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Response to: 'Twelve tips for introducing very short answer questions (VSAQs) into your medical curriculum'

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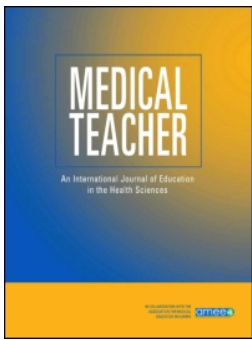
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Response to: 'Twelve tips for introducing very short answer questions (VSAQs) into your medical curriculum'

Dear Editor

With great interest, we read the paper by Bala et al. (2022) providing twelve tips for introducing very short answer questions (VSAQs) into the medical curriculum. Our recent study on VSAQ- use validation in Dutch medical undergraduates (awaiting review) provided us with insights that may further facilitate the introduction of VSAQs into the medical curriculum.

Although it is an attractive option to convert cover test proof single-best-answer-questions (SBAQs) into VSAQs by simply removing the answer options (**Tip 2**), we urge teachers to be rather careful when turning SBAQs into VSAQs. Although we adhered to important VSAQ construction requirements (especially specificity, see **Tip 4**) when rewriting cover test proof SBAQs into VSAQs, students interpreted questions in unforeseen ways and gave a larger-than- expected variety of answers. This occurred less frequently in VSAQs that had been written from scratch.

In conjunction with the above, we strongly recommend to have your VSAQs peer-reviewed by colleagues. This can help identify possible shortcomings before VSAQs are used in student assessment. Especially when asking colleagues from a different domain, missing shortcomings as a result of similar thought-processes can be avoided.

Lastly, we saw great value in training teachers, similar to the training of standard setters (**Tip 7**). In our study, we offered a workshop in one of the two courses studied, during which teachers were elaborately introduced to, trained in, and assisted with writing VSAQs. We considered the grading process of the course in which the workshop was offered to be less complex, as the given answers were less heterogeneous. In addition, participating teachers developed and maintained a positive attitude towards VSAQs leading to continued use of VSAQs in their courses.

VSAQs may offer an important contribution to assessment in medical education, as long as they are properly constructed and implemented. We believe our insights

further extend the tips from Bala et al. (2022) to facilitate this.




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Reference


Bala L, Westacott RJ, Brown C, Sam AH. 2022. Twelve tips for introducing very short answer questions (VSAQs) into your medical curriculum. *Med Teach*. DOI: [10.1080/0142159X.2022.2093706](https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2093706)

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