Sample of the ISE IV Controlled Written exam
Time allowed: 3 hours

This exam paper has three tasks. You must complete all tasks.

Task 1 – Reading into writing task – text synthesis

Read the text below and look at the graphs. Then, **in your own words**, write a report for a group of people who rely heavily on the use of a variety of electronic gadgets:

i) summarising the concerns that arise from the common habit of multitasking with a range of technological devices **and**

ii) discussing ways to deal with this new phenomenon and assessing how far the problem at work is the responsibility of the employer or of the individual.

(Write about 350 words)

Use your own words as far as possible. No marks for answers copied from the reading text. You must make reference to both the text and the graphic information in your answer.

As gadgets take over, focus falters

When one of the most important email messages of his life landed in his inbox a few years ago, Kord Campbell managed to overlook it, not just for a day or two, but 12 days. He finally saw it while sifting through old messages: a big company wanted to buy his Internet start-up. The message had slipped by him amid an electronic flood: two computer screens alive with email, instant messages, online chats, a web browser and the computer code he was writing.

While he managed to salvage the $1.3 million deal after apologising to his benefactor, Mr Campbell continues to struggle with the effects of the deluge of data. Even after he unplugs, he craves the stimulation he gets from his electronic gadgets. He forgets things like dinner plans and he has trouble focusing on his family.

Scientists say juggling email, phone calls and other incoming information can change how people think and behave. They say our ability to focus is being undermined by bursts of information which play to a primitive impulse to respond to immediate opportunities and threats. The stimulation provokes excitement that researchers say can be addictive. In its absence, people feel bored.

While many people say multitasking makes them more productive, research shows otherwise. Heavy multitaskers actually have more trouble focusing and shutting out irrelevant information, scientists say, and they experience more stress. Even after the multitasking ends, fractured thinking and lack of focus persist.

Mr Campbell, 43, came of age with the personal computer and he is a heavier user of technology than most. But researchers say the habits and struggles of Mr Campbell and his family typify what many experience – and what many more will, if trends continue. For him, the tensions feel increasingly acute, and the effects harder to get rid of.

For better or worse, the consumption of media has exploded. In 2008, people consumed three times as much information each day as they did in 1960. The nonstop interactivity is one of the most significant shifts ever in the human environment, said Adam Gazzaley, a neuroscientist at the University of California.

'We are exposing our brains to an environment and asking them to do things we weren't necessarily evolved to do, and we know already there are consequences.' It remains to be seen what the impact will be.

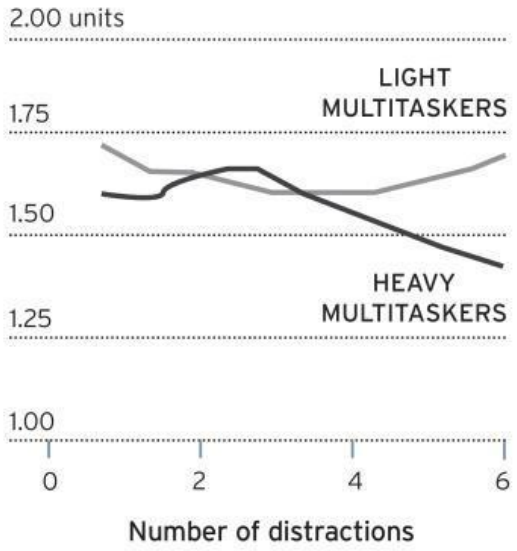
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The cost of multitasking

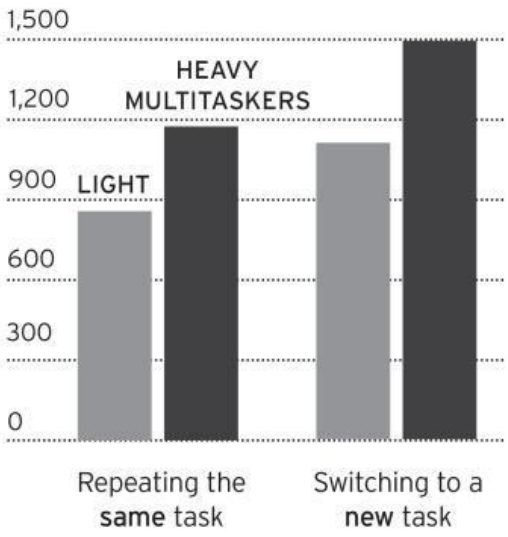
Heavy multitaskers don't perform as well as light multitaskers when faced with distractions.

Heavy multitaskers are also significantly slower than light multitaskers when switching between tasks.

Task performance with and without distractions



Time to perform
in milliseconds



(Source: Adapted from *The New York Times*, 13 June 2010)

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Task 2 – Reading into writing task – text transformation

Read the text below and then, **in your own words**, present the information given in the text as an online forum with two or more contributors debating the validity and practicality of adopting a 'locavore' lifestyle.

(Write about 350 words)

Use your own words as far as possible. No marks for answers copied from the reading text.

Locavores

A 'locavore' means someone who always tries to eat food grown in their local community. Some locavores give themselves a 100km radius and others go no further than their back garden. What 'locavores' have in common is that their eating and shopping habits are very right-on and very now.

The term 'locavore' is said to have been created by puzzled Californians in 2005 who wondered why they were eating strawberries from Europe while at the same time exporting their own crop.

Bill McKibben's book *Deep Economy* is about climate change and creating an economy which cares more about quality than quantity. His book explains how he and his family became pioneering locavores in Vermont for several months. 'The real pleasure is not just the delicious food, but the abundance of new relationships that are formed, the growing knowledge of where I live,' said McKibben.

Locavores make their own rules. Some are pedants, some compromisers. Barbara Kingsolver has written *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: Our Year of Seasonal Eating*. Her family moved to a farm, grew their own food, and shopped at local markets. However, they allowed themselves far-flung Fair-trade chocolate and coffee.

McKibben follows the 'Marco Polo' exception: his dinner must be local but can contain anything a 13th-century explorer might have brought back in his saddlebag – spices, ginger, etc. Few people can be complete locavores, but every bit helps. Kingsolver's husband calculated that if Americans ate one weekly meal of locally sourced organic meat and produce, the country would save more than a million barrels of oil a week.

Of course, what no one likes to mention is the scurvy. Well, there's no actual scurvy, but if you love orange juice, it's February, and the only fruit around is a shrivelled apple, you do tend to suffer seasonal affective dining disorder. On the whole though, food is the one area where making an ethical choice generally tastes good, so why resist it?

(Source: Adapted from *The Times*)

Task 3 – Critical and analytical writing task

'*Education has produced a vast population able to read, but unable to distinguish what is worth reading.*' (George Macaulay Trevelyan, Historian, 1942)

Write an essay commenting on the relevance of Trevelyan's statement in today's society. Balance your own opinions with alternative points of view.

(Write about 250 words)

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