

BEC TEST 1

Reading



PART ONE

Questions 1–8

- Look at the statements below and at the five extracts from an article on the opposite page about working in the field of management consultancy.
- Which extract (A, B, C, D or E) does each statement (1–8) refer to?
- For each statement 1–8, mark one letter (A, B, C, D or E) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Example:

0 Consultants may be able to work for a specialist firm.

0	A	B	C	D	E
	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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- 1 Consultants must be prepared to change the way they have evaluated a project.
- 2 Consultants need to value the colleagues they work with.
- 3 Large consultancies often have a background in accounting.
- 4 Consultants need to be able to assess each person's contribution accurately.
- 5 You can become a consultant even if you have no management experience.
- 6 Mentoring is often used to help trainees become more effective at the job.
- 7 Consultancy work is satisfying because you see the end result of a project.
- 8 Consultants must not be frightened of being honest.

Before you check your answers to Part One, go on to pages 10–11.

A

A good proportion of people entering consultancy do so after several years of industry experience. Those who have gone through a big graduate programme, have climbed the career ladder quickly and who have an MBA behind them tend to be favoured. But fear not – if you are a team player with sharp intellect, ambition and good communication skills, consultancy firms may be willing to train you up themselves. New entrants will usually join an intensive induction and training period under the guidance of an experienced consultant. During that time, you'll develop your skills and experience and gain ever more responsibility for the detailed day-to-day conduct of an assignment.

D

Cathy Monghan, head of the HR consultancy PES, adds that consultants need resilience: "You need to be able to prioritise and then inevitably reprioritise in accordance with the client's needs," she says. Meanwhile, Peter Walker, executive chairman of Pielle Consulting Group, believes consultants should also be "capable of seeing a whole picture from fragments of information, able to determine the key to moving to the next step and have a very clear appreciation of the law of unforeseen consequences." He adds, "They also need to be a team player with the ambition to be captain and the humility to recognise the importance of every member of the team."

B

Employers, like consultancy work itself, are very varied. You could opt for a generalist consulting firm, which offers a wide range of services from strategy consulting and human resources to IT and, in some cases, outsourcing on a global basis. Many of these firms grew out of audit firms, while others developed within IT service companies. Alternatively, you could join a strategy consultancy. These tend to be much smaller than the generalist firms and the majority are American. As the term suggests, they primarily offer strategic advice to companies on a project-by-project basis.

E

Olwyn Burgess, client services director of HR consultancy Chimento, agrees that sophisticated team skills are key. "Consultants have to be astute enough to spot the people who can help and those that will hinder the progress of a project and then have a strategy to work with or around the enablers and blockers," he adds. "You have to tell it how it is," adds Tom Barry, BlessingWhite European managing director. "For example, there will be occasions when you have to advise a client on something you know won't be popular. This is all part and parcel of providing consultancy. You need that strong spine."

C

Fiona Czerniawska, director of the Management Consultancies Association Think Tank, believes there's never been a better time to become a management consultant. "When you describe what's involved in management consultancy – going to meetings, gathering data and writing reports – it doesn't exactly sound exciting," admits Czerniawska. "But in fact, consultants get to spend a lot of time really listening to clients, helping them to articulate the issue they are grappling with and resolving the problem. If you take the analogy of a doctor, it's like being able to both diagnose a health problem and do the surgery."

Further practice for Reading Part One

EXAM INFORMATION

Part One of the Reading Test is a matching task and consists of five short texts on a related theme (or sometimes a single text divided into five sections). The texts may include:

- advertisements for goods or services
- extracts from company reports
- job advertisements
- book reviews
- business or career advice
- business news articles

You are given eight statements and you have to say to which of the five texts each statement refers.

A DETAILED STUDY

In this part of the test you need to be able to carefully analyse the statements in order to check which text contains ALL the information in the statement. Similar information or wording may occur in more than one text but only one will match the statement. In order to identify the correct text, you need to be able to identify key information and not get distracted by any extra or irrelevant information.

For example, five texts may all contain advice on recruiting staff. Look at these extracts:

A

You should use an agency if you're struggling to find staff that are specific to your sector as they have more experience at this and some specialise, for example, in production or clerical staff.

B

Many managers don't have the time to see all potential recruits themselves so hand over the initial processes to the support staff in your office. It is only managers who expect to be interviewed by equals.

