Extended-Answer Technique: Structure, P–E–E–L & Diagrams

The **extended answer** is worth 30% of your course and a large part of each examination. It is where you show you can sustain an argument, not just recall facts. The good news: a strong extended answer follows a reliable structure you can practise until it's automatic.

Decode the question before you write

Extended-answer questions usually carry an **analyse**, **evaluate** or **discuss** directive. Each demands more than explanation:

- **Analyse** — break the issue into its parts and show how they relate and interact.
- **Evaluate** — weigh strengths against weaknesses, costs against benefits, then reach a *supported judgement*.
- **Discuss** — present more than one point of view before concluding.

> An "evaluate" question with no judgement, or a "discuss" question that only argues one side, caps your mark no matter how much correct content you include. The verb sets the ceiling.

A structure that works every time

1. **Introduction** — define the key terms in the question and state the position or scope of your answer in two or three sentences. Don't waffle; signpost.
2. **Body paragraphs** — one idea per paragraph, each following the same internal shape (below). Three to four developed paragraphs is usually right.
3. **Diagram(s)** — integrate at least one fully labelled diagram and *refer to it in the prose* ("as Figure 1 shows, AD shifts right..."). A diagram that isn't discussed earns little.
4. **Conclusion** — for evaluate/discuss, give a clear, justified judgement that follows from your body. Don't introduce new content.

The paragraph engine: P–E–E–L

Build every body paragraph the same way:

P — Point. State the claim this paragraph proves.

E — Explain. Develop the economic reasoning step by step (cause → effect → effect).

E — Evidence. Support it: a diagram, data, or a real Australian example.

L — Link. Tie it back to the question's exact wording.

Worked paragraph (evaluate fiscal policy)

P: "A key strength of fiscal policy is its ability to target a downturn directly."

E: "By increasing government spending or cutting taxes, the government raises aggregate demand. Through the multiplier, the initial injection generates successive rounds of induced spending, so the final rise in output exceeds the original stimulus."

E: "As an AD/AS diagram shows, AD shifts right toward the LRAS, closing a recessionary gap and raising real output."

L: "This makes fiscal policy effective in a deep downturn — but, as the next paragraph argues, implementation lags weaken that advantage, which is central to judging its overall effectiveness."

Integrating diagrams

- Draw it large, rule your lines, and label every axis, curve and equilibrium.
- Show the *shift* with an arrow and a new curve (e.g. AD → AD_2), and mark the new equilibrium.
- Reference it explicitly in the sentence before or after.

Timing & planning

Spend the first 3–4 minutes planning: jot the verb, your judgement, and a one-line label for each paragraph plus its diagram. A 90-second plan prevents the most expensive mistake — a well-written answer to the wrong question.

Pre-submission checklist

- Did I **answer the verb** (judgement for evaluate/discuss)?
- Does every paragraph follow **P–E–E–L** and link back to the question?
- Is there at least one **fully labelled diagram**, referenced in the prose?
- Did I use **Australian evidence** or data where relevant?
- Does my **conclusion** follow from the body without new material?

Plan to the verb, argue in P–E–E–L paragraphs, integrate and discuss your diagrams, and finish with a judgement that the body has earned. That structure turns correct economics into a high-scoring extended answer.