

**ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE - ESPCI
ECOLE NORMALES SUPERIEURES**

CONCOURS D'ADMISSION 2025

**MERCREDI 16 AVRIL 2025
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Epreuve n° 6
ANGLAIS (XEULSR)**

Durée totale de l'épreuve écrite de langue vivante (A+B) : 4 heures

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**PREMIÈRE PARTIE (A)
SYNTHÈSE DE DOCUMENTS**

Contenu du dossier : trois articles et un document iconographique pour chaque langue. Les documents sont numérotés 1, 2, 3 et 4.

Sans paraphraser les documents proposés dans le dossier, le candidat réalisera une synthèse de celui-ci, en mettant clairement en valeur ses principaux enseignements et enjeux dans le contexte de l'aire géographique de la langue choisie, et en prenant soin de n'ajouter aucun commentaire personnel à sa composition.

La synthèse proposée devra comprendre entre 600 et 675 mots et sera rédigée intégralement dans la langue choisie. Elle sera en outre obligatoirement précédée d'un titre proposé par le candidat.

**SECONDE PARTIE (B)
TEXTE D'OPINION**

En réagissant aux arguments exprimés dans cet éditorial (document numéroté 5), le candidat rédigera lui-même dans la langue choisie un texte d'opinion d'une longueur de 500 à 600 mots.

A. Document 1

Money for nothing: is universal basic income about to transform society?

Donna Ferguson, *The Guardian*
14 July 2024

The concept of a guaranteed basic income might seem novel or neoteric, but it dates back to 1795, when the American founding father Thomas Paine suggested a "national fund" should pay every adult "rich or poor" a "ground rent" of £10 a year until the age of 50. Earth is "the common property of the human race", he argued, so everyone has been collectively dispossessed by "the introduction of the system of landed property" and was entitled to compensation.

Today, as artificial intelligence (AI) learns from the collective intellectual and creative output of humans and uses this to dispossess workers of their livelihoods, the idea of universal basic income (UBI) as a possible solution is gaining traction. "We are seeing the most disruptive force in history," Tesla founder and X (formerly Twitter) owner Elon Musk said last year, before speculating: "There will come a point where no job is needed – you can have a job if you want one for personal satisfaction – but AI will do everything."

The counter argument is that although AI could replace a range of jobs, it will also create new roles (including oversight of AI decision making – known as "human in the loop"). Yet for many workers, the advance of AI continues to be alarming. In March, after analysing 22,000 tasks in the UK economy, covering every type of job, a model created by the Institute for Public Policy Research predicted that 59% of tasks currently done by humans – particularly women and young people – could be affected by AI in the next three to five years. In the worst-case scenario, this would trigger a "jobs apocalypse" where eight million people lose their jobs in the UK alone.

UBI would provide a vital safety net. "Under capitalism, you need money to survive. It's that simple," says Dr Neil Howard, an international development social protection researcher at the University of Bath. He and his team have helped to develop basic income pilots around the world and, like Thomas Paine, he believes that a redistribution of the privatised resources of all human beings is inherently just. [...]

Contrary to expectations, he says, "It wouldn't necessarily lead to people doing less work – it would enable them to do better work or to invest their time in more socially useful activities."

This argument is backed up by a 2020 study conducted by researchers at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. It found that unemployed individuals who were previously in receipt of benefits increased their participation in the labour market after they were given a basic income for three years. Rather than opting for insecure work – taking any job they could get – to fulfil the conditions imposed upon them by the benefits system, they were more likely to find and accept a long-term, well-paid job. They also took on more work.

"Humans need to do work that feels valuable, psychologically," says Cleo Goodman, a UBI expert at the thinktank Autonomy. For example, she believes that if UBI was available, people would do more creative and charitable work. "The kind of work that it's now very difficult to make an income from is the kind of work that I think people would move to in droves. And I think that would be positive for society." [...]

Darrell West, author of *The Future of Work: AI, Robots and Automation*, says that just as policy innovations were needed in Thomas Paine's time to help people transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy, they are needed today, as we transition to an AI economy. "There's a risk that AI is going to take a lot of jobs," he says. "A basic income could help navigate that situation."

