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 SCIENCE OF DECISION-MAKING

I Standing in a supermarket aisle, staring at forty varieties of the same product, most of us have felt a small, familiar wave of paralysis. Should we choose the cheaper brand or the familiar one, the healthy option or the tempting one? Such moments feel trivial, yet they belong to a process that shapes every hour of our lives. From the food we eat to the careers we pursue, human existence is a near-endless chain of choices. For a long time, thinkers assumed that people decided by weighing costs and benefits like careful accountants. Modern science, however, tells a far stranger and more interesting story.

II Researchers now believe that the mind relies on two very different systems of thought. The first is fast, automatic, and effortless: it lets us recognise a friend's face or slam on the brakes without conscious calculation. The second is slow, deliberate, and demanding, the kind of thinking we use to solve a difficult puzzle or compare two job offers. Most of the time the fast system runs the show, guiding us efficiently through a complex world. Precisely because it is so quick, however, it relies on mental shortcuts, and these shortcuts, while usually helpful, can occasionally lead even intelligent people badly astray.

III These shortcuts produce predictable errors that scientists call biases. People tend to fear vivid, dramatic dangers, such as plane crashes, far more than statistically greater but duller risks, such as an unhealthy diet. We cling stubbornly to our first impression of a person, interpreting everything they later do in its light. We are also strongly influenced by the way a choice is presented: a food described as ninety per cent fat-free seems far more appealing than the identical product labelled ten per cent fat. Such biases are not signs of stupidity; they are built into the very machinery of the healthy human brain.

IV Curiously, having more options does not necessarily make us happier or wiser. Studies suggest that when people are offered an overwhelming range of possibilities, they often feel anxious, delay deciding, or avoid choosing altogether. Emotion, too, plays a far larger role than the old accountant model ever allowed. Patients who, through injury, lose the capacity to feel emotion frequently become unable to make even simple decisions. It appears that feelings, far from being the enemy of good judgement, are an essential part of it, quietly guiding us towards choices that reason alone could never reach.

V Understanding these hidden mechanisms need not leave us feeling helpless. On the contrary, simply knowing that our judgement can be nudged makes us better equipped to pause, question our first instinct, and slow down when a decision truly matters. Governments and organisations are already using this knowledge, redesigning forms and choices so that the easiest option is also the healthiest or most sensible one. As research advances, we may learn to build environments that help people decide more wisely without limiting their freedom. The science of decision-making offers not a gloomy verdict on human weakness but a practical set of tools for thinking better.

QUESTIONS — PART I (60 points)

1. How did thinkers once assume that people made decisions, according to paragraph I?

i. By ignoring costs and benefits entirely.
ii. By relying only on their emotions.
iii. By weighing costs and benefits like careful accountants.
iv. By copying the choices made by other people.

(6 points)

2. How does the writer describe the difference between the two systems of thought? (paragraph II)

ANSWER:

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(7 points)

3. According to paragraph II, why can the fast system sometimes cause problems?

i. Because it relies on mental shortcuts that can mislead us.
ii. Because it is far too slow to be of any use.
iii. Because it is almost never used in daily life.
iv. Because it always demands great conscious effort.

(7 points)

4. Give one example from paragraph III of how the way a choice is presented can influence people. (paragraph III)

ANSWER:

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(7 points)

5. Paragraph III argues that biases are perfectly normal. COMPLETE: Such biases are not signs of stupidity but are built into

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(7 points)

6. Paragraph IV explains how too much choice can affect us. COMPLETE: When people face an overwhelming range of possibilities, they often feel anxious, delay deciding, or

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(7 points)

7. What does paragraph IV suggest about the role of emotion in decision-making?

ANSWER:

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(7 points)

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

- ☐ The writer concludes that human beings are hopelessly irrational.
- ☐ Knowing our judgement can be nudged helps us pause and question our first instinct.
- ☐ Some organisations redesign choices so that the easiest option is also the most sensible.
- ☐ Governments are using this knowledge to remove people's freedom to choose.
- ☐ Understanding these mechanisms leaves us feeling completely helpless.
- ☐ Research into decision-making has now come to a complete stop.

(2×6=12 points)

PART II — WRITTEN PRODUCTION (40 points)

9. *(40 points)*

Some people believe that important decisions should be made quickly, while others think we should always take plenty of time. Which view do you agree with? 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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