Hello everyone, my name is David Cao, and I am a Master of Social Work student from UniSA. I have been living and studying in Australia for nearly 2 years. This October I managed to reach my ideal score in IELTS after sitting the exam 8 times during the past year. It is my great honour and pleasure to share my ‘road to IELTS’ with you, and I hope this could be helpful for those who are in the same boat.

When I was a university student in China, I was very confident about my English skills. As a student from a university which is famous for language training, I had spent plenty of time memorising a large amount of new vocabulary and rigid grammar rules. With the skills that I learned, it was quite easy for me to pass some important Chinese-designed English exams, which are powerful enough for me to find an internship position in a foreign company in Beijing and become a part-time English tutor in a secondary school. During that period of time, I have to say that English was my ‘best friend’ – it helped me gain respect from other people, it brought me a considerable income and it opened the doors to a number of significant opportunities.

As a social work student, I needed a minimum score of 7.0 or higher in each component in IELTS to become an accredited social worker in Australia. In order to achieve this goal, I started preparing for IELTS after I came to Australia, in a way that is very Chinese – memorising. I collected a number of so-called model essays from the internet and tried to memorise them word by word. When I had remembered several essays, I felt that I was invincible, so I sat the IELTS for the first time since coming to Australia. 6.5 is the score that I got in writing (with 7.0 or above in the other three categories). It was such a near miss, and this fact misguided me that I was on the right track and all I need is just a bit of luck, such as being in better shape on the testing day or coming across a lenient examiner. Holding this fluky psychology, I sat the exam for the second time, the third time and the fourth time until I realised that my learning method might not work with IELTS.

I happened to know that the UniSA CELUSA IELTS Testing Centre offers free counselling service to all students. Since it is free of charge, I booked an appointment with the counsellor and decided to give it a try. Looking back now, I think it was the best decision that I made in 2015.

In the 30 minute long meeting, I had a very effective conversation with Kim, who is an experienced consultant working for CELUSA IELTS. Kim patiently listened to me when I was telling her my desperate IELTS experiences. After having a better understanding about my current situation and English level, she gave me some tips in regard to language learning, such as preparing a notebook for new vocabulary and expressions. She also cleared some famous ‘rumours’ about IELTS. For example, many students believe
that they failed to achieve their ideal score simply because they came cross a strict examiner, and they would get higher grades if they met a more lenient one next time. Kim told me that this idea is completely wrong. All examiners are well trained and monitored closely to be fair to every candidate, so instead of ‘testing your luck’ time and time again, you would better improve your comprehensive English skills by studying harder.

In terms of improving English in an area of weakness, another helpful tool that CELUSA offers is the tutoring service. At the end of the consultation, Kim recommended a suitable tutor according to my level of English and current needs.

I had 10 sessions in total with my tutor, and it worked perfectly. My writing improved from 6.5 to 7.5 and speaking from 6.5/7.0 to 8.0 in 3 months. Due to confidential reasons, I am not allow to reveal my tutor’s name, but I would like to share several pieces of advice that I found most helpful on preparation of IELTS.

**READ DAVID’S TIPS FOR IELTS PREPARATION IN OUR NEXT EDITION OF ‘IELTS SUCCESS’.

If you are struggling to get your desired score or need information to prepare for your IELTS test, you can book an appointment with our Advice and Counselling Service by emailing [ielts.info@unisa.edu.au](mailto:ielts.info@unisa.edu.au)

Appointments available on Wednesdays between 3.30pm and 4.30pm.