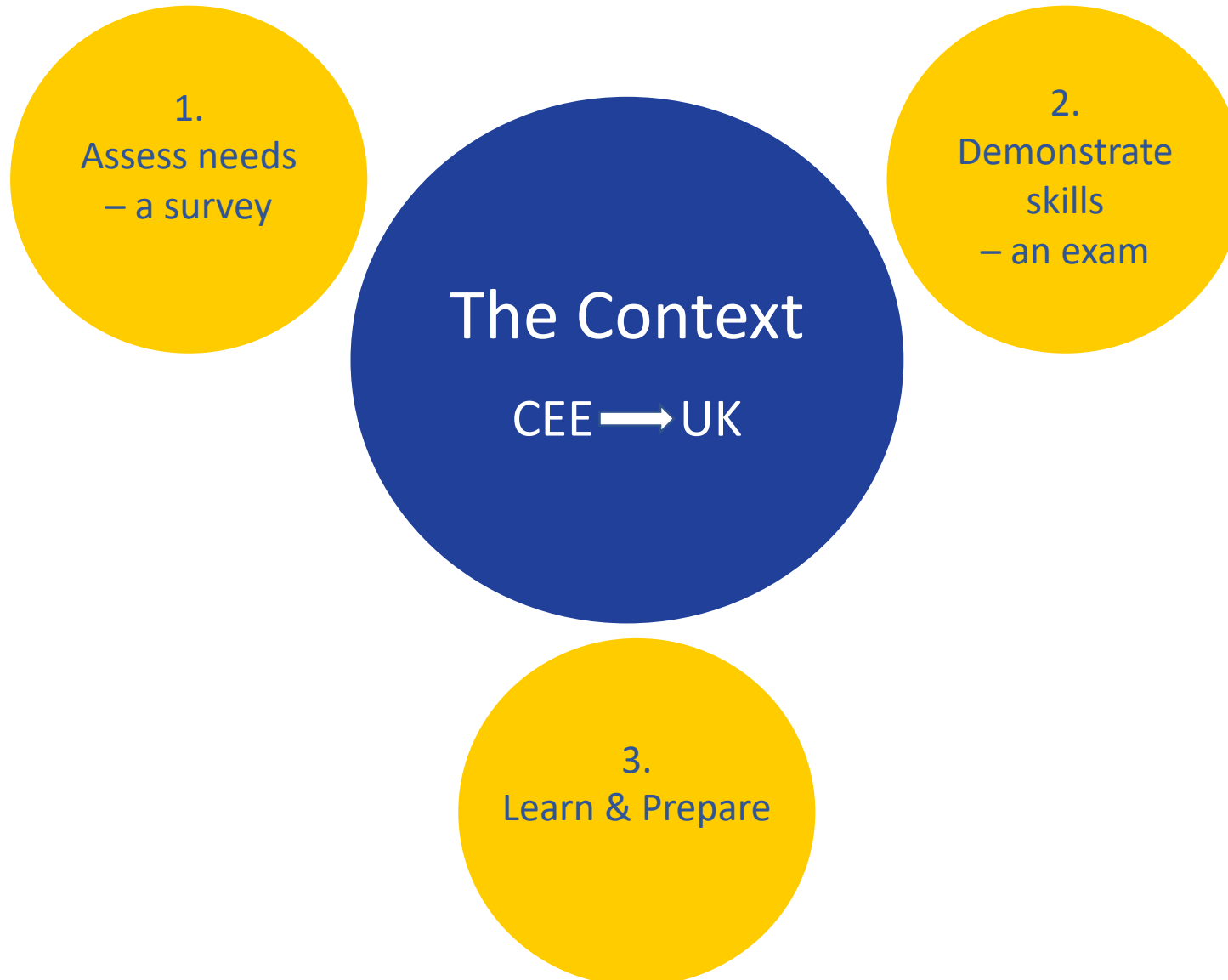# Positive washback from an all-academic exam for better prepared first-year university students

Kristóf Hegedűs

Contents

1.
Assess needs
– a survey

2.
Demonstrate
skills
– an exam

The Context

CEE ➡ UK

3.
Learn & Prepare

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UK context

The UK Government's new *International Educational Strategy*

(March 2019)

"The strategy sets out an ambition to grow the total number of international students during the year to 600,000 and generate £35 billion through education exports by 2030 – a rise of 75%."

(https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-boost-international-student-numbers-and-income)

"I strongly welcome the publication of this strategy as a signal of a change in direction. I particularly welcome the ambitious target to grow the number of international students to 600,000 by 2030 which sends a strong message of welcome."

