UNIT 11 CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE ITEMS

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 9, we have presented a discussion on the basics of measurement and evaluation. In Unit 10 we have discussed different types of tests and the steps involved in the construction of achievement tests. We have also explained various types of questions. It is further stated that in objective type test items learners select the correct answer of an objective type test item from a set of given answers. But there can be objective type questions where the learners are not provided with any set of answers. In that case the learners are required to give (supply) answer of their own. Such tests items where learners are expected to supply an answer are termed as constructed response type or response supply type tests.

In this unit we shall study the purpose of constructed response type tests along with their advantages and disadvantages. Also we shall discuss advantages and disadvantages of long answer or essay type questions, techniques of their construction and scoring. Essay type or long answer type tests are suited to measure complex learning outcomes.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- state the need of constructed response tests,
- explain advantages and disadvantages of short answer (SA) tests,
- describe the nature and need of long answer and essay type tests,
- describe the two forms of essay type questions,
- give examples of the two forms of essay type questions,
• explain restricted and extended response type questions,
• discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of essay type questions,
• describe the guiding principles of writing and scoring essay type questions,
• construct good quality essay questions.

11.3 CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE ITEMS: SHORT ANSWER TYPE

As discussed earlier, in order to measure learning outcomes as an integral part of instructional procedure, we can use various types of test items. In this section we will discuss short answer type items with regard to their meaning, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages.

11.3.1 Meaning, Purpose and Characteristics of Short Answer Type Items

In measuring learning outcomes, test items used in any instructional procedure can be typically divided into three general categories as follows:

i) The objective type test items are highly structured and require learners to supply (construct) or select response. These responses may consist of one or two words.

ii) The short answer (SA) test items require learners to supply (or construct) or select responses in one sentence or so.

Both of the above categories require well structured responses. Since there can be only one correct answer they are highly objective in scoring. However, it may be noted that in some cases there are objective type test items having more than one answer, and all the answers are correct. While questions with only one answer are convergent type, the other are called divergent type.

iii) The long answer (LA) or essay test items require learners to select, organize and present answer in essay form.

Therefore, a constructed-response test item may be an objective type (or a very short answer), short answer type, or long answer type. We can illustrate these concepts with the help of following examples.

a. Objective type test items: (very short answer)

Q.1 In which one of the following cities is NCERT located?
   a) Allahabad
   b) Hyderabad
   c) Mumbai
   d) New Delhi

This is a selection type test item with (d) as correct answer.

Q.2 Name the Headquarter of NCERT

Since no responses in this item are provided to select any one from them, this is a supply or response construction type test item.
b. Short answer (SA) test item

Q.3 Which of the following methods is the most appropriate for locating a specimen under microscope?

a) Start with the coarse adjustment up and with your eye at the eye piece, turn down the coarse.

b) Start with the coarse adjustment down and with your eye at the eye piece, turn up the coarse adjustment.

c) Start with the coarse adjustment in the centre and with your eye at the eyepiece, turn up and down until you locate the specimen.

This would be a response selection type test item because learner has to select correct response (b) from the given three responses.

Q.4 Name the most desirable method of locating a specimen under the microscope in one sentence.

If alternatives are not provided, it would be a response construct in (supply) type test item. However, both the questions Q.3 and Q.4 measure the same objective.

Gronlund (1990) has preferred to include both the above two types as short answer (SA) type. Such short answer type test items are easy to construct. Except for solving numerical problems in mathematics and sciences, these short answer items usually measure simple learning outcomes and mostly emphasize measure of recall of memorized information (response construction type) or identify information (selection type). Depending on the quality of items, the chances of guessing the correct answer in response construction or supply type are almost nil or minimum.

Both of these items have two major limitations: (i) they are unsuitable for measuring some complex or higher order learning outcomes, and (ii) they may not consider other answers which may be correct in varying degree.

The short answer test items are simple to construct and can cover a wide range of learning outcomes and a large area of subject content. If constructed response test items (supply type) are carefully prepared, they can also take care of wild guessing.

