**GMAT Sections and Formats**

| **SECTION OF THE GMAT** | **HOW MANY QUESTIONS?** | | | **TYPES OF QUESTIONS** | | **TIME LIMIT** |
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|  | |  |  | |  | |
| **Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA)** | | 1 essay prompt | Argument Analysis | | 30 minutes | |
| **Integrated Reasoning** | | 12 multiple choice | Multi-Source Reasoning Graphics and Table Interpretation Two-Part Analysis | | 30 minutes | |
| **Quantitative** | | 31 multiple choice | Data Sufficiency Problem Solving | | 62 minutes | |
| **Verbal** | | 36 multiple choice | Reading Comprehension Critical Reasoning Sentence Correction | | 65 minutes | |
| **TOTAL EXAM STATS** | | 1 essay prompt, 90 multiple choice |  | | 3 hours, 7 minutes | |

The current GMAT format has four sections, with assorted breaks. You might know this as the “new GMAT test format,” since the test duration was reduced from 4 hours to about 3.5 hours in April 2018.

**GMAT SCORES**

The GMAT is composed of four scores—the Verbal score, Quantitative score, Total score, and Analytical Writing score.

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| **Section** | **Scoring** | **How the Section is Scored** |
| [**Analytical Writing Assessment**](https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat/about-the-gmat-exam/gmat-exam-structure/analytical-writing-assessment) | 0.0-6.0 | Each essay is scored by a machine algorithm and some essays are additionally reviewed and audited by professional essay raters. The scores are averaged to provide one section score, reported in intervals of 0.5. |
| [**Integrated Reasoning**](https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat/about-the-gmat-exam/gmat-exam-structure/integrated-reasoning) | 1-8 | The Integrated Reasoning score is based on the number of questions you answered correctly. Some questions may have multiple parts; you must answer all parts to a question correctly to receive credit for that question.  Scores are reported in intervals of 1. |
| [**Quantitative**](https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat/about-the-gmat-exam/gmat-exam-structure/quantitative)  **and**  [**Verbal**](https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat/about-the-gmat-exam/gmat-exam-structure/verbal) | 6-51 | The Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning sections are item-level adaptive, and your score is based on three factors:  1. Number of questions you answer  2. Whether your answers are correct  3. Difficulty and other parameters of the questions you answered  You will earn a higher score if you answer a higher number of questions, answer more of them correctly, and qualify for questions of a higher difficulty level.  Scores are reported in intervals of 1 and the standard error of measurement is 3 points. |
| **TOTAL** | 200-800 | Total Scores are based on your calculated performance before scores are given for the Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning sections. The raw calculation is then converted to a number in the Total Score range.  Scores are reported in intervals of 10. The standard error of measurement is 30-40 points. |

The Analytical Writing Assessment on the GMAT is just one question, and it appears at the beginning of your test. You are given the question prompt and then a reading passage of several paragraphs that presents an argument. You are expected to analyze the argument for logical flaws and outline a response. Then you need to write a four- to six-paragraph essay based on your outline in which you agree or disagree with the argument, and analyze the flaws within it.

**ESSAY QUESTION #1:**

The following appeared in the editorial section of a national news magazine:

“The rating system for electronic games is similar to the movie rating system in that it provides consumers with a quick reference so that they can determine if the subject matter and contents are appropriate. This electronic game rating system is not working because it is self-regulated and the fines for violating the rating system are nominal. As a result an independent body should oversee the game industry and companies that knowingly violate the rating system should be prohibited from releasing a game for two years.”

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument. Point out flaws in the argument’s logic and analyze the argument’s underlying assumptions. In addition, evaluate how supporting evidence is used and what evidence might counter the argument’s conclusion. You may also discuss what additional evidence could be used to strengthen the argument or what changes would make the argument more logically sound.

**ESSAY #1:**

The author concludes that electronic game rating system is not working compared to the movie rating system. He gives reasoning for the argument by stating that electronic companies ability to self manage and regulate the rating system is part of the problem. Author also gives reason for what needs to be done in order for electronic rating system to work, but his reasons are weak. In the next few paragraphs, I will explain why the author’s reasons are weak and what could strengthen the argument.

First, the author mentions that by hiring an independent company to oversee the operation of the electronic rating system would solve the issue. This big assumption that author makes here is that he assumes independent company would do a better job in rating games than electronic game companies themselves. If the electronic gaming companies had a better understanding on how to improve, they might themselves do a better job than independent company to oversee the ratings.

Second, the author mentions that if an electronic company violates the rating system rule, then the penalty would be to prohibit that company from releasing any games for two years. This is another weak point the makes to support his argument because if the electronic company regular product-life cycle is to release each gave every two years, this penalty wouldn’t hurt the company at all. Also, there is not way of assessing how many year of prohibition would be adequate.

Author could have strengthen his argument, if he provided some data point such as from the movie industry to defend this stance that making independent company oversee and prohibition of movie release actually worked in the long-run. Perhaps, some research data that showed making these changes would actually work, would benefit the author’s overall argument stance.

Therefore, the author’s argument that electronic game rating system is not working is weak. Both of the points he made regarding independent company oversee and violation penalty are weak without data showing that it might work.

*RECAP:* The first thing that stands out in this essay is the organization. The paragraphs as clearly laid out and succinct, and each begin with a great transition word or phrase. The introductory paragraph, while unfortunately uses some unneeded self-reference, clearly demonstrates an understanding of the presented argument, which is mandatory of all “6” essays. Each flaw is then pointed out in a body paragraph, and the author then chooses to include a nice “how to strengthen” paragraph to demonstrate that he/she knows the argument at a more advanced level! The conclusion is clear, and reinforces the claims previously made. While no means perfect, the strong reasoning and clarity of organization definitely give this author a “6”!

**ESSAY QUESTION #2:**

Political organizations that advocate the use of violence to achieve their goals should be prohibited from operating within our country. Such groups are only interested in achieving short term goals which lead to more serious long term problems.

