Reasoned Argument

How to answer the last question: assess actions or a statement about a global issue, consider different perspectives, and build a line of reasoning from reasons and evidence.

Question 4 is the longest answer on the paper (20 or 24 marks). It uses **all** the sources, and it asks for **your own judgement**. Almost every paper gives three possible actions and asks "Which one of these actions would you recommend, and why?". The 2023 paper asked "Do you agree with this statement?" instead, so be ready for both. Nothing in the sources gives the answer. You are marked on how well you **reason**, not on which side you choose.

4.1 Assessing actions and perspectives on a global issue

What the question wants

The question prompt lists what to do. It looks like this:

- **State your recommendation** (or your opinion, for a statement).
- **Give reasons and evidence** to support it.
- **Use the material in the sources and/or your own ideas.**
- **Consider different arguments and perspectives.**

Every bullet is a mark scheme point. Tick them off as you plan.

Assessing an action

When you must choose between actions (for example "build schools", "train teachers", "fund mentors"), judge each one with **criteria**. Then choose the one that does best.

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Criterion	Question to ask
Effectiveness	Does it really solve or reduce the problem? How much?
Reach	How many people benefit? Who is left out?
Cost	What does it cost, and is that value for money?
Speed	How soon will there be results?
Feasibility	Can it be done in practice (people, skills, law, place)?
Sustainability	Will it keep working over time without harming the environment or the economy?
Side effects	Could it cause new problems?

> **Say why your choice is better than the others, not just why it is good. Comparing the options is what turns an opinion into a judgement.**

Considering perspectives

A perspective is a viewpoint based on reasons and evidence. For each action, ask **who** would support it and who would object. Perspectives can be:

- **personal**: how it affects one person or family,
- **local or national**: communities, businesses, governments,
- **global**: other countries, international organisations, the environment.

Whichever kind of question you get, give **one or two perspectives that disagree with you** (people who would prefer another action, or who disagree with the statement) and say why you still hold your view. This **counter-argument and reply** is a sign of top-level thinking.

Using the sources and your own ideas

- **Quote or refer to** at least two or three different sources, and say what each shows ("Source 2 reports that ...").
- Add **your own ideas** or examples, so your answer is not only a summary of the insert.
- Notice when a source is **biased or weak**. Using it carefully, with a comment, is stronger than quoting it as if it were fact.

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4.2 Supporting a line of reasoning with reasons and evidence

A **line of reasoning** is a chain of connected points that leads logically to your conclusion. Markers check whether each step follows from the last.

Plan before you write (3 minutes)

1. Decide your **opinion or recommendation**.
2. List **three main reasons** and, for each, the **evidence** (source number, figure, own example).
3. Pick **one opposing view** and how you would reply.
4. Write your **conclusion** in a sentence.

Structure of the answer

Part	What goes in it
Introduction (2 to 3 lines)	Your opinion or recommendation, and the issue in a phrase
Reason 1	Point, evidence, explanation, link back to your opinion
Reason 2	The same
Reason 3 (or a counter-argument)	The same, or the opposing view and your reply
Conclusion	Your judgement, the strongest reason, and a short note of the main limit or alternative

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The point-evidence-explain-link paragraph

1. **Point**: the reason, in a clear sentence.
2. **Evidence**: from a source, a statistic, an example.
3. **Explain**: **why** this evidence supports your point (this is the step most students miss).
4. **Link**: back to your main opinion, and if you can, to a different perspective.

TRY IT

Question: Which one of these actions would you recommend to a city council to reduce traffic: a new bus lane, a congestion charge, or a free park-and-ride?

Point: I recommend the **bus lane** because it makes the alternative to driving faster. **Evidence:** Source 2 says buses in the city are "stuck for 40 minutes a day". **Explain:** if buses become quicker than cars, more people will choose them, which removes cars from the road. **Link:** unlike the congestion charge, this does not punish poorer drivers, so it is fairer. (Then consider the view that the charge raises money, and reply.)

Ways to move up a level

- **Develop** every point with **because** and **which means**, rather than listing.
- **Compare** the options (**whereas**, **however**, **on the other hand**).
- Show **balance** without losing your **line**: acknowledge another view, then explain why yours is still stronger.
- Avoid **extreme words** (everyone, always, never) unless you can justify them.
- Keep your **conclusion linked to your reasons**: do not introduce new reasons at the end.

Managing the time

On a paper of about 75 to 85 minutes and 70 marks, you have roughly **one minute per mark**. Question 4 is worth the most, so keep **25 to 30 minutes** for it: 3 to 5 minutes planning, the rest writing. Read the sources once at the start, not once for each question.

NOTE

If you run short of time, write a **shorter, developed** answer with a clear opinion and two well-explained reasons rather than a long list. Quality of reasoning beats quantity.

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