ISE II sample exam

Before the exam starts

Topic task

Before the exam, the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice and in the exam this is used as a basis for the discussion.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'*We'll start with the topic. What are we going to talk about?*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions to elicit the language functions of the level.

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you for talking about your topic. Now we'll move on to the Collaborative task*.'

Collaborative task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to interaction controlled and maintained by the candidate.

The examiner chooses a prompt from one of several. These prompts are changed annually. An example is given below. Before reading the prompt the examiner will read the following instructions:

'*For the next part, I'll tell you something. Then, you have to ask me questions to find out more information and make comments. You need to keep the conversation going. After four minutes, I'll end the conversation. Are you ready?*'

Sample prompt:

'*I have a friend who's studying English. He thinks the best way to improve his language skills is to watch lots of films in English. I'm not sure I agree with him*.'

The candidate is then expected to ask questions and make comments in order to elicit further information from the examiner and develop and maintain the conversation.

At the end of the Collaborative task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Conversation task*.'

Conversation task

This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner chooses one of the subject areas from the list below:

- Society and living standards
- Personal values and ideals
- The world of work
- National environmental concerns
- Public figures past and present

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'*Let's talk about…*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit various functions of the level. The candidate and the examiner share responsibility for maintaining the conversation.

When the Conversation task is complete, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we're going to move on to the listening task*.'

Independent listening task

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification. Here is an example:

'*You're going to hear a talk about wind energy. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?*'

The examiner then plays the recording once. After the recording has played once, the examiner will say:

'*Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?*'

When the candidate has answered the question, the examiner hands them blank notepaper and says:

'*Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the reasons the speaker gives for and against the use of wind energy.*

Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording again.

After the recording has played for a second time, the examiner says:

'*Now tell me the reasons the speaker gives for and against the use of wind energy. I'll stop you after one minute*.'

The candidate has up to one minute to respond and may refer to their notes.

Sample audio script

When it comes to investing in wind turbines to create electricity, there are various factors that need to be considered. Most obviously, the creation of wind energy is 'clean'. Unlike the use of coal or oil, generating energy from the wind doesn't produce pollutants or require harmful chemicals, and it's this factor which weighs most heavily with those worried about the future of our planet. Moreover, wind will never run out, unlike other natural, non-renewable resources. So it would seem to be a winner in at least two very significant areas.

There are those, however, who continue to argue against the use of wind turbines — but it has to be said their arguments tend to focus on much more detailed issues, and largely ignore the bigger overall picture. It's claimed, for example, that the blades of wind turbines can sometimes be dangerous to wildlife, particularly birds. This may be true, but it seems a small price to pay compared to using other means of power generation, which could end up destroying the habitats of those very same birds. In addition, the sound turbines create can, admittedly, be a problem for those nearby. Perhaps a more significant point, though, and certainly one often mentioned by those who object to turbines, is that it requires a lot of open land to set them up, and cutting down trees seems to defeat the green purpose.

Those who criticise wind energy point out that the wind doesn't always blow consistently. And that's certainly a drawback right now — turbines typically operate at only 30% capacity. If the weather isn't in your favour, you may end up without electricity. And when there is wind, well, severe storms or extremely high winds might damage turbines, especially when they're struck by lightning. As such weather already damages existing methods of power production, however, this line of attack seems to be without much merit.

Ultimately, wind is free. In suitable geographical locations, it's there for the taking. While start-up costs are still off-putting for some, it's undeniable that the overall costs of producing wind energy have been dropping significantly in recent years, and as it gains popularity, it'll continue to become more affordable. In many countries, the costs of purchasing and installing turbines are subsidised by government schemes aimed to promote expansion. There are, no question, a number of problems associated with turbines which still require solutions — but in the longer view, the case for them appears beyond doubt.

Answers

Gist: Wind energy may be a good way to reduce damage to the environment, but there are drawbacks. Overall, there is a strong case for using them (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

For

- Clean energy – no harmful chemicals or pollutants involved/produced
- Will never run out
- Doesn't destroy habitats as other power generation means do
- Essentially free/any associated costs falling

Against

- Turbines dangerous to wildlife, especially birds
- Noisy
- Requires large area of open land – may lead to cutting down of trees
- Supply of wind not consistent – turbines operating at 30% capacity
- Bad weather can damage turbines