

LETTERS

Response to “The Need to Evaluate Question Writers’ Views and the Costs of Constructed-Response Versus Selected-Response Calculations Questions”

In reply: Thank you for the inquiries about our article “Pharmacy Student Performance on Constructed-Response Versus Selected-Response Calculations Questions.”¹ You noted a few areas that we had designated to discuss in a subsequent article. Test writing, as you suggested, is a time-intensive activity that requires expertise not typically held by traditional pharmacy faculty members.

Developing tests is a specialized skill that may be underestimated by both new and seasoned faculty members. Personnel with backgrounds in statistics, education, and/or psychology may have had exposure to the intricacies of test writing, but it takes a great deal of time, experience, and expertise to develop high-quality assessments. In the case of selected-response vs constructed-response questions, writing constructed-response questions is actually easier and less time-intensive than writing selected-response questions; writing the answer choices is one of the most difficult tasks in developing selected-response questions.

In terms of labor costs, faculty time is an important consideration, but the pharmacy schools of Shenandoah University and Union University do not have designated staff members to manage the question-writing process. The writing and approval process likely varies among colleges and schools of pharmacy. We do have technical staff members who are available to help with the online testing software and setup of tests.

Shenandoah University pharmacy students have been using laptops and online testing extensively since the school opened in 1996, and Union University pharmacy students have been using laptops and online testing since the school opened in 2008. In that regard, there is no additional cost for hardware or software specifically related to computer-based pharmacy calculations quizzes or examinations. The use of the testing software for this purpose actually would provide additional justification for any current annual expenses related to hardware and software necessary for online testing.

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