APPENDIX V

APPROACH TO QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Introduction

This appendix provides a brief introduction to questionnaire design and covers

- the type of question that can be used
- some useful do's and don'ts or the design of questionnaires, particularly the self-complete variety.

Types of questions

There are five main types of questions:
- classification questions
- coded/structured questions
- open-ended questions
- semantic differential type questions
- Likert type questions.

We will look at each of these types of question in turn

CLASSIFICATION QUESTIONS

Purpose:
- for analysis of the data
- to check the representativeness of a sample

Examples:
- age
- sex
- grade
- occupation
- department.
Coded/Structured questions

The respondent is given a limited choice of answers.

*Purpose*:

- to test knowledge
- to establish facts
- to measure attitudes

*Examples*:

How long must an employee have been employed before s/he can bring a claim for unfair dismissal on the grounds of race or sex?

Please tick the appropriate box:

One Year
Two years
No time limit
Don't know

Please indicate the five most important purpose of team briefings. Please put a 1 against the most important, a 2 against the next most important, and so on.

Give information on objectives / targets
Receive information / feedback
Discuss company issues
Discuss job issues
*etc.*

Other, please describe: .................................................................

*Advantages*:

- quick and easy to complete
- easy to analyse

*Disadvantages*:

- hard to design
- forced choice, may cause bias
Open-ended questions

The respondent is free to give any answer

Purpose:

- to test knowledge, usually of more complex areas/issues
- to measure attitudes

Examples:

What information should be included in the record of......?
Describe what you would do if.......
What do you think about the new proposals for......?

Advantages:

- gives no hints to the answers
- allows free expression of attitudes
- no bias
- easy to design

Disadvantages:

- difficult to analyse
- requires a strong marking frame, i.e., a framework for assessing the answers in the case of knowledge tests and coding and categorising schemes for attitude and opinion information.

Semantic differential type questions

The respondent is asked to assess something on a seven point scale. Other number scales can be used.

Purpose:

- to assess skills
- to measure attitudes.
Examples:

Please assess the chairmanship skills of the delegate, by circling the appropriate rating:

Strong control 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Week control
Listened well 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Did not listen

What are your views on bullying in the workplace?
very serious issue 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not a serious issue
Occurs frequently 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Occurs not at all

Advantages:

• allows for a structured range of responses
• easy to analyse.

Disadvantages:

• subjective judgements on rating scale.

Some issues:

• whether or not to be consistent with which is the favourable extreme, ie left or right
• whether to have a middle option, ie use an odd number scale (eg 5, 7, 9), or whether to use an even number scale to force a choice between the top half and the bottom half of the scale and avoid respondents' tendency to go for the middle option.

Likert type questions

The respondent is asked to indicate his/her views against a rating which is specified.

Purpose:

• to assess skills
• to measure attitudes
Examples:

Please indicate your views on the new disciplinary procedures, by ticking the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Easy to understand

Will improve discipline

etc

Please assess the chairmanship skills of the delegate, by ticking the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control of meeting

Listening skills

etc

Advantages:

- allows for a structured range of responses
- specifies the meaning of the scale.

Disadvantages:

- constrains response
- can cause bias.

Some issues:

- important to have a balanced set of response options
- whether to have a middle option for the same reasons as listed for the semantic differential type question.
Do’s and don’ts of questionnaire design (Self-complete questionnaires)

- keep questionnaire as short as possible
- keep questions as short and simple as possible
- use simple language - avoid technical / jargon words or acronyms, eg:
  - How many special incidents have you been involved in?
  - How many DP forms are there?
  - Do you use DCF techniques?
- avoid questions which rely heavily on memory - use the appropriate time span, eg:
  - How many training courses have you been on in the last five years?
  (Can you remember how many training courses you have been on in the last five years? A year may be the more appropriate time span.)
  - How many times have you used the staff restaurant in the last six months?
  (One month might be more appropriate.)
- avoid ambiguous questions, eg:
  - How many employees are you responsible for? (What does 'responsible for' mean - the employees that directly work for you, all the employees in the department that you head, those that you are professionally responsible for?)
  - Do you have a computer? (What does have mean - at home or at work, for your sole use or access to, etc?)
- avoid leading questions and using emotive words, eg:
  - Do you feel that your manager should be more supportive?
  - Do you think the company should forbid the use of telephones for personal calls?
- avoid multiple questions eg:
  - Do you think the company need more and better training?
• avoid double negatives
  Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:
  Managers should not be required to record their time on duty.

  Agree □□
  Disagree □□

• avoid 'presuming' questions, eg.

  How many training specifications have you prepared in the last six months?(This should be preceded by a filter question - have you prepared...... ?)

• questions should always be able to stand alone eg:

  How old was your baby when it arrived? (This was made clear by the previous question - when did you receive your free sample of milk!)

• try to avoid hypothetical questions - you will get a hypothetical answer!

  Would you use physiotherapist at work if one was available? (It is more productive to probe experience, eg of using a physiotherapist).

• if you are providing a structured list of choices, always give a Don't know, Not applicable, Other, Please specify option

• PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL, eg:

  Instructions for completing the questionnaire or individual questions.

  - tick one box only
  - routing or skip-to instructions - if yes, go to Q6.....
  - contiguous, not overlapping categoriesage

92