



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

9694/41

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

May/June 2026

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

This document consists of **15** printed pages.

General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: - the specific content defined in the mark scheme - the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions - the standard of response required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award whole marks (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks positively . This means that: - marks are not deducted for errors or omissions - marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for other valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate - the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged only when the mark scheme indicates that these features are specifically assessed in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must consistently apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and must not award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions 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.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Correct response. Use when a mark has been achieved in Q1, 2 and 3 .
	Incorrect (part of a) response
NGE	Not good enough. Use wherever such a judgment has been made.
BOD	Benefit of doubt
S	Strand of reasoning
CON	Main Conclusion
I	Intermediate Conclusion
AE	Additional argument element in Q1 / Argument Element in Q4
U	Creditworthy material in the Use of Documents skill
3	Use stamps 1–5 alongside U to indicate which document has been referenced

Annotation	Meaning
EVAL	Evaluation of documents
C	Comparison of or inference from documents
Q	Creditworthy material in the Quality of Argument skill
T	Treatment of counter-position
L2	Level achieved. Add annotation at the end of Question 4 in the order of S, U, Q from left to right.
+	Strong demonstration of a skill Higher mark within a level awarded
-	Minor demonstration of a skill Flaw or weakness Lower mark within a level awarded
SEEN	Examiner has seen that the page contains no creditworthy material Use to annotate blank pages
Highlighter	Use to draw attention to part of an answer

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	Identify two intermediate conclusions in paragraphs 4 to 5. <i>1 mark for each correctly identified IC (max 2)</i> <i>Mark only the first three answers given</i> • (So) increased voter turnout would greatly improve life expectancy and working conditions. • High turnout will increase individual happiness • such people can be ignored	2

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	Analyse the structure of the reasoning in paragraph 2. <i>Award 1 mark for each of the following [max 3]:</i> R1 When voter turnout is low, certain groups in society are less likely to vote than others. Ev A European study in 2014 found that people aged over 55 are twice as likely to vote as 18–35-year-olds. (Allow Ex) IC (Therefore,) most governments are not representative of the populations they purport to represent. R2 Democracy is based on the belief that the governments we elect represent the views of the people. C (So) voluntary voting is anti-democratic. A1 European voting patterns are representative of those in the rest of the world. A2 Most elections have a low turnout. A3 Voting patterns have not changed significantly since 2014. A4 The views of non-voters are significantly different from the views of voters. <i>Award 1 mark for identifying two relationships between elements, or 2 marks for identifying three relationships between elements, e.g.</i> • Ev supports R1 (Allow Ev supports IC) • R1 supports IC • R2/IC support C • R2 and IC support C jointly* • A1/A2/A3/A4 is needed for R1 to support IC • A4 is needed for R2/IC to support C <i>* credit joint support as two relationships, in which case those individual relationships do not gain additional credit for being repeated</i> <i>Reference to start and end of elements must be unambiguous.</i> <i>Sample 5-mark answer</i> The whole of the first sentence is a reason [1] that is supported by the evidence that ‘A European...olds.’ [1] [r] and itself supports ‘Therefore, most governments are not representative of the populations they purport to represent.’ [1r], which is an IC [1]. This IC supports the conclusion of the sentence, ‘So voluntary voting is anti-democratic.’ [1] [1r]	5

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	Identify one counter-assertion. (There are people who say that) voting is a hard-earned right and not a duty	1

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	Identify and explain three flaws and/or weaknesses in the reasoning in paragraphs 3 to 5. <i>2 marks for a developed version of any of the following points</i> <i>1 mark for a weak or incomplete version of any of the following points [max 6]</i> <i>Paragraph 3:</i> • <i>Weak support</i> – not being prioritised does not mean the same as being ‘ignored’ • <i>Conflation</i> – of ‘people disengaged from politics’ with ‘isolated people’ • <i>Slippery slope</i> – from politicians prioritising groups that vote in high numbers to a society run entirely for the benefit of rich old people <i>Paragraph 4:</i> • <i>Reliance on questionable assumption</i> – that the consequences of fewer people choosing to vote are the same as those of fewer people being allowed to vote • <i>Weak (disproportionate) appeal to history</i> – social attitudes are now very different from how they were in the nineteenth century and exploitation would be far less likely to be tolerated • <i>Causal flaw (cum hoc)</i> – voting restrictions occurring at the same time as low life expectancy and poor working conditions doesn’t mean that the first caused the second – there are likely to have been other causes <i>Paragraph 5:</i> • <i>Reliance on questionable assumption</i> – that carrying out civic duties makes individuals happy • <i>Weak response to counter</i> – Merely stating that the counter-position is wrong does not provide sufficient support for its dismissal • <i>Ad hominem</i> – the reader is encouraged to dismiss the views of those holding a contrary opinion on the basis of their unscrupulous nature and claimed vested interest in maintaining a low voter turnout	6

