

Proven BMAT techniques to boost your score...



AWARD WINNING COURSE



Master the BMAT

Master BMAT Techniques
Practice BMAT Questions



MEDIC MIND

By Medic Mind

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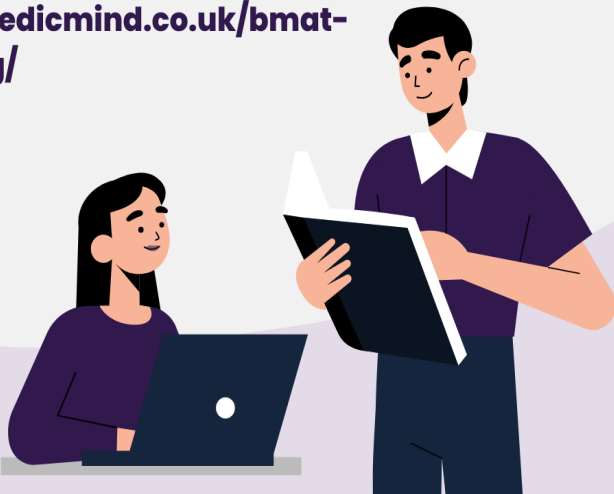
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1

Introduction

Section 3 is the final component of the BMAT. This section of the test differs significantly from the first two with regards to the format. Instead of lots of multiple-choice questions, Section 3 is comprised of just one question - a writing task. The purpose of this final question is to assess written communication skills - which are important for future doctors to have. Doctors are required to make patient notes, write referrals and prescriptions, and sometimes even publish research in scientific journals. Therefore, honing written communication skills will not only improve your Section 3 scores but will also prove invaluable in your future career.

Section 3 Format

Candidates will be presented with three statements and will be required to choose **one** to write a response to. The topics for the statements vary from year to year but typically, there is one **general** statement, one **scientific** statement and one **medical**

statement. All statements tend to be philosophical and lay the foundation for further debate. The statements are often given in the form of opinions, quotations and are expressed as if they were factual. The statement will contain three questions for candidates to answer. These questions can be used to structure the response and candidates **must** answer all three questions **comprehensively**. The typical question structure is outlined below.

Statement 'X'

1. Explain what Statement 'X' is referring to.
2. Argue for the statement and/or against the statement.
3. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Therefore, candidates are Required to

1. Explain what the statement is referring to or the reasoning behind the statement.
2. Formulate an argument supporting the statement
3. Formulate an argument opposing the statement
4. Reconcile both sides and provide your own opinion on the statement.

Common Pitfall!

Typically students who score poorly in Section 3 do not answer all three questions. Candidates **MUST**

answer all three parts of the question to ensure a good score.

Timing

Candidates are given 30 minutes to tackle Section 3. While there is no official word limit for those who are handwriting the exam, there is a space restriction on the answer sheet, which is roughly 3/4th of an A4 page. This typically equates to 300 words but can be between 250 and 350 words depending on the size of your handwriting. For those using a word processor, the world limit is 550 words.

The average person writes at a speed of 20 words per minute, meaning that most people should finish writing their essay in 10-15 minutes. This allows candidates to spend time picking a question, planning the essay and checking over the produced piece at the end. It is important to spend time planning in order to organise your ideas in a fluent and articulate manner.

Overall the recommended timings are

- 1-2 minutes choosing a question
- 6-8 minutes planning the response
- 10-20 minutes writing the response
- 5 minutes proofreading

These timings demonstrate how planning and writing coher-

ently are key to a successful essay. Quality over quantity is essential in achieving a high score.

Preparing for Section 3

Section 3 preparation is often neglected by candidates as writing practice essays can feel like an overwhelming task. The term “essay” can be daunting, particularly for students that do not take any humanities subjects. If this is something you are struggling with, rest assured that Section 3 is not a proper essay – it is only 300 words. Instead of thinking of this task as an ‘essay’, try thinking of it as a three-paragraph written response. Framing it as three paragraphs and a conclusion can feel a lot more manageable and help students gain motivation to write practice responses.

