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# Economics Exam Technique

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## I Introduction to Exam Technique

1.1 What are assessment objectives?

The economics exam tests **four types of assessment objectives, knowledge, application of knowledge, analysis and evaluation:**

- **Level 1** tests your **knowledge** of the syllabus and your ability to **express that knowledge** e.g. there are two main methods of measuring unemployment. Defining terms clearly is often a very good way to start an answer
- **Level 2** test your ability to **apply your economics knowledge** and understanding to particular problems and issues
- **Level 3** tests your ability to **use economic theories and concepts** to **analyse** macroeconomic problems e.g. use aggregate demand & aggregate supply diagrams to show rising unemployment caused by a negative output gap
- **Level 4** tests your ability to **evaluate** problems and policies and make informed and reasoned judgements based on theory and evidence e.g. short term and long term implications. **Evaluation must be based on analysis** for L4 marks to be awarded

If you write good economics with clear definitions, relevant diagrams, sound explanations, an attempt to use supporting evidence and make a genuine attempt at evaluation then the examiners will treat your paper very positively

1.2 What are command words?

To help students give the right type of answer examining boards give **command words**. E.g. Describe means a level 1 answer is required demonstrating knowledge; Discuss or evaluate are level 4 directives

Knowledge & Application of Knowledge	
<b>Calculate</b>	Work out using the information provided
<b>Define</b>	Give the exact meaning
<b>Describe</b>	Give a description of
<b>Give (an account of)</b>	As 'describe'
<b>Give (an example of)</b>	Give a particular example
<b>How (explain how)</b>	In what way or in what ways
<b>Identify</b>	Point out
<b>Illustrate</b>	Give examples/diagram
<b>Outline</b>	Describe without detail
<b>State</b>	Make clear
<b>Summarise</b>	Give main points, without detail
<b>Which</b>	Give a clear example/state what

Analyse Economic Problems and Issues	
Analyse	Set out the main points
Apply	Use in a specific way
Compare	Give similarities and differences
Consider	Give your thoughts about
Explain (why)	Give clear reasons or make clear
Justify/account for	Give reasons for

Evaluate Arguments and Evidence, making Informed Judgements	
Assess	Show how important something is
Criticise	Give an opinion, but support it with evidence
Discuss	Give the importance arguments, for and against
Evaluate	Discuss the importance of, making some attempt to weight your opinions
To what extent	Make a judgement

- 1.3 How can I pitch my answer to the right level?  
 It is essential to **pitch your answer to the right level** – too many students fail to evaluate when asked to discuss; too many try to analyse simple low mark level 1 understanding questions. The clue to what is required lies in:  
 The **command word** in the question e.g. Define (level 1) or Explain (level 3)  
 The **number of marks allocated**  
**Analytical and evaluative questions always carry the highest marks**  
 AS Economics has more level 1&2 questions than A2 (40% of the marks are for analysis and evaluation)  
 Level 3&4 questions tend to come after level 1&2 (i.e. the final parts of a structured question)  
 60% of the marks for the A2 exam are for **analysis** and **evaluation** (an important difference between AS and A2)
- 1.4 What is the economist's toolkit?  
 Economists draw on a **toolkit of concepts and techniques** to help to analyse and evaluate problems and potential government policy solutions. E.g: plumbers use spanners; economists use AD-AS analysis when discussing macroeconomic issues and frequently use the tools of welfare economics when discussing issues relating to microeconomics  
The highest marks in economics exam are reserved for students who think like an economist ie who select the appropriate tool from the toolkit to analyse and evaluate.
- 1.5 Explain evaluation  
 Evaluation means **weighing up evidence and arguments, making reasoned judgements** to present appropriate and well supported conclusions – based on appropriate analysis. It also means **reasoning your arguments** and **prioritising them**
- 1.6 What criteria can I use to be evaluative?  
 Many answers to questions requiring evaluation can usefully be assessed against these criteria:
1. **Efficient** i.e. does a particular policy result in a better use of scarce resources among competing ends? E.g. does it improve allocative, productive and dynamic efficiency and therefore lead to an improvement in economic welfare. Consider two examples: Will higher indirect taxes on aircraft fuel be an efficient way of reducing some of the external costs linked to the rapid growth of aviation transport? Will entry into the single European currency improve the efficiency and competitiveness of markets and industries in the UK economy?
  2. **Effective** i.e. which policy is **most likely** to meet a specific economic objective? For example which policies are likely to be most effective in reducing road congestion? Which policies in the long run are most effective in reducing the natural rate of unemployment? Or in raising labour productivity and thereby improving the trend rate of economic growth? Evaluation can also consider which policies are likely to have an impact in the short term when a quick response from consumers and producers is desired. And which policies are likely to prove most cost-effective in the longer term? You can often mention the importance of elasticity of demand and supply when discussing the effectiveness of particular policies.
  3. **Equitable** i.e. is a policy fair or does one group in society gain more than another? Many aspects of government intervention in markets raise important issues of **equity** - for example government spending on public and merit goods, changes to the system of direct and indirect taxation etc. There are nearly always winners and losers arising from government intervention in the economy. Always have this in the back of your mind when evaluating.
  4. **Sustainable** i.e. does a policy reduce the ability of future generations to engage in economic activity? Inter-generational equity is an important issue in many current policy topics for example decisions on energy policy and economic growth

