

4.4 Writing a thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS conclusion 结论

Objective

Build the skills to write a thesis that **survives** the essay you go on to write.

You must be able to:

- write a thesis narrow enough to defend in the space available
- revise a thesis after drafting if the argument has moved
- avoid a thesis that promises more than the essay delivers
- test a thesis against your own paragraph claims

1 Worked examples

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

■ Scope

A thesis must be defensible in the length available. “Education should be reformed” cannot be. “Timed exams measure a skill that no job requires” can be, in an essay.

■ Revising after drafting

Arguments move while being written. If your last paragraph makes a claim the thesis did not promise, change the thesis — it is the cheapest repair and the most commonly skipped.

■ Not promising too much

A thesis claiming three things and an essay defending one is a broken promise the reader notices. Claim what you will actually argue.

■ Testing against paragraphs

List your paragraph claims. If one does not serve the thesis, either it goes or the thesis changes. Both are legitimate; leaving the mismatch is not.

2 Practice

2.1 State what makes a thesis appropriately scoped. [2]

2.2 State what to do when the drafted essay outruns the thesis. [2]

2.3 Thesis: “School uniforms are harmful.” The essay argues only about cost.

(a) Name the problem. [1]

(b) State two possible fixes. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A thesis that promises three arguments in an essay that makes one is [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** appropriately broad
B a broken promise the reader notices
C well scoped
D a concession

3.2 The cheapest repair when an essay has moved beyond its thesis is to [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** delete the essay
B revise the thesis
C add a conclusion
D change the title

3.3 Prompt: “Is it right to require volunteering for graduation?”

(a) Write a thesis you could defend in five paragraphs. [2]

(b) List the paragraph claims that would serve it. [2]
