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| **Name (Please Print):** | **Student ID:** | **Degree of Study (Circle):** | **Date:** |
|  |  | Undergraduate / Graduate |  |

**English Placement Evaluation**

**The University of Iowa**

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs**

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| **How to Do Your Best on this Test**  1. If you are confused at any time, raise your hand and ask a question. The proctors are here to help you. You may take notes anywhere in the test booklet, but do not tear or separate pages.  2. Read the instructions at the top and bottom of each page carefully. Do not turn the page unless the instructions or a proctor tells you that you may go on.  3. Use your best handwriting so that your answers will be understood. Be especially clear when you write numbers that are similar, like 1 and 7, and 0, 6, and 9.  4. Mark all multiple choice questions clearly and only choose one answer per question. Double answers will not be graded.  5. In the writing tasks, use your own vocabulary and grammar to explain ideas from the reading texts. This will show your true comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar. Do not copy phrases longer than three words directly from the reading texts. Ideas that are copied will not count towards your score. |

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| **How to Avoid Cheating on this Test**   1. Don’t take the test for someone else. 2. Don’t talk during the test (unless you raise your hand to ask a question). 3. Don’t give or receive help from another student on the test. 4. Don’t ignore instructions from the test proctor. 5. Don’t look ahead in the test booklet unless you have permission from the test proctor. 6. Don’t keep working after the timer goes off. **Put your pencil down immediately.** 7. Don’t use dictionaries or outside notes. Notes that you take during the test on the test paper are okay. 8. Don’t copy test questions or answers to take with you after the test. 9. Don’t keep any electronic device with you on the test (phones, smart watches, tablets, etc.). Please silence these devices and leave them at the front of the testing room.   *If you do not follow these instructions, your exam may not be graded.* |

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| *If you understand the instructions above and agree to them, please sign your name below:*  I understand that if I do not follow the instructions written above, or if I do not follow the instructions from the test proctor, my exam may receive a grade of zero (0).  Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**English Placement Evaluation**

**Practice Test**

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| **Instructions Overview: What to Expect in This Test** |
| **Tasks 1 and 2:** 60 minutes   * You will read two sources that are each about 900 words long * Source 1 will present a problem * Source 2 will present a solution to the problem in Source 1 * You must identify five sentences that contain the five most important ideas in each reading text * You must answer five multiple choice questions * Finally, you must write a summary for each reading text (you will see specific instructions for the summary later) |
| **Task 3:** 30 minutes   * You will listen one time to a lecture that is 8-10 minutes long * Source 3 will present another solution to the problem that you read about in Source 1 * You must then answer five multiple choice questions about the listening text * Finally, you must write a summary of the listening text (you will see specific instructions for the summary later) |
| **Task 4:** 30 minutes   * In one or two paragraphs, you must compare the solutions from Source 2 and Source 3 and write your opinion about which one is the best solution to the problem in Source 1 * You must give at least two reasons for your opinion and support it with ideas from all three sources (you will see specific instructions for the opinion essay later) * If you have any extra time at the end, you may go back and check your answers for the other tasks |

*Any questions before we begin?*

*Turn the page to begin Task 1.*

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| **Source 1: Problems** |

*Read the following passage and answer the questions below. Then write a one-paragraph summary about Source 1. When you are finished, move on to the next task.*

***The U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking**

A 1Every year, millions of high school seniors and their families turn to the *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking as they make decisions about where to attend college. 2The *U.S. News* rankingcompares U.S. colleges annually based on an algorithm which changes each year. 3Overall, about 80% of the algorithm is determined by school data such as class size, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. 4The remaining 20% is determined by peer assessments from other college administrators. 5The *U.S. News* ranking began as a money-making strategy in 1983 when *U.S. News* was in dire financial straits. 6This strategy turned out to be very profitable. 7In 2010, the company stopped publishing their newsmagazine and now publishes other rankings – for high schools, hospitals, and cars, among other things. 8Although the *U.S. News* ranking is very popular among the general public, it is frequently criticized by experts for its faulty algorithm, its harmful effects on schools, and its harmful effects on students.