## 2 Building Evaluation into your Answers

2.1 Adopting a balanced approach when evaluating	<p>Examiners will always reward those students who seek to adopt <b>a balanced approach</b> and those who seek to <b>reason out and explain their arguments</b> i.e. they demonstrate an awareness of <b>different points of view / different schools of thought in Economics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monetarist versus Keynesian views on the impact of fiscal and monetary policies as instruments of demand management</li> <li>• Polluter pays principle versus permits versus command and control (regulation) as means of reducing environmental pollution</li> <li>• Economists who believe that fixed exchange rates are more effective than allowing a currency to float</li> <li>• Competing views on the relationship between economic growth and its long-term environmental impact</li> </ul> <p>Discussion of competing theories or explanations often leads naturally into good evaluation</p>
2.2 Significance of a government policy change or an external economic shock	<p><b>Evaluating the significance of something – ask the question - does it matter?</b></p> <p>What are the possible implications of an event such as an economic shock? Are the effects likely to be merely transitory or will they have important long-term consequences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E.g. The significance of a short term change in the sterling exchange rate</li> <li>• The possible impact of rising global oil prices on developed and developing countries</li> <li>• Remember that different countries will be affected in different ways to the same “shock” e.g. higher oil prices will have different effects for oil importers and oil exporters.</li> </ul>
2.3 The Law of Unintended Consequences!	<p><b>Evaluation is enhanced if you emphasise that government policy changes might have unintended effects.</b> E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible <b>government failure</b> from policies designed to correct for market failure</li> </ul> <p>e.g. Government intervention to stabilise prices and producer incomes in agricultural markets may cause long term problems of over supply / loss of economic efficiency</p>
2.4 Question the assumptions upon which a piece of theory is based	<p><b>Questioning the assumptions on which a particular piece of economic reasoning stands</b> e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The realism of the assumptions required for efficiency in perfectly competitive markets</li> <li>• The assumption that export prices always rise and export volumes fall when the exchange rate rises (non-price competitiveness might be an offsetting factor etc.)</li> <li>• Assumptions about how taxpayers will respond if the government cuts taxes in order to give a fiscal stimulus to the economy</li> </ul> <p>If the assumptions change, then your analysis may also change - and this can be developed in your answer</p>
2.5 Try to reach reasoned conclusions	<p><b>Coming to a reasoned conclusion on the basis of the evidence / supporting examples that you have used</b></p> <p>Often the conclusion may be that there is <b>insufficient evidence</b> or that <b>not enough time has elapsed</b> to reach a convincing judgement – for example in evaluating the economic effects of the congestion charge or the national minimum wage</p>

