

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. For example:

How do you account for the length and stability of the government of either Leopold Senghor in Senegal or Felix Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast?

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. For example:

Analyse the social impact of developments in (a) transport and (b) health care since 1945.

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. For example:

Assess John F Kennedy’s handling of the Cold War problems during his presidency.

Using the sources and your own knowledge, assess the extent to which Mao was effective in ‘eliminating classes and realizing universal harmony’ in China up to 1953.

compare/compare and contrast

Asks candidates to describe two situations and present the similarities and differences between them. On its own, a description of the two situations does not meet the requirements of this key word/phrase. For example:

Compare the effects of the changes in family structure since 1945 in one developed and one developing nation.

Compare and contrast the circumstances that gave rise to the regimes of Juan Perón and Fidel Castro in Latin America.

define

Asks candidates to give a clear and precise account of a given word or term. For example:

Define the aims of two international economic organizations and analyse their success in improving economic conditions.

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. For example:

Describe the content and discuss the relative importance of the Camp David Accords to the Middle East peace process.

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. For example:

Discuss the view that the United Nations General Assembly has become a forum for propaganda rather than constructive debate, but nevertheless acts as a useful safety valve.

Consider the significance of the 1837 rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada for the development of Canada to 1867.

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. For example:

'German policy after January 1917 forced the United States to declare war.'
Evaluate the validity of this statement.

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 which uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue. For example:

Examine the role of the Treaty Port system in the development of China's relations with foreign powers between 1842 and 1870.

explain

Asks candidates to describe clearly, make intelligible and give reasons for a concept, process, relationship or development. For example:

Explain the circumstances in which NATO and the Warsaw Pact were formed. What contribution did each make to the intensification of the Cold War?

Explain the success or failure of two guerrilla wars, each chosen from a different region.

how?

On its own this is a straightforward invitation to present an account of a given situation or development. Often a second part will be added to such an essay question to encourage analysis.

How and why did Indo-China achieve independence from France after the Second World War?

Adding a second word such as "**successfully**", "**effective**", "**accurate**", or "**far**" turns a "how" question into one that requires a judgment. The candidate is now expected to provide his/her detailed reasons for that judgment.

How successful has the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) been in achieving its aims?

How far do you agree that the absence of the United States from the League of Nations was the major factor in the failure of that organization to preserve world peace?

identify

Asks candidates to recognize one or more component parts or processes. A second part will be added to such an essay question requiring explanation and analysis. For example:

With reference to three examples, identify and explain the different reactions of African peoples to European attempts at annexation of their territory.

outline

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

Outline the ways in which two industrialized countries, each from a different region, attempted to solve the problems arising out of the Great Depression.

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. For example:

To what extent can nationalism rather than religion be considered the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

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".

Why have African-Americans been attracted to the teaching of Islam?

Why, since independence, have Asian countries achieved greater economic success than those in Africa? Refer to at least two countries in each region.