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This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript of the programme.

ANNOUNCER:

It's time for **Academic Listening** - a series for students at English-speaking universities. Join **Susan** Fearn and members of the World Service class of 2001 as they reach another milestone in a student's academic journey, and turn their attention to the dreaded 'e'-word – the 'exam'. In particular we'll hear about some of the specific qualifications you'll need to gain access to many English-speaking universities.

Susan:: If English is not your first language but you want to study at an English-speaking university, you'll probably be asked to demonstrate that your English is good enough for you to follow the course. You can offer the results of a number of different exams as evidence. The Test of English as a Foreign Language, the TOEFL exam for example, is common in Canada and America. Nick Charge works for the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and he's in charge of *their* exam called IELTS.

CLIP: Nick Charge

IELTS - International English Language Testing System - tests in 4 skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. It's mainly designed for candidates who are going to study overseas through the medium of English. Used by universities in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada and increasingly North America for tertiary entrance.

Susan: IELTS, like the other exams, can be used by universities and Colleges of Further Education to assess your English language ability. With IELTS, you're given a separate score for each of the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking -- as well as an overall score. But, as Nick Charge explains, unlike many other exams, this is one that you can't fail – you always get a result!

CLIP: Nick Charge

The way IELTS works is it reports scores on a 9-band scale. IELTS measures across the whole range of language ability. 1 is a non-user, band 9 is an equivalent to native speaker. Most universities require band score of 6 or more. Band 6 means a competent user of English who can survive well in social situations, go to lectures, write papers, contribute to seminars and tutorials, can function in same way as a native speaker.

Susan: The score you require depends on the subject you want to study. Universities might ask for an IELTS score of 5.5 for a foundation or introductory course. They might ask for 7.5 for subjects like history or law in which you'll need to be able to write or speak at length, using carefully, reasoned arguments. Even if you don't quite make the grade, Even if you only just fall short of the required grade, the university may still accept you, providing you agree to attend language support classes or to follow a course in English for Academic Purposes. Now, as I hope you've realised if you've been following this series,

this could be very beneficial. Not only will you have the chance to practise your academic English, but you'll learn a lot about effective study techniques as well ... as our WS students have discovered.

CLIP: Student

If your level is not very good you can do a course before you start the programme or during the course. I found some students who did the course during their studies found it quite useful - it helped them to understand essay structure.

Susan: Of course, learning any language takes time, and there's only so much improvement you can expect to make in a language support class. And, according to Nick Charge, it would simply not be in your interest to start an academic course while your IELTS score was too low.

CLIP: Nick Charge

There would be no point applying to a university if you've achieved a very low score - you would not be accepted. It may be that you're quite proficient in the actual subject, but your English ability is not up to study in an English-speaking environment. You'd be ill-advised to study at the university because you'd be seriously disadvantaged in terms of interaction with peers and understanding instruction. So you'd be advised to study further in English and reapply when your level of language is better.

Susan: But of course this is just one of the criteria that selectors are looking for.

CLIP: Louise Burton

In each case, undergraduate and postgraduate, we're looking at the whole application form - academic record, personal statement, reference.

Susan: Louise Burton works in the Undergraduate Admissions office at the London School of Economics.

CLIP: Louise Burton

On the academic side, we accept various qualifications and also looking for an acceptable standard of English language ability - as recognised by various formal qualifications: TOEFL, IELTS, GCSE, Cambridge Proficiency Test. In IELTS at undergraduate level, we normally look for 7 overall and 7 in individual papers. On the graduate side, we're looking for 6.5 but for some of courses we would be looking for 7.

Susan: There's plenty of competition for places at an institution like the London School of Economics. Louise Burton says they have about thirteen thousand applicants for just under a thousand places. So they can afford to set high standards. But she and her colleagues do try to be flexible where they can.

CLIP: Louise Burton

If a candidate doesn't meet the required standards marginally, we'll look at other qualifications and see if we can be a bit flexible. Or we might say: they should re-sit exam or take one of our English language courses at our language centre at LSE.

Susan : Now, if you're thinking of applying to study at an English-speaking university, there are various organisations that can advise you on the qualifications you'll need and how to go about applying for a university place in Britain and other

parts of the world. You can contact your local British Council Office or look at our Learning English website.

CLIP: Susan and student Denis from Belarus

Interview and IELTS-style listening test

(Transcript not available)

Susan: And that brings us to the end of today's programme and to the end of this series. In **Academic Listening** we've focused on a number of skills and techniques to help you study more effectively, and to improve your reading, writing, speaking and listening. Early in the series, we thought long and hard about listening to lectures. And that's where I'll leave you - with a final listening tip from Tony Lynch at the University of Edinburgh. He joins me and all my colleagues at the BBC World Service in wishing you the very best of luck with your academic studies.

CLIP: Tony Lynch

Talks about listening to lectures and some differences between native and non-native listeners; if you're a native listener, you seem to be more flexible about changing your mind about what has been, or is being said; keep listening for clues to make sure you're right.

(Transcript not available)

ANNOUNCER:

That brings us to the end of the series. Join us again next time for another Talk about English programme.