2.6	Weight the arguments	<p><b>Stating which arguments you believe to be most important and why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at the advantages and disadvantages of policies e.g.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Electronic road pricing as a means of reducing externalities from congestion compared to other policy options</li> <li>○ Ranking different options for reform of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.7	Use relevant supporting evidence and examples	<p>Use relevant supporting evidence in your arguments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Evaluation is a higher order skill</b> – but it can only come as a result of you having attempted to use some analysis and also bringing to your answer some factual evidence / examples</li> <li>• <b>The examiners will always reward reference to recent developments</b> in particular industries and markets, and to developments in both the domestic and international economy</li> </ul>
		<p>Before the exam make sure you are armed with some of the <b>key statistics on the UK and international economy</b> – particularly useful for the macroeconomic essay questions (e.g. on unemployment, economic growth and the balance of payments)</p> <p>The Tutor2u flash charts on the UK and international economy may be helpful for this years exams – use this link  <a href="http://www.tutor2u.net/chartsfx/economics/uk_macro/default.asp">http://www.tutor2u.net/chartsfx/economics/uk_macro/default.asp</a></p>
2.8	Examples of useful evaluation phrases to use in answers	<p>Some useful phrases to use to help the examiner!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arguments for and against X are finely balanced....</li> <li>• A change in X might cause a change in Y however this depends on Z being held constant.....</li> <li>• However, a possible disadvantage of this strategy / policy is that ...</li> <li>• The relationship between S and T rests on certain assumptions which may not be the case in reality.....</li> <li>• The effects of a change in A depend on the price elasticity of demand and supply.....</li> <li>• The argument that X causes Y is actually contradicted by recent evidence which shows that....</li> <li>• Although a fall in M should lead to a rise in N, time lags mean that policy changes take time to have their full effect.....</li> <li>• Although there are short term effects arising from the introduction of M, the longer-term impact might be more important</li> <li>• In conclusion, there are several policy options available to the government. I would argue that policy X is likely to be most effective in achieving the government's objective in the long run. This is because .....</li> <li>• There may be a potential conflict involved with this policy</li> <li>• To conclude I would argue that ...</li> </ul>

Good evaluation may be consistent with the view that in economics, *everything depends on everything else!*

### 3 Macroeconomics Data Response Techniques

3.1 Typical data response questions	<p>The question may ask you to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Describe recent changes / fluctuations in a data series</b> (e.g. annual rates of growth of real GDP; unemployment; measures of inflation; the exchange rate; the balance of payments etc) – including identification of any relevant trends in the data. These answers can usually be quite brief. Focus on getting the main changes across in your answer. Avoid spending time laboriously going through every change in the data.</li> <li>2. <b>Accounting for these changes</b> (including identifying some data presented to you that might help to explain these changes)</li> <li>3. <b>Explain basic economic relationships</b> between X and Y or X and Y and Z</li> <li>4. <b>Identify and then evaluate possible effects of government economic policies</b> designed to achieve a specific policy objective (e.g. to achieve a faster sustainable rate of growth or to reduce the scale of a balance of payments deficit)</li> <li>5. <b>Assess problems in forecasting future movements in economic variables</b></li> <li>6. <b>Assess / evaluate the impact of changes in a variable</b> (e.g. house prices, unemployment, interest rates, investment, the exchange rate) on the rest of the economy</li> </ol>	<p><b>Calculators at the ready!</b> You <b>must use a calculator</b> in a data response paper. Get your calculator out and work out some percentage changes</p> <p><b>Look for the main changes in a data series</b> Consider the scale of a change and possible correlations between two data series</p>
3.2 Explaining basic economic relationships?	<p><b>Clear explanations are required</b> Remember that the <b>direction of causation can change</b> E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A rise in unemployment might lead to a fall in cost and price inflation</li> <li>• But .....a fall in inflation might (in the long run) lead to a fall in unemployment</li> <li>• A rise in interest rates might lead to a slow down in house price inflation</li> </ul> <p>But..... a sharp slow down in house price inflation or a fall in house prices might encourage the BoE to cut interest rates</p>	
3.3 Time lags and problems in forecasting	<p><b>Many economic relationships are subject to a time lag</b> – this is always worth mentioning – particularly when talking about the likely effects of macro-economic policy changes - e.g. a rise in interest rates should lead to a slowdown in the growth of consumer spending – but in the short run, consumer spending might not react to higher interest rates (i.e. the demand for credit might be inelastic, consumer confidence takes time to respond to interest rate changes etc.)</p> <p><b>These time lags are difficult to forecast</b> – and this make accurate economic policy-making difficult and subject to error!</p>	
3.4 Multiplier effects	<p>An initial stimulus to demand (e.g. from a rise in government spending or higher capital investment demand) can lead to a much greater final rise in equilibrium national income – the size of the multiplier effect depends on the elasticity of aggregate supply and the size of the marginal propensities to withdraw from the circular flow (MPS, MPM etc)</p>	

