Effective Multiple-Choice Items

Review Checklist

The item

1. Is the item content correct, accurate and realistic?
2. Does the item match the standard, benchmark and indicator it is assessing?
3. Is the item fair and free from bias and sensitivity issues?
4. Is the item written at or below the grade level of the students who will be taking the assessment?
5. Does the item assess significant information?
6. Is the item written in the passive voice?
7. Is the item succinct, and does it contain only the needed information?

The stem

8. Does the item have a closed stem?
9. Does the item have a negative stem?
10. Does the item have a directed stem?
11. Does the stem avoid unnecessary technical language?

The options

12. Are the options the same length or ordered according to length, alpha order, or in numeric order?
13. Do the options avoid words such as “all” or “only?”
14. Are the options grammatically parallel?
15. Do the options avoid repeated information?

The key

16. Does the key answer the question posed in the stem?
17. Is the key correct and the only correct options?
18. Does the key contain significant language from the stem?
19. Is the key obvious because it is the only positively or negatively worded option?

The distractors

20. Are the distractors plausible, but incorrect?
21. Do the distractors present logical misunderstandings or misconceptions?
22. Do the distractors contain opposing statements?
23. Do the distractors avoid using the words “all of the above” or “none of the above?”