

Markscheme

May 2026

Digital society

Higher level and standard level

Paper 2

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Critical Thinking – explanation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation

These trigger words and phrases may signal different types of critical thinking. The bold headings align with key terms used in this mark scheme and the mark band guidelines used for Question 4.

Critical thinking skill	Purpose	Typical trigger words/phrases
Explanation	Explains how or why something happens	Because, as a result of, due to, therefore, consequently, for example
Analysis	Examines relationships, contrasts, causes, or consequences between ideas	However, whereas, conversely, on the other hand, likewise, in contrast; this leads to...; this demonstrates...
Synthesis	Combines ideas from multiple sources to create a new insight, inference, or broader understanding	Taken together, this suggests that...; Together, the sources imply that...; This supports the inference that...; A broader understanding emerges that...
Evaluation	Weighs up ideas or perspectives to reach a supported judgement	Overall, overall, although, despite, on balance, weighing up, ultimately

1. With reference to Source A, identify **two** items of user information that FlexiView might use to provide personalized content recommendations.

[2]

Answers may include items drawn from one or more of the following categories:

- Personal information (such as name, age, gender)
- Login credentials
- User location (such as country)
- Viewing history
- User ratings / feedback
- Preferences / settings
- Viewing patterns
- Interaction with recommendations
- Viewing device (such as tablet, phone, laptop)

Notes to examiners:

If candidates answer more than the prescribed number of questions, read all answers and mark positively up to the maximum marks.

Disregard incorrect answers.

*Award **[1]** for each item of user information identified up to **[2]**.*

2. With reference to Source B, suggest **two** reasons why there is an increase over time in the percentage of FlexiView subscribers who watch content on smartphones.

[4]

Answers may include:

- Increased access to smartphones
- as their relative price has decreased.
- Enhanced mobile internet speeds with 4G and 5G technology
- enabling seamless streaming, reducing buffering, since 2021.
- Smartphone battery life/increase access to charging.
- Meaning smartphones can be used ubiquitously.
- Change in viewing habits:
- convenience/any time, any place, anywhere watching of content increased.
- Offline viewing/download options in app are used more
- Leading to a positive change in viewing habits (link to blocking of website as one reason for viewing offline).
- Live streaming of events is a feature that was implemented earlier
- with more live events have been added to the list that can be viewed.
- Website blocked in workplace/school networks so users need to use app
- so link to live streaming and offline options is a possibility.
- Improved functionality of devices
- Access to content anytime anywhere there is connection

Notes to examiners:

Read all answers and mark positively up to the maximum marks.

Award marks for the first two reasons identified. However, a development that is clearly linked to a reason can be awarded, even if it is not adjacent to that identified reason.

Each development may only be applied to one reason.

*Award **[1]** for identifying each reason why there is an **increase over time** in FlexiView viewers who watch regularly on smartphones and **[1]** for a development of that reason up to **[2]**.*

*Marks as **[2]** + **[2]**.*

3. Compare and contrast the viewpoints in Source C and Source D with respect to the impacts and implications for **FlexiView**.

[6]

Notes to examiners:

There should be at least one comparison **and** one contrast in the better responses.

The focus must be on the impacts and implications for **FlexiView**.

- Impact = effect/outcome, e.g. increased costs.
- Implication = opportunity/risk as in what it could lead to, e.g. more diverse customer base and increase profits.
- Impacts and implications overlap and inform each other.

Comparisons may include:

Content availability:

- **Source C:** Characters are excited about FlexiView but note that it lacks local TV content and live sports, for example, “I’d love to see some live sports featuring our local teams” and “It’s disappointing that FlexiView doesn’t include any of our local TV content.” **Source D:** The email states that FlexiView aims to improve service by “increasing investment in local content,” directly addressing the concerns from Source C.
- **Implications/impacts for FlexiView:** Increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (impact) resulting in greater profit for FlexiView (implication). Customers may not be satisfied by local content (impact), FlexiView may lose customers to other streaming services (implication).

