

Practical Assessment Week 2

RMIT University - PCP/APD 2020 Semester 1

In the following section, a strategy is introduced that can be used to evaluate arguments. Learn and understand the strategy and then apply it to the questions that follow.

ACTIVITY ONE

Mark: $3 \times 0.75 = 2.25$

Seven Step Strategy for Evaluating Arguments¹

1. Convert the argument into standard form. That is, you need to list the premises and the conclusion.
2. Test the argument for its strength of reasoning to see whether it is valid or invalid.
 - a. Assume the premises to be true and ask yourself whether the conclusion must also be true when those premises are assumed true.
 - b. Is a counterexample to the argument possible?
3. Is the argument valid?
 - a. If yes, go to Step 4.
 - b. If no, go to Step 5.
4. Is the (valid) argument also sound? That is, are the premises true in the actual world?
 - a. If the argument is valid and if all of the premises are true in the actual world, then the argument is also sound.
 - b. If the argument is valid, but one or more premises can be shown to be false, then the argument is unsound. (Note that if one or more premises are unable to be verified, i.e., determined to be either true or false, then the overall argument is inconclusive.)
5. Is the (invalid) argument inductive or fallacious?
 - a. Ask *how likely* the conclusion would be true when the premises are assumed true.
 - b. If the conclusion would likely be true because the premises are assumed true (i.e., the evidence for the conclusion is strong), the argument is inductive.
 - c. If the conclusion would *not* likely be true even when the premises are assumed true, the argument is fallacious. Note: Keep in mind that a fallacious argument can be made up of individual claims or statements that are themselves true in the actual world.
6. Determine whether the premises in your argument are either true or false in the actual world.
7. Make an overall assessment of the argument by determining both
 - a. the argument's strength of reasoning (valid, inductive, or fallacious); and
 - b. the truth conditions of each of the argument's premises.

Now you should be able to determine, for example, that the argument's overall strength is:

¹ Source: Ethics and Technology: Controversies, Questions, and Strategies for Ethical Computing, 5th Edition, Chapter 3.

1. Sound
2. Valid but Unsound
3. Inductive with all true premises
4. Inductive with some false premises
5. Fallacious with some mixture of true and false premises
6. Some other combination

Apply the Seven-Step Strategy

Consider the following scenarios. **You must show the outcome of all 7 steps** by explaining and justifying what your decision for each step is.

Scenario 1

You are contemplating downloading a software application that is available on a Web site called Sharester, a file-sharing P2P (peer-to-peer) site. Sharester is not officially designated as a “pirate site” because it mainly provides users with access to (freely available) open-source software applications. However, this site also contains a few proprietary (or copyrighted) software applications that users can download. It turns out that the particular application you are interested in downloading is proprietary; furthermore, there is no indication that the copyright holder has authorized the free downloading of that application. Although you wish to download this application for personal use (only), you are conflicted about what to do; so, you discuss your concerns with a close friend, Charlie.

Charlie tries to convince you not to download a proprietary software program using the following rationale: ***Downloading proprietary software (without permission from the copyright holder) is identical to stealing physical property. Stealing physical property is morally wrong. Therefore, downloading proprietary software (without permission) is morally wrong.***

Source: Tavani, Herman T. *Ethics and Technology: Controversies, Questions, and Strategies for Ethical Computing*, 5th Edition.

Scenario 2

A major association representing the music industry in the United States has determined that 4,000 copies of a new album featuring a popular rock group, called DUO, had been illegally downloaded last month. The cost of this album for those who elect to download it legally from online music stores is \$10 per copy. So, the association concludes that the music company that holds the copyright to this album lost \$40,000 dollars in revenue last month (on that album alone).

Tavani, Herman T. *Ethics and Technology: Controversies, Questions, and Strategies for Ethical Computing*, 5th Edition, Wiley, 2015.
ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rmit/detail.action?docID=5106471>.
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Scenario 3

Determine whether the strength of reasoning used in the argument in the following scenario is valid or invalid. If it is invalid, does it commit any logical fallacies?

You are engaged in an intense discussion with your friend, Bill, who works in the IT department at your university. Bill complains that many students are using P2P (peer-to-peer) file-sharing applications on the university's network to download excessive amounts of unauthorized copyrighted material. He also claims that the most effective solution to this problem would be to disable student access to all (existing) P2P sites and to prevent students at your institution from setting up their own P2P sites for any reason whatsoever (even to include noncopyrighted material). You convey to Bill your belief that this measure is too drastic. However, Bill argues that the only way to eliminate unauthorized file sharing among students at your institution is to disable access to all P2P software on the university's network.

Tavani, Herman T.. Ethics and Technology: Controversies, Questions, and Strategies for Ethical Computing, 5th Edition, Wiley, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rmit/detail.action?docID=5106471>. Created from rmit on 2019-07-27 17:35:05.

ACTIVITY TWO

Below is the list of most common logical fallacies. Some of them were discussed during the lecture.

Fallacy Name	What it refers to...
Ad Hominem	Attack is directed at the person rather than the substance of what is disputed.
Slippery Slope	X could possibly be abused; therefore, we should not allow X.
Appeal to Authority	X is an authority in field Y. X said Y. Therefore, Y.
Post Hoc or False Cause	Event X preceded event Y. Therefore, X necessarily caused Y.
Composition	Confusing the characteristics that apply to the parts of a whole with the characteristics of the whole itself.
Ambiguity or Equivocation	The misleading use of ambiguous terms (i.e. terms with more than one meaning) in an argument.
False Dichotomy or False Dilemma	Presenting two options that might initially seem to be mutually exclusive.
Virtuality	X exists in cyberspace. Therefore, X is not real.
Non-Testable Hypothesis	Something that is not proven false, must or is likely to be true.
Band Wagon	The popular ideas are necessarily right.
Red Herring	Introducing a topic not related to the subject at hand in order to talk about a seemingly relevant, but in fact irrelevant, topic rather than the real or original issue.
Straw Man	Misrepresenting the opponent's position (e.g. by weakening it) and producing an argument against the misrepresentation.
Guilt by Association	Two things share some properties, therefore they are the same.

Classify the Given Statements

Marks: $5 \times 0.15 = 0.75$

Argument	Fallacy Name
John is a con artist. John has black hair. Therefore, all people with black hair are con artists.	
A politician degrading another politician during a political campaign when asked about a specific policy – “Well, I think we need to look at the other candidate’s failures regarding this topic.”	
There is a lot of commotion regarding saving the environment. We cannot make this world an Eden. What will happen if it does become Eden? Adam and Eve got bored there!	
Child to parent: Either you buy me this new book, or you decide that reading is not important at all.	
If we allow the children to choose the movie this time, they are going to expect to be able to choose the school they go to or the doctors they visit.	