**ESSAY #2:**

Political organizations that advocate the use of violence to achieve its goals can sometimes lead to destruction and devastation. However, that claim that such groups are detrimental to society does not follow the same line of reasoning. These groups might be of great help to certain sections of society. Also the claim that short term solutions can only lead to more serious long term problems is stated without any evidence. Hence the above argument is flawed.

Firstly, political organizations might be of great help to certain sections of society. Take for example the Indian National Congress party that helped tons of Indian’s voice their views to the British government during the British rule in india. Although this political organization advocated the use of violence, the organization was critical to India becoming a free of British rule in 1947.

Secondly, the argument assumes that short term solutions lead to more serious long term problems. Short term solutions are often very important in achieving long term goals, irrespective of whether the organizations advocate violence or not.  
The argument must also state clearly what constitutes violence. In a free country, such as the United States, to prohibit any political organization is to put a hold on their freedom. As long as the violence or aggressive behavior is not illegal, one can not prohibit a political organization from operating.

Thus although the argument seems to convey a valid point, that political organizations that advocate the use of violence should be prohibited from operating, it is worded to strongly and lacks evidence to support its claims that these groups are detrimental to society.

*RECAP:* The major difference between these two essays is length. More is not always better, but a student who can write 5-6 paragraphs within the given time frame definitely will stand out as a better planner, and as someone who already had a workable template. Furthermore, some minor grammar and spelling mistakes interfere with the essay’s clarity. The thesis, “Hence the above argument is flawed, “ is not as strongly worded as it could be, and doesn’t stand on its own as a powerful statement. The conclusion also seems to weaken the essay by admitting the argument conveys “a valid point.” This concession, without being more specific, weakens the overall thesis. The takeaway: length, specificity, and strength of argument will take this “4” to a “6.”

**ESSAY QUESTION #3:**

The following appeared in a promotional mailing sent by the publishers of a community directory, encouraging local businesses to buy an ad in the next edition:

“One of the best ways to reach new customers is also one of the cheapest. That’s why it makes sense to purchase an ad in the Stipeville Business Directory! Local business owners who have purchased an ad in years past will tell you the same thing! Did you know that three of our town’s top-ten doctors, two of our top-five caterers, and several of our top pet groomers bought ads last year? And we don’t want to name names, but a local hairdresser forgot to place her ad before our deadline last year, and she reports that her business dropped by 5%! Well, she’s buying an ad this year, and so should you! The Stipesville Business Directory is a must-buy for all local businesses!”

Discuss how well-reasoned you find this argument. In your discussion, be sure to analyze the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions underlie the thinking and what alternative examples or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion. You can also discuss what sort of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.

E**xplanation**

Although there is no single correct essay, the following is a well-written sample essay that will score well on the GMAT exam:

Most of us have faced a so-called “hard sell,” when a salesperson reaches too far and acts too aggressively in a desperate attempt to secure our business. Unfortunately, that’s what’s happened with the Stipesville Business Directory’s mailing as shown in the prompt. The advertisement uses faulty logic to make a flawed argument that may ultimately turn potential advertisers away from the Directory, instead of increasing sales.

The premise is wrong from the first line, which states that “one of the best ways to reach new customers is also one of the cheapest.” This line of thinking doesn’t make much sense, as no facts or figures are provided to show that the Business Directory is an inexpensive choice compared to other means of alerting potential customers about one’s business. It also assumes that local business owners value “cheapness,” which may not be true.

The ad continues to make a flawed argument with the statement that “local business owners” who bought ads in the Directory in past years will testify that doing so is “one of the best” ways to reach new customers. This argument has no meat to it since no testimonials from local business owners are included. It’s possible that the Directory is more helpful for businesses like repair shops, which rely on serving customers faced with emergencies, than businesses like hair salons, which rely on repeat customers and word of mouth. But that argument is not considered here.

Perhaps the most glaring error in the ad is the assumption presented in the listing of “three of our town’s top doctors, two of our top-five caterers, and several of our top dog groomers” who bought ads last year. There’s no means provided of understanding what “top” means here: Are these businesses the top in a local newspaper’s customer satisfaction survey or the top in money earned or some other means of measuring their success? And by what means is their success, however it is measured, tied to their participation in the business Directory? This information is not explained and thus equates participation in the Stipesville Business Directory with success as a business in a way that is not at all clear.

Additionally, this flawed logic continues with an anecdote about an unnamed hairdresser who apparently attributes her 5% drop in business to not purchasing an ad in the Stipesville Business Directory. This is flimsy evidence, and without knowing more about the hairdresser, we cannot be sure that the drop in her business is related to her failure to place an ad in the Directory. Her business might be located in an area of Stipesville where construction has taken place over several months, causing a decrease in visitors. Or she might have taken a vacation of a month or more, during which time her business would obviously see a decrease in earnings.

The shoddiness of the arguments presented ends up making the Stipesville Business Directory seem like an organization that’s overaggressive and abrasive, which is unfortunate. The inclusion of more detailed testimonials from satisfied local business owners who bought ads would provide more convincing, if anecdotal, evidence. The Directory’s compilers might also try to accrue more convincing figures, perhaps by surveying local businesses before and after they’ve placed ads. This sort of information, presented coherently, would ultimately be much more convincing to local business who are on the fence about placing an ad in the Stipesville Business Directory.

**ESSAY QUESTION #4:**

"The Excelsior Company plans to introduce its own brand of coffee. Since coffee is an expensive food item, and since there are already many established brands of coffee, the best way to gain customers for the Excelsior brand is to do what Superior, the leading coffee company, did when it introduced the newest brand in its line of coffees: conduct a temporary sales promotion that offers free samples, price reductions, and discount coupons for the new brand."

E**xplanation**

The argument claims that The Excelsior Company will introduce a new brand of coffee on market. As the coffee market is expensive and very competitive, Excelsior had to adopt a similar marketing strategy like a leading competitor. Stated in this way the argument fails to mention key factors, on the basis of which it could be evaluated. The conclusion relies on assumptions, for which there is no clear evidence. Therefore, the argument is rather weak, unconvincing and incomplete.  
  