Expert's Advice!

Taking 30 minutes every week to write a practice Section 3 response can greatly improve written communication skills! Learning to think, plan and write a high-quality response under timed conditions is difficult so it is important to practice this.

It is important to practice written communication skills consistently through regular practice in the months leading up to the test. Candidates are advised to review their thinking processes once they have completed the essay. This must be done with a

focus on highlighting specific weaknesses to work on over the weeks leading up to the test. For example, if you notice that planning is something you struggle with then work on essay planning. Try writing essay plans for all three question options on the practice test or past paper. On the other hand, if you notice that your hand is cramping and preventing you from writing neatly and quickly, try writing out 3/4 of a page of A4 every single day as quickly as possible. You can write anything on the paper, it does not matter - the point is to train your muscles. If you notice that space is a problem and end up running over, get another sheet of paper and rewrite your essay in a condensed format in the allotted space. Over time this will help you identify common trends within your writing where you can be more concise.

Expert's Advice!

Leave your practice essay for a few days, then return to and read it again. This will allow you to be more critical and better identify weaknesses. Utilise your Section 1 skills, trying to draw conclusions and identify the main arguments, and then ensure that these align with the questions. Analysing your writing after a few days helps prevent unconscious biases in your self-reflections, thus allowing for more thorough feedback.

Candidates who are concerned with coming up with ideas for writing the essay can help widen their knowledge through a range of sources. The topics of the **statements tend to reoccur**

over the years, so look at past papers and determine which topics are worth researching more. Then use sources such as podcasts, magazines - like The Scientist - and online videos to widen your relevant knowledge.

Expert's Advice!

Make sure to write practice responses to all three genres of statements e.g medical, general and scientific as appose to just sticking to one format. Many aspiring medics take a natural preference to the medical statement, however, it is important to practice writing responses to the general and scientific statements too. This means that if on the day the medical statement (or your preferred genre) is hard then you will feel confident writing responses to the other statement types.

Common Pitfall!

Some candidates believe that memorising quotes and forcing them into the essay is an effective use of preparation time. Whilst quotes can add value to an essay when used correctly, it is much better to use your preparation time to work on structure and coherence - this is where the marks are.

Take-Home Points

1. **Written Communication skills are key.** This section assesses this skill therefore honing written communication abilities prior to test day is essential.
2. **Approaching Preparation.** A positive mindset is necessary for approaching S3 preparation.
3. **Timings are key.** Stick to the recommended timings to ensure a high-quality, coherent response.

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2

Section 3 Scoring

How is Section 3 Scored?

BMAT essays are scored based on two criteria:

1. Quality of Content - on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
2. Quality of English - A, C or E

The essays are marked by two examiners and your final score will be one number to represent your quality of content and one letter to represent the quality of your writing linguistics.

Marking Criteria

The boxes below contain information on the marking criteria of the BMAT. Candidates are advised to read through the information thoroughly in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the expectations required for top marks.

SECTION 3 SCORING

Score 0	An answer judged to be irrelevant, trivial, unintelligible or missing will be given a score of 0
Score 1	An answer that has some bearing on the question but which does not address the question in the way demanded, is incoherent or unfocussed.
Score 2	An answer that addresses most of the components of the question and is arranged in a reasonably logical way. There may be significant elements of confusion in the argument. The candidate may misconstrue certain important aspects of the main proposition or its implication or may provide an unconvincing or weak counter proposition

