

## **Tools for questioning**

Asking questions is a widely used teaching, learning and assessment technique. Tools that you might develop to support this methodology include:

- verbal questioning
- written questions
- interviews
- self-assessment questionnaires
- questionnaires
- oral or written examinations (may be applicable at higher AQF levels).

### ***Verbal questioning***

Verbal questioning is a common assessment technique, which is used in a number of situations. It does not involve a large investment of time, and responses to oral questions provide useful evidence of:

- a candidate's vocational/technical knowledge
- their understanding of workplace procedures, legislation and safety requirements.

Questioning allows you to probe to obtain clarification, confirmation or supplementation when needed. For example, responses to "what would you do if..." questions are effective ways of determining whether a candidate is able to deal effectively with contingencies (an important dimension of competency) and to anticipate and pre-empt problems that may arise out of the work process.

Oral questioning may also be a reasonable way to accommodate a candidate's need for consideration of their language and literacy skill levels. Remember that the assessment should not demand higher literacy, language or communication skills than those required for the job itself.

**Table 2: General guidelines for effective questioning**

<b>General guidelines for effective questioning</b>
Keep questions short and focused on one key concept
Ensure that questions are structured
Test the questions to check that they are not ambiguous
Use 'open-ended questions such as 'what if...?' and 'why...?' questions, rather than closed questions
Keep questions clear and straight forward and ask one at a time
Use words that the candidate is able to understand
Look at the candidate when asking questions
Check to ensure that the candidate fully understands the questions
Ask the candidate to clarify or re-phrase their answer if the assessor does not understand the initial response
Confirm the candidate's response by repeating the answer back in his/her own words
Encourage a conversational approach with the candidate when appropriate, to put him or her at ease
Use questions or statements as prompts for keeping focused on the purpose of the questions and the kind of evidence being collected
Use language at a suitable level for the candidate
Listen carefully to the answers for opportunities to find unexpected evidence
Follow up responses with further questions, if useful, to draw out more evidence or to make links between knowledge areas
Compile a list of acceptable responses to ensure reliability of assessments

*Adapted from Guide 1: Training Package Assessment Materials Kit, Chapter 5, Pages 27-29  
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### **Recording responses**

When using oral questioning, you may need a tool that has exemplar responses and also enables you to record a candidate's responses. If the candidate's response is insufficient the assessor should record why on the recording sheet or checklist. This provides information that can be used later, if necessary, to explain to the candidate where he or she needs to develop their skills and/or knowledge to achieve the required competence.

**Figure 13: Recording sheet for oral questioning (template)**

Candidate's Name		
Assessor or Observer's Name		
Unit of Competency (code and title)		
Date of Assessment		
Location		
Task/Procedure		
Questions to be Answered by candidate	Response/Answer*	Satisfactory (Yes/No)
What would you do if		
What would you do if		
What would you do if		
How do you		
What are		
Why did you.....(clarification)		
Follow up Questions		
The candidate's knowledge was:	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Feedback to candidate:		
Candidate signature:	Assessor/Observer's Signature:	

\*Note: Satisfactory or exemplar responses can be recorded separately.

### ***Written questions***

Most educators and candidates themselves are very familiar with written questions in assessment situations, particularly where factual knowledge rather than its application is being tested. Written questions can be framed so that candidates are required to:

- 1) choose the correct answer, given multiple choices or true/false options, or to match information with another set of given information
- 2) construct the answer themselves, as in short-answer responses or longer reports or essays.

These two styles are sometimes used in combination to capture the benefits or minimise the risks associated with each. Clearly, the former is more time-friendly for the candidate and the person marking the responses, but the questions can be difficult to construct. Questions that require a response from the candidate are clearly easier to construct, but take a longer time to complete and to assess.

For both categories it is useful to develop a response sheet of correct answers. In the case of longer reports or essays, particularly where the candidate is asked to analyse or evaluate a situation/information, you will need to determine the criteria that will determine the sufficiency of the response. This will assist you to provide appropriate instructions for the candidate.

**Knowledge based tests**

The following table may help you with the process of developing questions for knowledge-based tests.

**Table 3: Designing knowledge based tests**

Stage	Questions to ask yourself
<b>Before you start writing or selecting questions</b>	<p>Have you identified the purpose of the test?</p> <p>Have you identified the required knowledge in the relevant unit(s) of competency?</p> <p>Have you addressed the Employability Skills facets relevant to the competencies?</p> <p>Have you decided on the most appropriate types of questions for the purpose of the test?</p> <p>Does the level of difficulty of the test match the AQF alignment?</p>
<b>As you develop your questions</b>	<p>Are the questions clearly worded, concise and grammatically correct?</p> <p>Have you used language and terminology appropriate for the characteristics of the candidate?</p> <p>Have you checked that the questions are not beyond the scope of the unit(s) or competency or their AQF alignment?</p> <p>Have you used a variety of question formats?</p> <p>Have you included enough questions to cover the underpinning knowledge adequately?</p> <p>Have you estimated the marking time for the test?</p> <p>Are your questions biased? e.g. do these questions include language/terminology that will be unfamiliar or insulting to certain groups?</p> <p>Have you checked for possible inclusion of stereotypes in your questions?</p> <p>Have you assessed the level of difficulty of the test questions?</p> <p>Have you allocated sufficient time to do the test?</p> <p>Have you piloted these question types?</p> <p>Have you planned the resources necessary to administer the test?</p> <p>If your test is computer-based, will all the candidates have access to computers and suitable software when the test is being administered?</p>

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Questions to ask yourself</b>
<b>Test structure</b>	<p>Have you estimated the duration of the test accurately for the group of candidates?</p> <p>If you are testing required knowledge of a number of units of competency, have you weighted them appropriately?</p> <p>Are there clear instructions for the candidate?</p>
<b>Test layout</b>	<p>Have you used an appropriate font for the questions, which is easy to read?</p> <p>Is there appropriate space between questions to ensure that they are easy to read?</p> <p>Have you checked that the questions do not run over to the next page?</p> <p>Have you included sufficient space for written answers?</p> <p>Have you considered a separate answer booklet?</p>
<b>Checking results</b>	<p>Have you compiled a guide indicating what are acceptable answers to the test questions and any weighting of the questions for the whole test?</p>

*Adapted from Designing Tests, © WA Department of Training/VETASSESS, 2000*