First, the beginning of the passage assumes that in order to experience a great success with its new brand of coffee. Excelsior has to copy the marketing strategy of an important competitor. This statement is a stretch as it does not provide any information about Excelsior's situation on the coffee market. Moreover, the author does not explain why such strategy would be effective in the case of Excelsior. We can take the example of Apple. a leading smartphone company. If we imagine that Apple was about to create TV set and home cinema -like Samsung or Sony-, nobody could say that Apple would experience success or failure. More precisely, Apple is not known as a TV producer, but as a hardware producer and seller. Therefore, it might be irrelevant for Apple to use the same strategy of leading competitors as Apple does not benefit from the same reputation in this specific area. Actually, it would be better for Apple to develop first its image in the TV set area before copying Sony's or Samsung's strategy. In brief, we can say that the first claim is unconvincing as the author does not provided any piece of background about Excelsior. Therefore, the reader cannot assess if such marketing strategy would be effective in the case of Excelsior Company. The argument would have been clearer if it had stated that such strategy was the fittest in the case of Excelsior.

Second, the argument asserts that the marketing strategy consists in offering free samples, introducing promotions etc. This is again an unsupported claim as it does not demonstrate any correlation between a discount strategy and the success of a new brand. We can consider the example of Nespresso. Nespresso represents a luxuary brand or coffee and is very successful thanks to its free samples. More precisely, when you go to a Nesspresso shop and when you buy Nespresso's coffe, then employees offer you a free cup of coffee. So we can conclude that Nespresso success is based on the good atmosphere created in their shops. Nevertheless, people are able to get free samples only when they buy. On the contrary, it is really hard to say if Nespresso would have been as successful as it is if it has provided free samples for non-buyers people. Therefore, Excelsior's success with promotion cannot be guaranted as the Nespresso's example is exactly the opposite situation. If the argument had provided some statistical data or evidence that the more a company makes promotion the more sales increase, then it would have been much more convincing.  
  
Finally, some additional information would have strengthened the argument. As explained before, providing information about Excelsior's background could have help to understand the company's situation, and so to determine what strategy was the fittest in this situation. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of marketing campaign would have helped the reader to determine whether a promotion strategy is good or not, or if another strategy -such as Nespresso's- is better. Without any answers to these questions, one is left with the impression that the argument is a wishful thinking rather than a substantiated argument. The claim would have been strengthened if it has mentioned one of the relevant facts cited before.

In conclusion, the argument is flawed for the above-mentioned reasons and is therefore unconvincing. Actually, in order to assess the merits of a decision, it is essential to have a full knowledge of all contributing factors. Without this information, the argument remains unsubstantiated and open to debate

**ESSAY QUESTION #:5**

"The recent surge in violence in the southern part of the city is a result of a shortage of police officers and an absence of leadership on the part of the city council. In order to rectify the burgeoning growth of crime that threatens the community, the city council must address this issue seriously. Instead of spending time on peripheral issues such as education quality, community vitality, and job opportunity, the city council must realize that the crime issue is serious and double the police force, even if this action requires budget cuts from other city programs."

E**xplanation**

In the argument above, the author concludes that the city council is not doing its job well and needs to focus on expanding significantly the police force in order to combat recent growth in the level of crime. The premise of the argument is that crime is expanding while the city council focuses on ostensibly unrelated matters such as education reform. However, the argument is flawed because it falsely assumes that the city council’s efforts to improve quality of life are entirely unrelated to levels of violence and it assumes that the crime problem can be solved by merely increasing the police force.

First, the argument wrongly assumes that issues of educational opportunity, community vitality, and job availability have no bearing on crime. However, the author fails to support this assumption. It is entirely possible that the crime level spiked due to a recent and sizeable layoff at a major nearby factory that pushed countless citizens out of work and onto the streets. With individuals struggling to survive, it should come as no surprise that people are turning to crime.

Second, the reasoning in the editorial is flawed because it erroneously assumes that increasing the police force will directly address the root of the crime problem and reduce the level of crime. Yet, a landmark study published in early 2008 showed that increasing the size of a police force beyond a certain point provides extremely small marginal returns in the reduction of crime. Given the fact that the local police force is already above this threshold, the editorial’s author wrongly assumed that a doubling of the police force will materially decrease the crime rate.

Moreover, the argument could be improved by appealing to the city’s history with fighting crime and managing the size of its police force. In particular, approximately 25 years ago, the city council faced a situation very similar to the one it faces today: a rising crime rate and growing spending on community development. The city council decided to increase the size of its afterschool programs’ budget by about 75% and this reduced crime dramatically. Faced with the same situation today, the city council should follow the path it took 25 years ago.

In conclusion, the argument in the newspaper editorial is flawed because it assumes that educational opportunity, job availability, and community vitality are not related to the level of crime a community experiences. Moreover, the argument wrongly concludes that an increase in the police force will address the root issue behind the crime, which the argument assumes is an inadequate number of police officers.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:6**

"What really matters in the leadership of business and organizations is getting results, reaching benchmarks, and achieving success."

E**xplanation**

Although the issue of what constitutes success is not black and white and some experts object to the statement that what really matters in organizational leadership is getting results, I agree with the above statement because achieving results benefits stakeholders and failing hurts both stockholders and stakeholders.

First, achieving results is the most important aspect of leadership because they benefit the owners and stakeholders. For example, stockholders in struggling companies are adamant that new management be found that can produce better financial returns and deliver gains in the stock price. Just as it is unfair to pay for a service that is being poorly rendered, so it is unfair for a business and its leaders to be compensated and viewed as achieving what really matters while they fail to meet the objectives of the owners.

Second, when a business or organization adopts a mentality that what matters are not results, it often fails and hurts stakeholders. For example, in Hurricane Katrina, the American people saw a government that paid little attention to achieving results and succeeding in its job. As a result of a mindset that what mattered were not results, the government demonstrated considerable apathy and the victims of the hurricane suffered. As New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco said, the Federal government’s lack of focus on results mattered in a significantly negative way for the people of New Orleans and Louisiana.

