

# Writing questions for formal assessments

Please consider the following when constructing assessment questions:

- 1. Learning outcomes.** Refer back to the learning outcomes of the session. Each of the learning outcomes needs to be tested. This can be done in 2 ways:
  - a. 1 or 2 questions per objective that all learners have to answer.
  - b. A 'bank' of questions per objective which contains 3 to 4 questions. The assessment will then randomly select 1 or 2 questions for an individual learner to answer. This will mean each learner is completing a different assessment each time. It will also mean that if a learner fails the assessment the 1st time, they will not get exactly the same questions on their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt.
- 2. Length of the assessment.** Ensure you consider the length of the assessment when deciding which approach to take; both for the learner and for the SMEs writing the questions. An average assessment that **the learner** will complete may contain approximately 10-15. If you have 'banks' of questions this will mean there will need to be 30-40 questions available which will be considerable more work for the SME.
- 3. Types of questions.** Questions need to be right or wrong so only certain question components can be used:
  - a. Single answer MCQ
  - b. Multi answer MCQ stating how many to choose to be correct
  - c. Graphic MCQ
  - d. Stacker/ordering question
  - e. Matching question
- 4. Pass mark and attempts.** Standard pass mark is 80%. This may vary slightly dependent on the final number of questions a learner is being asked to complete. Learners will get 3 attempts to pass the assessment.
- 5. Language.** Questions can be factual (ask the learner to recall information) or can be contextual (asks the learner to apply their knowledge and understanding to a situation). For example:

## Factual question

Decisions made at management and organisational level that may lead to a patient safety incident are described as:

Choose the correct option and select Submit.

- A latent failure
- A workplace failure
- An active failure



## Contextual

A hospital has recently implemented a new patient administration software system. Training for the new software has been mandatory for all staff but there has been no system in place to ensure all staff have completed that training. A nurse working in paediatrics incorrectly enters information into a patient's record which leads to a child being given the incorrect medicine. The nurse insists she has not received training on how to use the new software. Would you consider this a:

Choose the correct option and select Submit.

- A latent failure
  - A workplace failure
  - An active failure
6. **Consider your audience.** For example, it can be difficult to create contextual questions that would be applicable or relevant for **all** NHS staff. Contextual questions may be more difficult to construct for a wider audience and finding situations that are relevant to the whole audience. They may be easier for the new role-specific sessions.

### Examples.

Standalone assessment: <http://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/665484>

Question banks: <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/544060>

Locked assessment at end of session: <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/527944>