(Professor Dame Janet Beer, President of Universities UK)

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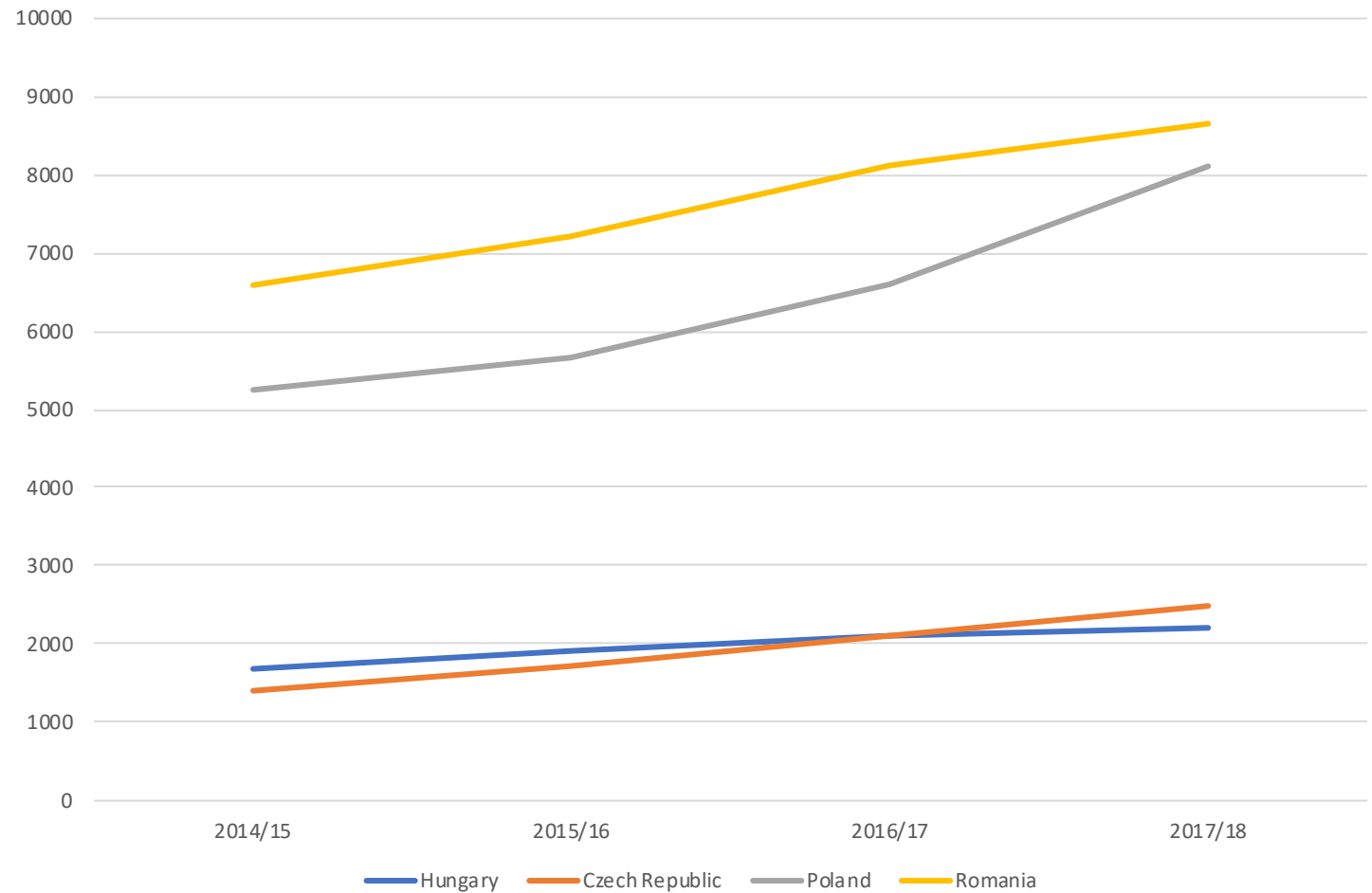# Central European context

Steadily rising applicant numbers over the years

Total annual enrolments from the four CEE countries

2014/15	14,930
2017/18	21,465

70% increase over a period of four years

(https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from)

Euroexam International

★ Established in 2000
★ High-stakes English and German language exams
★ Network of 105+ testing centres

⭐ Population profile

- 74% of test takers aged between 16 and 22
- 12,000 candidates taking exams at B2 & C1 levels for HE application purposes annually

⭐ All tests aligned with the CEFR

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The survey

The rationale

- reason for the continual rise in enrolments

- applicants' motivations

- perceived strengths as applicants and principal challenges

- any differences between how applicants and CEE students already studying at a UK university view these issues

- applicants' EFL teachers' opinion about their students' strengths and challenges

