



Admission Test (Cycle 1)

Written Portion 1/2

Strategy and tips

Duration : 2 hours

Session : XX

Topic 2 : Sustainable development: a solution to environmental and development challenges facing the planet.

Academic Entry : 2016/2017

INSTRUCTIONS

Read instructions carefully. You are to write on **one topic** from the 2 available choices.

Your essay must consist of 3 sections :

- Introduction : This is the part where you introduce the topic and analyze key concepts and terms. You are expected to raise the problematic and give clear indication on how you will approach the topic in subsequent paragraphs in the body of your essay.
- Body : This part should consist of 2 or 3 balanced paragraphs. You are expected to demonstrate a fair amount of knowledge about the issue at hand and outline different standpoints; showing where they converge and diverge. You are also expected to take a critical view showing the strengths and limitations of the standpoints you have outlined.
- Conclusion : A brief recapitulation and overall assessment of the main ideas featured in your essay, with the possibility to explore further the issue.

An essay which fails to comply with this format will be penalized. A particular attention will be given to the visual presentation of the exam answer sheet.

ESSAY TOPICS TO CHOOSE FROM

2nd Choice:

Theme 2 : Climate Change.

Topic 2 : Sustainable development: a solution to environmental and development challenges facing the planet.

Introduction

Your introduction should demonstrate a fair understanding of sustainable development both as a concept and as a practice. One possible way of opening up your essay could be an explanation of sustainable development as a solution to the economic and development challenges facing the international community. The thrust of your essay, however, could center around the synergy between the economy, in all sectors from agriculture, industry, trade and the environment.

Your thesis statement could be formulated as follows:

An economy that grows at the expense of the environment is not sustainable in the long run as natural resources that drive up the economy will soon run out; leaving nothing for future

generations. This explains the importance of innovative concepts such as sustainable development

It would not be enough to define the concept of sustainable development and present it as a viable solution to environmental and economic challenges. You would need to establish the social, political and economic context in which it emerged and developed. Hence, a fair amount of contextual material is needed at this point. Tracking the concept back in time through some of the crucial international conferences, conventions would be an indication that you have a good grasp of the issue at hand.

The following ideas could feature in the section where you offer a definition and contextualization of sustainable development:

The strong need to sustain human, economic and social development was expressed by leading economists since the eighteenth century. The English economist, Malthus, expressed concern about how population was growing out of proportion to the available natural resources. He suggested possible ways of curbing the rising demographic trend.

The phrase 'sustainable development' has been in circulation since the early 1980's. However, a succinct definition of the concept appeared in one of the reports of the Brundland Commission on environment and development in 1987. It was suggested that sustainable development is 'a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own.'

The concept of sustainable development came in response to the urgent need to ensure economic growth, meet our vital needs but without damaging the environment or stripping the planet of its natural resources. Simply put, sustainable development consists of striking a balance between our social, economic and environmental needs.

Given the vertiginous increase in the world population, international organizations such as the United Nations, together with activist groups from the international civil society, continue to put pressure on local and global policy makers to review patterns of production and consumption in the hope of protecting the environment from further degradation and ensuring food availability as well as reducing social inequality.

World leaders and decision makers have convened several times ever since the concept of sustainable started gaining currency. It is worth mentioning some of the crucial landmarks in this regard:

The Rio Conference (1992) on environment and development: Much of the debate in this conference centered around three main issues: Urban sustainability, food security, and access to alternative energy services.

The Kyoto Conference (1997) on climate change.

The Montreal Protocol (1998), a protocol that aims to protect the ozone layer by eliminating the Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), putting pressure on the chemical-manufacturing industry.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration: It aimed to reduce world poverty by 50% and expressed concern about rapid urbanization, social inequality, access to clean and energy, and sustainable agriculture. This declaration also provided for disaster management.

The Johannesburg Conference on Sustainable development (2002)

The Paris Conference on Climate (2015), COP 21

The upcoming COP 22 in Marrakech.

After Contextualizing the concept of sustainable in both historical and practical terms, you return to your thesis and develop it further:

Here follow some suggested ideas

There is a strong connection between environment degradation and economics. Increasing food supply entails intense use of land and so much fossil fuel energy that leads in itself to global warming which, in turn, causes natural disasters. Flooding, drought, deforestation lead to displacement and migration of entire communities. Having lost their livelihoods as a result of natural or man-made disasters, these communities have no other choice but move to cities and living in make shift camps that quickly become slums. This would in turn lead to all kinds of social ills, from poverty, poor education and healthcare to unemployment and social unrest.

It must be stressed that urban centers around the globe are home to 50% of the World population. This figure is set to increase dramatically; reaching 70% over the next thirty years. The slums with all subhuman living standards they connote are home to 1 billion people around the world. This explains the emergence of the concept of unsustainable cities.

The aforementioned paragraphs give an alarming picture of some of the challenges facing the international community. However, you would need to refer to some success stories and give mention of some of the policies initiated at the national or the municipal levels. Here follow some examples:

With regard to the environment, some individual states have made long strides towards sustainability. Ecuador and Bolivia have included in their respective constitutions ‘the rights of nature’. Some other countries impose heavy taxes on fuel, dissuading their citizens from using individual vehicles in favor of friendly light rail transportation. Japan and Denmark already have in place advanced fiscal tools that heavily tax energy-hungry users and provide encouraging tax incentives for Research and Development initiatives of sustainable development. The Netherlands and countries in Scandinavia are perceived as ‘cycling cultures’ where city dwellers, regardless of their social status use bicycles as means of transportation around the city.

Nowadays, a city is judged not only on the basis of its economic vibrancy but also on the basis of its environmental livability and urban sustainability. Singapore, a country which seriously

suffers from land and water shortage, decided as early as the early 1970's to build water reclamation plants and desalinated water or water catchments units. Singapore has shared such water solutions with China where the quality of water available for drinking presents serious health hazards. This is known in the parlance of sustainable development as 'water solutions to eco-cities'

There have been promising programs of what is now called 'green economy'. The low-carbon sector industry and environmentally friendly solutions to farming generate jobs, create business opportunities and enhance the use of innovative technology. The revenue generated by this new type of industry is projected to be 2 trillion US dollars by 2020.

Conclusion

In your conclusion, you may wish to indicate that **environmental sustainability is still at great risk as evident in biodiversity loss and increasing greenhouse gas emissions**. In other words, the challenges are still there and more effort needs to be made. Yet sustainability development still stands as the only viable solution to these challenges. **Here follow a suggested conclusion:**

For all the laudable initiatives taken in favor of the environment, the old debate between economic development and environmental conservation is still raging. Serious challenges are lying ahead as the impact of these measures on the entire world community remains uneven. Emerging economies, especially the Bric group (Brazil, Russia, India and China) stand guilty of the same charges as countries in the developed world. They do not seem to be willing to forego economic gains in favor of the environment. Worse still, they claim the right to pollution quotas arguing that the industrial achieved economic prosperity through pollution and so should they.

Poverty is still rife, with one out of six people lacking access to drinking water, healthcare, sanitation and education.

For its part, generating energy from the sun, wind, and tidal power is not a cost effective operation. More programs in research and development in matters of renewable energy are needed to recoup the investment incurred in sustainable schemes. Oil and natural gas lobbies worry that programs of sustainable development would significantly reduce their profit margin. They use their influence and abort green programs. International civil society groups should therefore continue to exert pressure on governments and international organizations in the hope of making the world greener, safer and with less poverty and deprivation.