

## How to write exam question 3(c)<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the big questions near the end of the paper. It's worth 15 marks (far more than the earlier questions), so please leave enough time for it. This document will help you learn to do it well.

You have to **evaluate** (i.e. assess the quality of) two opposing arguments to help you judge which one you find more convincing. This is a really important skill in life – when there's a disagreement, which side will you support?

This question is typically phrased:

Which argument is more convincing, [Person 1's] or [Person 2's]?

Your answer should consider both arguments, and you should support your point of view with their words.

You should also consider:

- the strength of their reasoning and evidence
- their use of language
- different types of information.

One of the sources given for you to read will normally be a statement each from two people who disagree about an issue. Each person's statement will normally contain strengths and weaknesses, so it probably won't matter which person you judge most convincing overall (and the mark scheme doesn't give an answer to that) – it only matters that you make good evaluative points and that these lead you to an overall judgement (either way).

The mark scheme tells us that a top-band response *makes clear, credible and well supported points about which argument is most convincing. It has coherent, structured evaluation of both arguments with clear comparison.* Taking that together with the question, we can make a colour coding key to identify creditworthy content in our notes and writing:

### Content analysis key:

*These are requested in the question:*

- strength of reasoning and evidence
- use of language
- types of information

*Also desirable:*

- bias & credibility<sup>2</sup>
- comparison
- acceptability of values
- likely consequences of the ideas
- coherent structure to your writing

Look at your exam paper now, and reread the source with the statements from two people. While you do that, make notes in the table below. When you are developing your skills it's good to try to make notes on every set of prompts, but in the exam that would be overkill.

If you are handwriting this as exam practice, you need to work to a time limit of 15 minutes for this question, so you can only spend about 5 minutes on prep. If you really get to know the ideas in the prep table well, by the time you get to the exam you should be confident enough to prepare just by writing a few notes in the margin of the sources.

<sup>1</sup> This question is the last part of Question 3. It can be (c) or (d), depending on the number of shorter questions that lead up to it.

<sup>2</sup> Bias is mentioned in the mark scheme. Credibility of the speaker includes bias as well as things like expertise.

Preparation Table	Person 1: _____	Person 2: _____
<p>How <b>credible</b> is the person? Do they claim <b>expertise</b>? If so, do you believe it?</p> <p>Are they likely to be <b>biased</b>, e.g. with <b>prejudice</b> or a <b>vested interest</b>?</p>		
<p>How is their <b>use of language</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vague or precise?</li> <li>• Neutral or value-laden?</li> <li>• Cautious, or exaggerated?</li> </ul> <p>Quote if you can!</p>		
<p>Are there any problems with their <b>reasoning</b>? – anything inconsistent or irrelevant?</p> <p>Are they leaving anything out, making their <b>perspective</b> too narrow?</p> <p>On the other hand, any notable strengths of their reasoning?</p>		
<p>Consider their use of <b>evidence</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they <b>back up</b> their claims with evidence or examples? (If evidence is offered, is it actually <b>relevant</b>?)</li> <li>• Did the speaker get their information from a reliable <b>source</b>?</li> <li>• Mention <b>types of information</b> where you can, which will help you consider whether they are appropriate (e.g. is <b>anecdotal evidence</b> given where <b>statistical evidence</b> is needed?)</li> </ul>		
<p>Consider the speaker's <b>values</b>. How <b>acceptable</b> are those values to other people? (In many cases this is a matter of degree – we might empathise with a person's values, but consider their <b>opinion</b> too extreme.)</p>		
<p>Consider the <b>consequences</b> of the ideas expressed by the speaker. You might criticise a person's ideas for being impractical, extreme, or harmful, e.g. "If everybody did <i>that</i>,</p>		

**Writing Template**

<p><b>STEP 1</b>  <b>Make a single-sentence opening statement.</b>          What is the main point of disagreement between the two people?          Whose argument do you find more convincing overall?</p>	
<p><b>STEP 2</b>  <b>Evaluate the argument of Person 1.</b> Write one or two developed points per person (you need three or more overall to enter the top band).</p> <p>Ideally, a developed point is a PEE paragraph of about 50-70 words.  <b>POINT</b> (convincing or not?) Make sure it clearly matches up with the opening statement.  <b>EVIDENCE</b> (refer to specific words and claims)  <b>EXPLANATION</b> (making use of your vocabulary of critical concept words)</p> <p><b>Include at least one point of comparison to the other speaker.</b></p> <p>(The examiners will also credit relevant undeveloped points. A few of those can stack up to be worth as much as a developed point, so in the exam if you aren't sure about structure, just write the idea somehow and move on.)</p>	
<p><b>STEP 3</b>  <b>Write another, similar section evaluating the argument of Person 2.</b></p> <p><b>Add one or two developed points (PEE paragraphs) for Person 2.</b> Again, make sure the topic sentence of each paragraph clearly matches up with your opening statement.</p> <p><b>Include at least one point of comparison to the other speaker.</b></p> <p>+ undeveloped points if necessary</p>	
<p><b>STEP 4</b>  <b>Make a one-sentence closing statement to reinforce your overall judgement.</b>          Check it matches up to your opening statement and the first sentence of each paragraph.</p>	

**How much should you write?**

The exam paper normally gives you 2 blank lines per mark, which would make 30 lines (≈300 words). However, this is the only question that doesn't follow this pattern; it only gives you 23 lines. If you write concisely you can make 3 developed points and get a top band score with a response of only 230 words, but if you're going to write beyond the lines given on any question, this might be the one. If you're practising by typing, keep a close eye on your word count

as it's easy to go over. Better to handwrite your exam practice – then there's no word limit, just a time limit.

If you include three or more successful developed points (perhaps with some undeveloped points as well), you should be in line for a high score on this question.

Practise well, and good luck in your exam!