B 9The central problem that critics have identified with the *U.S. News* rankings is that the algorithm is essentially meaningless because it relies on inappropriate data. 10For example, a substantial percentage of the algorithm is based on peer assessments from other college administrators. 11This assessment is based largely on administrators’ subjective opinions about other universities’ reputations. 12In addition, the algorithm puts undue emphasis on input variables instead of output variables. 13Input variables include measures of anything that enters the university, like donations, freshman test scores, and funding. 14Output variables include measures of anything that exits the university, such as graduation rates, student satisfaction surveys, and post-graduation employment. 15While input variables are easier to measure, arguably output variables are more important to most students when they seek to choose a place to study because they reflect a university’s ability to help its students achieve their goals. 16The *U.S. News* rankings do include some output variables, like graduation rates for full-time students, but historically their algorithm has been weighted heavily towards input variables.

C 17Additionally, the *U.S. News* rankings foster an environment that rewards cheating and competition between universities. 18In some of the worst examples, colleges have blatantly lied to the newsmagazine about their data. 19Since *U.S. News* doesn’t have a fact-checking department, no one can ensure that the universities are telling the truth. 20However, most universities are not so bold; instead, they may use some subtle strategies to boost their rankings. 21These strategies may have little to do with academic excellence, but they can be a quick way to improve rankings. 22For example, *U.S. News* only collects test scores of students who enter in the fall. 23Therefore, universities can boost their average test scores by offering spring enrollment to students with lower test scores. 24Another variable that can be **“gamed”** is class size. 25Many universities have reduced their class sizes to improve their ranking, but then need to hire more instructors to teach those classes. 26To do this cheaply, they hire part time or adjunct faculty to teach those classes. 27These adjunct faculty often have no health insurance or job stability, so they have to work multiple jobs and have less time to offer to their students, which defeats the purpose of having a smaller class size. 28If universities don’t engage in these shortcut strategies and simply try to improve their metrics in a natural way, they may be punished. 29Since the rankings compare schools against each other, it is not enough for universities to simply improve their score slightly on each of these metrics. 30Universities must improve even faster than their competitors or they will fall behind in the rankings.

D 31Perhaps most critically, many scholars are concerned that the *U.S. News* rankings raise the cost of tuition and therefore make it harder for students to afford an education. 32Many of the variables in the *U.S. News* algorithm are tied to money. 33Some are tied directly, such as donations, faculty salaries, and spending per student; others are only indirectly related. 34For example, test scores and graduation rates are generally higher for wealthy students. 35Most of these metrics can be gamed by throwing money at them. 36For example, one way to attract new students is to build new dorms, spend money on sports teams, or pay for more advertisements. 37All of this means that it is very expensive for a university to try to improve their rankings, and ultimately those costs are passed on to students. 38The rising cost of tuition is a burden for everyone, but particularly for students whose parents aren’t wealthy. 39This makes it less likely that those students will be able to afford an education at a highly ranked school. 40In short, the *U.S. News* ranking system seems to unduly favor the wealthy.

E 41Of course, there are some benefits to the rankings system as well. 42The *U.S. News* rankings are very convenient, have high name recognition, and may encourage positive changes in universities. 43Recently, the algorithm has changed to focus on more outcome variables and even added a measure of student debt. 44These changes, though small, are taking steps in the right direction to measure things that students actually care about. 45Arguably, the *U.S. News* rankings are not all bad. 46However, most experts agree that we can do better.

*Turn to the next page.*

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| **Source 1 Sentence Identification**  *Answer the following questions by writing the number of the sentence that contains the information.*  1. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ contains the main idea of Source 1.  2. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the first problem with the U.S. News college rankings.  3. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the second problem with the U.S. News college rankings.  4. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the third problem with the U.S. News college rankings.  5. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains three advantages of the U.S. News college rankings. |
| **Source 1 Reading Inference Questions**  *Select the best answer to the following questions.*  1. What is the best definition for the verb “to game” in Sentence Number 23?  a. to intentionally lie in order to win  b. to use clever tricks to win without lying  c. to win without tricks because of natural skills  d. to improve slightly without winning  2. Why are input variables easier to measure than output variables?  a. Output variables require additional data collection.  b. Input variables are often larger than output variables.  c. Output variables are often larger than input variables.  d. Input variables require additional data collection. |

