

Students learning from home

Preparing for external assessment



Before starting — familiarise yourself

Familiarise yourself with the layout and the instructions of the sample external examination papers for the subjects you study. Take note of:

- the features of the paper. A paper may have a question and response booklet, some papers have two sections, while others provide several question options
- the assessment technique, i.e. multiple choice, short answer response, extended response
- how you are required to indicate your choice of question when more than one is offered.



Preparing — understand the question

When preparing for external assessment remember that some assessment items may be written as a command, rather than a question, and may begin with words such as 'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?'

In both examples below, the prompt is placed at the beginning of the command or question to make it clear what you must do when constructing a response.

Command examples

Explain the role of the government in the theory of competitive advantage.

How does government play a role in the theory of competitive advantage?

Considering the command and question prompts helps you to understand what level of cognition the item is asking you to use.

Cognition examples

	Command	Question prompt
Knowledge retrieval	Identify, examine	Who/What/When ... ?
Comprehension	Explain	Why/How ... ?
Analysis	Compare	What are the similarities and differences between ... ?
	Contrast	How are these [specified factors] different from these [specified factors]? How can these [specified factors] differentiate between [this thing] and [that thing]?
Knowledge utilisation	Evaluate	To what extent is [xxx] the optimum ... / most suitable... / strength of...? What are the deficiencies/limitations of ...?
	Synthesise	How would you assemble ... ? If [xxx] then what conclusion could be drawn about [yyy]?
	Justify	To what extent is the [conclusion/hypothesis/generalisation] supported by evidence?



Practising — plan your response

External examination papers use a variety of question types. It is worthwhile familiarising yourself with the types of questions that might be asked and the expected length of responses.



Multiple choice

When practising multiple choice questions, read the question, try to formulate your own answer, read all the alternatives provided, then choose the best possible answer.



Short answer questions

When writing practice responses to short answer questions, the answer space provides guidance about the expected length of your responses. The mark value is also a good guide to how much time to spend answering the question.



Extended examination response

You must be familiar with the extended examination response technique required in the subject, e.g. analytical essay.

In some instances, the expected length for an extended examination response will be included in the paper. Where a length is not stated, use the number of pages in the response booklet and classroom practice tasks as a guide.



Stimulus material

If a question contains stimulus material, it will be needed to answer the question. Make sure you consider it carefully.

Stimulus material may take the form of images, quotations, data, or maps.



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