

Common Keywords in Essay Questions and their Associated Strategies

1. 'Sufficient'/'Effective'/'Adequate'/'Enough'

Assess the view that attempts to control climate change can never be truly effective. (2017)
"Any adaptation of a novel for film, television or the theatre is never as effective as the original." Discuss. (2016)
How effectively is public health promoted and managed in your society? (2015)
How effective are international efforts to ease the problem of global hunger? (2010)
'Technology is the most effective solution to environmental problems today.' How far do you agree? (ASRJC 2019)
Is democracy the most effective form of government today? (DHS 2019)
How effective is social media as a tool in bringing about change in society? (RVHS (2019)
Assess the view that attempts to reduce inequality in your society can never be effective. (CJC 2019)
Not enough is done for the vulnerable today. Is this true of your society? (NYJC 2019)
To what extent are the needs of the vulnerable given sufficient attention in your society? (YIJC 2020)

Common Mistakes:

- Students argue that a measure/policy is sufficient/effective because it brings about benefits.
- Students often describe the measure/policy taken, without first describing the problem, and evaluating how the steps are effective in rectifying the problem.

How to show that a policy/measure is 'sufficient' or 'effective'?

Think about the following:

- Does it address urgent needs?
- Does it address the root cause of problems?
- Is it sustainable/long-lasting?
- Does it cover a wide scope of issues/resolve problems for many different stakeholders?

Example: How effectively has your society managed inequality?

Singapore has managed inequality effectively through the use of laws that mandate equal legal status for **all** Singaporeans. (Topic Sentence) The fact that Singapore has a large Chinese population (approximately 75%) gives rise to the worry of **unequal power and treatment**, where the majority captures the power and wealth in the state, making the minorities lower class citizens, as in the case of Myanmar. (Explain problem) This problem has been effectively managed by the government, which establishes a secular state guaranteeing the equal treatment and status of all regardless of one's race, religion or place of birth, while also ensuring that minority voices are heard in parliament. These laws are **particularly effective** as they are **backed up by coercive force**, compelling citizens to follow them **without exceptions**. With the strict enforcement of such, the government effectively mitigates the worry of unequal power and treatment between races. (Explain how problem is effectively resolved). For example [insert Singaporean constitution, laws and GRC system here]. By guaranteeing the equal status of races, and that minority voices are always heeded, the government effectively mitigates the worry that unequal power relations would develop between races.

2. 'Realistic' / 'Feasible' / 'Possible'

In an age of rapid technological advancement, is a single career for life realistic? (2018)
 Evaluate the claim that equality of opportunity for females is a desirable, but unrealistic, goal. (2016)
 How far is it possible for one country to forgive another for its past actions? (2015)
 "Gambling on sport undermines its spirit and should be banned." How realistic is this position? (2014)
 How far is increased prosperity for all a realistic goal in your society? (2013)
 How realistic is it for your society to encourage more participation in the arts? (J2 TA1 2020)
 How far is it possible for countries to disregard their history and move forward? (J2 TA1 2020)
 To what extent is it possible to ensure food and water security in your society? (TMJC 2019)
 Evaluate the claim that the regulation of technology is a desirable, but unrealistic, goal. (TMJC 2019)
 Evaluate the claim that the use of alternative energy sources by all is a desirable but unrealistic goal. (YIJC 2020)

Common Mistake: Students argue that a situation is realistic as there are efforts made to achieve it. However, not enough is said about why these efforts are likely to succeed.

How to show that something is realistic?

- Explain the issue / problem Identify and describe criterion that has to be met to solve the issue.
- Identify and describe criterion that has to be met to solve the issue
- Explain how and why it is possible /not possible for the criteria to be met. If you argue that it can be solved, you are most likely to appeal to **trends** showing that the world/society are meeting the criteria. If you think that it cannot be solved, you can refer to **norms, national interest, power structures and different explanations of human nature**. (see below)

Criteria	Show how the criteria be met	Show why the criteria cannot be met
Support of the masses / Change in mindset of the masses	Trends demonstrating increasing awareness of issues (e.g. straws)	• Too much focus on regulations, which do not change mindset • Ignorance, lack of awareness • Focus only on superficial issues (e.g. straws) • Entrenched norms (e.g. consumerism) • Human nature: greed / self-interested nature • Short-term bias – unable to plan for the long-term
Cooperation of and between power players (governments and companies)	Trends demonstrating increasing political will (e.g. Paris Accords, Nuclear Treaties)	• National / self-interest • Unenforceable international laws / Lack of respect for international laws (e.g. South China Sea) • Companies too profit-driven to change • Corporations power over govt • Corruption (link to human greed)
Changing unequal power structures	Technology empowering the common citizen	• Some groups are too powerful (e.g. companies, authoritarian governments) • Victims themselves support the system (due to norms)
Having the expertise / infrastructure / resources / technology to solve the problem	Examples of such expertise / infrastructure / resources / technology	• Examples of important players not using the technology / expertise / infrastructure • Examples of how these resources are not used appropriately

