Course Title: Analytical Writing --- Preparation for GRE Writing Section (Level: High)

Context:

The teaching context will be in a Chinese language training school, which offers courses for preparation for GRE test, including verbal, quantitative and analytical writing.

Specifically in the writing courses, it is divided into three levels, basic, intermediate and high. Grammar, mainly sentence structure, and vocabulary is taught in the basic level. Intermediate level will be teaching writing skills, i.e., how to organize an essay, to connect logics, to use evidence to support the argument, and faithfully express the meanings. In the high level, students will learn how to analyze the logical fallacies in an argument, and how to use critical thinking to analyze an issue.

During the semester of the high level course, teachers will focus on "analyzing an argument" for the first half of the semester, and "analyzing an issue" for the rest of the semester. Language control will be taught through out the whole course, but not as a focus. Students will be able to (Goals of the high level course) :

• Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively

• Support ideas with relevant reasons and examples

• Examine claims and accompanying evidence

• Sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion

The classroom assessment presented as follows will happen in the high level writing course. The test is a mid-term test, which means it serves a function as summative assessment of how students will perform in the task of "analyzing an argument".

As objectives of the first half of the course, "analyzing an argument", our course will help students:

1) identify and analyze important features of an argument (main argument, supporting evidences, implications made by the author),

2) identify and analyze logical fallacies,

3) refute an argument,

4) arrange the refutations in a logical and powerful way.

The test is designed to assess if students achieve the objectives listed above. All the reading materials, statements and writing task come from the "Topic Pool" on the ETS GRE website word by word, or revised to better assess the objectives.

Mid-term Examination
Analyzing Arguments & Logical Fallacies

Part I. Read and choose. Please reading the following two articles below. Choose ONE main argument and MULTIPLE supporting evidences or implications for each article. Not every choice must be used. (20 points, 10 for each)

"Over the past two years, the number of shoppers in Central Plaza has been steadily decreasing while the popularity of skateboarding has increased dramatically. Many Central Plaza storeowners believe that the decrease in their business is due to the number of skateboard users in the plaza. There has also been a dramatic increase in the amount of litter and vandalism throughout the plaza. Thus, we recommend that the city prohibit skateboarding in Central Plaza. If skateboarding is prohibited here, we predict that business in Central Plaza will return to its previously high levels."

Main argument   (   )

Supporting evidence   (   )

Implications: (   )

A. The amount of litter and vandalism soared in the past two years in Central Plaza.

B. The number of shoppers in Central Plaza has been steadily decreasing.

C. The skateboarders are causing the decrease of number of shoppers in Central Plaza, as storeowners believe.

D. The popularity of skateboarding has increased dramatically.

E. The skateboarders are causing the increase of the amount of litter and vandalism.

F. The business in Central Plaza will return to its previously high levels.

G. Skateboarding needs to be prohibited in Central Plaza.

H. The business in Central Plaza is likely to increase if there's no skateboarder here.

"On Balmer Island, where mopeds serve as a popular form of transportation, the population increases to 100,000 during the summer months. To reduce the number of accidents involving mopeds and pedestrians, the town council of Balmer Island should limit the number of mopeds rented by the island's moped rental companies from 50 per day to 25 per day during the summer season. By limiting the number of rentals, the town council will attain the 50 percent annual reduction in moped accidents that was achieved last year on the neighboring island of Seaville, when Seaville's town council enforced similar limits on moped rentals."

Main argument   (   )

Supporting evidence   (   )

Implications   (   )

A. The town council of Balmer Island will attain 50% annual reduction in moped accidents like Seaville's town council did if they enforce the same limitation on rental.

B. Mopeds are a popular form of transportation on Balmer Island.

C. By reducing the number of moped rental in summer will attain an annual reduction in accidents on Balmer Island.

D. The population on Balmer Island increases to 100,000 during the summer months.

E. If the number of moped rentals in cut down in half, the number of accidents will reduce in half.

F. If the population increases, the number of accidents involving mopeds and pedestrians will increase on Balmer Island.

G. Seaville's town council was successful in reducing the accidents by enforcing a rule that reduced moped rental.

H. By limiting the number of rentals, the town council will attain the 50 percent annual reduction in moped accidents

Part II. The following statements are based on faulty reasoning. What are the logical fallacies of these statements? (There might be more than one in each statement. Picking ONE is enough.) What kind of example can you give to refute these statements according to the logical fallacy you point out? Give ONE. (30 points, 6 for each)

1. We recommend that Monarch Books open a café in its store, because opening the café would attract more customers.

2. Buckingham College should build a number of new dormitories because of the dramatic growth of enrollment based on current trends.