*Turn to the next page.*

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| **How to Write A Summary** |
| 1. A summary should include the main ideas from a source. The sentence identification questions on the last page asked you about the five most important ideas from Source 1. You should explain all five of those ideas in your summary. You may include other ideas from the source too if you have time and believe they are important, but you will only be graded on whether you correctly explained the five most important ideas. You must show the connections between those ideas by using transition words, phrases, or sentences.  2. A summary should be shorter than the source that it is about. For this summary, you only need to write one paragraph about Source 1. You must include at least one sentence about each of the five main ideas. Your answer should use complete sentences and look like a paragraph, not like a list.  3. A summary should not contain your own opinion. Don’t write about your own ideas about the topic.  4. A summary should be in your own words. That means you must change the words AND the grammar.   * + Change the words in the sentence whenever you can.   + Change the sentence structure; for example, change the subject or the organization of the sentence. * It’s okay to use a few key words and phrases from the text as long as those phrases are less than three words next to each other, but make sure that most of the words are your own. |

**Reading Source 1 Summary**

Please write a summary of Source 1 below. Remember, the purpose of this task is to show us that you can explain the main ideas of Source 1 in your own words. Refer to the ideas in the **Source 1 Sentence Identification** box.

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*Turn the page to begin Task 2.*

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| **Source 2: Solution 1** |

*Read the following passage and answer the questions below. Then write a one-paragraph summary of Source 2. When you are finished, wait for instructions.*

**Alternative College Ranking Systems**

A 1The *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking has attracted a substantial amount of criticism in the last several decades. 2Critics allege that it unduly focuses on quantifiable but meaningless metrics, creates a competitive atmosphere in which colleges are tempted to cheat and view each other as opponents, and contributes to the skyrocketing cost of tuition in the U.S.. 3In response to this criticism, several alternative ranking systems have arisen in the last few years. 4These alternative ranking systems seek to address some of the most serious shortcomings of the *U.S. News* rankings by putting more emphasis on output variables, choosing variables that are harder to cheat on, and including metrics that are more financially-conscious.

B 5The *U.S. News* algorithm tends to place emphasis on input variables which can be easily counted. 6These don’t always directly correlate with educational quality, however. 7The most immediate way in which alternative rankings systems have sought to address the shortcomings of the *U.S. News* rankings has been through prioritizing more output variables in the algorithm. 8Contrast the algorithm created by *Washington Monthly* in 2006. 9Its algorithm focuses on three categories of variables which estimate how well a school fulfills its mission of contributing to research, community service, and the greater good. 10The research category counts several variables including the number of papers published each year by the school’s faculty members, and the number of undergraduate students at that school who go on to receive a PhD. 11The community service category counts variables including the number of students at each school who volunteer with organizations like the Peace Corps, and the percentage of students each year who register to vote. 12The last category focuses on the school’s ability to assist lower income students. 13It measures the percentage of students at the school who qualify for federal Pell grants (a financial assistance package that is only available to low income students). 14The algorithm also includes a separate measure to track the retention and graduation rates for the Pell grant students. 15This ensures that schools don’t simply seek to attract these students and then forget about them. 16It also looks to see what salary these students are earning ten years after graduation. 17Taken together, these measures represent outcomes that are more directly connected to a university’s mission than the amount of donations it receives each year.

C 18Another way in which alternative rankings systems can address the problems of *U.S. News* is by selecting metrics which are harder for schools to cheat on. 19Typically this would involve giving more specific instructions about the type of data that schools need to report. 20For instance, one of the measures in the current *U.S. News* algorithm is the average faculty salary. 21However, the instructions don’t specify whether universities need to report the mean or the median. 22Because of this, most universities report the mean salary, as it tends to **inflate** the numbers. 23At most universities, a few star professors may earn as much as $200,000 a year, while the majority of faculty earn closer to $40,000. 24If universities were required to report the median instead of the mean, their numbers would better reflect the true salary of the majority of faculty members. 25This would be a clearer depiction of how well a university supports its faculty. 26Another example would be requiring schools to report the standardized test scores, GPAs, and graduation rates for all students. 27That would include part-time students, transfer students, and students who begin in the spring and summer semesters. 28This is the practice of the ranking system developed by *Money* magazine. 29In contrast, the *U.S. News* algorithm only collects data for full-time freshman students who begin in the fall semester. 30Requiring universities to report data about all students would reflect a clearer picture of how a university supports all its learners.

