



**Cambridge Assessment  
Admissions Testing**

# **BioMedical Admissions Test**

**Section 3**

**November 2020**

**Sample responses with examiner comments**

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ONLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TASKS**

Please indicate which task (1, 2 or 3) you have chosen in the 'Task Chosen' box on the answer sheet.

Each of the tasks consists of a statement in bold followed by three prompts. It is important that you address all three parts of your chosen task.

**1 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' (John Dalberg-Acton)**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that power does not necessarily degrade or weaken the morals of those who hold it. To what extent is it possible for someone to hold power without using it for their own personal gain?

**2 Science and art once collaborated as equals to further human knowledge about the world. Today, science is far too advanced and specialised to work together with the arts for this purpose.**

Explain what you think is meant by the statement. Argue that science and the arts can still work together to further understanding of the world. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

**3 There are now many different kinds of internet sites and apps offering medical advice, but they all share one thing in common: they do more harm than good.**

Why might online sources of medical advice be said to 'do more harm than good'? Present a counter-argument. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

## Question 1

The statement suggests that having power, or opportunity to take advantage of people, leads to the ill use of such power for personal gain, politically, socially, financially, etc, known as corruption. It implies that possession of it is the cause of such action and it occurs without exception, and that the more power, the more corruption. I would suggest this is because it provides opportunity for personal gain, relative to the amount of power, which becomes harder and harder to resist as the power increases.

It is possible Dalberg meant that the very power itself does not cause corruption, but provides temptation and opportunity to those would seek personal gain at the cost of others, and by this logic, those who do not wish this would be well suited to power without taking advantage of it. This idea is echoed widely in our society, as many altruistic groups are providing many opportunities to seek financial gain for example; any charity has money passing to causes, but those responsible could take it for themselves, but don't. Action aid provide money to Covid patients in India, rather than taking it for themselves, as an example of simple altruism.

However, there are a great many examples of where people have had this altruistic opportunity and instead taken it for gain, like the CEO of a successful company paying as little as possible to workers, while taking all they can spare for themselves. There are so many cases of this greed, that it is proof enough that the chance provided by power is so tempting to anyone that it leads to this corruption. And, furthermore, much of the reason that this doesn't occur more is because so many people are vigilant to corruption by those in power – effectively removing the opportunity afforded by the power, re-affirming the idea that when power does not corrupt, it's because the power to be corrupt is not there – as in the case of charities, where books are scrupulously checked and kept, and criminal charges are threatened to those who are corrupt here.

In conclusion, I believe that Dalberg-Acton suggests that power over people, money and resources, provides opportunity for financial gain to those willing to take it, and this becomes more tempting with more power. However, this is not universal and there are examples where people hold power and don't manipulate it – but this is due to genuine altruism, and accountability in many cases.

### **Examiner comments**

The candidate offers a reasonable explanation of the statement, capturing the progressive nature of corruption ('the more power, the more corruption') and suggesting a reason why power corrupts ('this is because it provides opportunity for personal gain'). However, the candidate does not distinguish between 'power' and 'absolute power'. The candidate would need to engage with this aspect of the question to push the essay above the 3 band.

The counter-argument focuses on a single point – altruism – giving ActionAid as an example. This is reasonable but does not discuss whether power can 'degrade or weaken the morals of those who hold it'. As the candidate then returns to the abuse of power in the third paragraph, the opportunity is missed to deepen the counter-argument and strengthen the essay as a whole.

The third part of the question ('To what extent is it possible for someone to hold power without using it for their own personal gain?') is dealt with in the third paragraph, but this simply repeats ideas already covered.

Overall, the essay is a reasonable attempt at the question, but there is a lack of focus on the wording of the statement. Paying close attention to the meanings of the different words in the statement and the question will help generate ideas and improve the focus of the essay.

There is 'some weakness' in 'the force of the argument' and 'the coherence of the ideas' (in the phrasing of the marking criteria) but an essay can have these weaknesses, as here, and still merit a 3.

**Mark: 3A**

## Question 1

The statement means that when someone is given power or a position where they can influence others, they will always want more and become greedy. People in power often become selfish and only think about their needs, and in people with absolute power, this happens to a greater extent. An example of this is a dictatorship – their absolute power over a country corrupts and often they become selfish and try to bend others to their will.