The survey

Basic information

- 3 groups:
  - (i) students headed to a UK university
  - (ii) students already studying there
  - (iii) EFL teachers
- Total no. of participants: 493
- Countries: HU, PL, CZ, RS, SK, DE, RO, RU
- 29 receiving universities

Main survey sections:

- Motivation
- Assessment of preparedness
- Academic and language skills

Motivation

Q: What are/were the two most important factors that have affected your decision to study in the UK?
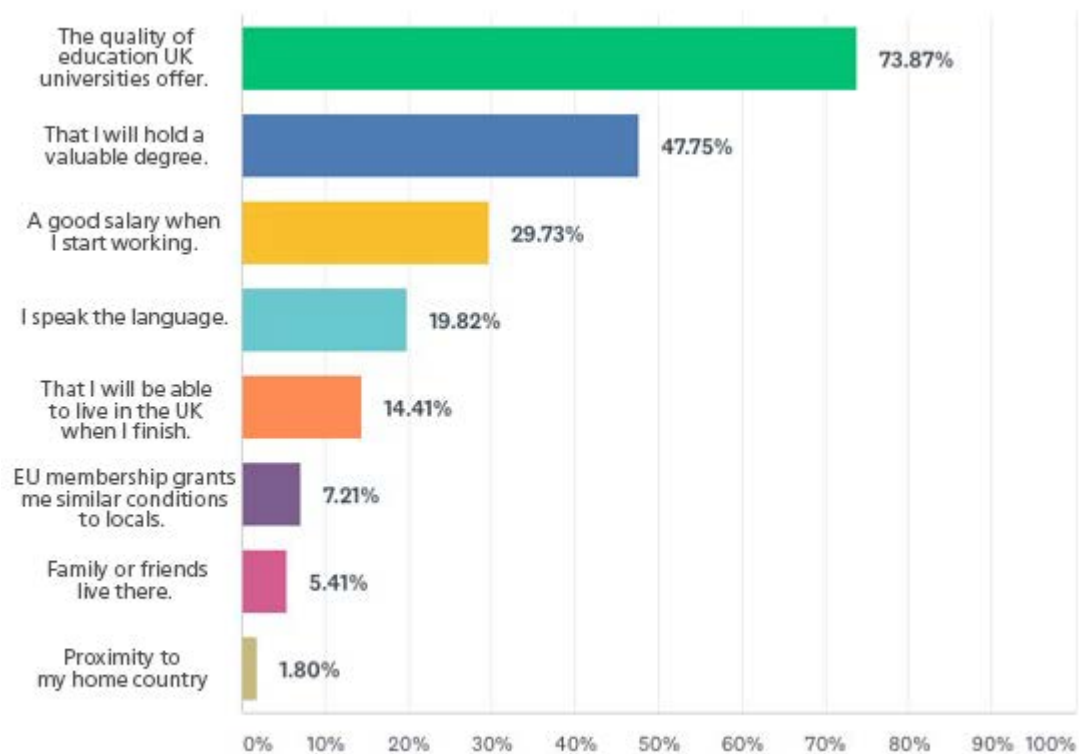
Students headed to the UK