On the other hand, some may argue that a focus on results and success breeds corruption. These individuals may point to examples of corporate fraud such as Enron or WorldCom. However, a crucial benchmark of success that every business should meet is acting socially responsible and delivering long-term growth in its stock price. Consequently, the leaders at businesses such as Enron failed to deliver true success for the stockholders since the value of the company evaporated. If the leaders of the company had focused on results, they would have avoided making unethical decisions that led to the company’s subsequent collapse.

In conclusion, the aspect of business leadership that matters most is achieving results because stakeholders benefit and avoid painful consequences that arise from an organization or business that fails to deliver results. Although some may argue that this mindset leads to corruption, it is actually a lack of focus on reaching benchmarks and becoming successful that causes leaders to make decisions that produce painful consequences for both stakeholders and stockholders

**ESSAY QUESTION #:7**

"Capital Bank has always required that its employees wear suits at all times while at work. Last month, Capital’s employee absenteeism and attrition rates both reached all-time highs. In order to reverse these trends, Capital should adopt a company-wide "casual Friday" policy, under which all employees would be permitted, and even encouraged, to dress casually for work every Friday. After all, most companies in the software industry allow their workers to dress casually for work anytime they want; and those workers often remark that this policy enhances their job satisfaction. Moreover, most software firms experience lower rates of employee absenteeism and attrition than companies in other industries, including banking."

E**xplanation**

This argument concludes that a "casual Friday" policy would reverse Capital Bank’s high absenteeism and attrition rates. This conclusion, based solely on certain comparisons with the software industry, is tenuous at best. The memo fails to address important differences between the two industries and between dress codes, other possible reasons for Capital’s problems, and potential problems with the cited statistics.

First of all, the memo assumes that since software workers prefer casual attire, so would bank employees. But this might not be so. People attracted to finance jobs are generally more oriented toward authority and wealth, and thus prefer to wear suits to impress and intimidate. Therefore, a "casual Friday" policy might have no positive impact on morale at Capital. It might even backfire, prompting even more workers to leave the company. The memo also assumes that a "casual Friday" policy is similar enough to the software industry’s dress codes to have the same effect on job satisfaction. But would just one casual day per week be enough to reduce absenteeism and attrition? Possibly not.

The memo further assumes that the dress code is to blame for Capital’s high absenteeism and attrition rates, without considering other possible explanations. A high absenteeism rate might be due instead to other working conditions, such as poor ventilation or cafeteria food, while a high attrition rate might be explained by such factors as inadequate salaries or benefits. Since the memo hasn’t ruled out these sorts of possibilities, the conclusion that a "casual Friday" policy will solve Capital’s problems is, at best, weak.

Finally, the statistics cited in the memo seem unreliable. One cannot draw any firm conclusions about job satisfaction from "remarks" made "often" by software workers unless the remarks are backed up by a proper survey of a sufficiently large and representative sample. Nor can one draw any firm conclusions about employee absenteeism and attrition from a single month’s data. Last month’s data might have been a one-time-only spike (to which the memo’s author over-reacted). Even if not, the monthly variation in itself tends to show that the dress code, which has remained the same, is not to blame for last month’s data.

In sum, the memo has not convinced me that worker preferences and dress codes in the software industry are similar enough to Capital’s workers and the proposed policy to ensure that the "casual Friday" policy will have the desired impact at Capital. Nor has the memo convinced me that Capital’s current dress code is the actual cause of the absenteeism and attrition problems in the first place.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:8**

“Mental health experts have observed that symptoms of mental illness are less pronounced in many patients after group music therapy sessions, and job openings in the music-therapy field have increased during the past year. Consequently, graduates from our degree program for music therapists should have no trouble finding good positions. To help improve the financial status of Omega University, we should therefore expand our music-therapy degree program by increasing its enrollment targets.

E**xplanation**

In a memo to the president of Omega University, the music department chair argued that the university should expand the music-therapy program.  This argument is substantially flawed.  The argument presents inconclusive information, offering dubious support, and from this draws unreasonably far-reaching conclusions.

The evidence cited involves ambiguous language.  For example, the argument asserts that the symptoms of mental illness are “less pronounced” after a group music-therapy sessions.  Of course, calm music will have a soothing effect on almost anyone, but can this be considered a legitimate treatment for the mentally ill? Presumably, the benefits of music therapy are neither as powerful nor as long-lasting as those of appropriate medications.  Simply by making the claim that symptoms are “less pronounced”, the author has failed to indicate whether the improvement is significant enough to merit any serious investment in this new field. The music chair also cites an “increase” in job openings in the field of music-therapy.  This is another unfortunately indefinite word.  The word “increase” might mean that music-therapy is a wildly burgeoning new field, although nothing suggests that this is the case.  Alternately, the word “increase” might denote, for example, a rise from 60 jobs nationwide last year to 70 this year — admittedly, this is an increase, although a change across such small numbers hardly would be large enough to warrant any major modifications in a university’s programs.

Having presented such questionable evidence, the music chair then draws a grand sweeping conclusion: the graduates of the university’s program will have “no trouble” finding jobs in this field.  Quite rare is the combination of a vibrant professional field and a thriving economy, such that applicants entering this field have “no trouble” finding a job.  Even if there is a plethora of jobs in this mental health niche, how do we know that these jobs would go to recent graduates of Omega University?  Surely practitioners with years of experience, or recent graduates of more prestigious universities, would be preferred for such positions.  Even interpreting the questionable evidence in its most optimistic light, we hardly can expect that this one field will explode with employment possibilities for Omega graduates.  This conclusion is far too strong, and therefore the request for funding is not well justified.

This music-therapy program is already in existence, so presumably it has already had graduates leave Omega University in pursuit of employment.  Evidence that all these recent music-therapy graduates found robust job possibilities waiting for them would enormously strengthen the argument.  Curiously, the music-director is silent on this issue.  If we knew the employment statistics of these recent graduates, these numbers would help us to evaluate this argument better.