11.3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Short Answer Type Items

Advantages: Short answer type items are being used widely for merits. They are very effective for measuring specific learning outcomes objectively and directly. They are easier to construct because these usually measure simple learning outcomes. They can use both types of test items: construct response (supply) and response selection. The main advantages of short answer type item can be summarized as follows:

- It can measure simplest learning outcomes.
- It is easier to construct. (But it requires great skill to construct unambiguous good items with suitable distracters to measure significant learning outcome. Such skills are to be mastered.)
- It can cover a wide sample of course materials.
- It can best be used in numerical questions requiring a number or symbol as an answer.
- Some of the short answer type test items can also measure knowledge and understanding (e.g. Multiple choice test items can be used by providing suitable alternatives to test reasoning, interpretation, etc.).
- Short answer type test items present well defined problems.
- It is simple to score with objectivity.

**Disadvantages:** Scholastic learning includes all those learning outcomes that are based on higher mental processes like comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, problem-solving abilities, etc.

Short answer (SA) test items suffer from many shortcomings so far as measurement of complex learning outcomes are concerned. Some of the disadvantages of short answer type items are that these do not provide:

- a more valid measure of real academic achievement of higher order learning outcomes,
- opportunities to relate facts, principles, thoughts etc.
- sufficient opportunities for demonstration of logical progression of content, language flexibility of thought, coherence, interpretative ability etc.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Notes:**

a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Higher order learning can be measured by short answer test items (Please tick.)
   
   a) Yes  
   b) No

2. In which of the two forms of short answer test items the response is intrinsic?

   .................................................................

3. Can short answer test items of the type “fill in the blanks” be used as constructed response type test items? (Please tick.)
   
   a) Yes  
   b) No

4. Which of the following would be the best supporting argument for the use of constructed response test item? (Please tick.)
   
   a) It puts good pressure on memory.  
   b) It restricts the domain of responses.  
   c) It does not provide any clue.  
   d) It restricts the score of an individual.
11.4 ESSAY TYPE TESTS

Essay type test is known as long answer test. Let us understand the concept of essay type test. Meaning of essay type tests, various forms of such tests, their advantages and disadvantages as well as construction of essay questions are discussed in this section.

11.4.1 Meaning

In the previous section, we have discussed that short answer test items through their various types and forms can measure learning outcomes which require mainly recall, recognition etc. Carefully planned and skillfully developed short answer type test items can also measure to some extent identification, differentiation etc. but these exclude significant instructional outcomes like capability to organize the content (ideas), integrate, express oneself, use data in a novel situation etc. In short, it can be said that short answer type tests (irrespective of the fact that they are response construction or response selection type) emphasize structuring (rigidly) of fixed response that is imposed by the teacher. It is the unstructured or flexible answer for which long answer or essay type tests are used to measure such learning outcomes that are complex rather than simple and higher order learning rather than lower order learning demanding understanding and reflection. Therefore, these are another variety of response construction type tests. These tests make use of the ability to: (i) construct answer than merely identify interpretations and applications. (ii) to select (not from given responses), organize and integrate ideas and express in original terms related to content, and (iii) provide freedom to learners to construct their own responses and thus encourage their originality and flexibility. But these factors affect objective scoring.

11.4.2 Forms of Essay Type Tests

The freedom of response provided by long answer tests or essay tests can be a matter of degrees. In order to attain objectivity, even a long answer test can be very specific. The variations in freedom of response tend to fall along a continuum between two extremes (of a few sentences to several pages of answer). Depending upon the length of expected response, such tests can be classified into: (i) restricted response type and (ii) extended response type.

**Restricted response type:** Restricted response questions usually limit the size of the expected answers (limits should not be artificial only). In order to restrict the size of the response, it is desirable that scope of the content should be restricted by indicating size, time and intent of expected responses.

**Example:** Answer the following questions (in 50 words).

(i) Why is mercury preferred in thermometers? (give three reasons).

(ii) State the main difference between invasions by Gaznavi and Gouri in India.

(iii) Give three reasons for poverty in rural areas in India.

**Exercise 1.** Write at least two questions of restricted response test items. (select from your own subject).
Exercise 2. Critically evaluate the suitability of the following questions as restricted response type questions.

(a) Compare the achievements of Chandragupta Maurya with those of Ashok.
(b) Name three main places of importance in Gupta dynasty.
(c) Explain the difference in the impact of Battle of Plassey and Battle of Buxar.