However not all people in a position of power become corrupted. There are many jobs which provide people with power for example a teacher. Teachers have power over their students however they use this to educate and teach inexperienced individuals. Furthermore, members of parliament have strong morals through their promises to the public. When elected and placed in a position of power, their morals don't change.

I believe that it is very hard to have power and not use it for your own personal gain. Our subconscious will always play a role in our decisions and often the decisions made will benefit the person in power. Most often things you believe strongly in affect yourself directly or indirectly so how you use your power will definitely affect you. In history we can see that people in absolute power, for example monarchs and dictators use their power to expand their nation by invading other nations to increase their power and wealth. In conclusion, I believe that people in power use it for their personal gain.

## **Examiner comments**

The essay provides a straightforward response to the question; it offers a reasonable counter-argument and makes the candidate's position clear.

The first paragraph explains the statement and the candidate recognises the distinction between 'power' and 'absolute power', suggesting a dictatorship as an example of the second. The paragraph could have been improved by closer attention to the wording of the quotation: 'corrupts absolutely' suggests there is a difference between corruption and absolute corruption, which could have usefully been highlighted here.

The counter-argument, in the second paragraph, rests on two examples: teachers and members of parliament. While well-targeted examples can support an argument, examples that are overly general or given without context generally lead to 'weakness in the force of the argument' (in the phrasing of the marking criteria), as is true here. The candidate would have done better to have thought about why they think teachers and members of parliament do not become corrupted and to have started from that idea.

The third paragraph fully sets out the candidate's own viewpoint and supports this by reference to the subconscious. It is important to make sure that the final part of the question task is fully covered: candidates often do not explain their own view in enough depth, or do not make it clear that this is what they are doing, which can limit the mark they receive.

**Mark: 3A**

## Question 1

The statement implies that people who have power become corrupt as a result of it. This could be because with increasing power, the individual has less restrictions and therefore morals may change because of increasing greed and control over others. It implies a linear relationship between power and corruption so as one increases, so does the other hence with total power comes total corruption. Overall I disagree with this statement to a moderate extent.

One example of when power has not weakened the morals of the person who holds it, is Greta Thunberg. Her increasing following and global recognition has put her in a position of power (many may argue that there is an intrinsic link between influence and power) yet her initial goal of raising awareness and reducing the amount of global warming and climate change has remained steadfast. Her original aim was only to make positive change and despite the huge increase in power, fame and influence she experienced, it has not been used for her personal gain and her motives remain unchanged, so power does not always degrade morals.

On the other hand, in support of the statement there is lots of evidence to suggest power is the cause of corruption and is used for personal gain. In many low income countries with the highest rates of poverty globally, the leaders (either democratically appointed or in dictatorships) often experience extravagant wealth at the expense of those who they hold power over. In resource rich areas, the power holders benefit more than ordinary people hence corruption has occurred and power has been used for personal gain, in the form of luxury living.

In summary, I believe it is possible for an individual to hold power and remain moral, without using it for personal gain. The example above illustrates this and therefore I agree to a significant extent that it is possible however I believe it is not probable. Human nature involves some amount of greed and therefore many people who hold power will benefit in some way, meaning they have used their power for their personal gain.

### **Examiner comments**

The essay starts with a good explanation of the statement: it suggests why power could lead to corruption and highlights the relationship between them. The candidate returns to the topic in the third paragraph, giving the example of corrupt political leaders, although here the argument would benefit from precise examples.

What really weakens the essay, however, is the counter-argument (in the second paragraph), which relies on the single example of Greta Thunberg and does not provide supporting reasons for the claims made about her. The candidate might have provided an effective counter-argument by continuing with the more abstract approach of the first paragraph. This would also have helped the essay cohere as a whole.

The final paragraph starts 'In summary' but the third part of the question does not ask candidates to provide a summary of their response. The question being asked here is: 'To what extent is it possible for someone to hold power without using it for their own personal gain?'. Candidates can therefore take any position on a spectrum from completely possible to completely impossible. This position needs to be justified, with reference to the arguments for and against in the rest of the response. The best essays will produce a 'compelling synthesis or conclusion' (in the phrasing of the marking criteria).