The music chair draws another untenably strong conclusion when he asserts that expanding this program will “help improve the financial status of Omega University.”  When alumni of a university make millions or even billions, and choose to give back in substantial amounts to their alma mater, that undoubtedly strengthens the financial standing of a university.  We don’t know the specifics of jobs in music-therapy, but their salaries most certainly do not rival those of hedge fund managers; mental health services are clearly not a field in which practitioners routinely amass remarkable wealth.  Even if the graduates of music-therapy had relatively good job prospects, which is doubtful, having a few more alumni with middle-class to upper-middle class incomes, who, if they choose, may make some modest contributions to, say, the university’s annual fund — this is not an impactful issue in the overall balance sheet of university’s total budget.  The claim that these alumni will substantially improve the “financial status” of the university is hyperbolically overstated.

This argument is neither sound nor persuasive.   The music director has failed to convey any compelling reasons for Omega University to expand the music-therapy program in his department.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:9**

The following appeared as part of an annual report sent to stockholders by Olympic Foods, a processor of frozen foods. “Over time, the costs of processing go down because as organizations learn how to do things better, they become more efficient. In color film processing, for example, the cost of a 3-by-5-inch print fell from 50 cents for five-day service in 1970 to 20 cents for one-day service in 1984. The same principle applies to the processing of food. And since Olympic Foods will soon celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday, we can expect that our long experience will enable us to minimize costs and thus maximize profits.”

E**xplanation**

The author concluded that with long experience of 25 years, Olympic foods will be able to maximize profits and minimize costs because the processing cost has gone down in color film industry. The line of reasoning is that the same approach in film processing industry should be applicable to the other industries. This argument is not sound, however, because it is not necessary that same thing would happen to food industry. It depends upon many other factors.

Firstly, the argument assumed that the color film industry is similar to food industry. One must not forget that an Olympic food is an industry for frozen foods or perishable products. These products require fast transportation and special equipments in order to keep fresh or the entire stock will get junked. These requirements can claim substantial costs and it is very likely that they can never be cut. One the other hand, color film is a consumer product which stays much longer and is not perishable. Therefore, it is possible that the cost-cutting approach is not applicable to the food industry.

Secondly, the author failed to address other factors that are important to a company’s success.  It is well known that in the long run maximization of profits occurs due to low cost of production. But it’s not the only factor they consider. Other factors such as demand for the product, selling price, and overall competition in the market should also be taken into consideration. Today, buyers become the king in the market. If other companies’ products are available at lower price with same quality or at similar price with higher quality, then people don’t buy the Olympic’s product. Therefore, if most consumers choose other companies’ products, then the objects of higher profits and lower cost can’t be attained.

Finally, the speaker did not include any information on Olympic management approach. Rather, it just mentioned the long experience of 25 years in food industry. While there is rough correlation between long experience and ability to maximize profit, it is not always the case. If the Olympic fails to accumulate valuable management experience, such as time-consuming strategic alliance, learning from failure, etc, then Olympic long experience will not enable it to minimize costs and thus maximize profits

In sum, the argument is not compelling because it omitted many other factors that must be addressed in order to make proper conclusion. If the author has considered the difference between color film and food industry, selling price, and product quality, the argument would be more convincing.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:10**

The following appeared in a memorandum from the business department of the Apogee Company. “When the Apogee Company had all its operations in one location, it was more profitable than it is today. Therefore, the Apogee Company should close down its field offices and conduct all its operations from a single location. Such centralization would improve profitability by cutting costs and helping the company maintain better supervision of all employees.”

**Explanation**  
The author argues that Apogee Company improves profitability by closing down its field offices and conducting all its operations from a single location. To support this argument, the author states that such centralization would improve profitability by cutting costs and helping the company maintain better supervision of all employees. In addition, the author points out that Apogee Company enjoyed a more profitable business in the past when it had all its operations in one location. However, the author's argument is flawed in three aspects.  
  
In the first place, the author regards a complicated managerial issue as a single-step change in operations and ignores many relevant factors. A company's profitability is determined by a whole bunch of economic, social, political, and cultural factors as well as management skills and employees' attitude. Luck also plays an important role. It can be reasonably assumed that Apogee Company is suffering a low profitability at present. The reasons can be many, so any single adjustment without considering other possible influential factors is incomplete, and any oversimplified conclusion is unfounded.

In the second place, it is dangerous for Apogee Company to cut costs deeper and supervise employees better by resorting to centralization. The company may lose its market share because it concentrates its entire resource in one single location and has no direct access to some of those markets that it has offices at present. It will be difficult for the company to get first-hand information and make quick decisions to fight competitors. Moreover, Apogee Company may also lose its customers' interest and trust. People always tend to conduct business with somebody who they can see whenever they want to see. Apogee Company may easily become another unfortunate company that is forgotten by its customers in a region where it does not have a permanent office.  
  
In the third place, it is senseless to compare the present operations of Apogee Company with the operations in the past. The world is changing and the business environment is different. Competition is probably more severe than before, for example, so Apogee Company does not have the relative advantage it had. The only way for the company to keep competitive is to keep tighter relationships with its customers and provide better and quicker services to them, but this may require Apogee Company to open more offices rather than to close most of the current offices.

In sum, the author's conclusion is unfounded. To improve its profitability, Apogee Company should analyze its business environment carefully and, without losing its current business relationships, explore new opportunities. If it simply closed its current offices, the most possible result is that it loses its customers and therefore suffers even lower profitability

**ESSAY QUESTION #:11**

The following appeared in a memorandum issued by a large city’s council on the arts. “In a recent citywide poll, fifteen percent more residents said that they watch television programs about the visual arts than was the case in a poll conducted five years ago. During these past five years, the number of people visiting our city’s art museums has increased by a similar percentage. Since the corporate funding that supports public television, where most of the visual arts programs appear, is now being threatened with severe cuts, we can expect that attendance at our city’s art museums will also start to decrease. Thus some of the city’s funds for supporting the arts should be reallocated to public television.”