Students already studying in the UK

Motivation

Q: What are/were the two most important factors that have affected your choice of university?
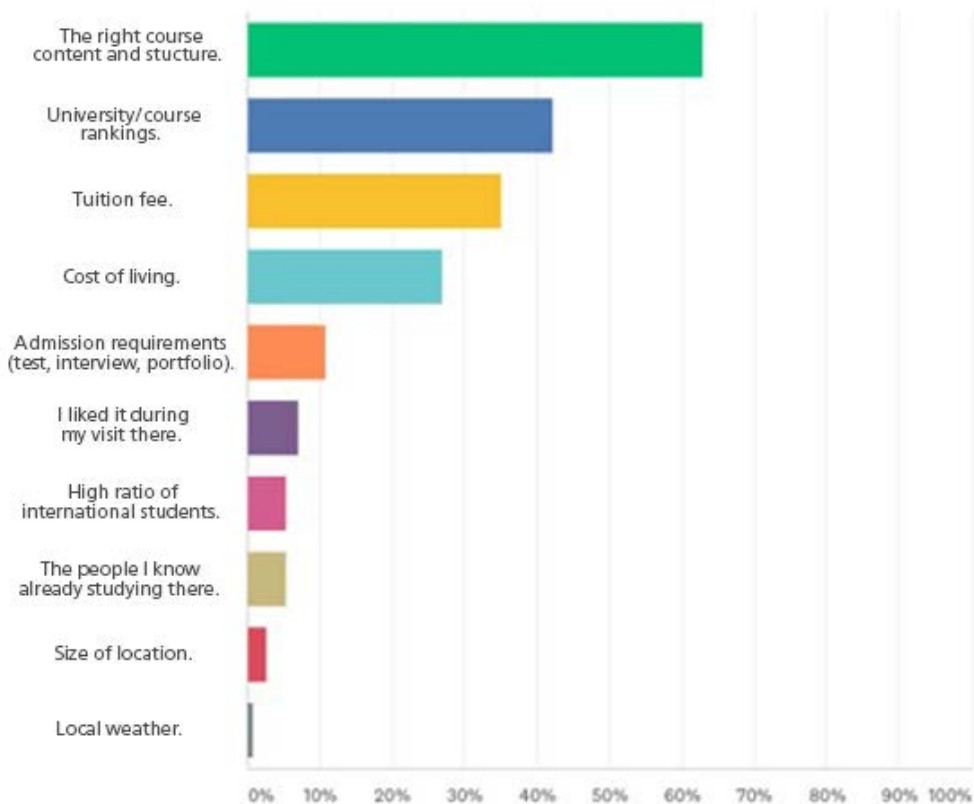
Students headed to the UK
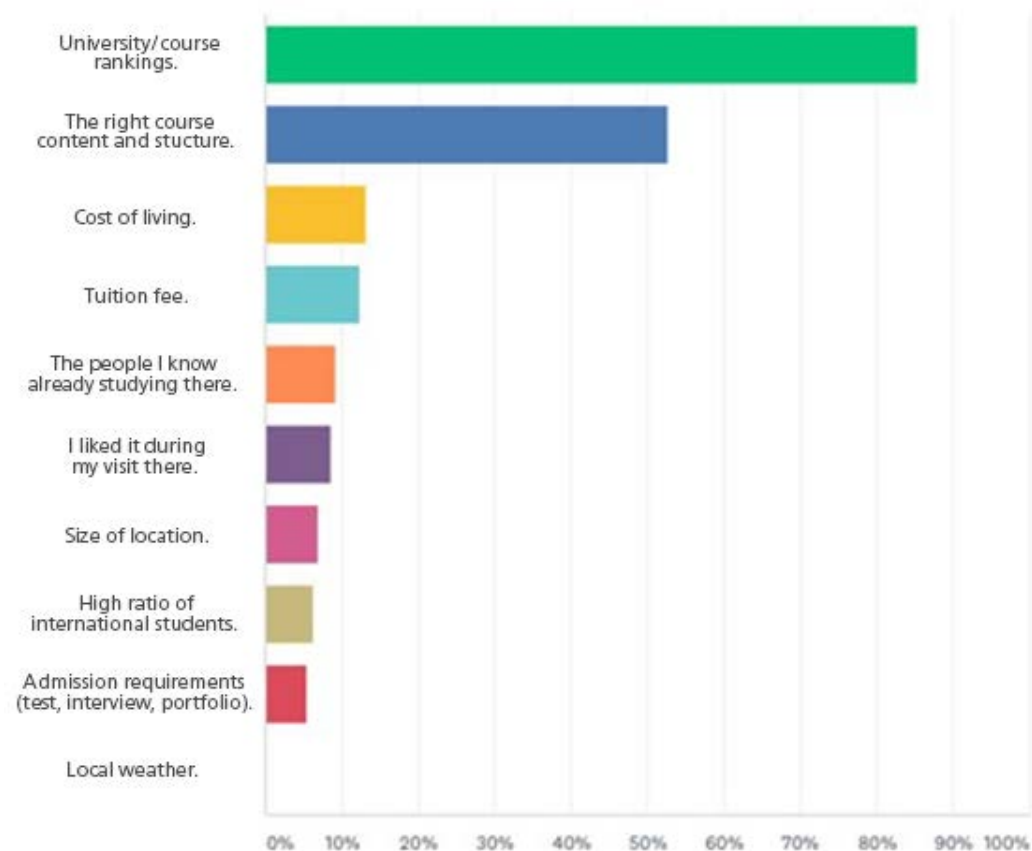
Students already studying in the UK