C

It is a good idea to source a firm of headhunters for any more senior roles. Looking for the ideal person who is already in your field can eat up an enormous amount of your resources, not least of which is time, plus you may not have the necessary contacts.

D

If you are looking for people who are experienced then your job ad should always clearly state exactly what experience you require. This is especially true in more senior roles and will save you time in the long run as it will weed out people who are unsuitable.

E

Often when you are recruiting managerial roles, the person you need may not have enough spare time to attend an interview, especially if they are in another location. In this case, do an interview over the phone initially to check if they have the type of experience you require and to allow them to ask questions.

The statement which has to be matched is:

Ask for external help if you are looking for someone who ¹has worked in your sector ²in a high level role but ³you are too busy to deal with the recruitment.

The statement refers to the piece of advice that is for people who need to recruit:

- 1 experienced staff
- 2 for a managerial job
- 3 but don't have the time

So you can see that only extract C contains all three elements in this statement.

1 Read the extracts about being a management consultant on page 9, and then answer these questions. Which extract is most appropriate if

- 1 you're concerned consultancy work may be unsatisfying?
- 2 you want to know how confident you need to be?
- 3 you want to know what kind of background you need?
- 4 you want to know what types of consultancy work are offered?
- 5 you want to know how flexible you need to be?

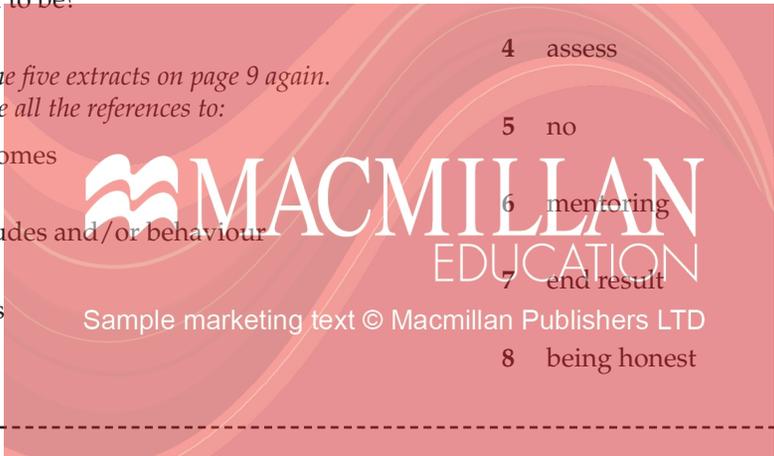
3 You will need to decide key words in the statements, then identify this information in the texts. Now underline the key words in each of the statements on page 8.

4 The extracts will contain paraphrases of the key words in the statements. Look at the statements again on page 8 and write paraphrases for these words. Use words from the extracts and any others you may know.

- 0 specialist *an expert in*
- 1 change
- 2 value
- 3 accounting
- 4 assess
- 5 no
- 6 mentoring
- 7 end result
- 8 being honest

2 Look at the five extracts on page 9 again. Underline all the references to:

- 1 outcomes
- 2 attitudes and/or behaviour
- 3 skills



Now check your answers to these questions and look back at your answers to Part One of the Reading Test.

PART TWO

Questions 9–14

- Read this text taken from an article about helping the people who manage change.
- Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill each of the gaps.
- For each gap 9–14, mark one letter (A–H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Is it change, or the past preserved?

Last week, I received a letter from a reader who was concerned that the people who were leading the change effort in his company were not competent to do so. He asked: "How can I show them what they really need to do if they don't see it themselves?" (0) About the only way to ensure people decide to do something differently is to help them see the gap between what they do now and what they need to do in the future. (9) This means that, if you can help them see the gaps between where they want to go (and why), and where they are now and what skills they need to drive change, the potential for improvement is increased.

To identify the gap, assemble a small group of managers and discuss what the goal is and why. (10) The numbers are just the end result. What you want to be able to see are the dimensions of the organisation that will drive those results. You should do this with more than one group. (11) What you have to consider is all aspects of the organisation. Try questions such as, "What systems and processes will be needed in the future?" Or, "What reward structures will be needed?" Or even, "What competencies will be needed?" When you get some consensus, compare it with what is in place at the moment. (12) But because your competition is closing their gaps, you have to as well.

Next, sit down with the managers who have to implement the change programme and show them the consensus on what has to be achieved. (13) If you want this effort to succeed, ask them what they will do differently in four managerial competency areas: how they think, how they influence, how they achieve and how they lead.

