

## Contents

<b>A</b>	<b>THE BIG PICTURE</b>	
	Paper 1 in a Nutshell	4
	What are Examiners looking for/assessing?	5
	"GP is Life"	7
	How do we even begin?	9
<b>B</b>	<b>THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF WRITING THE ESSAY</b>	11
	The Writing Process	12
	Pre-Writing	12
	Question Analysis: Interrogating and Unpacking the Question	12
	Addressing the Question	15
	Brainstorming	16
	Planning and Organising your Essay	17
	Writing	18
	Introductions: First Impressions Count!	18
	Paragraph Development	21
	Conclusions: End off with a Bang!	26
	Post-Writing	28
	Proofreading and Editing	28
	<b>APPENDIX</b>	32
	Band Descriptors	32
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	34

# **THE BIG PICTURE**

***What you need to understand***

## **Paper 1 in a nutshell**

Eight questions will be set, of which you will have to answer one in 500 to 800 words (approximately 3-4 pages in average-sized handwriting). Quality matters more than quantity, and Examiners have cautioned that excessively lengthy essays tend to get repetitive.

You will be expected to examine issues of local, regional and global significance, drawing on current affairs as well as general knowledge related to:

- society and culture
- economics
- politics
- the arts and humanities
- science and technology
- the environment.

Questions will be general in nature and require you to draw on your knowledge from across disciplines to show an awareness of significant local/regional/global issues and demonstrate understanding at a conceptual level.

Questions will require you to put forth a clear personal stand and support it with evidence, while demonstrating awareness and understanding of multiple, differing perspectives.

There is no fixed structure to writing the essay in terms of the number of paragraphs there should be, or the sequence of Supporting and Opposing Points. There is no *one* 'right' way because it really depends on the material you have and what you wish to achieve with your paragraphs. What matters more is *writing mindfully* and knowing what your *intent* is. However, your teachers may suggest some approaches as a starting point. As you gain competence and confidence in your GP journey, you can use your discretion to make the structural and linguistic choices that you feel would make your response coherent, cohesive and compelling.

The total mark for the essay is **50** (30 for Content and 20 for Language).

You have **90 minutes** to write your essay. This includes time for planning, proofreading and editing your response.

**What are Examiners looking for/assessing?**

Examiners are assessing...	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Content</b></p> <p>As demonstrated in...</p>
Your understanding of the <b>terms and scope</b> of the question	Your <i>unpacking</i> and explanation of terms in the introduction as well as later in your essay.
Your level of <b>conceptual understanding</b>	<p>Your ability to make observations of <i>trends</i> and <i>relationships</i> as well as <i>connections</i> across issues and ideas in a <i>measured</i><sup>1</sup>, <i>nuanced</i><sup>2</sup> and <i>subtle way</i>. Part of conveying this clearly requires effective phrasing, such as through the appropriate use of <u>modal verbs</u><sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>Your ability to <i>apply</i> or <i>adapt ideas</i> to other contexts where appropriate and relevant, for example, changes in <i>time</i> and/or <i>place</i>.</p> <p>Your ability to <i>analyse</i> and <i>evaluate issues</i> of <i>local</i>, <i>regional</i> and <i>global significance</i>, and their <i>implications</i> on <i>individual</i> and <i>society</i>, where relevant.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Measured: qualified, not a blunt observation, partial agreement/disagreement</li> <li>2) Nuanced: recognising complexity</li> <li>3) Modal verbs: verbs that show possibility, intent, ability, or necessity, e.g. can, may, might, would, could, should, will, must</li> </ol>
Your use of <b>illustration</b>	How effectively (clearly, thoroughly and succinctly) your <i>examples</i> support the <i>points</i> you are making. Examples should be wide-ranging and well-analysed.
The <b>relevance</b> of your essay	The degree to which you have <i>addressed the question requirements</i> and <i>responded to the specific question set</i> , as opposed to the general topical area.
How you have achieved <b>balance</b> in your essay	<p>Your consideration of <i>differing perspectives</i> (i.e. those that support and challenge your own) and <i>differing contexts</i>.</p> <p>While this is assessed under Content, being able to use appropriate linguistic cues to distance yourself from views that oppose your own, as well as to <u>hedge</u><sup>4</sup> and <u>qualify</u><sup>5</sup> your claims, would be crucial here.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) limit or qualify (something) by stating <i>conditions</i> or <i>exceptions</i></li> <li>5) make (a statement or assertion) <i>less absolute</i>; add <i>reservations</i> to</li> </ol>
The <b>logical development of ideas</b> in your essay from start (the introduction) to finish (the conclusion)	<p><i>Body paragraphs</i> which support the stand and elaborate on perspectives outlined in your introduction, and a conclusion which is not just a summary of the essay but a <i>nuanced resolution</i> of the issue.</p> <p>In other words, your body paragraphs logically develop the ideas in your introduction and also lead to a reasonable conclusion.</p>



## **Language**

*Examiners will be assessing the accuracy, range and sophistication of the following:*

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Grammar (subject-verb agreement, tenses, prepositions, articles)
- Meaning should be conveyed clearly and effectively
- Sentence structure
- Appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary
- Coherent paragraphing

*See pages 28-31 for some Language pointers and resources.*

## ***“GP is Life”***

**As we always say in Dunman High: GP is Life. GP is not just a pen and paper exercise.**

- GP questions reflect timeless and timely debates that are going on in the world.
- They reflect the *complex, ambiguous* reality of the world around us.
- The essay is an invitation for you to *enter the larger conversation* and *have your say*.
- There are intentionally *no clear cut answers*: agreeing or disagreeing would be equally valid stances to take!

**What makes things so complex?**

- Multiple *players* and their interests.
- Differing *contexts* across time and space.
- Differing *interpretations* of events.
- *Implications* of events for different groups of people (in different places), especially given the *interconnected* and *interdependent* nature of phenomena.

The challenge for you is to convey your stand with utmost clarity — such that the Examiner is never once unsure of where you stand — while also demonstrating your awareness and understanding that things are *not so simple*. Without demonstrating this understanding, your essay would likely come across as naive, or simplistic and lacking the maturity of thought required at the GCE A Level Examination.

‘Simplistic’ or ‘naive’ here would tend to mean arguing as if:

- Things are black and white and everyone interprets/experiences things the same way.
- Everyone thinks, behaves and responds the same way, everywhere, all the time.
- Benefits and disadvantages are absolute and experienced universally.
- Reality is static and unchanging.
- Outcomes always match the intentions.
- What should be done is always what can be done.
- Assuming universal truth.
- Taking things at face value.

Understanding the above is crucial in demonstrating **conceptual understanding**. But while the reality of the world and the events that unfold might be messy, your opinions and arguments must *always be clear*.

**How can you show that you are able to appreciate this complexity? By considering...**

Stakeholders/players and their perspectives/ interests	Contexts	Exceptions and Conditions	Evaluation lenses/ common tensions
<p><i>Individuals</i> and the demographic they are a segment of</p> <p><i>Non-Governmental Organisations</i> representing different causes/demographics</p> <p><i>Governments</i></p> <p><i>Inter-Governmental Organisations</i></p> <p><i>Corporations</i></p> <p><i>Crime syndicates</i></p> <p>(You may also consider <i>subgroups</i> within these stakeholder groups)</p>	<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern day</li> <li>• Past</li> <li>• How an issue may have changed from past to present</li> </ul> <p>Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big / Small</li> <li>• East/ West</li> <li>• Rich/ Poor</li> <li>• Old/ Young</li> <li>• Free/ Controlled</li> <li>• Religious/ Secular</li> <li>• Conservative/liberal</li> </ul> <p>Differing cultures</p> <p>Differing ages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there <i>limits</i> to your claim?</li> <li>• Who, where or when might your claim not be applicable (to) and why?</li> <li>• What <i>conditions</i> must be met for your claim to hold?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past vs present <i>trends</i></li> <li>• Ideal vs reality</li> <li>• Intention vs outcome</li> <li>• Cost vs benefit</li> <li>• Tradeoffs</li> <li>• Positive vs negative consequences</li> <li>• Superficial vs deeper analysis</li> <li>• Rhetoric/theory vs reality</li> <li>• Majority vs minority</li> <li>• Long term vs short term implications</li> </ul>

**...and by being careful in your choice of words and phrases** (so that you do not unwittingly give the impression that you are making absolute claims/assertions).

Eg.:

Too sweeping: Technology is beneficial to our lives.

More nuanced: In most instances, technology has improved our lives for the better -- at least for those privileged enough to have access to it.



Some of these considerations, notably *stakeholders* and *contexts*, should already come to mind when you are brainstorming for points for your essay. Some of the other considerations may not come to mind immediately, but should strike you later on as you flesh out your arguments.

