

TACKLE THE TSA



Overview

The TSA is a high-speed critical thinking and problem solving exam, which tests students on their ability to think clearly and efficiently under time pressure. Subject knowledge won't get you far in the TSA – it is designed to be taken by students applying for a variety of courses, and to test how they think, not what they know. It is a hard test, but by utilising specific methods and strategies to answer the different types of question that come up, it is possible to “crack” the TSA.

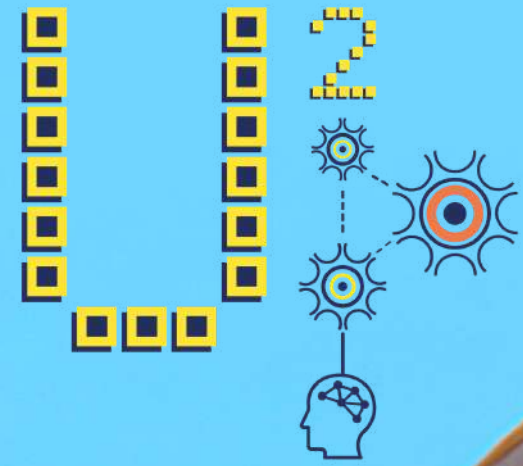
What to Expect

In these classes, we'll cover all the types of questions that come up in the TSA, focussing on particularly hard questions and the methods we can use to solve them.

By the end of these four sessions, you will have a comprehensive toolkit that should enable you to go out and ace the TSA.

Logistical Details

- All classes will take place over Zoom. Links will be sent out prior to the course commencing.
- Each class is 2hrs in duration.
- The course host will typically set optional tasks between classes.



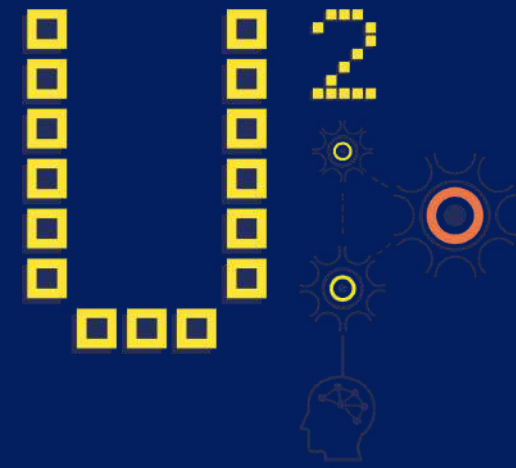
TSA Test Course

Our Host

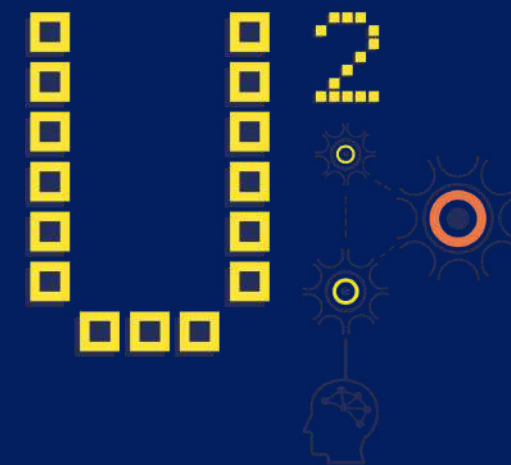


Sarah

Sarah graduated from Oxford University in 2019 with a first in PPE, finishing top of the year in philosophy. She then completed her MA in philosophy at NYU, graduating with departmental honors and a thesis with distinction. Since then, Sarah has used her experience of US and UK university admissions to mentor many students, providing support with essay writing, admissions test preparation (particularly the TSA and GRE, having scored in the top percentiles in both) and interview skills. In 2021, Sarah hosted a similar program online for Wellington school on behalf of U2 Tuition, as well as for Wimbledon High in 2022, and so has many relevant sessions prepared on all elements of the TSA, including critical reasoning, problem solving and essay writing.



