

A guide to command words by question type (taxonomy)

The table below is to identify which command words should be used against the specific question types and AO. No more than one command word should be tested within a question.

Question type	Used for	Expected response	Command word	Definition of command word	AO coverage	Knowledge in isolation
Short closed response	Single operation responses - simple recall, or simple application or categorisation	Single word/ answer/fragment of a sentence	Classify	Group or place on a scale	AO1	Yes
			Give	The recall of a fact or an example	AO1	Yes
			List	The recall of a series of names or things	AO1	Yes
			Name	The recall of a word or set of words by which someone or something is known	AO1	Yes
			State	The recall of a fact or an example	AO1	Yes
Short open response	Simple content topics	Up to two sentences	Define	Statement of translation	AO1	Yes
			Describe	An account of something without reasons	AO2	
			Identify	Establish or indicate who or what someone or something is	AO1	Yes
			Outline	A brief account of non-linked points	AO1	Yes
Long open response	More complex content topics	Up to a couple of paragraphs	Assess	An account of something with the relative importance of ideas balanced against each other and an evaluative statement	AO2 – 4 marks AO3 – 4 marks	
			Examine	Justification or exemplification of a point using analysis or evaluation	AO1 – 3/4 marks AO3 – 3/4 marks	

			Explain	How and why, meaning of something with reasons	AO1 / AO2	
			Justify	Articulate a viewpoint with reasons	AO1 – 4 marks AO3 – 4 marks	
			Summarise	Express the most important facts or ideas about something	AO1 / AO2 / AO3	
			Consider	Analysis of a stimulus to make a judgement	AO3	
Extended response	Synoptic drawing together conclusion	Essay	Compare	Explore similarities and differences between two or more factors	AO1 – 4/5 marks AO2 – 4/5 marks AO3 – 4/5 marks	
			Discuss	Explore issues, lines of reasoning and situations, articulating different viewpoints	AO1 – 4/5 marks AO3 – 8/10 marks	
			Evaluate	Use analysis to make a judgement	AO2 – 4/5 marks AO3 – 8/10 marks	
			Analyse	Examine something methodically and in detail, typically in order to explain and interpret it	AO2 – 4/5 marks AO3 – 8/10 marks	
Quantitative skills	Interpret a graph or set of data, plot		Suggest	Analysis or evaluation of a data based stimulus	AO3	

	a graph, work out a value from information provided		Calculate	Obtain a numerical answer, showing relevant working. If the answer has a unit, this must be included	AO2	
			Interpret	Explain the meaning of something with reference to a stimulus	AO2	

The table below is to indicate the demand of the command word.

Question type	Command word	Demand	Exemplification
Short closed/open response Calculations	Classify	Low	<p>A habitual or routine response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out a one-step procedure, for example recall or description of a fact or facts that are not linked, a term, principle or concept. • Recall or describe a fact or facts, a term, principle, definition, concept or procedure. • A routine question or simple, set procedure. • Apply a formula • Apply a standard set of conventions or criteria. • Locate information in a table, diagram.
	Define		
	Describe		
	Give		
	Identify		
	List		
	Name		
	State		
Calculate			
Short closed/open response Calculations	Explain	Medium	<p>Requires some mental processing beyond a habitual response, that is, a decision has to be made by the candidate, may include unfamiliar contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a conclusion from observations • Use and application of conceptual knowledge to describe or explain phenomena that required linkage, select appropriate procedures involving two or more linked steps, organise/display data, interpret or use data or graphs.
	Justify		
	Outline		
	Consider		
	Summarise		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate a route through a problem or calculation, that is, there are points where a candidate can get stuck. • Use and apply conceptual knowledge to describe or explain phenomena that requires linkage. • Select appropriate procedures involving two or more linked steps. • Demonstrate use of knowledge. Apply a set of rules or protocols to a situation. • Identify cause and effect. • Apply skills or concept to a task • Interpret or use data or graphs. Convert information from one form to another.
Long open/extended response Calculations	Analyse	High	<p>More complex and abstract ideas and may include unfamiliar contexts. Candidates need to consider a number of ideas and transfer knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse complex information or data. Use evidence. Draw conclusions from different observations. • Use concepts to solve problems. Work with complex concepts. • Synthesise or evaluate evidence. Use conjecture. Make predictions. Justify. • Analyse complex information or data, synthesise or evaluate evidence, justify, reason given various sources demonstrating complex linkage, develop a plan or sequence of steps to approach a problem. • Reason giving various sources demonstrating complex linkage. • Develop logical argument from a concept. • Develop a complex plan or sequence of steps to approach a problem.
	Assess		
	Compare		
	Discuss		
	Examine		
	Evaluate		
	Suggest		
	Interpret		

The table below is to indicate the mark allocation per command word.

Command word	Type of mark scheme	AS Level		A Level	
		Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Classify	Points	1	1	1	1
Give	Points	1	1	1	1
List	Points	1	1	1	1
Name	Points	1	1	1	1
State	Points	1	1	1	1
Define	Points	1	1	1	1
Describe	Points	2	4	2	4
Identify	Points	1	1	1	1
Outline	Points	2	5	2	5
Assess	Levels	8	8	8	8
Examine	Levels	6	6	8	8
Explain	Levels	2	6	2	6
Justify	Levels	8	8	8	8
Summarise	Points	2	6	2	6
Consider	Points	4	4	4	4
Compare	Levels	12	12	15	15
Discuss	Levels	12	12	15	15
Evaluate	Levels	12	12	15	15
Analyse	Levels	23	12	15	15
Suggest	Levels	12	12	15	15
Calculate	Points	1	4	1	4
Interpret	Points	2	6	2	6