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	Assess the extent to which paragraph 6 supports the argument as a whole. <i>Award marks from any of the following lines of explanation [max 3]</i> For the conclusion to be a plausible recommendation, it is necessary that it be achievable [1]. This paragraph provides evidence that it is achievable [1], and so provides support for the conclusion [1]. It provides some direct support for the idea of voting being compulsory [1], and, as the only paragraph to do so, is essential to the argument as a whole [1] because, without it, the MC is not well supported [1]. However, the reasoning within the paragraph is weakened by the presence of a sweeping generalisation – that fears about harsh enforcement are unfounded [1], and by the rash generalisation from the evidence of one Australian election to a general IC [1]. By arguing against harsh enforcement of voting, the paragraph is advocating a system barely distinguishable from a system which is not compulsory [1], which weakens the support given by the paragraph to the main conclusion [1].	3

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	The data given in Document 4A is intended to support the claim that ‘Public opinion is in favour of compulsory voting.’ Identify three reasons why the support given by the data is weak. <i>1 mark each for any of the following points [max 3]</i> • The countries listed do not represent global diversity well • The difference in the US is too small to be significant • It is possible that those choosing ‘No’ had stronger feelings than those choosing ‘Yes’ • People who are in favour of compulsory voting might be more likely to take part in a survey on that topic • It is possible that those choosing ‘No’ were politically better informed than those choosing ‘Yes’ • Undecided people are inherently more likely to answer ‘Yes’ to any question • There doesn’t seem to have been an option of ‘Don’t know’ • We don’t know if the samples were stratified appropriately (especially by age group)	3
3(b)	The graph given in Document 4B is intended to support the claim that ‘Compulsory voting is associated with higher voter turnout.’ Identify two reasons why the support given by the graph is weak. <i>1 mark each for any of the following points [max 2]</i> • The truncated y-axis exaggerates the scale of the difference • Restricting the data to countries where it is ‘reliable’ may well lead to an unrepresentative sample • Unclear whether voter turnout is total, average, weighted average etc.	2

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	The graph given in Document 4C is intended to support the claim that ‘Compulsory voting removes differences in voter turnout between different age groups.’ Identify one reason why the support given by the graph is weak. <i>1 mark for any of the following points [max 1]</i> • Two countries with compulsory voting is too small a sample upon which to base the conclusion • Several other countries without compulsory voting are very close to the Belgian / Australian figures	1

