

# GFP English Graduates: IELTS 5.0 Condition Affects the Global Skills Achievements

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## Abstract

An achievement of IELTS 5.0 is a strict goal of GFP English Exit requirements. Despite the OAAAQA's requirements, Exit outcomes fail to show that the GFP English graduates have any acquired global competencies. Even in the IELTS 5.0 focused assessments, GFP English deviates in style and methodology, raising concerns about the overall learning outcomes of the students across the three domains of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. This study will apotheosize certain highlighted GFP English assessment areas that need to be redesigned with the goal of evaluating students' compatibility with global skills together with the acquisition of the necessary competency equivalent to IELTS 5.0 band score.

**Keywords:** IELTS, GFP English, OAAAQA, Assessment, Global Skills, Competencies, Acquisition, methodology

## INTRODUCTION:

- Both teachers and students should have a clear understanding of the assessment requirements in any language programme. Teachers need to know that their lessons have been understood by the students and that they are capable of demonstrating their command of the information or skill sets the course is designed to impart. Accordingly, exams, continuous assessment, and classroom assessment are used by the General Foundation Programme English, hereafter referred to as GFPE, to guide the teaching and learning process (Intensive English Language Program: Assessment 2023). The GFPE uses both formative assessment (for example, classroom participation, projects, quizzes) and summative assessment i.e., midterm and final exams (GFP Structure, 2023). At the time of tertiary admission, students are required to take a Placement Test (of English, Mathematics and Computing Skills) to establish their proficiency levels. A student who achieves less than the equivalent of IELTS 4.0 in English is placed in Level 1 of GFP (General Foundation Programme, 2023); wherein, the major goal is to prepare students for the first year of their degree program (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021). This is achieved through preparing the students to understand lectures, use videos for learning, participate in class, interact online, learn from discipline-specific textbooks and other sources (including digital ones), take notes, write emails and other specialty-specific texts in keeping with OAAAQA's (i.e., Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance) set standards, except for the activities that prepare the students to describe objects and concepts, classify items, express opinions, engage in reasoned arguments, discuss similarities and differences as well as advantages and disadvantages, which indicate IELTS inclination as an internal and unvalidated qualitative benchmarking.

- Further to this, the programme is set to devise methods that include, but are not limited to, the communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method, Community Language Learning, Team-based learning, Task-Based Language Learning, Project-based Learning, Learning By Doing and Experiential Learning, Flipped Classrooms, Self-study to develop self-directed and self-regulated learning strategies, Inductive and Deductive, Analytic and Synthetic, and/or Technology-infused Learning (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021). Wherein, the four primary linguistic abilities of listening, reading, speaking, and writing are the core of the English language component. Additionally, it emphasizes improving students' all-around study abilities, including both affective (such as adhering to college English grammar rules) and cognitive ones. (e.g., logical, deductive, inductive, and analytical thinking). Accordingly, the programme assists students in developing the language and academic abilities required, giving priority to those that are essential for being prepared for their first-year specialization courses. This is because the GFP's major goal is to prepare students for the first year of their degree program. In other words, GFP English classes should aim to prepare students to understand lectures, use videos for learning, participate in class, interact online, learn from discipline-specific textbooks and other sources (including digital ones), take notes, write emails and other specialty-specific texts, describe objects and concepts, classify items, express opinions, engage in reasoned arguments, discuss similarities and differences as well as advantages and disadvantages. Thus, acquiring the skills themselves as well as gaining the skills to learn things that go beyond language are the two goals of the language classes. (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021)
- However, IELTS based assessments of GFPE not only prevents the graduates from attaining OAAAQA's set competencies but also impedes them from scoring 5.0 or above in IELTS tests that follow for employment, promotion, or higher education admission. Even though the general belief is that IELTS tutoring will improve one's communication skills to a large extent, but it will not improve one's pronunciation, GFPE's skills assessments are heavily IELTS based at the question level. Hence, others contend that it is better to attend spoken English and grammar classes before joining IELTS (Sreedavi, 2023). Also, many reiterate that studying IELTS is not about improving your English. It is about preparing for the test by learning test (Dave, 2017). To improve English, one needs to put in a lot of work outside class and find interesting materials that are not related to IELTS (Dave, 2017). Moreover, joining an IELTS class for improving English is not a good option. Instead, practicing from apps, watching movies, English commentary, books, are a good way (Curator, 2022). But, contrary to the common observations, GFPE assessments are heavily IELTS inclined. In that, they test examinees on all the English language skills i.e., listening, reading, writing, and speaking on question types that are more IELTS specific than language assessment related.