After they have done this, they need to do a peer and subordinate review. Historically, when doing this review, managers discover that what they have done in the past will not cut it in the future. Yes, you may experience rejection or looks of bewilderment. (14) If the organisation is to change for the better, managers need to realise that the only way it will happen is if they do things differently. And the only effective way for them to do this is to see it themselves.

Example:

O	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							

- A** Rest assured, there will be a gap and, in some organisations, the gap is rather intimidating.
- B** This is important; they need to look at more than just the financial aspects.
- C** But managers need to realise that the organisation is the way it is because of past decisions and the way they acted on them.
- D** All the talking in the world about changing the way people work will not carry any weight compared with managers and employees discovering the gap themselves.
- E** This is lame, old thinking that is not sustainable nor workable.
- F** Then ask them what they are prepared to do differently, beginning tomorrow, to close the gaps.
- G** Different managers have different perspectives and it is always good to see if there is a consensus in how the challenge is seen.
- H** My experience is that you can't.



PART THREE

Questions 15–20

- Read the following extract from an article about a specialised form of market research, and the questions on the opposite page.
- For each question 15–20, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet for the answer you choose.

Big brands turning to Big Brother

Questionnaires and focus groups aren't enough – now companies are having volunteers filmed for days on end to see what makes customers really tick.

Innovation is the norm in our fickle, fast-moving consumer culture. But launching new products or repositioning faded brands is increasingly the subject of scientific scrutiny. As development costs escalate so do the risks of a commercial failure. Global brands want to make sure their products succeed across national boundaries and are turning for help to a new kind of market testing – ethnographic research.

In less than a decade ethnographic research – detailed observations of the day-to-day behaviours of a small sample from a target group of consumers to shed light on how they use, choose or buy products – has established itself alongside consumer surveys and focus groups as a leading tool of market research.

Siamack Salari, boss of one firm specialising in this field called EverydayLives, explains ethnographic research as social anthropology meets the internet. Salari's researchers follow paid volunteers for days filming their every move with a hand-held camcorder in order to uncover hidden truths about the way they lead their lives. Some time, usually towards the end of the first day, the novelty of

being filmed will wear off and unselfconscious behaviours will start to emerge. The best insights come when people are feeling relaxed and off their guard.

Hours and hours of video are analysed for key behaviours before being finally edited down to around an hour of film that can be played back to the subject and shared with the client.

To research any given product, a sample is constructed usually of no more than six individuals or households each of which

is filmed for two to three days. Then, as Salari explains, the hard work begins – analysing and interpreting behaviours. Film has the advantage over questionnaires because the camera doesn't lie. People are often unaware of how they appear feeding the cat, for example, or chatting with other family members, or shopping in a supermarket aisle. Salari explains: "What the subject didn't do or nearly did can often reveal far more about their inner motives than what is happening on the surface."

The discussion between researcher and subject is used to generate insights which Salari calls 'co-discoveries'.

Describing his own brand of ethnography as "observational research with common sense and lateral thinking thrown in", Salari points out that only this type of qualitative research offers unexpected insights. While supermarkets mine data

from micro-chipped loyalty cards to segment markets and target special offers, this kind of number-crunching misses the bigger picture of how products are chosen and how they could be improved.

Salari points out: "Ethnographic research is always agenda-less. It's totally opposed to other forms of research and its big benefit is that it generates insights." Sometimes ethnographic research suggests small changes that can make the difference between a product succeeding in its market or falling flat. Such insight does not come cheap, however. According to Salari, an observational survey would cost in the region of £4,000–£6,000 per household. Normally a minimum of six households would participate.

Ethnographic research is widely endorsed and has gained in popularity through word of mouth. London Business School even devotes its latest MBA core module – discovering entrepreneurial opportunities – to expounding the principles of ethnographic research, and MBA students borrow heavily on these skills in their business start-up competition. John Mullins, assistant professor of entrepreneurship at LBS, says: "We use only ethnographic and qualitative research – in-depth observation – because a long list of the best and biggest companies are doing it to discover real customer insights and to satisfy their needs."

