

CSS English Essay: how to plan, structure and write a high-scoring essay

The English Essay paper is the one compulsory paper that every CSS candidate sits and that no amount of last-minute memorising can rescue. It tests whether you can think clearly about a question, take a position, organise an argument and express it in correct, plain English, all within three hours. This guide takes you through the paper in the order you will meet it on the day: what the examiners are looking for, choosing a topic, writing a thesis, building an outline, writing the introduction, body and conclusion, using evidence, avoiding language errors and managing your time. It ends with two model essays written by Mega Lecture, a checklist and a quick check with answers.

1. What the paper asks for

1.1 Format

The English Essay is a compulsory paper of 100 marks and 3 hours. You are given a list of topics and you write one essay on one of them. The topics cover a wide range: Pakistan's politics, economy and society, international affairs, science and technology, education, the environment, ethics and philosophy, and short quotations or single words that you must interpret. There is no fixed word limit in the paper itself, but candidates are commonly advised to aim for roughly 2,500 to 3,000 words of essay, preceded by an outline. Always check the current FPSC syllabus and instructions on the paper, because rules on format and pass marks are set by the Commission and can change.

What the Essay paper is testing, in one sentence: the ability to understand a topic precisely, take a clear and defensible position on it, organise that position into a logical sequence of arguments supported by evidence, and express it in correct, clear English.

1.2 What examiners reward

Examiners are not looking for the longest essay, the rarest vocabulary or the greatest number of quotations. They reward five things, roughly in this order of importance:

1. **Relevance.** Every paragraph answers the topic as set, not a nearby topic you prepared earlier.
2. **A clear thesis.** The reader knows from the introduction what you are arguing and why.
3. **Logical organisation.** The outline and the essay follow the same sequence, and each section leads naturally to the next.
4. **Depth and evidence.** Claims are explained and supported with accurate facts, examples and reasoning, and opposing views are dealt with.
5. **Correct, clear expression.** Grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are accurate, and the style is direct.

2. What the examiners' reports say candidates get wrong

FPSC publishes examiners' reports after each CSS examination. Year after year the same weaknesses appear in the comments on the English Essay. In our own words, the recurring complaints



are these:

1. **Irrelevance and memorised material.** Candidates prepare essays on popular themes and reproduce them whatever the topic says. A topic on "the role of the media in a democracy" receives a general essay on "the media in Pakistan" with no discussion of democracy. Examiners spot this immediately.
2. **No clear thesis.** Essays describe a subject without arguing anything. The reader reaches the end without knowing what the writer believes.
3. **Weak or mismatched outlines.** Outlines are long lists of vague phrases ("Introduction", "Causes", "Effects", "Solutions", "Conclusion"), or the essay that follows does not match the outline.
4. **Poor paragraphing.** Paragraphs are either one long block of a page or more, or a string of one-sentence paragraphs. Neither shows control of an argument.
5. **Basic grammatical errors.** Subject-verb agreement, articles, tenses, prepositions and sentence fragments are the commonest. Many scripts contain these errors in almost every paragraph.
6. **Ornamental, artificial language.** Strings of difficult words, clichés and borrowed phrases replace clear thought. Examiners repeatedly ask for simple, precise English.
7. **Too many quotations.** Essays open with three quotations, include a couplet in every paragraph and close with another quotation. Quotations are not arguments.
8. **Unsupported or inaccurate claims.** Statistics are invented or wildly wrong, and sweeping generalisations ("all politicians are corrupt") replace analysis.
9. **Poor handwriting and presentation.** Scripts that are hard to read, with heavy crossing-out, make the examiner's job harder and do not help the candidate.

3. Choosing a topic

3.1 Types of topic you will see

Type	Example of the form (our own wording)	What it demands
Statement to discuss	"Climate change is Pakistan's most urgent challenge."	Agree, disagree or qualify; you must take a position.
Direct question	"Can democracy deliver economic growth in developing countries?"	A clear answer (yes, no, or yes under certain conditions) defended throughout.
Comparative or "more than" topic	"Economic security matters more than military security."	Both sides must be weighed; the essay is about the comparison.
Quotation or proverb	"Knowledge is power."	Interpret the meaning, then apply it to a real context and argue about it.
Single word or short phrase	"Tolerance" or "The digital divide"	You must define it and choose an angle; the danger is writing a vague description.

3.2 The ten-minute choice

Spend no more than about ten minutes choosing. Read the whole list once. Strike out topics you do not understand fully. For each remaining topic, ask four questions:

1. Do I understand exactly what every word in the topic means, including any limiting words such as "only", "most", "in Pakistan", "in the twenty-first century"?
2. Can I state a clear position on it in one sentence now?
3. Can I list at least five or six distinct arguments for my position, plus one or two counter-arguments, in two minutes?
4. Do I know accurate facts and examples to support those arguments?

Choose the topic that scores best on all four, not the one that sounds most impressive. Abstract and philosophical topics can earn high marks, but only for candidates who can turn the abstraction into concrete argument. A familiar topic handled precisely beats an ambitious one handled vaguely.

