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Should we be banking on it? Exploring potential issues in the use of ‘item’ banking with structured examination questions

Conference Paper Abstract

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Should we be banking on it? Exploring potential issues in the use of 'item' banking with structured examination questions

There is a future need for increased flexibility in assessment, both for candidates and for question setters. One model that might help meet this need is item banking as setters can write a few questions rather than whole papers and tests can be created rapidly. However, there are few examples of banking being used with question types other than multiple choice. This research aimed to explore:

- factors considered, and strategies used, when selecting structured questions from a bank
- issues that question banking with structured questions might raise.

For an International A level Physics exam, a bank of structured questions was created from past exam papers. Three question writers constructed exam papers from the bank whilst being observed. Participants were also interviewed.

Factors considered when selecting questions were topic, skills to be assessed, intended difficulty level of questions, and task type (e.g., definition, calculation, graph use).

Participants' strategies varied with one spending time viewing a range of questions, the second using information about the questions to narrow down which to view, and the third relying mostly on information about the questions. A number of issues arose such as challenges around selecting questions that together provide the appropriate total mark.