

# Questionnaires

## What:

Written or computerized documents that contain questions for respondents to answer.

## Purpose:

To collect information about people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, practice context, etc.

## Advantages:

- Resource efficient.
- Can be completed by a large number of people.
- Can address a range of topic areas.
- Information is returned in a standardized way.
- Anonymity may reduce pressure for socially appropriate responses.

## Disadvantages:

- Captures opinions and needs of those who choose to respond.
- Low response rate may limit how representative the information is.
- Follow-up to non-respondents may be costly.
- Data is based on self-report and self-assessed needs.
- Results provide indirect measures of performance.

## Questionnaire Design:

*Questionnaire design is critical to obtaining high quality data*

### Points to consider in designing a questionnaire:

1. Involve target audience in questionnaire development.
2. Ensure that questions are relevant, direct, clear, specific, relate to each other and flow well.
3. Consider having a free text box at the end of sections or questionnaire to enable respondents to elaborate.
4. Place easier to ask questions earlier and sensitive questions later.
5. Address issues of validity and reliability.
6. Make format appealing and easy to read.
7. Provide clear introduction to questionnaire.
8. Pilot test the survey.

### Examples of question formats:

**Tick box:** Respondents may check a box indicating knowledge as extensive, adequate, or poor.

**Rating scale:** Respondents numerically rate each topic on a scale of 1 to 5 (low to high) for perceived current level of knowledge and their desired level of knowledge.

**Mark all that apply:** Respondents are asked to tick all preferred formats from a list of educational formats.

**Numerical ranking:** Rank list of factors influencing respondents' choice of CME programs from strongest to weakest.

**Open ended questions:** List highest priority areas for education.

### Examples of questionnaire-based needs assessment studies:

1. Price DW, Overton CC, Duncan JP et al. Results of the first national Kaiser Permanente continuing medical education needs assessment survey. *The Permanente Journal*, 2002;6:76-84.
2. Barnabe C, Kirk P. A needs assessment for southern Manitoba physicians for palliative care education. *J Palliat Care*, 2002; 18, 175-184.
3. Story MT, Neumark-Stzainer DR, Sherwood NE et al. Management of child and adolescent obesity: attitudes, barriers, skills, and training needs among health care professionals. *Pediatrics*, 2002;110:210-214.

### References

1. Boynton P, Greenhalgh T. Selecting, designing, and developing your questionnaire. *BMJ*, 2004;328:1312-5.
2. Hays RB, Davies HA, Beard JD, et al. Selecting performance assessment methods for experienced physicians. *Med Educ*, 2002;36:910-917.
3. Lockyer J. Getting started with needs assessment: Part 1 - the questionnaire. *JCEHP*, 1998;18:58-61.
4. Mann KV. Not another survey! Using questionnaire effectively in needs assessment. *JCEHP*, 1998;18:142-149.

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Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto