

Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS**9694/23**

Paper 2 Critical Thinking

October/November 2025**MARK SCHEME**Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **14** printed pages.

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotation	Meaning
	In Qs 1, 3 and 4 use to indicate where each mark has been awarded (except in Q1(a)).
	Use to indicate an answer or element that is wrong.
	Not good enough. Use wherever such a judgment has been made.
	Benefit of doubt. Use in conjunction with other annotations.
	In Q3 use to indicate 'significant additional element'. In Q5 use to indicate creditworthy other argument element.
	In Qs 2 and 5 use to indicate 'conclusion'.
	In Q2 use to indicate creditworthy evaluation of a source.
	In Q5 use to indicate creditworthy intermediate conclusion.
	In Q2 use to indicate creditworthy personal thinking. In Q3 use to indicate paraphrase.
	In Q2 use to indicate creditworthy inferential reasoning. In Q5 use to indicate creditworthy reason used to support a conclusion.
	In Q2 use to indicate creditworthy use of a source. In Q5 use to indicate distinct strand of reasoning.
	In appropriate cases, use to indicate significant omission. In Q3 use to indicate 'significant omission'.
	Use when an element of an answer which would normally be credited cannot receive a mark because of a rubric; e.g., in Q5 use when a type of argument element has already been credited in the same strand of reasoning. Use in answers when no other annotations have been used. Use on blank pages.
Highlighter	Use to draw attention to part of an answer.

There must be at least one annotation on each page of the answer booklet.

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	Is Source E an argument? Justify your answer. <i>2 marks for a correct answer with accurate explanation (3 ticks)</i> <i>1 mark for a correct answer with vague, incomplete or generic explanation (2 ticks)</i> <i>0 marks for a correct answer without explanation (1 tick)</i> <i>0 marks for an incorrect answer with or without explanation (0 ticks)</i> 2-mark answer Source E is not an argument ✓. It states reasons why continuity of care might and might not be a good thing ✓ but there is no (supported, persuasive) conclusion / it does not try to persuade the reader to do or believe anything. ✓ 1-mark answers Source E is not an argument ✓, because it does not include a (supported, persuasive) conclusion / it does not try to persuade the reader to do or believe anything ✓. Source E is not an argument ✓. It states reasons why continuity of care might and might not be a good thing ✓. 0-mark answer Source E is not an argument ✓, because it consists of only one (person's) opinion X. Source E is an argument. X.....	2
1(b)	Assess the reliability of Source E. <i>1 mark each for up to four valid comments based on reliability criteria.</i> <i>Examples of valid answers:</i> - As a Professor / someone invited to address a medical conference, the speaker has a good reputation. - As a former Professor of General Medical Practice, the speaker has good expertise in issues related to medical practice. - The speaker's use of the verb "I have observed" shows that his comments are based on excellent ability to see. - The fact that he is retired means that his expertise and ability to see are reduced, - but that does not weaken the reliability of the points he makes. - The speaker mentions both advantages and disadvantages of continuity of care, which shows that he is neutral/not biased. - Nothing about his personal circumstances or the context or content of his speech suggests that he has any vested interest to promote or discourage continuity of care.	4
1(c)	How is the reliability of Source D affected by ability to see? The researchers had good ability to see the published findings of 22 research projects / a large total sample size [1], but they did not necessarily see the original data [1]. The suggested explanations are based on inherent plausibility, not ability to see [1].	2

Question	Answer	Marks
1(d)	Look at Source C. Suggest two reasons why a patient might prefer to consult a doctor other than their named GP. <i>1 mark each for up to two valid answers.</i> <i>Examples of valid answers:</i> • The assigned doctor may not be available at a time when the patient needs medical advice. • Patients may wish to consult a doctor of a particular gender. • Patients, their relatives or friends may have had a bad experience with the assigned doctor. • A particular doctor may have a good or bad reputation for competence or attitude to patients. • <i>Accept (from Source E):</i> Patients may prefer to talk to a stranger about a sensitive or embarrassing issue.	2
1(e)	‘Access to healthcare in the US is among the worst in the world.’ Give two reasons why this cannot be reliably concluded from the evidence in Source B. <i>1 mark each for up to two valid answers.</i> <i>Examples of valid answers:</i> • Many countries are not included in the chart (and it is likely that several of them have poorer access to healthcare than the US). • Not being able to visit the same place of care on every occasion does not mean one is unable to access any healthcare • People in the US do not have ‘a regular doctor or place of care’ because they consult different primary care doctors for different conditions • The evidence refers to adults only, and therefore does not support a conclusion about access to healthcare in general / children may have much better access to continuity of care.	2

