

**ANGLO-CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2024**

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

August 2024

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

This document consists of 4 printed pages.



Passage 1. *An author suggests that the gig economy exploits workers and consumers.*

- 1 Across Britain, gig work—part of a casualised, precarious and on-call jobs market—is growing at a giddy rate. The sector has more than doubled in size since 2016 and now accounts for 4.7 million workers. In part, this is due to new technology: people are using apps on their mobile phones to sell their labour. The core business model relies on near-instant recourse to a large pool of on-demand workers looking for their next gig. Uncertain work is becoming the norm, with the result that unemployment statistics look better than the way Britons feel. It is an environment of overwork, marked by intense bursts of exhaustion. One gig-economy firm even tried to market burnout as a lifestyle by claiming its workers were ‘doers’ for whom ‘sleep deprivation is (their) drug of choice’. Nothing can disguise the fact that the gig economy’s rise has been accompanied by a fall in the fortunes of working households. In a seminal paper, researchers at Oxford University found that half of the gig work in the UK is in our streets, supplying food or couriering parcels or offering taxi rides. 5
- 2 Consumer rights are also being rewritten, often to the customer’s detriment. People using popular takeaway apps such as Uber Eats and Deliveroo can order from thousands of restaurants without being aware of their poor hygiene ratings. Such practices undermine the trust needed for the market economy to function smoothly. Hidden beneath the claims of autonomy is the fact that the platforms exercise firm control over most aspects of how, and to what standard, work is done. The technology can monitor whether a freelancer is working for the whole time billed. It can detect whether a gig-economy driver brakes too hard. Too many low rankings might see a worker kicked off a platform. Productivity becomes the way to measure human value. Firms can cherry-pick workers, usually those without children or in good health. What happens to those who have lives that do not match the gig economy’s demands? 15
- 3 In the gig economy, employees are no longer protected by a legal system that was designed for a different age. Gig-economy firms assume gig workers to be self-employed contractors rather than their employees who are entitled to employment benefits and have the right to unionise and bargain collectively for better terms and conditions. Britain does have labour laws, but they are not fully applied. This allows gig firms to fight claims individually and then just pay off the worker who wins in court without applying the ruling to the wider workforce. The UK government offers only cosmetic changes to the rules governing the gig economy when it would be better to regulate platforms properly. For example, trade unions suggest that Uber’s licence to operate in London could be made conditional on respecting drivers’ employment rights, but to no avail. 25
- 4 It ought to be possible for workers to have flexible work without denying them basic rights. Businesses can only compete fairly if employment rules are equally applied and consistently enforced. On a deeper level, the gig economy is erasing what was for many the traditional goal of working: to buy free time. Instead, we are being seduced and coerced into thinking that it is good to commercialise our leisure time and possessions. Time to spare? Exchange it for cash by delivering pizza. Your apartment free for a week? Rent it out for extra cash. This will not make us happy. We ought to work and have careers that enable us to focus on our relationships and have soul-enriching pastimes. It cannot be socially good to consider leisure time as a lost commercial opportunity. Unless we can turn away from such thinking, we shall see ourselves acting less like humans and more like companies. 35 40

Passage 2. *An author discusses the benefits of the gig economy.*

- 1 In the 20th century, the standard type of worker in the rich world was a full-time, permanent employee. It was cheaper for firms to have people there throughout the working day and order them about than to negotiate and enforce a new contract on the open market for every job that needed doing. In return for coming to work every weekday and following orders, employees received security and predictable pay. 5
- 2 The gig economy overturns that model. It relies on 'two-sided markets', which cater to two groups—workers and customers. The more there is of each group, the better for the other. Two-sided labour markets make it easier for economic activity to be organised according to price rather than the boundaries of firms. Accountants, drivers, lawyers and cleaners list themselves online, with descriptions of their experience and availability, and how much they charge. As more people sign up, the platforms have become highly efficient. Customers with tasks that need doing can easily find the skills that they are looking for, without making a permanent hire. 10
- 3 For workers, there are many upsides. The most obvious is that finding work has never been easier. With so many potential customers a click away, someone looking for work on a big platform such as Sendhelper¹ or Uber can almost always find it. The gig economy also creates paid employment that would not otherwise exist. Ride-hailing firms seem to boost demand for private-hire transport rather than forcing conventional taxis out of the market altogether. That makes gigging a boon in places where there is little work on offer of the conventional sort. In Italy, the official rate of youth unemployment is over 30% and the gig economy is a lifeline for those who are unemployed or working in part-time jobs. Moreover, gig work can help smooth out rough patches in the conventional labour market. Data from the Aspen Institute, a think-tank, suggest that the share of giggers working part-time is twice the rate among the workforce as a whole. 15 20
- 4 Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market. Moreover, gig work can be particularly useful for people with children, and for the disabled or the elderly. It can be seen as a useful stopgap between roles, or a way to top up low earnings from a first job. Given the flexibility of gig work, workers are able to enjoy a level of autonomy that is unusual in conventional jobs. Of course, many gigs—making deliveries, cleaning and taxi-driving—are not lucrative. But such work never paid well. Yet, for people in low-skilled jobs, gigging can mean an upgrade. 25 30

