



Contribution ID: 477

Type: Oral Presentation

Multiple Choice Question Responses: Right or Wrong?

Friday, 8 July 2016 15:20 (20 minutes)

**Abstract content (Max 300 words)
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Multiple choice questions (MCQs) are a tempting alternative to constructed response questions, especially when large numbers of students are being examined, because of their potential to save labour during marking. However one criticism of the MCQ is that it does not address the issue of 'part marks'. The student who chooses a partly correct answer is indistinguishable from an entirely incorrect choice, yet these are usually awarded the same marks in any MCQ-based examination. There exists a way to award different marks to each distractor in a MCQ, depending on the seriousness of the error resulting from the choice. Instead of having one correct option and three or four definitely wrong answers, each distractor must follow logically from an anticipated error. A different number of marks is awarded to each distractor depending on the gravity of the error, which effectively amounts to the awarding of part marks. The feasibility of doing this depends on the practicalities of marking – be it manually, or by whatever computer based marking system is available to the examiners. In the School of Physics at Wits, the marking of MCQs have been performed using an "old software" developed to cater for the evaluation of part-marks in MCQs. In our presentation a number of examples will be demonstrated and discussed.

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Session Classification: Physics Education

Track Classification: Track E - Physics Education