3.5 Multi-causal factors	<p>No doubt you have found in your revision that many factors can influence an economic variable E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The causes of unemployment (demand and supply side causes)</li> <li>• The causes of inflation (cost push and demand pull)</li> <li>• Reasons behind changes in the sterling exchange rate</li> <li>• Factors that the Bank of England takes into account when setting interest rates</li> <li>• Causes of economic growth in both the short run and the long run (AD and LRAS causes)</li> </ul> <p>Examiners will always reward students who make an attempt to <b>use relevant economic analysis</b> and make it clear that several factors affect a particular economic variable (inflation, investment spending).</p>
3.6 Economic uncertainty – creates risks!	<p><b>Most economic decisions are taken under conditions of uncertainty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers make consumption decisions without full knowledge of the products they are buying!</li> <li>• Firms must make pricing decisions without perfect knowledge of how other firms will react (e.g. in oligopolistic markets)</li> <li>• The Government announces spending plans up to three years ahead on the basis of macroeconomic forecasts that may prove to be wide of the mark (the economy might be stronger or weaker than expected – this affects their tax revenue and the amount of money they have available to spend / might have to borrow)</li> </ul> <p><b>Because of economic uncertainty – decisions have to be taken with a degree of risk</b> – the final outcome is rarely exactly equal to the forecast. There is always an error margin – and this raises the possibility of policy mistakes being made.</p> <p><b>Economic policy making is not an exact science</b> – the economy does not always respond to a policy change in the way in which theory might suggest.</p>
3.7 Trade-offs and policy conflicts	<p>Be aware of possible <b>trade offs between government economic policy objectives</b>. E.g. a desire to see a lower exchange rate to improve the balance of payments might conflict with the desire to maintain control of inflation.</p> <p>The <b>nature of trade-offs can change over time</b> – for example the changing Philips Curve – the UK has now had a decade or more of falling unemployment <i>without</i> any significant acceleration in the rate of inflation</p>
3.8 Making effective use of the data in questions	<p>Some of the questions on the data response will ask you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Describe trends in the data</b> (charts/tables etc)</li> <li>• <b>Outline reasons for the data changing</b> (moving) in a particular way</li> </ul> <p>Please <b>make effective reference to the data</b> in your answers. <u>Don't simply repeat the information provided – this is a data-response not a data-repeat paper!</u></p> <p>Things to bear in mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Don't mistake levels of for rates of change</b> - e.g. the level of output is different from the rate of change</li> <li>• <b>Misreading the axes</b> – check them carefully – what exactly is the data showing?</li> <li>• <b>Is the data expressed in real terms</b> – (i.e. measured at constant prices)</li> <li>• <b>When does the data finish?</b> Can you add in more recent data into your answer based on your revision?</li> </ul>

