



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

9694/42

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

May/June 2020

1 hour 45 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].

This document has **8** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

- 1 (a) State the main conclusion of the argument in Document 1. [1]
- (b) Analyse the structure of the reasoning in paragraph 2 of Document 1. [5]
- (c) Identify **two** intermediate conclusions in paragraphs 3 to 4 of the argument in Document 1. [2]
- 2 (a) Identify and explain **three** flaws and/or weaknesses in the reasoning in paragraphs 2 to 5 of Document 1. [6]
- (b) Assess the extent to which **one** flaw or weakness in paragraph 1 of Document 1 reduces the strength of the reasoning in the argument as a whole. [3]
- 3 Document 5 contains some statistics.
- (a) Identify **one** strength in the evidence from the 2017 survey. [1]
- (b) Identify and explain **two** reasons why the support given to the claim “Fake news worries are growing, suggests new poll” is weak. [5]
- 4 *You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.*
- ‘We should not be worried about fake news.’
- Construct a reasoned argument to support **or** challenge this claim. In your answer you should make critical use of the documents provided. [27]

DOCUMENT 1

Fake fake news

- 1 'Fake news' was named Collins Dictionary 'word of the year' in 2017. It is defined as "false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting". Use of the term increased by 365% in 2016. The left-wing liberal media want us to be afraid of fake news, but their definition of fake news seems to be 'news that our paper disagrees with'; so we can dismiss the concerns of these traditional news outlets.
- 2 Throughout history, governments have used whatever news media were available, from royal proclamations nailed to trees to crackly radio broadcasts, in order to promote their own agenda. Unsurprisingly, not all of this information has been factual. The fact that some of the information we receive is not true should not worry us. It has ever been thus.
- 3 'Fake news' is just a scary-sounding term invented by traditional media outlets to discredit newer, mostly politically right-wing, news providers. Left-wing journalists coined the term to smear these new digital outlets, most of which supported the Trump campaign. Use of 'fake news', measured by internet searches for the term, shot up around the time of the US presidential election in 2016; this probably reflects use of the term by supporters of anti-Trump candidates looking to discredit stories supportive of the Trump campaign. Ironically, President Trump is now well known for using the term himself when reacting to news stories that are critical of him.
- 4 Most alleged purveyors of fake news are not part of the cosy liberal elite of mainstream news broadcasters that had a virtual monopoly on news distribution until recently. The use of the term 'fake news' is a covert attempt by these enemies of the people to promote censorship of the news, and they have had some success. This is what we should really worry about. Certain social media websites have stated that they will now 'fact-check' their newsfeed before it gets to users. This so-called 'fact-checking' sounds suspiciously like censorship to me.
- 5 Fact-checking of newsfeed is censorship of the press. Social media platforms should be discouraged from doing it. Who is to say the fact-checkers will not have their own agenda? One person's balanced news is another's extremist propaganda. The whole idea that there is such a thing as 'fake news' is an attack on opinion diversity. Why not substitute the term 'opinion diversity' for 'fake news'? The liberal media outlets should all be supportive of something that has 'diversity' in the title.

DOCUMENT 2

German newspaper article

In the old world, military deterrence would involve moving a division of troops to a border or sending out a gunboat. In this new age of digital technology that approach feels like carrying a knife to a gunfight. Deterrence and defence in the information war are much less straightforward. This is especially true of a fake news attack.

There have always been errors in news reporting, and journalists have never been 100% accurate. But fake news is something else – and much more dangerous. Through the use of new digital platforms such as smartphones, certain hot topics can be effortlessly weaponised: the fear of the unknown, questions of war and peace, the collapse of political institutions.

In the headquarters of Germany's political parties, fake news is among the biggest concerns. For a democracy in which people are informed mainly through the media – and form their political opinions in this way – this process is threatened when lies spread through those same media. When it is no longer clear what is false and what is correct, people lose their confidence in the state.

Twenty thousand people in Germany access the News Front website directly every day; many more are exposed to its content via newsfeeds and partner websites. News Front, based in Crimea, belongs to a network of pro-Russian sites, such as RT and Sputnik, which are financed and managed directly by the Russian Government. All these sites cooperate and exchange content. So, for example, a fake news report on one site could use a source on another to corroborate its story.

Earlier this year, it was reported that 700 000 people had left their homes in Germany because of Chancellor Merkel's refugee policy; another report claimed that 1000 immigrants had set fire to a church in Dortmund. Neither of these stories was true. There is also the famous selfie of Merkel with a Syrian refugee that has been circulating on social media, attached to the false accusation that the refugee is a terrorist. The refugee has now successfully sued the social media platform but many people will be stuck with the image of Angela Merkel posing with a terrorist. Such things influence voters at elections.

Democracy depends on the voting public being informed by open debate. Opinions and emotions form part of any debate. Even facts can be disputed or interpreted in different ways but democratic decision-making requires some consensus on what is generally regarded to be 'true'. The deliberate creation of 'fake news' undermines social consensus and trust in political institutions.

How can we defend ourselves against fake news? All German political parties have formed so-called rapid response teams that are constantly monitoring discussion in social networks. "But we really have little to counter the pace, the force and the criminal energy of the attackers," said an experienced campaigner. The dynamics of the net against the sluggishness of the available responses is an unequal struggle.