The Agenda:



Class 1 (Critical Thinking: Conclusions, Assumptions, and Flaws)

In this class, we'll look at some of the more straightforward critical thinking questions: identifying and drawing a main conclusion, and assessing the impact of additional evidence. Through looking at specific questions, we'll methodically identify the premises and conclusions of an argument, enabling us to either identify or find the conclusion. Utilising this technique of identifying premises and conclusions, we will then look at the more difficult assumptions and flaws questions. While these are two different types of questions, they are a natural pairing, as an unstated assumption is almost the same as a flaw in an argument. If we can find a reason to doubt an assumption, it's a flaw in an argument. Again, by focussing on a premises and conclusion structure, we will be able to identify the gaps in the reasoning, and thus discover unstated assumptions and flaws in the argument.

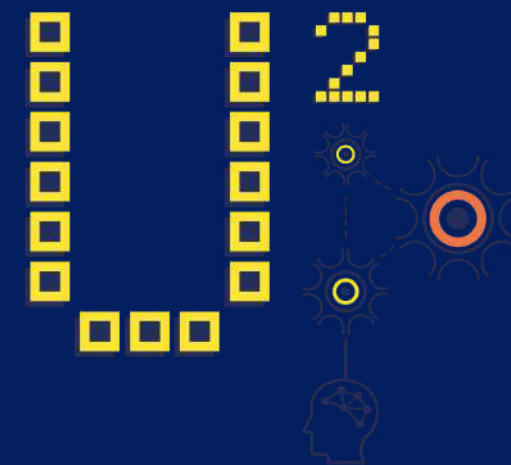


Class 2 (Problem solving: Relevant Selection and Identifying Similarity)

The problem solving questions are both more straightforward and more challenging than the critical thinking questions. While they often utilise maths (something students are familiar with), they often do so in a way that requires lateral thinking and mental gymnastics. In this first class on problem solving, we'll focus on 'Relevant selection' and 'Identifying similarity'. With both these question types, the TSA likes to overwhelm the examinee with a lot of extra information – our job is to cut through the noise and only focus on the important information. Through looking at a series of questions, we'll work on strategies to hone in on relevant information, and how we can relate seemingly disparate information (such as a graph and paragraph) to come to a methodically reasoned answer.



The Agenda:



Class 3 (Critical Thinking: Strengthening & Weakening, Matching Arguments, and Applying Principles)

The aim of this session is to cover the remaining question-types in critical thinking, beginning with questions that ask for further evidence that would support or weaken the argument. Having completed Class 1, students should now be well-equipped to identify conclusions, and therefore work out how further information would affect the strength of those conclusions. We will then look at 'Matching arguments' questions, which require us to identify arguments that have parallel structures. With these questions, we will learn to systematise the parallels, through reducing the arguments down to If/then statements, and through alternative methods, such as set theory. With 'Applying principles' questions, our job is to work out on what grounds the argument is given: for example, an argument for vegetarianism might be grounded in cruelty to animals. We then have to identify a similar argument that is also grounded in cruelty to animals. As with previous question types, by recognising premises and conclusions, we can see what is the operative principle at work, and therefore find our way to the answer.



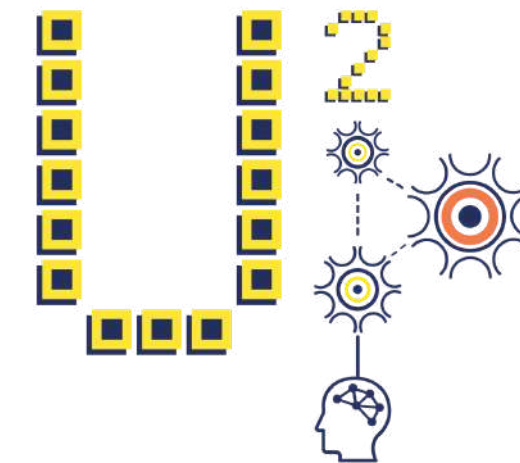
Class 4 (Problem Solving: Finding Procedures)

'Finding procedures' questions are in a sense the broadest of all. With these questions, there is often not any obvious or given method to find the solution. In this final class, we will work on different angles we can take on a question, applying lateral thinking techniques to come to an answer. Moreover, we will examine a variety of "standard approaches" that can be applied (such as looking for 'limiting factors' or even just tearing up pieces of paper!).




Any questions? Get in touch!

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