

GLOSSARY OF COMMAND TERMS

Candidates should be familiar with the following key terms and phrases used in examination questions. Although these terms are used frequently in examination questions, other terms may be used to ask candidates to present an answer in a specific way.

Account for - Asks candidates to explain a particular event or outcome. Candidates are expected to present a reasoned case for the existence of something.

Analyse - Asks candidates to respond with a closely argued and detailed examination of a perspective or a development. A clearly written analysis will indicate the relevant interrelationships between key variables; any relevant assumptions involved and also include a critical view of the significance of the account as presented. If this key is augmented by “the extent to which” then the candidate should be clear that judgment is also sought.

Assess - Asks candidates to measure and judge the merits and quality of an argument or concept. Candidates must clearly identify and explain the evidence for the assessment they make.

Compare and Contrast- Asks candidates to give an account of the similarities and differences of situations, referring to both throughout the essay.

Compare – Asks candidates to give an account of the similarities between two situations, referring to both throughout the essay.

Define - Asks candidates to give a clear and precise account of a given word or term.

Describe - Asks candidates to give a portrayal of a given situation. It is a neutral request to present a detailed picture of a given situation, event, pattern, process or outcome, although it may be followed by a further opportunity for discussion and analysis.

Discuss/Consider - Asks candidates to consider a statement or to offer a considered review or balanced discussion of a particular topic. If the question is presented in the form of a quotation, the specific purpose is to stimulate a discussion on each of its parts. The question is asking for the candidate’s opinions; these should be presented clearly and supported with as much evidence and sound argument as possible.

Evaluate - Asks candidates to make an appraisal of the argument or concept under investigation or discussion. Candidates should weigh the nature of the evidence available, and identify and discuss the convincing aspects of the argument, as well as its limitations and implications.

Examine - Asks candidates to investigate an argument or concept and present their own analysis. Candidates should approach the question in a critical and detailed way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue.

Explain - Asks candidates to describe clearly and give reasons for a concept, process, relationship or development.

Identify – Asks candidates to provide an answer from a number of possibilities.

Outline - Asks candidates to write a brief summary of the major aspects of the issue, principle, approach or argument stated in the question.

To what extent - Asks candidates to evaluate the success or otherwise of one argument or concept over another. Candidates should present a conclusion, supported by arguments.

Why - This short key word invites candidates to present reasons for the existence of something. Thus, the brevity of this command rather disguises a powerful requirement to present a detailed, reasoned argument. In effect it is similar to the invitation "account for".