Question	Answer	Marks
4	‘Voting in national elections should be compulsory.’ Example high-scoring answers <i>Argument to support (737 words)</i> In order to make a case for voting being compulsory it must first be established that high voter turnout is a good thing and, although Doc 1 has many weaknesses, it does spend a long time doing just that. Democracy relies on the government being representative (as far as possible) of the views of the public. Therefore, the higher the proportion of the public that votes the more democratically legitimate any government will be. Low turnout is certainly an issue in many countries, despite Doc 1’s phrasing of the problem in terms of a slippery slope. D1’s statement is corroborated by the graph in Doc 4B, which we are told comes from robust data and so has some credibility; it shows that voter turnout around the world has been decreasing since the middle of the last century. This weakens the mandate of democratically elected governments not only because an ever-smaller proportion of the people they purport to represent will have voted for them but also because, as LN in Doc 5 suggests, chance events such as the weather are likely to have a proportionally higher effect on election outcomes if the turnout is low. In voluntary systems, disparity between groups who exercise their vote is a real problem, despite D1s clumsy attempts to exaggerate the consequences. The European study mentioned in Doc 1 is corroborated by the graph in Doc 4C. The most striking feature of the graph is that, in almost every country, from a wide sample, older people are much more likely to vote than younger people. Strikingly, the difference between age groups in the two compulsory (and presumably, therefore, high)-voting countries is negligible. Suggestions that some of the other countries may have been cherry-picked to highlight a difference can be dismissed because the Australian and Belgian values are way below the average. Having a high proportion of the population voting is a progressive, and relatively recent, idea. Many countries did not allow women to vote until relatively late last century. Before that, only men who earned a certain income or owned property were allowed to vote. Despite Doc 1’s <i>cum hoc</i> suggestion that all the ills of the Victorian era were caused by low voter turnout, increasing voter turnout has been a feature of better socio-economic and public health conditions in most countries over the last 150 years. It might not be the only reason for progress, but it is likely to have made a contribution. Having established that high turnout in elections is a good thing, the question of how best to achieve this must be addressed. The documents offer very little in support of any methods other than compulsion, e.g., education or encouragement by advertising, but it is not unreasonable to assume that those countries who practise compulsory voting tried these methods first. So they probably don’t work.	27

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Question	Answer	Marks
4	In contrast, compulsion clearly does increase turnout. D1 mentions evidence from Australia that is corroborated by the graphs in Docs 4C and 4B (and so can probably be generalised). Doc 4B shows a consistently 6–8% higher turnout in compulsory-voting countries. The narrow difference in the early 1940s is irrelevant as the need for increased turnout exists only where turnout is low. Furthermore, Doc 4C suggests that measures taken in Australia and Belgium have been effective in reducing at least one group disparity. The fact that a report from Harvard University, quoted in Doc 2, argued in favour of compulsory voting is significant. Harvard has very high credibility in terms of, at the very least, reputation (which, presumably, it values), ability to know (gathering data is something universities do) and expertise (one is likely to need to be highly qualified to work there). So their opinion carries a lot of weight. Compulsory voting might be seen to run contrary to the principle of individual liberty. However, that principle is often in conflict with other principles, such as that of public safety or the greater good of society. As FM illustrates in Doc 5, there are many instances where certain civic ‘duties’ are deemed so important that governments feel justified in making them compulsory. Worries about people being thrown in gaol for their principles can be dismissed on the evidence from Doc 3 that penalties for non-compliance are generally minor. High voter turnout is desirable, and gentle compulsion is an effective and reasonable way to achieve this. Therefore, voting in national elections should be compulsory. <i>Argument to challenge (746 words)</i> Arguments about the merits of compulsory voting rely on accepting the premise that high voter turnout is a good thing. Doc 1 attempts to persuade the reader that this is the case but fails to convince because of a string of weaknesses, such as the weak response to a counter-position in paragraph 5, which have been described in the answer to Question 2. Furthermore, the tone of Doc 1 suggests a lack of neutrality on the part of the author and is in contrast to the more measured tone and logical reasoning present in Doc 2, which argues that high voter turnout may not be the positive thing it is often assumed to be. Doc 2 suggests that citizens who routinely do not exercise their right to vote are likely to be less well-informed or interested than those who do. This seems plausible and is consistent with some of the comments in Doc 5. Internet discussion forums do not have high credibility – anyone can say anything, and AZ’s comment about stealth tax implies a certain ignorance about the costs associated with gathering fines, but their comment, and that of BY, at least illustrate the point. Obviously not every voter can be well informed about every issue (hence the need for representative democracy rather than government by referendum) but it would clearly be better if a high proportion of those casting votes were. So, increased voter turnout would diminish the proportion of votes cast by well-informed citizens, which cannot be a good thing.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
4	Doc 1 makes much of disparities between certain groups but really only discusses age affecting likeliness to vote and provides evidence from only one single-continent study. However, the idea is corroborated by Doc 4C, so we can probably assume that it is true. Doc 1 goes down a slippery slope when discussing the consequences of age disparity so there is no real support for the idea that having a higher proportion of older voters is a bad idea. With age comes experience and knowledge. Older voters are, on average, better informed than younger ones. This pattern is likely to be repeated for other groups in which a voting disparity exists – the more interested (and hence better informed) will be more likely to vote. Therefore, disparities in group voting behaviour mean a higher proportion of votes are cast by well-informed voters. Doc 1's implication that voter group disparities mean elections are not democratic is question-begging that relies on the author's unsupported definition of 'democratic'. Therefore, disparities in voting behaviour between groups are not a bad thing. Rule by rich old people has ever been the case and, if rich and old means experienced and knowledgeable, that is probably no bad thing. Even for those who advocate for a higher turnout in elections, the nature of compulsion raises problems beyond that of ill-informed vote casting. In most countries the democratic principle goes hand-in-hand with the principle of freedom of choice – this is explained well in paragraph 2 of Doc 2 and illustrated by TE's comment in Doc 5. The highly credible Harvard University report, cited in Doc 2, suggests that a majority of people are against compulsory voting. Even if this report represents only US opinion, there does not need to be a majority against compulsory voting to create problems – a significant minority of objectors could still be an insurmountable problem. So compulsory voting is likely to create resentment among citizens who feel strongly about individual liberty, which could have large and negative consequences for a country. There is also the problem of penalties. Doc 1 implies that all non-voting penalties are minor, and Doc 3 does support this being the case in some compulsory voting countries, but not all – a €1000 fine in Luxembourg or the loss of a range of civic benefits in Brazil does not seem trivial. Not only are the costs associated with administering compulsion (e.g., collecting fines) likely to be substantial, the fate of those who do not comply with minor penalties is not always explicit. What happens to repeat offenders who refuse to pay the €1000? At some point, penalties will escalate, and the PR associated with someone refusing to vote on principle being arrested and imprisoned is not likely to be beneficial for a government claiming to be democratically elected. Increased voter turnout is not a desirable goal and there are some serious problems with compulsion in a democracy. Therefore, voting in national elections should not be compulsory.	