- 15 What does the writer say about new products in the first paragraph?
- A Detailed research will ensure that new products are successful.
 - B New products have to be available worldwide nowadays.
 - C Companies are more reluctant to take risks than previously.
 - D Consumers will stop buying brands that fail to innovate.
- 16 In the second paragraph we learn that the advantage of ethnographic research is that
- A other people can watch participants' behaviour.
 - B people are unaware that they are being filmed.
 - C it is easy to gather large amounts of data.
 - D it can capture previously unknown information.
- 17 What does Solari say is the advantage of using a camera?
- A It allows for more accurate data to be collected.
 - B Participants don't need to complete any paperwork.
 - C Several people can be filmed at the same time.
 - D Data can be collected over a short period.
- 18 In the fifth paragraph, Solari says the disadvantage of supermarket loyalty cards is that
- A the data they deliver is predictable.
 - B they are only useful for certain specific purposes.
 - C they don't allow for human interpretation of data.
 - D they need to be improved to deliver more information.
- 19 In the sixth paragraph, how does Solari say ethnographic research can improve products?
- A Although expensive to begin with, it can reduce costs in the long term.
 - B It offers objective information on how a product will perform.
 - C It selects a small range of participants that are likely to buy the product.
 - D It can highlight a key issue before the product is launched.
- 20 How does ethnographic research fit into the programmes at the London Business School?
- A It is the only form of research it approves for its students.
 - B It is promoted as a research method on one of its courses.
 - C MBA students must use this method in a business competition.
 - D Large companies advise the School on how to use this form of research.

PART FOUR

Questions 21–30

- Read the article below about smartphones.
- Choose the correct word to fill each gap from **A, B, C** or **D** on the opposite page.
- For each question 21–30, mark one letter (**A, B, C** or **D**) on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Smartphones – a necessity or a luxury?

Smartphones have (0) ... beyond the boardroom and keeping a close eye on what's new is Mike Lazaridis, chief executive of RIM, the company that makes the BlackBerry smartphone. His device may no longer be quite as trendy as it once was but it is still (21) – particularly for Argentinian milk farmers. Mr Lazaridis says: "I like the way it's being used by the farmers so they are always up to date. Milk is a (22) item, so delivery and production standards are incredibly important." He is reminded of the company's early days: "This is where we started in 1987, with a wireless vertical data business for the Swedish lumber (23), and then on to fire brigades, ambulances and garbage trucks."

While the BlackBerry was quick to (24) itself as the accessory of choice for business professionals such as Wall Street traders, the cheaper price (25) and new, more colourful handsets now (26) have opened it up to a much wider market. Mr Lazaridis says: "It was obvious that business people and self-employed professionals would buy the BlackBerry, but we were not expecting the (27) we had from ordinary consumers."

The greatest challenge for RIM, however, could lie in an economic (28), when individuals and companies alike may see devices like the BlackBerry as luxuries they can (29) without. The company has to make its product indispensable to the lifestyles of consumers, or prove that they bring a real (30) on investment for business users.

Example:

A unfolded B widened C displayed D spread

O	A	B	C	D
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- 21 A constructive B functional C active D operative
- 22 A perishable B short-lived C decaying D destructible
- 23 A manufacturers B enterprise C commerce D industry
- 24 A install B establish C create D demonstrate
- 25 A designs B programmes C plans D systems
- 26 A at B on C for D under
- 27 A return B retort C reply D response
- 28 A downturn B fall C decrease D drop
- 29 A make B carry C do D stay
- 30 A return B gain C interest D profit

Before you check your answers to Part Four, go on to pages 18–19.

Further practice for Reading Part Four

EXAM INFORMATION

Part Four consists of a text with eleven gaps. The first one is done for you as an example. You have to choose the word that best fits each gap from ten four-option multiple choice items. Most of the items test vocabulary. The options are all from the same part of speech but only one option fits the meaning. This part of the test is designed to see if you can distinguish between words of similar meaning.

