The Evaluation Ladder

A-Level Economics • 25-mark essays

Your final paragraph: reaching an informed judgement — use every prompt

The final paragraph is where top-band marks are won or lost. Examiners want a **supported, informed judgement** — not a summary of what you have already written. Answer the question directly, then show you understand the answer is conditional.

Core — every essay

1

A clear answer
Take a definitive stance — do not sit on the fence. Answer the exact question set.
"Overall, the policy is likely to be effective in reducing… because…"

2

Justify with a new point
Support your judgement with fresh reasoning — not a repeat of an earlier paragraph.
"The decisive factor is… which has not yet been considered…"

3

"It depends on…"
Identify the key condition(s) your answer rests on: elasticity, size of the change, state of the economy.
"However, the extent of this depends critically on…"

4

Short run vs long run
Effects often differ over time — time lags, adjustment of expectations, capacity changes.
"In the short run… whereas over the long run…"

5

Winners vs losers
Who benefits and who misses out? Weigh gainers and losers against each other.
"While savers gain from…, borrowers lose out because…"

6

Different sub-groups of agents
Disaggregate: low vs high income households, SMEs vs large firms, regions, age groups.
"The impact will not be uniform — for low-income households…"

7

Opportunity cost
What is the next best alternative forgone? Spending and investment choices all carry a cost.
"The £X spent on… could otherwise have funded…, meaning…"

8

Link back to the context
Apply your judgement to the specific industry, country or scenario in the question — not a generic answer.
"In the context of this specific market/economy…"

★ Pushing to A*

1

Magnitude & significance
How large is the effect? A small change may be outweighed by other factors.
"Although X occurs, its scale is likely to be modest because…"

2

Prioritise your arguments
Weigh points against each other and state which matters most — and why.
"The most significant argument is… because…"

3

The economic context
Does the answer change in a recession vs a boom, or with spare capacity vs full employment?
"Given the current position in the economic cycle…"

4

Unintended consequences
Information gaps, distorted incentives, regulatory capture, black markets, government failure.
"Intervention may create new distortions such as…"

5

Question the assumptions
Challenge ceteris paribus and rational behaviour — bring in behavioural economics.
"This assumes agents respond rationally, yet…"

6

Consider the counterfactual
Compare against the alternative: doing nothing, or a different policy entirely.
"Relative to the alternative of…, this is superior because…"

7

Combination, not either/or
Would a policy mix work better than relying on a single instrument alone?
"Used alongside…, the weaknesses of… could be offset…"

8

Interrogate the evidence
Is the extract data dated, partial, or drawn from one market? Can it be generalised?
"The data in Extract A pre-dates…, so…"