IELTS Reading
Academic

Test 8

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READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–14, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

The Commercialisation of Sport

The organisers of the London 2012 Olympic Games adopted the slogan "Inspire a generation" with good reason. Elite sport can certainly be a powerful influence on society. Many youngsters are inspired to take up sports after watching incredible athletic feats on TV or at live sporting events. Sports fans daydream about what it would be like to be a professional athlete competing at the very highest level. Even those with limited interest in sport are likely to recognise leading sports stars due to the considerable media attention these individuals receive. The profile of professional sport has never been so high.

We are now in an entirely new era of sports commercialisation. The size of the sports market is incredible. In the US alone, the sports industry is forecasted to be worth over $83 billion within a few years. To put that in context, America's car industry is worth $82 billion, while film and music are worth just under $20 billion combined. Worldwide, the sports market is expected to reach almost $600 billion within a decade. Perhaps an even clearer sign of sport's growing status is the creation of brand-new employment opportunities. Professional sport now involves roles such as sports agents, sports statisticians and sports lawyers. This has also led to degree courses designed to help students to develop careers in the professional sports sector.

Since 1945, sport has increasingly become a commodity to be exploited for commercial gain. The term "golden triangle" is used to explain how this commercialisation of sport has developed. The golden triangle consists of three core elements, which are the sport itself, media and corporate sponsors. These three elements depend heavily on one another for consumers and revenue. Without this golden triangle, sport wouldn't occupy such a prominent role in modern society.

Naturally, the more popular a sport is, the more value it has to broadcasters and, therefore, sponsors. Broadcasters are willing to pay more for the rights to popular sports. This in turn helps the sport to develop further because the money received from broadcasting can be invested in improving facilities and coaching, and attracting top international athletes. It also gives the sport a bigger platform through which even more fans can be reached. From the media's perspective, the more the sport grows the bigger the audiences it will attract, which enables broadcasters and media outlets to increase their own advertising revenues.

Despite the considerable financial benefits, there are concerns about whether media outlets now interfere too much in professional sport. For instance, broadcasters can control when matches are held so that they can maximise their audience ratings, even if this is not in the best interests of the athletes or fans attending the events. Athletes are also required to take part in press conferences and interviews for the media, which can be a hugely stressful distraction. Also, since the media focuses on the most popular sports, the financial gap between mainstream and minority sports is widening. This means that less well-known sports struggle to gain attention or interest. If these sports receive no media coverage, how will they inspire the next generation to take them up?

The third component of the golden triangle, corporate sponsorship, has also been criticised. Companies pay considerable sums to sports broadcasters for the right to sponsor their coverage, and also for advertising time during commercial breaks. Sponsorship is also a vital source of funding for major sports competitions and events. There's no doubt that global tournaments such as the football World Cup or Olympic Games rely heavily on corporate investment. This means that events find it difficult to refuse funding from companies, and, as a result, may become associated with products or brands that conflict with the core principles of the sport. For instance, is it really acceptable for sporting events to take sponsorship from fast-food companies? Surely it would be better to sacrifice some financial support to send the right message to audiences.

Companies also pay to sponsor sports teams or individual athletes. Naturally, the most successful athletes and clubs receive the best sponsorship deals because companies aim to gain as much attention as possible. This increases the gap between big and small teams competing in the same sport, which can give bigger clubs an unfair competitive advantage. In the case of individual sponsorship deals, athletes are expected to represent a particular image at all times for their sponsors, even in their free time. This puts additional pressure on them because if they don't behave exactly how the company wants at all times, they may lose their sponsorship deals.

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Commercial interests are transforming professional sport. It is often argued that, since sport has gained so much media coverage and corporate promotion, athletic standards have improved. This is certainly valid since competing at an elite level requires significant financial resources. Sports may be reaching new audiences, which is definitely a positive if it encourages more people to be active. However, there is also a risk that the true meaning of sport is being sacrificed in the pursuit of financial rewards.

Questions 1–5
Look at the following criticisms and the features of modern sport below.
Match each criticism with the correct feature, A–D from the box below.