User engagement:

- **Source C:** Characters enjoy watching popular international shows, like a reality show from Iceland, showing that they engage with FlexiView’s offerings. **Source D:** FlexiView plans to “collect detailed user data for better recommendations,” which could enhance user satisfaction by aligning with viewer preferences.
- **Implications/impacts for FlexiView:** Increased customer satisfaction and international offerings (impact) might attract a more diverse audience and greater profits (implications); privacy concerns may reduce trust in Flexiview (impact) damaging reputation/revenue (implication); data protection may increase costs and cyber security responsibilities (impact) reducing profits (implication); algorithmic influence may shape viewing habits (impact) lead to criticism of recommendation system (implication).

Contrasts may include:

User perspective vs. corporate strategy:

- **Source C** focuses on user experiences, expressing both excitement and disappointment about content availability. **Source D** reflects FlexiView's corporate strategy to enhance service and respond to user feedback through data-driven solutions in order to increase viewers and revenues.
- **Impacts/implications for FlexiView include:** Pressure (including costs) to increase content to satisfy users (impact); increased focus on viewer growth and revenues (impact); could strengthen customer loyalty and revenue (implication).

Unauthorized access:

- **Source C:** Users are benefitting from unauthorized access/sharing a login.
Example: "Thanks for sharing your FlexiView username and password."
Whereas Source D notes plans to "improve methods to identify and block shared login credentials," indicating that FlexiView is concerned about the impact of account sharing.
- **Impacts/implications for FlexiView include:** Shared logins may reduce subscription revenue (impact). Stricter controls on account sharing may help protect revenue (implication), but may also reduce informal exposure and word-of-mouth promotion from users sharing logins (implication). Improving methods to block access and taking legal action is costly (impact). These actions may discourage shared logins and help protect subscription revenue (implication), but may also damage user goodwill (implication).

Suggested level descriptors for question 3.

Marks	Level Descriptor
0	The response does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1-2	- For 1 mark: Candidates identify specific viewpoints from each of the sources - if no comparison or link between sources then this is a [1] max. - For 2 marks: There is a limited number of comparison/contrasts of viewpoints drawn from C and D (whereas, while...)
3-4	There are comparisons (similarities) and/or contrasts (differences) between Sources C and D with impacts/implications identified. The links between the comparisons/contrasts and impacts/implications may be weak or superficial. References to the sources may be implied rather than stated explicitly. - For 3 marks: Few comparisons and/or contrasts are made, and the impacts or implications for FlexiView are briefly mentioned (what). - For 4 marks: A range of comparisons and/or contrasts is provided, with some descriptive details about the impacts and/or implications for FlexiView (such as what, when, and who). Example of impact briefly mentioned [3]: Privacy concerns may reduce trust in FlexiView Example of impact described [4]: Privacy concerns such as excessive tracking of viewing habits and collection of personal data may reduce trust in FlexiView.
5-6	Implications/impacts for FlexiView are explained based on a detailed analysis of a range of similarities AND differences between Source C and Source D. The impacts/implications clearly connect to the comparisons/contrasts. - For 5 marks: the impacts and implications for FlexiView are briefly explained and <u>clearly connected</u> to the comparisons and contrasts briefly explained (why/how) - For 6 marks: shows a detailed and in-depth understanding of the impacts and implications for FlexiView, clearly and effectively connected to the comparisons AND contrasts. Explicit references to the sources should be included. Example of brief explanation of impact [5]: Privacy concerns such as excessive tracking of viewing habits and collection of personal data may reduce trust in FlexiView, <u>as</u> users may feel their data is being overly monitored. Example of explanation of impact with implication [6]: Detailed tracking of viewing habits and recommendation algorithms may reduce trust in FlexiView, <u>as</u> users may feel their personal data is being excessively monitored or profiled, potentially damaging FlexiView's reputation and subscriber retention if users switch to platforms that are more privacy-friendly

4. With reference to Sources A–D **and** your own knowledge, discuss the opportunities **and** dilemmas for the users of streaming services.

[12]

Answers may include:

Source A

Opportunities

- Can watch any time
- Greater accessibility for visually or hearing impaired.
- Can be viewed in multiple languages.
- Can be customised to show personal preferences.
- Can be viewed on the device of the user's choice.
- Can watch on any device with the FlexiView app/website.

Dilemmas

- Requires internet plus app and/or browser.
- Requires sign up.

Source B

Opportunities

- Market may be well established (a large percentage of users in the country).

Dilemmas

- Perhaps there is not much for the older person as the content is skewed to the younger audiences.
- The smartphone may not be the best device on which to view content.