Nell Watson, a futurist who focuses on AI ethics, has a more pessimistic view. She believes we are witnessing the dawn of an age of "AI companies": corporate environments where very few – if any – humans are employed at all. Instead, at these companies, lots of different AI sub-personalities will work independently on different tasks, occasionally hiring humans for "bits and pieces of work". [...]

Watson speculates that only jobs that require human interaction (like hospital chaplains and care workers) or involve complex physical tasks (like plasterers, plumbers and hairdressers) will need to be done by humans in the future. As a result, she thinks it could be AI companies, not governments, that end up paying people a basic income.

AI companies, meanwhile, will have no salaries to pay. "Because there are no human beings in the loop, the profits and dividends of this company could be given to the needy. This could be a way of generating support income in a way that doesn't need the state welfare. It's fully compatible with capitalism. It's just that the AI is doing it."

B. Document 2

Labour or leisure? Why a universal basic income might foster wellbeing but not productivity

Alexander Plum and Kabir Dasgupta, *The Conversation*
29 Aug 2024

The current cost-of-living crisis, high interest rates and the ensuing economic contraction have disproportionately hit low-income households. And for many low-income workers, the future remains uncertain.

On top of that, the rise of artificial intelligence may result in significant job redundancies and displacements. And recent employment data for New Zealand has been grim, with a rise in the number of unemployed.

The uncertain future of work in general has led many to propose some form of universal basic income (UBI) as a solution. The underlying idea is simple: everyone receives a basic income with no strings attached.

But would a UBI really work? And by how much could it change the lives of low-income households in particular? As it turns out, a new study from the United States, funded by OpenAI's founder **Sam Altman**, provides insights into what can potentially be expected if the UBI becomes a reality.

Altman sees universal cash payments as a possible solution to the large-scale job displacements expected with AI-driven automation. However, the study's results were not necessarily what supporters of the scheme were hoping for.

Thus, the UBI can be a costly programme for a government, depending on the amount paid. A 2019 study calculated that a UBI at the jobseeker support level of NZ\$215 per week would cost \$41.3 billion annually. However, the government can also generate savings by slashing bureaucracy and replacing the welfare system with the UBI.

A number of countries have been exploring what a UBI might mean for them. Finland ran a two-year UBI pilot in 2017 and 2018. This aimed to understand whether an unconditional cash transfer encouraged uptake of low-paid or temporary work among the unemployed.

Two thousand randomly selected unemployed people received €560 (NZ\$1,000) monthly. The study found positive wellbeing effects. The basic income recipients were found to be more satisfied with their lives and experienced less mental strain. The impact on employment was also positive but small.

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Sam Altman's US-based study investigated how guaranteed minimum income affects low-income households' employment and earning prospects.

The study recruited participants from low-income households, aged between 21 and 40 as of 2019, in the states of Texas and Illinois.

The research group consisted of 1,000 randomly selected low-income adult individuals who unconditionally received US\$1,000 (NZ\$1,700) per month for three years.

To put this amount in perspective, the cash transfer equalled, on average, a 40% increase in household income. Compared with other such studies, both the amount and the duration are unprecedented.

Two thousand participants formed the control group, each receiving US\$50 (NZ\$85) monthly.

Interestingly, the analysis revealed a 2% drop in labour market participation by those receiving the cash transfer, and a reduction in the weekly number of hours worked by between 1.3 to 1.4 hours.

What were the participants doing with the extra time? In theory, the additional financial security for low-income households should enable individuals to spend more time productively.

However, the study found an increase in the time spent on leisure pursuits, but no significant improvements in the quality of employment and no significant effects on education or training.

The findings suggest the negative labour market implications of UBI may depend on the duration and the generosity of the programme.

Given the most recent changes to the jobseeker benefit rules in New Zealand, which include benefit sanctions, it is unlikely the current government will consider a programme like a UBI.

But AI is fundamentally changing the nature of work. There may come a time soon when such a cash transfer becomes necessary.

C. Document 3

Could a £2-a-day basic income be the key to protecting rainforests?

Graeme Green, *The Guardian*
22 Aug 2024

"At the beginning, there was a lot of fear and disbelief," said Ketty Marcelo. "There was a perception from the communities that this was another scam, that it was only looking to steal information or our integrity."

