

How to: 20 mark essays

Friday, January 2, 2026 12:13 PM

New Material

There are **two** types of 20 mark essays in Higher Modern Studies.

- "To what extent..."
- "...Discuss"

These are largely the same essay, with a few subtle differences that you don't need to worry about right now. The main thing to be aware of is that "to what extent" questions will direct you to a specific issue, whereas a "discuss" question will allow you to be a bit broader in your response. Look at the two different types of essay questions on the same issue below.

A. *To what extent do the electoral systems you have studied provide effective choice and fair representation?*

B. *Voting systems used in the UK have many strengths. Discuss.*

You can see that the questions above are largely similar. The **discuss** question provides a bit more flexibility in how you approach it, whereas the **to what extent** question is asking you to focus firstly on **choice and representation** - however you can also bring in other factors. Today - we are going to begin by focusing on the following question.

Voting systems used in the UK have many strengths. Discuss. (20)

The first thing we should be doing when being presented with an essay question is consider what it is asking us to do. Make sure you are aware of any commands within the question.

Voting systems used in the UK have many strengths. Discuss. (20)

New Material

What to include in my essay?

Your 20 marks are allocated as follows.

Knowledge: 8 marks

KU refers to the information that you know that is relevant to this topic. These can include facts and figures, examples, or the views of specific individuals. Each relevant piece of information you use will give you **one** KU mark. This must be **recent** and from the last **10** years.

Analysis: 6 marks

Analysis refers to your ability to do something effective with the KU you have used. Analysis marks are about your ability to make an argument about the importance or significance of something. What does this show us? What is the significance of this? What are the consequences of this? **You should always be aiming to do this 2 or 3 times per paragraph.**

Evaluation: 4 marks

Evaluation is about your ability to reach a judgement on an issue. You should be looking to reach a judgement at the end of every paragraph. For example, when it comes to choice for voters, how effective is FPTP in providing this. You should look to write a mini-conclusion at the end of each paragraph, reaching a judgement and justifying conclusion.

Structure: 2 marks

Structure is about your ability to develop a clear and consistent line of argument. You should be aiming to have an **introduction**, **three or four main paragraphs** and **conclusion** in every 20 mark essay. It is important that your essay attempts to answer the question and you have a line of argument that flows throughout the essay - this should be mentioned in your intro, each paragraph and overall conclusion.

How to lay out my essay?

There is no absolute right way to write an essay. The most important thing is that you get your line of argument across and answer the question in an informed and evidenced manner. However, this structure is the best way to ensure you maximise marks in your essay.

(Note: this is an example with one paragraph - your essay should have three or four)

Introduction	1. Give some background information and context to the issue.
	2. What are your factors in this essay?
	3. What is your line of argument?

Paragraph 1	The first factor to be discussed - if a factor is mentioned in the question, you must discuss this first.
Introductory sentence	What is this paragraph about? For example: poverty plays a significant role in causing health inequality.
Knowledge	First piece of relevant information about the issue. Describe, explain, example. <u>This could be more than one piece of evidence, you can get multiple marks.</u>
Analysis	What is the significance of this? What does it tell us in relation to the question? What are the consequences of this?
Knowledge	Second piece of relevant information about the issue. Describe, explain, example. <u>This could be more than one piece of evidence, you can get multiple marks.</u>
Analysis	What is the significance of this? What does it tell us in relation to the question? What are the consequences of this?
Evaluation (mini-conclusion)	What judgement can you reach on this paragraph? Make a conclusion and explain/summarise why. Link to your line of argument.
Conclusion	Make an overall conclusion and answer the question. Try to link it back to your line of argument and bring the essay to a neat close.