Have you considered studying abroad, but are not sure whether it's worth your time? If you ask anybody who has studied abroad, he or she will most certainly tell you that it is a life-changing experience and one of the most rewarding things he or she has ever done. Perhaps you're not certain what benefits you can reap from an extended stay in a foreign country. Here are four very excellent reasons why you should take the plunge:

1. Study abroad is the optimal way to learn a language. There is no better and more effective way to learn a language than to be immersed in a culture that speaks the language you are learning. You're surrounded by the language on a daily basis and are seeing and hearing it in the proper cultural context. Language learning happens most quickly under these circumstances.

2. Study abroad provides the opportunity to travel. Weekends and academic breaks allow you to venture out and explore your surroundings - both your immediate and more distant surroundings. Since studying abroad often puts you on a completely different continent, you are much closer to places you might otherwise not have had the opportunity to visit. Some more structured study abroad programs even have field trips planned in or around the curriculum.

3. Study abroad allows you get to know another culture first-hand. Cultural differences are more than just differences in language, food, appearances, and personal habits. A person's culture reflects very deep perceptions, beliefs, and values that influence his or her way of life and the way that s/he views the world. Students who experience cultural differences personally can come to truly understand where other cultures are coming from.

4. Study abroad will help you develop skills and give you experiences a classroom setting will never provide. Being immersed in an entirely new cultural setting is scary at first, but it's also exciting. It's an opportunity to discover new strengths and abilities, conquer new challenges, and solve new problems. You will encounter situations that are wholly unfamiliar to you and will learn to adapt and respond in effective ways.
Take 1 minute to read the following questions. Listen to the recording. Mark down useful notes and answer the following questions.

**Section 1. (2 marks each)**
1. How does the speaker think of studying abroad?
   A. **It is a life-changing experience.**
   B. It is not worth it.
   C. There is no difference between studying abroad and locally.

2. Which of the following is correct?
   A. **Studying abroad is the best way to learn a language.**
   B. There are more effective ways to learn a language than to be immersed in that culture.
   C. There is not much chance for you to travel when you study.

3. When can you venture out and explore the surroundings?
   A. during class time
   B. after lessons on weekdays
   C. **during weekends and academic breaks**

4. According to the speaker, studying abroad allows you……
   A. get to know more friends
   B. **get to know another culture first-hand**
   C. reflect on yourself

5. Being immersed in an entirely new cultural setting is ……
   A. **scary and exciting**
   B. challenging and unfamiliar
   C. effective and responsive

**Section 2. (2 marks each)**
Use one word for each blank.

The recording gives **four** reasons why you should study abroad.
1. Study abroad is the optimal way to learn a **language**.
2. Study abroad provides the opportunity to **travel**.
3. Study abroad allows you get to know another **culture** first-hand.
4. Study abroad will help you develop skills and give you experiences a **classroom** setting will never provide.
Part B. Reading (Total: 30 marks)
Read the following articles and then answer the questions.

Passage 1 (20 marks)

To be, or not to be


Many students worry over the question of whether to choose higher education in Hong Kong or abroad.

[1] Teenagers often face tough decisions. One, in particular, involves making a choice about their future secondary education - should they study here or abroad?

[2] A foreign education has always been the preferred choice for many parents as well as students. They believe a foreign education offers better job prospects; the record levels of enrolment at Hong Kong’s many international schools are a sign of this. They may be located in the city, but they incorporate a foreign curriculum.

[3] Many students choose to go abroad and enroll in overseas boarding schools. The United States and Britain are the top destinations, although Canada and Australia are also popular choices.

[4] Yet there are many factors to consider. First, the cost, which is staggering. Basic tuition fees with boarding costs can range from about HK$233,200 to HK$423,600 for nationally accredited schools and those belonging to the Association of Boarding Schools, says Hillary Tsui, a manager at the Institute of International Education - Hong Kong (IIE).

[5] Location is another important factor. Family members that live in the same city, or same country, can provide assistance when you're hundreds of miles away from your parents. This was one of the factors that led Jeannie Nam to Emma Willard School, in New York, where she studied for three years.

[6] Many students select a certain boarding school with the intention of staying on in the city for higher education. "I decided to go to boarding school in the US because I wanted to attend university there," says Nam, who studies at New York University. "[It also] helps me adjust to living in the US and provides more of the tests and
courses specifically required for US colleges."

[7] Apart from the advantage of being immersed in an English-speaking environment, boarding schools also help students to develop independence, says Nam.

[8] "One of the main benefits of studying abroad is learning how to live on your own. Character-building is a main pro to attending boarding school. Living at school also means you are much more involved, for example, in sports, extra-curricular activities and work - all of which tend to take up more of your time than at a regular school."

[9] Yet independence comes at a price. The fears of leaving home and living abroad alongside strangers are always a big worry. But more often than not, these fears disappear once students become acquainted with their new environment.

[10] Kellina Gannon, 15, was worried before she left to study at Malvern St James, an all-girls boarding and day school in Worcestershire, in Britain. But these concerns disappeared soon after she started there.