## BACKGROUND

- Both IELTS and GFPE exams are essential for non-native English speakers to demonstrate their language proficiency. While the IELTS exam is recognized worldwide and provides a comprehensive assessment of language skills, the GFPE exam is tailored to the specific needs of a particular country or region central to the Middle East. The choice between the two exams depends on an individual's goals and needs. The learning outcomes of GFPE focus on developing basic language skills (Tuzlukova et al., 2019), while IELTS aims to assess a candidate's ability to use English in academic and professional settings. Accordingly, the learning outcomes of GFPE and IELTS are inconsistent. GFPE courses focus on the basics of English language learning such as developing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation

skills. The goal of GFPE is to help students achieve a level of proficiency that allows them to communicate effectively in everyday situations.

- On the other hand, IELTS aims to assess the level of English proficiency of non-native speakers who want to study, work, or live in English-speaking countries. The learning outcomes of IELTS include the ability to understand complex academic texts, write essays, make presentations, and engage in discussions. IELTS also tests a candidate's ability to comprehend and respond appropriately to spoken English in different accents and at varying speeds. Hence, considering GFPE to be equivalent to IELTS or vice-versa, is nothing less than thinking a bicycle is the same as a motorbike. Assuming that by passing the final level of GFPE, one is equatable to the IELTS 5.0 band achiever has amassed a lot of cognitive, affective, and behavioral debates; wherein, the findings are yet to be mainstreamed. This study is therefore aimed at drawing attention to certain GFP English assessment areas that need to be revised to assess students' ability to acquire the requisite competency as well as their compatibility with global abilities, specifically the 4Cs of competencies i.e., Creativity, Communication, Collaboration and Critical Thinking which are the set learning outcomes proposed by the UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework in 2021 (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- It has long been recognized that there are other elements outside the target language constructions that also affect test scores, even though proficiency in the target language should be the main component explaining a test score (the construct of interest) (Bachman, 2000). For instance, test takers may perform differently when taking a construct-response test as opposed to a multiple-choice examination (i.e., test-methods facets). Contrarily, finding out what students know, understand, and can do, as well as if lessons, programs, or courses are accomplishing their goals, and whether teachers and materials are meeting their objectives, are all determined through assessment in GFPE assessments. Whereas, though test difficulty should be conceptualized as a function of complex interactions between a given test-taker and a given assessment question and should not be understood and interpreted primarily from an analysis of assessment question characteristics and predetermined difficulty levels set by the test developers (Bachman, 2000), for its assessment question characteristics and specified difficulty levels set by OAAAQA, GFPE is topographically benchmarked with IELTS tests. Consequently, GFPE graduates, who are expected to attain at least 70 percent of the score in exit assessments, are equated to IELTS 5.0 band score and above achievers (source:), which results in their underperformance in IELTS assessment questions and a lack of global competencies to cope up with real life English needs, i.e., creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Also, notwithstanding the priority stated in OAAAQA standards, not only do none of the skills constitute any of the assessments at any GFPE level, but they also raise questions about the validity evidence for assessment question context validity (i.e., how closely an assessment question resembles or activates the cognitive processes) involved in the instruments of assessments and cognitive validity (i.e., how closely an assessment question represents or activates the target linguistic demands and settings; see also Field 2009a; Shaw & Weir 2007).