Indigenous communities in the Amazon have grown weary of people coming in from outside with plans that could mean them losing their land or way of life. When a team from Cool Earth, a climate action NGO, came to the Amazon communities of central Peru in October 2022, local people were hesitant. "These fears caused some families not to participate," Marcelo said. "And we, as an organisation, were afraid this would be another project that would seek to impose activities without respecting the autonomy of the communities."

But what developed instead was a collaboration between Cool Earth and two all-female Indigenous-led organisations – the National Organisation of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru (Onamiap), of which Marcelo is president, and the Organisation for Indigenous Women of the Central Selva of Peru (Omiaasec).

Together, they created a groundbreaking basic income pilot project to give £2 a day – with no strings attached – to 188 people across three Asháninka and Yánesha communities in the Avireri-Vraem reserve.

"It's the world's first basic income pilot for Indigenous peoples who live in rainforests with a link to protect the forest and fight the climate crisis," said Isabel Felandro, the global head of programmes for Cool Earth, who leads the organisation's work in Peru. "There are other basic income initiatives around the world but most are focused on humanitarian or social issues. In the communities we work with, their activities are very linked to the protection of the forest."

She continued: "Poverty is the biggest driver of deforestation in these areas. These communities in very remote areas not only face a lack of access to basic needs – healthcare, food, education – but on top of that they face the climate crisis. There are more fires in the forest and more droughts. There are also a lot of illegal economies going into these places: illegal logging, illegal mining and drug cartels. Growing drugs is one of the main drivers of deforestation in the areas of the Amazon where we work."

"When people are in urgent need and want to take their children for medical care or to school, sometimes these cycles of poverty lead them to take on roles in those illegal activities, or to sell their land or allow their trees to be cut down. Giving them financial support gives them a choice to have a more sustainable way of living." [...]

Three communities were selected because they were known to have an interest in conservation and reforestation. But each individual who receives the money is free to spend it however they choose. Giving money direct to individuals is seen as faster

and more cost-effective than setting up long-term community projects, such as in agriculture.

Felandro said: "Cacao or coffee projects create a lot of work and bureaucracy for us. You can skip all [the complication of an agriculture project], give people the income and trust them to make choices to support themselves and their territories. We don't want to create intermediaries or mass bureaucracy. We really give autonomy to people to spend the money how they want. There are no strings attached at all." [...]

"We're seeing very positive spending," Felandro said. "It's mostly to cover basic needs like food, healthcare or sending their kids to school. Some people are already buying seeds and investing in reforestation – they worry about droughts, so they're reforesting around the spring to maintain their water supply – a communal activity. Fewer families are facing financial stress. With poverty, they had to prioritise other things. But now they can do more conservation activities and rainforest restoration." [...]

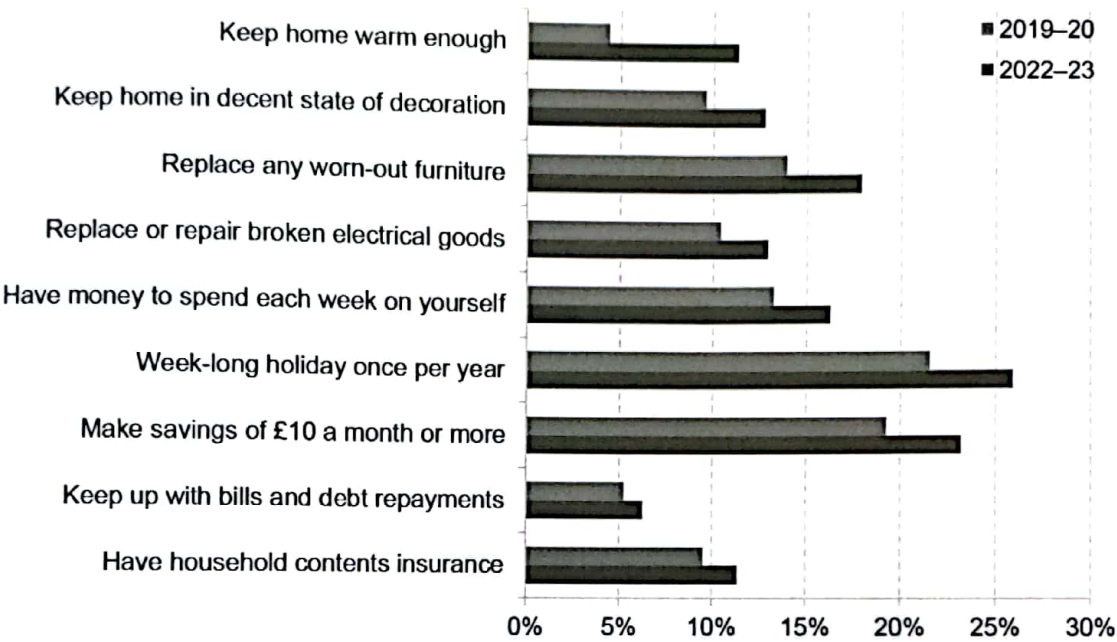
"We're very confident direct cash projects are the way to go," Felandro said. "This idea could apply to Indigenous communities in the whole Amazon and to rainforest communities in other regions of the world."

