

GCSE Economics

Exam Technique & Guidance

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- How to structure a 15-mark question

Paper structure

A reminder about the papers:

- You will sit two papers
- Each paper is worth 50% of the total GCSE marks
- Each paper is 1 ¾ hours long and is worth 80 marks; this equates to a minute a mark and 20 minutes reading time of the “Items”
- Questions will consist of a mixture of MCQs, calculation, short answer and extended response
- Both papers are very similar in structure and will have two sections:

Section A	MCQs, SAQs, 6m, 9m	Approx 48 marks
Section B	SAQ, 6m, 15m	Approx 32 marks

Paper 1 – “How markets work”

- ✓ Economic foundations
- ✓ Resource allocation
- ✓ How prices are determined
- ✓ Production, costs, revenue and profit
- ✓ Competitive and concentrated markets
- ✓ Market failure

Paper 2 – “How the economy works”

- ✓ Introduction to the national economy
- ✓ Government objectives
- ✓ How the government manages the economy
- ✓ International trade and the global economy
- ✓ The role of money and financial markets

Top Tips for success

A reminder about the papers:

- ✓ Manage your time effectively – roughly a minute a mark! This gives you 20 minutes to read each question carefully, plan your response – especially the 15-mark response and read each Item carefully
- ✓ Read every question twice – just to ensure that you answer the question that is specifically asked and not a different question!
- ✓ It is important to look at the marks available for each question and ensure a full enough explanation is given in each answer every time
- ✓ Read the case studies or “Items” very carefully. Remember the case studies will be split into different Items. To move up the mark scheme, answers must be written in context; context can only be awarded if you have read the case study, so take your time reading each Item to ensure that you fully understand it!
- ✓ Remember...mentioning the name of the business or something that is found in the question is not enough for context to be awarded - your answer has to be embedded in the case! This means talk about the business in your answer, but don't just copy bits from the case word for word; use the case study or Item to help support your answer!
- ✓ Remember in “Analyse”, “Recommend” and “Analyse/Evaluate” questions – you need to include points that are fully analysed to reach the highest levels; this involves using connectives and explaining the effect/impact of your point in context
- ✓ Always finish the paper
- ✓ Never leave a question blank
- ✓ Learn all the content and the key terms in the specification carefully – you need to therefore use the specification as part of your revision!
- ✓ Learn all the formulae – formulae will not be given in the exam!

MCQs advice

- With MCQ type tests, usually **time** is very limited. You have 1.2 minutes for each MCQ, so divide the time on all MCQs properly. This does not mean divide time equally. For example, Maths MCQs may take more time to solve while English MCQs should take lot less than the time allocated.
- **Read** the MCQ and before reading the choices, think in your mind for correct answer and then read the choices. It will help you to choose the correct choice or the answer.
- There will be some choices that would surely know are wrong, skip these wrong choices first and focus on the rest choices for correct answer. It increases your chances to select the correct choice.
- For answering MCQs you are directed to record your answers in a specific way. Ensure you follow the directions or your work with become void.
- Practice sample MCQs tests in timed environment. These let you know how you perform under time pressure.
- ✓ Select the correct response and ensure the circle is completely filled in alongside the appropriate answer
- ✓ If you change your mind, cross out the original answer and completely fill in the circle next to the answer you now wish to choose
- ✓ If you do change your mind, refer back to the instructions at the start of Section A to ensure you are following them precisely; the key is to make sure your answer is clear

How to structure a 6-mark question

- “Analyse” questions will appear in Sections A and B
- A level of response marking grid will be used containing 3 levels
- The examiner is looking for detailed or “full” analysis to reach Level 3 of the mark scheme
- Context is extremely important; all 3 levels of the mark scheme refer to context
- A variety of “Analyse” questions will be found in the exams e.g. “Analyse how effective...”, “Analyse one benefit...”, “Analyse the drawback...”
- Read the question carefully to determine whether only one point is required
- If the question does not specifically state how many points to give, **NEVER INCLUDE MORE THAN 2 POINTS IN A RESPONSE** otherwise the answer given may become a series of listed points, which will not demonstrate the skills of analysis

Analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ No definition✓ Maximum one or two points explained with at least 3 steps in the chain of argument✓ The point(s) should be taken from the Item, to ensure the answer is in context from the start✓ The chain of argument should refer to the context throughout and demonstrate a logical chain of argument, with no missed “steps”
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How to structure a 9-mark question

- “Recommend” questions will be found in both Section A
- “Recommend” questions sometimes involve two options, but not always
- Assesses application, analysis and evaluation; a judgement is therefore required
- Levels of response marking with 3 levels; the level that “best fits” the answer as a whole will be awarded. This style of question will follow a case study/context. You must use this in your response
- If there are figures included in the question, ensure they are referred to and used within your response; figures are included in the Item and the question for a reason – the best candidates will always use them!
- The examiner is looking for:
 - ✓ An answer that is written fully in context and shows accurate knowledge and understanding of business concepts
 - ✓ Detailed chains of argument across a maximum of two points
 - ✓ A clearly justified, thorough judgement that is answering the question se

Using Figure 3, assess whether a budget surplus would be good for the UK economy

Introduction:

Use this section as an opportunity to begin the focused answer to the specific question asked. Having a brief introduction allows for structure and consistency. If the question lends itself for the opportunity to include a definition, this is an ideal time to introduce them. However, not all questions will be “obvious” in its key topic. If this is the case, I would recommend that you read the question carefully and identify the “hook” word in the question, use that to form a clear opening paragraph.

For example:

Assess whether the decision to install machinery will be beneficial to the business and its workers. [9m]
You need to think about the topic being assessed, in this case it is decision making. The examiner is expecting you to be able to identify this through the use of the “hook” word of - decision. Here the topic is clear and student should be starting to demonstrate their understanding of decision making and opportunity cost.

Main points:

1. 9m questions require two points and often have two elements to focus on within the question, it is advisable to use paragraphs to structure this section. The question may be specific in the two elements or it may lead itself to a “positive/negative” aspect.

For example:

Assess whether the decision to install machinery will be beneficial to the business and its workers. [9m]
Here one point would focus on the impact of the decision making on the firm and the second would focus on the business.

2. In order to achieve the maximum marks students will have to analyse their points, connector words must be used in order to create a “logical” chain of argument. Think about the impact and consequences of your point in an economic context.
3. Throughout the response, the context will have to be used (eg figure 1). Application marks are required to achieve L3 therefore students will have to support their analysis with either quantitative or qualitative skills from the small case study provided.
4. Ensure that specialist economic terminology is used throughout the written response.

Paragraph 3: Conclusion Overall I think:

(w) – choose which option/make a decision

(w) – why have you chosen that option. Use the phrasing “Not only would it be good because ... refer back to the +ve point you have referred to in your earlier paragraph, but also it is good because (additional evidence to support your judgement IN CONTEXT)

(w) – why is it better than the alternative you have rejected... (think about the situation of the business, its finances, its aims)

Remember to:

(A) – Answer the question; avoid sitting on the fence – decide on the area which you believe will be most impacted

(J) – Justify this decision; refer back to your prior argument and bring in additional evidence to support your judgement by linking different functional areas together and comparing the relative importance of one area against the other

(I) – “It depends” on factor; does your judgement depend upon anything? If so include it here; alternatively will the judgement differ in the short term/long-term in relation to the area that will be most impacted; remember to try and integrate/link different functional areas together

(M) - Explain the most important reason why you have come to this judgement; this may include reasons why an alternative argument has been rejected (think carefully about the situation of the business, its finances, its aims when making this decision); ensure the data in the case is weighed up in terms of importance and reference is continually made to different functional areas

Remember to:

- ✓ Embed your answer in the context throughout
- ✓ Convince the examiner your judgement/choice is correct for the business; write a nice, detailed chunky conclusion clearly answering the question set

Ensure you weigh up the data in the Item in terms of which area will be impacted the most and link together different functional areas; ideally refer to and make links to more than the two areas that are listed in the question