Passage 3. *An author emphasises what is wrong with the gig economy.*

- 1 The challenge for many people who have embraced the gig engagement model is that they are often forced into accepting predatory working practices. These practices compromise their safety and they are paid less than minimum wage. Reluctant participation is also highlighted in McKinsey's latest report on the gig economy which found the majority of those engaged this way do so out of necessity either as their primary or as a supplementary income source. 5
- 2 The gig economy often disempowers the worker (exposing opportunities for exploitative employment practices) and has created tax avoidance or tax shifting opportunities for the global players involved. The media attention is primarily aimed at high profile Silicon Valley startups who have built platforms for ride sharing, food delivery, cleaning on demand and so many other services where the work itself is carried out under a gig-based engagement model. The general feeling from reports is you cannot make a living as a gig economy worker without working excessive hours. Furthermore, these businesses are not necessarily paying proportionate taxes in the countries where services are procured, which is of increasing concern for nations. 10
15
- 3 To be clear, not everyone fitting that description is behaving badly. A few gig platforms enable gig workers to select their own rates, among other friendlier terms. Many commentators are in fact predicting that we will all be freelance workers in the future of work, engaged for our specialist capabilities by many organisations.

ANGLO-CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2024

CANDIDATE
NAME

INDEX
NUMBER

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your index number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

The insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Note that up to 15 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiner's Use	
Content	/35
Language	/15
Total	/50

This document consists of 7 printed pages.



Answer all questions.

Your answers should be:

- written in **your own words as far as possible**. Where you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it.
- written in **continuous prose**.

From Passage 1

1 Explain what the author means when he describes gig work as part of a 'casualised, precarious and on-call jobs market' (line 1).

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

2 In paragraph 2, how does the author illustrate that the gig economy is detrimental to consumers?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

3 How are gig firms' claims of 'autonomy' (line 18) for gig workers an illusion?

.....

..... [1]

4 Explain the author's use of the rhetorical question in lines 23 – 24.

.....
..... [1]

5 In paragraph 3, what are the assumptions made by gig-economy firms of their workers?

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..... [3]

6 Explain how the last sentence in Paragraph 4 reinforces the author's criticism of the commercialisation of leisure time.

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.....
.....
..... [2]

From all the passages

- 8** Passage 1 states that the introduction of the gig economy 'has been accompanied by a fall in the fortunes of working households' (lines 10 – 11).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support the statement. Justify your answer.

.....
.....
.....
..... [2]

- 9** Passage 2 states that 'Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market' (line 25).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine the statement. Justify your answer.

.....
.....
.....
..... [2]

8881 H1 General Paper
2024 Anglo-Chinese Junior College Preliminary Examination
Paper 2 Answer Scheme

Common errors:

- Illegibility, marked out as spelling errors, often severely impeded understanding of students' responses.
- Students need to pay attention to the accurate identification of question types for short answer questions.
- Weaker students did not use the present tense in referring to the author's intention or when referencing the author.

From Passage 1

1. Explain what the author means when he describes gig work as part of a 'casualised, precarious and on-call jobs market' (line 1). [2]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased
Across Britain, gig work—part of a casualised ... (line 1)	a	The author means that gig work is part-time / short-term / impermanent, OR flexible / informal / freelance
... precarious ... (line 1)	b	...uncertain / insecure / unstable Note: Do not accept 'unsafe' or 'dangerous' since the context is wrong.
...and on-call jobs market—is growing at a giddy rate. (line 1)	c	and that gig workers have to go to work at a moment's notice / to be available whenever there is demand for their services.

1 – 2pts = 1m; 3pts = 2m

Question Type: Vocabulary

Examiners' Comments: Weaker responses paraphrased the words without understanding the context. 'Casualised' was often wrongly paraphrased as 'normalised', 'relaxed', 'trivialised' and 'laidback'. 'Precarious' was also often wrongly paraphrased as 'risky'. A handful of responses did not recognise that this was a vocabulary question.

