

For the information of our candidates:

1. **Duration:** 4 hours

2. The exam consists of **3 parts**:

- A: Listening Comprehension (LC, blue)
- B: Reading Comprehension (RC, white)
- C: Essay (yellow)

3. **Timing:**

- The LC takes approx. 20 minutes and will be collected after 25 minutes.
- As soon as you have finished and handed in the RC – you decide - , you will be given the essay task and a bilingual dictionary.
- Attention: The LC and the RC count for 25% each, whereas the essay counts for 50% of your final written mark!

4. **Assessment:**

part		grade
LC	25%	
RC	25%	
Essay	50%	
Final Mark		

A: LISTENING COMPREHENSION **20 pts.**

(For technical reasons, we cannot publish the audio file of our listening comprehension here, therefore we also refrain from publishing the tasks and questions.)

B: READING COMPREHENSION **54 pts.**

*It's all about me ...
Illustration: Andrew Stocks/Guardian*



Me! Me! Me! Are we living through a narcissism epidemic?

From attention-seeking celebrities to digital oversharing and the boom in cosmetic surgery, narcissistic behaviour is all around us. How worried should we be about our growing self-obsession?

Zoe Williams, Wednesday 2 March 2016 The Guardian

‘They unconsciously deny an unstated and intolerably poor self-image through inflation. They turn themselves into glittering figures of immense grandeur surrounded by psychologically impenetrable walls. The goal of this self-deception is to be impervious to greatly feared external criticism and to their own rolling sea of doubts.’ This is how **Elan Golomb** describes narcissistic personality disorder in her seminal book *Trapped in the Mirror*. She goes on to describe the central symptom of the disorder – the narcissist’s failure to achieve intimacy with anyone – as the result of them seeing other people like items in a vending machine, using them to service their own needs, never being able to acknowledge that others might have needs of their own, still less guess what they might be. “Full-bodied narcissistic personality disorder remains a fairly unusual diagnosis,” **Pat MacDonald**, author of the paper *Narcissism in the*

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Modern World, tells me. “Traditionally, it is very difficult to reverse narcissistic personality disorder. It would take a long time and a lot of work.”

What we talk about when we describe an explosion of modern narcissism is not the disorder but the rise in narcissistic traits. Examples are everywhere. Donald Trump epitomises the lack of empathy, the self-regard and, critically, the radical overestimation of his own talents and likability. Katie Hopkins personifies the perverse pride the narcissist takes in not caring for others. (“No,” she wrote in the Sun about the refugee crisis. “I don’t care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don’t care.”) Those are the loudest examples, blaring like sirens; there is a general hubbub of narcissism beneath, which is conveniently – for observation purposes, at least – broadcast on social media. Terrible tragedies, such as the attacks on Paris, are appropriated by people thousands of miles away and used as a backdrop to showcase their sensitivity. The death of David Bowie is mediated through its “relevance” to voluble strangers.

It has become routine for celebrities to broadcast banal information and fill Instagram with the “moments” that constitute their day, the tacit principle being that, once you are important enough, nothing is mundane. This delusion then spills out to the non-celebrity; recording mundane events becomes proof of your importance. The dramatic rise in cosmetic surgery is part of the same effect; the celebrity fixates on his or her appearance to meet the demands of fame. Then the vanity, being the only truly replicable trait, becomes the thing to emulate. Ordinary people start having treatments that only intense scrutiny would warrant – 2015 saw a 13% rise in procedures in the UK, with the rise in cosmetic dentistry particularly marked, because people don’t like their teeth in selfies. The solution – stop taking selfies – is apparently so 2014¹.

The compelling epidemiological evidence comes from *The Narcissism Epidemic*, in which the American academics **Jean Twenge** and **Keith Campbell** found that narcissistic personality traits rose just as fast as obesity from the 1980s to the present, with the shift in women particularly marked. Scores have risen faster since the turn of this century.