*Write the correct letter **A–D** in answer boxes 1–5.*

N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

1 There is a temptation to accept investment from unsuitable sources.

2 It means athletes have less control over their lives.

3 Sports decisions are made without considering the needs of fans or competitors.

4 It can lead to inequality within sports competitions.

5 Less popular sports are negatively affected.

A	Sponsorship of individual athletes
B	Sports broadcasting
C	Corporate sponsorship of clubs and teams
D	Corporate sponsorship of sports events

Questions 6–10
Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 6–10, write:

YES	*If the statement agrees with the claims of the writer*
NO	*If the statement contradicts the claims of the writer*
NOT GIVEN	*If it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

6 Careers in sport have become more in demand than careers in music and film. ☐

7 The cost of live sport coverage differs based on which channel is showing the event. ☐

8 Less well-known athletes find media duties more stressful than elite sports stars do. ☐

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9 Financial backing should be refused if there is a potential conflict with the values of an event. ☐

10 Commercialisation may improve the quality of sports performance. ☐

Questions 11–14
Complete the summary using the list of words or phrases, A–I, below.
*Write the correct letter, **A–I**, in boxes 11–14.*

The Golden Triangle

Professional sport is a product that can be bought and sold like any other good or service. The commercialisation of sport has developed through the interaction of three main **(11)**_____.

The **(12)**_____ sport receives from broadcasting rights can be used to develop its facilities or recruit trainers or athletes. Companies also contribute to the commercialisation of sport by sponsoring events or individual athletes.

There's no doubt that the golden triangle has raised the profile of sport, but it raises questions about the integrity of sport too. Commercial considerations should not **(13)**_____ how sports events are organised or run. Also, commercialisation tends to favour the most popular teams. This makes it even harder for smaller teams to compete on an equal **(14)**_____. This surely goes against the fundamental principle of competitive sport.

A	markets	**B**	income	**C**	determine
D	standard	**E**	sales	**F**	aspects
G	elite	**H**	prevent	**I**	basis

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READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 15–27, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

School Schedules

Section A

In many countries, the academic calendar has been in place for decades. The same applies for the timing and duration of the school day. Many of these school timetables were set long before research first began to be conducted on how students learn best. Therefore, it's unlikely that these schedules were originally created with specific educational purposes in mind. This has prompted educational experts to suggest that the time has come for schools to consider whether their schedules really meet students' learning needs. In particular, there are growing calls for the school day itself to be revised for teenage students.

Section B

During adolescence, people's natural sleep/wake rhythms change, meaning that there is a shift in the times when people feel sleepy or alert. Numerous studies have shown that teenagers don't feel sleepy until around 11pm. Even if they go to bed earlier than this, they will naturally find it difficult to fall asleep. At the same time, significant physical and cognitive changes occur during adolescence. Consequently, teenagers require on average one hour more sleep than they did during childhood. Given these two factors, it's hardly surprising that, around the world, many teenagers suffer from the effects of insufficient sleep if they must get up early for school.

Section C

It's highly likely that, when the school day begins before 10am, teenagers are too tired to focus on their lessons effectively. Over the long term, this has been shown to negatively affect teenagers' academic achievement. Sleep loss is also known to interfere with people's physical health. For instance, when people do not get adequate sleep, the body produces hormones that increases their appetite for food containing high amounts of fat, salt or sugar. Sleep loss has also been linked to mental-health issues including depression. Given all these issues, the case for starting the school day later is hard to ignore. If we have the possibility of improving school for students, is there any valid reason to retain the same school schedules that have been in place for decades?

Section D

Some schools have already started experimenting with changes to the school day, and there are convincing signs that later starts are bringing positive outcomes. One practical benefit has been that more students have time in the morning to have a decent, nutritious breakfast. As for academic impacts, in a three-year study in the US, pupils' class grades and national test results improved when later school start times were introduced. Similar results were reported in a study conducted in the UK. Moving to later start times resulted in significant improvements in academic performances amongst teenage pupils, and there were fewer cases of illness-related absences as well. Research in countries including Australia, Sweden and Singapore also confirms these findings: the clear message is that adjusting the school day to fits teenagers' natural sleep patterns supports learning.

Section E

Even so, changing the school day has obvious practical implications that have to be considered. Delaying the start of school will make it impossible for working parents to take their children to school. And any change to the start of the school day naturally affects the finish time as well. In some Northern Hemisphere countries, children could end up travelling home in the dark during winter. Later finishing times may also mean less time for after-school activities such as drama clubs or school sports. These activities are important for students' social development. There is also the concern that students won't have enough time to complete all their homework or studies if the school day finishes later. These valid practical concerns explain why many authorities remain reluctant to introduce radical changes to school schedules.

