CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS **9694/22**

Paper 2 Critical Thinking **May/June 2026**

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.

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Section A

Study the evidence and then answer Questions 1 and 2.

Source A

Health magazine

Tai Chi originated in China many centuries ago, but is now practised throughout the world. It is a unique combination of meditation and movement, which millions of people perform daily.

People who practise Tai Chi follow a series of slow and gentle movements, focusing their attention on their body's activity, including their breathing. Tai Chi has been described as 'moving meditation'. Perhaps surprisingly, given the above description, it is actually a martial art, although it mainly involves evading an attacker rather than counterattacking.

Source B

National health institute journal

Practising Tai Chi minimises the risk of being affected by type 2 diabetes.

738 Chinese adults aged over 40 participated in a recent study run by a Chinese university to find out if sustained practice of Tai Chi can help reduce waist circumference. A high waist circumference is one of the many risk factors for contracting type 2 diabetes.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the following groups: (1) a control group, who did not take any exercise; (2) a group taking conventional exercise; (3) a group practising Tai Chi. Members of groups 2 and 3 received instruction three times per week for 16 weeks, with sessions lasting one hour. The groups all contained the same number of people.

At the end of the study period, it was found that relative to the control group, people taking conventional exercise had an average reduction of 1.5 cm in waist circumference, while the corresponding figure for the Tai Chi group was 1.9 cm.

Source C

Website of European Tai Chi association

Tai Chi – it works for our members!

In last winter's edition of our magazine, we invited all of our members who had begun to learn Tai Chi within the last two years to participate in an online survey. There are just over 1000 members who fall into this category, from teenagers to people aged 70+ years. Approximately 60% accepted the invitation.

In the survey, they were asked to respond to a number of questions about their experiences of learning Tai Chi. The key points of their responses are as follows:

- 79% stated that, since starting to learn Tai Chi, they felt greater physical well-being*.
- 58% stated that, since starting to learn Tai Chi, they felt that their mood had improved.
- 65% stated that, since starting to learn Tai Chi, they felt that they had more energy.

* Those respondents who expanded on this point mentioned suppleness, balance and co-ordination as being particularly relevant here.

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Source D

Home-based fitness website

Tai Chi is a very popular activity around the world, but people would be wise to consider a few facts about it before deciding whether or not it's likely to be worth the effort required to master the art.

1. It takes a long time to learn. There are no 'quick wins' with Tai Chi. It takes years of dedication and practice to benefit from it.
2. You cannot learn it alone. The Covid pandemic caused a surge in people starting types of exercise that can be done at home. However, Tai Chi is not one of these. You need to attend a class run by a trained teacher, at least in the early stages.
3. Tai Chi is a slow and repetitive form of exercise, so may not suit those who like their exercise to involve speed and adrenaline.
4. The modern version of Tai Chi is a weakened form of this ancient art. The number of moves in modern Tai Chi is much lower than was originally the case.

Source E

Website of national Tai Chi association

Tai Chi offers many wellness benefits to those who practise this ancient form of exercise, but to obtain these benefits it is essential to learn the art in a class taught by a qualified instructor. Using online videos is no substitute. Not only do people learn very little this way, but they may even injure themselves.

Many of our members are fully qualified instructors, certified by us, with several years' teaching experience. Finding an instructor near you is very easy with our online tool.

1 **(a)** Is Source A an argument? Justify your answer. [2]

(b) Identify and explain **two** weaknesses in the support given by Source B for its claim that 'Practising Tai Chi minimises the risk of being affected by type 2 diabetes.' [4]

(c) Assess the representativeness of the evidence in Source C in relation to the claim made in the first sentence of the source. [3]

(d) How relevant is Source D in relation to a claim that practising Tai Chi is good for people's health and well-being? [2]

(e) Assess the reliability of Source E. [3]

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

'Everyone should seriously consider learning Tai Chi.'

To what extent do you agree with this claim?
Write a reasoned explanation to support your opinion.
Your answer should use and evaluate evidence from the sources provided. [8]

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Section B

Read the following passage and then answer Questions 3, 4 and 5.

1 Meritocracy is the social and economic system that rewards people according to their abilities and achievements, rather than according to their family connections or inherited wealth. People should be able to obtain the good things of life by their efforts alone; hard work and commitment are enough. Supporters of the system claim that it is a longstanding method of giving people what they deserve, and hence that there is no reason to change it.

2 This claim may sound plausible and fair. However, meritocracy is actually unfair. To do well in a meritocratic system it is necessary to have certain abilities and a capacity for hard work. It is only a matter of luck whether or not we are born with these.

3 People who are doing well are seen as being rewarded for their hard work, commitment, and abilities. More harmfully, those who are struggling because of poverty, poor housing, or lack of educational opportunities are held responsible for the negative circumstances in which they live. So meritocracy can be viewed as justifying inequality.

4 It is often claimed that low-paid workers should work harder or 'smarter' in order to earn more money. However, this view is only ever held by well-off people who are thriving in a meritocratic system – thoughtless people who neither understand nor care about the reality of poverty – so it can be ignored. Anyway, many low-paid workers work as hard and as efficiently as they can, and hence they have nothing left to give. Therefore, it is simply not true that all those who fail to thrive in a meritocracy only have themselves to blame.

5 Some psychologists suggest that belief in meritocratic values can make us less compassionate, more selfish, and less self-critical. If we believe that meritocracy is a fair system for distributing wealth and status, then our attitudes to other people can be affected in a harmful way. It follows that living under a meritocratic system can make people lose those qualities that maintain harmony in societies.

6 So, although it has a superficial attraction, meritocracy is actually a harmful social and economic system. In case there is still any doubt, we should remember that most people want to live in a society that values concern for others; but, because meritocracy values competition and the pursuit of one's own good, that wish is impossible to fulfil.

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3 **(a)** Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify the **main conclusion**. [2]

(b) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify **two intermediate conclusions** from paragraphs 2 to 3. [4]

(c) Identify the **argument element** and explain the function of the following words from paragraph 3:

'those who are struggling because of poverty, poor housing, or lack of educational opportunities are held responsible for the negative circumstances in which they live' [2]

(d) The passage contains this piece of reasoning:

Meritocracy is unfair. To do well in a meritocratic system it is necessary to have certain abilities and a capacity for hard work. It is only a matter of luck whether or not we are born with these.

This piece of reasoning relies on assumptions which are **not** stated in the passage. Identify **one** of these **unstated assumptions**. [2]

4 **(a)** Identify and evaluate an **appeal** in paragraph 1. [2]

(b) Evaluate the **appeal to authority** in paragraph 5. [2]

(c) Identify and explain **one** flaw or weakness in the reasoning in the **first two sentences** of paragraph 4. [2]

(d) Explain how the reasoning in paragraph 5 is weakened by the flaw of **conflation**. [2]

(e) Identify and explain **one** flaw or weakness in the reasoning in paragraph 6. [2]

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

'All school-leavers should complete one year's paid service for their local communities.'

Write your own short argument to support **or** challenge this claim.
Your argument should have a clear structure and make use of various argument elements.
The conclusion of your argument must be stated.
Credit will **not** be given for repeating ideas from the passage. [8]

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