Worked example: choosing between three topics

Suppose the list includes (a) "The media", (b) "Water scarcity: a threat to Pakistan's future" and (c) "Is globalisation a blessing or a curse for developing countries?"

Topic (a) is a single phrase with no direction; you would have to invent an angle, which risks a descriptive essay. Topic (b) gives a clear claim to agree or disagree with, and you can quickly list arguments: population growth, falling per-person availability of water, limited storage, inefficient irrigation, groundwater depletion, climate change and glacier melt, and the politics of shared rivers. Topic (c) asks a direct question but needs a firm grasp of trade, investment and development economics. A candidate with good knowledge of Pakistan's water sector and only general knowledge of economics should choose (b): the position is clear, the arguments come quickly and the evidence is available.

4. Understanding the topic and writing a thesis

4.1 Unpack the topic

Before you write anything else, underline the key words in the topic and write down what each one means. Pay particular attention to:

- **Limiting words:** "Pakistan", "developing countries", "today", "only", "main". An essay on "water scarcity in Pakistan" that spends half its length on Africa is partly irrelevant.
- **Comparative words:** "more than", "better than", "rather than". These require you to weigh two things against each other, not discuss one of them.
- **Question words:** "can", "should", "why", "to what extent". A "to what extent" question needs a measured answer such as "to a large extent, but not entirely".
- **Hidden assumptions:** "Why has democracy failed in Pakistan?" assumes that it has failed. You may accept or challenge that assumption, but you must notice it.

4.2 What a thesis statement is

Thesis statement: one or two sentences, placed at the end of the introduction, that state the essay's central argument as a clear, debatable claim and indicate the main reasons that the essay will use to support it.

A thesis is not a fact, an announcement or a question. "Pakistan faces water problems" is a fact that no one disputes. "In this essay I will discuss water scarcity" is an announcement. "Is water scarcity a threat?" is a question. None of these tells the examiner what you will argue.

4.3 From weak to strong

Worked example: improving a thesis

Topic: "Water scarcity: a threat to Pakistan's future."

Weak: "Water is very important and Pakistan is facing many issues regarding it." (No position, vague.)

Better: "Water scarcity is a serious threat to Pakistan." (A position, but no reasons.)

Strong: "Water scarcity is the most serious long-term threat to Pakistan's future because it endangers food security, economic growth and internal harmony at once; yet the crisis is largely one of management rather than nature, which means it can still be averted by storage, efficient irrigation and fair distribution."

The strong version takes a position, gives three reasons that become the main sections of the essay, and adds a qualification ("largely one of management") that shows judgement and sets up the solutions section.

4.4 Agree, disagree or qualify?

You do not have to agree with a topic. You may disagree, or agree with conditions. What you must not do is sit on the fence until the conclusion. A qualified position ("Yes, but only if...") is often the strongest, because it allows you to acknowledge complexity while still arguing. Once you choose your position, every section of the essay must support it.

5. Outlines

5.1 Why the outline matters

The outline is the first thing the examiner reads. It shows whether you have understood the topic and whether your essay will be organised. A good outline also helps you: once it is written, the essay becomes a matter of expanding each point into a paragraph or two, and you will not run out of ideas or repeat yourself in the third hour.

5.2 How to build an outline in 25 to 30 minutes

1. **Brainstorm (about 10 minutes).** On rough paper, write every relevant idea, fact and example that comes to mind. Do not judge them yet.
2. **Cluster (about 5 minutes).** Group related ideas. Each group will become a main section. Three to six main sections is usual.
3. **Order (about 5 minutes).** Decide the sequence. Common logical orders are: background, then causes, then consequences, then solutions; or least important argument to most important; or arguments for, then counter-arguments and their rebuttal, then recommendations.
4. **Write it out neatly (about 5 to 10 minutes).** Use numbered headings and sub-points. Write the thesis in full at the top.

5.3 What a good outline looks like

- The **thesis** is stated in full near the top.
- Main headings are **claims**, not single words. "Agriculture, which uses most of Pakistan's water, wastes much of it through outdated flood irrigation" is a heading that argues; "Agriculture" is not.
- Sub-points give the **evidence or examples** you will use.
- A **counter-argument** section shows you have considered the other side.
- The outline **matches the essay** exactly. If you change your mind while writing, correct the outline.
- Length: commonly about one to two pages. Long enough to show the structure, short enough not to eat into writing time.

5.4 Model outline 1: climate change and Pakistan

Topic: "Climate change: Pakistan's most urgent challenge."

1. Introduction

- Hook: the 2022 floods as a turning point in national awareness
- Context: Pakistan contributes very little to global emissions but is among the most exposed countries
- Thesis: Climate change is Pakistan's most urgent challenge because it multiplies every other problem the country faces, from food and water to the economy and public health; but with adaptation, regional cooperation and climate finance its worst effects can still be limited.

