SOCRATES

Module G — Full Practice Exam · 105 minutes · 100 points

WRITTEN RECEPTION (60 points)

(ACCESS TO INFORMATION FROM WRITTEN TEXTS)

Read the text and then answer questions 1–8. In the multiple-choice questions, circle the number of the correct answer. In the other questions, follow the instructions.

THE RISE OF THE FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK

I On a Friday morning in a growing number of offices, the lights stay off and the desks remain empty. Their occupants are not on holiday, nor have they fallen ill; they are simply enjoying a three-day weekend that is fast becoming part of ordinary working life. For more than a century, the five-day week has been treated almost as a natural law, as fixed and unquestionable as the weather. Recently, however, a bold idea has spread from a handful of experimental companies into mainstream debate: that people might work only four days a week, for the same pay, and achieve just as much.

II The reasoning behind the four-day week is less about laziness than about efficiency. Supporters point out that the traditional working day is filled with unnecessary meetings, endless emails, and stretches of low concentration. When employees are given less time, they argue, wasted hours are ruthlessly cut away, and the remaining time is used far more intensely. Several widely reported trials appear to confirm this. In one large experiment, most participating companies reported that productivity either held steady or actually rose, whereas levels of stress and exhaustion among staff fell sharply. Encouraged by such results, many firms chose to keep the shorter week afterwards.

III The potential benefits extend well beyond the workplace. An extra day of rest, campaigners suggest, could ease the exhaustion that drives so many people to abandon their jobs, and might improve public health by reducing chronic stress. There are environmental arguments too: fewer commuting journeys mean less traffic and lower emissions, whereas quieter roads and offices consume less energy overall. Some supporters even hope that extra free time might allow parents to share childcare more equally and give everyone greater freedom to volunteer, exercise, or simply rest. In this optimistic vision, a shorter week is not merely good for business but a route to a healthier society.

IV Critics, nevertheless, urge caution. What works comfortably in a software company, they warn, may prove impossible in a hospital, a school, or a factory, where the work cannot simply be compressed into fewer hours. Squeezing five days of duties into four, some employees report, can actually increase pressure rather than relieve it. There are practical worries as well: businesses that deal with customers every day of the week may struggle to close entirely, and smaller firms often lack the resources to reorganise so ambitiously. For

these reasons, sceptics insist that the enthusiastic headlines have run far ahead of the limited evidence so far.

V Whether the four-day week becomes the norm or remains a privilege of certain industries, it has already achieved something significant. By questioning an arrangement that once seemed permanent, it has forced societies to ask what work is actually for. Governments in several countries are now funding their own trials, and as the results accumulate, the debate is likely to intensify rather than fade. The traditional week may not disappear overnight. Even so, the fact that millions are seriously discussing a shorter one suggests that the way we think about work is beginning to change.

QUESTIONS — PART I (60 points)

1. What point does the writer make about the five-day week in paragraph I?

i. It has long been regarded as fixed and beyond question.
ii. It has existed for only a few years.
iii. It was invented by a handful of experimental companies.
iv. It has always guaranteed workers a three-day weekend.

(6 points)

2. According to supporters, why does giving employees less time not reduce what they achieve? (paragraph II)

ANSWER:

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(7 points)

3. What did the large experiment mentioned in paragraph II find?

i. Productivity fell sharply in most companies.
ii. Employees quickly became far more exhausted.
iii. Every company returned to the five-day week afterwards.
iv. Productivity stayed the same or rose, while stress fell.

(7 points)

4. Paragraph III describes environmental benefits. COMPLETE: Fewer commuting journeys would mean less traffic and

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(7 points)

5. Paragraph III mentions social hopes. COMPLETE: Some supporters hope that extra free time might allow parents to

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(7 points)

6. Paragraph IV warns that the idea may not suit every job. COMPLETE: In places such as a hospital or a factory, the work cannot simply be

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(7 points)

7. Why might businesses that serve customers daily find the four-day week difficult? (paragraph IV)

ANSWER:

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(7 points)

8. Mark the TWO statements that are true according to the text.

- ☐ The four-day week has already replaced the traditional week in every country.
- ☐ Governments in several countries are now funding their own trials.
- ☐ The idea has forced societies to question what work is really for.
- ☐ The writer expects public interest in the idea to fade away quickly.
- ☐ The traditional five-day week is certain to disappear overnight.
- ☐ Hardly anyone is still seriously discussing a shorter working week.

(2×6=12 points)

PART II — WRITTEN PRODUCTION (40 points)

9. *(40 points)*

Some people believe that having more free time is more important than earning extra money. Do you agree or disagree with this view? Write a composition stating and explaining your opinion. Write 120–140 words in English.

DRAFT / טיוטה

FINAL VERSION / גרסה סופית (words 140–120)

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