



TEST REVIEWS

Faculty "Roast" or Student Learning Experience?

Annette Bairan
Professor of Nursing

Beverly Farnsworth
Assistant Professor
of Nursing

Even though the effect is beneficial, test reviews are often anxiety-provoking, negative experiences for both students and faculty. Reviews can deteriorate into a defensive confrontation in which faculty defend their test items and students advocate their choices. Some faculty have referred to the situation as a faculty "roast." To make test reviews a more positive and constructive learning experience, we implemented a new approach.

Students are told to bring their textbooks and notes to class on the test day. Following the test, students are given a 15-minute break, at which time the tests are machine-scored and an overhead projector and screen are set up. When the students return from their break, tests and corrected answer sheets are returned to them; at the same time, a transparency with the item numbers, correct answers, rationales, and source(s) of all answers is projected on the screen. Students are instructed to check their notes and textbook sources if they have a question about a rationale. After reading the source, students are instructed to raise their hands if a question still remains and an instructor will go to them. The student then receives individual attention and feedback on the rationale in question. They can challenge the answer constructively, and other students can proceed at their own pace.

If a student thinks there is a valid, alternate rationale for an incorrect answer, he or she is allowed to turn in an individual written rationale and source that justifies the selected option. The instructor reviews these rationales and lets the individual student know if the rationale was accepted, and points are given for the student's answer. Blanket acceptance of items for the whole class is not given unless the item is incorrect. This discriminates between students who have a valid concern regarding an answer and students who chose the option in question by simply guessing.

Because the transparencies are changed only when all students have finished with each sheet of rationales, some students have to wait while others catch up. Three alternatives are: 1) set up another overhead projector and screen for an additional set of transparencies, 2) have a few extra copies of the rationales for the faster students to use individually, or 3) reproduce the rationales on paper — a copy for each student — instead of using transparencies.

An example of a test item with rationale is the following:

Mr. Smith's rehabilitation includes teaching him how to perform various activities of daily living. Mrs. Smith seems unable to accept the idea that her husband should do things for himself, even though he is hemiplegic. The nurse may be the most helpful in dealing with Mrs. Smith by:

- telling Mrs. Smith to let her husband do things for himself.
- letting Mrs. Smith know that the nursing staff has full responsibility for Mr. Smith's activities.
- letting Mrs. Smith assume responsibility for her husband's care as

she sees fit.

- asking Mrs. Smith for her assistance in planning the activities most helpful to her husband.

Rationale for test item:

- This option seems to overlook Mrs. Smith's need to help in her husband's care. Also, it does not offer an explanation as to why he needs to do things for himself.
- This sounds defensive, plus not including Mrs. Smith may result in her feeling unneeded. Also, it is inadequate, in that including the family increases the amount of rehabilitation "carry-over" to the home. The client is not an entity unto himself.
- This may prevent Mr. Smith from achieving his full potential of independence, plus Mrs. Smith may not be competent to assume such responsibilities.
- This allows Mrs. Smith to participate in planning her husband's care, which will likely result in her feeling useful and needed.

Source: (author, title, page[s])

The results of this type of test review have been very favorable. When students anonymously evaluated the course in writing, the new test review method was rated superior to other types of test reviews by all the students. Their anxiety level was low during the reviews. They were able to concentrate on their weak areas and to have individual attention. They had the option of submitting an alternative rationale for consideration. Time was not wasted in attacks and defense, and the faculty felt better about the reviews — that is, not "roasted," but "warmed" by student learning. 🍏

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