2. Understanding the challenge

- Meaning of climate change and why South Asia is vulnerable
- Pakistan's geography: glaciers in the north, the Indus basin, arid plains and a long coast

3. Climate change threatens water and food security

- Glacier melt and changing river flows
- Heatwaves and erratic monsoons damage crops
- An agricultural economy is directly exposed

4. Climate change damages the economy and public finances

- Disaster losses and reconstruction costs
- Pressure on the budget, debt and the balance of payments

5. Climate change harms health and deepens inequality

- Heatstroke, waterborne disease after floods
- The poorest, rural communities and women suffer most

6. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for security

- Internal migration and pressure on cities
- Disputes over shared water

7. Counter-argument: are economic and security crises more urgent?

- The case that debt and terrorism demand priority

- b. Rebuttal: these crises are worsened by climate shocks; the problems are linked

8. The way forward

- a. Adaptation: early warning, resilient infrastructure, water storage and efficient irrigation
- b. Mitigation: renewable energy, reforestation
- c. Climate justice and international finance
- d. Governance: implementing existing policies

9. Conclusion

5.5 Model outline 2: education and national development

Topic: "Education is the real defence of a nation."

1. Introduction

- a. Hook: nations are protected by more than armies
- b. Thesis: Education is the real defence of a nation because it builds the economy, the citizens and the institutions on which every other form of defence depends; Pakistan's security therefore rests as much on its classrooms as on its borders.

2. What "defence" means today

- a. Military defence remains necessary
- b. Modern threats: economic weakness, extremism, misinformation, technological dependence

3. Education defends the economy

- a. Skilled workers raise productivity
- b. Examples of countries that grew through investment in people

4. Education defends society against extremism and division

- a. Critical thinking and tolerance
- b. Shared values and national cohesion

5. Education defends democracy and institutions

- a. Informed voters, accountable leaders
- b. Capable civil servants and judges

6. Education defends against technological dependence

- a. Science, research and innovation, including in defence itself

7. Pakistan's situation

- a. Out-of-school children, low spending, unequal systems
- b. Article 25-A and the gap between law and practice

8. Counter-argument: in a dangerous region, military strength comes first

- a. The case for military priority
- b. Rebuttal: armed forces themselves depend on an educated nation

9. Recommendations**10. Conclusion****5.6 Model outline 3: democracy in developing countries**

Topic: "Is democracy the best form of government for developing countries?"

1. Introduction

- a. Hook: the debate between "growth first" and "freedom first"
- b. Thesis: Democracy is the best form of government for developing countries, not because it guarantees rapid growth, but because it alone combines legitimacy, accountability and peaceful change of power; its failures in many developing states are failures of weak institutions, which democracy itself is best placed to correct.

2. Defining democracy

- a. More than elections: rule of law, rights, free media, independent courts

3. Argument: democracy provides legitimacy and stability

- a. Peaceful transfer of power avoids coups and civil war

4. Argument: democracy provides accountability

- a. Elections, opposition, courts and the press expose misuse of power

5. Argument: democracy protects rights and diversity

- a. Particularly important in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual states

6. Counter-argument: authoritarian development

- a. Examples often cited of fast growth under one-party or military rule
- b. Rebuttal: many more authoritarian states stagnated; growth without accountability is fragile

7. Why democracy struggles in developing countries

- a. Weak institutions, patronage politics, low literacy, interruptions of civilian rule

8. Making democracy work

- a. Strong institutions, local government, education, electoral reform

9. Conclusion**6. Introductions****6.1 The three jobs of an introduction**

1. **Engage the reader** with an opening that is relevant to the topic.
2. **Give context:** define key terms and narrow the subject to the angle you will take.
3. **State the thesis**, normally as the last sentence or two.

A good introduction is usually one to two paragraphs, about 200 to 300 words in a full-length essay. It should not contain your main arguments in detail; those belong in the body.

6.2 Ways to open

- **A concrete event:** "In the summer of 2022, floodwater covered a large part of Pakistan."
- **A striking contrast:** "Pakistan produces a tiny share of the world's greenhouse gases, yet it pays one of the heaviest prices for them."
- **A short, apt quotation**, used once, and only if it leads directly into your argument.
- **A definition that challenges the obvious:** "Defence is usually measured in soldiers and missiles. It should also be measured in teachers and laboratories."

6.3 Openings to avoid

- "Since the dawn of time..." or "Man is a social animal..." (cliché, not related to the topic).
- "In this essay I am going to discuss..." (announcement, not argument).
- Three quotations in a row.
- A dictionary definition of every word in the topic.
- A long history lesson before the reader knows what you are arguing.

Worked example: a model introduction

Topic: "Water scarcity: a threat to Pakistan's future."

"Pakistan was built on the Indus. Its farms, its cities and much of its electricity depend on a single river system fed by Himalayan snow and monsoon rain. That dependence has become a danger. As the population grows and the climate changes, the water available to each citizen is shrinking, while much of what remains is wasted in leaking canals and flooded fields. The problem is often described as a natural disaster in slow motion, but that description lets policymakers off too lightly. Water scarcity is the most serious long-term threat to Pakistan's future because it endangers food security, economic growth and internal harmony at once; yet the crisis is largely one of management rather than nature, which means it can still be averted by storage, efficient irrigation and fair distribution."

