

The Writing Task, decoded

One prompt, three jobs, 40 minutes and a 750-word ceiling. A plan for disciplined argument rather than decorative prose.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Choose **one of three prompts**. Explain the statement, give a reasoned argument against it, then state the extent to which you agree. UAT-UK does not score the response; universities receive it verbatim. Plan for 5–10 minutes, define the disputed terms, build the strongest counter-case and make a qualified judgement.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 The task has three verbs

The official Question Guide says a prompt will typically ask you to do three things:

1. **Explain** what the statement means.
2. **Give a reasoned argument against** the statement.
3. **Judge the extent** to which you agree.

These are not three separate mini-essays. The explanation fixes the meaning of the claim. The counter-argument stress-tests it. The final judgement weighs what survives.

The 750-word limit is a ceiling, not a target to hit at any cost. UAT-UK says it exists to promote disciplined selection, organisation and concise, accurate expression. Detailed subject knowledge is not expected. A precise ordinary example beats an unsupported parade of names and statistics.

1 The tell

If your plan contains topics but no claims, it is not yet an argument. “Education, jobs, inequality” is a list. “Equal access can be fairer than equal outcomes because people make different choices” is a proposition that can be tested.

2 A 40-minute shape

UAT-UK recommends planning for 5–10 minutes. This schedule keeps that advice and protects an editing pass:

Clock	Job	Output
0–7 min	Choose and define	One prompt; key terms; provisional judgement
7–10 min	Build the spine	Strongest case against; response; two concrete examples
10–30 min	Write the argument	Explanation, counter-case and reply in connected paragraphs
30–36 min	Deliver judgement	State where the claim works, fails and needs qualification
36–40 min	Edit for force	Remove repetition; repair logic, grammar and ambiguous pronouns

The timings are a study strategy, not an instruction issued by UAT-UK. Practise until you know whether seven planning minutes leaves enough typing time for you.

3 Worked prompt: build the argument before the sentences

Worked example Original TARA-style Writing Task plan

Statement: “A fair society gives everyone the same opportunities, not the same outcomes.”

Explain what you think is meant by the statement. Give a reasoned argument against it. To what extent do you agree?

1. Explain the claim

“Opportunity” means access to realistic chances, not merely a rule that applies identically on paper. “Outcome” means the result people eventually reach. The statement claims fairness is procedural: once chances are genuinely equal, unequal results can be accepted.

2. Build the strongest argument against it

Opportunities cannot be separated neatly from outcomes. Severe outcome gaps can shape the next generation’s starting points through housing, health, time and education. A society that refuses to notice results may preserve unequal opportunity while declaring the procedure fair.

3. Answer that challenge

Equalising every outcome would ignore effort, preference and legitimate risk. It could also require coercive treatment of people whose needs and choices differ. The better response is not identical outcomes, but an outcome floor and active correction where results reveal a blocked opportunity.

4. Make a qualified judgement

Agree with the statement only if “same opportunities” means substantive access and if persistent outcomes are used as evidence about whether that access is real. Fairness should not promise identical destinations, but it cannot ignore who repeatedly fails to reach the starting line.

Correct: Each section answers one required verb, and the final position changes in response to the counter-argument.

Trap: A two-sided list ending “there are good points on both sides” avoids the judgement the prompt requests.

This is a plan, not a model answer to memorise. The value lies in its movement: define, oppose, answer, qualify.

4 The paragraph test

Every body paragraph should pass four checks:

1. **Claim:** what are you asking the reader to accept?
2. **Reason:** why should the reader accept it?
3. **Example:** what concrete case reveals the reason?
4. **Link:** how does this change your judgement of the prompt?

An example is evidence only when you explain what it demonstrates. One developed example is normally stronger than three named examples left to argue for themselves.

5 Four failure modes to remove

Failure	What it looks like	Repair
Prompt drift	A general essay on fairness	Repeat the disputed phrase at the start of each planning branch
Weak opposition	A token objection you can dismiss in one sentence	Give the counter-case its strongest plausible form
Example pile	Names, events and anecdotes with no inference	After each example, write the precise claim it supports
Summary ending	The conclusion repeats the introduction	State the condition that changes the extent of agreement

Also watch repeated throat-clearing: “It is important to note”, “throughout history” and “in today’s society” usually consume words without making a claim. Cut them. Use the space for a qualification or a link.

6 How the university sees it

UAT-UK does not mark the Writing Task. It makes the response available to participating universities where your course requires TARA. That creates two important limits:

- there is no official UAT-UK essay score or universal weighting to optimise;
- the response should stand on its own, because the university receives what you actually typed, not the better explanation you formed afterwards.

Check the exact university course page for how the test enters selection. Do not assume every department reads the response in the same way simply because they receive it.

2 Try it

Take one prompt and spend seven minutes on only four lines: definition, strongest objection, reply, qualified judgement. If line four could have been written before lines two and three, the argument has not genuinely developed.

7 Sources

UAT-UK, TARA Question Guide

The three-part prompt, planning advice, relevance, precision, counter-argument and expression guidance. [Read pages 16–17.](#)

UAT-UK, TARA Content Specification

The 40-minute module, 750-word limit, unscored status and purpose of disciplined selection and expression. [Read the specification.](#)

The prompt and plan in this guide are original. They are not a recalled live question or an official model response. UniGenius is independent.