D 31One last change in alternative college rankings has attracted a lot of attention. 32Several alternative ranking systems intentionally include measures that encourage tuition rates to go down. 33The popular business magazine *Forbes* created an alternative college ranking system in 2008 which includes a measure of student indebtedness. 34This measure looks at two things: the average amount of money that a student owes after getting a four-year degree, and the average number of students who graduate with debt. 35These two measures together indicate how expensive the school is. 36Having a measure like this in the ranking algorithm is important to balance out other measures which promote heavy spending. 37Unlike the *U.S. News* algorithm, the *Forbes* algorithm does not reward schools for practices which drive tuition rates up.

E 38Skeptics raise concerns that these alternative rankings don’t have enough name recognition to replace the better-known *U.S. News* rankings. 39Rankings gain power only when they are popular enough to influence people’s decisions. 40Many of these alternative rankings are unfamiliar to prospective students and their families, and therefore don’t factor in to their decisions about where to study. 41If a ranking system doesn’t influence many students, then administrators at a college might decide that they can safely ignore it. 42Though it may sound cynical, many administrators will only make changes to their policies if they realize that they are losing students. 43However, the very existence of such alternative rankings shows that the reign of *U.S. News* might be coming to an end. 44If nothing else, the existence of competition in the rankings market has pressured the *U.S. News* to make some important changes to its ranking algorithm. 45In 2021, they added a measure of student indebtedness for the first time (although this measure weighs only 5% in the *U.S. News* algorithm, compared to 20% of the *Forbes* algorithm). 46Though to date no ranking system can compete with *U.S. News* in name recognition, alternative ranking systems are doing their part to better represent the true values of education consumers.

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| **Source 2 Sentence Identification**  *Answer the following questions by writing the number of the sentence that contains the information.*  1. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ contains the main idea of Source 2.  2. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the first advantage of alternative college rankings.  3. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the second advantage of alternative college rankings.  4. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains the third advantage of alternative college rankings.  5. Sentence Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explains one reason that alternative college rankings may not succeed. |
| **Source 2 Reading Inference Questions**  *Select the best answer to the following questions.*  1. What is the best definition for the verb “inflate” in Sentence Number 23?  a. artificially lower  b. artificially raise  c. intentionally control  d. intentionally confuse  2. What can we conclude about Pell grant students?  a. They qualify for many other scholarships besides Pell grants.  b. They typically graduate at higher rates than other students.  c. Most schools include a high number of Pell grant students.  d. Some schools admit Pell grant students but then ignore them.  3. Based on Source 2, we can predict that, if all college rankings required universities to report faculty salary medians instead of means, universities would feel pressured to . . .  a. . . . pay their low-earning faculty more.  b. . . . pay their high-earning faculty more.  c. . . . pay all their faculty much more.  d. . . . continue paying the current salary rate. |

*Turn to the next page.*

**Reading Source 2 Summary**

Please write a summary of Source 2 below. Follow the instructions for writing a summary in Task 1. Remember, the purpose of this task is to show us that you can explain the main ideas of Source 2 in your own words. Refer to the ideas in the **Source 2 Sentence Identification** box.

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*When you are told to do so, turn the page to begin Task 3.*

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| **Source 3: Solution 2** |

*Listen to the lecture one time. You may take notes while you listen. Do not turn the page until the lecture is finished. After the lecture is finished, turn the page to answer the five multiple-choice questions and write a summary about Source 3. You may use your notes to help you answer the questions and write the summary.*

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| **How to Take Good Notes**  1. Focus on main ideas.  2. Try to show the organization of the lecture in your notes (how smaller ideas connect to bigger ideas).  3. Don't worry about writing down every word; use short words and drawings to save time. |