Self-assessment of preparedness

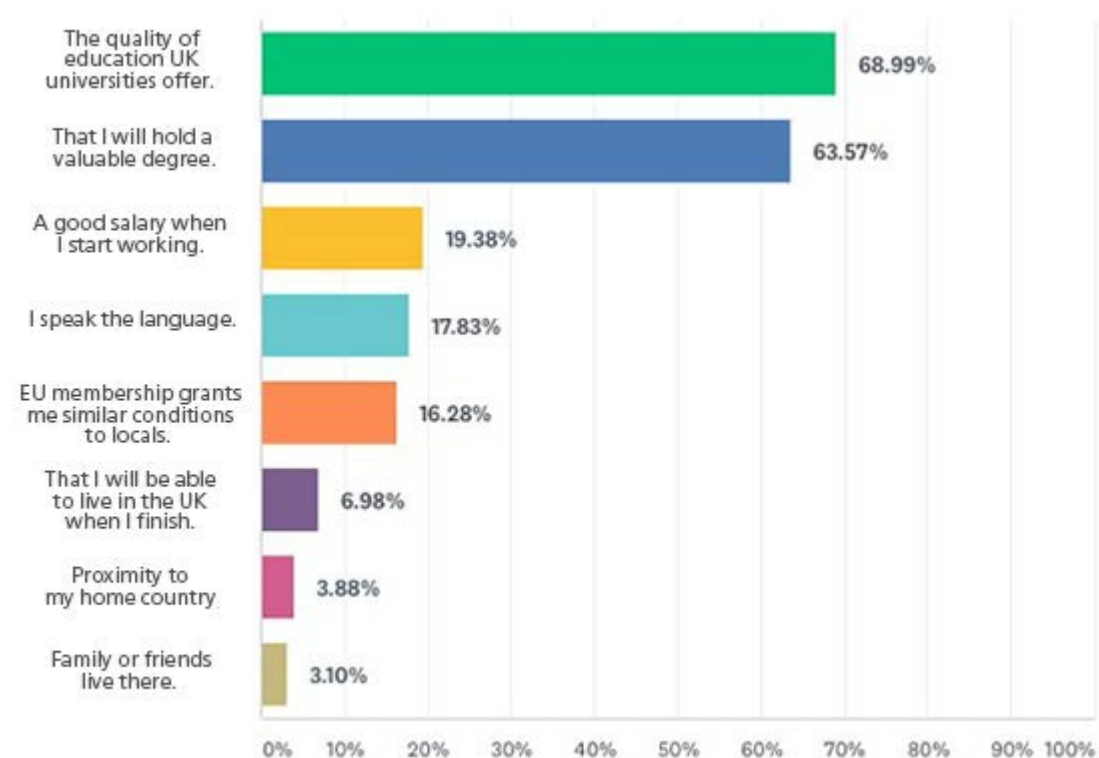|	I FEEL VERY UNPREPARED	I FEEL A LITTLE UNPREPARED	I DON'T KNOW / NOT APPLICABLE	I FEEL SOMEWHAT PREPARED	I FEEL VERY PREPARED
Academic essay writing	5%	27%	5%	49%	14%
Individual study skills	0%	10%	8%	48%	34%
Critical thinking skills	0%	9%	7%	44%	40%
Presentation skills	1%	23%	6%	38%	32%
Research skills	0%	10%	11%	53%	26%
Debating skills	4%	20%	15%	40%	22%
Subject knowledge	1%	13%	15%	44%	27%

Students headed to the UK

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In summary

Confident about sufficient subject knowledge

✓ 79% accepted students

✓ 70% applicants

I am/was prepared academically*

✗ 43% accepted students

✗ 23% applicants

*Critical thinking, academic writing, debating, research skills, presentation skills

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Preparation: how and what help *is/was* available?

Students headed to the UK

- I prepare on my own.
- I am attending/ I have attented extra language courses.
- Friends help me.
- I have had a personal advisor/mentor to help with my application.
- My school is helping me in developing my academic skills.
- My school is helping me in my application to UK universites.
- I am doing / I have completed extra online courses.
- Other (please specify).

Students already studying in the UK

- Prepared on my own. — 70.63%
- My school prepared my academic skills well. — 44.44%
- I had a personal advisor/mentor to help with my application. — 35.71%
- Friends helped me. — 29.37%
- I attented extra language courses. — 26.98%
- My school helped me in my application to UK universites. — 24.60%
- Other (please specify). — 11.11%
- I completed extra online courses. — 6.35%

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Teachers' assessment of students' preparedness

	THEY ARE QUITE UNPREPARED	THEY ARE SOMEWHAT PREPARED	THEY ARE VERY WELL PREPARED	I DO NOT KNOW
Academic essay writing	16%	50%	32%	2%
Individual study skills	2%	35%	61%	2%
Critical thinking skills	7%	46%	42%	5%
Presentation skills	7%	46%	48%	0%
Research skills	22%	48%	24%	6%
Debating skills	15%	57%	24%	4%
Subject knowledge	2%	24%	71%	3%

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Intended Learning Outcomes

Reading

- comprehend complex written texts in an educational context for a non-specialist audience
- analyse the structure of complex texts
- understand finer shades of meaning and implied meaning
- develop effective strategies to approach written texts in extensive and intensive reading scenarios