[11] She says "making friends, liking the school and doing well in classes" were her biggest fears before starting at the school in 2009. "Almost as soon as I got there [though], the girls were so friendly, showing me around and showing me the ropes," she says.

[12] No matter which route a student decides to take - here or abroad - there's no substitute for hard work. Yet with the proper mindset, and an adequate learning environment - which most Hong Kong schools offer - students can excel.

[13] Whether a student should take up local education or go abroad, there's really no right or wrong decision.

[14] Just try not to let your appetite for American homemade apple pie, or English fish and chips, be the determining factor.

[15] For those who want the experience of a foreign education but don't want the commitment, many schools offer summer or short-term courses.

[16] Information is available at the IIE - Hong Kong and the British Council Hong Kong.
Questions
Answer questions 1 to 7 using information from the above article. Choose the best answer for each question and write your answer in the space provided.

1. Why do students choose to have a foreign education? (2 marks)
   A. It offers better job prospects.
   B. Foreign education is better than the local one.
   C. It is cheaper to study in international schools.

2. Which of the following statements is correct? (2 marks)
   A. International schools in Hong Kong have the same curriculum as those in local schools.
   B. Cost is the only concern of parents to send children abroad.
   C. Canada and Australia are among the popular choices of overseas boarding schools.

3. What is the meaning of ‘staggering’ (line 10, paragraph 4)? (2 marks)
   A. Very shocking and surprising
   B. As if it is going to fall
   C. Constantly changing

4. According to the passage, which of the following is not the advantage of studying in boarding schools? (2 marks)
   A. Being immersed in an English-speaking environment.
   B. To escape from the pressure of studying in a local school.
   C. Helping students to develop independence.

5. What were the biggest worries of Kellina Gannon before she left to study in Britain? (2 marks)
   A. Missing her family, not liking the food and not being able to adapt to new environment.
   B. Making friends, liking the school and doing well in classes.
   C. Missing her family, not being able to adapt to new environment and doing well in classes.

6. What are the factors to consider when students go abroad to study? (6 marks)
   The two factors are cost and location.

7. What were the reasons for Jeannie Nam to have her secondary education in New York? (6 marks)
   The first reason is location. She has family members who live in the same city or same country. She also had the intention of staying on in the city for higher education.
Passage 2 (10 marks)

Study Abroad: is it right for you?

(Source: Randall Davis. http://www.tips4students.com/studyabroad.htm)

[1] The interest in studying abroad, particularly in ESL, is on the rise around the world as students seek to obtain a university degree to advance their job opportunities. However, students need to decide if studying abroad will help them reach their objectives.

[2] First, try to determine whether studying abroad will really help you in your future or if going overseas is just a fad or right of passage for citizens in your country. Ask people who have studied overseas if the experience has helped them educationally and financially in the long run.

[3] Second, consider what impact studying abroad will have on your family. Will it be a financial burden to study overseas? What are your family's expectations for you once you return to your country?

[4] Third, think about whether you really are flexible and open-minded enough to endure the challenges of adjusting to a foreign culture. If you feel comfortable with your answers to these questions, then you should proceed and look into studying abroad in more detail.
Questions
Answer questions 1 to 4 using information from the above article. Choose the best answer for each question and write your answer in the space provided.

1. What is the central idea of the passage? (2 marks)
   A. Students need to decide if studying abroad will help them reach their objectives.
   B. Students need to decide if studying abroad will help their family reach their objectives.
   C. Students need to decide if studying abroad will have a financial impact on their family.

2. According to the passage, why do students want to obtain a university degree? (2 marks)
   A. To learn more.
   B. To advance their job opportunities.
   C. For interests.

3. Which of the following is not correct for students considering studying abroad? (2 marks)
   A. You have to think about if you can accept a foreign culture.
   B. You have to know if your family can afford it.
   C. You have to think if you can travel a lot in the country.

4. Fill in the blanks. Use one word for each blank. (2 marks each)
   Students should ask people to know whether the experience of studying overseas can help them educationally and financially.
Part C. Writing (Total: 30 marks)
Write about 300 words on the following topic.

Argumentative essay:
Studying abroad is better than attending schools in Hong Kong for students in the long run. Do you agree or disagree?

In an argumentative essay, we not only give information but also present an argument with the PROS (supporting ideas) and CONS (opposing ideas) of an argumentative issue. We should clearly take our stand and write as if we are trying to persuade an opposing audience to adopt new beliefs or behaviours. The primary objective is to persuade people to change beliefs that many of them do not want to change.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

You are reminded of the importance of clear handwriting and the need for planning and proofreading.
Part D. Speaking (Total: 20 marks)
Find a partner or make an appointment with an ELLRC instructor to talk about the following topic for 1.5 to 2 minutes. You have 1 minute to think about what you are going to say. You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Do you want to study abroad? Why do you think so?

The student may talk about:
- the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad
- the factors that need to be considered