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Section 1: Logical Reasoning (Arguments and Critical Thinking)



Question: 1

Every employee who attended the optional training session received a certificate. Marcus received a certificate. Therefore, Marcus must have attended the optional training session.

Which of the following arguments contains the same logical flaw as the argument above?

- A. All birds have wings. A penguin is a bird, so a penguin has wings.
- B. If you have a fever, you are sick. You do not have a fever, so you are not sick.
- C. If you study for the test, you will pass. You passed the test, so you must have studied.
- D. Only members can enter the club. John is a member, so he can enter.
- E. People who live in Paris speak French. Jean lives in Paris, so he speaks French.

Answer: C

Explanation: The original flaw is affirming the consequent ($A \rightarrow B, B \therefore A$). Option follows this exactly: Study \rightarrow Pass. Pass \therefore Study. It assumes that because the result is present, the specific sufficient condition mentioned must have occurred, ignoring other ways to pass (like being naturally gifted).

Question: 2

A city transportation director argues that converting downtown streets into pedestrian-only corridors will significantly increase retail revenue. The director notes that several international cities implementing pedestrian-only districts later experienced measurable increases in tourism and retail activity. A local economist responds that those cities simultaneously invested heavily in public transit expansion and commercial redevelopment incentives.

Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the economist's objection?

- A. Commercial redevelopment incentives were implemented before pedestrian restrictions began.
- B. Pedestrian-only districts generally reduce vehicle congestion in urban centers.
- C. Retail businesses frequently support infrastructure projects improving tourism access.
- D. Some international cities experienced temporary declines in downtown parking availability.
- E. Tourism revenue increased more sharply in neighborhoods receiving redevelopment incentives.

Answer: E

Explanation: The economist argues that factors other than pedestrian-only streets may explain the retail growth. Evidence showing that tourism revenue increased most sharply in areas receiving redevelopment incentives strongly supports the competing explanation that redevelopment, rather than street closures themselves, produced the economic improvement. The other choices either support the transportation director indirectly or fail to isolate the alternative cause effectively.

Question: 3

Logic Professor: "A student argued that since no one can prove that God exists, God must not exist. I told him that by the same logic, since no one can prove that God does *not* exist, God *must* exist." The professor's response to the student is:

- A. An application of a principle regarding the burden of proof in an argument.

- B. An equivocation of the word "prove" to mean both "evidence" and "certainty."
- C. An overgeneralization about the beliefs of students in a logic classroom.
- D. An use of a counterexample to show the flaw in the student's reasoning method.
- E. A faulty analogy between the existence of God and other unproven phenomena.

Answer: D

Explanation: The professor uses a parallel counter-argument to demonstrate that the student's *method* of reasoning (appealing to ignorance) leads to contradictory conclusions. This highlights the invalidity of the student's original logic.

Question: 4

Symbolic rule: $\neg x (\text{Student}(x) \rightarrow \text{Eligible}(x))$. A person is not eligible.

What follows?

- A. Person is a student.
- B. Person is not a student.
- C. Person is partially a student.
- D. Person may be a student.
- E. Eligibility is unrelated.

Answer: B

Explanation: Student \rightarrow Eligible. Not eligible \rightarrow not student.

Question: 5

Paleontologist: The discovery of a feathered dinosaur fossil in a region that was once temperate suggests that feathers originally evolved for insulation rather than for flight. If feathers had evolved for flight, we would expect the earliest feathered dinosaurs to be found in environments where flight would provide a distinct predatory advantage.

The paleontologist's argument depends on assuming which of the following?

- A. Early dinosaurs did not inhabit tropical environments where flight would be advantageous.
- B. Insulation is a more biologically complex function for feathers than the mechanics of flight.
- C. Predatory advantage is the only reason a species would develop the biological capacity for flight.
- D. Temperate environments 150 million years ago were cold enough to require biological insulation.
- E. The fossil found represents one of the earliest species of dinosaurs to ever develop feathers.

Answer: D

Explanation: The argument links feathers to insulation because they were found in a temperate region. This only makes sense if those temperate regions were actually cold. If the temperate regions were warm, the "insulation" theory would have no environmental basis. The argument requires the assumption that the environment necessitated warmth-retention.

Question: 6

If a policy is legal, then it must not violate constitutional rights. This policy violates a constitutional right. Therefore, the policy is not legal. Which of the following best describes the reasoning?

- A. It is valid because it uses modus tollens.
- B. It is invalid because legality and constitutionality are unrelated.
- C. It is valid because all legal policies are fair.
- D. It is inductively strong because most legal policies respect rights.
- E. It is invalid because rights violations are sometimes justified.