The opening sentence is short and concrete; the next sentences give context; the second-to-last sentence challenges a common view; the final sentence is the thesis.

7. Paragraph structure and argument

7.1 The body paragraph

A strong body paragraph has five parts:

1. **Topic sentence:** one clear claim that supports the thesis.
2. **Explanation:** why the claim is true; the reasoning.
3. **Evidence:** a fact, example, case or data that supports it.
4. **Analysis:** what the evidence shows and why it matters.
5. **Link:** a sentence connecting the point back to the thesis or on to the next paragraph.

A typical body paragraph in the Essay paper is about 120 to 200 words. One main idea per paragraph

is the rule. If you find yourself writing "Moreover" followed by a completely new idea, start a new paragraph.

Worked example: a model body paragraph

"Agriculture is where Pakistan's water crisis is decided, because it uses by far the largest share of the country's water. (*topic sentence*) Most farmland is still watered by flood irrigation, in which fields are simply submerged; a large part of the water seeps away or evaporates before it reaches the roots of the crop. (*explanation*) Water-hungry crops such as rice and sugarcane are also grown in areas where water is scarce, because their prices are supported and their buyers are guaranteed. (*evidence*) The result is that the country is not short of water so much as short of water where and when it is needed, while it spends what it has on inefficient methods and unsuitable crops. (*analysis*) Any serious answer to water scarcity must therefore begin in the fields, not only at the dams. (*link*)"

7.2 Dealing with counter-arguments

A counter-argument section is one of the clearest signs of a mature essay. State the strongest opposing view fairly, then answer it. There are three ways to answer:

1. **Refute it:** show that it is factually wrong or logically weak.
2. **Concede and outweigh:** accept that it has some truth but show that your arguments matter more.
3. **Absorb it:** show that it actually supports your thesis when looked at closely.

Worked example: concede and outweigh

"It may be argued that a country facing heavy debt and terrorism cannot afford to make climate change its first priority. There is force in this: a state that cannot pay its bills or protect its citizens has little room for long-term planning. Yet the floods of 2022 showed that climate disasters are themselves a cause of economic crisis, destroying crops, homes and roads and adding to the very debts that are said to be more urgent. Treating climate change as a separate problem to be dealt with later misunderstands how closely it is tied to the problems that seem more pressing."

7.3 Transitions

Transitions show the reader the logical relationship between ideas. Use them accurately, not decoratively.

Relationship	Useful words and phrases
Adding	further, in addition, equally important, a second reason
Contrasting	however, yet, by contrast, on the other hand, nevertheless
Cause and effect	therefore, as a result, consequently, because of this
Example	for example, for instance, a clear case is
Conceding	admittedly, it is true that, although
Concluding	in short, overall, taken together

8. Evidence and examples

8.1 Kinds of evidence

- **Facts and figures:** population, budget shares, literacy rates, disaster losses.
- **Historical examples:** events in Pakistan's history or world history that illustrate the point.
- **Comparative examples:** what other countries have done and what happened.
- **Constitutional and legal references:** for example Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan on free and compulsory education.
- **Expert views:** reports by recognised bodies, attributed correctly.
- **Reasoning:** a clear logical argument is itself evidence when facts are not available.

8.2 Rules for using evidence safely

1. **Never invent a statistic.** Examiners know the main figures. One wrong number damages the credibility of the whole essay. If you are not sure of a number, use a careful phrase: "around a third", "millions of children", "less than one per cent".
2. **Attribute claims.** "According to the World Bank..." or "Government estimates suggest..." is more convincing than a bare number, but only if the attribution is true.
3. **Explain every example.** An example that is not analysed is just decoration. Always say what it shows.
4. **Balance:** use evidence from Pakistan and from other countries, from different fields, and avoid relying on a single source.

8.3 Build an evidence bank before the exam

The best preparation for the Essay paper is not memorising whole essays but building a notebook of themes. For each major theme (economy, education, energy, water, climate, governance, foreign policy, gender, technology, health, extremism) keep one page of: key facts with sources, two or three Pakistani examples, two or three international examples, and one or two strong arguments on each side. You can then assemble a fresh argument for whatever topic appears, instead of forcing a prepared essay onto it.

9. Conclusions

A conclusion should leave the examiner sure of your position. It has three jobs:

1. **Restate the thesis** in fresh words, not copied from the introduction.
2. **Draw the main arguments together** in a sentence or two, showing how they combine.
3. **Look forward:** a recommendation, a warning or a wider significance.

Avoid introducing new arguments or evidence, ending with a question you do not answer, or finishing with a loud slogan. About 150 to 250 words is usual.

