## PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-6, which are based on Passage 2 below.

**THE INTRODUCTION OF SATs**

**A.** These are testing times. In both education and the field of work, the prevailing wisdom appears to be: if it moves, test it and if it doesn't, well, test it anyway. I say wisdom, but it has become rather an obsession. In addition to the current obstacles, like GCSEs, A-Levels, GNVQs, ONDs, and HNDs, not to mention the interviews and financial hurdles that school-leavers have to overcome in order to access higher education, students are facing the threat of 'new tests', scholastic aptitude tests (SATs).

**B.** SATs are being imported from the United States, where they have been in use for nearly a hundred years. As a supplement to A-levels, the tests purport to give students from poor backgrounds a better chance of entering university, SATs are intended to remove the huge social class bias that exists in British universities. But, in fact, they are, no more than an additional barrier for students. The tests, which masquerade as IQ tests, are probably less diagnostic of student potential than existing examinations, and, more seriously, are far from free of the bias that their supporters pretend.

**C.** First of all, as for any other tests, students will be able to take classes to cram for SATs, which again will advantage the better-off. At a recent conference of the Professional Association of Teachers, it was declared that school exams and tests are biased towards middle-class children. Further, the content of the tests in question is not based on sound scientific theory, merely on a pool of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), set by a group of item writers.

**D**. The questions in SATs are tested on a representative sample of children. Those which correlate with the school grades of the children are kept and the rest are discarded. This is highly unsatisfactory. There is also evidence that in MCQ tests women are at a disadvantage, because of the way they think, i.e. they can see a wider picture. And it is worth noting that MCQs are only as good as the people who write them; so, unless the writers are highly trained, those who are being tested are being judged against the narrow limitations of the item writers!

Other developments in testing

**E.** Globalization has introduced greater flexibility into the workplace, but the educational system has not been so quick off the mark. But there are signs that times are changing. Previously, students took exams at the end of academic terms, or at fixed dates periodically throughout the year. Now, language examinations like the TOEFL, IELTS and the Pitman ESOL exams can be taken much more frequently. The IELTS examination, for example, is run at test centres throughout the world subject to demand. Where the demand is high, the test is held more frequently. At present, in London, it is possible for students to sit the exam about four times per week.

**F.** Flexible assessment like the IELTS has been mooted in other areas. It has been suggested that students may in future be able to walk into a public library or other public building and take an assessment test for a range of skills on a computer. The computer will dispense an instant assessment and a certificate. The beauty of this system is the convenience.

**G**. The workplace has been at the forefront of developing in-house schemes to establish whether people are suitable for particular jobs and/or careers. Psychological profiles and hand-writing analysis as well as aptitude tests are now part of the armory of the corporate personnel officer; an interview and curriculum vitae no longer suffice. But, as in the education field, there are dangers here. Testing appears to confirm the notion that certain people are predestined to enter particular careers. All of us have heard someone say: he/she is a born actor, a born teacher, and so on. The recent work on the human genome and the research in genetics adds further credence to this notion.

**H.** How long before psychological profiling is introduced into schools to determine a child's future? With the aid of psychometric tests, children may soon be helped to make more informed choices about the subjects they choose to study at secondary school, and then university. But people will still be pointed in the wrong direction. In many cases, the result will conflict with the person's own desires, mainly because he/ she filled in the test wrongly, or the test did not pick up an essential piece of information. Unless the assessors are highly trained experts, many more people will find themselves mid-life in jobs that they did not really want to do.

**I.** Whilst testing achievement is essential and indeed inevitable, it needs to be treated with caution. Tests are, after all, only tools - not an end in themselves

Questions 11-18

Reading Passage 2 has 9 paragraphs (**A-I**). Choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph from the List of headings below. Write the appropriate **numbers (i-xiv)** in Boxes **1 - 8** on your answer sheet.

One of the headings has been done for you as an example.

Note that you may use any heading more than once.

**NB.** There are more headings than paragraphs, so you will not use all of them.

**Example** Paragraph A **Answer**: xiii

1. Paragraph B …..
2. Paragraph C …..
3. Paragraph D …..
4. Paragraph E …..
5. Paragraph F …..
6. Paragraph G …..
7. Paragraph H…..
8. Paragraph I…..

**List of headings**

1. Assessment in the future
2. The theory behind MCQs
3. Not enough testing
4. Problems with SATs
5. Misuse of testing in schools
6. The need for computer assessment
7. The future of psychometric testing in schools
8. Testing with caution
9. Testing in the workplace
10. Globalization in testing
11. The benefits of SATs
12. The shortcoming of MCQs
13. Too much testing
14. Flexibility in language testing