Another way of drafting restricted response questions is to base the questions on specific problems. For this purpose, introductory materials can be presented which would be different from interpretive short answer test items only by the fact that essay type questions are used instead of multiple-choice or true-false type items.

Example: (A) Majority of us agree that iodine and iron are essential for good health and therefore, should be included in common salt as supplement as part of health programme. But this idea of compulsory mixing is against the principle of freedom of choice.

Question: Give two reasons for your position on the statement.

Restricted response type questions should be well structured and can be used for complex learning outcomes like application and interpretation of facts, deduction of valid conclusions etc. Too much restricted response type questions will also suffer from the same defects as short answer type questions and will have little scope of measuring capability of integrating, organizing, etc. of the content.

Example:

(A) Subject: Social Science
Topic: Human resources
Question: State briefly two main reasons for growing problems in Indian cities. (your answer should not exceed 60 words)

Extended response type: Deviating from short answer type tests and restricted response type questions, “extended response type questions” are used to provide greater freedom of response. On the one hand, this freedom will enable the learners to select appropriate factual informations, organize, integrate and evaluate ideas, while on the other hand this freedom makes the extended response test items ineffective in covering more areas of learning objectives/subject course content for measurement and introduces scoring difficulties with increase in subjectivity.

Example:

Subject: Social Science
Topic: Transportation and Communication
Sub-topic: Transportation
Question: Discuss in about 150 words contribution of efficient transport system in the economic development of India.
Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test item</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Score(s)</th>
<th>Learning outcomes (Measurable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Short answer objective type</td>
<td>Q. What is the full form of S.T.D.?</td>
<td>(1/2)</td>
<td>- Identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Response selection)</td>
<td>a) State to State Trunk Dialing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Straight Trunk Dialing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Subscribed Trunk Dialing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Subscriber’s Trunk Dialing</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer or objective type</td>
<td>Q. Name two important mass media useful for public.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>----do----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Response construction)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Type or Long answer</td>
<td>Q. Describe the two main mass media useful for public.</td>
<td>(2 ½)</td>
<td>- Describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Restricted response)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Define (in specific words), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Type or Long answer</td>
<td>Q. How does telecommunication strengthen the economy of a country?</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>- Explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Extended response)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Given reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Evaluate, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essay type tests, thus, provide a basis for evaluating the ability to organize, integrate, synthesis and evaluate knowledge. Response to essay type questions
reflect student's creativity, attitudes etc. Before studying other aspects of such tests let us pause and try to answer some questions.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Notes:**

a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. For each of the following, would it be more appropriate to use an extended response question or a restricted response question?

   i) Describe the differences in the two forms of Essay tests with regard to nature of Learning outcomes.

   ii) State the need of extended-response questions.

   iii) Use of studying this unit. (single)

   iv) Describe attitude of teachers in using essay tests.

   v) Discuss advantages of mixed economy in India.

### 11.4.3 Advantages and Limitations of Essay Questions

A brief discussion of essay questions has been presented in the previous subsection of this unit. In this section, let us discuss the advantages and limitations of essay questions.

The main advantage of essay question is that it can measure complex learning outcomes of higher order learning objectives and this use is not confined to recall of facts only. Second advantage of such a question (especially extended response type) is its emphasis on the integration and application of thinking and problem-solving skills. A third advantage is its ease of construction.

The limitations of essay questions are not less and severe. The most serious limitation is its reliability of scoring and this fact is well known to all. Though many a time this unreliability occurs because of the absence of clearly defined intent of questions, proper framing, clearly defined scoring rule/scheme and proper training in scoring. The second limitation may be attributed to the time required for scoring. Ironically, most of the suggestions for improving the scoring of essay type questions require more time for conscientious scoring. The third limitation of such questions is the limited coverage of the subject matter or course content. Inadequate coverage makes an essay type question ineffective for the purpose of proper evaluation.

### 11.4.4 Developing Essay Type Questions

In Units 10 and 12, steps for the construction of short answer questions have been discussed. Similarly, while writing essay questions a proper planning is needed. The course objectives should be clearly defined in terms of measurable learning outcomes. While discussing, construction of test in the previous Unit, preparation of 'Blue Print' has been discussed. "Blue Print" is a scheme which includes the information about short answer questions, restricted response
questions and extended response questions. It also includes the relative weightage (scores, number of questions of each type), and tentative time.

