

# BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)

## Section 3: Writing Task

### Guide to Section 3: The Writing Task

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## Section 3: The Writing Task

### Overview

Section 3 of the BMAT is the Writing Task. This task is used to assess a candidate's ability to provide a **coherent**, **logical** and **well-reasoned** argument, with consideration of multiple perspectives.

You will be given **3 questions** to choose from and will be expected to **answer one** of them.

- You have **30 minutes** to answer the question on the A4 sheet of paper given.
- This is approximately 300 handwritten words, although your answer will have to fit onto the A4 sheet regardless of handwriting size.

The topics of the questions generally involve something **medical**, **scientific** or **ethical**. It's important to remember that the topic can always be **debated**.

### Question format

The format is generally:

- Statement presented as a quotation or fact.
- Three cues to address, such as:
  - Explain the statement and argue for it.
  - Argue against the statement.
  - To what extent do you agree with the statement?

### General essay structure

Therefore, a very common **essay outline** is:

- **Defining and explaining** the statement
- Arguing **for** the statement
- Arguing **against** the statement
- Brief **conclusion** giving your opinion

You should use **examples or case studies** where you can to support the arguments for and against the statement.

**Hint:** It is worth remembering that the BMAT essay can be used by medical schools at the **interview** stage. For example, you may be asked to review your answer and critique it or expand on certain points.



## Approaching Section 3

### Choosing the Question - 2 minutes

30 minutes may at first seem like very little time in which to choose, plan and write Section 3 so you may want to begin to answer the question immediately, but taking a couple of minutes to read all the questions and briefly consider potential arguments can prove to be invaluable.

Instinctively, you may gravitate towards a certain question (for example, if it is more medically linked), but it is worth considering whether you have **enough points** for the topic first.

- If you struggle to come up with ideas, you might end up spending too much time brainstorming and not enough planning and writing the essay itself.
- Do not forget that you are expected to answer **all parts** of the question - make sure you can do so before you start writing an answer.

Similarly, consider whether the topic of the question really **interests** you - if it does, you are likely to convey your points in a more convincing manner. Nonetheless, this is not essential; if you can think of enough points for a question, you can write a good essay with some careful consideration.

When choosing which question to answer, you should also pay attention to the **cues**; they may not be directly linked to the quote or statement itself, which may simply act as a prompt.

Remember, Section 3 is assessing your ability to balance arguments, so **it is not necessary to answer the question that is most related to medicine** if you prefer one of the other, less applied ones. The topic of the essay does not make a difference, it is better to choose the question that prompts you to write the most successful essay answer; one that is well-balanced and can showcase your writing skills.

Once you are familiar with the questions and have chosen the one that you think you can answer best, it is time to make a plan.

### Making a Plan - 8-13 minutes

Planning is a necessary part of writing a good essay. It enables you to organise your thoughts in a **logical** manner, and helps you to stick to a **concise** essay structure, both of which are examinable criteria.

Start off by **writing down any ideas** that come to mind about the essay title.

- Split them up into arguments for and against the statement given, and make a note of any case studies or quotes that you could use.

**Exam tip:** Make sure that you do your planning on the **question paper** - **not** the answer sheet - as you do not want to waste any space given for writing your answer.



Once you have decided on the points you will include in your essay, quickly write a more **organised plan** which you will be able to follow easily when writing your answer.

- Begin by making sure you understand the question, and that you can answer the “explain” prompt - this will serve as a sort of **introduction**.
- Follow the cues given in the question, answering each of them **in order** - this will give your essay a more logical structure and will make sure that you answer all the parts of the question.
- Choose **approximately 2 points** for each side of the argument, and write down any appropriate quotes or case studies that can support and strengthen your points.
  - ◆ When writing the essay, you may find that you cannot fit in all the points, in which case choose the most appropriate ones.
- Use the final part of the question, usually asking “to what extent” you agree with the statement, as a sort of **conclusion**.
  - ◆ There is **no need to summarise** the points you have already written out. Instead, take the opportunity to directly **compare and contrast** your points which will lead to a strong “synthesis” of the essay.

**Exam Tip** - A good way to make sure you include everything is to set out your essay plan as:

- Introduction - explain the statement
- Arguments in support of the statement
- Arguments contradicting the statement
- Conclusion - answer to what extent you agree with what the question asks

However, note that this is a basic plan and it may need to be slightly adjusted in order to answer all of the cues in the question.

### Writing Your Essay - 15-20 minutes

Once you have written your plan, writing your answer will not seem so daunting. While doing so, make sure you pay attention to your **writing style and expression** - make them **formal** and **fluent**. The most successful answers have a flow to their essays, where each point is separate in its own right but links to the one before.

An important thing to consider is not to use your examples as points; they should **support** your main point. There is also **nothing to be gained from writing out multiple examples** for the same point, as this can make your essay long-winded and will take up writing space that could be used for other points.

**Exam Tip** - When explaining the statement, you might want to **define** a keyword from the question. This can be very useful as a lead-up to explaining what is meant by the statement. However, try to avoid simply defining without any link to the cue as this can take up valuable space without gaining any points.