2. In paragraph 2, how does the author illustrate that the gig economy is detrimental to consumers? [2]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred
Consumer rights are also being rewritten... People using popular takeaway apps such as Uber Eats and Deliveroo can order from thousands of restaurants without being aware of their poor hygiene ratings . (lines 14-16)	a	The author uses the example of how consumers can order from Uber Eats and Deliveroo / food places without being conscious / having knowledge of their unclean / dirty environment / inadequate sanitary standards to show that... Note: 2-part answer; Students must also mention the specific example or make reference to food delivery.
	b	<u>Inferred</u> ...this is detrimental to customers' welfare / well-being / physical health. (Health) OR ...customers may suffer from food poisoning or other ailments. (Health) OR ...this is detrimental because customers are deprived of the <u>right</u> to information / right to know. (Rights) Note: accept lift for 'rights' Note: Do NOT accept a generic response such as 'harms' or 'causes problems to customers'.

Question Type: Inferential (Use of example)

Examiners' Comments: Some responses did not focus on the impact on consumers but instead focused wrongly on the impact of the market economy or the impact on gig workers. Some carelessly lifted 'aware' or 'hygiene'.



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3. How are gig firms' claims of 'autonomy' (line 18) for gig workers an illusion? [1]

From Passage	Paraphrased/Inferred
Hidden beneath the claims of autonomy is the fact that the platforms exercise firm control over most aspects of how, and to what standard, work is done. (lines 17-19)	(While gig firms claim that gig workers have autonomy), gig firms <u>actually</u> have much / a lot of power / authority / influence over work done by gig workers. Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must demonstrate the contrast. 'Hidden beneath' is bolded to demonstrate that students must capture the contrast. • Intensity must be captured.

Question Type: Literal

Examiners' Comments: Weaker responses either did not provide the contrast or the intensity. Some responses merely paraphrased the examples in lines 19-21.

4. Explain the author's use of the rhetorical question in lines 23 – 24. [1]

From Passage	Paraphrased/Inferred
Productivity becomes the way to measure human value. Firms can cherry-pick workers, usually those without children or in good health. What happens to those who have lives that do not match the gig economy's demands? (lines 21-24)	Function The author wants the reader to think about / ponder / contemplate... OR The author wants to emphasise / reinforce / highlight... Context ...whether it is right for companies to use efficiency / efficacy / contribution made by the worker to determine the worth of a person. OR ...how the gig economy is biased towards / unfairly chooses those who are single / physically fit. OR ... how unfair the gig economy could be towards workers with other commitments / who cannot keep up with / live up to the requirements/ expectations of the gig economy.
	Function The author wants the readers to empathise with ... Context ...those who are left out / not preferred by the gig economy.

Question Type: Linguistic device

Examiners' Comments: Weaker responses only paraphrased the author's rhetorical question. Weaker responses did not give the context at all or gave a vague context (e.g. the problems of the gig economy).

5. In paragraph 3, what are the assumptions made by gig-economy firms of their workers? [3]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased
Gig-economy firms assume gig workers to be self-employed contractors... (lines 26)	a	Gig-economy firms assumed that gig workers are independent contractors / their own bosses...
...rather than their employees who are entitled to employment benefits ... (line 27)	b	...rather than employees who have the right to job/work privileges / perks... OR Gig workers have no right to job perks / privileges / welfare schemes.
...and have the right to unionise and bargain collectively for better terms and conditions. (lines 27-28)	c	...and to negotiate with / pressure companies together / as a group to improve work conditions. OR Gig workers cannot participate in labour organisations that will help them fight for their rights.

Question Type: Literal

Examiners' Comments: Some responses mistakenly took reference from lines 29-31. Others lifted 'self-employed' for point (a).

6. Explain how the last sentence in Paragraph 4 reinforces the author's criticism of the commercialisation of leisure time. [2]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased
... This will not make us happy. We ought to work and have careers that enable us to focus on our relationships and have soul-enriching pastimes . (lines 41-42) It cannot be socially good to consider leisure time as a lost commercial opportunity. (lines 42-43) Unless we can turn away from such thinking, we shall see ourselves acting less like humans ... (lines 44)	a	The last sentence highlights how commercialising leisure causes us to become less concerned with human ties / social interactions OR meaningful / fulfilling pursuits... OR (Inferred) The last sentence highlights how commercialising leisure causes us to become less concerned with our well-being. Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should not simply paraphrase 'less like humans'. Either 'relationships' or 'soul-enriching pastimes' should be captured. Alternatively, award mark if student demonstrates holistic understanding of both ideas. Allow lift for 'social'.
...and more like companies . (lines 45)	b	... and become driven by profit / more money-minded. Note: Students should not simply paraphrase how we become more like firms. Idea should be inferred. Allow lift of 'more'.