**Exercise:**

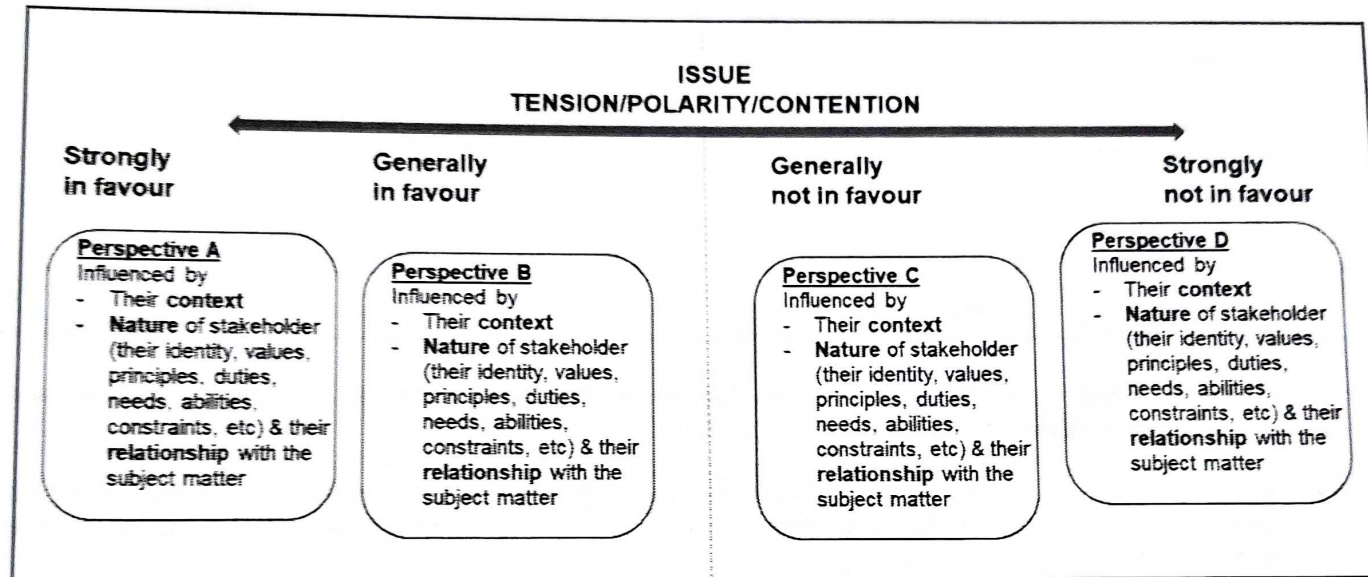
- Read an essay of your choice. Your teachers may provide you with a sample, or you can look through publications such as Dunman VOICES and Broader Perspectives.
- Identify
  - a) the stakeholders and contexts explored;
  - b) the evaluation lenses applied;
  - c) any exceptions or conditions that have been articulated in the arguments, and
- Pick out examples of how the writer uses language to make a nuanced observation.



### How do we even begin?

Most of you will appreciate by now that in argumentative essays, there is a *point of contention* from which the two general stances arise. We also refer to this as the *issue*, *tension* or *polarity* in the question. Where you may need to refine your understanding, however, is in moving from black and white, un-contextualised 'for and against' arguments, to arguments which are more thoughtful and nuanced.

Instead, try to explore the *differing perspectives* people may have towards the issue in question by considering *who* would have a stake, *what* their stance is and *why* they might hold that particular stance. The diagram below illustrates some factors you may take into consideration when attempting to understand why particular stakeholders may adopt a particular stance. The general understanding here is that a stakeholder's *unique context and nature* will affect their perspective on any issue.



Note that in addition to considering the above, you will have to decide where **you** personally stand along the spectrum, and how you would **respond to**, or **reconcile**, the different stakeholders' perspectives.

Let's illustrate the above approach by considering the following question:

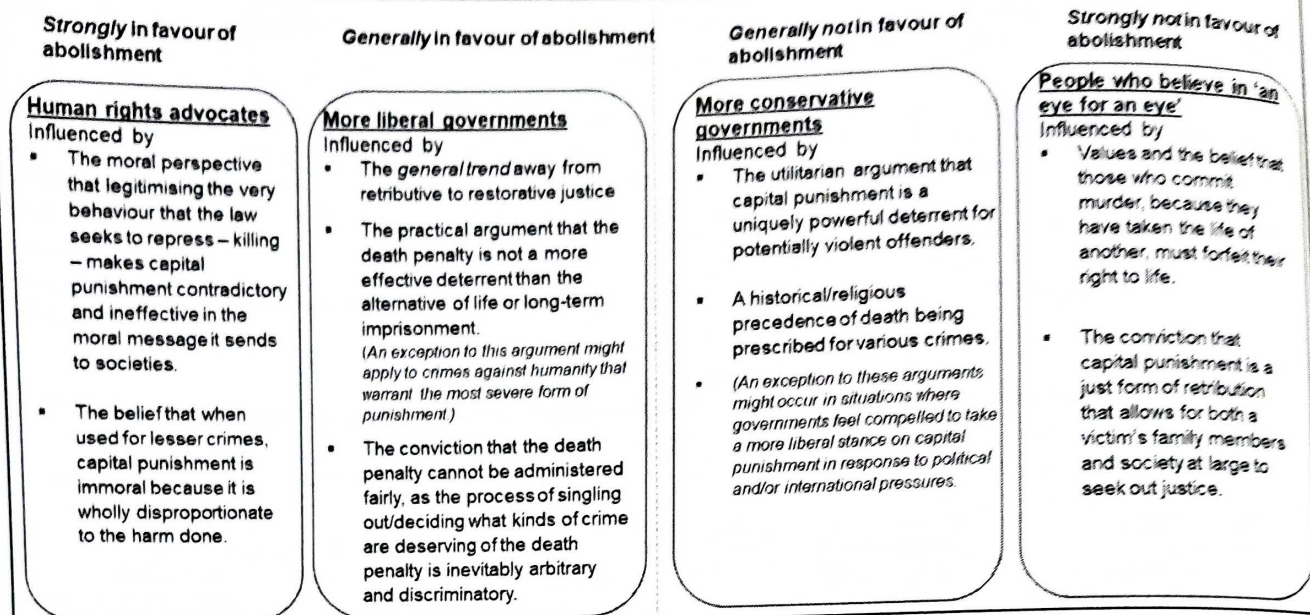
### ***Should capital punishment be abolished?***

Take a moment to reflect on these questions.

- *Who* might some *stakeholders* be in this debate?
- *What perspectives* are they likely to adopt and where might they fall along the spectrum?
- *Why* are they likely to adopt these perspectives? What *influences* these perspectives? Consider their unique *contexts, nature and relationships* with the subject matter.



## SHOULD CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BE ABOLISHED?



Now that you have a feel of the differing perspectives that can be offered and where relevant stakeholders may stand on the issue of capital punishment, do also bear in mind that:

- You are not required to churn out all available perspectives. Simply pick the ones that will **most effectively convey your stance** while offering **sufficient breadth of argumentation** (i.e. perspectives that lie on either side of the spectrum).
- Even on the same end of the spectrum, there exist **subtle differences in perspectives** held by stakeholders depending on their respective roles, values, norms and contexts. Identifying these differences will allow you to showcase a **more layered and nuanced response**.
  - In the illustration above, human rights advocates, for example, may hold a non-negotiable stance that capital punishment must be abolished at all costs, because of the belief that it is wholly immoral. More conservative governments, while generally agreeing that capital punishment should be abolished, may instead take on a more layered perspective and acknowledge (in its role as a country's ruling body) that there may be universally agreed upon circumstances that render capital punishment mandatory. Such a circumstance might include crimes against humanity, where perpetrators have caused human suffering and death on a large scale.
- Note that (as in the example above), as you develop arguments for each stakeholder, you can also **consider exceptions and conditions to your arguments** to show more rigour.

\* Admittedly, it may be challenging, especially in the beginning, to think of specific stakeholders. Do not let this be a reason to get 'stuck' in thinking of perspectives. In such cases, it may help instead to think of groups with certain **attitudes** that may result in a particular perspective, e.g.: *idealists, optimists, realists, pragmatists, pessimists, conservatives, liberals...* If this is still difficult, at *least* consider the context from which a particular perspective may arise.

### Exercise:

For the following issues, consider *who* might have a stake, *what* their stance might be and briefly explain *why*. Draft your answers on a simple spectrum.

- 1) Abolishing examinations in schools
- 2) Censoring movies
- 3) Hosting a major sporting event in a country

# **THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF WRITING THE ESSAY**

# THE WRITING PROCESS

The writing process can be broken down into three stages.

PRE-WRITING (approx. 20 min)	WRITING (approx. 60 min)	POST-WRITING (approx. 10 min)
Choosing a Question Question Analysis Brainstorming Planning and organising your points	Crafting the Introduction Writing the Body Paragraphs Rounding off with a satisfying Conclusion	Proofreading Editing

## PRE-WRITING

Examiners constantly stress the importance of planning, so do not overlook the pre-writing stage! This is especially important now that the requirement to demonstrate **conceptual understanding** has been made more explicit: it is only when you carefully think through the question to explore the *relationships* between ideas, purposefully consider the differing (or similar!) perspectives/interpretations *across contexts* (e.g. cultures, time and space), as well as perceptively analyse trends and their *implications on different demographics in society* that your essay will even begin to potentially demonstrate such conceptual understanding.

### Question Analysis: Interrogating and Unpacking the Question

When analysing a question:

- Ascertain what the **topic/subject matter** is and ensure that you understand what it refers to.
  - Some questions may have only have one clear topic/subject area.
    - E.g.: *Is religion still relevant today?*
  - Other questions may explore the relationship between two topics/subject areas.
    - E.g.: *'Science and religion will always conflict.' Discuss.* *Not immediately obvious*
- Ascertain what **question type** you are dealing with. Some common question types are:
  - Questions assessing the *role/value/function* of something
  - Questions assessing the *impact* of something
  - 'How far'/'To what extent' question types
  - 'Should' question types
  - *Absolute* question types
  - *Comparison* questions
    - Comparison across time (past vs present)
    - Comparison between two or more entities
    - False dilemmas/dichotomies
  - 'In your society' questions

Your tutors will suggest some approaches to these different question types in class.