[...]

‘The best-case scenario is disillusionment’

Most of the traits have at their core the belief that one is extraordinary. The problem is obvious immediately: most people are not extraordinary.

The problem with narcissistic traits is that they’re unrealistic; the belief in one’s own extraordinariness will sooner or later clash with the world, and the result will be disillusionment in the best-case scenario or ever-greater fake grandeur in the worst. “Especially when you’re talking about traits and not the disorder, it’s correlated in youth with less depression, less anxiety,” says **Twenge**. “It isn’t until middle age that narcissists become depressed, because of their failed relationships.”

Your immediate worry, obviously, is that you have narcissistic traits yourself. Experiencing this anxiety means you don’t, since true narcissists know it – and freely admit it. Another major figure in the narcissism field, **Brad Bushman**, has shown that agreeing with the statement, “I am a narcissist” correlates highly with narcissistic traits. They are proud of it: they would say it helps them succeed. They also relate proudly, in surveys, that they’re low on empathy and caring isn’t their thing. There’s not much guilt in narcissism.

[...]

¹ to be 2014: to be outdated

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The damage narcissism brings can be quite amorphous and ill-defined. “Much of our distress,” **MacDonald** notes, “comes from a sense of disconnection. We have a narcissistic society where self-promotion and individuality seem to be essential, yet in our hearts that’s not what we want. We want to be part of a community, we want to be supported when we’re struggling, we want a sense of belonging. Being extraordinary is not a necessary component to being loved.”

The full-blown disorder is associated with harsh, critical parenting, but a mass rise in narcissistic traits is partly ascribed by **MacDonald** to lax and indulgent parenting: “[With] parents seeing their children as extensions of themselves – they want to be mates, the boundaries aren’t set – the child gets very confused: ‘You’re great, you’re terrific.’ Maybe we’re not, maybe we need to know we’re just ordinary.”

This has been evinced – again by **Bushman**, alongside **Eddie Brummelman** – in a longitudinal study that found overpraised children showed narcissistic traits six months to a year later. It’s not so much a new kindness in parenting as a kind of lackadaisical positive assertion, where self-esteem can be conjured out of thin air simply by the people around you saying it’s so. To a degree, **MacDonald** traces the new style of parenting back to new media: “You see mums relating to the non-human other, the smartphone, not the baby. The child is not getting a sense of self.” But the impact of social media is more pronounced – currently, at least – in the adult with narcissistic traits. “There’s a good accumulation of evidence that narcissists have more friends on Facebook,” **Twenge** says. “We can’t make the case definitively that social media causes narcissism, although it does certainly call for a certain type of attention-seeking. If you look at Twitter, and the quest for followers, that has a narcissistic ring to it.”

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- I. Tick (✓) the best definition of the words or phrases as used in the context.
The words are underlined. 20 pts.

1. inflation	a) pretentiousness b) swelling c) rapid increase in prices
2. impenetrable	a) impermeable b) high c) crumbling
3. impervious	a) immune b) affected c) free
4. seminal	a) creative and original b) several c) minimal
5. full-bodied	a) complete b) affecting the whole body c) overweight
6. epitomise lack of empathy	a) stand for absence of sympathy b) emphasise absence of pity c) symbolise inability to understand and share the feelings of others
7. hubbub	a) rise b) uproar, confusion c) tendency
8. a backdrop to showcase their sensitivity.	a) a means to forget one's own problems b) a reminder of one's vulnerability c) scenery to display one's feelings prominently
9. mundane	a) special b) sophisticated c) ordinary
10. emulate	a) imitate b) try to equal or excel c) laugh at
11. scrutiny	a) criticism b) technique c) examination
12. warrant	a) guarantee b) criticise c) justify
13. compelling evidence	a) convincing proof b) an interesting symptom c) important information
14. a marked shift	a) a sharp contrast b) a striking change c) important progress

