

Some Religious Studies GCSE specifications require students to write a short essay evaluating a statement and producing a well-argued line of reasoning backed up with evidence. (See marking criteria below.)

We recommend teachers break down the writing process into several stages:

1. **I DO** Teacher reading aloud and deconstructing a model answer typical of writing expected.
2. **I DO** Teacher clarifying how the text needs to be organised and what are the typical language features for a logical argument.
3. **WE DO** Teacher and pupils jointly fill in a plan, supported by the IPEELL mnemonic.
4. **WE DO** Teacher and pupils review the success criteria – both the GCSE expectations as well as specific writing expectations.
5. **YOU DO** Using the pre-filled planning sheet, pupils write their own essay.
6. **YOU DO** Pupils work in pairs with agreed success criteria to mark each other's work.
7. **REPEAT** with a new essay topic/title; this time asking pupils to produce their own plan.

Model evaluation question

Text organisation		Language features
Introduction: summarise main thesis	Evaluate the statement, "War is never right" The assertion that "war is never right", may seem obvious, but in some cases it could be the lesser of two evils.	Objective third person voice
Paragraph one: introduce argument	Many believers, such as the Quakers, argue that war is never right. It causes untold misery to ordinary citizens. Jesus taught his disciples not to use violence when he was being arrested in Gethsemane. He said, 'Those who live by the sword die by the sword,' which suggests violence breeds more violence. We can see from the Middle East today that conflict in the past has not ended war but resulted in yet more conflict. Deaths in war cause lifelong suffering for both soldiers and families who lose loved ones.	Subject specific vocabulary in reference to religion Modal verbs to suggest possibilities (<i>could be, may</i>)

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<p>Paragraph two: develop argument</p>	<p>In addition, war ruins a country's economy and infrastructure, leaving people homeless and hungry.</p> <p>People are left with absolutely nothing and may flee the country, becoming refugees. We see this in the world today, where no good has come from the war in Syria. It is bad stewardship to spend huge sums of money on war, leading to famine and starvation. According to Jesus, we shall be judged on how we have treated those in need. This means we should be feeding and educating people, not killing them.</p>	<p>Discourse markers signalling addition <i>(In addition, also)</i></p>
<p>Paragraph three: counter argument</p>	<p>However, it could be argued that in certain situations war is the lesser of two evils. Although it is never good, it may sometimes be justified. If a corrupt and powerful regime harms its own citizens, civil war could be the only way of overthrowing it, as a last resort. A powerful nation could be justified in getting rid of such a regime in order to help the population of that country. The Just War theory tries to limit the wars being fought, but it accepts that in some cases, a war might be necessary and justified.</p>	<p>Signal words for contrast <i>(However, although)</i></p>
<p>Ending: summary and evaluation</p>	<p>Overall, it can be asserted that war is never right because of Jesus' teaching his disciples to love not only their neighbours but also their enemies. Going to war against our enemies is hardly loving them.</p>	<p>Summary discourse marker <i>(in conclusion, overall)</i></p>

Suggested plan using IPEELL approach

PAT Purpose – to evaluate a point of view Audience – teacher, examiner Type – essay evaluating a point of view	IPEELL Introduction Points Elaboration: (exemplify, evidence, explain) Ending Links/discourse markers Language
Introduction One sentence introducing overall view and intention	
Point one Argue first view point in one or two paragraphs <i>It could be strongly argued that...</i>	Evidence – refer to a source of wisdom from religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is line with the teachings of...</i> • <i>Name the source</i> • <i>Give a quotation</i> Explain your point or source of wisdom
Point two Present counter argument (the other side) Link to the previous statement... <i>However ... some ... (believers) would strongly disagree with this because...</i>	Evidence – refer to a source of wisdom from religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is line with the teachings of...</i> • <i>Name the source</i> • <i>Give a quotation</i> Explain your point or source of wisdom
Ending (conclusion) Summarise the stronger argument with qualification if you like. <i>In conclusion, I think the strongest argument is ... because...</i> <i>In summary, whilst (view 1) is indisputable, (view 2) still has some merit</i>	
Links (discourse markers) Adding information: <i>another, furthermore, also, in addition, moreover</i> Causal: <i>Consequently... as a result...</i> Compare and contrast: <i>However... although... on the other hand ...</i> Concluding: <i>In summary, on reflection...</i>	
Language Third person voice in main section, first person in conclusion Modal verbs to suggest possibilities Explaining verbs: <i>It shows that...it means...it suggests that ...this indicates</i> Relevant Tier 3 vocabulary:	

Twelve Mark Questions		
Mark Scheme		
Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10-12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7-9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion or the argument is one-sided.	4-6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1-3

Alternative success criteria for marking and improving extended writing

Name	Teacher	Pupil score	Teacher score
Title Evaluate the statement "War is never right"			
Introduction 1 mark			1
Paragraphs 1 mark for each clear topic sentence max 3 marks			3
Evidence and 1 mark per source of wisdom given max 3 marks Explain 1 mark per explanation max 3 marks			6
Ending 2 marks for a summary			2
Links 1 mark per discourse marker used for cohesion max 3			3
Language 1 mark for relevant subject word used max 3 marks			3
Total score (max 18)			18