Question Type: Inferential

Examiners' Comments: Weaker responses missed out point (a) entirely or paraphrased point (a) very generically as 'relaxing' or 'having fun'.

7. Summarise the benefits of the 20th century labour market and those of the gig economy today. [8]

From the Passage		Paraphrased/ Inferred	
1	It was cheaper for firms to have people there throughout the working day and order them about... (lines 2-3)	1	Benefits of the 20th century labour market The 20 th century labour market made it more affordable / economical / cost-efficient for firms to have workers present for the whole day.
2	... than to negotiate and enforce a new contract on the open market for every job that needed doing. (lines 3-4)	2	Employers did not have to agree on / discuss / impose / execute a new contract every single time. Note: Either a rephrasing of 'negotiate' or 'enforce' is acceptable.
3	...a full-time, permanent employee... (lines 1-2) In return for coming to work...employees received security ... (lines 4-5)	3	Employees had a stable / certain / long-term employment...
4	...and predictable pay . (line 5)	4	...and a stable/ consistent / guaranteed income / salary / remuneration.
5	(...which cater to two groups—workers and customers.) The more there is of each group, the better for the other. (lines 5-7)	5	Benefits of the gig economy It is mutually beneficial for both gig workers and customers when their numbers increase.
6	Two-sided labour markets make it easier for economic activity to be organised according to price rather than the boundaries of firms. (lines 8-9)	6	Business transactions can be categorised / sorted / classified based on price rather than limited to / confined to what is offered by firms. Note: Allow lift of 'price'. Focus is on price competitiveness.
7	As more people sign up, the platforms have become highly efficient . (line 11)	7	These platforms become very effective / productive / well run.
8	Customers with tasks that need doing can easily find the skills that they are looking for, without making a permanent hire . (lines 12-13)	8	Customers can conveniently / quickly source / search for people with the expertise / competencies / abilities without employing / engaging someone for the long term. (Note: 2-part answer; allow lift of 'find'; if students demonstrate holistic understanding of "skills" e.g. "suitable workers", award the mark.)
9	The most obvious is that finding work has never been easier . (lines 14-15) With so many potential customers a click away , someone looking for work...can almost always find it.... (line 15)	9	The gig economy also allows people to conveniently source for employment without much difficulty. OR The gig economy allows people to connect directly with customers. (Note: Allow lift of 'find')
10	The gig economy also creates paid employment that would not otherwise exist . (lines 16-17) That makes gigging a boon in places where there is little work on offer of the conventional sort. (lines 19-20)	10	The gig economy offers jobs that are new / novel / unconventional / never seen before / that are only there because of the gig economy. Note: Allow lift of 'paid employment' OR The gig economy is advantageous in places where traditional / standard / established / employment is scarce / limited.
11	Ride-hailing firms seem to boost demand for private-hire transport rather than forcing conventional taxis out of the market altogether. (lines 17-19)	11	(Inferred) The gig economy actually increases / bolsters demand in the market rather than undercutting / undermining traditional industries.
12	...the gig economy is a lifeline for those who are unemployed or working in part-time jobs. (line 21)	12	The gig economy is a source of income in desperate / challenging situations / provides jobs for the jobless.
13	Moreover, gig work can help smooth out rough patches in the conventional labour market. (line 22)	13	Gig work can plug gaps / provide more labour / skills when required in the conventional labour market.
14	Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market . (line 25)	14	Gig work can help people return / rejoin / get back into the traditional job market / the conventional workforce. Note: Allow lift of 'back' and 'market'
15	Moreover, gig work can be particularly useful for people with children, and for the disabled or the elderly . (lines 25-27)	15	(Inferred) Gig work can be especially helpful to those who require flexible work arrangements. OR Gig work can be especially helpful to those with families / are handicapped / physically incapacitated / the old / senior citizens. Note: Any one of the three groups for the mark
16	It can be seen as a useful stopgap between roles... (line 27)	16	Gig work is helpful as a transition / temporary position between roles.
17	...or a way to top up low earnings from a first job. (line 27)	17	Gig work can be used to enhance / increase / bolster meagre / paltry pay / income / salary from a first job.
18	Given the flexibility of gig work, workers are able to enjoy a level of autonomy that is unusual in conventional jobs. (lines 28-29)	18	Gig work gives workers more control over their work lives / more independence in work-related matters than conventional jobs.
19	Yet, for people in low-skilled jobs , gigging can mean an upgrade . (lines 30-31)	19	For the less educated / competent / capable, gig work can increase / boost their pay.