Answer: A

Explanation: The argument follows the pattern if P then Q; not Q; therefore not P. This is modus tollens, a valid deductive form. The conclusion follows from the premises.

Question: 7

If a student receives a scholarship, they must maintain a GPA of 3.8 or higher. If a student maintains a GPA of 3.8 or higher, they are eligible for the Honors Society. Marcus is a member of the Honors Society. Therefore, Marcus received a scholarship.

- A. Invalid, because it confuses a necessary condition with a sufficient one.
- B. Invalid, because it fails to consider Marcus's specific GPA calculation.
- C. Valid, because Honors Society membership requires a high GPA.
- D. Valid, because it follows a logical chain of sufficient conditions.
- E. Valid, because the scholarship is the only way to reach the Honors Society.

Answer: A

Explanation: The argument's structure is: Scholarship \rightarrow GPA \rightarrow Honors. Marcus has the result (Honors). However, having the result of a conditional chain does not prove the starting condition (Affirming the Consequent). There may be other ways to join the Honors Society besides having a scholarship.

Question: 8

All successful novels have compelling characters. Some novels with compelling characters are not commercially successful.

- A. All novels with compelling characters are successful novels.
- B. Compelling characters are a necessary condition for a novel's success.
- C. Compelling characters are a sufficient condition for a novel's success.
- D. No successful novels lack compelling characters in their plots.
- E. Some novels are successful despite having uninteresting characters.

Answer: B

Explanation: "All successful novels have compelling characters" means Success \rightarrow Compelling. This makes "Compelling" a necessary condition for "Success." The second premise confirms that "Compelling" is not a sufficient condition (since some have them but fail).

Question: 9

A public health official argues that a community's rise in asthma cases was caused by a nearby factory because cases increased after the factory opened. Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument?

- A. The factory began operating during the same month that pollen counts reached a five-year high.
- B. Some residents disliked the factory because it was noisy.
- C. Asthma cases were higher among children than adults.
- D. The factory hired many local workers.
- E. The community had no previous factory nearby.

Answer: A

Explanation: If pollen counts were unusually high at the same time, that provides a strong alternative explanation for the rise in asthma cases. The argument relies on post hoc reasoning, and the seasonal pollen surge undercuts the causal link.

Question: 10

All employees who completed cybersecurity training can access the secure portal. Some people who can access the secure portal are not employees. Therefore, some employees who completed cybersecurity training are not employees. Which of the following best evaluates the argument?

- A. Valid, because secure access implies employment.
- B. Invalid, because the conclusion is unsupported and self-contradictory.
- C. Valid, because some portal users are not employees.
- D. Invalid, because all trained employees can access the portal.
- E. Valid only if contractors also received training.

Answer: B

Explanation: The conclusion states that some employees are not employees, which is self-contradictory. Even aside from that, the premises do not establish such a result. The argument is logically defective.

Question: 11

If the machine is calibrated, then its output falls within the specified range. The output does not fall within the specified range. Therefore, the machine is not calibrated. Which of the following best describes the reasoning?

- A. Deductively valid because it uses modus tollens.
- B. Deductively invalid because calibration can be partial.
- C. Inductively weak because output ranges vary.
- D. Deductively valid because the output proves the machine is faulty.
- E. Invalid because calibration and output are unrelated.

Answer: A

Explanation: The structure is if P then Q; not Q; therefore not P. That is modus tollens, a valid deductive form.

Question: 12

A security analyst argues: “Whenever confidential intelligence systems are compromised, emergency cybersecurity protocols activate automatically.” A government official concludes that because emergency cybersecurity protocols activated automatically, confidential intelligence systems must have been compromised.

Which of the following most closely parallels the official’s reasoning?

- A. Whenever manufacturing defects emerge, product recalls increase substantially. Product recalls increased after safety inspections intensified.
- B. Whenever public corruption investigations expand, political resignations increase rapidly. Political resignations increased during the election scandal.
- C. Whenever severe flooding occurs, emergency rescue operations expand immediately. Emergency rescue operations expanded after river barriers weakened.
- D. Whenever telecommunications failures occur, emergency backup systems activate automatically. Emergency backup systems activated automatically after the power outage.
- E. Whenever transportation strikes intensify, commuter delays increase dramatically. Commuter delays increased after highway construction began.

Answer: D

Explanation: The official reasons from the activation of emergency protocols back to the presumed cause. The telecommunications example mirrors this structure exactly: if failures occur, backup systems activate; backup systems activated; therefore failures occurred. Backup systems may activate for reasons other than telecommunications failures.