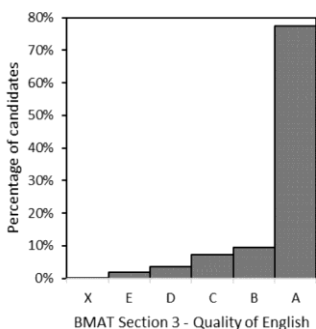
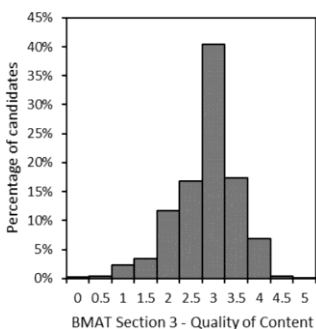
Score 3	A reasonably well-argued answer that addresses ALL aspects of the question, making reasonable use of the material provided and generating a reasonable counter-proposition or argument. The argument is relatively rational. There may be some weakness in the force of the argument or the coherence of the ideas, or some aspect of the argument may have been overlooked.
Score 4	A good answer with few weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed, making good use of the material and generating a good counter proposition or argument. The argument is rational. Ideas are expressed and arranged in a coherent way, with a balanced consideration of the proposition and counter proposition.
Score 5	An excellent answer with no significant weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed, making excellent use of the material and generating an excellent counter proposition or argument. The argument is cogent. Ideas are expressed in a clear and logical way, considering a breadth of relevant points and leading to a compelling synthesis or conclusion.

	Band A	Band C	Band E
Fluency	Fluent	Reasonably fluent/not difficult to read	Hesitant fluency/not easy to follow
Sentence Structure	Good sentence structure	Simple/unambiguous sentence structure	Some flawed sentence structure/paragraphing
Vocabulary	Good use	Fair range and appropriate use	Limited
Grammar	Sound use	Acceptable	Faulty
Spelling and Punctuation	Good with few slips or errors	Reasonable with some slips/errors	Regular errors and frequent slips

Target Score

Setting a target score is a highly personal goal. The graphs below show the 2021 score distributions which indicate that the average candidate obtains a 3.0A in Section 3. As you can see from the criteria above, to score the best possible marks for quality of content, you do not need to have the most knowledge about the topic. Instead, you need to be able to use the material well and present a coherent argument that is well balanced and compelling. This can be achieved by using a variety of relevant points and covering all aspects of the question. This means that a good essay will necessarily not be one that is creative or original but instead is more likely to be one which is structured well, concise and based on logical reasoning.

SECTION 3 SCORING



These graphs demonstrate that the majority of students score an A for quality of English. Therefore, it is not hard to obtain an A. Remember to reflect on your own language skills, even if English is your first language, as you may need to improve your grammar and vocabulary to obtain a high letter grade in the BMAT. To obtain an A candidates simply must not make too many grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. This can be achieved by keeping things simple and using vocabulary that you know.

Expert's Advice!

Having other people mark your practice tests can help identify common errors in your spelling and punctuation. Try swapping with a friend or asking a parent and/or teacher to take a look. Our BMAT team at Medic Mind UK are also happy to lend a hand!

Timing Tip!

Make sure to leave five minutes at the end to check your work for spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes. These five minutes can make or break your letter grade and so, it is worth being strict about it's allotment at the end of your writing time.

What Skills are being Tested?

As stated, Section 3 aims to assess written communication skills. The BMAT specification 2022 states that they are assessing a candidate's capacity to:

- address the question in the way demanded
- organise their thoughts clearly
- express themselves using concise, compelling and correct English
- use their general knowledge and opinions appropriately.

Therefore, producing a logical and coherent response that is concise and well structured is strongly advised. Similarly, it is important to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the question.

Expert's Advice!

How you say it i.e structure is just as important as what you say i.e content. Your response must be logical and coherent.

Take-Home Points

1. **Good English Matters.** Make sure to check your work for spelling and punctuation mistakes.
2. **Structure is Key.** Ensure your response is well thought out and follows a logical flow of thought.
3. **Keep it concise.** There are not a lot of words, stick to the key points.