- In addition, although Weir's (2005) socio-cognitive validity framework highlights the equal importance of both examinees' mental processing and their use of language to complete an assessment question, so examining the interaction between test-task characteristics and examinees' characteristics is also pertinent to this framework, GFPE assessments negate the validity framework by grounding its major goal in the preparation of students for the first year of their degree program (UTAS Proposed GFP

Pedagogical Framework, 2021). Moreover, GFP English component classes are aimed at preparing students to understand lectures, use videos for learning, participate in class, interact online, learn from discipline-specific textbooks and other sources (including digital ones), take notes, write emails and other specialty-specific texts, which are far from being aligned to that of IELTS assessment questions except for the activities like describe objects and concepts, classify items, express opinions, engage in reasoned arguments, discuss similarities and differences as well as advantages and disadvantages.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

- The question that arises is that should Oman Accredited Council (OAC) currently known as Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance (OAAAQA) of Education persist in offering the GFPE program with such program outcomes, including IELTS 5.0 equivalent band score, or integrate ways to devise some plausible instruments of measurement of the global skills in the assessments while emphasizing the need for the English language acquisition on a priority basis?

## METHODOLOGY

**.1.** This research will explore the OAAAQA documents on GFP, and OAAAQA standards for the program to decipher the discrepancies, if there are any, and advise ways to overcome the gap. It will further study the IELTS tests, namely the reading, listening, speaking and writing skills to juxtapose with GFP counterparts to gather data about the measurable differences leading to the unattainability of the global skills, and IELTS 5.0 band score. For this, the team will investigate both GFP English and IELTS assessment instruments, the question types, and their expected outcomes.

### **.2. Research design**

This study adopted a mixed method wherein it gathered quantitative and qualitative data. Following the Durkheim's study model, the GFP English course was compared to that of IELTS 5.0 band score standards through experimental and observational model of data analysis. The primary source of data for this research were retrieved from UTAS, OAAAQA and IDP documents. Whereas the secondary data were mainly gathered from the assessment instruments by differentiating their classifications, patterns, and outcomes.

### **.3. Population**

- At least 70 professionals (former GFP graduates from various colleges and universities) who have attended IELTS preparatory courses at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, ITRI have been evaluated during a course of two semesters in 30 and 40 participants as a group.
- Also, students of GFPE levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been evaluated based on their midterm and final term examination results with specific focus in reading, listening, speaking, and writing (where the lacking are hypothesized at the most) of Fall 2022-23 and Spring 2022-23.

### **.4. Instruments**

The study was carried out using secondary data collection methods from instruments namely published sources, online databases, and publicly available data, including the analysis of the UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework; and GFP benchmarking report of Fall 2020-21. Data retrieved from such sources were analogously interpreted for qualitative measurement of the GFPE and IELTS assessments in juxtaposition on three primary target areas i.e., methods, question types, and their intended outcomes.

### **.5. Procedure**

The procedure followed three main methods of data collection i.e., observational with no attempt to affect the outcome, experimental with an intervention for effects, and derived with calculation of values from collected data.

### **.6. Observational**

The big data for this study is observational data, such as the results of the Fall 2022–23 and Spring 2022–23 Midterm and Final Examinations of Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing skills of all the GFP English.

### **.7. Experimental**

This study involved carrying out an experiment with systematic intervention activities in the listening, reading, and writing skills of GFP English across level 3 to determine the most plausible approach to assessments that not only leads to the accomplishment of OAAQA set standards but also IELTS 5.0 band score equivalent proficiency. For this, IELTS focused formative assessment tasks were given to the students of GFPE Spring 2022-23 in level 3 with a provision to evaluate the outcomes in three stages i.e., pre-feedback, post feedback and final.

### **.8. Derived**

The study also involved using existing data points from data sources like the results of Fall 2022-23 Midterm and Final Examinations of Listening, Reading, and Writing Skills of GFPE to compare the derived data with that of experimental data derived from the results of Spring 2022-23 Midterm and Final Examinations of Listening, Reading, and Writing Skills of GFPE by applying an arithmetic formula.