In the last days of the 2016 US election, the top 20 fake news stories were more frequently shared on social media than the top 20 serious news reports. Here in Germany, "Five of the ten most popular links to news articles are sources of fake news and right-wing populist websites", said a former Green Party campaigner who now advises all parties on how to handle fake news.

DOCUMENT 3**Online news article**

In the late 17th Century, the King of England called for the restriction of coffee houses to prevent the spread of 'false, malicious and scandalous reports'. Coffee houses were the 17th Century equivalent of social media websites. Panic gripped the establishment that these new drinking salons had become forums for political dissent. In 1672, Charles II issued a proclamation "*to restrain the spreading of false news*" that was helping "*to nourish an universal jealousy and dissatisfaction in the minds of all His Majesties good subjects*". Now governments across the world are seeking to do something similar with social media.

Fake news has a long history, as does the fear of fake news. In 1924, four days before the UK general election, a newspaper published the now famous 'Zinoviev letter', a letter purportedly from the Kremlin to communists in the British Labour party. Labour lost the election by a huge margin; the letter was a fake.

In 1989, another newspaper ran a campaign to besmirch supporters of a football club after 96 of them died, crushed to death after being forced into an overcrowded caged area. The newspaper invented stories of drunken fans as the cause of the disaster.

Fake news is as old as news itself but there are two differences. The first lies in the origin of such news and the speed with which it is spread. In the past, only governments and powerful media barons could manipulate public opinion. Today, it's anyone with access to a computer.

The other difference is more subtle. In the past, stories were manipulated to present lies as truth. Now, lies are often accepted as truth because we seem to be losing the very concept of 'truth'. To many, 'truth' means 'this is what I believe'. On issues from EU membership to same-sex marriage, all sides cling to their view as 'the truth'. The cry of 'fake news' has become a way of dismissing inconvenient truths. So, should we rush to crack down on such news? Repressive regimes around the world use the charge of 'fake news' to impose censorship and crush dissent. Stalin famously described writers expressing views contrary to his own as 'enemies of the people'. Following King Charles's proclamation, only 'loyal men' were licensed to run coffee houses and they had to promise to inform the king of anything 'they know or hear said prejudicial to the government'.

So maybe we shouldn't be too quick to restrict access to information, fake or otherwise.

DOCUMENT 4

Every cloud has a silver lining

Print and traditional broadcast news media have suffered from a declining share of the news-provision market in recent years. Could that be about to change?

In 2016, Donald Trump stunned the world when he defeated Democratic rival Hillary Clinton to win the US Presidential election. 'Fake news' headlines were cited as the explanation for such a surprising result. "The Pope loves Trump" outperformed legitimate stories in the final months of campaigning. So, some claim that untrue stories persuaded undecided voters to vote for Trump and that this phenomenon highlights a broader problem facing democracy: that we have entered an era of 'post-truth' politics. There were once certain facts about which there could be no disagreement and upon which decision-making could be based. Now, if you don't like a particular fact, you can choose an 'alternative fact' of your own on which to base your opinion.

But, in the not too distant future, we might look back with relief that the whole fake news phenomenon happened – if for no other reason than we now know that the internet is awash with fiction in non-fiction's clothing.

We are now having a fierce debate about how millions of people could have been duped by stories that were so obviously false. Many news organisations have now been forced to invest in fact-checking, and to publicise the fact that they are doing so. The vocation of rigorous, professional journalism has been reinvigorated. Traditional journalism as a career had been dwindling in the face of low-cost internet-based news providers but an ability to filter fact from fiction gives the profession a clear distinction from people who merely re-post 'news' they have been fed. It gives journalists a new reason for existence.

Journalists are terrified of being criticised for inaccuracies or being accused of peddling fake news (inaccurate news is different from fake news: one is a mistake, the other is malicious). The public, too, is now much more sceptical than it once was of headlines that appear on its newsfeed. Fake news has allowed the public to see the value in journalism, and this might lead to their being willing, once again, to pay for it.

Journalist's view

DOCUMENT 5

Fake news worries are growing, suggests new poll

In 2017, the BBC World Service surveyed 16 000 adults in 18 countries.

- 79% of respondents said they worried about what was fake and what was real on the internet.
- Brazilians were most worried about what was real and what was fake, with 92% reporting 'some concern'.
- China and the UK were the only two countries in which a majority wanted their governments to regulate the internet – 67% in China and 53% in the UK.
- The majority of UK respondents favouring regulation were women.
- 58% said the internet should never be regulated.
- Greece (84%) and Nigeria (82%) were most hostile to regulation.
- 53% of respondents felt unsafe expressing opinions online; most of these came from Europe and North America and most were women.
- 78% of men said they had been online in the last six months, compared to 71% of women.
- 53% of those questioned agreed that access to the internet should be a fundamental right, particularly in Brazil, Greece and India.

In 2010, the BBC World Service surveyed 15 of the same 18 countries (India, Peru and Greece were not surveyed in 2010).

- 51% said the internet should never be regulated.
- 49% of respondents felt unsafe expressing opinions online.

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