

Writing Good Assessments

Open Response Items

- The Extended Writing Task
- The Short-answer Item

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Open response items

Types of open response items

- Extended writing task
- Short-answer item
 - Answer to a question
 - Fill in the blanks
 - Cloze passage
- Sequencing
- Editing – Indicate what is incorrect

Open response items

Advantages

- Relatively easy for test writers
- Students required to produce their own work
 - Less scope for cheating
- Good for higher order skills
 - Test students' ability to integrate different types of knowledge/skills
 - Enable students to give their own opinions
 - Allow for creativity

Disadvantages

- Fewer questions may be asked in a test
 - More marks per question
 - More weight placed on student understanding of those few questions
 - Heightened importance of clear wording of questions
- Time management issues for students
- Biased towards more literate students
- Evidence that less able students are less willing to answer such items
- Relatively difficult for assessors
 - Inter-marker reliability

Important things to consider

- Interest value of the question
 - Students have to feel motivated to do more than colour a bubble
- Getting the marking scheme right
 - Number of marks to be awarded
 - Clarity of marking scheme
 - Acceptable and unacceptable answers

The extended writing task

Parts of the writing task

- Introductory statement
 - Usually required when not subject-specific
- Stem (Question/Prompt)
- Instructions/Hints

Writing the writing task

- Clearly define task – set boundaries e.g. word limit, degree of detail
- Use imperative mood
- Make clear marking criteria

Marking scheme

Marking criteria should match instructions in writing task

- Holistic marking
 - One mark given for overall quality
 - Quick for assessors but doesn't provide detailed information for students
- Criterion-referenced marking
 - Marks are given in set criteria
 - Slow for assessors (and therefore expensive) but provides detailed information for students

- Number of marks to be awarded should be related to complexity of task
 - Detailed descriptions of each score level/band
- Clear exemplars
 - Either through trialling or through detailed marking and analysis of initial batch of scripts

Short-answer items

- Best used when the marking scheme is extremely clear
 - Only one or a very small number of correct answers

Writing the short-answer item

- Make instructions clear
 - Should answer be one word or complete sentence?
 - Where do students write their answer?
- Clearly define scope of question
 - If asking ‘why’ question, ensure there’s only one reason or make clear number required.
- Indicate number of marks question is worth
- Use amount of answer space to help guide length of answer required

Marking scheme

- Easy if there is one clear answer!
- Think about how marks should be awarded
 - One mark per reason?
 - Or 1m for lower order reasoning with 2m for higher order reasoning?
- List all correct and incorrect answers
 - Ensuring inter-rater reliability