### **.9. Validity**

All the collected data from Pre-feedback, post feedback and final drafts were passed through data type check, format check, consistency check and range check across time, different observers such as, the second marker, and the local GFP coordinator. Further to this, formative validity was used to assess the effectiveness of GFP English assessments in achieving the global competencies, and equating the graduates with IELTS 5.0 band standards.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- The informed consent, risk of harm, anonymity, confidentiality, and conflicts of interest of the respondents were all addressed ethically as part of this study's data collection. In light of Fleming's (2018) concerns over the "insider researcher," this study made sure that its sampled population has approved of the research ethics before beginning to collect data using the survey questionnaire. Also, the researchers received permission to collect data while abiding by institutional policies and staff conduct standards. The sampled population was also properly informed about the questions, how and where the data would be used, and what consequences (if any) will result from doing so, while leaving the option to opt out open, notifying the risk of damage, guaranteeing anonymity, and non-disclosure of the confidentiality.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The study encountered five main types of limitations in these practices reported in the literature: risk of bias, publication bias, methodological limitations, psychometric limitations, social desirability bias, difficulty controlling all variables, and lack of manual instructions.

## OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS

Following Dr. Paula Dawidowicz's tips on how to make sense of the collected data, this study eliminated the biases, and the limitations by revisiting the research question that had risen from observational, experimental, and derived data and addressed the likelihood that features of the study design or conduct of the study that may give misleading results. The research further evaded selective outcome reporting (SOR) by resorting to experimental data outcomes. Devising clearly defined instruments, the research maintained a systematic method to acquire data that substantiated the hypothesis and the research validity.

## DATA ANALYSES

### Findings

- Contingent on the hypothesis that “a student who has not learned much after a whole semester or has not gained deeper insight into their [language] knowledge cannot be said to have been fully successful or efficient in learning” (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021), leads to the GFP English graduates' inability “to meet international or regional accreditation standards” (Benchmarking Report Fall AY21-22, 2022). Further, in an ambitious attempt to “meet the requirements of GFP standards set by Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA), which entails obtaining IELTS overall band 5 and not less than 4.5 in each language skill (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking)” (Benchmarking Report Fall AY21-22, 2022), the graduates of GFP not only were on the blink at attaining the set proficiency level, but also haywired from the OAAAQA's expected competencies. Even though GFP English “is also geared towards enabling the students to perform and progress in one aspect of the community, namely English-medium tertiary education” (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021); wherein, “the learners, first, become competent users or versed consumers of knowledge and solutions and, then, evolve into daring creators or innovative producers of them” (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021), contrary outcome resulted. For instance, the insufficiently educated graduates of GFP took admission for IELTS preparatory courses to not only further augment their already subjected English learning, but also objectively hoped for IELTS 6.0 and above, which is severely outlandish in scope and range since the original aim of the programme was to prepare learners for 5.0 or less band score level proficiency.
- Accordingly, GFP's aim “at preparing to hone the 4Cs of the 21st century competencies (i.e., Creativity, Communication, Collaboration and Critical Thinking)” (UTAS Proposed GFP Pedagogical Framework, 2021), also renders ineffective because the syllabus, delivery plan, text book, and assessment instruments lack calibration (see appendix 1.0). IELTS and GFP English have quite different outcomes for learning. While IELTS intends to evaluate the level of English proficiency of non-native speakers who desire to study, work, or live in English-speaking countries, GFP English is a beginner-level course designed to teach non-native speakers the fundamentals of English syntax, vocabulary, and speaking. IELTS learning outcomes include the capacity to comprehend challenging academic texts, write essays, deliver talks, and participate in conversations. GFP English, however, solely concentrates on acquiring fundamental language abilities. The results of the assessments are likewise different for GFP English and IELTS. To track a student's development in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral competency, GFP English uses continuous assessments, quizzes, and terminal examinations, whereas IELTS uses continuous assessments, quizzes, and terminal examinations.