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15. lax and indulgent parenting	a) having a friendly and caring family b) having negligent and lenient parents c) having strict and impatient parents
16. evinced	a) made evident b) investigated c) disproved
17. lackadaisical positive assertion	a) enthusiastic commentaries b) indifferent manifestations c) spiritless, random and unsupported praise
18. conjured	a) produced b) strengthened c) put out
19. quest	a) call b) need c) pursuit, search
20. have a narcissistic ring	a) be a group of narcissistic people b) something that seems to have narcissist qualities c) be proof of narcissism

II. Indicate whether each of the following statements is right (R), wrong (W) or not mentioned explicitly (X).
 There might be 0, 1,2,3,4 or 5 true statements. 34 pts.

1. In her book *Trapped in the Mirror* **Elan Golomb** describes that

	a) originally the narcissistic personality disorder is nothing but a self defence mechanism.
	b) people with a narcissistic personality disorder want to be invulnerable to criticism coming from a third party.
	c) sexual relationships are very challenging for narcissistic people.
	d) the narcissistic personality disorder generally can be overcome by hard work over a longer period of time.

2. Narcissists

	a) see other people as robots having neither feelings nor needs.
	b) like Donald Trump, for instance, have no empathy at all.
	c) are shockingly proud of their insensitivity towards others' misfortunes.
	d) tend to make more use of social media than other people because it is far more convenient to state one's personal opinion on virtual platforms.

3. Nowadays,

	a) it is a must for celebrities to be present on Instagram or Twitter.
	b) shallowness on platforms like Instagram or Twitter has become a general practice.
	c) anybody believes being able to become important by sharing banalities of their everyday lives.
	d) the rise in cosmetic surgery is linked to the narcissistic disorder.
	e) it is the famous people who set new beauty standards.

4. **Jean Twenge** and **Keith Campbell** found that

	a) research has shown that narcissism is spreading like an epidemic.
	b) the rise in narcissistic traits correlates with the rise of obesity.
	c) women have shown more narcissistic traits than men in the past three decades.
	d) narcissistic traits have spread even faster since the year 2000.

5. Narcissistic traits

	a) are not only negative in adolescence whereas the narcissistic disorder is seen negatively.
	b) are prevalent in many teenagers nowadays.
	c) are atypical of extraordinary people.
	d) result in a reduced interest in other people's well-being.

6. According to **Bushman**,

	a) worry is the first step towards narcissism.
	b) admitting that you are a narcissist is a sign of facing the problem and a first footstep on the road to an improvement.
	c) anxiety is a clear proof that you are not narcissistic.
	d) pride is a main trait in narcissistic people.

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7. **MacDonald** believes that

	a) the narcissistic disorder lies in parents who praise their children too much and make them feel special, which has a negative long-term effect.
	b) narcissistic traits are caused by a severe and heartless upbringing leading to a cold-hearted behaviour towards others.
	c) the narcissistic disorder can be ascribed to missing limits set by the society.
	d) narcissistic traits can be found in a society which is grounded upon multiple possibilities and therefore leading to a confusion of youngsters.
	e) the narcissistic disorder originates in mothers who give their children smartphones at an early age.

8. The new media play a crucial role

	a) because they make parents neglect their children and so the children cannot develop a healthy self-esteem.
	b) for narcissistic teenagers as the use of social media causes narcissism.
	c) because young people use social media such as Facebook and Twitter which have an immediate impact on the development of narcissism.
	d) as social platforms like Twitter make the damage even bigger.

C: Essay

Choose a topic (one only!!) relating to the following works you have read in class or the article you have read in the reading comprehension.

Write an essay of 500 - 700 words (recommended). Count your words!

1. *“Narcissism and self-deception are survival mechanisms without which many of us might jump off a bridge.”* Todd Solondz

Discuss the above quotation sustaining your arguments with examples from the **reading comprehension** text or your own experience.

2.

3.

4.