3.9 What are the examiners are looking for in data response papers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Clear definitions – e.g. making correct use of the terminology of economics</b></li> <li>2. <b>Good effective use of the data stimulus</b> – if you ignore the data you cannot pass the exam</li> <li>3. <b>Explanations of economic relationships / causations</b></li> <li>4. <b>Awareness of key objectives</b> of government economic policy</li> <li>5. <b>Awareness of the different strategies</b> available to governments to meet these objective (i.e. fiscal policy, supply-side policies, direct controls)</li> <li>6. <b>The limitations of policy</b> – problems in meeting targets and objectives; errors in forecasting and understanding the strength of macroeconomic relationships; issues relating to the behaviour of economic agents e.g. the economy not reacting in the way that the policy intended</li> <li>7. <b>Evaluation of the effects of policy</b></li> </ol>	<i>There is scope for diagrams in the data response paper – particularly effective use of aggregate demand and aggregate supply curve analysis and other macroeconomic diagrams.</i>
3.10 Comment questions	<p>In data questions which state the following "<b>to what extent</b>" or "<b>comment</b>" try the following method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State the <b>basic theory</b> that the data is trying to prove</li> <li>▪ State <b>whether the data supports this</b> (yes or no or a partial confirmation if the data shows different things) and then <b>show the relevant figures</b> - e.g. between 90 and 95 GDP went up 20% and so did consumption by 15% proving the theory...</li> <li>▪ Be careful not to misinterpret the data - in particular the difference between a change in the rate of growth of X (e.g. consumption) and a change in the level of Y (e.g. unemployment)</li> <li>▪ Say "<b>however</b>" and note where the data may disagree with your theory</li> <li>▪ Give reasons <b>why the data may disagree</b> e.g. other factors, time lags, forecasting errors</li> </ul>	

## 4 Advice on Essay Techniques

4.1 Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read through the paper</b> – and make sure you can do both parts before starting any particular question</li> <li>• <b>Essay plans should be brief</b> – don't spend more than 2-4 minutes to organize your thoughts</li> <li>• <b>Quality not quantity</b> – it is not a race to fill the answer booklet</li> <li>• You can write a perfectly good essay in 3 sides (with good analytical diagrams)</li> <li>• Timing is important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look at the mark allocation for each part and assign the right amount of time</li> <li>○ E.g. if you have 45 minutes and part (a) carries 20 marks and part (b) carries 30 marks, then you should spend no more than 18 minutes on part (a) and look to spend 25 minutes on part (b)</li> <li>○ Become familiar with the specific marking schemes of the exam board that you are taking – each board provides details of their marking schemes and examiners' reports on their web sites</li> <li>○ AQA: <a href="http://www.aqa.org.uk">http://www.aqa.org.uk</a></li> <li>○ EdExcel: <a href="http://www.edexcel.org.uk">http://www.edexcel.org.uk</a></li> <li>○ OCR: <a href="http://www.ocr.org.uk">http://www.ocr.org.uk</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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4.2 Essay Structure	<p><b>Start with precise definitions</b> Explain using text, diagrams and relevant examples and evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Analysis:</b> Requires diagrams – develop your analysis by changing the elasticity, or shifting some curves around. Don't go right back to square one in your diagrams – most of the examiners are economists (!) they don't need to be told what demand and supply curves are. Avoid the temptation to fall back on simple supply and demand diagrams when the exam expects a more sophisticated analysis (e.g. in essays on theory of the firm)</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples and evidence count as knowledge</b> – there are marks for this – and they also help you evaluate when you come to the end of an answer</p>	
4.3 Include a brief concluding paragraph	<p>Each essay should have a <b>brief concluding paragraph</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question the assumptions of the piece of theory that you have just explained</li> <li>• Argue, "Other factors that affect X need to be taken into account" for a more complete explanation (you are unlikely to have covered every explanation!)</li> <li>• Perhaps make a reference to a recent economic event to serve as a reminder of the relationship that you have just finished explaining</li> </ul>	<i>In a conclusion, please don't simply repeat what you have already written (a complete waste of your time!)</i>
4.4 Effective discussion – a higher order skill	<p>Discussion involves comparing the costs and benefits or the arguments for and against a particular economic policy or decision. Evaluation also involves <b>putting things in a proper context</b> and not exaggerating the importance of a single event, piece of data</p> <p><b>Open ended questions</b> - there is <b>rarely a unique right answer</b>. Examiners will be looking for <b>breadth of argument</b> as well as <b>depth of analysis</b>. And you will be expected to bring into your answers some wider knowledge on economics. From this knowledge (and a willingness to consider both sides of a debate) comes the ability to evaluate at the end of the essay.</p> <p><b>It is expected that students will acquire a good knowledge of recent trends and developments in the economy</b> which have taken place during the past ten years but they may also benefit from a general awareness of earlier events when this helps to put the last decade into a meaningful context. <i>(Developments in the United Kingdom should be seen in the context of the globalisation of the world economy and the United Kingdom's membership of the EU.)</i></p> <p>The Tutor2u macroeconomics revision presentations are a good resource for your revision: <a href="http://www.tutor2u.net/flash_econ_as.html">http://www.tutor2u.net/flash_econ_as.html</a></p> <p><b>Good candidates analyse the reasons for recent changes in the UK economy and propose possible solutions to macroeconomic problems.</b> They assess the impact and effectiveness of current government policies to deal with these problems as well as considering <u>alternative policies</u></p> <p>Consider long and short term effects or policy options, and make a distinction between <b>cyclical</b> and <b>structural causes</b> of a problem</p> <p><u>Government intervention cannot even begin to cure every macroeconomic ill or microeconomic market failure!</u></p>	<i>You don't have to come to a definitive conclusion. Economic awareness and evidence really counts in both AS and A2 exams!</i>