GFP English outcomes	IELTS Outcomes	OAAAQA's Goals
Help students to gain effective command of the required skills in English Language, Mathematics and Information Technology.	familiarize yourself with all aspects of the IELTS test format: reading, writing, speaking and listening	Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for options.
Provide realistic learning opportunities for students to speak, listen to, read and write social, workplace and academic English confidently and effectively.	practice with authentic questions and receive expert advice from qualified and experienced teachers	Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data.
Provide a solid foundation in English, Mathematics, and Information Technology to allow them to perform successfully in a variety of academic programs at a higher level.	learn test taking strategies to help you maximize your test result	Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions.
Equip students with the skills and attitudes to successfully participate in lifelong learning in their academic programs and future careers.	receive feedback on your strengths and areas to improve	Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.
Develop social competence by helping students to acquire teamwork and decision making skills.	free British Council materials specifically designed for exam preparation	Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, note taking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarizing, use of quotations and use of references.
Develop academic competences which will include logical and abstract reasoning, problem solving, higher level cognitive and critical thinking.	feel more confident on the day of your test.	Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g. lecture, news broadcast).
		Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages.
		Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, register (e.g. formal or informal).
		Read a one to two page text and identify the main idea(s) and extract specific information in a given period of time.
		Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student's area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g. prediction, deduction, inference.

**.10. Assessment Focus**

Both GFP English and IELTS are unique in their contents, delivery plan, teaching and learning methods and outcomes; however, their uniqueness is quite stark in the approaches to assessing English proficiency. Their uniqueness ranges from their skills that are being assessed to determine proficiency. Also, they are different in their grading systems. GFP English is graded out of 100 marks, but IELTS is measured out of a band score of 9. Moreover, GFP English assesses its students on six skills that includes two unique skills i.e., Grammar and Target Vocabulary; whereas, IELTS only evaluates its candidates on 4 skills which include Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing (see Table 1: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Focused Skills).

**Table 1: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Focused Skills**

Types of skills	Qualitative Interpretation			Quantitative Interpretation		
	GFP English	IELTS	Both	GFP English	IELTS	Both
Grammar (taught) Skills	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	1	0	0
Target Vocabulary Skills	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	1	0	0
Writing Skills	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
Listening Skills	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
Reading Skills	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
Speaking Skills	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

- However, both GFP English and IELTS show alignment of their four skills assessments. Though both the programs assess four typical language skills i.e., Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking, GFP English tests two extra skills that are Grammar and Target Vocabulary (see Figure 1: GFP English and IELTS Mapping) which differentiates it from IELTS and causes expectation shock. In which both GFP English and IELTS are 33% and 67% unique in their approaches to their assessments of the skills (see Table 2: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Uniqueness).

**Table 2: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Uniqueness**

Courses	Uniqueness	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
GFP English	2	33%	Unique
IELTS	4	67%	Unique

- But findings indicate that in principle 67% of the skills of GFP English are mapped against IELTS. But only 33% of the skills are unmapped, which leads to the failure of the students in their IELTS attempts (see Table 3: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Mapping).

**Table 3: GFP English vs IELTS Assessment Mapping**

Status	GFP English & IELTS Skills	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Mapped	4	67%	Mapped
Unmapped	2	33%	Unmapped

### .11. Reading Skills

- IELTS assesses reading skills on 14 types of questions, but GFP English does it on 6 types of questions across its 4 levels in 4 four semesters (see Table 4: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions).

**Table 4: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions**

Types of questions	Qualitative Interpretation			Quantitative Interpretation		
	GFP English	IELTS	Both	GFP English	IELTS	Both
Matching Headings	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
True / False / Not Given	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Yes / No / Not Given	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Matching Paragraph Information	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Summary Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Sentence Completion	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Multiple Choice Questions	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
List Selection	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Choosing a title	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Matching sentence endings	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Table Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Flow-chart Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Diagram Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Short Answer	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>

- Hence, in reading skills, only 6 out of 14 question types of IELTS are mapped with that of GFP English which leaves the examinees unfamiliar with 8 question types (see Table 5: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions Uniqueness).

**Table 5: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions Uniqueness**

Courses	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
GFP English	6	30%	Unique
IELTS	14	70%	Unique



- Accordingly, both GFP English and IELTS are unique by 30% and 70% respectively (see Table 6: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions Mapping). Hence, they are 50% mapped and 50% unmapped against each other.