Keep your structure **clear**. Do not jump from one cue to the next and back again, but instead use your plan to answer each part of the question wholly. This is important as it shows **organised thought**, which is a big marking point.

In addition, keep the answers to each cue an appropriate **length**. The “explain” part should **not** be as long as the argument and counter-argument sections. Equally, keep the sides of the argument balanced in terms of length. This shows that you considered multiple perspectives in an unbiased way.

Make sure that you **do not repeat** your points. This may seem obvious, but it can be easily done if you do not plan sufficiently.

**Exam Tip** - Remember the PEE structure - **point, evidence, explain**. While you may not be able to do this thoroughly for every point given the time and space constraints, it is worth checking that you have a basic form of this throughout. This ensures that your answer is cogent.

### Key Points to Remember

- If you do not answer all parts of the question, you cannot achieve more than a score of **2**. Conversely, if you answer all parts of the question, even if the arguments are basic, it is unlikely that you will score less than **3**.
- **Do not make up** any quotes or statistics, as these will be checked and you will be penalised. This can extend to incorrect assumptions presented as facts (e.g. breast cancer is the most lethal cancer), so be careful how you present your points.
- **Do not rely too much on cliché phrases** as this can make the essay seem unprofessional.
- Try to **avoid using the first person** as this can make your essay seem less balanced. You can give your overall opinion in the conclusion but make sure that you make it clear that you considered multiple perspectives. It is best to use the **third person** in order to give your answer a professional-sounding detachment when presenting various arguments.

### General Marking Criteria

You should make yourself familiar how Section 3 is marked so you know what the examiner is looking for in your answer. For each practice essay you write you should use the mark scheme to help you work out which areas you need to improve.

→ To get a more objective opinion you should get other people to mark your essays.



The following criteria is taken from Admissions Testing. You can find the original [here](#).

### Quality of Content

In arriving at the score, you should consider:

- Has the candidate addressed the question in the way demanded?
- Have they organised their thoughts clearly?
- Have they used their general knowledge and opinions appropriately?

Scores are awarded on a scale from 1 to 5.

#### Score 1

- Some bearing on the question
- Question not addressed in the way demanded
- Answer is incoherent or unfocussed

#### Score 2

- Addresses most of the components of the question
- Answer arranged in a reasonably logical way
- May be significant elements of confusion in argument
- Candidate may misconstrue certain important aspects of the main proposition or its implication or may provide an unconvincing/weak counter-proposition

#### Score 3

- Reasonably well-argued, addressing ALL aspects of the question
- Makes reasonable use of the material provided
- Generates a reasonable counter-proposition/argument
- Argument is relatively rational
- May be some weakness in force of argument or coherence of ideas, or some aspect of argument may have been overlooked.

#### Score 4

- Good answer with few weaknesses
- ALL aspects of question are addressed
- Makes good use of the material provided
- Generates good counter-proposition/argument
- Argument is rational
- Ideas expressed and arranged in a coherent way, with balanced consideration of the proposition and counter-proposition

#### Score 5

- Excellent answer with no significant weaknesses
- ALL aspects of question are addressed
- Makes excellent use of the material provided
- Generates an excellent counter-proposition/argument



- Argument is cogent
- Ideas expressed in a clear and logical way, considering a breadth of relevant points and leading to a compelling synthesis or conclusion.

An answer judged to be irrelevant, trivial, unintelligible or missing should be given a score of **0**.

### Quality of English

In arriving at your score, you should consider:

- Have they expressed themselves clearly using concise, compelling and correct English?

Scores are awarded on a scale from A to E.

#### Band A - Good use of English.

- Fluent
- Good sentence structure
- Good use of vocabulary
- Sound use of grammar
- Good spelling and punctuation
- Few slips or errors

**Example** - *The revealing of truth is viewed as an honourable and morally correct cause, and is generally regarded as the driver of scientific work. However, this is not to the extent that it surpasses the morals shared by society of not causing intentional harm or forcing people to undergo procedures without their consent.*

#### Band C - Reasonably clear use of English.

**There may be some weakness in the effectiveness of the English.**

- Reasonably fluent/not difficult to read
- Simple/unambiguous sentence structure
- Fair range and appropriate use of vocabulary
- Acceptable grammar
- Reasonable spelling and punctuation
- Some slips/errors

**Example** - *Showing the truth is a good reason to do scientific work and is a good moral. But, this doesn't mean that a scientist can do intentional harm. They also can't make people do things without their consent.*



**Band E - Rather weak use of English.**

- Hesitant fluency/not easy to follow at times
- Some flawed sentence structure/paragraphing
- Limited range of vocabulary
- Faulty grammar
- Regular spelling/punctuation errors
- Regular and frequent slips or errors

**Example** - *Truth is a good reason for science and also is a good Moral which means that scientists should follow it but it's also not good for scientists to not follow society and make people do things they dont want to do or hurt them.*

Where candidates have crossed out sections or added information, the essay should be judged on the quality of the resulting use of English (i.e. crossed out text ignored, and inserted text read as if it were originally in place).

An essay that is judged to be below the level of an E will receive an X.

