

AD5 Essay Guide

How to approach the AD5 written essay with more clarity, structure, and confidence

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This guide is designed to help candidates understand and practise the AD5 written essay format. It is not an official EU or EPSO document. It does not claim access to official correction grids or official previous essay questions.

What you will find in this guide

- What the essay is really testing
- What strong answers tend to do well
- A simple structure to use under pressure
- Three realistic AD5-style practice prompts with model answer logic
- A final checklist before submission

1. What the AD5 written essay is really testing

Candidates often think the written essay is mainly a knowledge test. In reality, it usually rewards clear written communication under time pressure.

A strong answer is not the one that sounds the most complicated. It is the one that answers the task directly, uses the provided material well, and presents ideas in a logical and usable way.

- Can you identify the real task quickly?
- Can you organise information into a clear structure?
- Can you write for a specific audience and purpose?
- Can you stay concise while still being useful?
- Can you use the source materials selectively instead of repeating them?

2. What markers are likely to expect

While you should avoid pretending to know an official correction grid, strong answers in this kind of exercise usually share the same broad qualities.

- A clear and logical structure
- Relevant use of the documents or source materials provided
- A tone that fits the task and audience
- Concise writing without unnecessary repetition
- Paragraphs that each do a clear job
- A conclusion or recommendation that feels useful rather than generic

3. Common mistakes candidates make

Many candidates lose marks not because they lack ideas, but because they organise them badly or write in a way that creates extra effort for the reader.

- Repeating the source material instead of selecting and using it
- Writing too generally and not answering the specific task
- Ignoring the intended audience
- Using weak paragraph structure
- Trying to sound sophisticated instead of clear
- Leaving planning until too late
- Running out of time and ending with a rushed conclusion

4. A simple structure to use under exam conditions

A practical essay structure is usually enough. You do not need a complex academic format. In most cases, the safest structure is:

Part	What it should do	What to avoid
Introduction	State the issue, frame the purpose of the response, and signal the main direction.	Long scene-setting or abstract theory.
Development paragraph 1	Present the first key point using relevant material and clear logic.	Listing facts without linking them to the task.
Development paragraph 2	Develop the next key point and add contrast, risk, or implications where useful.	Repeating the same point in different words.
Development paragraph 3 (optional)	Use only if it adds real value: recommendation, implementation issue, or final dimension.	Adding a weak extra paragraph just because you think the essay must be longer.
Conclusion / re commendation	Close the response clearly and show the practical takeaway.	A vague ending that says nothing new.

5. How to plan before writing

A short planning phase often saves far more time than it costs. Even three or four focused minutes can prevent a weak structure.

- Identify the task: What exactly are you being asked to produce?
- Identify the audience: Who will read this and what do they need?
- Extract the main points from the material: facts, risks, priorities, contrasts, recommendations.
- Group the material: Which points belong together?
- Choose the order: What should the reader understand first?

- Write only once the structure is clear enough.

6. A practical writing method under pressure

Use a simple mental sequence:

- Task
- Audience
- Main points
- Structure
- Write
- Check

If you remember only one principle, remember this: **the reader should never have to work hard to understand what you mean.**

7. Realistic AD5-style practice prompt types

The examples below are not official previous questions. They are realistic AD5-style practice prompts designed to help you train for the kind of written exercise you may face.

- A briefing note on an EU policy issue
- A recommendation memo based on short source documents
- A structured response on an administrative challenge in an EU context

8. Example prompt 1 - Briefing note on digital public services

Prompt

You are asked to draft a short note for a senior EU decision-maker on how digital public services can be made more accessible across Member States. Using the provided materials, explain the main challenge, identify two barriers to progress, and recommend practical next steps.

What the task is really asking

- Explain the issue briefly and clearly.
- Show that you can select the two most important barriers from the material.
- End with realistic next steps, not abstract principles.

Suggested structure

- Introduction: frame the issue and purpose of the note.
- Paragraph 1: barrier one and why it matters.
- Paragraph 2: barrier two and why it matters.
- Conclusion: practical recommendations and next step.

Model answer

Accessible digital public services are increasingly important for both administrative efficiency and equal access across the European Union. The material provided suggests that progress is uneven

across Member States, not because the objective is unclear, but because implementation capacity and user-centred design remain inconsistent.

A first barrier is uneven technical and administrative capability. Some administrations have invested in interoperable systems and accessible interfaces, while others still depend on fragmented legacy tools. This creates unequal user experiences and slows cross-border usability.