3. The local health club has more members than ever in Plainsville. Therefore, our health-related products should prove to be successful in this town.
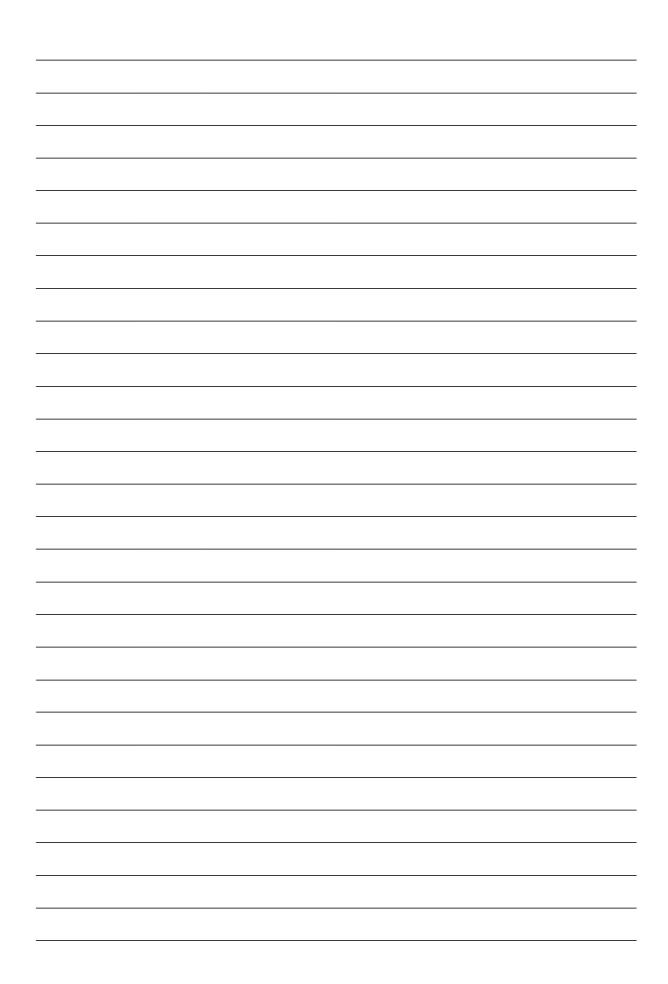
4. Students' overall grades in Omega University have risen by 30% percent due to the fact that Omega University implemented a new procedure that encouraged students to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of all their professors

5. Many servers have reported that a number of customers who ask for butter do not complain when they are given margarine instead of real butter. Thus, customers don't care whether we give them butter or margarine.

Part III. Writing (50 points)

The following is a memorandum from the business manager of a television station.

"Over the past year, our late-night news program has devoted increased time to national news and less time to weather and local news. During this period, most of the complaints received from viewers were concerned with our station's coverage of weather and local news. In addition, local businesses that used to advertise during our late-night news program have canceled their advertising contracts with us. Therefore, in order to attract more viewers to our news programs and to avoid losing any further advertising revenues, we should expand our coverage of weather and local news on all our news programs."

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on these assumptions and what the implications are for the argument if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

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Evaluation and Feedback

Part I will be scored according to the Answer Key as followed.

	Argument	Evidence	Implication
1.	G;	ABCD;	EH
2.	H;	BG;	ACEF

Per answer will be worth of 1.5 points. 1.5 points will be deducted if student gets a wrong answer choice until the score gets to zero. That means:

7 right = 10   6 right = 8.5   5 right = 7   4 right = 5.5

3 right = 4   2 right = 2.5   1 right = 1   0 right = 0

In Part II, if students point out the right logical fallacy, they will get 2 points. It doesn't have to be word by word, just provides clear explanation.

As long as they can provide a refuting example referring to the logical fallacy, no matter how effectively it will refute the argument, they will get 4 points.

Part III will be scored according to the rubric (See Excel).

Although language control and general writing skills are not the objectives in the course, they are still the basic elements of a good piece of writing. That's why they are in the scoring rubric, but less valued.

If students get a good score in Part I, it means they achieved objective 1. Part II is used to assess objectives 2 and 3. Part III is an overall assessment of all the objectives.

(Continued)

The feedback will be given as a checklist to show how many objectives students have achieved.

Analyzing an Argument			
	Effort Needed	Fairly Good	Excellent
Identify important features of an argument (main argument, supporting evidences, implications made by the author)			
Analyze important features of an argument (main argument, supporting evidences, implications made by the author)			
Identify and analyze logical fallacies			
Refute an argument			
Arrange the refutations in a logical and powerful way			
General Writing / Use of Language (Grammar, word choice)			

Rubric for Part III					
	Yes			No	
identify the main argument	5			0	
	Identify 3 or more		Identify 1 or 2		Identify 0
identify the supporting evidences or implications	5		2-4		0
	Effectively	Sensibly (Lack few details)	Fairly (Lack some connections or important details)	Little Relevance and value	Little if any support	Off topic
analyze how the author uses evidences and implications to support their argument	10	8	6	4	2	0
	Effectively (Explain logical fallacy)	Sensibly (Lack of explanation)	Fairly (Explanation presented but not clear)	Little Relevance and value	Little if any support	Off topic
evaluate the evidences and implications	10	8	6	4	2	0

	Cogently, logically, with clear transitions	Clearly, logically, with appropriate transition	Satisfactorily, but without transitions	Limited logical development and organizations	Without logical development , disorganized or illogical	Off topic
Idea development (Argument Refutatuon)	10	8	6	4	2	0

	Excellent (Precise and complex)		Average (A little misused and wordy)		Limited (Inappropriate)	
demonstrate control of language (word choice, sentence variety)	4-5		2-3		0-1	

	Excellent (Native like grammar fluency)		Average (Readers can get the ideas but grammar problems are apparent.)		Limited (barely understandable)	
use standard written English (grammar, mechanics)	4-5		2-3		0-1	