**Explanation**

The author concludes that the city should allocate some of its arts funding to the public television in order for the attendance at the city art museums not to further decrease. The argument is based on the two assumptions: 1) the number of audience of art programs on public television is appropriate to that of local art museums, and 2) the public television faced of severe funding cuts. While this argument is somewhat convincing, it is not sound because its line of reasoning is not compelling.  
  
First of all, the author commits the “Confused Cause and Effect” fallacy. The argument depends on the assumption that increased exposure to the visual arts on public television has caused a similar increase in local art-museum attendance in the past years. However, the poll that increased art-museum attendance is statistically correlated with similar increases in television viewing of visual-arts programs, does not necessarily mean that the increased television viewing of arts is the cause of the rise in museum attendance. There may be other factors relevant to increased interest in the local art museum during the past years. For example, some larger social or cultural factors may cause greater public interest in municipal art museums.

Second, the argument does not address the effectiveness of citywide poll conducted five years ago. The survey may be biased. If the respondents do not properly represent the whole residents, then the poll is not convincing. Moreover, since the survey was conducted five years ago, the statistics can become invalid and can no longer be used as future prediction.

In conclusion, the argument is not convincing enough and would be strengthened if the author were to eliminate other significant factors that might have caused the increase in visits to the local art museum, as well as to address the soundness o the survey conducted five years ago.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:12**

The following appeared in a report presented for discussion at a meeting of the directors of a company that manufactures parts for heavy machinery. “The falling revenues that the company is experiencing coincide with delays in manufacturing. These delays, in turn, are due in large part to poor planning in purchasing metals. Consider further that the manager of the department that handles purchasing of raw materials has an excellent background in general business, psychology, and sociology, but knows little about the properties of metals. The company should, therefore, move the purchasing manager to the sales department and bring in a scientist from the research division to be manager of the purchasing department.”

**Explanation**

The author argued that the company should replace the current manager with a scientist from the research division as the manager of the purchasing department as a result of falling revenues. The argument is based on the two facts: 1) The company revenues fall at the same as do delays in manufacturing; and 2) The current manager who is responsible for purchasing of raw materials knows little about the properties of metals. The line of reasoning is not sound and, therefore the conclusion is not compelling.

Firstly, the argument failed to address the casual relationship between falling revenues and delays in manufacturing. The fact that the falling revenues that the company is experiencing coincide with delays in manufacturing does not mean one causes another. It may be other reasons that cause the company to experience the falling revenues. For example, the quality of products does not satisfy its customers, and as a result, many previous clients are turning to its competitors.  
  
Furthermore, it is not reasonable to conclude that a scientist can save the poor planning in purchasing metals. If the scientist is skilled in the properties of metals but poor at planning, the delays in manufacturing may be worse. The purchasing manager must know where he could find those kinds of metals, what prices they are, and when they can be transported to his company. In fact, a department manager in business background is really acceptable. Because when he bumps against a technical problem, he can easily seek advice from the engineer team in manufacturing department.  
  
In conclusion, the delays in manufacturing were not necessarily caused by the purchasing manager's poor knowledge about the properties of metals. Maybe the company must replace the purchasing manager; however, a scientist may also not be competent for this job. It must find someone who really knows how to plan and how to buy qualified metals in time.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:13**

The following appeared in an announcement issued by the publisher of The Mercury, a weekly newspaper. “Since a competing lower-priced newspaper, The Bugle, was started five years ago, The Mercury’s circulation has declined by 10,000 readers. The best way to get more people to read The Mercury is to reduce its price below that of The Bugle, at least until circulation increases to former levels. The increased circulation of The Mercury will attract more businesses to buy advertising space in the paper.”

**Explanation**

The announcement concludes that the best option for increasing Mercury's circulation to former levels is to lower its price below that of its competitor, The Bugle. This conclusion is based on the fact that since The Bugle was introduced, circulation has declined substantially. This argument is not convincing as the author has made some questionable assumptions that may or may not be true, given the data provided. Firstly, the factors as to why the circulation has declined are unknown, this may not have been related to the introduction of the Bugle at a lower price. Furthermore price is not the only factor taken into consideration by readers when deciding which paper to buy. Finally, the goal of the Mercury is to attract more business to buy advertising space and increased circulation is not necessarily the best way to achieve this goal.  
  
First of all, the fact that the Mercury has lost 10,000 readers since The Bugle first appeared on the market five years ago implies nothing. Other factors may have contributed to this decline. For example, it would be correct to say that for the last five years, or more, the information revolution has changed the way that people access information. More and more people are becoming Internet literate and perceive it as a source of free and easily accessible information. News is readily available on the Internet, leading readers away from traditional forms of news such as newspapers. There is no indication in the argument as to whether circulation has been declining even before The Bugle. If so, then it will be apparent that factors, other than The Bugle, have contributed to the poor performance of the paper.  
  
Furthermore, the author did not rule out other factors that caused the decreasing circulation. Price may not be the only factor influencing readers whether or not to read a certain newspaper. Consider the following situation. The Bugle is a tabloid newspaper while the Mercury is aimed at a more educated audience. Lowering the price, although this may result in a slight increase in readers, may not attract those readers who prefer tabloid newspapers. This invalidates the assumption that lowering the price of The Mercury will allow circulation to return to former levels.  
  
Finally, the newspapers wishes to achieve its ultimate goal of attracting more business, and as a result increasing profits, to buy advertising space it needs to take into consideration the other factors that entice a business to advertise with a newspaper. The newspaper's audience is an obvious example. An educated audience will attract a specific, perhaps more prestigious class of business to advertise at a high price. To lower the price of the newspaper, and in turn risk changing the type of readers that buy the paper, will affect the number, and type, of businesses that are willing to advertise.  
  
