

## *Quick Reference Guide for* **WRITING EFFECTIVE TEST QUESTIONS**

Writing effective test questions can be a challenging task, especially when a test is being used to measure learning outcomes. Use this quick reference guide as a refresher before you begin writing test questions for your course or as you make changes to existing test questions.

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

- Use essay questions to analyze, synthesize, make connections or explain a topic within a new context to measure higher-level thinking skills.
- Focus on higher-level, directional verbs in Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Provide clear guidelines, such as a grading guide or scoring rubric, to enable students to respond how you want the essays to be answered.
- Experiment with writing several short essays rather than one long one to allow students to write on a variety of topics. They're also easier to score.

## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

- Use multiple choice questions to assess a variety of learning outcomes or focus on higher-level thinking.
- Construct effective stems and solutions or alternatives.
- Stems should present a single, clear problem and form a question.
- Exclude irrelevant material.
- Avoid negative phrasing.
- State the solution/alternative clearly.
- Avoid including clues.
- Avoid using all of the above and none of the above.
- Present in logical order.
- Distractors must be plausible.
- Multiple choice questions are less susceptible to guessing.

## **TRUE OR FALSE**

- It's best to avoid using true or false questions as there is a high probability of guessing the correct response.
- They are also difficult to write because true/false questions must be phrased without additional qualifications and have no qualifying exceptions.
- Using qualifying words, such as "sometimes" or "always" provides a clue to the correct answer.
- They are better for pre-tests to help identify what the learner doesn't know.
- If thinking of writing a true or false question, try asking yourself, is there a more substantial way to ask this question?