3. 'Should' / 'Acceptable' / 'Justified'

In your society, to what extent is it acceptable for public money to be used for the acquisition of works of art? (2017)

How far is it acceptable for technology to be used only for financial benefit? (2012)

To what extent is it acceptable for private companies to be involved in financing scientific research? (2011)

Can the belief in superstitions ever be justified? (EJC 2019)

Can migration be justified when it creates social problems? (JPJC 2019)

'Any punishment that does not aim to rehabilitate the criminal is unjustified.' Discuss. (ASRJC 2019)

How far should migration of people be encouraged? (MI 2019)

Should the death penalty be abolished? (YIJC 2020)

To what extent is it acceptable for public money to be used for space research? (YIJC 2020)

Should ethical concerns influence what we consume? (J2 BE2 2020)

How far should democracy be encouraged in the modern world? (J2 BE2 2020)

Common Mistake: Students tend to list the benefits and disadvantages associated with the action without showing how the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

How to show that something is justified?

- Assess the consequences (whether x benefits or harm us) in a systematic manner to reach a conclusion on whether the net effect is beneficial/detrimental
- Examine relevant morality issues (rights, duties and fairness)

Example 1: Should ethical concerns influence what we consume?

Given their wealth, citizens of developed countries have a great amount of consumer choice. With the power of choice comes the responsibility to choose morally. This is especially the case when people are well aware of the inhumane and environmentally-damaging circumstances in which animals are raised.

Example 2: How far should democracy be encouraged in the modern world?

SV (benefit) – Given the diversity inherent in modern states, democracy should be encouraged as it allows citizens with disparate viewpoints to compete fairly to have their preferred policies and leaders implemented. This allows for a peaceful compromise to their differences, obviating the need for violence to resolve disagreement.

OV (harm) – However, it may be argued that the clashes in opinions are never peaceful, and may instead lead to political gridlock where governments are no longer able to effectively respond to the ever-changing demands of fast-paced modern world.

Rebuttal (benefit outweigh harm) – While I acknowledge that democratic politics may give rise to political gridlock, I argue that rather than being a bug of democracies, gridlock is actually a feature that protects us from abuse of power. Gridlock ensures that policies are considered thoroughly and that all perspectives are considered. It also prevents centuries of hard work from coming undone in the event that corrupt or ineffective politicians gain power.

4. 'Too much' / 'Over'

Discuss the view that too much faith is placed in statistics. (2008)

'We are too focused on the trivial.' Is this true? (NYJC 2019)

'Governments play too big a role in people's lives today.' Do you agree? (ASRJC 2019)

'Citizens are too reliant on the government.' How far is this statement true in your society? (RVHS 2019)

Is it true that your society has paid too high a price for its success? (SAJC 2019)

Has social media given people too much power? (JPJC 2019)

'People depend too much on the government to solve problems.' How true is this of your society? (YIJC 2020)

Common Mistakes:

- Students tend to repeatedly assert that something is too much without explaining how it is excessive.
- When refuting the claim, students tend to state the benefits of something despite it being too much.

How to show that something is too much/not too much?

- If it's too much: Highlight the negative consequences that results from too much of something
- If it's not too much/just right: Explain why something (that is perceived as excessive) is actually necessary/justified to show that something is not too much

Example 1: 'People depend too much on the government to solve problems.' How true is this of your society?

One might argue that the stellar track record of the Singaporean government in the nation's short history has helped it build up much credit amongst the citizenry. Many therefore feel that problems can be left to the government to resolve. The government may be able to solve the problem for the short-term, but this dependence may be seen to be excessive, as the passiveness breeds an immature citizenry that is incapable of stepping to the plate when the situation calls for it.

Example 2: 'Governments play too big a role in people's lives today.' Do you agree?

Given the social media movements that capitalise on outrage more than dealing with issues founded on truth, governments' surveillance of people's actions online is needed to be fair and safeguard the interests of all groups in society.