Scaling up would require significantly more money. "We'd love to see a global fund for basic income," Felandro said. "We call Indigenous communities the guardians of the rainforest. But they're often not provided the agency to support the forest. This basic income pilot is about giving them that. The ideal goal is for governments to get involved. We have the Green Climate Fund, with governments and big companies putting money in, but only 0.01% of the money is really reaching Indigenous communities. With a basic income cash transfer, that money could go direct to communities."

D. Document 4

Share of working-age adults unable to afford each item in the UK

Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2024 by IFS, 25 July 2024



E. Document 5

Universal Basic Income Is a Moral Hazard

Chris Talgo, *Newsweek.com*

29 Jan 2024

In recent years, several countries, and more than a few municipalities in the United States, have experimented with universal basic income (UBI) under the assumption that unconditionally sending people a government check every month will reduce poverty, decrease income inequality, increase happiness, and allow people to pursue their artistic and creative endeavors without having to worry about working for a living.

Some, mostly on the Left, believe that a UBI is unavoidable, and needs to be implemented sooner rather than later given that automation, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and other emerging technologies are revolutionizing the workplace and making many traditional jobs nearly obsolete.

Many on the Right think differently about a UBI, arguing that it is not a poverty cure-all, and that it would be too costly and introduce more perils than benefits.

Since the launch of the War on Poverty in 1964, the United States has spent an estimated \$22 trillion on anti-poverty programs. And what have Americans received in return? A cottage industry of welfare, bloated government bureaucracies, cronyism, corruption, and a large increase in those dependent on the dole. Incredibly, since 1965, the poverty rate has barely changed.

Evidence shows UBI programs similarly fail to achieve their primary stated goal of alleviating poverty.

Consider the example of Finland, which abandoned its UBI experiment after it failed to reduce unemployment and placed a big burden on Finnish taxpayers. In 2015, the Finnish government launched a UBI program that gave 2,000 unemployed Finnish families \$658 per month after the unemployment rate reached a 17-year high of 10 percent.

While the UBI was in effect, Finland's unemployment rate decreased less than 1 percentage point. To this day, it remains among the highest of all the Nordic countries. Additionally, only 35 percent of hard-working Finns supported the UBI when told they must pay more in taxes to keep the UBI program afloat, according to a study by Finland's Social Insurance Institution. [...]

Aside from the fact that UBI programs are expensive, ineffective, and breed government dependence, they also undermine people's dignity, adversely affect the economy, and remove the incentive to work.

By simply giving people money with no strings attached, UBI advocates eliminate their incentive to earn an income and their natural inclination to pursue a fulfilling career. [...]

As anyone who has been in the work force for many years knows, having a career brings satisfaction. Yes, work can be tedious. It can be draining. It can even be frustrating at times. But work is also inherent to the human condition. It is where we learn to set and achieve goals, overcome obstacles, cooperate with others, communicate effectively, among many more life lessons. *Bullshit jobs*

UBI is a dubious policy, not only because it has failed to produce the intended results in places where it has been tried, but also because it rewards idleness and begets dependence on government. [...]