Allocation of Marks

No. of points	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9	10-11	12-13	14+
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Examiners' Comments for Summary:

- Some responses did not make any distinction between the 20th century labour market and the gig economy. Some responses did not understand the context of point 3 on 'security' and the context of point 19 on 'upgrade'.

- Many students did not count the number of words. Many students exceeded the stipulated word limit for the summary. Some students even went as far as lying about their total word count.
- In an attempt to optimise the word count, many students compromised on the grammatical accuracy of their answers, e.g. dropping articles ('the', 'an', 'a'), run-on sentences, and artificial combination of sentences with different subjects.

8. Passage 1 states that the introduction of the gig economy 'has been accompanied by a fall in the fortunes of working households' (lines 10 – 11).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support the statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From Passage 3	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred
<p>...they are paid less than minimum wage. (lines 2-3)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The general feeling from reports is you cannot make a living as a gig economy worker without working excessive hours. (lines 12-13).</p>	a	<p>The author argues in passage 3 that gig workers are poorly compensated / remunerated / earn meagre / paltry salaries.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The author argues that gig workers cannot hope to financially support themselves and their families (without working extremely long hours).</p>
<p>Passage 1</p> <p>Nothing can disguise the fact that the gig economy's rise has been accompanied by a fall in the fortunes of working households. (lines 9-11)</p>	b	<p>This supports the statement in passage 1 because gig workers are poorly paid / rewarded for the work that they do, <u>likely causing</u> household income to decline.</p> <p>Note: For the justification, there should be mention of the <i>link</i> between poor pay and household income.</p> <p>The student may present the answer in a different manner, but the <i>link</i> needs to be made clear nonetheless...</p>

Question Type: Connection of Ideas

Examiners' Comments: Most students were able to select the correct idea and link it logically to the question. For point (b), weaker responses provided a mere paraphrase of the quote from passage 1.

9. Passage 2 states that 'Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market' (line 25).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine the statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From Passage 3	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred
Many commentators are in fact predicting that we will all be freelance workers in the future of work, engaged for our specialist capabilities by many organisations. (lines 17-19)	1a	The author mentions in passage 3 that people will become gig workers / employed as contractual / part-time workers.
Passage 2 Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market. (line 25)	1b	This undermines the statement in passage 2 because people are likely to continue with their freelance work arrangements, rather than going back to working for a single employer / working for fixed hours / fixed pay. OR This undermines the statement in passage 2 because organisations will likely hire gig workers for their specific skills/competencies rather than workers on permanent contracts.

OR

From Passage 3	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred
...the majority of those engaged this way do so out of necessity either as their primary or as a supplementary income source. (lines 5-6)	2a	The author argues in passage 3 that people will become gig workers because they have no other choice / this is the only job that they can find.
Passage 2 Gigs may also help people find their way back into the formal labour market. (line 25)	2b	This undermines the statement in passage 2 because it is unlikely that these workers who lack the opportunities / options can transition into full-time employment.

Question Type: Connection of Ideas

Examiners' Comments: Some responses did not choose the correct idea and hence their justification was extremely contrived.

Additional note regarding Qns 8 and 9:

- The 1st mark (a) can be awarded for identifying and paraphrasing the relevant idea from Passage 3 if the justification is wrong.
- The 2nd mark (b) can be awarded for explaining the justification if the idea from Passage 3 is correctly identified but lifted/ is awkwardly paraphrased.
- However, the justification (b) cannot be awarded if the idea is not correctly identified. In this case, even if a student somehow gets the justification, no marks will be awarded, as the student has not demonstrated understanding.

10. The reading passages cover a range of views about the gig economy and the changing nature of work today. How far do you agree that the gig economy is beneficial today? [12]

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from at least one of the reading passages.
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

Requirement

Students should

- explain the extent of their agreement with the authors' views about the gig economy – the benefits and detriments to workers, customers and for their society generally;
- support their views with reasoned argument; and
- show understanding of the ideas and attitudes in the passages.

Explanation

Students should show understanding of some of the following issues:

- Does the gig economy provide workers with more pay?
- How much autonomy do gig workers actually have?
- Are gig workers entitled to employment benefits and to what extent are their rights protected?
- How effective are gig firms in matching gig workers to customers and to what extent do customers enjoy cost savings?
- How far has the gig economy helped empower people to find their way back into the formal labour market?

Evaluation

Students should:

- question or show reasons for approving of some of these views;
- give examples from their own and their society's experience in support of their views; and/or
- may put forward original ideas on the benefits and/or detriments of the gig economy.