Source C

Opportunities

- Can view content from any global location: gives users a more global perspective.

Dilemmas

- May encourage binge-watching (addictive behaviour).
- Neglects local content.
- Homogenization of content at the expense of cultural diversity.
- Users are sharing passwords (illegal activity). Is the subscription price too high?

Source D

Opportunities

- Collecting user data, leading to improved recommendations.
- Collecting user data for targeted marketing – some users may welcome this.
- Increase in local content.
- Using tracking to identify user location – may then recommend relevant local content.

Dilemmas

- Collecting user data for targeted marketing – may be unwelcome.
- Privacy implications from collection of user data.
- Taking legal action against individuals who share logins.
- Are users being surveilled? What other information is being gathered about the users of FlexiView?
- Is this personal data kept secure/sold to other companies/deleted when a user cancels a subscription?

Synthesis of arguments drawn from multiple sources and own knowledge may include:

- **Personalised recommendations vs loss of autonomy:** Users, particularly younger audiences who make up a larger proportion of subscribers, can easily discover content suited to their interests (opportunity), but recommendation algorithms may track personal data, create filter bubbles, and reduce independent viewing choices (dilemma)/but must trust streaming services with their viewing data (Sources A + B + D).
- **Access to international and diverse cultural content:** Subscribers may engage more with global streaming content and explore entertainment from different countries and cultures (opportunity), but dominant global content may overshadow local cultures and reduce cultural diversity (dilemma). (Sources C + D)
- **Convenient and flexible viewing:** Users may value the ability to stream content anytime on multiple devices (opportunity), but targeted content may create echo chambers and solitary viewing habits may reduce social interaction (dilemma). (Sources A + D, possibly C)
- **Shared logins and affordability:** Users, possibly younger viewers, may reduce subscription costs by sharing accounts with friends or family (opportunity), however users who commonly share accounts may face blocked access or legal action as platforms introduce stricter controls (dilemma). (Sources B + C + D)
- **Engaging entertainment experiences:** Users may be strongly attracted to engaging and personalised entertainment experiences (opportunity), but these systems may encourage binge-watching and excessive screen time (maybe more with younger users) (dilemma). (Sources A, B, C + D)
- **Rapidly evolving platforms and fresh content:** Users can access frequently updated and trending content that appeals to one demographic, such as younger user (opportunity), but may replace content for another demographic (possibly older users) (dilemma). (Sources B + C + D)
- **Shared viewing culture:** Popular streaming content may encourage discussion and social connections (opportunity), but stricter controls on account sharing may reduce informal sharing (dilemma). (Sources C + D)

Students may refer to some of the underlying technologies such as:

- Language, accessibility and subtitle technologies
- Analytical tools/microtargeting
- Content recommendation/curation algorithms
- VPN and geo-blocking technologies
- Location services, e.g. IP address resolution
- Authentication method: password and login credentials
- User data collection and tracking technologies
- Cloud storage and cloud-based streaming infrastructure
- Internet-connected devices used to access streaming services, e.g. smartphones, tablets, smart TVs, laptops, and gaming consoles

Subject specific terminology may include:

Change, expression, identity, power, spaces, systems, values, ethics, data, accessibility, algorithms, bias, machine learning, recommender systems, transparency, well-being, isolation, echo chamber.

Please refer to the Question 4 markband on page 13.

The following markband should be used for responses to Question 4.

SL and HL Paper 2, question 4	
Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	- The response shows a limited understanding of the demands of the question. - There is limited relevant knowledge. - Evidence from sources is not integrated with the response. - The response has limited organization.
4–6	- The response shows some understanding of the demands of the question. - Some knowledge is demonstrated but this is not always relevant or accurate. - Evidence from sources is partially integrated into the response. - The response is partially organized.
7–9	- The response shows adequate understanding of the demands of the question. - Relevant and accurate knowledge is demonstrated with some lapses. - There is adequate integration of evidence from the sources, but this is not always sustained. - The response is adequately organized.
10–12	- The response is focused and shows an in-depth understanding of the demands of the question. - Relevant and accurate knowledge is demonstrated throughout, adding insight to the response. - There is consistent and effective integration of evidence from the sources. - The response is well-structured and effectively organized.