In sum, the author’s conclusions can not be drawn from the data that has been provided. The Mercury may not be losing readers as a direct result of the introduction of The Bugle. Lowering its price, to below that of The Bugle, may not increase the circulation of The Mercury to former levels or help the paper to achieve its goals of attracting more business to buy advertising space and thus increasing revenues.

**ESSAY QUE STION #:14**

The following appeared as part of an article in a magazine devoted to regional life. “Corporations should look to the city of Helios when seeking new business opportunities or a new location. Even in the recent recession, Helios’s unemployment rate was lower than the regional average. It is the industrial center of the region, and historically it has provided more than its share of the region’s manufacturing jobs. In addition, Helios is attempting to expand its economic base by attracting companies that focus on research and development of innovative technologies.”

**Explanation**

In this article, corporations are encouraged to settle their business in the city of Helios when seeking new business opportunities or a new location. The recommendation is based on the fact that Helios is the industrial center of the region, given that the city provided more than its share of manufacturing jobs and its unemployment rate is lower than average. Furthermore, the city is taking efforts to expand the economic base of the city by attracting companies that focus on research and development of innovative technologies. This argument is somewhat persuasive but not convincing for the following two reasons.

First, lower-than-average unemployment rate seems attractive to job applicants, but actually not good for corporations. Because of the lower than average unemployment rate in Helios, companies that should recruit large numbers of employees would not find Helios a great place. Lower unemployment rate means that the incoming corporations will have to recruit new workers outside the city of Helios or lure the existing workers away from their current jobs with higher wages. Both of these two alternatives will result in higher recruiting costs, and therefore make Helios a BAD place for business.

Second, it is questionable whether the available labor in Helios could support all types of business. Even though the city of Helios has great environment for industrial and manufacturing companies, it is likely that the local prospective employees are not suitable for other types of corporations, such as financial service companies. Furthermore, the city’s attempt to attract companies that focus on research and development of innovative technologies does not necessarily result in the expanding economic base as it expect.

In sum, the author did not provide compelling reasons for why Helios is a great site for a company wishing to relocate. Nor has the author provided compelling reasons for companies seeking new business opportunities to choose Helios. If the author had included the above items, it may be more convincing.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:15**

The following appeared in the health section of a magazine on trends and lifestyles. “People who use the artificial sweetener aspartame are better off consuming sugar, since aspartame can actually contribute to weight gain rather than weight loss. For example, high levels of aspartame have been shown to trigger a craving for food by depleting the brain of a chemical that registers satiety, or the sense of being full. Furthermore, studies suggest that sugars, if consumed after at least 45 minutes of continuous exercise, actually enhance the body’s ability to burn fat. Consequently, those who drink aspartame-sweetened juices after exercise will also lose this calorie-burning benefit. Thus it appears that people consuming aspartame rather than sugar are unlikely to achieve their dietary goals.”

**Explanation**

The article concludes that it is better to use sugar than the artificial sweetener aspartame for those people who want to lost weight. The author uses two reasons to support his viewpoints. First, high levels aspartame will cause people to eat more. Second, sugar can help fat-burning if used properly. These reasons can only tell reader that aspartame has some bad side-effect while sugar has some good effect, but they can't prove that sugar is better than aspartame for weight-control. Therefore, the reasoning is less than sufficient and the argument is not convincing.  
  
In the first reason, author fails to define what the level of amount is “high”. The normal dose of aspartame that people consuming may be very low. If most people use artificial sweetener that contains lower level of aspartame than the one that will trigger a craving for food, then the advantage of consuming sugar no long exists. Moreover, the author didn't mention whether sugar will also contain that chemical. If it is the case, people should turn to the third product.  
  
The second reason is also not sound, because it requires people not to drink until 45 minutes after exercise. This procedure is difficult to follow because most people drink juices immediately after or during excise. If they have to wait for 45 minutes, they may not need drink any longer. Also, the author didn't mention whether the calorie that sugar itself generates is less than the amount it helps to burn. Finally, the article fails to address whether the aspartame's side-effect, if any, is bigger than sugar’s.

In conclusion, the argument is nor sound or convincing. However, if it had included the above mentioned items, it would be more compelling.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:16**

 The following appeared in the editorial section of a corporate newsletter. “The common notion that workers are generally apathetic about management issues is false, or at least outdated: a recently published survey indicates that 79 percent of the nearly 1,200 workers who responded to survey questionnaires expressed a high level of interest in the topics of corporate restructuring and redesign of benefits programs.”

**Explanation**

In this argument, the arguer claims that workers are becoming more and more enthusiastic about management issues. To substantiate this conclusion, the arguer provides the result of a survey, which point out that more than half of the workers asked were considerably interested in the topics of certain corp9orate programs, While this argument has several merits, there are some logical errors that seriously undermine the reasoning.

In the first place, the procedure of the sampling is unclear. With different views on management issues, the 1,200 workers should come from different fields. If they worked in the same department, however, the results of the survey would be unreliable. In addition, the arguer must provide a more detailed process of the questionnaire.

In the second place, no evidence is offered to indicate that most of the other workers take the same level of interest in those programs as the ones asked, for the reason that the 1,200 workers are not representative of all of the workers. Hence, the arguer must present much more data such as the total number of worker.

Last but not least, the arguer makes a hasty generalization about the types of issues that the workers are interested in. It is entirely possible, for example, that most of the 1,200 workers were concerned about only the corporate restructuring and redesign of benefits programs and still apathetic about other issues. If so n the survey on which the argument relies would lack credulity and therefore would not lend strong support to the argument.

In conclusion, the arguer fails to demonstrate that the results of the survey are reasonable and convincing. To solidify the argument, the arguer must present more concrete information about the procedure and many other samples of the survey. Furthermore, the arguer would have to provide a clearer definition of management issues so that the workers might have more choices when answering the questions of the survey.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:17**

The following appeared in the opinion column of a financial magazine. “On average, middle-aged consumers devote 39 percent of their retail expenditure to department store products and services, while for younger consumers the average is only 25 percent. Since the number of middle-aged people will increase dramatically within the next decade, department stores can expect retail sales to increase significantly during that period. Furthermore, to take advantage of the trend, these stores should begin to replace some of those products intended to attract the younger consumer with products intended to attract the middle-aged consumer.”