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Intended Learning Outcomes

Listening

- understand extended speech in a formal setting, e.g. a university lecture

- follow a complex line of argument

- makes effective notes that are useful in reconstructing the main points of a talk or lecture

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Intended Learning Outcomes

Writing

- create a draft that helps the writer produce a well-structured text
- produce an effective written piece with a transactional or discursive purpose in an educational context
- write in different genres and apply communicative functions

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Intended Learning Outcomes

Speaking

- plan and deliver a well-structured presentation on a thesis statement

- demonstrate awareness of metalinguistic delivery features

- apply a range of linguistic elements to initiate and maintain a balanced discussion of a topic

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Thematic composition

A general educational context, with an appropriate balance of three major fields of study:

- humanities and social science
- natural science
- business studies and economics

Communication contexts

Communicative situations that appear in the test bear certain fundamental similarities in all university courses:

- *communication* that is established *as part of the learning process*, such as seminar presentations, making lecture notes or writing an essay for a home assignment

- *communication* that is *indirectly connected to the learning process*, such as a meeting about the design of a conference poster or an email to a tutor about the assessment requirements of a certain module

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Reading

Text parts removed:

(i) topic sentence
(ii) paragraph closing sentence,
(iii) summary
(iv) exemplification
(v) anaphoric reference,
(vi) cataphoric reference,
(vii) developing an idea,
(viii) emphasising a point,
(ix) expressing sequence,
(x) opinion,
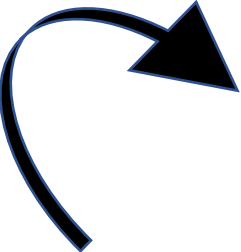(xi) contrast,
(xii) cause and effect.

John Rawls: an American liberal

John Rawls (1921-2002) was an American political philosopher in the liberal tradition. His theory of justice as fairness describes a society of free citizens holding equal basic rights and cooperating within an egalitarian economic system. His theory of political liberalism delineates the legitimate use of political power in a democracy, and envisions how civic unity might endure despite the diversity of worldviews that free institutions allow.

Yet, it is ideas about what justice is and how it is to be determined that established his fame. According to the moral philosopher TM Scanlon, "John Rawls was widely recognised as the greatest political philosopher of the 20th century. His work revived and reshaped the entire field, and its profound influence on the way justice is understood and argued about will last long into the future."

His masterpiece is *A Theory of Justice*, which appeared in 1971. _7_____ "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought." It might strike you as a little too lofty, but he brings his subject matter right down to earth in the next sentence. "A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust."

Rawls wrote his masterpiece during the Vietnam War, at a time when America was struggling to come to grips with all sorts of things, not least the idea of civil rights. _8_____

... about justice and fairness, about how our ... or not it's morally right. The book prompted

... d at the heart of his thinking is a remarkable ... ople who are asked to choose the principles ... usions are fair for everyone, and to ensure ... —there's no horse-trading, no bargaining ... magines them operating behind "the veil of ... heir eventual social position, race, gender, ... about religion or what sort of life they might ... nd not knowing where they'll end up or quite

... s he called it would focus on securing basic ... ld want to do something about inequality ... erson has an equal right to a fully adequate ... e which is compatible with a similar scheme ... are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must ... er conditions of fair equality of opportunity; ... the least advantaged members of society.

... but you're somehow contemplating your ... u were to look down at your country, as it is ... l life somewhere in there fill you with comfort

... edding down on the streets while investment ... people just stuck? _14_____. Are ... lth concentrated in the hands of the few? Is

... cast a longing glance at a fairer society, say ... t, but you might also now have a better idea ... world that we're in.

A	It's been recast in all sorts of ways, but a version of it goes like this.
B	To bring Rawls' conclusions home, some put his thought experiment slightly differently.
C	Another criticism of Rawls is that he assumes all the people in his original position are rational economic calculators, not gamblers.
D	It sold hundreds of thousands of copies and was translated into more than 25 languages, despite the content being both technical and turgid. The ideas in it continue to strike a chord.
E	Do those from all walks of life have equal access to the best education?
F	Rawls comes to the conclusion – and much ink has been spilled on whether his conclusions are correct – that they would settle on two principles.
G	Opposition to Rawls' work was heavy from the growing tide of unrest in the United States.
H	Political philosophy in previous decades had focused on history and conceptual analysis, not the ragged edges of real world problems, and probably the time was ripe for a big change.
I	In short, they don't know what their place will be in the society they're setting up.
J	Reception of Rawls' work, however was far greater outside the United States, which had the following effects.
K	Its opening line says a lot about its content.

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Listening

Text features:
(i) single extended monologue,
(ii) redundant and distracting information included,
(iii) dense, factual information
(iv) clear signposting of required information.