Worked example: a model conclusion

"Water scarcity threatens Pakistan on three fronts at once: it endangers the harvests that feed the country, the industries and power plants that employ it, and the fragile trust between provinces that share its rivers. Yet the crisis is not a sentence already passed. Most of the water Pakistan

loses is lost to poor management, and management can be changed. If the country stores more of its monsoon flow, irrigates its fields efficiently, prices water honestly and shares it fairly, the Indus can continue to sustain the nation it created. If it does not, scarcity will decide Pakistan's future for it."

10. Style and language errors to avoid

10.1 Grammar and usage

The following errors appear again and again in candidates' scripts. Learn the correct forms.

Incorrect	Correct	Point
discuss about the issue	discuss the issue	"discuss" takes no preposition
return back, revert back	return, revert	"back" is already in the verb
cope up with	cope with	wrong particle
The number of students are rising.	The number of students is rising.	subject is "number", singular
One of the major problem is...	One of the major problems is...	"one of the" takes a plural noun and a singular verb
Pakistan is facing the energy crisis since 2007.	Pakistan has been facing an energy crisis since 2007.	"since" with a period up to now needs the present perfect
He is having a car.	He has a car.	"have" meaning possess is not used in the continuous
an university, a honest man	a university, an honest man	"a" or "an" depends on the sound, not the letter
The Pakistan, the nature	Pakistan, nature	no article with most country names or general abstract nouns
informations, evidences, advices	information, evidence, advice	uncountable nouns have no plural
Although... but...	Although... (no "but")	one linking word per contrast
Despite of the problems	Despite the problems / In spite of the problems	mixed forms
Because of corruption. The economy suffers.	Because of corruption, the economy suffers.	sentence fragment
The government should take strict actions.	The government should take strict action.	"action" in this sense is uncountable

10.2 Style

- **Prefer plain words.** "Use" not "utilise", "start" not "commence", "show" not "manifest", unless the longer word is more precise.
- **Keep sentences controlled.** Mix short and medium sentences. A sentence of more than about 35 words is usually two sentences.

- **Avoid clichés:** "in this day and age", "a burning issue", "the need of the hour", "a double-edged sword", "last but not least". One or two will not fail you; a page of them will.
- **Do not translate idioms literally from Urdu** into English; they rarely work.
- **Limit quotations** to two or three in the whole essay, each short, correctly attributed and followed by your own comment.
- **Avoid rhetorical questions** in place of statements. Answer questions; do not ask them.
- **Keep a formal register:** no contractions ("don't", "it's"), no slang, no text-message forms.
- **Avoid sweeping generalisations:** "always", "never", "all" and "everyone" are usually false. Qualify: "often", "many", "most".

10.3 Punctuation and presentation

- Use full stops generously. Comma splices ("Pakistan is rich in resources, it is poor in management") are a common error: use a full stop, a semicolon or a linking word.
- Use capital letters correctly: "the Prime Minister" (the office), "the government" (in general), "the Constitution of Pakistan".
- Write legibly, leave a line between paragraphs and cross out errors with a single neat line.

11. Time plan for the 3-hour paper

Time	Task
0:00 to 0:10	Read every topic; shortlist two or three; choose one using the four questions in section 3.2.
0:10 to 0:20	Unpack the topic; write the thesis on rough paper; brainstorm all ideas, facts and examples.
0:20 to 0:40	Cluster and order the ideas; write the final outline neatly in the answer book.
0:40 to 0:55	Write the introduction, ending with the thesis.
0:55 to 2:30	Write the body: about 10 to 15 paragraphs, following the outline section by section. Check the clock at the end of each section.
2:30 to 2:45	Write the conclusion.
2:45 to 3:00	Proofread: subject-verb agreement, articles, tenses, spelling, missing words. Check that the outline matches the essay.

The commonest timing error is spending too long on the outline and then rushing the last third of the essay. Practise full three-hour essays under timed conditions at least several times before the examination, so that you know how many pages you write in an hour.

12. Model essay 1: Climate change, Pakistan's most urgent challenge

This essay follows model outline 1. It is shorter than a full examination essay so that it fits this guide; in

the examination each section would be developed further.

In the summer of 2022, rain fell on Pakistan for weeks in amounts the country had rarely seen. Rivers burst their banks, villages disappeared under water and roughly a third of the country was flooded at the peak of the disaster. More than 1,700 people lost their lives and tens of millions were affected. For many Pakistanis this was the moment climate change stopped being a subject for international conferences and became a fact of daily life. The cruel irony is that Pakistan has contributed less than one per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, yet it is among the countries most exposed to their consequences. Climate change is Pakistan's most urgent challenge because it multiplies every other problem the country faces, from food and water to the economy and public health; but with adaptation, regional cooperation and climate finance its worst effects can still be limited.

Climate change refers to the long-term warming of the planet and the changes in weather patterns that result, caused mainly by greenhouse gases released from burning fossil fuels and clearing forests. Its effects are felt unevenly. Pakistan is especially vulnerable because of its geography. In the north lie thousands of glaciers in the Karakoram, Himalaya and Hindu Kush, which feed the Indus river system. In the centre and south are hot, dry plains that depend on that river for irrigation. Along the south runs a coastline exposed to cyclones and rising seas. Few countries combine so many forms of climate risk in one territory.