Question: 13

If the factory installs the new filtration system, its carbon emissions (C) will fall below 100 units. The factory's carbon emissions are 120 units. Therefore, the factory has not installed the new filtration system.

- A. Invalid, because the emissions might have been even higher without the system.
- B. Invalid, because there is no proof that the filtration system actually works.
- C. Valid, because it uses the contrapositive of the first conditional statement.
- D. Valid, because the conclusion is based on a sound and verified calculation.
- E. Valid, because falling below 100 units is a necessary condition for the system.

Answer: C

Explanation: Logic: Install $\rightarrow C < 100$. Fact: $C = 120$ (which is NOT < 100). By contrapositive: NOT $C < 100 \rightarrow$ NOT Install. This is a valid logical deduction.

Question: 14

A university will offer a new course only if there is sufficient student interest and a qualified instructor is available. There is sufficient student interest for a course on Quantum Ethics.

- A. A qualified instructor is available to teach the course on Quantum Ethics.
- B. Student interest is the most important factor in offering a new course.
- C. The university will definitely offer the course on Quantum Ethics.
- D. The university will offer the course if an instructor is found.
- E. The university will not offer the course if no qualified instructor is found.

Answer: E

Explanation: "Only if" introduces necessary conditions. Offer \rightarrow (Interest AND Instructor). We know "Interest" is true. However, "Offer" still requires "Instructor" to be true. If "Instructor" is false, "Offer" must be false.

Question: 15

If the symphony receives the grant, it will perform a series of free outdoor concerts. The symphony will perform the concerts only if the city provides a permit for the central park. The city has announced it will not provide the permit.

Which of the following must be true?

- A. The symphony will not receive the grant.
- B. The symphony will receive the grant but will not perform the concerts.
- C. The symphony will perform the concerts in a different location.
- D. The symphony will seek a permit for a different park.
- E. The symphony will not perform the series of free outdoor concerts.

Answer: E

Explanation: This tests conditional reasoning and rules. Grant \rightarrow Concerts. Concerts \rightarrow Permit. Given "Not Permit," we know via contraposition that "Not Concerts." However, we *cannot* conclude "Not Grant." The symphony might receive the grant and simply fail to perform the concerts (violating the initial conditional) or use the money for something else. The only certain deduction is that the concerts cannot happen.

Question: 16

If the alarm is armed, then the hallway lights flash. The hallway lights are flashing. Therefore, the alarm is armed. Which of the following best characterizes the reasoning?

- A. It is valid because flashing lights prove activation.
- B. It is invalid because it affirms the consequent.
- C. It is valid because it denies the antecedent.
- D. It is inductively strong because alarms often cause flashing lights.
- E. It is invalid because hallway lights never flash for other reasons.

Answer: B

Explanation: The form is if P then Q; Q; therefore P. That is affirming the consequent, an invalid argument because the lights could be flashing for some other reason.

Question: 17

A study of 50 people found that those who ate an apple a day had fewer sick days than those who didn't. The study concluded that apples prevent illness. The most significant flaw in this study is:

- A. Its failure to consider the nutritional content of different types of apples.
- B. Its reliance on a very small sample size to draw a universal conclusion.
- C. The assumption that health is solely determined by dietary choices.
- D. The possibility that healthy people are simply more likely to eat fruit.
- E. The lack of a control group that ate other types of fruit besides apples.

Answer: B

Explanation: A sample size of 50 is extremely small for making a broad medical claim like "apples prevent illness." This is a sampling flaw where the data is insufficient to support the conclusion.

Question: 18

A judge argues that stricter sentencing laws deter crime because regions adopting such laws often report subsequent declines in criminal activity. A legal scholar responds that many of those regions simultaneously expanded economic assistance programs targeting high-risk populations.

Which of the following most closely parallels the scholar's reasoning?

- A. A nutritionist argues that vitamin supplements improve health because supplement users report fewer illnesses, while a physician notes that supplement users also exercise more frequently.
- B. A teacher claims that students learn mathematics more effectively through memorization, while another teacher argues that conceptual understanding is equally important.
- C. A historian argues that military victories depend primarily on technological superiority, while another historian emphasizes strategic planning.
- D. A business owner claims that customer satisfaction determines profitability, while a consultant argues that marketing also affects profitability.
- E. A journalist argues that political scandals reduce voter turnout, while a pollster argues that turnout depends on demographic patterns.