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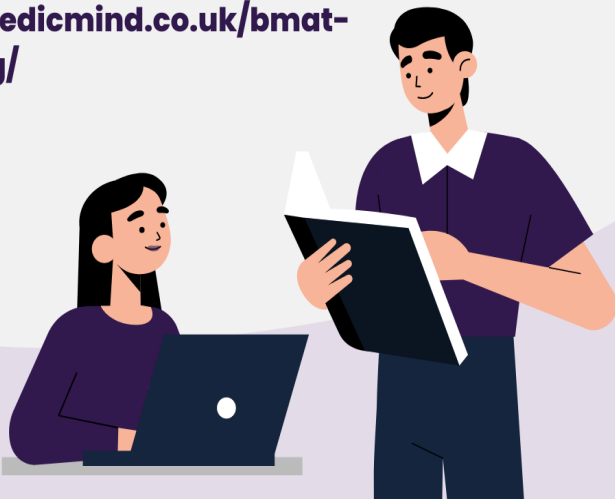
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3

Choosing a Question

Choosing a question is an important part of Section 3. Candidates do **not** score extra points or credit for choosing a harder question. You are **strongly** advised to choose the question that you feel you could write the most comprehensive, clear and logical response.

Picking a Question

Candidates are advised to spend 1-2 minutes choosing a question. During this time it is advisable to read through each of the three options carefully. Ensure that whichever question you choose you are able to answer all three sub-questions effectively. When settling on a question ensure you can answer the following questions.

1. Do you have sufficient knowledge to be able to answer the question?
2. Are you able to give examples to illustrate most, if not all

CHOOSING A QUESTION

your points?

3. Can you address all components of the question?
4. Can you argue for both sides of the argument?
5. Do you find the question interesting? Will you be able to engage in the topic well?
6. Do you understand all parts of the question?

If the answer to all of these questions are yes, then you have likely chosen the best question for you.

Expert's Advice!

Do not pick a question if you cannot present the opposing side of the argument. You must demonstrate that you have considered both sides of the argument or you will not score highly.

Difficulty Picking

It is not uncommon for candidates to struggle to choose a question due to the fact that none of the questions stand out as particularly 'good' or 'easy'. If this happens then it is advisable to take a minute to calm down and do not panic. Instead, ask yourself the six questions above and chose the question that has the most 'yes' responses. Do not begin writing until you have made a clear essay plan based on your knowledge that you know answers all components of the question. This is because you are only given one sheet of paper and so it is not advisable to change

questions once you commence writing. Changing question mid-way through writing will waste valuable space on your page and look messy due to crossed out work. Luckily, following the planning advice in this book will prevent this unfortunate event from occurring as you will have a full, comprehensive plan of what to say before you commence writing.

Expert's Advice!

Remember to stay calm in Section 3. Section 2 is very time pressured so it is natural to feel stressed and time-pressured coming into Section 3. Take a deep breath and try to approach Section 3 in a calm and logical manner.

Take-Home Points

1. **Spend 1-2 minutes picking.** Do not rush into writing.
2. **Ensure you can answer the question well.** Ask yourself the six questions.
3. **Stay Calm.** Take a second to relax and plan your essay well.

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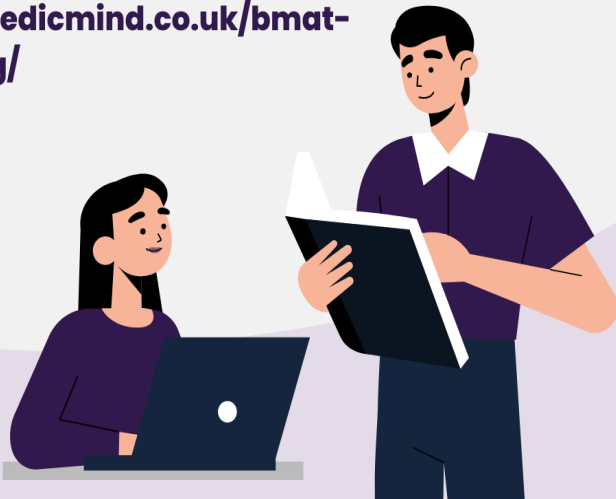
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4

Planning the Essay

Planning an essay well is essential for attaining high marks. The BMAT specification clearly delineates that structure and coherence are critical. Candidates are advised to spend 6-8 minutes planning the essay before commencing writing.