11.4.5 Guidelines for Constructing Essay Questions

Testing with the help of such questions requires attention of the paper setter on two main issues:

- How to construct such questions that can represent the desired learning outcome?
- How to score reliably the achievement of the learners?

A few suggestions are mentioned as guidelines for writing essay questions.

I. Essay questions should be used only when learning outcomes cannot be measured by objective type questions.

II. Question should be so worded that its intent is objectively stated. (i.e. to convey the meaning and scope of the answer and it should be interpreted in the same way by paper setter, examinee learner and scorer).

Example:

(1) Discuss the desirability of current government policy regarding Public Sector Undertakings.

(2) Discuss the desirability of current policy of the present government regarding disinvestment of government shares in the Public Sector Undertakings.

Support your answer with two examples. (your answer will be evaluated by appropriateness of facts, quality of arguments, example presented and skill with which answer is organized.)

Exercise: Evaluate the above two examples with respect to clarity, objectivity and scorability of students’ expected answers.

- There should not be any optional questions. If optional questions are provided to students, the common basis for evaluating learners’ achievement is lost and different students are being evaluated for different learning outcomes. This provides a distorted measure of students’ achievement and may lead to preparing for examination selectively.

- The questions framed should be based on well defined instructional objectives.

Some of the instructional objectives which can be assessed with the help of essay type questions are given as under:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of behaviour (Instructional objectives)</th>
<th>Key words (Sample of behaviour)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>- To compare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To give reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To infer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Generalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>- To apply principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>- To identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Distinguish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Analyse organizational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>- Writing a theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Formulates a scheme or plan of action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reconstruction of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>- Judging value of work or policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Making an appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Drawing conclusion about impacts etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The time limit and appropriate number of words for each question must be indicated.

Optional questions should not be provided as different questions may demand different attention. It is desired that specific time limits and scores may be indicated of each question depending upon expected length and depth of its answer required. It may be indicated either in introductory notes or in the parenthesis after each question. Since essay questions emphasize the speed, fewer questions with generous time limits should be provided.
Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Critically examine the following essay questions on the basis of criteria discussed.

   a) Do you think that Indian government should go for disinvestment of all Public Sector Units?

      .................................................................................................................................

      .................................................................................................................................

   b) What were the reforms brought by Raja Ram Mohan Roy for Indian women in the society?

      .................................................................................................................................

      .................................................................................................................................

   c) Prove that sum of angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles.

      .................................................................................................................................

      .................................................................................................................................

2. Restate the above questions to meet the criteria discussed.

      .................................................................................................................................

      .................................................................................................................................

11.4.6 Scoring of Essay Questions

It has been discussed earlier in this unit that essay question should be so constructed that it conveys the same meaning to learner, scorer and any other person. Beside other factors, the score is influenced by the language of question itself. Therefore, it is suggested that essay type questions should be so constructed that paper setter, learner and scorer all understand it in the same way with regard to its meaning, scope, size and time required. Needless to mention that no degree of proficiency in evaluating responses can compensate for poorly phrased questions.

The following suggestions can be used effectively to increase the reliability of the scoring procedures:
(i) A model answer along with a suitable scoring key should be provided to all evaluators.

(ii) Analytic method of scoring rather than holistic method should be used.

There are two methods of scoring response of an essay question: analytical and holistic methods. Analytical method employs molecular approach. Evaluator can identify the crucial elements of an ideal response. Scorer should identify the missing elements in learner’s response. The crucial elements included in the students’ responses are: organization, integration and relations between crucial elements. Analytical scoring is felt sometime cumbersome and tedious but its merit can’t be ignored. On the other hand, ‘holistic method’ involves scoring a response on the basis of global impression formed by the evaluator.

Example: Discuss the impact of Konkan Rail line on the Western Ghats of India.

Exercise: Consider the following pattern for scoring this question.

Scoring pattern may be developed like this. The dimensions to be assessed are social, political and economical impacts. The answer and examples should address to all the three dimensions. The scoring of answer should include all the three aspects and their relevant examples. Proportional deduction should be allowed for deficiency in the answers.