- **Definition**

5. What is the basic principle of the two-nation theory? What kind of identity does it construct? **(1 point)**

6. Which groups hoped to gain from this theory and what did they pursue? **(2 points)**

- **Territoriality**

7. On what grounds was a religion-based concept of nationhood defended **(2 points)**
   - in general by supporters of the theory?
   - in more detail by Jinnah?

- **The question of co-existence**

8. Describe the two imagined solutions to the problem of coexistence. **(2 points)**

t-partition debate

ch two facts could be argued to prove the invalidity of the two-nation theory. **(2 points)**

You will hear a presentation about the two-nation theory.

- At the end of the presentation, you will have to answer five questions.
- While listening, take notes which will help you answer the questions.
- The recording will only be played once.
- Write your notes below, but remember to copy your answers onto the separate Answer Sheet.

Your Notes

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Writing

Rating scale criteria:

(i) Task Achievement,
(ii) Appropriacy,
(iii) Coherence,
(iv) Cohesion,
(v) Grammatical Range and Accuracy
(vi) Lexical Range and Accuracy

Task One: Transactional Writing – *(20 minutes)*

You are not satisfied with the mark and evaluation you have been given for your college course.

- Write **an email** to your teacher, explain what happened and justify your request. Use the information below
- Write **around 200 words**. Make sure you refer to all the points in your Notes.
- Write your answer in the email template provided on the Answer Sheet – Task One.

Student evaluation form

- **Course title:** Theory of Knowledge
- **Time:** Monday 14:00-16:00
- **Attendance:** Poor
- **Midterm test (underlined):**
  Fail – Pass – Average – <u>Good</u> - Excellent
- **Essay:** Not handed in
- **Final mark (underlined):**
  Fail – <u>Pass</u> – Average – Good - Excellent

My notes

»» *reason for poor class attendance*

»» *individual preparation for midterm – good results*

»» *issues with essay*

»» *new deadline for essay?*

Task Two: Discursive Writing – *(40 minutes)*

- Choose only ONE of the following questions – 1, 2 OR 3.
- Write **around 250 words.**
- DO NOT answer more than one question.
- Write your answer to this question on the Answer Sheet - Task Two.

1.

To what extent do you agree with the statement:
'**Participation in a student government greatly benefits your future career.**'

Write an **essay**.

Explain your points for and against; and arrive at a conclusion at the end. Make sure you state your arguments logically and clearly.

2.

To what extent do you agree with the statement:
'**It is impossible to improve people's standard of living without using non-renewable energy resources.**'

Write an **essay**.

Explain your points for and against; and arrive at a conclusion at the end. Make sure you state your arguments logically and clearly.

3.

To what extent do you agree with the statement:
'**The easy money effect of credit cards stimulate overspending.**'

Write an **essay**.

Explain your points for and against; and arrive at a conclusion at the end. Make sure you state your arguments logically and clearly.

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Speaking

Operational verbs:
(i) modes of communication: negotiate,
(ii) modes of characterisation: define,
(ii) explaining a position: elaborate,
(iii) deliberative activity: challenge,
(iv) performing an analysis: contrast.

Presentation: 1

Ia	Family-friendly policies encourage economic growth.
Ib	The concentration of power in the media leaves democracies vulnerable.
Ic	The routine use of antibiotics in factory farming puts human health at risk.

Presentation: 2

2a	Developing public transport is a better way of reducing urban congestion than introducing self-driving cars.
2b	Some art programmes resonate more with the art world than the public.
2c	Nepotism drives talent away.

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Teaching modules

Structure

Contact hours: 20 hrs
Independent learning hours: 15 hrs

- Introduction

Raising awareness; mapping existing knowledge and skills to build on during the course

- Organisational and structural aspects

- Vocabulary extension

- Skills development

- Production

Integration of reception and production

- Euroexam Academic: focus on test tasks

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Speaking module — a snapshot

Introduction – raising awareness

Fluency 1

Structure
- types of speech structures
- signposting
- fronting
- rhetorical questions

Vocabulary extension
- reporting verbs
- formal – informal word pairs (phrases)
- fillers

Body language

Presentation practice
- peer feedback & self-reflection
- re-do presentation based on above

Managing a discussion
- initiating and turn-taking
- dis/agreeing

Discussion practice
- present / discuss / observe

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Introduction

Stand up and talk

The freedom of speech is an internationally recognised human right. One of the most unique and exciting places where people exercise this right is called *Speakers' Corner*. However, the most well-known such place in Hyde Park, London, is not the only one by far.