Level	Structure*	Use of documents	Quality of argument
	- Conclusion (MC) - Intermediate conclusions (ICs) - Strands of reasoning - Examples or evidence - Original analogy - Hypothetical reasoning	- Reference to documents - Evaluation of documents - Comparison of documents (corroboration or contradiction) - Inference from documents	- Comprehensive and persuasive argument - Logical order of reasoning - Relevant material - Treatment of counter-positions - Absence of flaws and weaknesses - Non-reliance on rhetorical devices
3	Excellent use of structural elements: 7–9 - Precise conclusion - Multiple valid explicit ICs that support the MC - Multiple clear strands of reasoning - Some effective use of other argument elements to support reasoning	Excellent use of documents: 7–9 - Judicious reference to at least three documents - Multiple valid evaluative points, clearly expressed and used to support reasoning - Some comparison of or inference from documents	Excellent quality of argument: 7–9 - Sustained persuasive reasoning - Highly effective order of reasoning - Very little irrelevant material - Key counter-position(s) considered with effective response - Very few flaws or weaknesses - No gratuitous rhetorical devices
2	Good use of structural elements: 4–6 - Clear conclusion - More than one valid IC (may be implied) - Some strands of reasoning - Some use of other argument elements	Good use of documents: 4–6 - Relevant reference to at least two documents - At least two evaluative points used to support reasoning - May be some comparison of or inference from documents	Good quality of argument: 4–6 - Reasonably persuasive reasoning - Unconfused order of reasoning - Not much irrelevant material - Some counter-position(s) considered with some response - Not many flaws or weaknesses - May be some reliance on rhetorical devices
1	Some use of structural elements: 1–3 <i>There may be:</i> - Conclusion - Implied ICs - Some strands of reasoning - Some use of other argument elements	Some use of documents: 1–3 <i>There may be:</i> - Reference, perhaps implicit, to a document - Some evaluation of a document - Some comparison of or inference from documents	Some quality of argument: 1–3 <i>There may be:</i> - Some support for the conclusion - Some order to the reasoning - Some relevant material - Some counter-position(s) considered with some response
0	No creditable response 0	No creditable response 0	No creditable response 0

*Cap mark for Structure at 3 if no conclusion given