

# BMAT Section 3 Past Papers

## BMAT SPECIMEN SECTION 3

### **1 'A little learning is a dangerous thing.' (Alexander Pope)**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary to show that a little learning is not dangerous. To what extent do you think learning can be a dangerous thing?

### **2 'Our belief in any particular natural law cannot have a safer basis than our unsuccessful critical attempts to refute it.' (Karl Popper)**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that science may not proceed by attempting to refute hypotheses. To what extent do you think this statement accurately reflects the nature of scientific method?

### **3 It is ridiculous to treat the living body as a mechanism.**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you think this apparent contradiction can be resolved?

## BMAT 2020 SECTION 3

### **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?

## BMAT 2019 SECTION 3

### **1 People are often motivated to deny the existence of problems if they disagree with the solutions to those problems.**

Explain what you think is meant by the statement. Present a counter-argument. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

**2 'In science, there are no universal truths, just views of the world that have yet to be shown to be false.' (Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw)**

Explain what you think is meant by the statement. Argue that scientists need to accept some things as 'truths' to advance their understanding. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

**3 Teamwork is more important for surgical innovation than the skills of an individual surgeon.**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that the skills of individual surgeons are more important for surgical innovation or progress. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

BMAT 2018 SECTION 3

**1 'Liberty consists in doing what one desires.' (John Stuart Mill)**

Explain the reasoning behind the statement. Present a counter-argument. To what extent do you agree that freedom is doing what you want?

**2 Rosalind Franklin said that science gives only a partial explanation of life.**

Explain what you understand is meant by her statement. Argue to the contrary that science can give a complete explanation of life. To what extent do you agree with Franklin's statement?

**3 In the age of modern healthcare, every time a patient dies after a routine operation or procedure, it's a case of medical error.**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that there can be reasons other than medical error behind such deaths. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

BMAT 2017 SECTION 3

**1 'He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander'. (Aristotle)**

Explain what you understand by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that someone cannot be a good leader without learning how to follow?

**2 The only moral obligation a scientist has is to reveal the truth.**

What is the reasoning behind this statement? Present an argument to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that the only moral duty a scientist has is to reveal the truth?

**3 The health care profession is wrong to treat ageing as if it were a disease.**

What do you understand by this statement? Argue that it is not wrong to treat the effects of ageing as if they were a disease. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

## BMAT 2016 SECTION 3

### **1 ‘You can resist an invading army; you cannot resist an idea whose time has come.’ (Victor Hugo)**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that, on the contrary, any idea can be suppressed with sufficient force. What do you think gives power to an idea?

### **2 Science is not a follower of fashion nor of other social or cultural trends.**

Explain what you think the statement means. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

### **3 The option of taking strike action should not be available to doctors as they have a special duty of care to their patients.**

Explain what is meant by this statement. Argue that it should be possible for doctors to go on strike as other workers do. To what extent should doctors’ duty of care to patients affect the conditions of their employment?

### **4 If we truly care about the welfare of animals, we must recognise them as fellow members of our communities with their own political rights and status.**

Explain the thinking behind this statement. Argue that it is not necessary to confer political rights or status upon animals in order to ensure their welfare. To what extent is it possible to incorporate the interests of animals into political institutions?

## BMAT 2015 SECTION 3

### **1 “Computers are useless. They can only give you answers.” (Pablo Picasso)**

Explain what is meant by this statement. Argue to the contrary. What are the real limits of technology?

### **2 “That which can be asserted without evidence, can be dismissed without evidence.” (Christopher Hitchens)**

Explain what you think Christopher Hitchens means. Argue to the contrary that some assertions do not require evidence. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

### **3 When treating an individual patient, a physician must also think of the wider society.**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that a doctor should only consider the individual that he or she is treating at the time. With respect to medical treatment, to what extent can a patient’s interests differ from those of the wider population?

### **4 Just because a behaviour occurs amongst animals in the wild does not mean it should be allowed within domesticated populations of the same species.**

Explain what you think is meant by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent should humans interfere with the natural behaviours of animals?

## BMAT 2014 SECTION 3

### **1 There is no such thing as dangerous speech; it is up to people to choose how they react.**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue to the contrary that there can be instances of dangerous speech. To what extent should a society put limitations on speech or text that it considers threatening?

### **2 Science has been a process of continuous advancement towards objective truth.**

Explain what is meant by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that science is a continuous process of advancement towards objective truth?

### **3 There is money to be made from not curing disease.**

What do you think is meant by this statement? Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that there is money to be made from disease?