- Ascertain if any specific **context** or **demographic** has been specified.
  - E.g.: *'Religion is an important part of the lives of young people today. Consider whether this is true in your society.* → You will have to ensure that your response maintains the focus on i) young people ii) in your society, iii) in today's context.
- Ascertain if there are any **key terms** that you can **explore to broaden the scope** of your response.
  - Many students simply replace key terms with synonyms when analysing the question, when what they could and should be doing is to explore different *degrees, facets, manifestations*, or *connotations* of a term, as well as what some *common associations* might be.



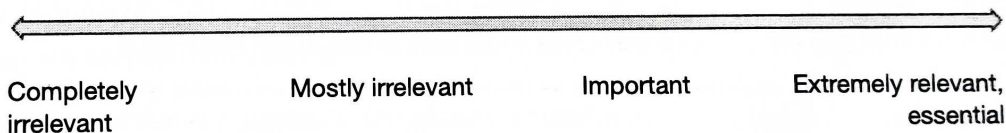
- Ascertain if there are any words that may change the **nuance** in the question, or contain certain **assumptions** and therefore have implications on what might be expected in the response, after all:
  - *Do you love me?* is not the same question as
  - *Do you still love me?* or
  - *Will you ever love me?* or
  - *Should you love me?* or
  - *Do you love me more than you love him?* or
  - *Do you love me enough?*

Answering all these questions as if they were asking/suggesting exactly the same thing would mean that you have not really grasped the nuances in the question, and are therefore not fully addressing the question. Some words you may need to pay attention to include:

- 'still', which suggests that something in the present context has changed from before, and requires an examination of past and present
  - 'ever'/'never', which suggest pessimism/great doubt, and would require candidates to show understanding of why there is much pessimism or doubt.
  - 'too much', which suggests that a situation has gone overboard, to the point that it is becoming undesirable and harmful.
  - 'more than'/'most'/'main' and similar words, which denote that a comparison must be done.
  - *loaded terms* that may compel you to offer a more measured take.
- Ascertain where the **tension** in the question lies.
    - The **tension** refers to the **point where the debate arises/the competing points of view arise**. It is important that you identify this correctly because this is the ultimate point that would require resolving and taking a stand on. Without this, you would have not addressed the *crux* of the question.

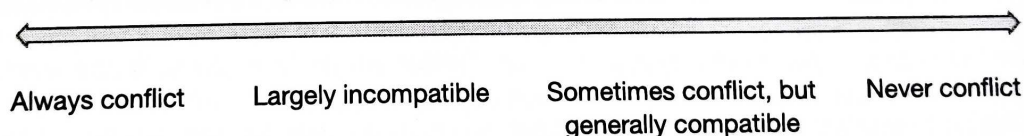
- E.g. *Is religion still relevant today?*

The tension lies in assessing whether religion *is* or *is not* still *relevant*. Your stand would lie somewhere on a spectrum like the one below:



- E.g. *'Science and religion will always conflict.'* Discuss.

The tension lies in assessing if the two *will* or *will not* always conflict. Your stand could lie somewhere on a spectrum like the one below:



- When you think of where you stand along such a spectrum, make it a habit to think of **exceptions** and/or **conditions**, e.g.: "largely incompatible *except when...*" or "generally compatible *if...*"
  - E.g.: *Should capital punishment be abolished?*  
You might argue 'yes, *except* in cases where the scale of the crime is so massive, such as crimes against humanity.'

Noting and understanding the above is important because these terms will *set the parameters* for your response. Veering away from the parameters would result in an off-topic response.



### **What do we mean by unpacking the question? Why is it important?**

You will often hear teachers repeatedly emphasising the importance of 'unpacking the question'. To unpack something means to analyse it into its component elements. Too often, students gloss over the unpacking process and jump straight into brainstorming for points because they think that after all, that is what they are supposed to do – generate arguments. But unpacking the question is central to understanding the question. This essential step allows you to explore the potential in the question to the fullest. When you unpack the question well, it will allow you to add breadth, depth and clarity to your essay.

### **The power of 5W1H (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How):**

- What is the issue in question?
- Why might this question arise in the first place?
- Who might have an opinion/stake in the issue? What would their stand be? Why?
- What is meant by X (key term)? What does X entail? What is the nature of X? How might X manifest itself? What are some different facets of X?
- Who might experience X/find X important? What is their experience of X? How do they experience X? When? Why?
- How might X be viewed differently in different cultures/countries?
- How might X/views of X have changed over time? (list of questions is non-exhaustive)

Let's take a simple example: **Do you still love me?**

Unpacking here would mean asking questions like:

- What do we mean by love?
- What are the different ways one can show love?
- Who is the 'you' in question, and what would count as 'love' for that person?
- How does their context influence their understanding/yardstick of what counts as love?
- What does the word 'still' imply, and how would that affect the response to the question?

Notice that when you ask some of these questions, you are already beginning to explore *stakeholders* and their *perspectives*, as well as varying *contexts*. Note however that while the 5W1H are a powerful starting point, unpacking usually does not involve only one round of questions. One question may lead to another. When you unpack the question thoroughly, you will notice that that is when you begin to discover *different facets* of the issue, and potential *grey areas*. These grey areas could lead to some insightful points!

### **Exercise:**

Practise question analysis and unpacking on the following questions, using the above pointers.

### ***Is it always important to succeed? (2000 A Level)***

- What is the topic?
- What is the question type?
- Have any contexts or demographics been specified?
- What is the tension in the question?
- Are there any words we should pay particular attention to as they may affect the nuance of the question?
- Explore the key terms and ask some 5W1H questions.
- Outline a spectrum of possible stances to take. Do any exceptions/conditions come to mind?

**How far is it important for people to be aware of current events in countries other than their own? (2014 A Level)**

- What is the topic?
- What is the question type?
- Have any contexts or demographics been specified?
- What is the tension in the question?
- Are there any words we should pay particular attention to as they may affect the nuance of the question?
- Explore the key terms and ask some 5W1H questions.
- Outline a spectrum of possible stances to take. Do any exceptions/conditions come to mind?

### Addressing the Question

To answer the question fully, you will need to ensure that

- You have *understood* all the key terms.
- All key terms have been attended to consistently throughout your response.
- You have kept to the parameters set out in the question.
- You showed *sensitivity* to words that lend certain added *nuance* to the question.

It is important that your response is *tailored to the specific question that has been set*, as opposed to an imaginary question you wish had been asked. There is a tendency for some candidates to change the topic or the focus of the question by bringing in material that is *not central to the discussion*. They often do this when they feel over-eager to regurgitate rehearsed material that they had read on the subject matter, mistakenly thinking that all the generic topical information would score them content marks. When you do not actually respond to the specific question but instead steer the discussion to suit your own agenda, you would be said to have *hijacked the question* and gone off *topic*, or *not dealt with the crux of the question*.

To prevent this, you must always *circle the discussion back to the key terms in the question*. Even when you bring in other factors for evaluation, these must be assessed in relation to the key terms in the question. Assessors want to see **consistent reference to the key words** in the question.



## Brainstorming

To *brainstorm* is to suggest a lot of new ideas very quickly, with the intention of considering them more carefully later. Students often fear not having enough points for their essays, but rest assured that with *thorough unpacking* and a *systematic approach to brainstorming*, this will not be the case!

Recall (on pages 7-8) that as candidates responding to the essay question, you would need to show an awareness that **reality is not always so simple**, and some factors for consideration were suggested. Interestingly, it is by systematically considering these aspects that contribute to a 'complicated' reality that you will lend a sense of order and clarity to your response, as this could be a stepping stone for you to organise your material, i.e. each paragraph could deal with a different stakeholder, domain, or context.

To add to the factors for consideration listed on pages 7-8, you can apply the PEST/SPERMA framework.

### PEST/SPECTRA/SPERMA

This is essentially a tool to prompt you to consider different domains, with each letter corresponding to a particular domain. You could consider stakeholders/perspectives from these different domains (where relevant), or how the topic/subject matter relates to these different domains.

A basic starting point	But the letters can also be expanded to stand for...
<b>P</b> olitical <b>E</b> conomic <b>S</b> ocial <b>T</b> echnological	<b>S</b> ocial/Science And Technology/Spiritual <b>P</b> olitical/Psychological/Physical <b>E</b> conomy/Environment/Education/Ethics <b>R</b> eligious/Racial <b>M</b> edia/Moral/Medical/Military <b>A</b> rts

In sum, if you consider...

Stakeholders/Players	Contexts	Domains
<i>Individuals and the demographic they are a segment of</i>  <i>Non-Governmental Organisations representing different causes/demographics</i>  <i>Governments</i>  <i>Inter-Governmental Organisations</i>  <i>Corporations</i>  <i>Crime syndicates</i>  (You may also consider subgroups within these stakeholder groups)	<b>Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern day</li> <li>• Past</li> <li>• How an issue may have changed from past to present</li> </ul> <b>Place</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big / Small</li> <li>• East/ West</li> <li>• Rich/ Poor</li> <li>• Old/ Young</li> <li>• Free/ Controlled</li> <li>• Religious/ Secular</li> <li>• Conservative/liberal</li> </ul> Differing cultures Differing ages	<b>S</b> ocial/Science And Tech/Spiritual  <b>P</b> olitical/Psychological/Physical  <b>E</b> conomy/Environment/Education/Ethics  <b>R</b> eligious/Racial  <b>M</b> edia/Moral/Medical/Military  <b>A</b> rts  Ask yourself: <i>Which domains are your stakeholders from? (PEST?)</i> <i>Why might certain stakeholders have a stake in certain domains?</i> <i>How might certain stakeholders affect particular domains?</i>

... you should be able to generate enough points for your response.