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## 5 SYNOPTICITY IN ECONOMICS EXAMS

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- 5.1 What is horizontal synopticity? This is where a macroeconomic concept e.g. relating to aggregate demand, inflation, growth etc is introduced into an exam or data response question in a microeconomics paper or vice versa.
- For example a question on the behaviour of consumers and businesses within an industry or market can be affected greatly by the impact of the economy's business cycle or by the longer-term effects of globalization
  - A second example is where the distribution of income and wealth is influenced by the changing pattern of unemployment and movements in real incomes and national house prices
- Micro and macroeconomics are not separate subjects – there are many strong cross-linkages between them – your revision should seek to establish some of these cross-relationships
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- 5.2 What is vertical synopticity? Vertical synopticity occurs when material covered in an AS paper (e.g. Markets and Market Failure) is also introduced into an A2 paper question. For example the material covered on price elasticity of demand and supply is often hugely relevant to the pricing behaviour of firms in competitive and concentrated markets.
- In the AQA exams for example, you are expected in the Unit 5 examination to develop and extend material learnt for the Unit 1 paper at AS particularly in relation to resource allocation and misallocation and the possibility of government failure.
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## 6 ADVICE ON REVISION TECHNIQUES

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- 6.1 Advice for before the exam
- Thorough revision means not cutting corners or relying on question spotting as a means of doing well.  
Remember - exams test a range of different skills and your knowledge base must be secure to approach the exams with confidence.  
Plan revision sessions but be flexible – be aware of your energy and concentration levels  
It is better to work more intensively in shorter bursts rather than long periods when concentration wanes  
Revise together in small support groups – help each other, test each other, share some of the workload!  
The more you revise the more fluent and knowledgeable you will become. Economics is a circular subject i.e. it is one of those subjects that tends to 'come together' in the final phase of study when you have revised a number of different topics
- 
- 6.2 Advice for active revision ahead of the exam
- Make **revision notes** from your class-notes and supplement your class notes with extra reading  
Make use of **bullet points** to highlight the key points  
**Underline important definitions** and get someone to test you on them in the final days before the paper - then test them as well!  
**Practice drawing key diagrams** until you can do them really well and at some speed. They are valuable in the exam and provide some analysis in answers  
**Make essay plans** from previous papers and discuss them in revision groups with your friends  
**Read one current economics article a day** and make brief notes on your reading  
**Learn 5 key definitions every day and two important diagrams every day**  
**Update your knowledge of the UK economy** with some **salient economic facts** to back up your arguments
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**Try one timed essay or data response question per week** and send it to your teachers for marking and feedback