The first and most direct threat is to water and food. The Indus system depends heavily on melting snow and ice. As temperatures rise, glaciers melt faster, which can raise river flows for a time and cause glacial lake outburst floods, but over the long term threatens to reduce the water on which farms depend. At the same time, the monsoon is becoming less predictable, bringing either too much rain at once or too little when it is needed. Heatwaves during the growing season reduce wheat yields, and floods destroy standing crops such as cotton and rice. Since agriculture employs a large part of Pakistan's workforce and feeds the whole population, these changes threaten both livelihoods and the price of food. A country that cannot rely on its harvests cannot plan its future.

The second threat is economic. Disasters destroy roads, bridges, homes, schools and power lines that took decades to build. Assessments after the 2022 floods put the total damage and losses at around thirty billion US dollars, a huge sum for an economy already struggling with debt. Money that should have gone into development had to be spent on relief and reconstruction. Lost exports of crops such as cotton widened the trade deficit, and the need to import food added to the pressure on foreign exchange. In this way a single climate disaster fed directly into Pakistan's balance-of-payments crisis. When such disasters become more frequent, they turn from occasional shocks into a permanent drain on national resources.

The third threat falls on public health and on the poorest citizens. Heatwaves in cities such as Karachi have already caused many deaths, especially among labourers who work outdoors and the elderly who lack cooling. After floods, stagnant water spreads malaria, dengue and diarrhoeal diseases, and damaged clinics cannot cope. These burdens are not shared equally. Rural families who live on low-lying land, own no insurance and depend on a single harvest lose most. Women, who often have less access to information, money and transport, face particular difficulty in escaping and recovering. Climate change therefore widens the inequality that already divides Pakistani society.

Finally, climate change acts as a threat multiplier for security. When farming fails, people move to cities that already lack housing, water and jobs, and informal settlements grow on land that is itself exposed to flooding. Competition for scarce water can sharpen disputes between provinces and between neighbouring countries that share rivers. None of this means that climate change alone will cause

conflict, but it adds pressure to every existing fault line.

It may be argued that a country facing heavy debt, inflation and terrorism cannot afford to put climate change first. There is force in this: a state that cannot pay its bills or protect its citizens has little room for long-term planning. Yet the events of 2022 showed that climate disasters are themselves a cause of economic crisis, adding to the very debts that are said to be more urgent. Treating climate change as a separate issue to be dealt with later misunderstands how closely it is tied to the problems that seem more pressing. Climate policy is economic policy and security policy by another name.

What, then, should be done? Pakistan's first priority must be adaptation, because the warming already under way cannot be reversed quickly. Early warning systems for floods and heatwaves save lives at low cost. Roads, bridges and homes should be built to withstand floods, and building on riverbeds and natural drainage paths should be stopped. More water must be stored during the monsoon and less wasted in the fields through modern irrigation methods. Second, although Pakistan's emissions are small, moving towards solar, wind and hydropower would reduce dependence on imported fuel and so serve both the climate and the economy. Reforestation and protection of mangroves along the coast provide natural defences. Third, Pakistan must continue to argue internationally for climate justice: the countries that caused most of the warming have a responsibility to help finance adaptation in countries that did not. The agreement at the 2022 United Nations climate conference to set up a fund for loss and damage was a step in this direction, but promises must become money. Finally, none of this will work without governance. Pakistan has climate policies on paper; what it lacks is consistent implementation, coordination between federal and provincial governments and honest use of funds.

Climate change is not one problem among many for Pakistan; it is the problem that makes all the others harder. It threatens the water and food on which the nation survives, drains an economy that has little to spare, falls hardest on the poorest and adds strain to every source of tension. The country did little to cause it, but that injustice does not reduce the urgency of the response. If Pakistan adapts its infrastructure, manages its water wisely, cleans its energy supply and presses its case for fair international support, it can limit the damage. If it treats the floods of 2022 as a one-off misfortune, the next disaster will find it no better prepared.

13. Model essay 2: Education is the real defence of a nation

This essay follows model outline 2, again in a shortened form.

When people speak of a nation's defence, they usually picture soldiers, tanks and missiles. These matter, especially for a country with Pakistan's history and neighbourhood. Yet history shows that states rarely collapse because their armies are too small; far more often they decay from within, through poverty, division, poor government and dependence on others. Against these threats no weapon is effective. Education is the real defence of a nation because it builds the economy, the citizens and the institutions on which every other form of defence depends; Pakistan's security therefore rests as much on its classrooms as on its borders.

The meaning of defence has widened. Military strength remains necessary, and no sensible argument for education requires a country to disarm. But the threats a modern state faces include economic weakness that leaves it dependent on loans, extremist ideas that turn citizens against each other, misinformation that spreads faster than truth, and technological backwardness that forces it to buy what it cannot make. Each of these is, at root, a failure of knowledge and skills, and each can be countered only by education.

