



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

9694/41

Paper 4 Applied Reasoning

May/June 2025

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 4 to 5. [2]
- (c) Analyse the structure of the reasoning in paragraph 3. [5]
- (d) Identify an unstated assumption in paragraph 6 upon which the reasoning relies. [1]
- 2 Identify and explain **four** flaws and/or weaknesses in the reasoning in paragraphs 2 to 4. [8]
- 3 (a) 'The results of all judged events in the Olympics are subject to a significant degree of nationality bias.' (Document 4)
- Identify **four** weaknesses in the support given to this claim by the table in Document 4. [4]
- (b) 'Subjective sports are not as popular as 'first-past-the-post' events at the Summer Olympics.' (Document 5)
- Identify **two** weaknesses in the support given to this claim by the table in Document 5. [2]
- 4 *You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.*
- 'Subjective sports should be included in the Olympics.'
- Construct a reasoned argument to support **or** challenge this claim.
Your argument should:
- have a clear structure and make use of various argument elements
 - use and evaluate evidence from Documents 1 to 5
 - respond to significant counter-positions. [27]

DOCUMENT 1

- 1 The Olympic Games is a showcase of sport and internationalism that happens once every four years. Most well-known sports are included, but they can't include everything – there is no Kabaddi, for example, or my favourite sport, cricket. However, every Olympic Games features some sports that tarnish the name of the whole competition: 'subjective events', that require human opinion to determine the winner – sports like figure skating, synchronised swimming and the snowboarding halfpipe.
- 2 Every Olympic Games has included some subjective sports – gymnastics has been around since the beginning – but a lot of sports that require judges, such as skateboarding, have been added to the mix only recently because they appeal to young people. Trendiness, however, should not be a criterion for inclusion in the Olympics and the criterion for winning should not be 'which competitor is the most flamboyant'. Subjective sports are damaging the Olympic tradition.
- 3 In order to be regarded as a sport, a competition must be considered to be fair. If the winner is decided by judges, the result might not be fair – a winning margin of 0.1 points out of 100 from a panel of five judges could easily have gone the other way. Therefore, the outcome of such events must frequently be unfair. So subjective events are not sports.
- 4 Victory in subjective events is often undeserved. Real sports can contain some temporary uncertainty, but that can be resolved after consulting, for example, a photograph of runners crossing the line. However, in subjective events there is always controversy and disagreement about the winner. In the men's figure skating event in the 2010 Olympics, the gold was awarded to Lysacek but most of the watching crowd thought the more entertaining Plushenko deserved the gold medal. It is ridiculous that the opinion of a small group of judges can outweigh that of thousands of spectators.
- 5 Over the years there have been allegations of rampant bias in judging panels, based on nationality. Many competitors win just because of where they were born. It is also possible for judges to be bribed into awarding points to a certain competitor. There was a major investigation into corruption in the judging of the boxing competition in the Rio Olympics of 2016. So subjective sports damage the reputation of the Olympics.
- 6 The Olympic motto is 'Swifter. Higher. Stronger.' Any sport that does not meet any of these criteria should be excluded from the Olympics. Therefore, subjective sports should not be represented in the Olympic Games.

DOCUMENT 2

Who decides what sports to include in the Olympics?

What connects croquet, cricket, lacrosse, pelota, pigeon shooting, polo, power boating, real tennis, roque, rackets and tug-of-war? They are all one-time Olympic sports that have since been dropped from the competition. Conversely, almost 100 events have been added since as recently as 1980. Skateboarding, surfing, climbing and karate all made their first appearance at the 2020 Olympics. But who decides which sports to keep, drop or add to the mix?

The short answer is: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) – an organisation of 99 members from all over the world, many of whom are former sportspeople or current sports leaders. The IOC's executive board proposes sports for inclusion and their proposals are then voted on by the rest of the committee. Importantly, the IOC also decides on the criteria that must be met in order for inclusion to be considered.

Currently, any sport considered for the Olympics is judged on 35 criteria. Examples of criteria include how much value the sport would contribute to the Olympic legacy, how long the sport has existed, how popular the sport is in the country currently hosting the Games, what would be the media and public interest, and the cost. There are many other conditions, including bans on sports dependent on mechanical propulsion and sports that have no physical component, like chess. The host city also has a role to play and can push for the inclusion of a particular sport in the Games they are hosting – breakdancing was included in the 2024 Games in Paris.

In order to be included, a sport must also be recognised by the IOC. The sport must be administered by an international nongovernmental organisation. Once a sport has been recognised, it is moved to International Sports Federation (IF) status and the international organisation administering the sport must then enforce the Olympic Movement Anti-Doping Code and ensure that the sport complies with the Olympic Charter.

Recognition, however, is not a sufficient criterion for inclusion in the Olympics. Bowling and bridge, although recognised sports, are not represented at the Olympics and sports must meet a popularity threshold – they need to be widely practised in a range of countries and continents.

