Glossary of command terms

Command terms with definitions

Students should be familiar with the following key terms and phrases used in examination questions, which are to be understood as described below. Although these terms will be used frequently in examination questions, other terms may be used to direct students to present an argument in a specific way.

Calculate	Obtain a numerical answer showing the relevant stages in the working.
Comment	Give a judgment based on a given statement or result of a calculation.
Compare	Give an account of the similarities between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.
Construct	Display information in a diagrammatic or logical form.
Deduce	Reach a conclusion from the information given.
Describe	Give a detailed account.
Determine	Obtain the only possible answer.
Differentiate	Obtain the derivative of a function.
Draw	Represent by means of a labelled, accurate diagram or graph, using a pencil. A ruler (straight edge) should be used for straight lines. Diagrams should be drawn to scale. Graphs should have points correctly plotted (if appropriate) and joined in a straight line or smooth curve.
Estimate	Obtain an approximate value.
Find	Obtain an answer showing relevant stages in the working.
Hence	Use the preceding work to obtain the required result.
Hence or otherwise	It is suggested that the preceding work is used, but other methods could also receive credit.
Interpret	Use knowledge and understanding to recognize trends and draw conclusions from given information.
Justify	Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion.
Label	Add labels to a diagram.
List	Give a sequence of brief answers with no explanation.
Plot	Mark the position of points on a diagram.
Show	Give the steps in a calculation or derivation.

Show that	Obtain the required result (possibly using information given) without the formality of proof. "Show that" questions do not generally require the use of a calculator.
Sketch	Represent by means of a diagram or graph (labelled as appropriate). The sketch should give a general idea of the required shape or relationship, and should include relevant features.
Solve	Obtain the answer(s) using algebraic and/or numerical and/or graphical methods.
State	Give a specific name, value or other brief answer without explanation or calculation.
Verify	Provide evidence that validates the result.
Write down	Obtain the answer(s), usually by extracting information. Little or no calculation is required. Working does not need to be shown.