A scheme of scoring such a question is being given below (purely suggestive):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>All irrelevant response or no response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>At least one out of the three aspects is correctly narrated with no or irrelevant example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>At least one of the three aspects is correctly narrated with relevant example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>At least two out of the three aspects are explained correctly with at least one relevant example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>At least two out of the three aspects are explained with relevant examples to both the aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>All the three aspects are explained with at least two relevant examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>All the three aspects are explained with relevant examples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scale 0-6 can be used judiciously by the evaluator to award score on the continuum and quality can be adjusted accordingly.

(iii) Irrelevant criteria/factors should be controlled: There are some factors which can influence evaluation of essay questions but they are not pertinent to learning objectives being measured e.g. handwriting, sentence
structure, punctuation, neatness etc. are to be ignored while scoring if not included as one of the objectives.

(iv) Avoid ‘Halo effect’: ‘Halo effect’ in the scoring of essay question comes, when general impression about a person on the basis of scoring of one or two question(s) influences score(s) of subsequent questions. The evaluator should keep this factor in mind. However, to improve reliability, independent scoring of the answers to each question should be done though it is certainly troublesome and time consuming to carry out.

(v) Avoid students’ identity: “Halo effect” may also be influenced because of general impression of the teacher about a student. It would be better if the teacher rearranges answer books in random order and does not look at the identity of the students. One of the simplest way would be to write only roll numbers and other particulars at the back of the answer books. However, strong intention of the evaluator to know the identity of the students can’t be concealed.

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**Check Your Progress 4**

**Notes:**

a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit

1. List three factors while scoring of an essay question.

   ..........................................................................................................................

   ..........................................................................................................................

2. Describe ‘Bluffing’ as a source of scoring error in essay questions.

   ..........................................................................................................................

   ..........................................................................................................................

3. Describe a procedure of evaluating a question like “comparing the two events” (e.g. two periods in history or two concepts like evaporation and boiling).

   ..........................................................................................................................

   ..........................................................................................................................

4. Which of the following should not influence a score of an extended response question? (Please tick)

   i) Length of the answer.
   
   ii) Novel ideas or examples.
   
   iii) Overlapping of ideas.

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11.5 LET US SUM UP

The essay questions or long answer questions are best put to use to measure those learning outcomes that cannot be measured by short answer questions and are complex in nature. They may broadly include,

a) to construct response rather than simple identification or selection of responses including interpretative, application type test items.

b) to measure ability that need selection of appropriate solution, organisation, integration, explanation, discrimination, evaluation, analysis, synthesis like abilities among learners.

An essay question may be of two types: restricted response and extended response types. Whereas, the first kind is mostly applicable to the first (a) above, the second kind can be used to measure higher order learning outcomes mentioned above in (b). The essay questions have many advantages and disadvantages. Evaluation of essay questions can be improved by taking suitable measures like making the intent of question very objective, scoring analytically by comparing answer with standard answers, ignoring irrelevant factors, and scoring without looking into students’ identity.

11.6 UNIT-END EXERCISES

Given below are certain situations. You are required to suggest suitable form of question (i.e. interpretive objective type, restricted response essay type or extended response essay type questions). Give reasons in support of your answer.

(1) To evaluate student’s ability to judge the correctness of various reasons for the delay of crop production in the Rabi season.

(2) To rationalize advantages of rotation of crops.

(3) To evaluate applicability of a theorem of geometry.

(4) To distinguish between various kinds of triangles.

(5) To evaluate the impact of low Bank rate on industrial growth.

(6) To prove that the sum of the interior angles of a hexagon is equal to 8 right angles.

(7) To describe molecular structure of Ammonium Hydroxide.

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress 1

1. No
2. Response constructed.
3. Yes
4. (c)
Answers to Check Your Progress 2

i) Extended response
ii) Restricted response
iii) Extended response
iv) Restricted response
v) Extended response

Answers to Check Your Progress 3


Answers to Check Your Progress 4

1. (i) Absence of clarity in framing question.
   (ii) Absence of use of analytical mode.
   (iii) Halo effect or personal impression of scorer.

2. Develop a suitable answer.
3. Follow the example provided.
4. (i) Length of the answer.

11.8 SUGGESTED READINGS