

Examination Question Writing Guide

The purpose of this document is to provide formatting guidelines for questions that will be stored in our question bank. These apply to both single-answer multiple choice questions (MCQ) as well as to multi-answer clinical decision-making questions (CDMQ).

All questions should be based on the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Exam (MCCQE) format, as published in the [Guidelines for the Development of Multiple-Choice Questions](#) and [Guidelines for the Development of Key Feature Problems & Test Cases](#), to help prepare students for their MCCQE Part I exam. Any question not structured in accordance with that format will require revision or will be rejected from the question bank.

- **MCQ:** Should be single best answer, made up of a stem (usually a clinical scenario) with a lead-in question, followed by five response options – one correct or best answer (in red font), and four distractors.
- **CDMQ:** The Clinical Decision-Making (CDM) component of the exam consists of case descriptions, followed by one or more questions, which assess problem-solving and decision-making skills in the resolution of a clinical case. CDMQs are either in a short-menu format with the maximum number of choices not exceeding 15 options and the with one or more correct or best answer(s) (in red font), or write-in format.

Not Accepted:

- Any question whose answers include “none of the above”, or “all of the above”.
- Any question whose answers include a combination of choices, e.g. “a and b”, or “c and d”.
- Questions that say something like “All following statements are true except” or “Which of the following is not correct?”.
- Caps (except for acronyms) and/or bold.
- Any question that includes the use of the words “always” or “never”.
- More or less than five answer choices.
- Use of acronyms alone. Acronyms should be spelled out first and follow in brackets, e.g. “magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)”.

Inadvisable:

- Questions asking for recall of a single fact, e.g. “Which of the following substances is a hormone?”.
- Absence of a clinical stem, i.e. questions having only a lead-in such as “Which of the following statements is correct?”.

Acceptable/Preferred:

- Clinical scenarios/vignettes, where questions pertain to a scenario – in most cases these should be clinically based, and a designation of the clinical context should be given.
- The distractors and the correct answer should “look” similar in length and form i.e. if the lead-in asks for the best treatment, include only various treatments among the responses (not diagnoses or other types of elements).

Required:

- Association of the question with one or more identified learning objectives of the unit/rotation. These can be found on the UGME ProfZone website: <https://www.uottawa.ca/faculty-medicine/undergraduate/faculty/prof-zone>
- Association of the question to one or more content areas.
- More than one multiple choice question can be presented following a single clinical stem. They should be identified as such above each question (e.g. Question 1 of 2, Question 2 of 2, etc.).
- Brief rationale for the correct or incorrect answers is added in light blue at the end of the question, if available.
- Lab values must be inserted into the body of the question or into a table, as in the example below:

An 86-year-old female is seen in the Emergency Department with dyspnea. An arterial blood gas is performed, revealing:

pH	7.34	(normal 7.35-7.45)
PaCO ₂	60 mmHg	(normal 35-45 mmHg)
PaO ₂	52 mmHg	(normal 80-100 mmHg)
HCO ₃	30 mmol/L	(normal 22-26 mmol/L)

Which is the correct interpretation of this blood gas?