Examiners' Comments:

- **Definitions:** Gig work should be understood based on the context of the passages which link 'gig work' to gig platforms/ online platforms/ tech tools. Therefore, this is a narrower definition but true to the passages. Examples which are purely part-time work such as working in fast food restaurants (not mediated by online platforms) are not accepted.
- **Introductions** were often functional. Weaker responses had negligible relevance to the question and simply provided a laundry list of Singapore characteristics (if any at all) or merely summarised the key arguments.
- **References:** Many students selected examples in the passages as references, such as the Uber Eats and Deliveroo examples in passage 1. They should instead focus on responding to arguments presented by the writers.
- **Explanation & Evaluation:** Many students only offered a simplistic understanding of the passage and the local context. Weaker responses lack coherence and offer superficial descriptions.
- **Examples:** Some students did not quite understand what gig work entails and provided examples which are not really about gig work.

10. The reading passages cover a range of views about the gig economy and the changing nature of work today. How far do you agree that the gig economy is beneficial today? [12]

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from at least one of the reading passages.
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

Key ideas about the gig economy (Passages 1, 2 & 3)	Guiding Questions	The gig economy is beneficial	The gig economy creates problems
<p>1) Gig workers' working conditions</p> <p><u>Lack of Safety</u> Across Britain, gig work—part of a casualised, precarious and on-call jobs market—is growing at a giddy rate. (Passage 1, lines 1-2)</p> <p>It is an environment of overwork, marked by intense bursts of exhaustion. (Passage 1, lines 7-8)</p> <p>'These practices compromise their safety...' (Passage 3, lines 2-3)</p> <p><u>Poorly Paid</u> Nothing can disguise the fact that the gig economy's rise has been accompanied by a fall in the fortunes of working households. (Passage 1, lines 9-11)</p> <p>The challenge for many people who have embraced the gig engagement model is that they are often forced into accepting predatory working practices. (Passage 3, lines 1-2)</p>	<p>Does the gig economy improve or worsen working conditions?</p> <p>What laws or provisions are there to protect gig workers?</p>	<p>[EV] For those who do not rely on gig work as their only source of income, there is less pressure to extend their working hours beyond what they can bear, and the flexibility is in fact welcome by them.</p> <p>[EG] For instance, it is not uncommon to hear of freelancers (in other industries such as in the creative sector) doubling up as private-hire drivers during their lull periods in between projects. While those who can only rely on gig work have no choice but to work extremely long working hours, this group of freelancers are instead leveraging the opportunities provided by the gig economy to boost their income. In other cases, it may be said that those who are currently unemployed, in the midst of a job transition, or have retired, can also benefit from the gig economy, having some income rather than none. Provided they are not under excessive financial pressure, they have the freedom to decide how much to work and when to rest.</p>	<p>[EV] Gig workers, also known as platform workers, are delivery workers, private-hire car drivers, and taxi drivers using online matching platforms which have incessantly become vital to daily life. They lack benefits and face risks in their everyday lives on the road. In light of their increasing significance in the industry, offering convenience for many people amidst their hectic schedules, the Singapore government is beginning to introduce measures that ensure improved safety conditions and secure retirement options for gig workers. It however remains to be seen if this will improve their working conditions.</p> <p>[EG] Amongst the major concerns voiced by gig workers are the lack of work accident coverage, of expeditious access to payouts, and the absence of a dispute resolution mechanism, as well as their statutory right to make CPF contributions in the absence of co-contributions from platform companies. In the first of its kind, the Singapore parliament passed a landmark Bill on September 10, 2024, designating gig workers as a distinct legal category in between employees and the self-employed. The Platform Workers Bill will come into effect from January 1, 2025. Gig workers will get higher levels of contributions to their CPF, similar to what employees and employers pay today. Moreover, gig firms will also be made to provide them with standardised work injury compensation, with the same level of coverage as employees. Additionally, while gig workers cannot unionise under current laws, they will be able to form representative bodies called platform work associations, with legal powers similar to those of trade unions.</p>