To add more depth to your essay, consider:

Evaluation frameworks to frame your essay/arguments	Exceptions and conditions to qualify your arguments	Levels of analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past vs present trends</li> <li>• Ideal vs reality</li> <li>• Intention vs outcome</li> <li>• Cost vs benefit</li> <li>• Tradeoffs</li> <li>• Positive vs negative consequences</li> <li>• Superficial vs deeper analysis</li> <li>• Rhetoric/theory vs reality</li> <li>• Majority vs minority</li> <li>• Long term vs short term implications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there limits to your claim?</li> <li>• Who, where or when might your claim not be applicable (to) and why?</li> <li>• What conditions must be met for your claim to hold?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual context</li> <li>• Cultural context</li> <li>• National/country context</li> <li>• Modern world context</li> <li>• Universal human context</li> </ul>

Do these prompts sound familiar? They should! You have already encountered them earlier in this package when we discussed the Big Picture when it comes to writing General Paper essays!

## Planning and Organising your Essay

After you have analysed questions and come up with preliminary points, you will need to come up with a brief **outline** for your essay. This should include not just the points and examples for your body paragraphs (and making sure they are suitably paired!), but also a gameplan for how you will start off the essay, and how you will end it. Drafting all your topic sentences is a good practice to have.

Another area that you would need to be deliberate about is the **sequencing** of your points.

Some considerations for organising your points:

**1) Is it a fundamental point for your argument?**

If so, it might make sense to place it near the beginning of your essay.

**2) Does one point lead to another?**

Sometimes, one point sets the context for or explains the logic behind another point. This means it has to come first or your argument would not make sense.

**3) Is it an important opposing point that you must acknowledge?**

Sometimes an opposing point is such a widely held perception that it might make sense to address it first to show you are aware of this prevailing view, and then move on to your supporting points. This also works because you get to demonstrate balance in your essay immediately.

**4) Are some points more commonly held, while others more insightful?**

You may at times wish to start off with more common views (which show your awareness of the larger conversation) and then go on to bring in more insightful points that demonstrate your original. If it culminates in a powerful conclusion, your essay may be more memorable for the reader.

The above advice also implies that there is **NO** rule on whether you will need to follow a supporting/opposing/supporting/opposing structure or other variations. Instead, ask yourself: *what sequence do you think will provide the most **clarity** for, and make the most **impact** on, your reader, given the material you have?*



## WRITING

After thinking through the question and planning your points, it is time to get down to writing. In this section, we will use a few sample paragraphs from the same essay, '*How far is it true that technology has eroded people's trust in others?*' (DHS Y5 Promo 2020), written by Valene Lim (20Y5C42), as illustration. This is so that you may see how the different parts of the essay link to one another.

### Introductions: First Impressions Count!

Introductions serve as a **crucial roadmap** for the entire essay. They play an important role in capturing the reader's interest, outlining the course that the essay will take, and situating the overall thrust and stand of your discussion.

The introduction will showcase your **identity** as a writer – the things you stand for, your style of organising and presenting information, and your ability to juggle and present multi-faceted ideas relating to the question with *clarity*, *subtlety* and *nuance*.

In accordance with the A Level marking rubrics, effective introductions should demonstrate:

- **Clear understanding of the terms and scope** of the question
- **An engagement with the question at a conceptual level**
- **Question relevance**, addressing the requirements of the question
- **Balance** in showcasing differing perspectives

Here are some broad Do's and Don'ts when it comes to writing the Introduction:

Do...	Do not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Define the key terms, where appropriate (self-explanatory terms may not need too much explication)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer some context or sense of importance of the issue</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outline the debate briefly and include differing points of view (i.e. offer balance and set up a framework for the development of the essay)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer a reasoned or measured view</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus clearly on establishing a stance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be succinct</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin in a way which arouses interest, such as with an appropriate example or quotation which leads into the crux of the issue</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer some criteria for coming to a particular judgement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin in broader terms, without explicit focus on the exact terms of the question set</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ramble about the general topic without dealing with the actual question</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use an example or quote that does not clearly link to the concepts of the question.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write a long, convoluted opening paragraph</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make numerous grammatical, spelling and expression errors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use formulaic and sometimes irrelevant openings, irrespective of the topic, such as 'In the globalised and fast-paced society in which we live today...'. Such an opening is especially exasperating when these contexts are found to be inconsequential to the rest of the essay and could have been done away with.</li> </ul>

Now that we have an inkling of what effective introductions should possess, let us jump into exploring what the Introduction can look like! Here are two frameworks that can help you craft an effective introduction:

#### 1) **G.I.S.T.**

The G.I.S.T framework serves as a guide to formulating the introduction using a set of essential elements:

- a **grab** to pique the interest of the reader,
- an exploration of the central concerns and **issues** relating to the question,
- a clearly articulated and nuanced **stand**, and
- an overview (**treatment**) of arguments that will be presented.

Note that these elements do not need to be presented following a fixed order, although it only makes sense for the Grab to appear first!

Element	What it encompasses
<b>Grab</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The grab <b>catches the attention of the examiner</b> and jumps into the question in an engaging and direct way.</li> <li>Some possible ways of crafting an engaging grab (this list is non-exhaustive) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exploring the nature of the key word/topic</li> <li>powerful quotations or song lyrics</li> <li>painting global or local trends</li> <li>startling statistics</li> <li>illustrations, analogies, or thought-provoking questions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Note: Students who have memorised beforehand their favourite quotes, statistics or illustrations sometimes have a tendency to force-fit them into any/every essay question of their choosing. It is imperative that the grab <b>specifically and directly engages with and addresses the crux of the essay question</b> at hand.</li> </ul>
<b>Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students should take the time in the introduction to <b>identify the central concerns, key issues and points of tension</b> in the question.</li> <li>The importance of the issue, and the presence of differing perspectives/competing priorities should be succinctly explained and captured.</li> <li>Strong and effective introductions often <b>set the scope of discussion by unpacking key terms that require clarification</b>, and <b>setting the parameters</b> for the discussion.</li> <li>Dissecting issues shows Examiners that you are aware of the question demands.</li> <li>Sometimes the issue and treatment may be weaved together.</li> </ul>
<b>Stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stand is a thesis statement that <b>directly answers the question</b>, and <b>encompasses an overarching personal view that will be supported across the various paragraphs</b>. The stand should be a <b>qualified, measured and nuanced</b> one, acknowledging counter-points while putting forth your main argument.</li> <li>The stand allows examiners to know what to expect in terms of the overall thrust of your essay.</li> </ul>
<b>Treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The treatment of the introduction briefly outlines <b>the arguments that will be presented</b> and discussed in the essay.</li> <li>Does not (and in fact, should not) have to be a word-for-word replication of arguments that will come in the body paragraphs.</li> <li>Showcases the <b>contentions and nuances</b> of the question.</li> <li>The treatment provides clarity as it will illuminate the direction the essay will take.</li> </ul>

Have look at the introduction with GIST elements in its entirety:

<p><b>How far is it true that technology has eroded people's trust in others?</b></p> <p><sup>(Q)</sup> "Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master," said the historian Christian Lous Lange. Indeed, technology has long been a fundamentally useful part of human life, as <sup>(I)</sup> it is the simple practice of translating one's environment with advanced tools to serve his or her interests. Today, however, the word 'technology' conjures images of powerful algorithms, state-of-the-art electronic devices and increasingly, the pervasive control and influence it has over individuals, groups and communities through addictive tools such as social media platforms. Thus, a crucial question emerges – is technology still a uniting force today, or has it morphed into an insidious tool that erodes our trust in other people and the <u>government</u>? Crucially, this question is one that mainly regards different facets of modern technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain. <sup>(T)</sup> <b>Avid users of such technology propose that in the realms of <u>media</u>, technological advances have</b></p>	<p><b>G:</b> An apt quote that introduces the complex relationship between technology and humans.</p> <p><b>I:</b> An attempt to define and unpack technology and what it encompasses. An understanding of 'trust' as being a uniting force is also implied. (Perhaps the candidate could have used associated terms like 'belief' and contrasting ideas like 'suspicion' to unpack 'trust' more clearly.) Parameters for discussion have been set by acknowledging the increasingly pervasive use of technology in our lives.</p> <p><b>T:</b> Clear signposting of arguments that will be presented subsequently in the body paragraphs.</p>
---	--



aided in uniting people from all around the world and promoting conversations between opposing groups, while promoting transparency in the corporate world. On the other hand, more judicious players like human rights activists argue that technology has entrenched the divides in media and society. <sup>(a)</sup>For one, I support the latter as I believe that technology largely erodes trust.

Ideas presented contain differing perspectives (e.g. avid technology users; human rights activists) and exploring different domains.

**S:** A clearly articulated stand/ overall thesis that directly answers the question.

## 2) Events/Players/Reactions

Another way to begin your introductions effectively is to focus on *events and trends that can frame the issue for the reader*. This serves to immediately help the reader focus on what is happening in the world that would spark this question to begin with. It is *the way in which the various stakeholders react to events* that often drives the main tension of a given essay question.

World events today are propelled primarily by six major players. Understanding their primary agendas, duties and responsibilities may help you to write about and explain them. Note, however, that in your essays, you need not limit yourselves to these six players, and can also explore *subgroups* within them. Neither would you need to cover *all* these players in every question.