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## 6.3 In the Exam Hall

- **Take careful note of the mark allocation for each question and allocate your time carefully** – be ruthless in your timing and leave sufficient time for the latter parts of questions that **always** carry higher marks (based on levels of response marking)
- Whereas the early parts of a question in a data response paper can often be brief and to the point, examiners are looking for extended answers to the final parts of the question – they demand from you evidence of meeting the higher-order skills of analysis and evaluation
- **Do not waste time copying out the questions**, but leave a few lines at the end of each part of your answer in case you have time at the end of the exam to add an extra sentence or two.
- **Only spend 2-3 minutes on an essay plans** - because plans do not count as part of the answer
- **Start answers with clear definitions** of the main concepts in the question

**Don't go in for over-long introductions** - define, and then start to move onto the analysis / explanation (the core of your answer) and evaluation (the important section in the final part)

Part (a) of an essay question will ask you to explain

Part (b) will ask you to discuss (i.e. evaluate)

- **Develop your economic analysis using relevant diagrams** where possible. Make sure all diagrams are clearly labelled and explained

**Answer the specific question set** - don't adopt the 'kitchen sink' approach

Remember the importance of command words (see earlier in this revision guide)

Keep referring back to the question – it helps to focus your answer

Look for **key stem words** in the question which must be addressed in your answer

- E.g. discuss the effects of a significant appreciation of the exchange rate
- E.g. evaluate the argument that policies to reduce unemployment must inevitably cause higher inflation
- **Make fewer points in more detail** rather than attack the examiner with shopping lists
- **Bring in relevant evidence and appropriate examples** to supplement your theoretical points
- **Be careful with spelling, grammar and presentation of your work** – there are nearly always a few marks awarded for quality of language

**Leave a line between each paragraph** – it helps the examiner to mark your work and spot the key points and arguments that you are including in each paragraph

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- 6.4 Timing your answers correctly
- A frequent mistake that candidates make in the exam is to spend too long on lower order questions carrying few marks**
- Don't exceed the time allowed for each question** - if you need to press the "panic button" near the end of the exam write out a series of points in note form (perhaps in a numbered list)
- For essay questions carrying 50 marks (e.g. A2 micro and macro essay questions)**
- Part (a) 16 minutes (20 marks)  
Part (b) 25 minutes (30 marks)
- Part a) of the essay assesses your understanding of a topic. So use definitions, diagrams, explanations etc
- For data response questions carrying 50 marks**
- Q (a) 3 minutes (4 marks)  
Q (b) 5 minutes (6 marks)  
Q (c) 8 minutes (10 marks)  
Q (d) 24 minutes (30 marks)
- Part b) assesses how well you can apply knowledge. If you write fluently and avoid waffle, you can secure a high mark without writing that much, perhaps 3 sides for the essay?
- It is crucial that you attempt evaluation. This could be summing up arguments or assessing the relative importance of the issues you are considering, or criticising models
- Answer all the parts of the question, preferably in the correct order**, sticking rigidly to the time allocation. Do not over-develop your answers to parts (a) and (b) of the question, but remember that a single-sentence answer seldom answers the question properly
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- 6.5 And finally!
- Get a nice pen (splash out!), this will avoid the dreaded writers cramp**
- Avoid phrases like**
- 'massive effects' and 'huge changes'  
'inevitably' and 'will definitely'
- **Life is uncertain**, so is economic theorising and the reality out there in markets and industries is shrouded with uncertainty and doubts – raising these is a good form of evaluation
- Please avoid political comments that have no place in objective economic analysis and discussion**
- The law of unintended consequences is always worth thinking about!**
- Helpful links on the Tutor2u web site:**
- The Discussion Forum: <http://www.tutor2u.net/forum/default.asp>
  - Revision Notes: [http://www.tutor2u.net/revision\\_notes.asp](http://www.tutor2u.net/revision_notes.asp)
  - Links to all of our updated resources: <http://www.tutor2u.net/default2.asp>