**Table 6: GFP English vs IELTS Reading Questions Mapping**

Status	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Mapped	7	50%	Mapped
Unmapped	7	50%	Unmapped

### .12. Listening Skills

- Research further points out that IELTS assesses listening skills on 12 types of questions compared to GFP English which only evaluates on 3 types of questions that have some similarity with the former (see Table 7: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions).

**Table 7: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions**

Listening Assessments are focused at the following types of questions	Qualitative Interpretation			Quantitative Interpretation		
	GFP English	IELTS	Both	GFP English	IELTS	Both
Fill in the gaps	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Sentence Completion	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Table completion	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	1	1	0
Summary completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Map Labelling	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Diagram Labelling	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Matching Headings	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Matching Statements	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Form Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Short Answers (no more than ...)	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	0	1	1
Plan Completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Note taking / completion	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>

- Hence, both GFP English and IELTS are unique by 20% and 80% respectively (see Table 8: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions Uniqueness).

**Table 8: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions Uniqueness**

Courses	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
GFP English	3	20%	Unique
IELTS	12	80%	Unique

- Since only 20% of the question types are mapped and 80% are unmapped against each other, examinees staggered when met with a test situation (see Table 9: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions Mapping).

**Table 9: GFP English vs IELTS Listening Questions Mapping**

Status	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Mapped	3	20%	Mapped
Unmapped	9	80%	Unmapped

### .13. Writing Skills

- Furthermore, research results show that both GFP English and IELTS are distinct in their assessment of writing skills. Though both assess the writing skills, GFP English maintains an incremental

process through its 4 levels of the program. For the most part, writing skills assessments in level 1 and 2 do not conform with IELTS assessment neither in question types nor in targeted response. However, level 3 and 4, despite GFP English’s uniqueness to IELTS, evince roughly 32 percent of similarities. Accordingly, in writing skills, out of 17 writing genres and question types only 6 are mapped against IELTS’ (see Table 10: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions).

**Table 10: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions**

GFP English vs IELTS Writing Skills Assessment						
Writing Skills (Academic & General Modules) Assessments are focused at the following types of questions	Qualitative Interpretation GFP			Quantitative Interpretation		
	English	IELTS	Both	GFP English	IELTS	Both
line graph	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Bar graph	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Pie Chart	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Table	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Process description	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Map description	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Flow chart description	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Multiple Graphs	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Opinion Essay	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Discussion Essay	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	1	1	1
Advantage and Disadvantage Essay	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Problem Solution Essay	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	1	1	1
Direct Question Essay	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Double Question Essay	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Formal letters	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Semi-Formal Letters	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
Informal Letters	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>

Hence, results indicate a staggering 41.67 percent uniqueness in IELTS from GFP English (see Table 11: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Uniqueness).

**Table 11: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Uniqueness**

Courses	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Level 1	8	16.67%	Unique
Level 2	6	12.50%	Unique
Level 3	5	10.42%	Unique
Level 4	9	18.75%	Unique
IELTS	20	41.67%	Unique

That implies that almost 47% of the writing skills of IELTS and GFP English are mapped; whereas, 53.13% are unmapped (see Table 12: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Mapping).

**Table 12: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Mapping**

Status	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Mapped	15	46.88%	Mapped
Unmapped	17	53.13%	Unmapped

**.14.Speaking Skills**

Furthermore, GFP English speaking skills, too, lack complete alignment with that of its counterpart IELTS. Though both the programs typically assess their examinees to determine speaking proficiency, their approaches, and target outcomes differ greatly. First, GFP English assesses speaking skills across

four semesters in four distinct levels. Though all the levels consist of 3 parts (sections) in speaking assessment, they are dissimilar in their sections 2 and 3. For instance, in Level 1, speaking assessment begins with targeting interaction ability from set topics through a brief interview (ideally 3-4 minutes), followed by a challenge at forming questions for the said sentences (ideally in present simple, present simple continuous, present perfect, present perfect continuous and simple past tenses) and finally finishes off by elicitation of description of some set pictures (or photos). Level 2, speaking assessment, applies the same first two sections of level 1, but finishes off with a choice task; wherein, an examinee is required to give directions following a map or tell a story based on the set pictures (or photos). However, Level 3 and 4 have a lot in common. They begin with an interactive session of 3 - 4 minutes, followed by a monologue of 3 to 5 minutes wherein the examinee is required to speak about a given topic, which is introduced by the examiner on the day. Then it concludes with an extended interaction in which the examinee and the examiner engage in a longer discussion about the topic introduced in Part 2 (see Table 13: GFP English vs IELTS Speaking Questions). Resultantly, in speaking skills, only 1 out of 7 types of parts is mapped with IELTS.