A DETAILED STUDY

- 1 *You should always read the text first to get a general sense of meaning. Answer the following questions to help you with the general meaning of the text.*
 - 1 Why is the Blackberry still used by some farmers?
 - 2 Where did the company start?
 - 3 Who was the Blackberry popular with originally?
 - 4 What has happened to the Blackberry now?
 - 5 What may threaten the popularity of the Blackberry?
 - 6 What must the company do to retain its popularity?
- 2 *To improve and widen your vocabulary, you will need to check dictionary definitions. Match each of the following words to their definitions. All the words are options in the test.*
 - 1 **A** constructive **B** functional **C** active **D** operative
 - 1 useful; working correctly
 - 2 working and able to be used
 - 3 suggestions or input that is intended to improve something
 - 4 still in good working order
 - 2 **A** perishable **B** short-lived **C** decaying **D** destructible
 - 1 starting to rot or becoming destroyed
 - 2 existing or happening for only a limited time
 - 3 can be damaged so that it can no longer be used
 - 4 likely to decay quickly
 - 3 **A** response **B** return **C** retort **D** reply
 - 1 a written or spoken answer to an enquiry
 - 2 to act or speak after something has happened or been said
 - 3 an angry or humorous remark
 - 4 a statement giving a written answer to official questions
 - 4 **A** install **B** establish **C** create **D** demonstrate
 - 1 to show or describe how something works
 - 2 to put a piece of equipment somewhere and connect it so it can be used
 - 3 to start an organization or system that is intended to continue for some time
 - 4 to make something exist that did not exist before

- 3 In order to select the right word you will have to look carefully at the words before and after the gap to see which option fits best. Certain words typically collocate with certain other words, e.g. *According to ...*.

For each of the following, match the word that each option often collocates with. All the words are options from the test.

1

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| A to do something by | 1 plan |
| B under a | 2 design |
| C a change of | 3 system |
| D to come to the end of a | 4 programme |

2

- | | |
|---------|-----------|
| A at | 1 sale |
| B on | 2 cost |
| C for | 3 control |
| D under | 4 offer |

3

- | | |
|---------------|------|
| A a return | 1 of |
| B a gain | 2 in |
| C an interest | 3 on |
| D a profit | 4 of |

Now check your answers to these questions and look back at your answers to Part Four of the Reading Test.



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PART FIVE

Questions 31–40

- Read the article below about booking conference venues.
- For each question 31–40, write one word in CAPITAL LETTERS on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Example:

0	N	O	T					
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--

How to book a conference

First decision is the choice of venue. Which venue is right will depend (0) just on the number of people attending. It will also depend on the cost (31) whether the participants (32) being charged to attend. If the event lasts for several days the problem of finding accommodation influences the choice, but just (33) complicate the decision it also depends on whether to have everybody on the same premises as the conference. Some seminars break up the sessions (34) time to time into smaller groups which will require additional rooms with the right facilities. (35) really do need to be handy for the main session.

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Professionals advise not (36) book any premises or facilities without visiting first. In (37) case, you need to meet the senior organising staff to find out what they can do and what they have. And it is probably a good idea to test all the equipment and ask about back-ups.

A frustrating problem for organisers laying on the facilities is never being sure just (38) many people will turn up. People go sick, managers (39) were overseas suddenly reappear, an emergency at the company prevents some key people attending, and (40) on. Still, some estimate is vital for the booking. It may be indeed one of the factors in deciding the venue and in haggling over the price. If all that sounds just too much hassle there is another option – hire a professional to take the load off your back.

PART SIX

Questions 41–52

- Read the text below about a company acquisition.
- In most of the lines 41–52 there is one extra word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit in with the meaning of the text. Some lines, however, are correct.
- If a line is correct, write CORRECT on your Answer Sheet.
- If there is an extra word in the line, write the extra word in CAPITAL LETTERS on your Answer Sheet.
- The exercise begins with two examples (0) and (00).

Examples:

0	C	O	R	R	E	C	T	
00	B	E	C	A	U	S	E	

Evans cycles to a more active future



- 0 Active Private Equity has bought a majority stake in Evans Cycles,
 00 because the independent chain of UK specialist cycling stores.
 41 The retailer, which sells bicycles, accessories, clothing and their
 42 services in its 31 stores, had reportedly been going in talks with
 43 controversial sports billionaire, Mike Ashley, last summer and was said
 44 to have such a price tag of around £35m. Yesterday, Active said it had
 45 completed a refinancing of the group “to provide the necessary for
 46 growth capital and expertise that will help the company fulfil its potential”.
 47 Despite the Smith Family has owned Evans for the past 50 years,
 48 but they are thought to have wanted to reduce their holdings to a
 49 minority stake. The company’s turnover has doubled up over the last
 50 three years to £45m. Nick Evans, who was introduced Active to the Evans
 51 board, will take up the post that of executive chairman. Active partners Bryan
 52 Vaniman and Spencer Skinner will also to join the Evans board as directors.