**Explanation**

The speaker concluded that department stores should replace some of their products intended to attract the younger consumer with those intended to attract the middle-aged consumer. The argument is based on the following two facts: 1) the middle-age consumers devote more percent of their retail expenditure to department store than do younger consumers; and 2) the number of middle-aged people will increase dramatically in the next decade. The above argument omits some paramount items that must be involved in the reasoning process; therefore, it does not constitute a logical argument in favor of the conclusion and it certainly is not persuasive and sound.  
  
First, it is questionable that middle-aged consumers will increase greatly within the next decade. According to the above argument, one can not get the conclusion that the middle-aged consumers will increase during the next decade. The population of the present young people should be presented. If now the number of younger people surpasses the number of middle-aged people greatly, then one can get the above conclusion. If not, the conclusion is wrong. The above article gives its reader the impression that middle-aged customers will increase just because the young people will become middle-aged patronages in ten years. So, it is illogical.  
  
Second, the author assumes that the average expenditure to department store products and service of middle-aged customers is greater than those of young ones. In fact, young people usually spend more money than older ones. So, if the author wants to convince others that the opposite is right, he must present related information or data collected in some surveys.  
  
In summary, the article leaves out the paramount issues mentioned above. Hence it is not thorough or convincing. If it had included persuasive information that could eliminate its readers' doubts, it would have been more sound and compelling.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:17**

The following appeared in the editorial section of a local newspaper. “This past winter, 200 students from Waymarsh State College traveled to the state capitol building to protest against proposed cuts in funding for various state college programs. The other 12,000 Waymarsh students evidently weren’t so concerned about their education: they either stayed on campus or left for winter break. Since the group who did not protest is far more numerous, it is more representative of the state’s college students than are the protesters. Therefore the state legislature need not heed the appeals of the protesting students.”

**Explanation**.  
The article concludes that the state legislature does not need to consider the positions of protesting students. To support this argument, the author cited that only 200 of the 12,000 students traveled to the state capitol to claim their concerns on the proposed cuts in college programs. The remaining students do not participate in this protest and therefore are not interested in this issue. The argument is not convincing for the following two reasons.

First, the author assumes that because less than one-tenth of the students participated in the protest, only less than one-tenth of the students proposed against the funding cut programs. This assumption is questionable since if the protesting students were selected randomly from the entire student body, their views would correctly reflect the views of the entire college. Without further information regarding the way by which the protesting students were selected, it is questionable to conclude that their opinions fail to reflect the opinions of their colleagues.

Second, the author points out that the other 12,000 students stayed on campus or left for winter break and concludes that they are not concerned on fund-cutting program. The line of reasoning is not solid because there may be other reasons that they did not participate. For example, they probably think their opinions will be expressed by the protesting students. Without addressing why the remaining 12,000 students did not attend the campaign, the argument that the remaining 12,000 students are not concerned about their education is unacceptable.

In conclusion, the argument is neither sound nor convincing. To make it logically acceptable, the author should point out what is the point of view of the remaining 12,000 students.

**ESSAY QUESTION #:18**

"Most companies would agree that as the risk of physical injury occurring on the job increases, the wages paid to employees should also increase. Hence it makes financial sense for employers to make the workplace safer: they could thus reduce their payroll expenses and save money."

**Explanation**.

This argument states that it makes financial sense for employers to make the workplace safer because by making the workplace safer then lower wages could be paid to employees. This conclusion is based on the premise that as the list of physical injury increases, the wages paid to employees should also increase.

However, there are several assumptions that may not necessarily apply to this argument. For example, the costs associated with making the workplace safe must outweigh the increased payroll expenses due to hazardous conditions. Also, one must look at the plausibility of improving the work environment. And finally, because most companies agree that as the risk of injury increases so will wages doesn't necessarily mean that all companies which have hazardous work environments agree.

The first issue to be addressed is whether increased labor costs justify large capital expenditures to improve the work environment. Clearly one could argue that if making the workplace safe would cost an exorbitant amount of money in comparison to leaving the workplace as is and paying slightly increased wages than it would not make sense to improve the work environment. For example, if making the workplace safe would cost $100 million versus additional payroll expenses of only $5,000 per year, it would make financial sense to simply pay the increased wages. No business or business owner with any sense would pay all that extra money just to save a couple dollars and improve employee health and relations. To consider this, a cost benefit analysis must be made. I also feel that although a cost benefit analysis should be the determining factor with regard to these decisions making financial sense, it may not be the determining factor with regard to making social, moral and ethical sense.

This argument also relies on the idea that companies solely use financial sense in analyzing improving the work environment. This is not the case. Companies look at other considerations such as the negative social ramifications of high on-job injuries. For example, Toyota spends large amounts of money improving its environment because while its goal is to be profitable, it also prides itself on high employee morale and an almost perfectly safe work environment. However, Toyota finds that it can do both, as by improving employee health and employee relations they are guaranteed a more motivated staff, and hence a more efficient staff; this guarantees more money for the business as well as more safety for the employees.

Finally one must understand that not all work environments can be made safer. For example, in the case of coal mining, a company only has limited ways of making the work environment safe. While companies may be able to ensure some safety precautions, they may not be able to provide all the safety measures necessary. In other words, a mining company has limited ability to control the air quality within a coal mine and therefore it cannot control the risk of employees getting Blacklung. In other words, regardless of the intent of the company, some jobs are simply dangerous in nature.

In conclusion, while at first it may seem to make financial sense to improve the safety of the work environment sometimes it truly does not make financial sense. Furthermore, financial sense may not be the only issue a company faces. Other types of analyses must be made such as the social ramifications of an unsafe work environment and the overall ability of a company to improve that environment (i.e., coal mine). Before any decision is made, all these things must be considered, not simply the reduction of payroll expenses.