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<p>... they are paid less than minimum wage. (Passage 3, line 3)</p> <p><u>Extremely Long Hours</u> The general feeling from reports is you cannot make a living as a gig economy worker without working excessive hours (Passage 3, lines 12-13)</p> <p><u>Lack of employment benefits</u> Gig-economy firms assume gig workers to be self-employed contractors rather than their employees who are entitled to employment benefits and have the right to unionise and bargain collectively for better terms and conditions. (Passage 1, lines 26-28)</p> <p><u>Paid More</u> Many gigs...are not lucrative. But such work never paid well. Yet, for people in low-skilled jobs, gigging can mean an upgrade. (Passage 2, lines 29-31)</p>	<p>To what extent can gig platforms ensure consumers receive fair</p>	<p>[EV] Many Singaporeans are tech-savvy and familiar with sussing out the best deals and service providers online. By carefully reviewing worker profiles, ratings, and past experiences, consumers can choose providers with a proven track record, and avoid being shortchanged while benefitting from the services provided by the gig economy.</p>	<p>[EV] While gig workers are considered self-employed persons (SEPs), in reality, many of them lack the autonomy and flexibility of typical SEPs due to control exerted by platform companies. They also face an array of financial challenges: relatively modest incomes, limited prospects for wage progression, the risk and cost of getting injured on the job, and the absence of income if unable to work. That said, the rising demand for convenient services in a gig economy ushers in new workers, keeping them relatively replaceable while continuing to be unable to unionise and have bargaining powers over their income levels. It does not help that in Singapore, because of the low barriers to entry into the gig economy, many younger Singaporeans are attracted to the purported flexibility and the so-called 'easier money' to be made, which could have an adverse impact on their long-term careers and retirement planning.</p> <p>[Eg] Under Grab's shift system, riders are ranked and it affects how jobs are distributed. Newbies work their way up to the highest level based on several factors: The number of jobs they take, their job acceptance rate, cancellation rate and rating. The higher the tier, the more benefits riders get and the more they earn. They get to book shifts and receive priority orders during certain timings. Being able to book a shift also guarantees riders a minimum amount they can earn during that period, based on their location. Should their earnings fall short of the minimum fare, Grab will top it up. Riders who are not on shifts may still receive orders — but the lull between deliveries may be all too long. All these mean that they in fact have rather limited control over their working hours and hence daily wages.</p>
<p>2) Consumers are shortchanged in a gig economy</p> <p>Consumer rights are also being rewritten, often to the customer's detriment. People</p>			<p>[EV] Singaporeans are pragmatic and seek out value-for-money products and services. When faced with a variety of service providers on a gig platform, Singaporeans might prioritise the cheapest option over checking qualifications or reviews.</p>

