

II. Written Essay

The British newspaper, *The Guardian*, has recently published readers’ opinion letters on social media platforms. It now wants to include opinions from other European countries. Write a letter to the editor, approximately 150 words, expressing your opinion and using an appropriate style or register. It will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- appropriate tone and style
- clearly organised and expressed ideas
- correct use of vocabulary
- correct use of grammar
- correct spelling and punctuation

Plan and organise your essay (use the rough paper provided). When you have finished writing the definitive version in the space below, read it carefully and make corrections if necessary.

**Is it acceptable to lose privacy in exchange for free social media platforms?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



ENGLISH ENTRANCE EXAM: JUNE 18, 2016

*Time allowed for this exam: 3 Hours*

*Before starting, please read the following carefully:*

- ☞ All mobile phones must be turned off.
- ☞ Make sure your name is correctly given above.
- ☞ There are three parts to this exam:
  - I. Resum en català / Resumen en Castellano (50%)
  - II. Language Work (25%)
  - III. Written Essay (25%)
- ☞ Write all your answers in this exam booklet. Use the spaces provided.
- ☞ All rough paper will be collected after the exam.

***POLITE WARNING!***  
***ANY TALKING, COPYING OR USE OF NON-AUTHORISED DEVICES DURING THE EXAM***  
***WILL MEAN AUTOMATIC AND IMMEDIATE DISQUALIFICATION***

I. Resum en català / Resumen en castellano (50%)	_____
II. Language Work (25%)	_____
III. Written Essay (25%)	_____

# The human cloud is here to stay

## Websites that match employers with freelancers are growing – but that’s not all

1 In the past decade cloud computing has radically altered the way we work, but it’s the growth of the “human cloud” which is really going to shake up the world of work. It’s a vast global pool of freelancers who are available to work on demand from remote locations on a mind-boggling range of digital tasks, and their numbers are growing.

5 The past five years have seen a proliferation of online platforms that match “requesters” (employers in “cloudspeak”) with “taskers” (freelancers). They operate very much like an auction: requesters post a project (task), taskers are invited to bid for it and then the requester chooses the offer they feel is the most competitive. The requester has instant access to countless offers and taskers to numerous projects. Two of the biggest sites are Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, which claims to have 500,000 “turkers” from 190 countries at any given time, and Upwork, which estimates that it has 10 million freelancers from 180 countries on its database. Together it has been estimated that they offer approximately 3m tasks each year, which essentially are anything that can be done on a computer, and they finance this service by charging a fee to both parties. Because the market is evolving so quickly it’s hard to pin down exactly how many people are using these sites worldwide, however a study by management consultants McKinsey estimates that by 2025 some 540 million workers will have used one of these platforms to find work.

15 Sevendays, founded by Vassili van der Mersch, is one of the most recent of these platforms. According to Mersch: “People don’t necessarily want to work from 9am to 5pm in an office any more. They want more flexible work, both in terms of the hours and the location.” Although Sevendays also matches freelance workers with companies, it differs in a number of aspects from the auction model favoured by sites like Upwork: it focuses particularly on startups (new innovative companies) and digital agencies looking to outsource projects which require a higher level of skills, it only invites carefully selected jobseekers to apply for each task, freelancers are not charged a commission and can also specify the minimum rate they are prepared to accept.

25 Van der Mersch prefers to use the term “cloud model” for his site and argues that there are career development opportunities for cloud workers because many startups use it as a way to check out freelancers to see if they are a good cultural fit before offering them a permanent job. Likewise, freelancers can try out the startups. According to Mersch: “Typically these remote freelancers are very entrepreneurial, which is one of the qualities that startups are looking for. They are independent, take the initiative and don’t need someone looking over their shoulder.”

30 The benefits for companies using these sites appear to be obvious: instant access to a pool of cheap and willing talent, no lengthy recruitment processes, they don’t need to provide office space or equipment or shell out for holiday and sick pay. Requesters may be concerned about issues such as guaranteeing quality and meeting deadlines, but this is rarely a problem as they don’t pay until the task is completed. For the taskers the benefits are less clear cut. Those who champion the crowdsourcing model claim that it’s a powerful force to redistribute wealth, and it brings a fresh stream of income and flexible working hours into emerging economies such as India and the Philippines (two of the biggest markets for these platforms).

35 But for critics it is the ubiquity of the human cloud and how it operates that are cause for concern. By inviting people to bid for work, sites such as Upwork inevitably trigger a “race to the bottom”, with workers in Mumbai or Manila able to undercut their peers in Geneva or London thanks to their lower living costs. According to Guy Standing, professor of economics at SOAS, University of London, this race not only increases inequality but actually drives down real wages. He has written two books on the “precariat”, which he defines as an emerging global class with no financial security, job stability or prospect of career progression. Standing argues that falling wages in this sector, with workers often willing to complete tasks for as little as \$1 an hour, will eventually have a knock-on effect on the wages of traditional employees and contribute to the growth of the precariat. But his criticism does not stop here: “It’s not just unskilled labour that’s being done online. It goes all the way up: legal services, medical diagnosis, architectural services or accounting. It’s affecting the whole labour spectrum.”

40 The global dimension of the human cloud poses another issue, not only for workers but also for governments. At present this sector of the labour market is largely unregulated, there is no internationally agreed code of ethics for this industry, nor are there internationally agreed policies to protect the rights of freelancers or taskers in the event of disputes. Guy Standing’s research indicates that in the last decade the use of cloud labour has almost doubled every year: “It’s going to become a very big, explosive issue and so far the policymakers haven’t dealt with it.”

50 With requesters and taskers often in different countries, each with their respective national labour and corporate laws, this is no easy matter to resolve. Whether we like it or not, the human cloud is already part of the way we will work in the future, but governments are not even close to agreeing on what the fundamental rights of workers are or how to ensure them.



## I. Language Work

Explain briefly in English the meaning of the following words / phrases according to the context in which they appear in this article – use the space provided (7 points)

1. shake up (*l. 2*)
2. cloudspeak (*l. 7*)
3. bid (*ls. 9, 38*)
4. turker (*l. 12*)
5. don’t need someone looking over their shoulder (*l. 29*)
6. race to the bottom (*l.38*)

Find a synonym in the text for the following (8 points):

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. determine                   | 5. generate or cause to happen     |
| 2. collection or common source | 6. offer a lower price             |
| 3. pay                         | 7. indirect result / repercussions |
| 4. obvious                     | 8. not controlled by laws          |

Who or what do the following words/ phrases refer to? (5 points)

- |                                     |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. both parties ( <i>ls.14-15</i> ) | 4. it ( <i>l. 34</i> )   |
| 2. it ( <i>l. 26</i> )              | 5. this ( <i>l. 53</i> ) |
| 3. they ( <i>l. 29</i> )            |                          |



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Facultat de Traducció i d'Interpretació

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Resumiu en **català i/o castellà** el contingut de l'article (aprox. 250 paraules). La versió definitiva en net l'heu d'escriure en aquest full.*

*Resumid en **catalán i/o castellano** el contenido del artículo (aprox. 250 palabras). Escribid la versión definitiva en limpio en esta hoja.*