Education first defends the economy. A worker who can read, calculate and use technology is more productive than one who cannot, and a nation of productive workers can pay for its own needs, including its defence. The economic rise of East Asian countries such as South Korea is often explained by many factors, but heavy, sustained investment in schooling is common to almost every account. A country that exports skilled services and manufactured goods earns far more than one that exports raw cotton and unskilled labour. Pakistan's repeated balance-of-payments crises are, in part, the result of an economy that produces too little of value, and that in turn reflects a workforce that has been educated too little and too unevenly.

Education also defends society against extremism and division. Extremist movements recruit most easily among the young who are unemployed, poorly informed and unable to question what they are told. A good education does not simply fill the mind with facts; it teaches people to weigh evidence, consider other views and reject easy answers. It also brings children of different regions, languages and sects into shared classrooms, giving them a common foundation of values and a sense of belonging to one nation. A country whose citizens can think critically and respect difference is far harder to divide than one whose citizens cannot.

Third, education defends democracy and the institutions of the state. Voters who can read manifestos, follow the news and recognise false claims are better able to hold leaders to account. Courts, ministries, police and regulators all depend on capable, honest officials, and such officials are produced by good universities and schools. Where education is weak, institutions are weak, and where institutions are weak, power is easily misused. In this sense the quality of a nation's teachers ultimately shapes the quality of its government.

Fourth, education defends against technological dependence, including in defence itself. Modern weapons, communications, cyber security and space technology all rest on science and engineering. A country that cannot train its own scientists must import its equipment and expertise, and with them a degree of dependence on the suppliers. Pakistan's own achievements in fields such as nuclear and missile technology were made possible by scientists and engineers trained at home and abroad, which proves rather than disproves the point: even military strength is built in laboratories and lecture halls.

Measured against this standard, Pakistan's position is worrying. Article 25-A, added to the Constitution by the Eighteenth Amendment in 2010, obliges the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged five to sixteen. Yet millions of children in that age group are out of school, with girls and children in rural areas most likely to miss out. Public spending on education has for years remained low as a share of national income compared with what international bodies recommend. The country also runs several parallel systems, from elite private schools to under-resourced government schools and madrassas, which produce citizens with very different skills and outlooks. The gap between the promise of the Constitution and the reality of the classroom is itself a security risk.

Some will argue that in a dangerous region, military strength must come first, and that education is a luxury to be afforded once the borders are secure. Admittedly, no country can neglect real military threats. But the argument assumes that the two compete, when in fact one supports the other. Armed forces need educated officers and technicians, a strong economy to pay for them and a united public to support them. A state that spends on weapons while neglecting schools is building a strong wall around a weakening house.

The way forward is clear, even if it is difficult. Spending on education should rise steadily and be protected from cuts. The money must go where it matters most: trained and fairly paid teachers, girls' schooling, early-years education and the basic facilities that keep children in school. Curricula should

emphasise reading, mathematics, science and critical thinking rather than memorisation. Technical and vocational training should be expanded so that young people leave school with skills employers need. Above all, education must be treated as a national priority across governments, not a programme that changes with every election.

A nation's frontiers can be guarded by soldiers, but its future can only be guarded by its people. An educated population earns its own living, resists those who would divide it, holds its rulers to account and builds the technology on which modern strength depends. Pakistan has the young population to make this its greatest asset. Whether that population becomes a strength or a burden will be decided not on the battlefield but in the classroom.

14. Checklist

Use this before the examination when you practise, and in the last fifteen minutes of the paper.

- I chose a topic I fully understand and can argue with facts.
- I underlined and defined the key words, including limiting and comparative words.
- My thesis is one or two sentences, takes a clear position and names my main reasons.
- My outline states the thesis in full and uses claims, not single words, as headings.
- My outline includes a counter-argument section and a way forward where relevant.
- My essay follows the outline exactly, in the same order.
- My introduction engages, gives context and ends with the thesis.
- Each body paragraph has one main idea, a topic sentence, explanation, evidence, analysis and a link.
- Every paragraph answers the topic as set.
- Every statistic I used is one I am sure of, or I used a careful approximate phrase.
- I used no more than two or three short quotations, each explained.
- My conclusion restates the thesis in new words and adds no new arguments.
- I checked subject-verb agreement, articles, tenses, prepositions and plurals.
- I avoided clichés, rhetorical questions, contractions and sweeping generalisations.
- My handwriting is legible and paragraphs are clearly separated.

Quick check

1. State the five things the CSS English Essay examiners reward, in order of importance.
2. Describe three faults that FPSC examiners' reports repeatedly identify in English Essay scripts.
3. Explain why a candidate should choose a familiar topic handled precisely rather than an impressive topic handled vaguely.
4. The topic is "Economic security matters more than military security." Explain what the phrase "matters more than" requires the essay to do.
5. Explain why each of the following is not a thesis statement: (a) "Pakistan has a large population." (b) "In this essay I will discuss population growth." (c) "Is population growth a problem?"