Answer: A

Explanation: The scholar argues that the observed reduction in crime may result from another factor occurring simultaneously with stricter sentencing laws. The nutritionist analogy mirrors that structure exactly: supplement use correlates with better health, but exercise may explain the improvement. The remaining options discuss competing influences more generally without matching the same causal-confounding pattern.

Question: 19

A constitutional theorist states: “If governments suppress independent courts, constitutional protections become unreliable. If constitutional protections become unreliable, investor confidence declines significantly.”

Which conclusion follows logically?

- A. Constitutional protections depend entirely on economic confidence.
- B. Governments suppressing independent courts reduce investor confidence.
- C. Independent courts guarantee long-term economic prosperity automatically.
- D. Investor confidence depends primarily on international trade conditions.
- E. Judicial independence eliminates constitutional disputes within democracies.

Answer: B

Explanation: Combining the conditional statements transitively yields: suppressing independent courts leads to unreliable constitutional protections, which leads to declining investor confidence.

Question: 20

A school district claims that later start times improve achievement because one pilot school’s test scores rose after the bell schedule shifted later. However, the school also began offering free breakfast during the same semester. Which of the following, if true, most weakens the claim?

- A. Free breakfast can improve student alertness and concentration.
- B. Later start times are popular among students.
- C. Teachers reported fewer tardies after the change.
- D. The pilot school had older students than nearby schools.
- E. Test scores improved more in math than in reading.

Answer: A

Explanation: If free breakfast can improve alertness and concentration, then the improvement in scores may be due to breakfast rather than the later start time. That alternative cause weakens the argument by offering another plausible explanation.

Question: 21

Recent research indicates that individuals who consume more than three cups of coffee per day have a significantly lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Some scientists hypothesize that certain antioxidants in coffee improve insulin sensitivity. However, a follow-up study found that coffee drinkers also tend to engage in more physical activity on average than non-coffee drinkers.

The follow-up study, if true, most strongly supports which of the following?

- A. Antioxidants are not actually effective at improving insulin sensitivity in the human body.
- B. Consuming coffee is a direct cause of increased physical activity levels in most adults.
- C. People who are at risk for diabetes should increase both coffee consumption and exercise.
- D. The correlation between coffee and diabetes risk may be explained by a confounding variable.
- E. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented entirely through a combination of diet and regular exercise.

Answer: D

Explanation: The initial finding suggests a causal link between coffee and diabetes prevention. The follow-up study introduces a "confounding variable"—physical activity. If coffee drinkers are also more active, it might be the exercise, not the coffee, that reduces the diabetes risk. This weakens the causal claim about coffee by offering an alternative explanation for the observed correlation.

Question: 22

Every person who wins the lottery becomes instantly wealthy. No person who is instantly wealthy is able to fully appreciate the value of a dollar. Therefore, no person who wins the lottery is able to fully appreciate the value of a dollar.

Which of the following most closely parallels the pattern of reasoning in the argument above?

- A. All professional chefs use high-quality knives. Some high-quality knives are very expensive. Therefore, all professional chefs use expensive knives.
- B. Every student who studies for the bar exam is stressed. No one who is stressed is able to sleep well. Therefore, no one who studies for the bar exam is able to sleep well.
- C. No one who is afraid of heights should go skydiving. Maria is not afraid of heights; therefore, Maria should go skydiving.
- D. Only members of the elite squad are allowed in the briefing room. Marcus is in the briefing room; therefore, Marcus is a member of the elite squad.
- E. People who eat healthy live longer. Since Sarah eats healthy, she will definitely live longer than her peers.

Answer: B

Explanation: This is a "Parallel Reasoning" question. The original argument is a valid categorical syllogism: All A are B. No B are C. Therefore, No A are C. Option follows this exact valid form: All Students → Stressed. No Stressed → Sleep Well. Therefore, No Students → Sleep Well.

Question: 23

A pharmaceutical executive defends a drug's safety by arguing that it is "perfectly safe for human consumption" because clinical trials showed it is safe in controlled laboratory conditions, equating the two environments. Which one of the following most precisely identifies the reasoning error?

- A. It demands that critics prove the drug unsafe without providing positive safety evidence.
- B. It uses the term "safe" with two distinct meanings—one in trials and one in real-world use.
- C. It generalizes from a small trial group to millions of diverse patients.
- D. It circularly assumes drug safety to conclude laboratory results prove real safety.
- E. It attacks the motives of regulators questioning the drug instead of the data.

Answer: B

Explanation: The argument commits equivocation by shifting the meaning of "safe." Laboratory-controlled conditions differ significantly from real-world variables such as long-term use, interactions, and patient diversity, making the term ambiguous across contexts.

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