



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Perceptions of Students towards the Examination Questions at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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Published: 21 April 2008

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Education for Health, Volume 21, Issue 1, 2008

Available from: <http://www.educationforhealth.net/>

Dear Editor,

The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak employ assessment methods that include: multiple choice questions (MCQ), modified essay questions (MEQ), objective structured practical examinations (OSPE), objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE), short and long clinical cases and other cases to evaluate its medical students' progress and performance. A study was conducted to ascertain students' perceptions on fairness, clarity and the difficulty of True/False MCQs used in their examinations. A total of 218 examinees were briefed regarding the study and what is meant by fairness, clarity and difficulty (Kaufman, 2001; Duffield & Spencer, 2002; McCoubrie, 2004). They were given a checklist to indicate their perceptions of fairness, clarity and difficulty for each item immediately after they completed the examination paper. A total of 725 MCQs in 32 examinations used in years 1 – 5 and two professional examinations were surveyed.

The gross average of students' perceptions on fairness, clarity and difficulty across all five years of medical education speaks of the favourable standard of MCQs used in the formative and summative assessments in this institution (see figure 1).

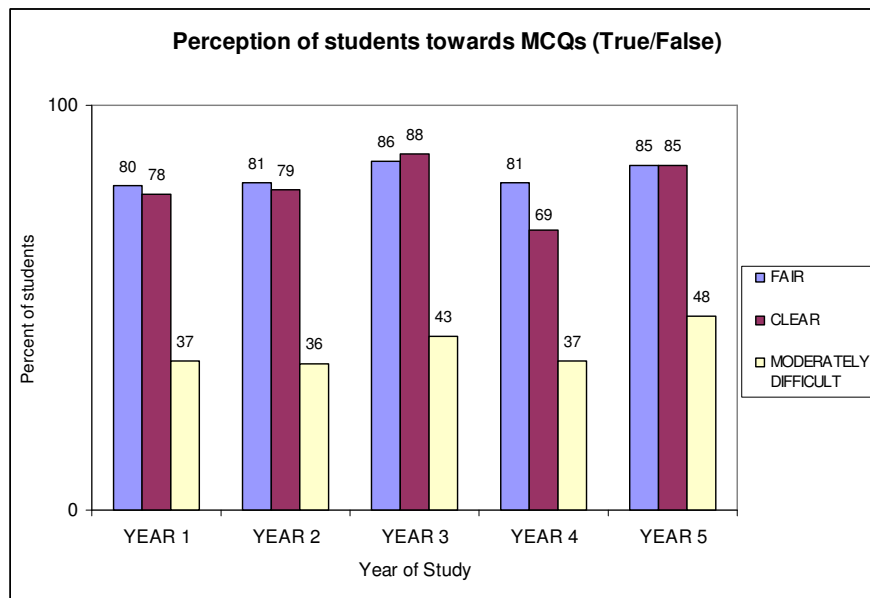


Figure 1: Perception of students towards MCQ's (True/False)

The high averages (above 80%) for perception on fairness of questions indicate that questions used in the examinations are within the intended and specified curriculum. Questions were generally perceived as clear ($\approx 80\%$). Perception on the difficulty of questions was mixed, ranging from too easy to too difficult. More than one third ($\approx 40\%$) perceived the questions as moderately difficult.

Conclusion

In order to maintain high standards in assessment, special attention should be given to the aspects of fairness, clarity and difficulty while writing and vetting examination questions.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful for the Seed Grant No. UNIMAS/21/09-01.2.3 (63) from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and would like to thank the Dean, Head of the Department of Medicine, the staff and students of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UNIMAS for their participation, help and encouragement.

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