Question	Answer	Marks
1(f)	Source D suggests three possible explanations for why patients were more likely to die if they were ‘treated by different primary care doctors or hospital consultants’. Suggest one alternative explanation for this statistical correlation. <i>Up to 2 marks for a valid answer.</i> <i>Examples of valid answers:</i> • Patients who need urgent treatment in an emergency are more likely to die [1] and will be treated by whichever doctor is most readily available [1]. • Patients who need urgent treatment in an emergency are more likely to die [1] and are likely to be treated by multiple doctors [1]. • Patients who are admitted to hospital frequently are more likely to die [1] and are more likely to be cared for by different doctors on different occasions [1]. • People who are terminally ill [1] often need to be under the care of two or more hospital specialists [1]. • Patients in the studies who saw different doctors may have been from countries with generally poorer health / healthcare [1], with less access to doctors and higher mortality rates [1].	2

Question	Answer	Marks										
2	<i>‘Patients should be able to see the same doctor on every visit.’</i> 1 mark for an explicit supported conclusion <table border="1"><tr><td colspan="2">Up to 7 marks from the following:</td></tr><tr><td>Use of sources</td><td>2 marks for use of 4 or 5 sources 1 mark for use of 1–3 sources</td></tr><tr><td>Evaluation of sources</td><td>1 mark for each valid evaluation of the reliability or quality of reasoning in sources <i>Maximum 3 marks</i></td></tr><tr><td>Inferential reasoning from sources</td><td>1 mark each <i>Maximum 3 marks</i> <i>Source must be mentioned for this to be credited</i></td></tr><tr><td>Personal thinking</td><td>1 mark each <i>Maximum 2 marks</i></td></tr></table> Annotate answers as follows: CON To indicate ‘conclusion’. S To indicate creditworthy use of source. EVAL To indicate creditworthy evaluation of source. R To indicate creditworthy inferential reasoning. P To indicate creditworthy personal thinking. X To indicate incorrect material. Indicative content • Source A explains why it may be unrealistic and less efficient for people in the US to see the same doctor for every consultation • and why medical practices in the UK may find it easier and more efficient to make appointments with whichever doctor is available at the time. • Source B depicts a significant variation between European and English-speaking countries in relation to continuity of medical care, • but no explanation is given and it is likely that there is greater variation in other countries. • Source C acknowledges that it can be beneficial for patients to see the same doctor on every visit, • but also identifies factors which may make this difficult to achieve. • On the basis of reliable evidence, • Source D claims that enabling patients to see the same doctor on every visit produces increased satisfaction and survival rates. • Source E, which is highly reliable on the basis of the author’s reputation, expertise and ability to see, • gives further reasons as to why continuity of care is often desirable, • but also explains why this is not entirely the case.	Up to 7 marks from the following:		Use of sources	2 marks for use of 4 or 5 sources 1 mark for use of 1–3 sources	Evaluation of sources	1 mark for each valid evaluation of the reliability or quality of reasoning in sources <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>	Inferential reasoning from sources	1 mark each <i>Maximum 3 marks</i> <i>Source must be mentioned for this to be credited</i>	Personal thinking	1 mark each <i>Maximum 2 marks</i>	8
Up to 7 marks from the following:												
Use of sources	2 marks for use of 4 or 5 sources 1 mark for use of 1–3 sources											
Evaluation of sources	1 mark for each valid evaluation of the reliability or quality of reasoning in sources <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>											
Inferential reasoning from sources	1 mark each <i>Maximum 3 marks</i> <i>Source must be mentioned for this to be credited</i>											
Personal thinking	1 mark each <i>Maximum 2 marks</i>											