	The Players	Things to watch out for
1	Inter-governmental organisations (e.g. NATO, UN, ASEAN)	Certain players would play a more prominent role in some issues than others, e.g.: crime syndicates may not be such a prominent player in many questions; if we are discussing climate change or foreign aid, inter-governmental organisations would certainly come into play; if we are discussing a government's spending on certain sectors its country, there may logically be no room for discussing IGO.
2	Non-governmental organisations (e.g. civil society groups such as AWARE, PETA, WWF)	
3	Corporations	
4	Governments	
5	Individuals	
6	Criminal organisations, syndicates, rogue states	

Consider the following introduction, which makes use of the **Events, Players, and Reactions approach**:

### **Should the government regulate scientific research and development?**

Joceline Ng Shi Ling, 11Y6C44 [adapted]

<sup>(1)</sup>In 1996, Pfizer's drug trial on desperately ill Nigerian children led to a furore as Pfizer claimed it to be a humanist act despite the high counts of death owing to the use of the unapproved Trovan drug. Such immoral scientific research and experiments have led to the call for tighter control over the burgeoning scientific community. <sup>(2)</sup>**Human rights activists** have <sup>(3a)</sup>opined that such regulations should fall under the purview of the government and that the government should step in to prevent such atrocities in order to ensure the safety and credibility of works claimed to be scientifically proven. The government should also provide tighter control over potentially dangerous scientific and technological weapons. <sup>(3b)</sup>**Purveyors of free scientific research and development**, on the other hand, denounce such restrictions on their intellectual freedom and claim that it will erode incentives of

**(1) Event:** Pfizer's drug trial on sickly Nigerian children contains an element of severity that showcases tension relating to science research and development and the protection of human lives.

**(2) People:** In response to the consequences of the event, the writer immediately identifies **two differing groups of stakeholders** - (a) human rights activists and (b) proponents in favour of scientific research and development. Their **reactions** showcase competing tensions that get to the crux of the question.

**(3a) + (3b) Reactions:** A brief display of the differing stances taken on by both human rights activists and proponents of scientific research, giving a taste of arguments to come in the body paragraphs.



scientists to innovate and hinder progress. However, despite these legitimate concerns, 'overall there still seems to be a strong need for the government to mitigate the woes and fears of the general public regarding scientific research and development.

(4) **Stand:** The overall stand is clearly articulated and nuanced, acknowledging the differing perspectives.

The terms and scope have been unpacked: 'regulations' to mean control, restrictions, government intervention. 'Scientific research and development' includes drug trials, experiments and technological weapons.

## Paragraph Development

The body paragraph is the basic building block of the Paper 1 essay. Each body paragraph should expand and build upon the broad ideas and approach laid out by the candidate in the Introduction and collectively, work towards presenting a coherent and persuasive argument, which *supports the main stance or thesis* which the candidate has taken in relation to the question.

Each body paragraph should contain a clear and concise **Topic Sentence** containing one idea which answers the *question directly*. Ensuring this is key to being relevant. This should be accompanied by purposeful **elaboration** and development of said idea, broadening and refining its meaning with contextual and detailed **explanations**. Next, ideas need to be supported with accurate real-world **exemplification**, reflecting the candidate's conceptual understanding of the world around them. Examples also serve as illustrations to further concretise the argument found in the Topic Sentence and its elaboration. Lastly, a **concluding statement** which echoes the original idea presented in the Topic Sentence should serve to round off the discussion.

Think of the Topic Sentence as a skeleton, the explanations as the flesh and the examples as the clothes on a person. You will need all elements present; missing any would not be feasible or appropriate!

### Topic Sentences (TS)

#### Ask yourself:

**Why do I hold a particular stance on this issue? What is my reason?**

**(For Opposing Paragraphs) Why might others hold the opposing stance?**

- The Topic Sentence (TS) is a point which **addresses the question directly** and underscores **why** the point is made.
- It **frames/anchors the paragraph**. The rest of the paragraph will contain further details, elaboration and references to examples that build upon this initial point.
- The TS can appear anywhere in the paragraph, but putting it at the beginning often helps to achieve clarity for both the reader and the candidate.
- Focus on **one (main) point per paragraph** to make things clear.
- **Draft** your topic sentences when planning your essay. When you read them, the line of argument should be coherent, and as another rule of thumb, a good TS is one where the reader of the essay will be able to glean the key words and parameters of the question without having looked at it.
- The TS need not be a single sentence alone. If your sentence is too long, break it up into two shorter sentences.
- **Qualify** your point to avoid contradiction.

#### Exercise:

See if you can guess the questions these candidates are responding to from the given Topic Sentences on the next page. Your question phrasing need not be exact, but they should capture the general question requirements.



### Question 1

Q:

?

- TS1 To sustain religion in the modern world, religious institutions have turned to technology to make religion accessible to the masses.
- TS2 In addition, adapting the ways of teaching religion has allowed it to remain relevant in our modern world today.
- TS3 Admittedly, as many in our world today are becoming more educated, it may be difficult for religions to flourish the way they did in the past.
- TS4 Despite that, religion may still be sustained in our modern world if the government takes measures to integrate it into our daily lives.

### Question 2

Q:

?

- TS1 It is understandable why many might perceive that city life has become less desirable: tales of overcrowding and pollution in urban areas as common in the media.
- TS2 Moreover, the cost of living in many urban areas seems to be escalating over the years, which may make city living less desirable for those who worry about sustaining a living.
- TS3 However, urban areas are expanding, which seems to suggest that they are still attractive to vast amounts of people. Perhaps this is inevitable as urban areas still largely do offer better economic prospects for people who may come from poorer rural areas in a country.
- TS4 In addition, where there is political will and effective management, great advances have been made in improving city life in many countries in the last decade.

Were you able to guess the questions? What features of the topic sentences helped you to arrive at the answers? Did you also notice the use of linguistic cues the candidates used to signal the flow of their arguments?

### Answers:

Q1

*How far can a belief in religion be sustained in the modern world?*

Q2

*Is urban life becoming increasingly unattractive?*

## Explanations (Ex)

Ask yourself:

What makes me say what I said in my Topic Sentence?

How can I make my point clearer for the reader?

What details can I give so that the reader has just enough information to understand my argument?

- Explanations are your **opportunity to clarify and expand** upon the main idea captured in the TS and **justify** your point. You should not assume that the ideas communicated in the Topic Sentence are self-evident and obvious to the reader.
- Bear in mind that the reader may hold a different opinion from you and may not always understand or agree with your point of view. Explanations **give readers enough information to understand your thoughts** which stem from the idea in the TS.
- The elaboration you give *could* involve some of these:
  - Clarification of **key terms** and phrases
  - Relevant **contextual** details
  - Relevant **stakeholders details**
  - Addressing or breaking down the '**nature**' of the subject matter e.g. a question about social media → what is it about social media that brings about the issue in the question? What are **certain (unique) characteristics and features** about it that contribute to the issue?
- Stay focused on advancing the discussion from the TS. **Every sentence has to link to the TS** and address the overall question. Do not regurgitate unnecessary details that only generally relate to the topic but do not answer the question specifically.
- **Use qualifiers** ('some', 'most', 'a majority', 'a handful' etc.) to hedge your arguments and provide a nuanced perspective while avoiding absolute, blanket, sweeping statements.
- **Use linguistic cues** ('Furthermore', 'Moreover', 'With hindsight', 'While this is..., it is actually...' etc.) to signpost the flow of your argument.

## Examples (Eg)

Ask yourself:

What illustrations can I provide so that my point is convincing for the reader?

How can I show that the illustration addresses the question?

- Examples are required to illustrate and develop a point in depth, and so they **must be analysed**, instead of just listed or described.
- **Comment** on examples to show their **significance** and link to the question.
- Connect your examples to key terms in the question and in your elaboration.
- Do not write *example-driven* paragraphs, where lengthy descriptions of examples may be given, but no effort has been made to explain to the reader what the *argument* or main point is.
- Be mindful about making assertions and generalisations from isolated or narrow examples, such as referring to North Korea because it may not be representative of general trends.
- Avoid using hypothetical or fictional examples to illustrate your argument, especially for claims where there is obviously no shortage of real-world examples at your disposal.
- Do not over-rely on quoting or spamming statistics, percentages and numbers as your examples. Numbers alone do not tell the entire story; they require contextual details and information to provide the whole picture. When you do use statistics, interpret the data and comment on the significance of these numbers.
- Keep dated examples to a minimum (unless of course the question invites a comparison to the past, or if you wish to make a comparison to the past to illustrate a point). Recent examples are encouraged, especially since GP is about keeping abreast of trends and developments. Strive to use examples that are from no more than five years ago.



Read the sample paragraphs below, written in response to the question '*How far is it true that technology has eroded people's trust in each other?*' Pay attention to how the candidate has developed her arguments.

