

# H1 GP (8881)

## Paper 1: Essay — Exam Notes

A-Level 2027 Syllabus

### Paper Format at a Glance

Item	Detail
Questions	8 questions, answer 1
Word limit	500–800 words
Time	1 hour 30 minutes
Content marks	30 (60%)
Language marks	20 (40%)
Total	50 marks (50% of H1 GP)

### Command Words and What They Require

Understanding the command word is the first and most critical step. It dictates the kind of response expected.

Command Word	What Examiners Expect
<b>Discuss</b>	Consider different perspectives/arguments. Present evidence for and against. Reach a reasoned conclusion that weighs the relative merits.
<b>To what extent...?</b>	Argue for a position but acknowledge its limits. Your thesis should include a qualifier ( <i>largely, partially, depends on...</i> ). The conclusion must state how far the statement is true and under what conditions.
<b>How far do you agree...?</b>	Similar to “to what extent.” State areas of agreement and disagreement. Weigh which is more significant.
<b>Evaluate</b>	Assess the strengths and weaknesses of an argument/-claim/situation. Make a judgment about its value, validity, or effectiveness.
<b>Consider</b>	Examine multiple facets of an issue. A thematic structure works well here — examine different dimensions (economic, social, political, ethical).
<b>Is...? / Are...?</b>	A direct yes/no framing. But a simple yes or no answer is insufficient. You must argue with nuance: “It depends on...” or “To some extent, yes, but...”
<b>How can...? / What should be done...?</b>	Problem–Solution structure. Identify the problem, propose solutions, evaluate trade-offs.
<b>Does...? / Do...?</b>	Same as “Is/Are” — require a qualified position.
<b>Why...?</b>	Causal analysis. Explain the reasons behind a phenomenon. Requires evidence of causation, not just correlation.

**Warning Mismatched Command Word**

Writing a descriptive essay when the question asks “To what extent...?” signals to the examiner that you have not understood the question. The command word is not optional — your essay structure must be shaped by it.

**Timing Guide**

Phase	Time	What to Do
Reading + selection	10 min	Read all 8 questions. Select the one you can argue best.
Planning	15 min	Outline your argument. Brainstorm 3–4 examples per point.
Writing	55 min	Write the essay. ~12–14 min per paragraph.
Reviewing	10 min	Check spelling, grammar, clarity. Tighten weak phrasing.
<b>Total</b>	<b>90 min</b>	

**Exam Tip The 15-Minute Plan**

Do NOT skip planning. The 15 minutes you spend planning will save you 30 minutes of rewriting. A good plan includes:

- Your thesis statement (1 sentence)
- For each body paragraph: Point + key example(s) + how it links to the question
- Your counter-argument and evaluation direction
- Your conclusion direction

**Mark Allocation by Band****Content (30 marks)**

Band	Qualities	Marks
5	Nuanced thesis, conceptual depth, wide-ranging developed examples, sustained balance and evaluation, measured conclusion	25–30
4	Clear thesis, good examples, balanced discussion with evaluation, well-supported conclusion	19–24
3	Competent but descriptive, narrow range of examples, some balance but limited evaluation, assertive conclusion	13–18
2	Partial understanding, limited and undeveloped examples, little balance or evaluation	7–12
1	Little relevance, no coherent argument, superficial ideas	1–6

## Language (20 marks)

Band	Qualities	Marks
5	Very few errors, sophisticated vocabulary, complex sentence structures, coherent paragraphing	17–20
4	Few serious errors, varied vocabulary, effective paragraphing, clear meaning throughout	13–16
3	Some errors but meaning clear, appropriate vocabulary, basic but functional paragraphing	9–12
2	Frequent errors impeding meaning, limited vocabulary, weak organisation	5–8
1	Pervasive errors, very limited vocabulary, incoherent organisation	1–4

### Exam Tip Language is 40% of Your Mark

A Band 3 for Language (9–12/20) pulls a Band 4 Content (22/30) essay down to 31–34/50 — barely a B. Do not neglect language work: practise writing concise, varied sentences daily. Read back what you have written. Fix your common errors (subject–verb agreement, comma splices, run-ons).

## Question Selection Strategy

### How to Choose Your Question

1. **Scan all 8 questions** (2 min) — Mark the ones where you immediately think of 2–3 strong examples.
2. **Shortlist 2–3** (3 min) — For each shortlisted question, test: can you argue *both* sides? Can you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each side?
3. **Select the one with the strongest thesis** (5 min) — Not the easiest question, but the one where you have the most to say with depth and nuance.

### Warning The Easiest Question Trap

Choosing the question that seems simplest often backfires because hundreds of other candidates chose it too. Examiners read repetitive answers and mark them harshly. A less obvious question where you have a unique angle often scores higher.

### What NOT to Do

- Do NOT choose a question because you “have a great example” but no argument. Examples support arguments; they are not substitutes for them.
- Do NOT choose a question you have written before — you will reproduce a memorised response rather than engaging with the specific wording of this year’s question.
- Do NOT choose a question whose key terms you cannot define.

## Answering Framework: The ACS System

Use the **ACS Framework** to structure every body paragraph:

<b>A</b>	<b>Assertion</b> — State your point clearly
<b>C</b>	<b>Corroboration</b> — Support with a specific, named example
<b>S</b>	<b>Significance</b> — Explain why this matters for the question

Then **evaluate** using the ECLECTIC mnemonic:

<b>E</b>	<b>Exception</b> — When does this argument not hold?
<b>C</b>	<b>Context</b> — Under what conditions is this true?
<b>L</b>	<b>Limitation</b> — What does the evidence not show?
<b>E</b>	<b>Extension</b> — How does this connect to a broader issue?
<b>C</b>	<b>Comparison</b> — How does this compare to other cases?
<b>T</b>	<b>Trade-off</b> — What is the cost of this approach?
<b>I</b>	<b>Implication</b> — What follows from this argument?
<b>C</b>	<b>Counter-factual</b> — What would happen if the opposite were true?

You do not need ALL of these in every paragraph. Pick 1–2 that fit naturally.

## Common Errors from Examiner Reports

---

Based on past SEAB examiner reports, these errors recur year after year:

1. **Irrelevant content** — Writing about the general topic rather than answering the specific question. This is the single biggest cause of lost marks.
2. **Assertion without evidence** — “Many countries have problems with inequality” — which countries? What data? Without specifics, this is an unsupported opinion.
3. **The narrative essay** — Telling a story or narrating personal experience instead of constructing an argument. GP is an argumentative paper, not a reflective journal.
4. **The balanced but bland essay** — “On the one hand... On the other hand...” without reaching a judgment. A conclusion that refuses to conclude loses marks for evaluation.
5. **Rote-learned examples** — Examiners can tell when an example has been memorised from a guide rather than understood. The example will be poorly integrated and may not fit the question.
6. **Poor time management** — Rushed conclusions or unfinished essays score poorly. The conclusion is disproportionately important because it is the final impression.
7. **Language errors that impede meaning** — Persistent errors in subject–verb agreement, tense consistency, article usage, and preposition choice signal weak language control and cap Language marks.

## Quick-Reference Checklist

---

Before submitting, ask yourself:

- **Thesis:** Does my introduction state a clear, nuanced position?
- **Relevance:** Does every paragraph directly answer the question?
- **Examples:** Are my examples specific, named, and developed?
- **Evaluation:** Have I weighed competing perspectives?
- **Conclusion:** Does my conclusion make a judgment, not just summarise?
- **Language:** Have I checked for spelling and grammar errors?
- **Word count:** Am I within 500–800 words?