**Table 13: GFP English vs IELTS Speaking Questions**

GFP English vs IELTS Speaking Skills Assessment												
Speaking Assessments are focused at	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	IELTS	Both	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	IELTS	Both
	Part 1 - interview (interaction from topic based questions)	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	1	1	0	0	0
Part 2 - making questions (after listening to statements)	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	1	1	0	0	0	0
Part 3 - describing pictures	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	1	0	0	0	0	0
Part 3 - giving directions / instructions or telling a story	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	0	1	0	0	0	0
Part 1 - introduction & interview (interactive)	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	0	0	1	1	0	0
Part 2 - candidate card (Question and Answer)	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	0	0	1	1	0	0
Part 1 - answer questions about yourself and your family.	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	0	0	0	1	0
Part 2 - speak about a given topic, which will be introduced by the examiner on the day.	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	0	0	0	0	1	0
Part 3 - have a longer discussion with the examiner about the topic introduced in Part 2.	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	0	0	1	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

- Accordingly, GFP English is 33% unique in speaking skills to that of IELTS which is 67% unique (see Table 14: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Uniqueness).

**Table 14: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Uniqueness**

Courses	Uniqueness	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
GFP English	2	33%	Unique
IELTS	4	67%	Unique

- But that makes GFP English mapped by 11% to that of IELTS in speaking skills (see Table 15: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Mapping)

**Table 15: GFP English vs IELTS Writing Questions Uniqueness**

Courses	Number of Question Types	Percentage of Alignment	Comments
Mapped	1	11%	Mapped
Unmapped	8	89%	Unmapped

## CONCLUSION

- GFP's English component, particularly post level 4, where students are regarded as graduates, is neither roughly analogous to IELTS (much less band score 5.0) nor advantageous in transforming graduates who are globally compatible signifying measurable attainment of the 4Cs. Some of the most important findings, among others, indicate that despite the program's focus on IELTS, its assessments are shallow and superficial, the curriculum does not adequately assess students' creativity, critical thinking, collaborative agility, or active citizenship, despite its objective to generate skilled graduates, and although it is a robust, systematically pragmatic programme, it aims to equip learners with skills for lifetime learning that falls short as discussed here. Furthermore, it has been discovered that the GFP English program, which aims to teach non-native speakers the principles of English syntax, vocabulary, and speaking, is incompetent in fulfilling regional or international accreditation requirements. Graduates of GFP English have not only fallen short of the required proficiency level but have also deviated from the expectations of the OAAAQA. The program's goal of preparing students for 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration has also failed because the syllabus, lesson plan, textbook, and assessment tools are all out of date. The program's learning objectives are different from those of GFP English, which concentrates on developing foundational language skills, and IELTS, which assesses non-native speakers' English proficiency. In addition, aside from the target language constructions, other factors that affect test scores include aspects of test methods and the quality of the lessons, programs, and courses. Students' knowledge, comprehension, and abilities are assessed through GFP English tests, but because they are compared to IELTS exams, they perform poorly on IELTS questions and lack the global competencies required for real-world English language needs. GFPE assessments do not cover all skills and raise concerns about the validity of evidence for the context of the assessment questions and cognitive validity, even despite OAAAQA standards. The framework of socio-cognitive validity highlights the significance of examinees' mental processes and language usage when answering assessment questions. Except for exercises like these, GFP English component classes are designed to get students ready for the first year of their degree program, which is not correlated with IELTS assessment questions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Non-native English speakers, more specifically, Omani tertiary students must demonstrate their language proficiency through the GFPE exams to prove their IELTS 5.0 proficiency level to abide by the OAAAQA requirements while also attaining the 4Cs of global skills. Next, the GFPE exam should focus on developing the fundamental language skills, whereas the IELTS exam, as internationally known, should evaluate a GFPE graduate's ability to use English in academic and professional settings because the GFPE and IELTS learning outcomes are inconsistent and cannot be identical. In that, the GFPE assesses vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in contrast to the IELTS that assesses a candidate's ability to understand complex academic texts, write essays, give presentations, and participate in discussions. Hence, based on the findings from this research suggest for employing teaching to the test approach - since the curriculum is heavily focused on preparing students for a standardized test (i.e. IELTS, specifically with a band 5.0 score), integrating IELTS reading, listening and writing genre of questions types and assessment methods in GFPE, and focusing on global skill development rather than IELTS specific outcomes while augmenting English skills of the students by reassessing the previously taught vocabulary because taking spoken English and grammar classes before taking IELTS is preferable, and that studying IELTS is about preparing for the test rather than improving English. In fact, the program's goal is to prepare