**Mark: 3A**



## Question 2

Science and art have always worked hand in hand especially during the renaissance period in Europe. Many great minds (most notably Da Vinci) furthered the human understanding of the universe through the use of paintings, sculptures and statues whilst also increasing human understanding through science. The statement suggests that in the more modern and technologically advanced world we live in today science is far too advanced for art. One might agree with this as art is somewhat of a lost profession. Unlike in the renaissance period, advancements no longer take place in the field with it being seen as more of a hobby or recreational activity whereas science has continued to expand with more technology available to help progress our understanding of the universe.

Whilst one might agree that art is a lost profession some might say that this doesn't mean that they can't work together. Science is a very literal and factual field where the goal is to reveal the truth to further human understanding whereas art is about taking your understanding and expressing it in your art. Whilst science is crucial to further human knowledge some might say the more science strays away from art the less human it becomes. The great mystery of the universe turns into a series of numbers. For this reason people might believe that as we are more technologically advanced that now more than ever we will need art to work with science to further human understanding and that it definitely can still work together.

To conclude, I can understand what the statement is trying to say with regards to science advancing and art ultimately being left behind. However, to say that they can't work together is wrong and if many people think like this it can be damaging to human understanding. Therefore in the future I hope that art and science can advance together to bring the beauty of human expression and the great mysteriousness of the universe together and then Human knowledge will be at its best.

### **Examiner comments**

The candidate has made good use of the material in both parts of the statement: there is a reference to the Renaissance and then a contrast with the present. The candidate has unpacked the prompt material, rather than simply restating it in different words, which is common in less successful essays. (Although the candidate has not capitalised 'Renaissance', this is a minor slip; the language of an essay does not have to be perfect for it to be awarded an A as the language mark.)

The second paragraph has a clear explanation of the difference between science and art, and the candidate provides a reason for thinking that these fields 'can still work together'. One weakness here is the somewhat one-dimensional and rather limited interpretation of science.

The essay is balanced and includes a clear statement of the candidate's view in the final paragraph. Although it was given a 4, it sits towards the bottom of the band because of the superficiality in the counter-argument. The best responses make points as precisely as possible and avoid repetition.

**Mark: 4A**

## Question 2

This statement means that, while the arts once complemented and supported the sciences as much as the sciences supported the arts, this is no longer possible – in effect, scientific disciplines have become too specialised and progressive to overlap with the broader and less revolutionary arts.

However, one can argue that this is not the case. As science advances, art is needed as a way to visualise what humans can no longer see themselves. For example, geometric and graphical representations of astronomical events and planets are necessary to turn numerical data into visual forms. Likewise, diagrams and biological drawings are needed for parts of the body doctors and patients cannot regularly observe. As science specialises, there is an equal necessity for the arts. Specific disciplines, for example, turn to the arts for support when they are not helped by other sciences. For example, music therapy and creative activities are implemented in palliative care to help support patients near the end of their lives. There are even whole scientific specialties about the arts such as the study of musical sound waves.

Overall, I disagree with the statement. In the world today, unlike hundreds of years ago, there are many less polymaths – people who work on the arts and sciences in parallel. Although it could be argued that this reveals a lack of collaboration between the two, I believe it rather shows how merged and intrinsic they now are. How could geometrists work without drawing shapes, or surgeons without drawing anatomical diagrams? So the advancement and specialisation of science has been supported from the very start by the arts, and despite the fact that the arts are not so specialised, in comparison they are still the mortar that hold the bricks of the house of science together.

## **Examiner comments**

This essay is a reasonable attempt at answering the question and covers all three parts. Although the candidate offers an explanation of both parts of the statement in the first paragraph, this section of the essay is the weakest: 'complemented and supported' has a similar meaning to 'collaborated', but does not imply that the arts and science were once equals or that they once worked together. The explanation would be improved by a closer focus on the words used in the question; the most effective essays take a broad view of the terms used in the question and engage fully with the different nuances of meaning.

The second paragraph does engage more closely with the statement wording, offering two examples, introduced by 'advances' and 'specialises'. These, however, suggest a somewhat limited understanding of art and the arts. The first highlights the use of art in communicating scientific knowledge. 'Diagrams and biological drawings' do further our understanding of the world, but this is limiting the arts to a technical role. The second refers to music therapy; here, science and arts are working together, but not in a way that furthers our understanding of the world.

The candidate has set out a clear position in the third paragraph, although this is again hampered by a narrow view of art and the arts. The most successful essays set out the strongest possible version of each side of the argument; the candidate's answer here would have been strengthened by working from a broader view of the contribution that art can make.