Question	Answer	Marks
2	Example 8-mark answer (355 words) S Source A explains an important difference between the systems of primary care medicine in the US and the UK. Because of this difference, it may be unrealistic and less efficient for people in the US to see the same doctor for every consultation, but the reason why it may be difficult to achieve continuity of care in the UK is that practices find it easier and more efficient to make appointments with whichever doctor is available at the time. S Source B depicts a significant variation between European and English-speaking countries in relation to continuity of medical care, but no explanation is given and it is likely that there is greater variation in other countries. It is plausible that the reason why a lower proportion of people in the US and perhaps other countries have a regular doctor is because they consult different practitioners for different problems. S Source C acknowledges that it can be beneficial for patients to see the same doctor on every visit, but also identifies factors which may make this difficult to achieve. S Source D claims that enabling patients to see the same doctor on every visit produces increased satisfaction and survival rates. These are good reasons for making such continuity happen if it can be managed. The claims are reliable, because they are based on a large amount of original research and as researchers in a UK university the people conducting the survey have both reputation and expertise. S EVAL Source E, which is highly reliable on the basis of the author's reputation, expertise and ability to see, gives further reasons as to why continuity of care is often desirable, but also explains why this is not always the case. CON Overall, I agree that doctors should arrange their work so that patients can see the same doctor on every visit, but recognise that some patients may see a doctor so infrequently that consistency will not be of any value to them, while others may need to consult different doctors for different problems.	

Question	Answer	Marks
In Q3, annotate as follows: AE Significant additional element A Significant omission P Paraphrase <i>In Q3(a), (c), and (d), if two answers are given, one of which is correct, award 1 mark. In all parts of Q3, apply guidance relating to additional material only if it constitutes an additional part of an answer or an alternative answer.</i>		
3(a)	Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify the main conclusion. <i>2 marks for an exact answer 1 mark for a paraphrase, or for one additional element or omission</i> Young people should (therefore) devote themselves to achieving optimistic but realistic ambitions.	2
3(b)	Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify two intermediate conclusions from paragraphs 4 to 6. <i>For each of up to 2 of the following: 2 marks for an exact answer 1 mark for a paraphrase, or for one additional element or omission If more than two answers are given, mark the first three only</i> - This [being committed to an ambition] increases their chances of fulfilling their dreams. (Unless someone is committed to an ambition,) even a minor failure is disastrous (However,) it would be misleading to tell young people that they can become whoever they want to be and achieve whatever they want to do.	4
3(c)	Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify one counter-assertion. <i>2 marks for an exact version of either of the following 1 mark for a paraphrase of either of the following, or for one additional element or omission</i> (Parents and teachers sometimes tell children that) hard work is the most important ingredient for success (However, it would be misleading to tell young people that) they [young people] can become whoever they want to be and achieve whatever they want to do.	2

Question	Answer	Marks
3(d)	Identify one unstated assumption required by the argument in paragraph 3. 2 marks for an exact version of either of the following 1 mark for an incomplete or vague version of either of the following • Hard work focused on ambition will / is likely to lead to success. • Advice based on a desire to make the giver's own life easier will not benefit the recipient. <i>Examples of 1-mark answers:</i> • Ambition does bring about success. • Hard work without ambition does not bring success.	2

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	Identify and evaluate an appeal in paragraph 1. The appeal to “reliable experts in sociology and politics” is an appeal to authority/expertise [1]. It is a relevant appeal, because sociology and politics are fields relevant to social mobility [1], but is weakened because the adjective ‘reliable’ is subjective [1]. The reasoning is at risk of being circular / a “no true Scotsman” fallacy [1], if holding this opinion is the criterion for being considered by the author as reliable [1].	3
4(b)	Identify and explain one flaw or weakness in the reasoning in paragraph 2. The reasoning in paragraph 2 confuses necessary and sufficient conditions / is an invalid deduction / affirms the consequent [1]. The (alleged) fact that everyone who is successful has been loyal to a vision is not the same as, and does not prove, that everyone who is loyal to a vision becomes successful [1]. OR There is a rash (hasty) generalisation [1] from everyone who has reached the peak of achievement to anyone who believes in themselves [1].	2
4(c)	Evaluate an analogy in paragraph 4. Self-confidence is compared to a superpower [1]. Although self-confidence is a natural, rather than a supernatural ability [1], the effects are comparable [1]. However, an air of confidence only exerts influence, whereas a superpower is irresistible [1].	3

Question	Answer	Marks
4(d)	<i>Explain how the reasoning in paragraph 5 is weakened by the flaw of slippery slope.</i> The claim that even a minor failure ‘discourages them from attempting further challenges’ is not synonymous with saying that it will prevent them from making any further such attempts [1], and even if that were true, it is not inevitable that doing so ‘will lead to a life of unemployment, poverty and misery’ [1]. Viable alternatives are available at every stage of this slippery slope [1].	2

