

7.3 How claims are qualified

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 18 marks**

KEY WORDS qualification 限定

Objective

Build the skills to analyse **how a claim is qualified** in a text.

You must be able to:

- identify the qualifying word, clause or structure
- state what the qualification excludes
- distinguish a qualification from a hedge and from a concession
- explain the effect of qualification on credibility

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Where qualification lives

In a **word** (often, typically, largely), a **clause** (where transport allows), a **modal** (may, can, might), or a **structure** (a subordinate clause carrying the exception). Point to the actual language.

■ What it excludes

A qualification is informative in proportion to what it rules out. “In cities over one million” excludes a great deal; “in some circumstances” excludes nothing.

■ Three different moves

A **qualification** limits the claim’s scope. A **hedge** weakens the writer’s commitment without limiting scope. A **concession** grants a separate point to the other side. They look similar and do different work.

2 Practice

2.1 Name three places qualification can appear in a sentence. [3]

2.2 State the difference between a qualification and a hedge. [2]

2.3 “This holds in cities over one million; elsewhere the effect reverses.”

(a) State what the qualification excludes. [1]

(b) State its effect on credibility. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “In some circumstances” is best described as [1]

- **A** an informative qualification
- **B** a hedge
- **C** a concession
- **D** a thesis

3.2 A qualification is informative in proportion to [1]

- **A** its length
- **B** what it rules out
- **C** where it appears
- **D** the writer’s tone

3.3 A passage qualifies its central claim three times in one paragraph.

(a) State one possible reason. [1]

(b) Explain the risk. [2]

3.4 Full free-response task. In a 2009 lecture, an economist argues that a proposed

policy “will probably work, in the countries that can afford to wait”. She repeatedly uses “*tends to*”, “*in most cases*” and “*on the evidence we have*”, and devotes an entire paragraph to a country where the policy failed.

Write an essay that analyses how the speaker qualifies her claim and what those qualifications accomplish.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A — Thesis (1), Row B — Evidence and Commentary (4), Row C — Sophistication (1).**

[6]

Solutions

2.1 any three of: a qualifying word; a limiting clause; a modal verb; a subordinate structure carrying the exception.

2.2 a qualification limits the claim's scope; a hedge weakens the writer's commitment without limiting anything.

2.3 (a) all cities under one million, where the effect is said to reverse. (b) it raises credibility, since the writer states where the claim fails.

3.1 B. it weakens commitment without excluding any case.

3.2 B. what is excluded is what makes it informative.

3.3 (a) the audience is expert or hostile and will test the claim. (b) repeated qualification can leave the reader unsure what is being claimed, so the argument loses force even as it gains accuracy.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). A defensible claim about **what the hedging achieves**, not that it exists. **Earns it:** “The speaker’s hedges are not retreats but boundary markers: by naming in advance every condition under which she would be wrong, she makes the surviving claim harder to attack than a bolder one would have been.” **Does not:** “The speaker uses qualifying language to make her argument seem more reasonable.”

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). Each qualifier needs to be read for **function**. “*Tends to*” concedes exceptions before an opponent can supply one. “*In most cases*” converts a universal claim, which one counter-example destroys, into a statistical one, which it does not. “*On the evidence we have*” makes the claim provisional on data rather than on conviction, so new evidence revises rather than refutes her. The clause “*that can afford to wait*” is the strongest qualification in the passage because it names the condition on which the whole argument depends. The failure paragraph must be read as a **strategic concession**: presenting the counter-case herself denies it to an opponent and demonstrates that her claim already survives it. Listing the hedges without this analysis caps at 2.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Earned by holding the genuine tension — heavy qualification also costs force, and a listener may hear caution as weakness; the strongest responses weigh what the speaker gives up against what she buys, and situate the choice in the demands of her audience.