



Module Exam Question Papers – Change to Command Word Format (Start date Nov 2026)

Command words

Command words make it easier to understand a question and guide you towards writing direct answers. As we refine and develop this approach, the structure of the questions will reflect the standards adopted across general education in the UK.

To help prepare for this style of examination, the accompanying table shows the core command words that will be included in future Module exams. The table also shows how the command words can be interpreted.

Understanding command words

Questions will contain specific command words, guiding you towards providing the information that answers the specific question. Understanding them is the key to giving the right type of answer and gaining the marks available. For example, if the question asks a candidate to list five things, then only the first five items will be accepted as the answer. In this example, the key command word is 'list.' Think of command words as the 'verbs' in the question. They don't just fill space, they guide you towards the answer, how much detail to include, and what skills to demonstrate.

Why command words matter

Command words indicate the required depth of the answer (brief fact vs. detailed explanation) or how to organise your response (list, describe, compare, analyse, evaluate). If you miss the command word, you might write a long answer that earns very few marks. Similarly, markers use the response to command words to check that the candidate can apply knowledge, not just recall facts.

How to use command words in answers

Underline or highlight the command word in every question before starting to write. Match the style of answer to the command word; short bullet points for 'List', detailed reasoning for 'Explain'. Check the mark allocation; for example, a 'State' question with one mark needs only one correct fact, while an 'Explain' worth six marks needs depth and structure with a clear point for each mark.

In conclusion

It pays to focus on what the command word asks and write in response rather than simply writing down everything that you know. To help, we recommend that you familiarise yourself with the accompanying sample paper to develop the ability to spot command words quickly.

“Command words are the exam’s ‘secret code’. If you learn what each command word means and write your answers as a direct response, you will give the marker exactly what they’re looking for – which turns your knowledge into marks and a beautiful new SBA certificate!”

Command word	What it means	Example
State/give/name	Provide a brief fact or piece of information. No explanation needed.	State the melting point of beeswax.
List	Write a series of facts, one after another. No detail, just the facts.	List three products of a beehive.
Describe	Say what something is like, or what happens. Give details but not reasons for it happening.	Describe the process of honey extraction.
Explain	Give reasons or say why something happens, using facts or logic.	Explain why bees swarm in spring.
Compare	Point out similarities and/or differences. Sometimes 'contrast' is used for differences only.	Compare the roles of worker and drone bees.
Outline	Give the main points, in order, without detail.	Outline the life cycle of a queen bee.
Discuss	Present arguments for and against, or different sides, and come to a conclusion	Discuss the impact of pesticides on bee health.
Evaluate	Judge the importance, effectiveness, or value of something. Provide evidence for your judgement.	Evaluate the effectiveness of artificial swarming techniques.
Analyse	Break down into parts and explain how they work together.	Analyse the reasons for colony collapse.
Suggest	Offer a possible answer or solution, often when there is no single correct answer.	Suggest several methods to reduce hive moisture, with pros and cons.