Code of conduct

Speakers Corner is available between the hours of 9am and 9pm for any member of the public, provided that users:

- are strictly non-adversarial and non-partisan
- provide all participants with an equal opportunity to express their views within the law, and respect diversity of opinion
- refrain from using coarse language
- conduct themselves calmly and without rancour
- seek common ground, rather than confrontation
- aim to engage, inform and enrich opinion and, wherever possible, entertain
- stop speaking when they engage an audience of fewer than five people

Above, you have just read the Code of Conduct of the *Speakers' Corner* in the town of Lichfield, in the Midlands – except for two items.

Can you identify the two items that don't belong in the list?

Discuss in groups of three or four which rules *are* or *aren't* part of the code. Always give reasons to support your choices.
Now check your ideas below. Why do you think the committee in Lichfield considered exactly these five rules to be most important?

Public speaking – some more genres

People will stand up and talk in front of lesser and larger audiences in wildly different contexts. Here are some short videos of people speaking to an audience.

Watch each video and complete the table with the missing information and your notes.

	Genre	Level of formality and markers	Awareness of audience	Aim of speaker	Some rhetorical devices the speaker uses
Talk 1					
Talk 2					
Talk 3					
Talk 4					
Talk 5					
Talk 6					

Compare your notes with a partner. Think of two or three key factors that make a presentation in each of these genres successful.

Many people find presenting to an audience scary – the motto at the beginning of this lesson puts this in a very concise form. Do you think that the advice it gives is useful? (If so, how? / If not, why not?)

What do think are / will be your strengths as a presenter? In what areas will you need more help? Think of things like content, structure, body language, maintaining interest, awareness of the audience, humour, etc.
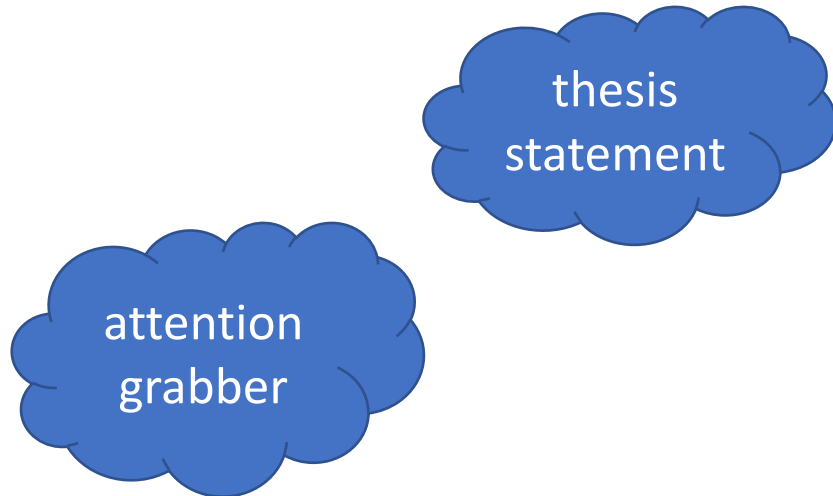
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Structure

It's the method as well as the words

Here is an effective way that you can structure your content when you give a presentation.

Put the items on the right into the appropriate blue boxes of the presentation structure.
You will have to use two of the items three times (see the bullet points below).
What will be the labels for the three main parts (in yellow)?

evidence

the „punchline"

thesis statement

relevance of the presentation

attention grabber

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Body language

Giving a presentation – mind my body language!

The motto of our lesson is about body language.

Work in pairs and discuss how the motto can be related to giving presentations to an audience. Which of the features collected in the previous activity do you think can have some relevance while giving a presentation?

Watch the video and take notes on the pieces of advice Alex Lion, a communications coach gives on three key aspects of body language you have to pay special attention to while giving presentations. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmbQFWBvTtY*

Work in pairs. One of you should focus on what the speaker tells you to do, the other on what he tells you not to do. Take notes in the chart below.

	DOs	DON'Ts
1st tip:		
2nd tip:		
3rd tip:		

Compare your notes with your partner and fill in the missing parts of the chart. Have you been aware of these features?

Have you ever given a presentation? Have there been any "mistakes" (*DON'Ts*) you have made? Discuss in groups of three or four.

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Presentation practice

Peer feedback checklist on the *STRUCTURE* of the presentation		
While listening to your peer's presentation, mark with a ✓ whether there is evidence of the following features in it.	YES	NO
The speaker managed to grab the attention of the audience.		
The thesis statement was clearly articulated.		
There was an initial summary of the main ideas.		
The main ideas were supported by evidence.		
The speaker provided a recap of the main ideas at the end of the presentation.		
There was a punchline the audience can definitely take away.		
The speaker considered the relevance of the topic for the audience.		

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A survey to explore the context

CEE ⟶ UK

Learn & Prepare ⟶ Demonstrate skills – an exam

Closing

Thank you for your attention

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