Question	Answer	Marks										
5	‘Relationships are more important than work.’ 1 mark for an explicit supported conclusion <i>Must use the precise wording of the claim or an acceptable negation.</i> <i>Must not be expressed as an opinion.</i> <table border="1"><tr><td colspan="2">Up to 7 marks from the following:</td></tr><tr><td>Reasons</td><td>2 marks for three or more reasons supporting conclusions 1 mark for one or two reasons supporting conclusions</td></tr><tr><td>Inferential reasoning</td><td>1 mark for each use of an intermediate conclusion or chain of intermediate conclusions <i>(including if used in a response to a counter)</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i></td></tr><tr><td>Argument elements</td><td>1 mark for each use of other argument elements that strengthens the reasoning: counter with response, example, evidence, analogy, hypothetical reasoning <i>Credit each type only once per strand of reasoning</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i></td></tr><tr><td>Structure</td><td>1 mark for two or more distinct strands of reasoning</td></tr></table> <i>Each component of a candidate response may score only once. Where there is more than one possibility, use the classification which leads to the higher total mark.</i> <i>No credit for material unrelated to the claim given on the question paper.</i> <i>No credit for material reproduced from the passage.</i> Annotate answers as follows: CON To indicate main conclusion. R To indicate creditworthy reason used to support a conclusion. I To indicate creditworthy intermediate conclusion. AE To indicate creditworthy other argument element. S To indicate distinct strand of reasoning. SEEN When a type of argument element has already been credited in the same strand of reasoning. X To indicate material that is judged not to have a structural function the argument. Use highlighter to indicate material which is not relevant to the stated claim or is derived from the passage.	Up to 7 marks from the following:		Reasons	2 marks for three or more reasons supporting conclusions 1 mark for one or two reasons supporting conclusions	Inferential reasoning	1 mark for each use of an intermediate conclusion or chain of intermediate conclusions <i>(including if used in a response to a counter)</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>	Argument elements	1 mark for each use of other argument elements that strengthens the reasoning: counter with response, example, evidence, analogy, hypothetical reasoning <i>Credit each type only once per strand of reasoning</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>	Structure	1 mark for two or more distinct strands of reasoning	8
Up to 7 marks from the following:												
Reasons	2 marks for three or more reasons supporting conclusions 1 mark for one or two reasons supporting conclusions											
Inferential reasoning	1 mark for each use of an intermediate conclusion or chain of intermediate conclusions <i>(including if used in a response to a counter)</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>											
Argument elements	1 mark for each use of other argument elements that strengthens the reasoning: counter with response, example, evidence, analogy, hypothetical reasoning <i>Credit each type only once per strand of reasoning</i> <i>Maximum 3 marks</i>											
Structure	1 mark for two or more distinct strands of reasoning											

Question	Answer	Marks
5	Example 8-mark answers <i>Support (140 words)</i> Most people's work ^R makes use of a narrow range of their skills and ^R rewards them only with money. So if someone tries to find fulfilment ^R through their work, they will be disappointed. Relationships, by contrast, incorporate ^{AE} such aspects of a person as their personality, tastes and leisure pursuits. They ^I therefore offer a much richer fulfilment. ^S Relationships also last for longer than work. We relate to parents and often siblings during childhood, before we start work, and most of us ^R continue to share our lives with a spouse or other intimate partner ^R after we have retired from work. Devoting all one's energies to work would be as short-sighted ^{AE} as taking one university course after another and never looking for a job. ^I So investment of time and effort into relationships will be repaid over time. ^{CON} Therefore relationships are more important than work. <i>Challenge (135 words)</i> It is widely ^{AE} believed that relationships are of higher moral worth than work. However, many relationships are quite selfish, because the participants are ^I more interested in what they receive than what they give, whereas work ^R consists of the contribution one makes to the common good, such as ^{AE} feeding people, making their lives more ^I comfortable, keeping them safe or conducting transactions for them. So work should be more highly esteemed than relationships. ^S Work also develops ^R people's potential and gives them status. So their ^I personal growth is stunted if they never embark upon a career. Before the invention of modern domestic technology, many women were ^{AE} frustrated ^I because they were defined by their relationships as wife and mother. So being able to go out to work greatly improved their lives. ^{CON} Therefore relationships are not more important than work.	

Question	Answer	Marks
5	<i>Acceptable ‘Challenge’ conclusions:</i> • Relationships are not more important than work. • Relationships are less important than work. • Work is more important than relationships.	