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AS Level Economics A

Examiners' Edition

*Securing A*s*

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Pearson Edexcel 8ECO

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A Level Economics A • Theme 1

Introduction to Markets and Market Failure

*Examiners' Edition: Securing A*s*

33 common mistakes • 66 practice questions • full mark schemes

Written for Pearson Edexcel AS and A Level Economics A (8ECO, 9ECO).

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1.1 Nature of Economics

MEMORISE THIS

Positive statement	Objective; can be tested against evidence (even if wrong)
Normative statement	Value judgement about what ought to be; cannot be tested
Opportunity cost	Value of the next best alternative forgone
Opportunity cost on a PPF	Fall in output of the other good when moving along the frontier
Point inside the PPF	Unemployed or inefficiently used resources
PPF shifts outwards	More or better resources, or improved technology
Functions of the price mechanism	Signalling, incentive, rationing

1 Positive v normative statements

AS & A Level

X Common mistake

Students call normative statements 'opinions' and label forecasts or predictions as normative because they might be wrong. Many explain the terms but never apply them to the statement given.

✓ Do this instead

- Normative = a value judgement about what ought to happen; it cannot be tested.
- Positive = can be checked against evidence, even if it later proves false (forecasts are positive).
- Spot value words such as 'should', 'fair', 'better', 'too high'.
- Quote the actual statements from the source to earn application marks.

IN THE EXAM

Most students could not earn the analysis mark for explaining why a value judgement cannot be tested while a factual claim can. (Jun 2023, A Level Paper 3)

Exam tip: A prediction is positive: ask 'could data prove this right or wrong?'

Examiners flagged this in: Jun 2019 AL P1 Q6(a), Nov 2021 AL P1 Q1(a), Jun 2022 AS P1 Q4(a), Jun 2023 AL P3 Q1(a), Jun 2025 AS P1 Q6(d)



Mark schemes

Note: for longer answers, each marking point shows one creditworthy idea (knowledge, application, analysis or evaluation); equivalent points in your own words also score.

1 Positive v normative statements

Question 1.1 Check it

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Part	Answer	Marks
(a)	A statement involving a value judgement about what ought to be, which cannot be tested/proved true or false	1
(b)	Statement 3 is normative	1
(b)	It uses 'should': a value judgement that evidence cannot settle	1
(b)	Statement 2 is a forecast that can be checked against visitor data next year, so it is positive even if it proves wrong	1
Total		4

Question 1.2 Apply it

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Part	Answer	Marks
(a)	K: positive statements are objective and can be tested against evidence	1
(a)	K: normative statements contain value judgements and cannot be tested objectively	1
(a)	App: e.g. 'sugar content fell by 18%' or 'cost 1,200 jobs' is positive: it can be checked with data	1
(a)	App: 'fairest way... should be extended' is normative: it depends on views of fairness	1
(b)	A measurable claim, e.g. 'Extending the levy to sweets would reduce children's sugar intake by 10% within two years'	1
(b)	No value words (fair/should), and the outcome could be checked against data	1
Total		6

Common wrong answers: Writing that normative statements are 'just opinions' (no mark: say value judgement). Labelling statement 2 normative because it is a prediction or might be wrong. Calling the trade body's job-loss claim normative because the source is biased; it is still testable, so positive.



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AS Level Economics A: Securing A*s

Theme 1 Introduction to Markets and Market Failure

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