<p><sup>TS</sup>Technologically-adept youths tout the advances in social media algorithms, championing the cohesive effects it has on bringing people of diverse backgrounds together to <u>engage in conversation and eliminate stereotypes</u>. <sup>EP</sup>Prior to the age of social media, the diversity of people individuals interacted with was largely limited by <u>geographical constraints</u>. Without an accessible and virtually costless medium, it was a Herculean task to reach out to <u>those from separate social enclaves, especially if they were situated at the opposite end of the world</u>. Consequently, people sought to stay cocooned in their communities. This dearth of inter-cultural interaction culminated in the accumulation of distrust between those of different nationalities. Today, however, a simple tap on one's smartphone allows one access to a vast network of social connections that greatly simplifies the originally arduous task of finding common interests with those of different backgrounds or nationalities. <sup>EP</sup>Technological advancements have only served to <u>bolster the reach and bonding power</u> of social media and communication technology, evident from the emergence of new players like Telegram and TikTok. Through such platforms, <u>it is considerably easier for those across cultures to identify shared passions and even express elements of their culture that are frequently misunderstood</u>. <sup>L</sup>Given the role of technology as a bonding agent, it follows that it indeed helps build relationships and understanding, rather than erode trust.</p>	<p><b>TS:</b> Focuses on how a specific type of technology (social media) is able to build trust through its features of <u>initiating conversations and eliminating stereotypes</u>. [Note how this is a more fleshed-out version of a point mentioned in the Treatment in the Intro on page 20.]</p> <p><b>Ex:</b> Paragraph compares the past with present ('prior to the age of...' vs 'Today...') to explain how technology has been able to build trust by helping to <u>overcome challenges and limitations (geographical constraints)</u> to bring people together from the <u>far reaches of the world</u>. Conceptual understanding is shown when exploring the different time contexts. The phrase 'especially if' conveys nuance in the point.</p> <p><b>Eg:</b> Paragraph simply lists 2 examples of social media ('Telegram' and 'Tik Tok') but elaborates on how their features and characteristics ('...<u>bolster the reach and bonding power</u>...') allows for better understanding through <u>dispelling misconceptions of people from different cultures</u>. The phrase 'considerably easier' shows a measured evaluation.</p> <p><b>L:</b> The paragraph concludes with a <b>concise single sentence</b> which echoes the main idea captured in the topic sentence, along with the key terms of the question ('technology' 'erosion of trust')</p>
--	--

Note: The above point was brought in as an **Opposing Point** in the essay. Framing this point as one held by 'technologically adept youths' helps the candidate avoid sounding like she is contradicting her own stand (that technology has eroded trust in others). The candidate then addresses this point in her next paragraph (sample given on the next page).

When bringing in Opposing Points/counter-arguments, remember to **distance** yourself from the point, either by specifying which stakeholder is disagreeing with you, or more generic cues such as 'while opponents of ... may disagree that...' or 'While it is commonly thought that...'.

You can then **address** these opposing points by:

- i) **conceding** that they are valid/have some merit, or
- ii) **refuting** them, i.e.: attempt to prove the view wrong / invalidate, or diminish the reasoning behind the opposing viewpoint / point out errors in the opposition's reasoning, for example by highlighting:
  - flawed **assumptions** that have been made
  - how **illogical** it is
  - how they have **oversimplified** the issue
  - **facts** that may have been **overlooked**
  - (recent) developments/**evidence** that may clearly **undermine** such a claim/prove otherwise
  - its **immorality** or **unethically**
  - how their point may be too **idealistic/pessimistic/unsustainable** etc

Often, you may end up addressing the Opposing Points with a **combination** of the two approaches, i.e. acknowledging the validity of the view *up to a certain extent*, but arguing that overall, other considerations may outweigh it. This balanced approach of giving credit where it is due is to be expected since after all, we are supposed to be fair and objective in putting forth our arguments.



Yet, such an argument is too myopic and idealistic. <sup>TS</sup>Unfortunately, technology meant for the greater good has, more often than not, been **tainted by corporations' profit motives and nations' vested interests, thus warping them into weapons that diminish social trust.** <sup>Ex</sup>Crucially, we must note that most of the technology prevalent in our lives are products of corporations. Being fundamentally profit-oriented, most corporations will invariably sacrifice social welfare for the sake of bettering their keep. <sup>Ex</sup>There is no better testament to this than the billion dollar giant, Facebook. **In a bid to evolve into a shrewd business model** that satisfies all the needs of its advertisers, Facebook continually revamps its algorithms to improve its ability in harvesting user data for eerily accurate targeting of potential customers. **When combined with the political motive of governments or hostile foreign enemies**, social media becomes heavily weaponized as it is used to **encapsulate users in tiny echo chambers and gradually pushes their ideologies to polarizing ends of the spectrum.** <sup>Ex</sup>This is evinced by the New York Times' experiment of 'Red Feed, Blue Feed', where it developed a website showcasing what news most Republicans and Democrats saw on Facebook. Shockingly, the same event was presented in starkly different ways to pander to the readers' ideologies. While partisanship has always been an acute problem plaguing America, technology had catalysed the entrenching of divisions among Americans and obstructed the reconciliation of views from opposite ends of the political spectrum. The result is crystal clear – America is more divided than it has ever been (apart from the Civil War period), bickering over every issue, from consequential ones like the feasibility of mail-in ballots, to minute ones like the wearing of masks. Add in Russian interference, and the situation becomes even more dire. The use of technology by the Russian government to disrupt American elections by sowing seeds of distrust among them has proven successful – according to the Oxford Internet Institute, 1.4 million people have been exposed to the misinformation spewed by Russian bots. <sup>Ex</sup>Evidently, the convergence of profit motives and hostile foreign interventions has poisoned technology as it fans the flames of existing divides.

**Ex:** A clear expression of the writer's own assessment of the argument above being too idealistic. Note that such an assessment then needs to be adequately explained and justified.

**TS:** The topic sentence states why the writer feels that technology has instead eroded trust.

'Unfortunately' gives an indication of how the writer feels about this. [Notice how this is a more fleshed-out version of another point mentioned in the Treatment in the Intro on page 20.]

**Ex:** An explanation of why technology may be warped, taking into consideration the nature of corporations.

**Eg/Ex:** While this part reads like an example as Facebook is mentioned, it also serves to explain more concretely how technology may result in the erosion of trust. Explanation links to the point on the profit-making agenda by explaining Facebook's actions as an attempt to evolve into a 'shrewd business model' with the platform's features. 'When combined with the political motive...' states the condition present that results in the sowing of distrust among people. '...encapsulate users in tiny echo chambers... polarizing ends of the spectrum' links the example to the heart of the issue of Trust. Conceptual understanding is demonstrated in the observation of the relationship between technology, corporations and politics.

**Eg:** NYT example illustrates how technology has contributed to polarisation. The example is commented on in a nuanced manner by acknowledging that while it is true that partisanship has always been a problem, technology has exacerbated it greatly. The gravity of the problem of erosion of trust is underscored in the next lines.

**L:** Concluding sentence succinctly and emphatically sums up the argument in this paragraph.

<sup>TS</sup>Moreover, politically, the use of technology by authoritarian governments further diminishes trust between citizens and rulers. <sup>Ex</sup>Surveillance technology has emerged as a prime choice for governments to **keep a close eye on their citizens and possible dissenters.** On the pretext of maintaining social stability, these governments employ the widespread use of AI to record citizens' online and offline tracks in excruciating detail. <sup>Ex</sup>**China** is an apt example. From security cameras equipped with facial recognition technology, to the Great Cannon and the Great Firewall that fervently scour the Internet for information contradictory to the national narrative, **Chinese citizens** are under constant scrutiny. Undoubtedly, this has had deleterious effects on trust as evinced by **Chinese youths** calling for greater freedom and denouncing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as an overly paranoid mother. <sup>Ex</sup>Today, many Chinese citizens no longer wholly trust official statements, **preferring to take them with a pinch of salt while cross-referencing Western media** via their Virtual Private Network (VPN). Clearly, the uncomfortably close surveillance enabled by technology is a major contributor to the erosion of trust in governments.

**TS:** Identifies how technology erodes trust between two specific stakeholders.

**Ex:** Highlights a use of a specific technology (by the government) which would lead to an eventual outcome where trust is lost.

**Eg:** With reference to China, the example illustrates how the Chinese government utilises technology to an extreme extent, which leads to backlash by **young Chinese citizens.**

The example goes on to link back to the key issue regarding trust by commenting on how Chinese citizens today **choose to cross-reference** their news intake from local media with those covered by the international media, as a **reflection** of their level of distrust with the government.

**L:** The paragraph concludes with a **concise single sentence** which echoes the main idea captured in the topic sentence, along with the key terms of the question ('technology' 'erosion of trust')



## Conclusions: End off with a Bang!

Just as the introduction is very influential in establishing the possible quality of your essay, the conclusion is the last thing Examiners read before finalising your grade. The conclusion is your 'last word' in the essay, and should make an impact. Unfortunately, many candidates underestimate the importance of the Conclusion and end off with a whimper instead – with absent conclusions, or rushed conclusions which do little more than repeat their arguments or merely state a stand.

Here are some characteristics of stronger and weaker conclusions in a nutshell:

Stronger Conclusions...	Weaker Conclusions...
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate arguments to reach a nuanced and measured view <input type="checkbox"/> Link neatly and meaningfully back to an example cited at the start. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the 'key message' which the Examiner should bear in mind and emphasise that in as succinct and emphatic a way as possible. <input type="checkbox"/> It is possible sometimes to add a fresh slant on the question, along the lines of mitigation, reservation, or a proposal for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer little more than a summary/a mere regurgitation of earlier points. <input type="checkbox"/> Are absent. The essay ends abruptly. <input type="checkbox"/> Consist of simply a brief (re)statement of a view or of the question's proposition. <input type="checkbox"/> Contradict what was said earlier in the essay.

Much like how a judge conducts a court hearing and then presides over a concluding judgment, with a written justification for his decision, a well-written conclusion *offers a satisfying resolution and takeaway* after the reader has considered various key viewpoints and contexts. One should bear in mind the need to convince readers of a reasonable and logical way of accepting an overall argument. The conclusion should *make some reference to claims made in earlier parts of the essay* and logically follow (i.e. not contradict) the body paragraphs. There should be a *coherent flow of an argument*.