### **4 Modern veterinary medicine is more for the benefit of humans than the animals under its care.**

Explain what you understand by this statement. Argue to the contrary that veterinary medicine is concerned more with the benefit of non-human animals. How might human and non-human interests diverge within the practice of veterinary medicine?

## BMAT 2013 SECTION 3

### **1 "When you want to know how things really work, study them when they are coming apart." (William Gibson)**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree with the assertion?

### **2 Good surgeons should be encouraged to take on tough cases, not just safe, routine ones. Publishing an individual surgeon's mortality rates may have the opposite effect.**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you think league tables should change a surgeon's behaviour?

### **3 "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge: it is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert that this or that problem will never be solved by science." (Charles Darwin)**

Explain what you think is meant by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you think it is true?

### **4 In a world where we struggle to feed an ever-expanding human population, owning pets cannot be justified.**

Explain what is meant by this statement. Argue that pet ownership is indefensible. How should moral or ethical concerns influence a decision to own a pet?

## BMAT 2012 SECTION 3

### **1 "Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd." (Voltaire)**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that to be certain about something is not necessarily absurd. To what extent do you agree with Voltaire?

### **2 "There is something attractive about people who don't regard their own health and longevity as the most important things in the world." (Alexander Chancellor)**

Explain what this statement means. Argue that nothing is more important than one's own health and longevity. To what extent do you agree with Alexander Chancellor?

### **3 The scientist is not someone who gives the right answers but one who asks the right questions.**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that the right answers are more important than the right questions. To what extent do you agree that the right questions must be asked before science can progress?

### **4 "... Dolphins are very intelligent and so similar to humans that they are worthy of a special ethical status: that of 'non-human persons'."**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that dolphins should not be given special ethical status. To what extent do you agree that intelligence and similarity to humans bestows special ethical status?

## BMAT 2011 SECTION 3

### **1 Democratic freedom means there should be no restriction on what may be said in public.**

Explain what you think democratic freedom means. Argue that there should be restrictions on what is said in public. To what extent do you agree that there should be limitations on what can be said in public?

### **2 The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease. *Voltaire***

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that medicine does in fact do more than amuse the patient. To what extent do you think Voltaire is correct?

### **3 A scientific man ought to have no wishes, no affections - a mere heart of stone. *Charles Darwin***

Explain what this statement means. Argue that scientific enquiry benefits from personal wishes and affections. To what extent do you think a scientist should have 'a mere heart of stone'?

### **4 Veterinary pet care in the UK should be free at the point of delivery, as human care is.**

Explain the argument behind this statement. Argue to the contrary, that if people choose to keep pets they should pay for all aspects of their care. To what extent do you agree that there should be free pet care?

## BMAT 2010 SECTION 3

### **1 Anyone who has a serious ambition to be a president or prime minister is the wrong kind of person for the job.**

What is the reasoning behind this statement? Argue to the contrary that without serious ambition to be a leader a person would not be suited to the job. To what extent is ambition required to succeed as a political leader?

### **2 People injured whilst participating in extreme sports should not be treated by a publicly funded health service.**

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Suggest an argument against this statement. To what extent, if any, does the statement justify a change in public attitudes to personal risk taking?

### **3 A pet belongs to its owner - it is their property. Thus, if a client asks for their healthy cat to be painlessly euthanased, a veterinary clinician should always agree to this request.**

Explain the reasoning behind the statement. Argue to the contrary that a veterinary clinician should never agree to such a request. To what extent should pet owners influence clinicians' decisions?

### **4 Science only tells us what is possible, not what is right.**

Explain what this statement means. Argue to the contrary that science helps us to judge what is right. To what extent can decisions about what is right and wrong be informed by science?

## BMAT 2009 SECTION 3

### **1 You must be honest and open and act with integrity.**

*UK General Medical Council, Good Medical Practice 2006*

Explain what is meant by the above statement. Why might honesty, openness and integrity be important in a good doctor? Under what circumstances might a good doctor be justified in being less than perfectly honest or open in the course of their professional practice?

### **2 Science is a way of trying not to fool yourself.**

*Richard Feynman, 1964*

Explain why not fooling oneself is necessary for a scientist. Why might it be easy for scientists to make the mistake of fooling themselves? How might scientists guard against this mistake?

### **3 It is an obscenity that rich people can buy better medical treatment than poor people.**

Explain the argument behind the statement. What assumptions does it make? Argue to the contrary, that patients are entitled to spend money on better healthcare if they choose to.

