

Approach 2: “Control as behavioural management” (people-focused critical)

This approach will put the human response to control at the centre: motivation, trust, resistance, followership, and culture. Great if you want a more “Level 6 critical” feel.

Step-by-step guide

1. Define controlling and then separate “control of work” from “control of people.”
2. Build your argument around how control influences behaviour (productive vs dysfunctional).
3. Use leadership theories heavily: autocratic/democratic/laissez-faire and transformational leadership + follower behaviour.
4. Critically evaluate the paradox: control is essential, but excess control undermines empowerment.
5. Use examples where controls caused unintended behaviour (e.g., sales targets → mis-selling).

Suggested structure and key points

Why control is essential (400 words):

- Controls reduce ambiguity and coordinate work (especially with many employees).
- Controls set expectations → improve fairness and accountability.
- Controls protect stakeholders (customers, regulators, employees).
Critical angle: behavioural side effects—stress, reduced autonomy, “initiative-killing.”

Theory link (400 words):

- Autocratic control: quick compliance; weak intrinsic motivation; follower dependence.
- Democratic control: shared standards; stronger buy-in; control becomes self-regulation.
- Laissez-faire: suitable for highly skilled teams; risk: lack of direction and uneven performance.
- Transformational leadership: aligns internal values; creates “self-control” through identity and purpose.

- Fayol supports structure/discipline; critique: may underplay modern empowerment needs.

Challenges (400 words):

- Resistance, low trust, presenteeism (especially digital monitoring).
- Target fixation and gaming.
- Inequity perceptions (controls applied unevenly).
- Hybrid work makes “visibility control” tempting but risky.

Mitigation (400 words):

- Use “control with autonomy”: define outcomes but allow discretion in methods.
- Co-create KPIs; explain rationale; ensure procedural fairness.
- Mix leading indicators (process) + lagging indicators (results).
- Coach-style corrective action; build feedback loops and learning culture.

Example set

- Wells Fargo-type sales culture (targets → misconduct) as “dysfunctional control.”
- Tech/creative firms using OKRs (shows autonomy + outcome control).
- Call centres (intense monitoring: productivity vs burnout).