



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

9694/41

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

May/June 2024

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. Any blank pages are indicated.

Questions 1 and 2 refer to Document 1.

- 1 (a) State the main conclusion of the argument. [1]
- (b) Identify **two** intermediate conclusions in paragraphs 3 to 4. [2]
- (c) Analyse the structure of the reasoning in paragraph 2. [4]
- (d) Identify **one** counter-argument in paragraphs 4 to 6. [1]

- 2 (a) Identify and explain **three** flaws and/or weaknesses in the reasoning in paragraphs 3 to 5. [6]
- (b) Assess the extent to which paragraph 6 supports the argument as a whole. [3]

3 Question 3 refers to Document 2.

- (a) 'Homework greatly improves student achievement, as measured by improved exam results and the likelihood of entering higher education after school.' (Paragraph 4)
- Identify **four** weaknesses in the support given by paragraph 4 to this claim. [4]

- (b) 'Homework develops good study habits and key skills ... that students can use throughout their lives.' (Paragraph 5)

Explain why the support given by paragraph 5 to this claim is weak. [2]

4 You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.

'Schools should not set compulsory homework.'

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

- 1 In today's world, it is obviously important that young people go to school and get an education. However, like most aspects of life, there are good things about school and there are bad things. Top of my list of bad things is homework.
- 2 Many homework tasks, like writing essays, are dull and too difficult for some students to engage with. Furthermore, with incomplete or late homework comes the threat of punishment. Consequently, students find the whole thing very stressful. Many students learn to associate education with stressful situations and so homework can put students off learning altogether.
- 3 It is misleading to argue that, because working in the evening is something they will do as adults, homework helps students to prepare for work. My father works in a factory making parts for computers. At around 6.30 he arrives home and does no job-related activities at all. Moreover, he did not learn the skills he uses in his job by doing homework when he was a student.
- 4 The work produced by students at home has no educational value. Teachers often set tasks without much thought about whether they are appropriate, and assignments are often not returned to students anyway – many are not even marked by the teacher. If there were no homework, teachers could use all the hours currently spent setting and assessing homework to produce better lessons that would improve learning. Overall, homework has a negative effect on education.
- 5 Growing up should not be about only schoolwork. Time in the evenings and weekends should be available for relaxation, hobbies, sport and socialising with friends and family. It is ridiculous for schools to prevent students from doing these things. If children do homework rather than some form of exercise after school, then this could store up all sorts of health problems in the future. Lack of exercise leads to obesity and the subsequent development of heart disease. Schools should stop issuing homework to students. We could see an increase in heart disease in 20 years' time if they don't.
- 6 Of course, some young people are preparing for tests and so would benefit from studying at home, but these tasks should not be compulsory. Students themselves should be able to choose what type of studying they want to do and how much time they will spend on it. Students who set their own studying goals will be more motivated to learn and will not be put off learning for life.

DOCUMENT 2

- 1 When my children first received homework from school, they completed it enthusiastically and took pride in what they had produced, never questioning its value. When they were a little older, they had a different view: they completed it reluctantly, often only after much parental encouragement, and frequently claimed that it added nothing to their education. However, by the time they got to university, their view changed again and, whilst not perhaps enthusiastic about homework, they could certainly see its value.
- 2 Many things have changed in education over the last 100 years but one of the constants has been homework. So the positives must outweigh the negatives. Let's look at some of them.
- 3 It is obvious that homework allows extra time for students to consolidate what they have learned in class. Class time is limited, and many things are difficult to learn without substantial practice. Using class time for practice means less time for introducing and explaining new topics. So homework increases the effectiveness of any school-based education students receive. Of course, poorly planned tasks can add little, if anything, to school learning but planned homework that can be completed independently and with ease is the goal of most teachers.
- 4 Homework greatly improves student achievement, as measured by improved exam results and the likelihood of entering higher education after school. According to the educational research literature, 64% of homework studies conducted in the last 10 years showed that completing assignments at home was effective in improving academic achievement. A recent report in an education research journal reported that children who spent an average of an hour a day on homework scored 40% higher on a national standardised mathematics test than their peers who completed no homework.
- 5 Homework develops good study habits and key skills, like self-discipline, time management and problem solving, that students can use throughout their lives. Research by a leading US university noted that 'students who engage in self-regulatory processes, such as goal setting and time management, while completing homework are generally more motivated and are higher achievers than those who do not use these processes'.
- 6 Take-home assignments also allow parents to be more involved with their children's education, enabling them to track what their children are learning at school and become more informed about their academic strengths and weaknesses. This can often make parents aware of the existence of any learning disabilities their children may have and thus allow them to seek the appropriate help. Countless studies, including one from the prestigious Johns Hopkins University in the US, have demonstrated beyond doubt that increased parental involvement with education at home is associated with improved class performance by students.

