TSDA In-Training Exam
Item Development Guidelines
Goals

• Determine whether resident possess the knowledge and cognitive skills necessary for safe and effective performance in the profession

• Knowledge being assessed is the content contained in the Thoracic Surgical Curriculum
Format

• Type A multiple choice item structure
  • **Stem** followed by a series of possible responses
    • **Key**: one best answer
    • **Distractors**: incorrect or non-best answers
Guidelines

• Best questions require application of knowledge not just recall of facts
  • Clinical scenario or vignette
• Questions should be clearly written
• Inclusion of pictures, graphs, diagrams, and video clips is encouraged
• Must include references
  • Section of Thoracic Surgery Curriculum content
• Include a brief comment section indicating the significance of the item, what is being tested, how the candidate should reason
Flawed Questions

• Vague terms: usually or rarely
• Negative stems: all of the following except, least likely, etc.
• Multiple true/false
  • Question should be able to be answered without reading responses
• Too easy or difficult
  • Ideal range 40-75% correct
• Which of the following statements is true
Stem

• Brief clinical scenario or vignette with relevant information
  • Avoid unnecessary information
  • Elicit a diagnosis, choose management, order or interpret a test, or select an operative procedure
    • The most likely diagnosis is...
    • The best next step in management is...
    • The treatment with the highest rate of success is...
    • The most appropriate management is...

• Able to be answered without looking at responses
Responses

• Include 4 options (3 distractors and 1 correct answer)
• Distractors should be plausible
  • Reflect common misconceptions or faulty logic
  • Avoid absurd distractors that no one will choose
• One clearly correct answer
• Distractors should be of similar length
• Imprecise terms (e.g., commonly, usually) suggest a correct response
• Absolutes (e.g., always, never) suggest an incorrect response
• Do not use “none or all of the above”
Question Template

• Question #
• Question Author: (Your Name)
• Topic: (The assigned topic of the question, e.g., Cardiac/Coronary Artery Disease)
• Stem
• Options/Responses/Distractors: (3 distractors and 1 correct answer)
• Key: (The correct answer)
• Illustration/Visual: (Must clearly and obviously show the lesion or pathology on which the examinee is being tested)
• Reference(s): (Include 1-3 current, peer-reviewed references for every item. Write out the full citation information. Remember to add where in the Thoracic Surgery Curriculum the reference was found)
• Author’s Comments: (Brief descriptive information about the item, such as the concept being tested, or the relevance of the item)