

Evaluation – the answer to your prayers

The plan

Definition of key terms - crisp, accurate

Analysis/explanation – points 1-2-3, 1 key point per para

Diagram to support explanation

Examples/evidence in support

Application to context (if one is given) 1-3 points

Evaluate (1 or 2 evaluation points per main point) as you go (what should/could be, important, priority – see below), evaluative conclusions, not summary (waste of time)

Conclusion – reasoned, don't repeat points already made

Refer back to key words in question/context throughout

What evaluation is

Evaluation is about making **critical judgements** and coming to **reasoned conclusions** using **evidence** in front of you and the **wider knowledge** you bring. Strong evaluative answers use **supporting evidence** to justify an argument. **Justifying** an argument carries more marks than making the argument since stating an argument may be simple. If you are really pushed for time, add in some final evaluation points as bullets. **HINT: DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHALLENGE THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM**

Weestep in evaluation

Wider context – bigger picture, use it to add to arguments, what else is going on, what other effects outside main effect

Efficiency – more or less efficient resource allocation

Equality/equitability (fairness) – some benefit more than others, distributive effects, who, why, is it retrospective

Scope, scale or magnitude – where people are affected, how much, who is affected, different stakeholders/economic agents (consumers, workers, managers, investors, companies, government, policy makers/civil servants, the poor, the rich etc. etc. – remember to think about **what they know, perceive, remember, expectations, how they make decisions**), why, results, strong or weak effects, broad or narrow, some or all, equally?

Time – how long will it last, will it stay the same, diminish over time, or increase, learning effects. But, is it too early to come to a definitive conclusion?

Effectiveness – does it solve issue it was intended to

Prioritisation – which of your points is strongest and why, in context of question

Evaluation phrases

However, hence, nevertheless, although, it is likely that, tendency is, in retrospect/hindsight, on the other hand, in the short run/but long run, it depends upon, data suggests, according to the extract, arguments finely balanced, most important factor/cost/benefit is.... because, is relatively insignificant because – something else more important, theory may not hold true because, idea often criticised because, argument contradicted by evidence, no longer applies as conditions have changed, time lags means policy takes time to work through, effects take time, possible conflicts, the writer argues that, but tentative – **may, might, can, could**

Time and causation

Time taken to change policy, time to implement, short vs. medium vs. long term causes and effects; first, second and third round effects, but how long does it take to do, first get weaker?; suppose other things do change, when do they change, what then happens?; relative importance of different strands of argument – prioritise them; nothing happens in isolation – other possible changes?; are effects exaggerated or could they be more serious than stated?

Evidence

Evidence, what actually happened, is it reliable, is there bias in extracts? Up to date supporting evidence/examples – is it up to date? Does it really support the argument?

The command words within a question that definitely require evaluation include:

Evaluate – e.g. compare several possible views about a problem or an issue and come to a reasoned conclusion about which view holds most weight E.g. evaluate the performance of the Bank of England in maintaining macroeconomic stability in recent years

Assess - analyse an issue and weigh up the relative importance of different strands e.g. assess the possible effects of a rise in the external value of the pound against the currencies of our major trading partners

Do you think – invites a personal response but the highest marks are awarded for good analysis backed up with reasoned argument and supporting evidence e.g. do you think a national system of road pricing should be introduced for Britain's motorway network?; should school meals be free? ; should we charge for doctor visits?

Discuss – prompts you to provide and then compare a range of possible views about an issue or a problem. E.g. discuss the advantages and disadvantages of introducing a national minimum wage into the UK labour market

Criticise - analyse the problems facing UK manufacturing industry in today's global economy

To what extent – invites broad analysis and discussion and judgement on the importance/merits/demerits of something or a policy

Ten strategies for improving evaluation skills in data response and essay questions

1. Make good use of your **final paragraph** – avoid repetition of points already made
2. Look for **key stem words** in the question – build your evaluation around this
3. Put an economic event, a trend, a policy into a **wider context**
4. Be familiar with different **schools of thought** e.g. free market versus government intervention
5. A singular economic event **never happens in isolation**, especially in a world where economies are so closely inter-connected.
6. Question the **reliability of the data** you have been given
7. Draw on your wider knowledge to provide supporting evidence and examples
8. Consider both **short term and longer term consequences** (they are not always the same)
9. Consider both positive and negative consequences
10. Think about what might happen to your arguments if you **drop the “ceteris paribus” assumption**