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<p>using popular takeaway apps such as Uber Eats and Deliveroo can order from thousands of restaurants without being aware of their poor hygiene ratings. (Passage 1, lines 14-16)</p> <p>3) The degree of autonomy that gig workers have</p> <p>Actually less autonomy Hidden beneath the claims of autonomy is the fact that the platforms exercise firm control over most aspects of how, and to what standard, work is done. (Passage 1, lines 17-19)</p> <p>More autonomy Given the flexibility of gig work, workers are able to enjoy a level of autonomy that is unusual in conventional jobs.</p>	<p>value for the price they pay, considering both cost and quality?</p> <p>Do gig workers in Singapore have true control over their work schedules and can they choose when and how much they work?</p>	<p>[EV] The 'complain culture' in Singapore can push gig platforms to prioritise quality control. Singaporeans readily share negative experiences online and with consumer protection agencies. By expressing dissatisfaction with specific service aspects, consumers can indirectly influence how platforms operate and the types of services offered.</p> <p>[Eg] Following complaints about surge pricing not being displayed clearly in ride-hailing apps, the platforms introduced a new feature that shows the estimated fare before booking, including any potential surge pricing.</p> <p>[Eg] All the major food delivery platforms in Singapore have faced criticism for late deliveries, and in response over the years, have implemented features such as estimated delivery times when an order is placed and real-time tracking of orders. Some platforms also compensate customers for delays beyond a reasonable timeframe.</p>	<p>[EV] Singapore's fast-paced and hectic lifestyle can lead to people rushing into making decisions. In the gig economy, this can mean overlooking red flags like suspiciously low prices, vague service descriptions or a lack of qualifications.</p> <p>[Eg] Gig workers have taken to platforms such as Carousell, traditionally a consumer-to-consumer platform, to offer their services. Many homeowners now turn to Carousell to look for handyman or cleaning services provided by gig workers as the charges are often much lower than the standardised rates offered by established companies offering the same services. However, since gig workers are independent contractors, there is less control over quality compared to a traditional employee. This is made worse by the fact that gig workers often focus on the number of jobs completed to maximise earnings, which might compromise the quality of work.</p>
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<p>(Passage 2, lines 28-29)</p>		<p>for some extra cash. Bakers can set their own baking schedules and production times. Some popular home-based bakers, for instance, sell only limited quantities of their creations via 'monthly drops' on their social media accounts. This allows them to work around their personal lives and family commitments, offering a level of autonomy not available in traditional bakery jobs.</p>	<p>[Eg] The Singapore government recently mandated that gig platforms must contribute to the CPF for workers under 30 years old. This provides some social security benefits like retirement savings, but it also means deductions from their income. The decrease in gig workers' take-home pay could potentially impact their autonomy in managing their finances.</p>
<p>4) The gig economy allows for efficient matching of gig workers with customers and cost savings</p> <p>Two-sided labour markets make it easier for economic activity to be organised according to price rather than the boundaries of firms. (Passage 2, lines 7-9)</p> <p>As more people sign up, the platforms have become highly efficient. Customers with tasks that need doing can easily find the skills that they are looking for, without making a permanent hire. (Passage 2, lines 11-13)</p>	<p>To what extent do gig platforms in Singapore offer value for money and convenience to customers?</p>	<p>[Ev] In a highly urbanised society that is known for its frenetic pace of life and hurried citizens, the gig economy offers a unique proposition to time-starved Singaporeans via the convenience of a multitude of services to meet their needs, from delivery of piping hot meals to house cleaning services – all at an affordable price point.</p> <p>[Ev] Furthermore, in a rapidly digitalising economy, these platforms empower the average Singaporean workers with the autonomy to negotiate their wages with customers directly rather than be bound by rigid company regulations.</p> <p>[Eg] According to the latest figures from a Straits Times report, there were 76,686 private-hire cars on ride-sharing platforms in June 2023, which was an increase of 11.3% over the last 12 months, to meet rising ride-hailing demands from Singaporeans and returning tourists after the pandemic. Such a large pool of drivers is more than sufficient to meet Singaporeans' demand while dangling discounts, particularly during off-peak hours, compared to the hassle of physically flagging down a taxi and paying metered fare. Convenience and cost-savings aside, there may be an added bonus of reducing car ownership for a greener society and congestion on the roads.</p> <p>[Eg] Gigsomething mediates between employers and freelancers who want to connect and work together. Workers looking for short-term gigs are called 'Giggers' and employers are called 'Gigboss'. Giggers can freely propose and negotiate the rates they charge to Gigbosses and the terms and conditions of their temporary engagement.</p>	<p>[Ev] While gig platforms such as Food Panda and Grab have gained popularity in recent years, the generous discounts that they have dangled to Singaporean customers and attractive sign-on bonuses to gig workers in the initial years have petered out. Intense competition between gig platforms and the way these platforms are burning through investors' cash have made them more financially prudent.</p> <p>[Ev] Moreover, algorithms in these apps are also designed in a way that incentivises gig workers to work when there is a surge in demand because the surge pricing can be eye-wateringly high. Under such circumstances, customers are charged even more than usual and the matching becomes inefficient since the surge pricing algorithm discourages gig workers from working during off peak hours. With the already high cost of living, many Singaporeans feel the pinch and perceive such antics by gig firms as exploitative and unwarranted, even as gig firms vigorously defend such surges as a 'more efficient way of allocating resources'.</p> <p>[Eg] Private hire cars from gig platforms Grab and Gojek for instance have been criticised for the hefty surms that are charged during surge pricing at certain peak periods of the day. Some transport experts such as SUSS Associate Professor Walter Theseira have commented that private hire cars have not necessarily made commuting easier in Singapore but have created inefficiencies in that fewer private hire cars may be plying the roads during off peak hours, making online booking for a private hire car challenging.</p>

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<p>5) The gig economy creates jobs for people and help people find their way back into the formal labour market</p> <p>The gig economy also creates paid employment that would not otherwise exist. (Passage 2, lines 16-17)</p> <p>It can be seen as a useful stopgap between roles, or a way to top up low earnings from a first job. (Passage 2, lines 27-28)</p>	<p>Do gig platforms serve as a stop gap measure or transition to more formal employment for Singaporean gig workers?</p>	<p>[Eg] Sendhelper is an online platform that connects homeowners with independent service providers for household services on-demand such as cleaning, laundry, air-conditioner servicing and handyman services. Singaporean households may not see the necessity of hiring domestic helpers, which is certainly costlier, if all they need is a simple spring cleaning or for their children to be cared for during certain hours or time of the day.</p>	<p>[EV] While gig work offers flexible employment and could be a stepping stone to more formal employment, there is a worrisome trend of young Singaporeans pursuing gig work as a career, such as food delivery and transport that does not require specialised skills, because these young Singaporeans think it is easy money with flexible working hours.</p> <p>[Eg] Gig work that lacks deep skills such as food delivery and transport will likely keep gig workers trapped in such jobs since future employers are unlikely to take such experiences as relevant for a job that requires significant technical and management skills. This is also why the Singapore government is legislating in 2024 for basic protections to support gig workers such as work injury compensation, Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions and even collective representation. More importantly, there are also incentives such as paying gig workers an allowance for them to upskill themselves under the SkillsFuture initiative, so that they can eventually pivot away from simple food delivery or transport.</p>