6. Write a strong thesis statement for the topic "Social media: a blessing or a curse?"
7. Describe four features of a good outline.
8. State the three jobs of an introduction and give two openings that should be avoided.
9. Name the five parts of a strong body paragraph.
10. Explain the "concede and outweigh" method of answering a counter-argument.
11. Correct the errors in these sentences: (a) "We will discuss about the informations given." (b) "One of the main reason are poverty." (c) "Pakistan is facing load-shedding since many years."
12. A candidate is unsure whether Pakistan's literacy rate is 58 per cent or 62 per cent. Explain how they should refer to it in the essay, and why.
13. Describe a sensible time plan for the 3-hour paper.

1. In order: (1) relevance to the topic as set; (2) a clear thesis; (3) logical organisation, with the outline and essay following the same sequence; (4) depth and evidence, including dealing with opposing views; (5) correct, clear expression. Language accuracy runs through all of them, because this is an English paper: a strong argument in poor English, or good English that is irrelevant, can both fail.

2. Any three of: irrelevance, where candidates reproduce memorised essays that do not answer the topic set; no clear thesis, so the essay describes rather than argues; weak or mismatched outlines made of vague one-word headings, or outlines the essay does not follow; poor paragraphing, either huge blocks or one-sentence paragraphs; frequent basic grammatical errors in agreement, articles, tenses and prepositions; artificial, ornamental language and clichés; too many quotations; invented or inaccurate statistics and sweeping generalisations; illegible, untidy scripts.

3. Marks are awarded for relevance, a clear thesis, organisation, evidence and correct English, not for the apparent difficulty of the topic. A familiar topic lets the candidate state a clear position quickly, produce several distinct arguments and support them with accurate facts. An impressive but poorly understood topic tends to produce a vague, descriptive essay with unsupported claims, which scores lower however ambitious it looks.

4. It is a comparative topic. The essay must weigh economic security against military security and reach a judgement about which matters more. Writing only about economic security, however well, would miss half the topic. The candidate must define both, consider the case for military security fairly, and then argue why economic security matters more (or, if they disagree, why it does not).

5. (a) It is a fact that no one disputes, so there is nothing to argue. (b) It is an announcement of the subject, not a position on it. (c) It is a question, not an answer; a thesis must state the writer's answer.

6. One acceptable answer: "Social media is, on balance, a blessing for Pakistan because it widens access to information, gives ordinary citizens a voice and opens new opportunities for business; but its benefits will outweigh its harms only if users are taught to recognise misinformation and the state regulates abuse without silencing free expression." Marks would go to any thesis that takes a clear position, gives two or three reasons that could become sections, and shows judgement through a qualification.

7. Any four of: the thesis is stated in full near the top; main headings are claims rather than single

words; sub-points list the evidence and examples to be used; there is a counter-argument section; it follows a logical order such as causes, effects and solutions; it matches the essay exactly; it is concise, about one to two pages.

8. Jobs: engage the reader with a relevant opening; give context by defining key terms and narrowing the subject; state the thesis, usually at the end. Openings to avoid (any two): clichés such as "Since the dawn of time"; announcements such as "In this essay I will discuss"; several quotations in a row; dictionary definitions of every word; a long history lesson before the position is clear.

9. Topic sentence (one clear claim supporting the thesis); explanation (the reasoning); evidence (fact, example or data); analysis (what the evidence shows and why it matters); link (connecting back to the thesis or on to the next point).

10. The writer first states the strongest opposing view fairly and accepts that it has some truth (concedes). They then show that their own arguments are more important, or that the opposing point is less decisive than it appears (outweighs). For example, accepting that debt and terrorism are urgent, but showing that climate disasters worsen debt, so climate action cannot be postponed. This shows balance and judgement while keeping the thesis intact.

11. (a) "We will discuss the information given." ("discuss" takes no preposition; "information" is uncountable.) (b) "One of the main reasons is poverty." ("one of the" takes a plural noun and a singular verb.) (c) "Pakistan has been facing load-shedding for many years." (present perfect continuous for an action continuing up to now; "for" with a length of time, "since" with a starting point.)

12. They should avoid giving a precise figure they are unsure of and use a careful phrase such as "around six in ten adults can read" or "a large minority of adults cannot read". An invented or wrong figure damages the credibility of the whole essay because examiners know the main figures, whereas a careful approximation still supports the argument without risking an error.

13. A sensible plan: about 10 minutes reading and choosing the topic; about 10 minutes unpacking the topic, drafting the thesis and brainstorming; about 20 minutes ordering ideas and writing the outline; about 15 minutes for the introduction; about 1 hour 35 minutes for the body, checking the clock after each section; about 15 minutes for the conclusion; about 15 minutes proofreading for grammar and checking the outline matches the essay. The key principles are planning before writing, not over-running on the outline, and leaving time to proofread.