**Mark: 3A**

## Question 2

Both science and art allowed knowledge about the world to progress through a multitude of ways. Whilst science led to discoveries about the physical world and its inhabitants, art helped to develop the human understanding of emotion and built connections between millions of people.

On one hand, it seems clear that science is too specialised to work with the arts due to its rapid advancement rate compared to art. Science can provide a detailed explanation of most of the things in the universe. It shows what happened in the past and can explain the smallest of details with the use of DNA. In addition, it can predict the possibilities of the future and even estimate major events like the death of the sun and the end of the universe. In contrast, art simply cannot provide this knowledge.

On the other hand, art uses creativity to expand our understanding of the world – something that science may lack. It allows humans to express characteristics/emotions which science cannot. Art can be used to raise questions and curiosity of different aspects of the world. Knowledge can be conveyed between people through the use of art.

In conclusion, whilst science is major in understanding the world, it cannot be solely used as it lacks explanations for things which can only be processed through art. Therefore, I disagree with this statement as both are vital and should be used together.

## **Examiner comments**

Although this essay makes some reasonable points and attempts to address all three aspects of the question, it treats art and science throughout as separate entities. Since the question focus is on collaboration between art and science and how they can work together, the candidate has therefore (in the phrasing of the marking criteria) 'misconstrued certain important aspects of the main proposition'. The essay has been awarded a 2 as a result.

It is important to engage as closely as possible with the material provided by the question. Discussing the topic area in too general or unfocused a way risks a low mark. Here, the candidate links art to the expression of emotion; while this may be one of the functions of art, the question does not refer to emotion and so the candidate has strayed too far from the topic.

Similarly, it is also important to avoid overly general language in the response. The candidate refers to 'progress through a multitude of ways' (paragraph 1), 'different aspects of the world' (paragraph 3) and 'things which can only be processed through art' (paragraph 4): more precise language here and the inclusion of concrete examples would have improved the arguments.

**Mark: 2A**

### Question 3

A variety of sites across the internet provide information surrounding medical advice, possible diagnoses and treatments. The regulation surrounding these sites is relatively uncontrolled, leading to many sites providing false information. Only a small proportion give advice which adheres to official guidelines, meaning people may take action which harms instead of helps themselves.

On one hand, with the rise in internet usage, particularly social media sites, medical misinformation is now able to spread much more rapidly. For example, there has been an epidemic of misinformation surrounding Covid-19 vaccinations, which has led to decreased uptake as people only see the misinformation which presents vaccines as dangerous. This may be leading to increased death rates as people lose trust in the medical industry. However, there are also state-endorsed medical sites which can inform people on what to expect from their healthcare. For example the NHS has a thoroughly reviewed and fact checked website providing accurate information surrounding healthcare. This can allow people to gain more understanding into whether to seek help for their symptoms and how to perform basic first aid. However, the wealth of information may be a threat to the mental health of users as they are overwhelmed and stressed by the options and information.

In conclusion, for the majority of the time, well regulated sites allow people to have a better understanding of how they can help themselves through first aid or seeking treatment. Despite this, a large proportion of unregulated sites cause people to treat or diagnose themselves incorrectly leading to increased stress or harm. Therefore I agree with this statement to some extent.

### **Examiner comments**

This is a reasonably well-argued essay that succinctly engages with all the parts of the question. The first paragraph offers a clear reason why online medical sites might be harmful – because they may provide ‘false information’. There are somewhat vague references to ‘regulation’ and ‘official guidelines’; it would have supported the argument to clarify these, if possible. The second paragraph covers similar ground to the first, suggesting that, with the internet, ‘medical misinformation is now able to spread much more rapidly’.

The counter-argument – that official sites can help people ‘gain more understanding’ of ‘their symptoms’ and ‘how to perform basic first aid’ – is short but relevant. The final sentence in the paragraph (‘the wealth of information may be a threat to the mental health of users’) is reasonable, but it logically belongs with the argument that medical websites can cause harm; it is best to group all similar points together, rather than split them across the essay.

The final paragraph provides the candidate’s own view and justifies this by reference to the points made above. It is important for candidates to make their own position clear and to justify this. If it is not clear to the examiner what a candidate’s position is, the essay will be judged not to have addressed all three parts of the question and the maximum mark it can get will be a 2.

