

## **Multiple Choice Questions: Coaching Strategies and Course Content**

### **Defining Characteristics**

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) combine content knowledge and skills to assess the test taker's ability to eliminate several distractors and to select one correct or most appropriate answer to a question that has a limited number of potential responses (i.e., the multiple choice nature of the question).

### **Elimination Strategies**

1. Multiple Choice Questions are designed to eliminate three of five choices (i.e., to narrow the number of choices to the two most likely potential responses that initially look similar in meaning).
2. The wording of the stem (the question itself) of a multiple choice question often provides clues to the correct or most appropriate response or answer.
3. The final two choices (responses) for a multiple choice question will differ according to factual accuracy, implications or inferences, and/or the wording of the question and the possible responses.
4. If one item or part of a response is false, then the entire response is false.
5. Inferences can affect the accuracy of a response, thus should be made logically within context.
6. The correct, accurate, or most appropriate response will align with the conditions of the question.
7. Careful attention to the elimination and selection process should result in choosing the correct or most appropriate answer and not changing your answer due to later doubts or lingering concerns.

### **Coaching Strategies**

1. Content knowledge and skills required for multiple choice questions should be taught throughout the student's academic career, especially during the year in which a multiple choice test is scheduled.
2. Coaching or drilling students for completion of multiple choice questions and tests is a legitimate instructional and learning activity, as long as critical thinking skills have been incorporated within the course itself and last minute coaching or drilling is not a substitute for long-term learning.
3. Practice of the skills associated with multiple choice questions and tests is essential for students to understand factors, such as pacing and time management, which affect responses and scores.
4. Familiarity with the test and question format and expectations can positively impact test results.
5. Focused, sustained attention to details and other factors are essential components of test taking.

### **Course Content**

1. Multiple Choice Questions can be described as vocabulary tests as well as tests of one's mastery of the learning process; therefore, teaching and learning course content can also be effective exam preparation.
2. Using released test items as texts for course content is a legitimate way of incorporating vetted texts, vocabulary, reading comprehension skills, higher level critical thinking skills, and test preparation.
3. The data provided with released exams could assist teachers and students with recognizing the difficulties of some questions, as evidenced by the low accuracy percentage of those students earning overall commendable scores, and the ease of some questions, as evidenced by the high accuracy percentage of those students earning overall unsatisfactory scores.
4. Last minute exam preparation is not the most effective method or preferred substitute for a serious approach to teaching and learning the course content and assessment requirements throughout the school year.
5. Alignment of standards, curriculum, instructional content, learning activities, teacher assessment (including formative and summative assessments), and best practices can yield satisfactory exam performance.