How to structure a 15-mark question – Section B

There will be one 15-mark question in each paper found in Section B only; it will always be the last question on the paper

- “Analyse and Evaluate” questions assess all the assessment objectives: knowledge & understanding, application, analysis and evaluation
- The question will always require you to use both “Items” (case studies)
- Levels of response marking with 5 levels; the level that “best fits” the answer will be awarded

The examiner is looking for:

- Accurate use of key terms; thorough knowledge and understanding of economics which draws together different economic objective/agents
- An answer that relates to the Item
- Detailed chains of argument in context
- A detailed, valid and well supported judgement that is answering the question set and weighs up the information provided in the Item i.e. an answer that compares the relative importance of both points or brings in another functional area

Introduction:

Use this section as an opportunity to begin the focused answer to the specific question asked. Having a brief introduction allows for structure and consistency. If the question lends itself for the opportunity to include a definition, this is an ideal time to introduce them. However, not all questions will be “obvious” in its key topic. If this is the case, I would recommend that you read the question carefully and identify the “hook” word in the question, use that to form a clear opening paragraph.

For example:

Do you think the government should intervene further in the UK supermarket industry? Use Figure 6 and 7 and your own economic knowledge to justify your view

You need to think about the topic being assessed, in this case it is gov. intervention. The examiner is expecting you to be able to identify this through the use of the “hook” word. Here the topic is clear and student should be starting to demonstrate their understanding of market failure and intervention.

Main points:

1. 15m questions require two points and often have two elements to focus on within the question, it is advisable to use paragraphs to structure this section. The question may be specific in the two elements or it may lead itself to a “positive/negative” aspect.
2. In order to achieve the maximum marks students will have to analyse their points, connector words must be used in order to create a “logical” chain of argument. Think about the impact and consequences of your point in an economic context. You need to consider the use of economics diagrams in this section. They can be used to evidence your “economic evidence” and your “specialist language”.
3. Throughout the response, the context will have to be used. Application marks are required to achieve L4 therefore students will have to support their analysis with either quantitative or qualitative skills from the small case study provided. Often in this section there are two contexts which can be used within your response to demonstrate your application skills. It is vital that a wide range of AP is demonstrated in the written response.
4. Ensure that specialist economic terminology is used throughout the written response.

Paragraph 3: Conclusion Overall I think:

(w) – choose which option/make a decision

(w) – why have you chosen that option. Use the phrasing “Not only would it be good because ... refer back to the +ve point you have referred to in your earlier paragraph, but also it is good because (additional evidence to support your judgement IN CONTEXT)

(w) – why is it better than the alternative you have rejected... (think about the situation of the business, its finances, its aims)

Remember to:

(A) – Answer the question; avoid sitting on the fence – decide on the area which you believe will be most impacted

(J) – Justify this decision; refer back to your prior argument and bring in additional evidence to support your judgement by linking different functional areas together and comparing the relative importance of one area against the other

(I) – “It depends” on factor; does your judgement depend upon anything? If so include it here; alternatively will the judgement differ in the short term/long-term in relation to the area that will be most impacted; remember to try and integrate/link different functional areas together

(M) - Explain the most important reason why you have come to this judgement; this may include reasons why an alternative argument has been rejected (think carefully about the situation of the business, its finances, its aims when making this decision); ensure the data in the case is weighed up in terms of importance and reference is continually made to different functional areas

Remember to:

- ✓ Embed your answer in the context throughout
- ✓ Convince the examiner your judgement/choice is correct for the business; write a nice, detailed chunky conclusion clearly answering the question set
- ✓ Ensure you weigh up the data in the Item in terms of which area will be impacted the most and link together different functional areas; ideally refer to and make links to more than the two areas that are listed in the question

Levelling Grid Descriptors

L5	An- fully developed Ap- Comprehensive Eval - Justified
L4	An- Not fully developed Ap- Strong Eval - Coherent
L3	An- Starts to develop Ap- Good Eval – Partial
L2	An- No chain Ap- Simple Eval - Basic
L1	An- No chain Ap- Basic Eval - Simple