

Short Answer Questions

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DESCRIPTION

Short Answer Questions are questions that require a briefer written response than a Long Answer Question, prompting the student answer to identify and present specific knowledge in a written answer. SAQs tend to be used to test basic knowledge and recall but unlike MCQ the onus is of the student to describe the answer. The SAQ can take several forms, including setting the form of a scenario, with a breakdown of sub-questions, each attracting a specific number of marks to give an overall mark, and students can answer in bullet points, or few words.

Virtues

- Can be swift to mark, especially if the answer requires the student to mention key words or phrases
- Marking criteria can be relatively objective
- Can be used as part of a formative and summative assessment
- Answers cannot be guessed, as with MCQs, as students must supply the answer
- Allows the assessment of a broad range of syllabus in a single exam.

Drawbacks

- Only suits questions with brief and clear answers
- Can encourage rote learning ahead of understanding unless paired with other assessment forms
- Award of marks can be overly rigid if mark scheme does not allow for students who answer in an alternative way or paraphrases
- Time pressure to read and write quickly can disadvantage students who struggle to recall under pressure.