A second barrier is the insufficient integration of user needs at the design stage. The materials indicate that digital services are sometimes built from an internal administrative perspective rather than from the perspective of citizens with different linguistic, physical, or digital literacy needs.

A practical way forward would be to combine clearer accessibility standards with targeted implementation support. In particular, administrations should be encouraged to share reusable design solutions, test services with diverse user groups, and prioritise accessibility requirements earlier in procurement and development processes. This would improve both service quality and consistency across Member States.

Why this answer works

- It answers the task directly.
- It selects two barriers rather than discussing everything.
- It keeps the tone suitable for a briefing note.
- The recommendations are concrete and linked to the analysis.

9. Example prompt 2 - Recommendation memo on staff training

Prompt

You are asked to prepare a recommendation memo on how an EU body could improve staff uptake of mandatory digital skills training. Using the provided documents, explain the current problem and recommend the most effective response.

What the task is really asking

- Diagnose the problem clearly.
- Choose a response that follows from the evidence.
- Write in a managerial, solution-oriented tone.

Suggested structure

- Introduction: define the problem and objective.
- Paragraph 1: evidence on low uptake and likely causes.
- Paragraph 2: recommended response and why it is stronger than weaker alternatives.
- Conclusion: implementation priority.

Model answer

The current challenge is not the absence of training opportunities but the low level of staff uptake despite a formal requirement to complete the programme. The documents suggest that the problem is linked to timing, perceived relevance, and limited managerial follow-up rather than to a lack of

training material.

First, staff appear to treat the training as an administrative obligation rather than as a practical tool. This weakens motivation. Second, where supervisors do not actively reinforce the importance of the programme, completion rates remain low. Third, the training offer may be seen as too generic if it is not connected to the digital tasks staff actually perform.

The most effective response would therefore be to make training more role-relevant and more visibly supported by management. Shorter modular content linked to everyday tasks, combined with clearer completion expectations from supervisors, is likely to increase uptake more effectively than simply sending more reminders.

Implementation should begin with the teams showing the lowest completion rates and should include a short review after the first cycle. This would allow the organisation to adjust the format quickly and focus future effort where it has the highest practical impact.

Why this answer works

- The memo identifies causes instead of only describing symptoms.
- The recommendation is selective and prioritised.
- The tone is administrative and practical.
- The conclusion points to implementation.

10. Example prompt 3 - Structured response on procurement transparency

Prompt

You are asked to prepare a structured response on how transparency in public procurement can be improved without creating unnecessary administrative burden. Use the provided material to explain the trade-off and recommend a balanced approach.

What the task is really asking

- Show that you understand both transparency and administrative efficiency.
- Recognise that there is a trade-off, not a one-sided problem.
- Recommend a balanced and workable solution.

Suggested structure

- Introduction: explain the policy tension.
- Paragraph 1: why more transparency matters.
- Paragraph 2: where additional reporting can create burden.
- Conclusion: balanced recommendation.

Model answer

Improving transparency in public procurement is important for accountability, competition, and public trust. At the same time, the material suggests that additional transparency measures can create operational pressure if they are implemented through overlapping reporting requirements and unclear data standards.

Greater transparency matters because it helps detect irregularities, improves comparability, and makes procurement decisions easier to scrutinise. In that sense, transparency is not only a control mechanism but also a way to strengthen confidence in public spending.

However, the material also shows that transparency requirements can become counterproductive when contracting authorities must enter similar information multiple times in different systems or apply rules that are not operationally clear. This risks shifting effort away from substance and towards repetitive compliance work.

A balanced approach would therefore focus on standardised data structures, better interoperability between systems, and clearer publication rules rather than simply adding more reporting obligations. This would improve transparency while limiting avoidable administrative burden. The most effective next step is to simplify reporting architecture before expanding it.

Why this answer works

- The answer handles the trade-off directly.
- It avoids taking an overly simplistic position.
- The recommendation is balanced and realistic.
- The writing remains concise and decision-oriented.

11. Final checklist before submission

Use this short checklist in the last minutes before you submit.

- Did I answer the exact task?
- Is the intended audience clear in the tone and level of detail?
- Is the structure easy to follow?
- Did I use the provided material selectively and effectively?
- Are my paragraphs doing distinct jobs?
- Is my writing concise?
- Does the conclusion feel useful?

12. Final note

Strong AD5 preparation is easier when your practice stays focused. Qweega.eu combines a free timed test, a detailed review, module practice, explanations, saved progress, and a final timed exam in one clear platform.

Focused AD5 preparation, without the noise.