Conclusions should not simply repeat all their arguments leave the varied perspectives presented scattered and unresolved: the candidate's final word and where s/he stands on the issue must be made known. Below are some suggested approaches on how the differing perspectives can be negotiated/reconciled to help you reinforce your stand:

1. Conclude by factoring in key considerations	2. Conclude by applying criteria	3. Conclude by conditional agreement/disagreement
<p>A candidate can apply <b>key considerations</b> that result in the rejection or acceptance of prior arguments made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eg. The <u>borderless nature of new media today</u> does mean that governments must exert/ assert control over the media, via regulation.</li> <li>- Eg. The <u>presence of malicious actors such as hostile foreign governments or terrorists</u> does mean that governments should not allow unregulated free speech.</li> </ul> <p>Key considerations can refer to very important ideas, e.g. significant features of the modern day context or</p>	<p>A candidate can identify the best argument out of a few arguments made, or reject an argument, by applying <b>criteria</b>. A common set of criteria can be used across arguments to highlight whether an argument should be accepted or rejected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eg. The continued growth of the economy is unsustainable <u>in the long term</u>, as it impacts mental health and birth rates. Hence, economic growth is not the best measure of good governance. (Question: 'Is economic growth the best measure of good governance?')</li> </ul>	<p>A candidate agrees with <b>conditions</b> attached in order to show partial agreement, especially when prior arguments are made at a broad level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eg. <u>Skilled</u> immigrants are definitely beneficial for <u>countries with ageing populations</u> as they can help improve economic productivity. (Question: 'Are immigrants are good for society?')</li> </ul>

universally cherished principles, that must be borne in mind. These ideas can override arguments made as they have high levels of significance or impact.		
---	--	--

A simple conclusion can consist of a *re-emphasis of key points* followed by a *final statement*. The final statement or concluding statement forms a lasting impression on the reader. It can range widely in terms of tone and message. Some examples of what such a final statement can contain include:

- emphasising what is ultimately at stake
- an optimistic call for action
- a hint of worse things to come should certain warnings go unheeded
- showing the way forward
- a reminder of universal values and principles that should inform our decisions.

<p><b>How far is it true that technology has eroded people's trust in others?</b></p> <p><sup>(1)</sup>The truth is that the unintended development of technology without proper consideration of its ramifications has resulted in its weaponization as a divisive tool. <sup>(2)</sup>Its effects, especially in the realm of the Internet, often go unnoticed until someone stumbles upon the truth and discovers its horrific effects – as in the case of Russian interference in American politics. <sup>(3)</sup>Yet, there is still a glimmer of hope that our problem-solving skills and determination can give rise to proper regulation of technology in the future and restore social trust. <sup>(4)</sup>Unfortunately, <u>in our current context, humans have yet to employ efficacious methods that quell the undesirable effects of technology on a wide scale.</u> Thus, technology has indeed eroded trust substantially.</p>	<p>(1) Candidate cites unintended effects as a reason for the negative use of technology to divide groups. This is a point which the candidate has already built up in the body of her essay.</p> <p>(2) Evidence is provided and elaborated on, to support this view.</p> <p>(3) Candidate acknowledges that there is a possibility of the problem being mitigated; however...</p> <p>(4) ...she provides a reality check by pointing out the lack of an effective solution currently, leading to the final conclusion</p>
---	---

Writing a powerful conclusion with an emphatic 'final say' can be daunting for candidates. The sense of vulnerability is perhaps driven by the need to create meaning on a new level and to elevate the entire discussion through the use of a conclusion. Rather than feel overwhelmed by the demands of the conclusion, you should note that the process of crafting one's final say is a *journey of personal growth*, where risks are taken to achieve a rationally deduced final idea. Your competency in crafting a good conclusion is a *work in progress*, and it comes with *uncovering your personal voice*: discovering *who you are* and *what you stand for* as an individual. So take these two years to think seriously and deeply about your identity and your convictions, as they would be instrumental in helping you craft a great conclusion – and a powerful essay on the whole!






# POST-WRITING





## Proofreading and Editing

When you are done writing your essay, you should devote some time to **proofreading** and **editing** your response. This involves looking out for language and expression errors, as well as any issue that might make your ideas less clear.

In this section we will focus on language issues. The table below lists some types of errors candidates make and their corresponding annotations. If you find yourselves making these mistakes often, do refer to the resources recommended below to reacquaint yourselves with the rules.

Note that not all errors may be annotated with the corresponding abbreviation; sometimes tutors may add carets (^) to denote that there is something missing, underline/circle to denote an error, or even write what the correct/missing word/punctuation is. Some teachers may use different annotations. Regardless, **as pre-university students, you are expected to be able to identify what kind of mistake you have made, and take steps to seek clarification.** Most of the resources suggested below contain comprehensive explanations on the rules, as well as practice exercises that you can do. If you need further clarification, look for your teachers.



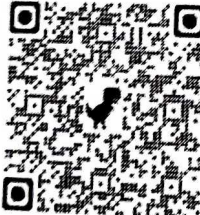

Annotation	What it refers to	Learn more	Some common mistakes
g	general grammar mistakes		(see more specific types of mistakes below)
sva	subject-verb agreement		<p>The rule seems straightforward but students often make mistakes when they write longer, more complex sentences. They then lose sight of what the subject being referred to is, and use the wrong form of the verb.</p> <p>e.g.: 'the <u>politicians</u> who govern our society <u>has</u>...' (should be HAVE because the subject, 'politicians' is plural)</p> <p>e.g.: '<u>Scientific advancements</u> in terms of innovations and improvements in technologies in medical science made through scientific research <u>provides</u> ...'. (should be PROVIDE)</p>
sing/ pl	singular/ plural		<p>A singular noun goes with a singular pronoun (e.g. 'This is a mistake.) A plural noun goes with a plural pronoun (e.g. These are mistakes). A surprising number of candidates still get this wrong, e.g. 'These woman', 'this men', or using 'it' when referring to plural nouns.</p> <p>Some words have <i>no plural form</i>, e.g.: equipment, machinery, research, evidence, elderly, knowledge, advice, information</p>
t	tenses		'They did not <u>noticed</u> ' (should be 'They did not notice').

s/sp	spelling		See list of common spelling errors on page 31.
pp	preposition		decide <del>on</del> how, tap <del>on</del> , leverage <del>on</del> , discuss <del>about</del> , emphasised <del>on</del> , seek <del>for</del> , voice <del>out</del> , comprise <del>of</del> , entitled with (should be entitled to), solutions of their problems (should be solutions to), I agree <del>to</del> the author (should be I agree <u>with</u> the author)
art	article		<p>Omitted articles for some nouns e.g.: <u>a/the</u> majority of, <u>the</u> internet, in <u>the</u> hope of, due to <u>the</u> advancement of technology, with <u>the</u> emergence of</p> <p>Omitted articles for some proper nouns e.g.: <u>the</u> UK, <u>the</u> United States, <u>The</u> Straits Times, <u>The</u> New York Times, <u>The</u> BBC and <u>The</u> Guardian.</p> <p>Superfluous articles e.g.: in <del>a</del> research, <del>a</del> good weather</p>
exp/awk  ww wc wf/wfw	<p>expression error/ awkward phrasing/ expression</p> <p>wrong word word choice wrong form of word</p>		<p>Often, mistakes in expression occur because the candidate has phrased their ideas in a way that is just not how that idea is usually expressed/they have the wrong collocation. A collocation refers to two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound "right" to native English speakers, who use them all the time. On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound "wrong".</p> <p>Getting expressions/collocations right very much depends on your exposure to and familiarity with the norms of the English Language, so you will have to <u>use/listen to/read EL more regularly</u>.</p>
reg	lapse in register, e.g. through the use of informal words and contractions		<p>Informal words: stuff, gonna, kids, hang out, slack, 'insane amount', chill, legit</p> <p>Contractions: It's, can't, won't, don't, ads, etc.</p>
p cap	punctuation capitalisation		<p>Too many students are not capitalising their proper nouns (e.g. names of people, places, platforms like TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram).</p> <p>This is <b>inexcusable</b> as this is a basic rule which you would have learnt in primary school. If you do not show that you have grasped the basic mechanics of the English Language, you cannot expect to obtain a high Use of English mark.</p>
rep	Repetition – you have repeated an idea.		



## Sentence Structure ('ss') Issues

Knowing how to write a proper sentence is crucial because sentences are the building blocks of your responses. Cambridge Examiners have also repeatedly pointed out that Candidates have been making many of these errors, e.g. comma splices and fragments (incomplete sentences).

Annotation	What it refers to	Learn more	Some common mistakes
ss	sentence structure		
frag/ fragment	fragment (incomplete sentence)  Some tutors may write 'WICS' (write in complete sentences) or 'NACS' (not a complete sentence).		Writing incomplete sentences <b>disrupts the flow of reading</b> for the Examiner. Incomplete sentences <b>do not contain a complete idea</b> , end abruptly, and require re-reading on the part of the Examiner.  E.g.: Although I did not study for the test. E.g.: While it is true that Singapore is a competitive society.  More material will be needed to complete the above sentences, e.g. "Although I did not study for the test, I did well."
run-on sentence	Two independent clauses that are joined together with no connecting word or punctuation to separate the clauses.		This error occurs when you join two sentences together without an appropriate coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).
comma splice	Occurs when two sentences are joined together inappropriately using <u>only</u> a comma.		In many scripts, candidates incorrectly use a comma before 'however' or 'therefore'.  WRONG: Social media can lead to many problems, however many of these problems can be mitigated.  CORRECT: Social media can lead to many problems; however, many of these problems can be mitigated.