**Source 3 Notes: Transparent Reporting for Academic Data**

*When you are told to do so, turn to the next page.*

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| **Source 3 Listening Questions**  *Select the best answer to the following questions.*  1. According to Source 3, the best definition for “open source data” is data that . . .  a. . . . is open about the sources that it uses for reference.  b. . . . is open for all people to access without charge.  c. . . . uses sources that are free for others to access.  d. . . . uses sources that are available on the internet.  2. According to Source 3, what is the best definition for “relative”?  a. of close and familiar relationship, such as a family member  b. of value determined by its relationship to another thing  c. of value that increases regardless of the position of other things  d. of relationship that is comparatively distant and informal  3. A public database would be better than the Forbes rankings because the public database . . .  a. . . . allows us to look at tuition directly.  b. . . . includes a measure of student indebtedness.  c. . . . favors schools which accept wealthy students.  d. . . . measures which parents pay for tuition.  4. According to Source 3, colleges don’t need to compete with each other because . . .  a. . . . there is low demand for their services.  b. . . . there is high demand for their services.  c. . . . their primary funding source comes from tuition.  d. . . . their primary funding source is from donations.  5. Based on Source 3, if we see that a college president’s salary is tied to the school’s ranking, we can conclude that . . .  a. . . . the college will have a high ranking.  b. . . . the president will have a high salary.  c. . . . the president will have high pressure.  d. . . . the college will have high enrollment. |

*Turn to the next page.*

**Source 3 Summary**

Please write a summary of Source 3 below. Follow the instructions for writing a summary in Task 1. The only difference for the listening summary is that you do not have any main idea sentence identification questions for Source 3 as you did for Sources 2 and 3. Instead, for this summary, look at your notes and select five ideas that you believe are the most important ideas in the listening text, explain those five ideas in your own words, and show how they are connected using transition words, phrases, and sentences. You may include other additional ideas if you choose, but your listening score will only focus on your ability to explain the five most important ideas. Remember, the purpose of this task is to show us that you can explain the main ideas of Source 3 in your own words.

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*Turn the page to read the instructions for Task 4.*

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| **Task 4: Writing** |

Thinking about the solutions from Sources 2 and 3, compare the two solutions to the problem in Source 1, and make an argument about which solution you believe is better. Then explain at least two reasons why you support this solution. Use information from all three sources to support your opinion. Your answer should be one or two paragraphs long.

You must show your opinion for this task; don’t just say that both solutions are important. Your answer should contrast the solution that you prefer against the other solution. You don’t have to say that the other solution is bad, but you should explain why your solution is more important.

Also, you don’t need to summarize all the information from every source again here, since you have already done this in Tasks 1-3. Instead, only include information that supports your argument. Remember, the purpose of Task 4 is to show us that you can make an argument based on information from sources.

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| **How to Write Your Argument** |
| 1. Make sure your opinion about the solution is clear: which solution is better?  2. List at least two reasons for your opinion.  3. Support your reasons with ideas from all three sources. When you report ideas from a source, you must change the words AND the grammar.   * + Change the words in the sentence wherever you can   + Change the sentence structure (for example, changing the subject and rearranging ideas)   + It’s okay to use some words and phrases from the source as long as those phrases are less than three words next to each other   4. Read over your argument again to see if it is clear. Change some sentences if you need to. Remember, your writing will be evaluated for the strength of your argument, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. |

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*Congratulations! You have finished the English Placement Evaluation!*

**This page is for OFFICE use only. Do NOT write anything here!**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name (Please Print):** | **Student ID:** | **Degree of Study (Circle):** | **Date:** |
|  |  | Undergraduate / Graduate |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task**  **Subscores**  *(Passing subscores must be 3.5 or higher)* | **Reading** | **Listening** | **Writing** | **Oral Skills** |
| Source 1 Representation:  \_\_\_/5 | Source 3 Representation:  \_\_\_/5 | Argumentation:  \_\_\_/5 | Pronunciation:  \_\_\_/5 |
| Source 2 Representation:  \_\_\_/5 | Listening Questions:  \_\_\_/5 | Coherence:  \_\_\_/5 | Fluency:  \_\_\_/5 |
| Sentence Identification:  \_\_\_/10 ÷ 2 =  \_\_\_/5 | Oral Listening:  \_\_\_/5 | Vocabulary:  \_\_\_/5 | Oral Grammar:  \_\_\_/5 |
| Reading Questions:  \_\_\_/5 |  | Written Grammar:  \_\_\_/5 |  |
| **Subscore Pass?** | Y / N | Y / N | Y / N | Y / N |
| **Total**  **by Skill**  *(Passing totals must be 80% or higher)* | \_\_\_/20 | \_\_\_/15 | \_\_\_/20 | \_\_\_/15 |
| **Total Pass?** | Y / N | Y / N | Y / N | Y / N |
| **Placement**  **Decision**  *(Circle One)* | Pass  ---  No Pass | Pass  ---  No Pass | Pass  ---  No Pass | Pass  ---  No Pass |