15.1 Analyze an Issue: instruction families and a reasoned qualified position

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

KEY WORDS policy consequence • qualified thesis

Objective

Match an Issue response to its specific instruction rather than a fixed template; Address reasons, competing views or policy consequences when requested; Develop a qualified position with explained examples within 30 minutes.

Original public tasks and locally authored marking guidance. No official score is assigned.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

policy consequence : An intended or unintended result relevant to judging a proposed rule.

qualified thesis : A position stating its limits or conditions rather than making an unsupported absolute claim.

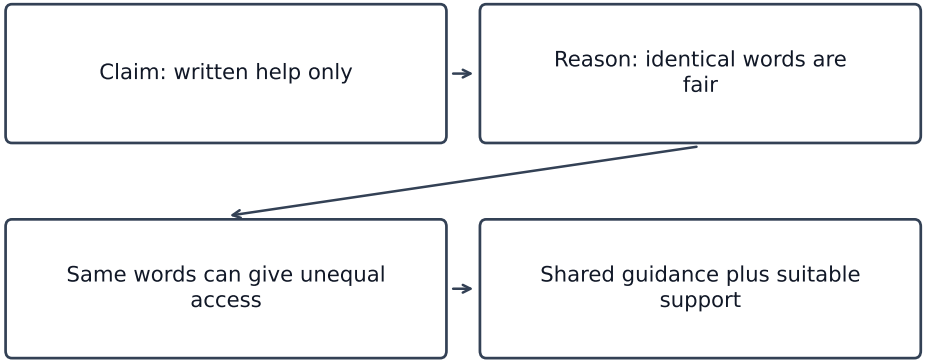
The current standard GRE writing measure has one 30-minute Issue task. The issue and the instruction together define the response. Some instructions ask when a statement holds; some ask when a recommendation helps; others ask for the strongest challenge to your position. Identify the requested reasoning action before generating examples. A generic agree/disagree template can omit the central task.

A two-view instruction requires engagement with both views, not just a chosen side. A claim-and-reason instruction requires evaluation of the claim and the stated justification separately. The conclusion may be reasonable while its reason is weak, or vice versa. Make the relationship explicit in the thesis and development rather than leaving the reader to infer it.

For a policy instruction, explain consequences and how they shape your view. Separate intended benefits from plausible unintended costs. Use concrete mechanisms and circumstances: who benefits, what resources are needed, where the recommendation may fail and what limit improves it. Hypothetical examples can illuminate reasoning when labelled as such; unsupported invented statistics should not be presented as measured evidence.

Use a flexible plan, not a required paragraph count. A suggested practice budget is four minutes to interpret and outline, twenty-three to write and three to revise. Check task fit, development, logical organisation and clear language. An original classroom response is reviewed by a teacher; the local formative checks do not produce an official GRE writing score. Current Issue practice must not be relabelled as the retired Argument task.

Original claim-and-reason case: Claim: universities should let every student replace a laboratory requirement with independent reading. Reason: all meaningful learning comes from books. A qualified thesis might reject universal replacement while accepting reading as preparation. The reason overlooks learning from direct measurement, procedural errors and collaboration. Model development: “In a hypothetical introductory measurement course, a student may correctly describe uncertainty after reading but still misalign an instrument during use. A supervised trial exposes the difference between knowing a rule and applying it. Reading therefore supports the laboratory rather than always replacing it. A student with verified equivalent practical experience could reasonably receive an alternative task, so preserving a laboratory requirement need not mean ignoring individual circumstances.” This evaluates both the recommendation and its reason, gives a mechanism and introduces an explained exception.



Identical help is not equal access: pair shared guidance with suitable support

2 Practice

2.1 Original Issue prompt. Claim: “Public learning centres should provide help only through written guides.” Reason: “Giving every visitor identical information is the fairest policy.” Discuss how far you agree with both the claim and its reason. Explain circumstances and consequences that affect your position.

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Compare three instruction families using this issue: (a) assess when a recommendation works, (b) discuss both a claim and its stated reason, (c) address the strongest challenge to your own position. Write a different planning sentence for each. Explain why a fixed agree/disagree template could miss the task.

Solutions

2.1 Written guides can make public services clearer and more consistent, but they should not be the only source of help in a learning centre. I also question the reason offered for that policy. Fairness requires dependable information, yet giving everyone identical words does not ensure that everyone can use them. A better policy combines shared written guidance with appropriate personal support.

The argument has a real strength. Visitors should not receive contradictory instructions simply because different staff members answer their questions. A clear guide can state opening times, booking rules and available services in a form that visitors can consult again. In a hypothetical centre where staff previously gave different answers about course registration, a common written procedure could reduce confusion. It could also free staff from repeating routine explanations and allow them to spend more time on difficult questions. These are practical reasons to invest in guides.

However, consistency of information is different from equality of access. A visitor with limited reading ability may be unable to follow the guide. Another may understand each sentence but not know which rule applies to an unusual case. If both receive only the same document as a confident regular visitor, the centre has treated them identically while leaving them with different opportunities to learn. Personal explanation can remove that barrier without changing the underlying rule. Fairness therefore supports consistent decisions and suitable assistance, rather than one communication method for all.

The proposed restriction may also produce costs that its reason ignores. Suppose a visitor misunderstands a booking instruction and repeatedly submits an incomplete form. A short conversation might identify the difficulty immediately. Refusing that conversation can increase delay for the visitor and create extra correction work for staff. The centre should compare the full process, not just the time saved at the first enquiry. This example is hypothetical, but it explains a mechanism through which a seemingly efficient policy could waste resources.

There are circumstances in which written-only support may be reasonable for a limited service. A simple self-service room used by experienced members might need only clear notices and an accessible guide. Even then, the centre should provide a way to report an exceptional problem and check whether users actually understand the instructions. A limited case does not justify extending the restriction to every service and every visitor.

I would therefore retain written guides as the common reference and allow staff to explain and apply them. Staff should record recurring difficulties so the guide improves, and unusual decisions should remain accountable to shared rules. This approach accepts the value of identical core information while rejecting the claim that identical communication is always fair. It preserves consistency without making a visitor's ability to interpret a document the hidden condition for receiving help.

3.1 (a) "Written-only help may work for simple routine services used by experienced visitors, but fails when accessibility or unusual cases demand explanation." (b) "I reject exclusive written help and distinguish the reason's valid concern for consistency from its unsupported equation of identical words with fairness." (c) "The strongest challenge is that personal support may introduce inconsistent advice; shared rules, records and staff training can reduce that risk." Other plans are valid if they perform the requested action. A generic position without conditions, a judgement on the reason or an answered challenge can omit the instruction even when its prose is fluent. Use human review for reasoning and language; local checks do not assign an official writing score.

Local review checklist: follow every response instruction; support the answer with the stated evidence; explain rejected alternatives or an opposing view; check scope, restrictions and clarity. For writing, this is a formative checklist, not an official rubric score.