Expert's Advice!

A well-planned essay is a prerequisite for high marks. This is because Section 3 is assessing written communication skills. Clear communication of thoughts requires planning therefore, candidates are less likely to score highly if they miss this step.

How to Plan the Essay

Once you have chosen an essay question, begin by brainstorming all the ideas you have that are relevant to the question. Take a few minutes to write down these points and corresponding examples, then narrow this down to three or four points that will be central to your essay. Once you have decided on these final three or four points, ensure you have a real-life example for each to thoroughly evidence your argument. These points and corresponding examples should form the basis for your essay. There is usually a space on the back page to make notes, it is advisable to use this space for brainstorming and essay planning.

Common Pitfall!

Do not use the A4 page to plan your essay. This space should be reserved exclusively for your written response. The space is valuable and should be treated accordingly. Use the back page for planning instead.

Expert's Advice!

Ensure that you do not just aimlessly jot down numerous points you want to include in your essay. Instead, ensure that you are aware of particular points that you want to focus on, and make sure you are able to easily tell this from your plan when you are writing your essay.

It is recommended to structure the essay around the three sub-questions. When making your plan write out Paragraph 1 and note what you will say in a few words, repeat this for Paragraphs 2 and 3. Below contains a brief outline of a recommended structure, this will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

Experts Advice!

Draw in examples from anywhere, it does not have to be formal readings - it can be from daily life.

Paragraph 1

This can be viewed of as the 'introduction'. In this paragraph, candidates will be responding to the first question. The first question usually takes the format of 'explain the statement [or reasoning behind the statement]' In this paragraph, it is important to really answer the question and contextualise the statement. Candidates should make this paragraph roughly between 50 and 100 words.

Paragraph 2

This paragraph should respond to the second sub-question. Often this will require candidates to argue against the statement. If candidates are asked to present both sides of the argument in the second question, then this can either be done in one large paragraph or split into two paragraphs with one for and one

against. Regardless of your chosen formatting, it is essential to present both sides of the argument thoroughly. Presenting just one side of the argument well and one side of the argument weakly will substantially lower your score. Throughout the response to the second sub-question, it is vital to weave in strong examples to evidence your point. The response to the second question should be around 150 words.

Common Pitfall!

Be careful not to be biased in presenting the argument. It is vital to balance both sides of the argument in your essay. You can present your own opinion in the conclusion when asked.

Paragraph 3

The final paragraph should respond to sub-question 3 and typically requires candidates to reconcile both sides of the debate outlined above before presenting their own opinion. It is important to tie in everything you have said above in this concluding paragraph and then give your own thoughts on the conclusion. The aim here is not to summarise but to reconcile both sides, instead of just restating your aforementioned points try to consider how they fit together and result in the chosen conclusion. Using words like 'Ultimately' and 'overall' can help signpost that you are about to give your own opinion. The response to sub-question 3 should be between 50-100 words.

Adhering to this structure will help ensure candidates answer

all three sub-questions, a pre-requisite for a decent score.

Common Pitfall!

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing clearly state that a common trap that candidates fall into is trying to demonstrate their medical expertise instead of sticking coherently to the question. Do not try to force medical facts into an essay. Stick to the relevant examples and focus on ensuring the essay flows.

Source <https://youtu.be/aKqKIP0phHs>

Expert's Advice!

Be concise! As seen above, the word limit is very short. For example, only 75 words in the introduction. Therefore, it is essential to be concise and get straight to the point.

Take-Home Points

1. **Plan your essay thoroughly.** Make a plan of exactly what you are going to say in each paragraph.
2. **Ensure to answer all the questions.** Structure your paragraphs around the sub-questions to ensure you cover all the key points.
3. **Be concise.** Words are limited so get straight to the point.

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