

1.1 Short Answers

Skills	Criteria
Analyse the question	The question is answered completely and appropriately
Select relevant information	The content is all relevant to the question
Think critically and analytically	The answer shows understanding of how key aspects relate Information is questioned and a point of view argued
Begin with a proposition	The proposition shows understanding of the question and indicates the points to be covered
Present an argument	The argument is logical and concise

Purpose

To write a concise and logical answer to a question.

Audience

Your assessor. However, this format is also practice for presenting persuasive answers to issues or problems for business colleagues or superiors.

Structure

Introduction

An establishing sentence shows the reader you understand the question and indicates the position you will take (see example). In other words, the core answer to the question is in this sentence.

Argument

This part of the answer defines the key terms in the question and provides justification for the argument with the 'What' and the 'Why'.

What: Provide the relevant information to answer the question. You may include brief examples.

Why: Most questions require an explanation section where you show the relationships, consequences or reasons for the answer you give.

Conclusion

A concluding sentence is only needed if the argument is long and complex.

Style

The answer may have only one paragraph. If longer than half a page, consider more paragraphs. The writing should be impersonal to give the answer generality and suggest impartiality. However, in some instances, the nature of the assignment task may require a more specific response where students are asked to relate elements of a scenario to concepts and theories.

Steps

1. Underline the key terms in the question.
2. Decide whether the question asks for a simple description (Describe... or What is...?) or some analysis and explanation (Discuss, Comment, Explain or Analyse).
3. Establish the meanings of the key terms and identify information that will answer the question.
4. Write an establishing sentence that shows you understand the question and indicates your position.
5. Present information and justification for your answer. Include brief examples if they will help to make your point(s) clear.
6. Check that all the information included is necessary to your answer - no padding.

Example

Question: Discuss the conditions under which cash accounting provides useful financial information.

Answer

Introduction

Establishing sentence (including point of view)

Cash accounting provides useful financial information only under restrictive conditions.

Argument

What (explanation)

Pure cash accounting maintains records of an entity's cash flow. It ignores all liabilities and only recognises one asset – cash. Modified cash accounting methods keep the daily records on a cash basis, but augment the end-of-period results for a few significant non-cash items such as inventories or equipment.

What (explanation)

The main aim of accounting is to provide financial information for use in making economic decisions. The accountant normally presents this information in terms of an entity's financial position and changes therein as represented by assets, liabilities and owner's equity.

Why (implications of the facts)

When non-cash assets and liabilities are a significant part of an entity's operation, then the cash accounting method will not provide the information needed for making economic decisions.

Conclusion

(logical conclusion drawn – restates argument based on what has been presented)

It follows that the cash accounting method will provide useful financial information when an entity's operations are conducted mainly in cash terms, with relatively small or constant carry-overs of inventory and equipment from one period to the next.