Teaching IELTS: Producing materials for the academic reading and writing modules

1. Introduction
   Sam McCarter tells us in this seminar that straitjackets give students freedom. What do you think he means by this?

   To stick to the IELTS coursebook can become boring and repetitive for learners. One way to spice up your lessons and to provide extra extensive practice for students is to produce your own learning materials. In this seminar, Sam McCarter provides guidelines and advice on producing materials for IELTS.

2. Session summary and objectives
   In this seminar, Sam McCarter outlines some important strategies, tips and guidelines for teachers interested in producing their own IELTS materials. He stresses the point that although writing is a creative journey, it is essential to strive to produce materials that follow IELTS course criteria. He warns against breach of copyright and stresses the importance of highlighting both relevant textual features of an IELTS text with the necessary language input.

3. Who is this session for?
   - All teachers who teach IELTS.
   - Teachers who need to produce materials for IELTS
   - Teachers who are interested in producing materials for ELT general classes

4. About the speaker
   Sam McCarter is a full time ELT writer and teacher; 11 of his 19 published books are on IELTS. Check out Sam McCarter’s other seminars recorded for the British Council Seminar Series.

5. Before you watch
   What do you think the important criteria of material design to be for an IELTS course? Make a list of the important factors that come to mind and then compare your list with what Sam McCarter raises in this seminar.
6. Real life practice
Following the advice that Sam McCarter gives in this seminar for producing IELTS study materials, have a go at producing content yourself. But to do so, we advise you to work with a peer teacher. All great writers need to work with their editor and their audience in order to produce great material! No writer works alone! Follow these guidelines for producing your own materials.

- Search on the internet for suitable ideas and an appropriate text. Or perhaps use some material that a student has produced!
- Decide what functional task the text will be used for in class – which aspect of the IELTS examination will it be relevant to?
- Rewrite the content in your own words.
- Be mindful that the text is of appropriate length – summarise or expand it accordingly.
- Include the vocabulary that you want the students to learn or pay attention to. Perhaps the focus is, for example, relevant to lexical cohesion or a particular lexical family, etc.
- Write 4–5 questions for this task. Ensure that these question types are typical of the questions that you would find in the IELTS exam.
- Ask your peer teacher for feedback on the text. Revise or edit as required. Use the material in class with your students. Reflect on how well the material fitted the lesson. Ask the students for their feedback on the material.
- Ask your peer teacher to use the material as well. Ask them to give you feedback afterwards and to tell you what their students thought.
- Revise and finalise the final draft of the material as required. Brand it to your school’s standards as stipulated (if relevant). Then add the material to the material bank in your school!

Then share your thoughts on this exercise with other teachers via an online forum or blog. Share your new knowledge!

7. Top tips
1. Ensure that all the materials you produce for IELTS adhere to exam practice requirements; make sure the text types and task types you produce are like those required for the exam.
2. Follow Sam McCarter’s suggested materials pathway when producing content: select materials, refine, redraft and summarise.
3. Producing excellent classroom resources takes time and effort. If you are in a position of authority, ensure time is allocated to the interested IELTS specialists to produce these materials.
4. Beware of copyright rules! Don’t steal other people’s hard work or branded content from the internet. Be creative yourself – it’s not only legal, it’s far more rewarding!
5. Try and attend a material-writing workshop to learn more about writing and producing teaching materials. And watch Rachel Roberts’ British Council seminar entitled ‘How to write effective classroom materials’.

8. Staffroom discussion
How important is personalisation when designing new IELTS materials for your lessons? Do you think because it is an IELTS course that personalisation is less important, or is personalisation always important for student motivation? What are your thoughts on this?

9. Downloadable resources and further reading
General information about the IELTS exam:
British Council Take IELTS - http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teachielts