**Mark: 3A**



### Question 3

Thousands resort to google and apps to diagnose and heal themselves, I am of the opinion this does more harm than good.

Medicine degrees require many years of training and potentially specialisation before one can even become a GP. The average person has not had any of this training and therefore does not possess the necessary skills to spot the important symptoms, know how to correctly describe them, diagnose the illness and most importantly, heal themselves.

Websites and apps get rewarded by clicks and downloads and there is no better way to get these rewards than fear mongering and false promises. This can cause serious harm to the uneducated people trying to treat themselves, as they are none the wiser to the seemingly blatant 'clickbait'. Because apps and websites will prey on the foolishness of the common person, all this can lead to them not seeing their GP or outright harming themselves. I agree with this statement.

Some argue that in light of recent times, where hospitals are critically underfunded, understaffed and under appreciated medical apps and websites can help to relieve pressure. Whilst I believe this point has merit, such as the NHS website or app, other apps out there only cause more harm and result in increased pressure on a healthcare system to not only treat but also to educate. Covid-19 has had a detrimental effect on not only Britain's but all the worlds' healthcare systems, however; websites spreading false information, apps suggesting hopeless treatments in an attempt to grab money and people slowly losing trust for their GP due to google disagreeing, are by no means the solution.

To conclude, medical apps do more harm than good as they are a solution to problem yet end up only perpetuating the issue. In the long term there should be more focus on increasing the staff availability in the NHS and other healthcare systems and in the short term, people should be taught to resort to the NHS website for advice, not to some article claiming that injecting yourself with disinfectant or exposure to a 'great light' is the solution to curing a deadly viral infection.

### **Examiner comments**

The candidate has made a reasonable attempt to engage with the question and states a clear point of view. However, there is no substantive counter-argument and so the essay cannot be given a mark higher than 2.

The first two paragraphs say why 'online sources of medical advice' can 'be said to "do more harm than good"'. The effectiveness of the argument, however, is weakened by the inclusion of obvious background information ('Medicine degrees require many years of training and potentially specialisation before one can even become a GP'): for the BMAT essay, candidates have a limited space to write and it is best to use this space to focus as closely on the argument as possible. There is also some repetitive, dismissive language ('uneducated people', 'the foolishness of the common person'), which does not enhance the argument.

The third paragraph seems to attempt a counter-argument ('medical apps and websites can help to relieve pressure'), but then returns to a discussion of the harm websites can do. The final paragraph, like the second, is weakened by the inclusion of irrelevant information ('there should be more focus on increasing ... staff availability').

**Mark: 2A**

### Question 3

Online sources of medical advice is said to 'do more harm than good' because many people on social media platforms offer medical advice for issues they have experienced before. This is likely to not be useful advice as everyone is different and will have varying experiences with medical issues due to the difference in each person's genes. For example, many influencers on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, provide advice about skin care. The followers of these influencers are very likely to buy and use the exact same products, thinking that they will see a huge improvement in their skin texture. However, this is very misleading as everyone has different types of skin, meaning it is not guaranteed that they will achieve good results. This might even result in some of these followers damaging their skin.

On the other hand, the online sources of medical advice may do more good and may benefit many people. Offering good medical advice on the internet is very beneficial for people living in countries where they do not have easy access to healthcare. Online sources provide free and quick medical information for them. There are also many online websites and influencer accounts who are trained in the medical field and offer good medical advice. For example, many dentists have begun to make social media accounts in order to educate more people on how to take care of their teeth and gums, which people of many different age groups find very helpful and informative.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement because I believe that not all online sources of medical advice do more harm than good. It is only harmful when it is by someone who has no experience at all in the medical field, which is not the case for the majority of popular medical online sources.

### **Examiner comments**

This is a reasonably well-argued response that clearly covers all three aspects of the question and so has been given a 3. The candidate's response to the statement focuses on social media platforms and provides a reasonable argument, although the example of skincare is not a clear instance of 'medical advice'.

The essay then provides a sound counter-argument, making two good points, first about the benefits of online medical information in countries 'where they do not have easy access to healthcare' and second about social media influencers who have been medically trained. It always strengthens the counter-argument to provide more than one reason in support, as here, or to cover different aspects of the same argument from different angles. In the third paragraph, the candidate clearly states an opinion and provides a reason supporting it.

**Mark: 3A**

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