Numbers can often be a key limiting factor. The Games have grown from 241 competitors at Athens 1896 to more than 10 000 competitors today. But raising the number of competitors beyond its current level creates logistic difficulties, like scheduling and venue limitations, which can lead to certain sports being left out. Baseball featured in the 2020 Games for the first time since 2008. The decision to exclude baseball from the 2012 Games was made after an anonymous IOC vote in 2005. The IOC cited a lack of global appeal (outside of North America and East Asia) as the primary reason for rejection. It was again dropped for 2024. In recent years the IOC has operated a one-in-one-out policy for new sport inclusion.

DOCUMENT 3**Stop moaning and enjoy the spectacle**

The Olympic Games has the unique quality of both raising the awareness of new sports and making certain sports relevant to the casual sports fan. Only once every four years do most people care about gymnastics, snowboarding or my old sport – diving. Most of us would not have heard of Chloe Kim or Ayumu Hirano if it weren't for snowboarding featuring in the Winter Olympics. Some people suggest that the inclusion of sports that require a judge is somehow against the Olympic ideal, but what is the Olympic ideal if not to bring sport to the masses?

Some of the subjective sports are massively popular – skateboarding is something that millions of young people are passionate about. Gymnastics has been in the Olympics since their inception and the Games have been the better for it. Legendary figures like Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci are part of Olympic history.

Gymnastics, skateboarding and other judged sports, like diving and synchronised swimming, operate by the same rules in competitions outside the Olympics and are recognised as sports, not only by the International Olympic Committee, but by the world at large. The petty gripes of a few newspaper columnists in an Olympic year ought to be treated with disdain.

Many so-called 'objective' team sports require judges of one form or another, umpires or referees, upon whose decisions the outcome of the match can rest. And yet tennis, football and hockey are uncontroversially present at the Olympics. The outcome of the vast majority of Olympic boxing matches is decided by judges and yet, somehow, boxing seems to escape the subjectivity criticism usually reserved for the likes of synchronised swimming.

Ultimately, it is the International Olympic Committee that decides whether a sport should be included in the Olympics and, if it's OK with the IOC, it's OK with me.

DOCUMENT 4

Can we trust the outcome of judged sports?

There have been many individual judging controversies in recent Olympics. This has not just been because of a triumph of technical excellence over crowdpleasing antics, such as Lysacek's victory in the men's figure skating in 2010. In the same sport in 2002, the initial result for the team event was actually overturned after an inquiry into poor judging. In the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korean boxer Park Si-Hun was awarded the gold despite an obviously better performance from his US opponent Roy Jones Jr. Park himself reportedly apologised to Jones after the decision and the match referee was heard to say to Jones, 'I can't believe they are doing this to you'. One of the judges later admitted that Jones ought to have won.

It is hard to infer conclusions from these anecdotal events, but there is some hard evidence that shows that the results of all judged events in the Olympics are subject to a significant degree of nationality bias. The data below are from a range of men's figure skating competitions across the 2016–2017 season.

<i>Country</i>	<i>National overscore*</i>
Ukraine	0.42
Russia	0.31
South Korea	0.28
China	0.27
Austria	0.25
France	0.25
Italy	0.21
Canada	0.21
USA	0.18
Japan	0.18
Germany	0.10
Czechia	0.10

* The average difference between the score given by a judge from the same country as the competitor and the average score given by the other judges.

DOCUMENT 5

Some Olympic statistics

Subjective sports are not as popular as 'first-past-the-post' events at the Summer Olympics. Only one sport relying on judges' opinions for the outcome, gymnastics, made the top 10.

<i>Sport</i>	<i>Wins* (%)</i>	<i>Range** (%)</i>
Volleyball	70	
Soccer	64	
Swimming	62	42–73
Triathlon	61	
Track & Field	60	17–84
Rugby	58	
Water Polo	58	
Basketball	57	
Handball	55	
Gymnastics ^a	55	50–61
Modern pentathlon	52	
Tennis	51	46–56
Rowing	50	47–53
Diving ^a	48	40–53
Canoeing	47	44–50
Wrestling ^b	45	42–49
Cycling	44	31–52
Boxing ^b	43	
Table tennis	43	43–43
Field hockey	42	
Judo	41	
Fencing	41	38–44
Badminton	40	39–41
Weightlifting	39	
Trampolining ^a	37	
Taekwondo	37	
Archery	34	
Sailing	32	
Shooting	28	
Rhythmic Gymnastics ^a	26	
Golf	23	
Synchronised Swimming ^a	22	
Equestrian	18	10 ^a –24

* Over 50 000 respondents in the US were given a series of randomised pairs of sports and asked to select the one they thought was 'better'.

** Many sports feature multiple events. The range shows the least and most popular events within each sport.

^a subjective

^b partly subjective

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