Section F

Opponents argue that schedule changes will disrupt teenagers' night-time routine. The fear is that it will encourage them to go to bed later. For instance, teenagers might be tempted to stay up playing video games if school starts later. However, this idea is hard to defend. Teenagers' natural biological clocks will let them

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know when it is time to go to bed. The later school start will simply enable them to get sufficient sleep. Nevertheless, the broader point about night-time routines is an important one, because parents have a role to play in this. Research has shown that using electronic devices in the evening can interfere with people's natural sleep patterns. Therefore, teenagers' screen time should be restricted before going to bed. Parents have a responsibility to help teenagers make smart choices in the evening.

Section G

There is overwhelming evidence that later school times can lead to more productive lessons and healthier, happier students. However, one worrying idea that has been suggested is for schools to fit more time into the school day by removing breaks and lunchtime. Although this may enable schools to "catch up" on a later start without finishing the school day much later, it is certainly not the right policy. It should be obvious that people cannot learn effectively without breaks, and pupils definitely need lunch if we want them to stay focused in the afternoon. Therefore, schools, parents and local authorities need to work together to create a school schedule that works on both practical and educational levels.

Questions 15–20
Reading Passage 2 has 7 sections, A–G.
*Choose the correct headings for Sections **A–F** from the list of headings below.*
Write the correct number i–viii in answer boxes 15–20.

List of headings

i The teenage body clock
ii Implementing the right changes
iii Potential disadvantages of school schedule changes
iv Studies on the role of sleep in learning
v Established school routines
vi Evidence for changing the school schedule
vii How lack of sleep affects students
viii Encouraging good sleep habits

Example:

	Answer
Section **G**	*ii*

15 Section **A** ☐

16 Section **B** ☐

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17 Section **C** ☐

18 Section **D** ☐

19 Section **E** ☐

20 Section **F** ☐

Questions 21–23
*Complete the sentences below using **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from Reading Passage 2 for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 21–23.

21 When school schedules were first created, few studies had focused on pupils' …

_____

22 During adolescence, people's sleep requirements generally increase by …

_____

23 In a UK study, changing the school schedule led to fewer students missing school due to…

_____

Questions 24–27
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

*Write the correct letter **A–D** in answer boxes 24–27.*

24 The writer expresses doubt that ☐

A school schedules were originally the same as they are today.

B educational experts understand the issues involved in creating academic calendars.

C educational issues determined how authorities originally planned the school day.

D the school day is long enough for teenage students.

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25 What happens to people's natural sleep patterns during adolescence?

A People feel tired no matter how much sleep they get.

B Physical changes make people more tired during the day.

C People feel sleepy for shorter amounts of time.

D There is a delay in the time that people start to feel sleepy.

26 The writer says that parents should

A limit teenagers' use of electronic devices at night.

B give teenagers the freedom to decide their own bedtimes.

C encourage teenagers to go to bed earlier.

D set good examples by improving their own sleep routines.

27 Which statement best describes the writer's attitude towards starting the school day later?

A More research needs to be done to discover whether it has any drawbacks.

B It is worth doing despite the practical challenges it presents.

C The social impacts will be greater than the health benefits.

D It will have little impact on teenagers' academic performance.

READING PASSAGE 3

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

Spotlight on … Psychology

Personal insights

If you're interested in human behaviour, then a degree in psychology may be the course for you. This fascinating subject explores how mental processes work, and the various factors influencing how people act, think or feel. Psychology students gain a deep understanding of people's emotional needs, which is vital for establishing and maintaining positive relationships. At the same time, understanding how the human mind works can help people to make sense of their own emotional needs. There's no doubt that psychology is an excellent choice if your main priority is personal development.

Building your future

Of course, given the substantial financial commitment, most students choose their degree course based on factors that extend beyond opportunities for personal growth. For a degree to be an excellent investment in your future, it must equip you with transferable skills. Psychology is one of the most popular subjects to study at university precisely because it provides students with an impressive range of skills which can be used in a range of professional contexts.

