

Preparation and Setting of a Question Paper

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Abstract

Evaluation is the one of the most troublesome area in education. Written examination is the most widely used method of evaluation and assessment. Most of the times questions are prepared just before the examination and are bypassing the quality check, Which may lead to confusion or misinterpretation of the questions by the students. This article focuses at providing the guidelines and a scientific method of preparing a good question paper to improve the quality of evaluation and assessment of students.

Key words: Evaluation; Examination; Assessment; Question Paper; Quality, Guidelines.

Introduction

Written examination is the widely accepted tool of evaluation in both formative and summative evaluation. It cannot be replaced entirely by any other method. Written examination leaves a record for reevaluation in case of a controversy.² While this is not possible in practical and viva voice. The instrument used in the written examination is the question paper. Evaluation is done in two ways: formative(term/sessional) and summative (year end/university).³ For both methods question paper setting is an important task. The quality of the question paper can be improved by adequate and systematic preparation.

Question Paper Setting/ Preparation

There are seven steps involved in preparing a question paper:

1. Design of the question paper
2. Preparation of a blue print of the question paper
3. Preparation of a model question paper.
4. Preparation of a marking scheme

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5. Refining the question paper
6. Editing the question paper
7. Review of the question paper

Design of the question paper

The decision on the design of the question paper is a policy decision, which has to be made by the Dean/Principal of the college / institution. The points to be decided are:

- i. Weightage to be given to different forms of questions. i.e how many essays, short answers, or multiple choice questions should be decided to make a balanced question paper. It should be decided on the number of questions in subjects, marks for each type of questions, and the time allotted for the paper. Also the number of sections in each question paper also to be decided.
- ii. Weightage to be given to learning objectives and to topics or areas of the subject.
- iii. If the objectives are already divided into must know, desirable to know and nice to know categories, the same can be adapted in the question paper. As the term examinations prepare the students to

develop competency in terms of knowledge and skills that is supposed to be acquire by the end of the course, the final examination question paper should not be made very difficult. But the question paper should assess whether the student has achieved the minimal skills and knowledge.

- iv. Guidelines regarding the use of options, nature of sections and difficulty level of the paper are also required to be delineated.

Once the above decisions are made, it is advisable to write them in clear and simple terms. Such documents will help at a later period to write instructions to the question paper setters.

Preparation of blue print of the question paper

Blue print of a question paper, is the table of specifications, is a two dimensional chart giving placement of different question (in terms of mark and number) in respect to the objectives or learning

Table 1: Blue-print of a question paper

Objectives/content area	Knowledge (Recall)					Understanding (Interpretation)					Application (Problem solving)					Skill	Total
	LA	SA	SN	DB	AB	LA	SA	SN	DB	AB	LA	SA	SN	DB	AB		
Cardiology		1					1		1							1	
Oncology			1		1												
Plastic surgery									1								
Neurology		1							1	1							
Disaster			1														
Nephrology	1											1					
Critical care			2														
Geriatrics			1														
Total	1	2	5	-	1	-	1	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	

LA: Long Answer SA: Short Answer SN: Short notes AB: Answer briefly DB: Differentiate between

outcome, content area and the form of question. Preparation of a model question paper

Preparation of a model question paper

The model question paper is written on an item card. A model item card is given below.

Table 2: Model item card

Objective:	Marks:
Content area/Topic:	Estimated difficulty level:
Form of Question:	Estimated time:
Question:	
Model answer	Points of answer
	Marks for points

Preparation of marking scheme

Once a model paper has been prepared, the next step is to evolve a marking scheme. The purpose of marking scheme is to assign proportions of marks to different parts of the answer. There are two types of marking schemes- Analytical(objective type and short answer type) and Global(long answer type).

Refining the question paper

After model question paper and marking scheme has been made, a second critical look at the is

recommended. While reviewing questions to refine them, the following questions need to be asked:

- i. Does the question test an important learning outcome?
- ii. Is it based on pre-determined objective?
- iii. Is the scope well defined as regards to:
 - Clarity of directions
 - Language of the questions
 - Length of the answers
 - Marking scheme
 - Appropriateness of difficulty level
- iv. A question must be relevant to the course objectives.
- v. Questions must emphasis on the professional skill and competence.
- vi. The questions should not relate to trivial or insufficient, vague and diffuse topics.
- vii. Questions on a rare phenomenon or entity does not represent higher learning and does not necessarily judge the practical and professional ability of the student and hence must be avoided as far as possible.
- viii. The length of the question paper must be reasonably feasible for an average student to answer within stipulated time.

- ix. The mark for each question is predetermined, and it should be proportional to the length and difficulty level of the question.
- x. The questions sampled should be such that uniform coverage of the entire curriculum is done.
- xi. The language should be clear, and unambiguous, understandable by an average student.
- xii. Special care may be taken to avoid spelling or grammatical errors which may cause confusion or even alter the meaning.
- xiii. Open ended questions are apt to encourage rambling by a student and it may be difficult to ascertain substance amidst the verbiage.
- xiv. Short answer question without a stem or verb do not indicate precisely what the examiner wants.

Editing the question paper

Editing is the next step in the preparation of the question paper. While editing, the following points to be checked:

- i. Grouping questions according to the objectives, form of questions, content area etc.
- ii. Numbering of the questions
- iii. Instructions for administration.

Review of the question paper

The question paper may be reviewed with the help of a check list. The final step is to ensure confidentiality by sending rough sheets to the university or destroying them as per the instructions.

Conclusion

A systematic approach will improve question paper setting in our examinations. The steps involved are plan the design, prepare the blue-print, prepare a model question paper, prepare marking scheme, refine the questions, edit the questions, review the question paper, and final typing / writing and dispatch.

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