*Common spelling errors*

Wrong	Correct	Wrong	Correct
*alot	a lot (a space is needed)	martial (to do with fighting/war)	marital (to do with marriage)
*accomodate	<u>accommodate</u>	millenium, millennium	<u>millennium</u> (plural: <u>millennia</u> )
advertisment, advertistment	advertis <u>e</u> ment	*mordern	<u>modern</u>
agression	<u>aggression</u>	*myraid	myriad
*arguement	arg <u>u</u> ment	*neccesary, neccessary	ne <u>ce</u> ssary
*athelete	athlete	ocassion, occassion	<u>oc</u> casion
availiable	avail <u>a</u> ble	ocurr, ocurred	<u>oc</u> cure, <u>oc</u> curred
calender	calend <u>a</u> r	omision, ommission	<u>o</u> mission
comparision	comparis <u>o</u> n	*pesevere	persevere
*convinient	conve <u>n</u> ient	*perseverence	persever <u>a</u> nce
curiosity	curi <u>o</u> sity	phenomenom, phenomenum	phenomen <u>o</u> n (plural: phenomena)
*definatly	defini <u>t</u> ely	*potray	port <u>r</u> ay
dissapointed, dissappointed	dis <u>a</u> ppointed	*privelege, priviledge	privile <u>g</u> e
emphatise	em <u>p</u> athise	proffessional, proffesional	professio <u>n</u> al
existance	exist <u>e</u> nce	recommmend	recomm <u>e</u> nd
*hierachy	hier <u>a</u> rchy	*seperate	separ <u>e</u>
independant	independ <u>e</u> nt		

*\*these errors are especially frequently made by Dunmanians.*

**Other English Language Resources you may find it helpful to refer to:**

**English Grammar 101**  
<https://www.englishgrammar101.com/>

**Purdue Online Writing Lab**  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/grammar](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar)

## BAND DESCRIPTORS

### Band Descriptors for the assessment of Paper 1 Content

#### **Band 5 (25–30 marks)**

- The **terms and scope of the question are clearly understood** and defined, **with some subtlety**.
- **Engagement with the question at a conceptual level is clearly evident**. Nuanced and measured observations of trends and/or relationships are made. Connections between issues and ideas are identified and explained.
- **Fully appropriate and wide-ranging illustration** is used and developed throughout to support the points made within the argument.
- **Fully relevant**, addressing the requirements of the question throughout.
- There is a **well-balanced discussion** and consideration of differing perspectives and contexts, demonstrating **developed analysis and evaluation of the issues**.
- The **conclusion is measured and nuanced**.

Overall, the response demonstrates full engagement with the question, offering insightful comment and a depth of argument, supported by wide-ranging illustrations. If the examples are consistently evaluated, observations frequently nuanced and connections between issues identified and fully explained, award marks of 28 to 30. If examples are mostly evaluated, observations nuanced, and explanations of connections are made but not fully developed, award marks of 25 to 27.

#### **Band 4 (19–24 marks)**

- The **terms and scope of the question are understood** and defined.
- **Some engagement with the question at a conceptual level**, making some measured observations of trends and/or relationships. Connections between issues and ideas are identified.
- **Appropriate and frequent illustration** is used to support the points made within the argument.
- **Relevant**, with almost all content addressing the requirements of the question.
- There is a **balanced discussion** and consideration of differing perspectives, demonstrating **analysis and evaluation** of the issues.
- The **conclusion is well supported**.

Overall, the response demonstrates sustained clarity of relevant and detailed discussion, using appropriate illustration to support the ideas. If examples are wide in range and clear connections are made between issues, with frequent evaluation of arguments, award marks of 22 to 24. If some connections and evaluative comments are evident, award marks of 19 to 21.

#### **Band 3 (13–18 marks)**

- The **terms and scope of the question are generally understood**. This may not be explicitly defined but can be inferred from the response.
- **Occasional demonstration of conceptual understanding**. This may not be explicit but is evident from the selection of ideas and examples used. Observations of trends and/or relationships are generalised, assertive and/or descriptive. The connections made between issues and ideas are implicit.
- **Appropriate illustration** is used to support the points made within the argument, but this is narrow in range and/or underdeveloped.
- **Mostly relevant**, with content generally addressing the requirements of the question, but perhaps with some repetition or occasional discussion of the topic or theme more generally.
- There is an **attempt at balance** and reference to differing perspectives, demonstrating **some analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** is likely to be **assertive or a summary** of the argument.

Overall, the response demonstrates competence, but this is not sustained throughout. If there is evidence of analysis, as well as some evidence of implied connections between issues, award marks of 16 to 18. If there is a focus on the question, but observation and analysis are more generalised and underdeveloped, award marks of 13 to 15.



**Band 2 (7–12 marks)**

- The **terms and scope of the question** are **partially understood**. The response addresses the **general topic rather than the specific question**.
- **Limited demonstration of conceptual understanding** evident from the selection of ideas and examples used. Limited awareness of trends and/or relationships with few or no connections of ideas made or implied.
- **Use of illustration** is limited in range and undeveloped. Examples may not be consistently relevant to the argument.
- **Some evidence of relevance** which addresses a limited range of general points raised by the question topic or theme.
- There is **limited attempt at balance** and little reference to differing perspectives, with **limited analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** is likely to be **implicit** and brief, with little support.

Overall, the response demonstrates limited clarity of argument and relevance may not be sustained. Basic illustration is offered with little development. If an argument and some developed illustration are attempted, but cogency is uneven, award marks of 10 to 12. If a partial argument and/or undeveloped illustration is evident, award marks of 7 to 9.

**Band 1 (1–6 marks)**

- The **terms and scope of the question** are **not understood**.
- **No demonstration of conceptual understanding**. Ideas demonstrate little to no awareness of trends, relationships or connections.
- **Little to no clear use of illustration**. Ideas and examples are superficial and lack relevance.
- **Little to no evidence of relevance**. The response rarely addresses the demands of the question.
- There is **little attempt at balance** or reference to differing perspectives, with **little analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** may be **absent or simply asserting an opinion**.

Overall, the response achieves little coherent discussion. Illustration is minimal and/or offers little support to any line of argument. If occasional ideas and information are offered which relate to the wider topic, award marks of 4 to 6. If little relevant content is evident, award marks of 1 to 3.

**A mark of 0**

should be given only when nothing in the response meets any of the criteria.

**Additional marking guidance for CONTENT**

**'Your society' questions**

Answers to 'your society' or a specified society (Singapore) question need to be rooted in a specific society. While it is likely this would be Singapore, not all candidates are established Singaporean nationals so they may discuss 'their society' or experience outside of Singapore. This is an acceptable approach. Contrasts with other societies may also be relevant when answering these questions, as long as the primary focus remains rooted in the specified society.

**Conceptual understanding**

For the purposes of assessing this skill within this syllabus, the definition of this term is as follows:

- make observations of trends and relationships as well as connections across issues and ideas
- apply or adapt ideas to other contexts where appropriate and relevant, for example, changes in time and/or place
- analyse and evaluate issues of local, regional and global significance, and their implications on the individual and society (where relevant).

**Band Descriptors for the assessment of Paper 1 Language****Band 5 (17–20 marks)****Excellent linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:**

- very few errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; meaning is not impeded
- varied and complex sentence structure
- choice of vocabulary is sophisticated and wide in range, with nuanced and convincing language
- paragraphing is coherent, making use of a range of linking devices and logical sequencing

Overall, the response demonstrates assured use of language throughout, with very few errors, and with sophisticated vocabulary, expression and structures used appropriately.

**Band 4 (13–16 marks)****Very good linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:**

- few serious errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; meaning is not impeded
- good variety of sentence structure
- choice of vocabulary is varied and consistently appropriate
- effective paragraphing and some variety of linking devices

Overall, the response demonstrates controlled use of language, with few serious errors, and with varied vocabulary, expression and structures largely used appropriately. Meaning is clear throughout.

**Band 3 (9–12 marks)****Sound linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:**

- errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar may be frequent, but meaning is not significantly impeded
- some attempt at variety of sentence structure; this may not always be successful
- choice of vocabulary is mostly appropriate
- paragraphing and linking devices are present but may be repetitive; there is some sequencing of ideas

Overall, the response is characterised by a general level of competence, with meaning not significantly impeded. Attempts to use varied vocabulary, expression and structures may be present but flawed.

**Band 2 (5–8 marks)****Limited linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:**

- frequent spelling, punctuation and grammar errors of various types; meaning is occasionally impeded
- limited variety of sentence structure; this may not always be successful
- vocabulary is limited in range or words may be occasionally used incorrectly / in the wrong context
- paragraphing and linking devices are basic; the sequencing of ideas may be difficult to follow

Overall, the response is characterised by a high frequency of (basic) errors and the meaning is not securely communicated. Some re-reading may be required for meaning to be discerned.

**Band 1 (1–4 marks)****Weak linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:**

- weak spelling, punctuation and grammar which regularly impede meaning
- few sentences showing control or accuracy
- vocabulary is basic and words are frequently used incorrectly / in the wrong context
- there is little attempt to organise or sequence ideas

Overall, the response is characterised by significant incidence of errors, resulting in severe breakdown of meaning. Substantial re-reading may be required for meaning to be discerned.

**A mark of 0**

should be given only when nothing in the response meets any of the criteria.



**References:**

Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Higher 1 General Paper (8881)  
Examination Syllabus  
<http://www.seab.gov.sg>

Think Tank Studio - Broader Perspectives  
<https://www.broaderperspectives.com.sg>

Cover image is taken from <http://www.gocit.org>