Unsurprisingly, psychology graduates can communicate effectively in a range of situations, and this ability is highly desirable to employers. Psychology degrees also train participants to analyse statistical information effectively and apply critical reasoning when evaluating written information. Of course, many degrees can enhance students' analytical skills,

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but, due to the nature of the subject, psychology students are more likely to conduct their own research. Consequently, psychology graduates have excellent project-management skills, along with practical experience of using research tools and evaluating different types of evidence.

In short, psychology degrees equip students with numerous skills that serve them well beyond graduation.

Flexibility and range

There's no doubt that psychology is a degree subject which is extremely broad in scope. No two psychology courses are identical because of all the different modules that programmes offer. For instance, you may explore different areas including sports psychology, educational psychology, experimental psychology and many more. What adds to the flexibility of a psychology degree is that it complements a number of other subjects. Many students combine psychology with a related subject such as criminology or sociology. These combinations work well because they enable students to look at issues from different perspectives. Alternatively, many students choose to study foreign languages alongside psychology, as this can boost their career options even further.

Choosing the right course

With so many options available, your choice of course may depend on your career goals. If you have clear aspirations to work in clinical practice, then look for programmes that offer you the chance to work toward professional accreditation. These courses provide content that meets the requirements set out by professional bodies, which can help you to gain professional qualifications. Otherwise, it's worth considering a general psychology programme that offers students a variety of study options.

Careers in psychology

A degree in psychology can open up an astonishing variety of professional opportunities. Here are just a few of the exciting careers that you could pursue with a psychology degree:

- **Human Resources (HR)**
  HR managers play a vital role in every company and organisation, as they are responsible for the wellbeing of employees. They use their knowledge of motivation and conflict resolution to ensure that the workplace is healthy and productive for everyone.

- **Marketing and communications**
  Psychology graduates can build stimulating careers in marketing since they have the skills required to identify consumers' needs and feelings, and can use this to develop the most appropriate ways to develop a cohesive brand message.

- **Clinical research**
  The analytical skills that are a key feature of psychology degrees are vital in clinical research. Clinical researchers design and conduct clinical studies. These studies are used to develop treatments to help people with a wide range of disorders or problems.

- **Performance coaching**
  In both business and sporting contexts, performance coaching is all about identifying obstacles that are preventing an individual from unlocking their full potential. There are many opportunities in this emerging field, especially for graduates with knowledge of sports psychology.

- **Criminal profiling**
  Criminal profilers work in law enforcement. They analyse criminal cases and crime scenes to identify specific behavioural clues. Using this information, they create a psychological profile to assist police investigators. One of the most common routes into this career is by studying a joint degree in psychology and criminology.

Admission requirements

Since the subject is so popular, there is usually fierce competition for psychology places. As a result, most universities expect applicants to have achieved good school grades, or, alternatively, to be able to demonstrate strong academic potential. Many universities prefer applicants with biology or mathematics qualifications, but, again, this isn't compulsory. As psychology degrees begin with compulsory introductory modules, applicants are not expected to have studied the subject before. In fact, psychology attracts a wide range of applicants of all ages and educational backgrounds. If you're motivated and determined, you'll find your ideal psychology programme!

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Questions 28–34
Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 3?

In boxes 28–34, write:

TRUE	*If the statement agrees with the information in the passage*
FALSE	*If the statement contradicts the information in the passage*
NOT GIVEN	*If there is no information on this in the passage*

28 The main reason why people choose psychology degrees is for personal growth. ☐

29 Psychology degrees can be more expensive than other degrees. ☐

30 Research is a common feature of psychology degrees. ☐

31 Most psychology degrees include similar modules. ☐

32 General psychology courses are less challenging than professional accreditation courses. ☐

33 Performance coaching is growing in popularity. ☐

34 Prior subject knowledge is generally required before students can enter psychology degree programmes. ☐

Questions 35–39
*Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 35–39.

35 What term in the text refers to abilities used in many professional roles?

_____

36 Which additional subject is commonly chosen by students who wish to improve their job prospects?

_____

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37 What professional field do accreditation courses prepare students for?

38 Which career is concerned with the welfare of people within workplaces?

39 Which combination of subjects is popular with people who become profilers?

Question 40
What is the writer's purpose in Reading Passage 3?
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

*Write the correct letter **A–D** in the answer box below.*

A To argue for universities to widen the focus of their psychology programmes

B To describe the university admissions process for psychology applicants

C To highlight the benefits that can be gained from studying psychology

D To compare the pros and cons of different types of psychology course

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