DOCUMENT 3**Newspaper article**

A local schoolboy is demanding an end to all homework. The boy has set up an online petition asking for the government to ban homework for all secondary school pupils in England. Liam says he has so much homework he has little time for his hobbies or chatting to friends. His petition has had over 5000 people sign up since it was launched last year.

The 15-year-old, who aspires to be a politician, says he is being given three to four hours of homework each night, and in his petition states, 'students go to school about 30 hours a week and spend more hours doing homework'. He says pupils should be able to relax their brains and have a break, 'not work all the time'.

Liam says he gets two pieces of homework per week in each of his subjects. 'I can't socialise with my friends and family because of all this homework,' he said, after receiving 10 pieces of homework during his week-long school break in October. He also complains about not having enough time to play tennis, badminton or go fishing.

The petition is addressed to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the UK Parliament. On a school trip to the Houses of Parliament, Liam discussed the issue with his local Member of Parliament but was told he should take it up with his school.

A spokesman for Liam's school said, 'We have extremely high expectations of our students as learners and expect them to take personal responsibility for their learning as well as benefiting from the expertise of our highly skilled staff. Extensive academic research shows that regular completion of homework increases levels of both attainment and achievement across all subject areas.'

Liam, who has muscle problems and hypermobile joints, says he needs a word processor to type out his work at school, because he struggles to write. His mother said, 'When I got home from school, I couldn't wait to get out and play. Now they have stress and too much homework. Liam suffers from anxiety. He is committed and willing to learn but sometimes it is too much.'

Liam is happy that the petition has been signed by so many people.

DOCUMENT 4

School U-turn on banning homework

In a fanfare of publicity in 2016, a school in Essex introduced a ban on all compulsory homework – the first secondary school in the UK to do so. At the time it was claimed that teachers would have more time to concentrate on planning and delivering high quality learning experiences in lessons. Students were given some suggested activities on the school website, but completion was optional. Many students, therefore, completed no homework at all. This led to protests from parents when children failed to achieve expected grades. A number of parents contacted the local Member of Parliament but the MP, who then contacted the school directly, did not get an adequate response to the concerns from the school's leadership.

The headteacher who introduced the policy was suspended from her position for undisclosed reasons. The new acting headteacher took a poll of parents, students and staff on the issue and stated that a new policy would be introduced in the new school year. A letter to parents from the school said, 'We are in the process of establishing a robust and thorough approach to independent study at home which will be based on a very significant compulsory element'.

The leader of the parental protesters said the voluntary scheme was both confusing and divisive – his sons said that they would not do the homework unless it was compulsory. Over the years, seven of his children have attended the same school, which he described as having been very good in the past. His elder daughter was educated at the same school and has just qualified as a doctor. 'Young people need boundaries in regard to what they should do. The voluntary system did not work,' he said. He went on to say that the return of compulsory homework is something to be celebrated.

Newspaper report from 2018

DOCUMENT 5

A selection of quotes from an internet discussion forum

Finland is a prosperous and successful country with what is regarded as an excellent education system, and yet they have almost no homework.

AB, South Africa

I don't mind doing homework if it is on an electronic device. I just hate writing long sentences, particularly if you have to handwrite them.

CD, UK

Parents and teachers often justify homework on the basis of extra learning outside school. But what about the other types of learning, like social interactions and physical activity? I learn loads just by surfing the internet and I read about what I'm interested in, so I find it more enjoyable. Learning really can be fun if you are interested.

EF, New Zealand

Teachers don't do homework in the evenings and weekends. So why should students be expected to do it? If teachers did have to do it, they'd probably get paid overtime.

GH, US

Homework is divisive: students from wealthy families with access to books, electronic media and space to concentrate will always find it easier than students who don't have these privileges.

IJ, Brazil

Neuroscientists know that rest and exercise are essential to good health and real learning. A study into the development of expertise found that elite musicians, scientists and athletes do their most productive work for only around four hours a day.

KL, Malaysia

Many studies have shown there is little or no academic benefit to completing homework. In 2016 students here in Spain launched a national strike against excessive homework assignments.

MN, Spain

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