the difference between previous automated writing programs and GPT2? Why and how the new program’s ability to imitate one’s style of writing can wreak havoc on the foundation of democratic communication? (25%)
2. Many luminaries from the world of science have issued warnings about the dangers of AI. Do you agree with their doomsday predictions? If you agree, elaborate with a possible doomsday scenario. If you disagree, provide a counter argument. (25%)

Passage B

[Excerpts from “Should Engineers Pay Less for College than English Majors?” by Katherine Schulten, *The New York Times*, December 12, 2012 and ““Florida May Reduce Tuition for Select Majors” by Lizette Alvarez, *The New York Times* December 9, 2012]

Should students majoring engineering, science, and technology – all fields in demand in the job market –pay less for college than those majoring in history, philosophy, anthropology, or English? The governor of Florida says he thinks so, at least at Florida’s 12 state universities.

Notes:

- “English majors” in the USA is equivalent to Chinese majors in Taiwan. In the US, English-major students learn American literature, while in Taiwan, Chinese-major students learn Chinese literature. This article does NOT talk about foreign-languages major.
- “State universities” in the USA have a similar concept to national universities in Taiwan, where students pay less to attend college in comparison to private universities due to government’s subsidies.

For this part of the exam, first read the following excerpt of an article about this proposal, taken from *The New York Times*, then answer the questions at the end.

Rick Scott, businessman turned politician, campaigned for [Florida] governor in 2010 with promises to run Florida like a successful business — more efficiency, lower costs, less hand-wringing and measurable results.

Now, looking for more value on the remaining dollars, Governor Scott and Republican lawmakers are prodding Florida’s 12 state universities to find ways to steer students toward majors that are in demand in the job market.

The message from Tallahassee [Florida’s state capital] could not be blunter: Give us engineers, scientists, health care specialists and technology experts. Do not worry so much about historians, philosophers, anthropologists and English majors.

To nudge students toward job-friendly degrees, the governor’s task force on higher education suggested recently that university tuition rates be frozen for three years for majors in “strategic areas,” which would vary depending on supply and demand. An undergraduate student would pay less for a degree in engineering or biotechnology — whose classes are among the most expensive for universities — than for a degree in history or psychology. State financing, which has dropped drastically in the past five years, would be expected to make up the tuition gap.

Dale A. Brill, the chairman of the governor’s task force and a “liberal arts guy,” said universities needed to be realistic. Generous state financing is no longer an option, at least not in Florida. Universities, he said, need to be practical about the value of their degrees at a time when well-paying jobs are scarce, a position taken by a growing number of institutions and one that underscores the latest philosophical divide over education.

“The higher education system needs to evolve with the economy,” said Mr. Brill, the president of the Florida Chamber Foundation. “People pay taxes expecting that the public good will be served to the greatest degree possible. We call that a return on investment.”

At the University of Florida, the state’s most prestigious campus, a group of history professors criticized the recommendation for tiered tuition and organized a protest petition. Liberal arts devotees across the state are signing it. The professors said the move would inevitably reduce the number of students who take humanities classes, which would further diminish financing for those departments. In the end, Florida universities with nationally prominent programs, like the one for

Latin American history at the University of Florida, will lose coveted professors and their overall luster.

According to Lillian Guerra, an associate professor of Cuban and Caribbean history, “A degree in the humanities gives students a set of analytical skills and writing skills. You’re trained to think critically and use evidence and write about it.” In the long run, differential tuition could mean a less “richly educated” workforce. Students in strategic majors also could suffer from lack of a well-rounded education – something she said makes them “truly adaptable and employable over the course of their lives.”

Writing Task (50%)

1. What do you think about the issue that is being reported by this New York Times article?
2. Do you think a system like this would encourage students to enroll in more “job-friendly” degrees like science and technology?
3. How do you think people who study the humanities, like English, history, anthropology, etc., can survive in the high-tech 21st century’s job market?

Write an essay about this topic, addressing the questions above. You need to write 4 paragraphs in this essay.

- The first paragraph summarizes this controversial issue in your own words.
- The second paragraph states your position and explains your **FIRST** reason to support your position.
- The third paragraph explains your **SECOND** reason to support your position.
- The fourth paragraph is your conclusion paragraph.

Your essay will be graded based on your English language use. The stance that you take towards this issue will **NOT** affect your grade.