students for their first year of college by preparing them for various activities such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

Units	Contents	Task	Classroom Practice Task	Assessment Task
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language for writing: What is a sentence?</li> <li>Underline the subject and circle the verbs in each sentence.</li> <li>Read the items below. Check each complete sentence. If it is a fragment, what is missing?</li> <li>Change the fragments in exercises into complete sentences using your own ideas.</li> <li>Unscramble the words to make sentences. Then underline the subjects and circle the verbs.</li> <li>Read the information below. The complete each sentence with the correct form of be. Use the simple present tense.</li> <li>Read the information below. Now complete each pair of sentences with the correct form of a verb from the box. Use the simple present tense.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are going to write sentences on the following topic: Describe yourself and your communication habits.</li> <li>Write answers to the questions. Write notes (not complete sentences). Then share your answers with a partner.</li> <li>Use your notes to write four or more sentences about yourself and your communication habits. Use the simple present tense of be and other verbs in your sentences.</li> <li>Now edit your draft. Correct mistakes with the simple present. Use the checklist on page 157.</li> </ul>	Paragraph / Email writing: Describing self and other people real or imaginary	Write an email to a friend about your family. You should tell your friend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The names of your father and mother</li> <li>How many brothers and sisters you have got</li> <li>The names of your brothers and sisters and their ages</li> <li>The village, town or city where you and your family live</li> <li>The kind of home you live in (is it a flat or a house)?</li> <li>The kind of food you and family like eating</li> <li>Where you and your family like to go on vacation</li> <li>What you and your family like to do at the weekends.</li> </ul> You should write at least 75 words.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language for writing: verbs + infinitives</li> <li>Now complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box. Use each set of the verbs only once.</li> <li>Talk to your classmates and find someone who wants, hopes, plans, or needs to do each of the activities in the chart. Ask for extra information.</li> <li>Use the information in the chart to write four sentences.</li> <li>Read the information below. Find and correct one mistake in each of the sentences.</li> <li>Language for writing: verb + noun collocations</li> <li>Circle the noun or noun phrases that does NOT collocate with the verb.</li> <li>Complete each sentence with a suitable verb. Sometimes more than one verb is possible.</li> <li>Correct each sentence below by replacing one word.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are going to write sentences on the following topic: Describe your plans and dreams for the future.</li> <li>Follow the steps to plan your writing. Make notes in the chart.</li> <li>Use your ideas above to write three pairs of sentences. In each pair, describe your plan or dream, and explain what you need to do to achieve it. Use plan, want, hope, and need and the collocations for achieving dreams.</li> <li>Now edit draft. Correct mistakes with plan, want, hope, and need and the collocations for achieving dreams. Use the checklist on page 157.</li> </ul>		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the sentences from the reading passages and answer the questions below.</li> <li>Language for writing: using imperatives and should</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are going to write sentences on the following topic: Write a walking tour of an area you know well.</li> <li>Follow the steps to plan your writing.</li> </ul>	Paragraph or Email Writing: Vacation activities	