## BMAT 2008 SECTION 3

**1 When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot ... your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind.**

*Lord Kelvin, 1824-1907*

Explain what you think Lord Kelvin means. In particular discuss the extent to which Lord Kelvin's remark applies to biology and medicine, with specific examples of topics that do or do not require to be treated quantitatively.

**2 Life has a natural end, and doctors and others caring for a patient need to recognise that the point may come in the progression of a patient's condition where death is drawing near.**

*UK General Medical Council, Good Practice*

Explain what you think this statement means and why it is of relevance to good medical practice. What are the risks and consequences of doctors and others caring for patients not recognising the point where death is drawing near? Give a reasoned answer.

**3 Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition.**

*Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, 1776*

Explain what you think this statement means. What do you think Smith is referring to when he talks about enthusiasm and superstition, and to what extent is science an antidote to these?

## BMAT 2007 SECTION 3

**1 The technology of medicine has outrun its sociology.**

*Henry E. Sigerist (1891-1957)*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

What do you understand by this statement? Give an example of a technological advance to which it might apply. How might this problem be addressed?

**2 Our unprecedented survival has produced a revolution in longevity which is shaking the foundations of societies around the world and profoundly altering our attitudes to life and death.**

*Tom Kirkwood, BBC Reith Lectures, 2001*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

This is a statement concerning ageing and longevity; explain what you think it means. Advance an argument against this statement, i.e. in favour of the proposition that a revolution in longevity is not shaking the foundations of societies around the world.

**3 Irrationally held truths may be more harmful than reasoned errors.**

*Thomas Henry Huxley*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

This is a statement concerning truth in science; explain what you think it means. From what Huxley says in this statement, what do you think he means by irrationally held truths?

Advance a contrary argument, that reasoned errors are more harmful than irrationally held truths.

### BMAT 2006 SECTION 3

#### **1 Our zeal to make things work better will not be our anthem: it will be our epitaph.**

*Bryan Appleyard, Countdown to Catastrophe, Sunday Times, 15/12/02*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

The above statement was made in reference to modern technology; explain what you think it means. Advance an argument against the statement above, i.e. in support of the proposition 'our zeal to make things work better will be our anthem'.

#### **2 Higher education and great numbers – that is a contradiction in terms.**

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

Expand the argument underlying this assertion. What do you understand by 'higher education'? Is it qualitatively different from other kinds of education? Present an argument that it is in fact possible to provide higher education for a large proportion of the population.

#### **3 The main benefit of patient consent is that it relieves doctors of blame for bad decisions.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

Explain the argument underlying this statement. What are conventionally regarded as the benefits of 'patient consent'? Give an example of a situation in which a patient's consent would be meaningful, and another in which it would not. How should clinical decisions be made?

### BMAT 2005 SECTION 3

#### **1 Animals do not feel pain as we do.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

In what way might 'feel' here have a different meaning from 'sense'? What kinds of experiments or observations might support such a view? Advance an argument against the statement above, i.e. that animals feel pain of the same kind and to the same extent as we do.

#### **2 Science should leave off making pronouncements: the river of knowledge has too often turned back on itself.**

*Sir James Jeans (1877-1946)*

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

What do you understand by the word 'pronouncement'? Give an example of a biomedical pronouncement that has subsequently turned out to be false. Advance an argument against the statement above, i.e. that scientists should nevertheless not feel inhibited in making pronouncements of what they believe to be the truth.



**3 With limited resources and increasing demand, doctors will not in the future be concerned about how to cure, so much as whether to cure.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

Explain what you think this statement means. What factors might contribute to 'limited resources' and 'increasing demand'? Advance an argument that governments should ensure that resources for medical care should always match demand.

BMAT 2004 SECTION 3

**1 Individual freedom and the rule of law are mutually incompatible.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

What might be the grounds for making this assertion? Give a reasoned argument against the proposition. How can the concepts of freedom and law be reconciled in a real society?

**2 There is more to healing than the application of scientific knowledge.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

Briefly define 'scientific knowledge'. Explain how it might be argued that medical treatment that is not wholly based on scientific knowledge is worthless. Discuss whether there can be approaches to healing that are valid but not amenable to scientific experiment.

**3 Our genes evolved for a Stone Age life style. Therefore, we must adopt Stone Age habits if we are to be healthy.**

Write a unified essay in which you address the following:

Explain the logical connexion between the two sentences. What might be the practical implications if we were to agree with the reasoning? Discuss the extent to which the argument is valid.