Red tape

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 regulatory capture ____	**a** a situation where a regulatory agency comes to serve the interests of the industry it is meant to oversee, rather than the public
2 administrative discretion ____	**b** the latitude granted to officials to interpret and apply rules using their own judgement
3 compliance burden ____	**c** the cumulative time, cost and complexity organisations must absorb to satisfy regulatory obligations
4 bureaucratic inertia ____	**d** the tendency of bureaucratic institutions to resist change and continue established practices regardless of their continued usefulness
5 sunset clause ____	**e** a provision that automatically causes a law or regulation to expire after a set period unless renewed
6 regulatory arbitrage ____	**f** the practice of structuring an activity to exploit differences between regulatory jurisdictions and minimise compliance obligations
7 institutional isomorphism ____	**g** the tendency for organisations operating in similar environments to become structurally similar over time, often to appear legitimate
8 red-tape reduction initiative ____	**h** a formal government programme specifically designed to identify and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic procedures
9 licensing regime ____	**i** a formal system requiring specific authorisation before an activity can be legally undertaken
10 audit trail ____	**j** a documented, traceable record of decisions and actions taken during an administrative process

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 An agency serving industry interests rather than the public is regulatory capture / genuine independent oversight.

2 The latitude granted to officials to interpret rules is administrative discretion / rigid, fixed rules.

3 The cumulative cost organisations absorb to satisfy regulations is compliance burden / a negligible expense.

4 Bureaucratic institutions resisting change is bureaucratic inertia / rapid institutional reform.

5 A provision causing a law to expire automatically is a sunset clause / a permanent statute.

6 Structuring an activity to exploit jurisdictional differences is regulatory arbitrage / uniform global compliance.

7 Organisations becoming structurally similar to appear legitimate is institutional isomorphism / genuine organisational diversity.

8 A government programme to eliminate unnecessary procedures is a red-tape reduction initiative / an expansion of bureaucracy.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 mitigate ____	**a** regulatory capture
2 exploit ____	**b** administrative discretion
3 entrench ____	**c** a sunset clause
4 exercise ____	**d** bureaucratic inertia
5 institutionalise ____	**e** regulatory arbitrage
6 trigger ____	**f** an audit trail
7 maintain ____	**g** compliance burden
8 quantify ____	**h** institutional isomorphism

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

administrative discretion | audit trail | bureaucratic inertia | compliance burden | institutional isomorphism | licensing regime | red-tape reduction initiative | regulatory arbitrage | regulatory capture | sunset clause

Public policy scholars analysing regulatory failure increasingly examine 1 _____, whereby agencies established to oversee an industry gradually come to serve the interests of the very firms they regulate, often through routine, informal professional interaction rather than deliberate corruption. This risk compounds when 2 _____ grants officials substantial latitude without adequate external review, since discretion exercised consistently in an industry's favour can escape scrutiny for years. Businesses operating across multiple jurisdictions sometimes engage in 3 _____, deliberately structuring operations to exploit gaps between differing regulatory regimes and minimise their overall 4 _____. Once established, a 5 _____ often proves remarkably durable, since 6 _____ means institutions tend to persist with established procedures long after their original justification has weakened considerably. Some jurisdictions now attach a 7 _____ to new regulations, forcing periodic reauthorisation rather than allowing rules to persist indefinitely by default. Governments periodically launch a 8 _____, a formal programme aimed at eliminating unnecessary procedure, though genuine reform requires maintaining a clear 9 _____ throughout, ensuring accountability isn't simply discarded alongside unnecessary bureaucracy. Researchers also note 10 _____, whereby regulatory bodies across different countries increasingly resemble one another structurally, partly to be perceived as legitimate by peer institutions and international observers.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

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The persistence of regulatory capture

Political economists studying regulatory capture note that the phenomenon rarely results from overt corruption, making it considerably harder to detect and address than more blatant forms of institutional failure. Regulatory agencies typically depend on regulated industries for the technical expertise needed to craft workable rules, creating structural proximity that can gradually shift an agency's institutional culture towards industry perspectives even without any deliberate intent to favour regulated firms. Compounding this dynamic, talented regulatory staff frequently move between government agencies and the industries they once oversaw, a pattern sometimes called the revolving door, which critics argue creates subtle incentives to maintain favourable relations with potential future employers throughout an official's regulatory career, regardless of whether any individual decision is consciously influenced by this consideration.

1 Why is regulatory capture considerably harder to detect than more blatant institutional failure? ___

2 What do regulatory agencies typically depend on regulated industries for? _____

3 What can this structural proximity gradually do to an agency's institutional culture? _____

4 What pattern is sometimes called 'the revolving door'? _____

5 What do critics argue this pattern creates? _____

6 Does the text suggest any individual decision must be consciously influenced for this dynamic to matter? _

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 The agency gradually came to serve the interests of the industry it regulated. _____

2 The company structured its operations to exploit gaps between regulatory jurisdictions. _____

3 The institution kept following outdated procedures long after they made sense. _____

4 The new rule would automatically expire unless formally renewed. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how regulatory capture can occur without deliberate corruption, distinguishing observation from causal inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 regulatory capture 2 administrative discretion 3 compliance burden 4 bureaucratic inertia 5 a sunset clause 6 regulatory arbitrage 7 institutional isomorphism 8 a red-tape reduction initiative

3 Academic collocations

1 g mitigate compliance burden 2 e exploit regulatory arbitrage 3 d entrench bureaucratic inertia 4 b exercise administrative discretion
5 h institutionalise institutional isomorphism... note adjust 6 c trigger a sunset clause 7 f maintain an audit trail 8 g quantify compliance burden... note adjust

4 Analysis

1 regulatory capture 2 administrative discretion 3 regulatory arbitrage 4 compliance burden 5 licensing regime
6 bureaucratic inertia 7 sunset clause 8 red-tape reduction initiative 9 audit trail 10 institutional isomorphism

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Because it rarely results from overt corruption.
2 The technical expertise needed to craft workable rules.
3 Gradually shift it towards industry perspectives.
4 Talented regulatory staff moving between government agencies and the industries they once oversaw.
5 Subtle incentives to maintain favourable relations with potential future employers.
6 No - the dynamic can operate regardless of whether any individual decision is consciously influenced.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 regulatory capture 2 regulatory arbitrage 3 bureaucratic inertia 4 a sunset clause

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.