Examination is the commonly used evaluation process for measuring educational outcomes. There are different ways of performing examinations such as written, practical and viva voce or oral examinations. In professional education oral examinations are often combined with practical examinations. In health sciences, the practical examinations are also referred to as clinical examinations (Pearce & Lee, 2009). Viva examinations are the examinations where the examinee is asked series of questions on the selected topics directly by the examiner/s and the examinee is expected to give immediate response verbally. It is a general non-patient based encounter between a candidate and one or more examiners (Wakeford, Southgate & Wass, 1995).

Viva examinations have lot of importance in clinical education.

1. They are focused on the practical/clinical situations and its associated domain. The examinee is exposed to the clinical learning adequately prior to the examination and assumed to have achieved expected level of competency in the specified course.

2. Viva examination is a valid and novel method of assessing learning outcomes such as application of deep learning, application of theory to practice, and problem-solving skills. The viva questions are directed towards the knowledge related to the skills which the examinee has just demonstrated. They provides an opportunity to the examinee to speak out their understanding, contradict opposing ideas and support their views (Pearce & Lee, 2009; Upasani, 1978).

3. Knowledge which cannot be accessed through skill presentation can be accessed through oral examinations. Following the demonstration of patient care procedures, knowledge of the student related to patient care policies can be assessed.

4. The examiners can assess the comprehension and assessment abilities of the examinees directly while seeking immediate response from the examinee. They get an excellent opportunity to assess the verbal and nonverbal skills of the examinee along with his ability of handling questions and organising answers (Shinton, 1978).

5. The personality of the examinee can be assessed like his grooming, level of confidence, tone of voice, facial expressions, vocabulary and the comprehension skills etc.

6. The examiners can correct the wrong concepts of the students in relation to patient care practices.

Advantages

Direct testing of students’ knowledge is possible in viva examinations and it can be completed on time as planned. Students can be guided during the examination and their wrong concepts can be corrected immediately in face to face encounter. Communication skills of the students can be directly examined (Shinton, 1978).

Disadvantages

It consumes lot of time as individual students are assessed by one or more examiners (Torke et al 2010; Dobson, 2008). Further, it is very taxing for both examiners and examinees. Waiting for the turn of examination can be very tiring and stressful for the students. The psychological stress of examiners can have direct negative effect on evaluation scores of students (Wellington, 2010). The students who appear first and last may get positive and/or negative impact due to the examiners high level of enthusiasm or tiredness. The examination can cause tremendous anxiety on the minds of the examinees which may adversely affect their performance (Saipanish, 2003). Sometimes the examinees may gain benefit due to hallo effect and/or become victims of the horn’s effect.

Elements of Viva-Voce Examinations

The four major elements of viva examinations are the examinee, the examiner, the setting of the
examination and the process of examination.

The Examinee

The examinees are the most important element in the viva examinations. They undergo tremendous stress before, during and immediately after the examination. Before the examination they possibly try to study everything what they perceive important. The most vulnerable phase they experience is few days before and just before encountering the viva examination. With the start of the theory examination, the critical phase of their academic life starts and during the viva examinations it is on its pick level.

The Examiner

The examiners are the senior academicians and experts in the field of examination with specialised qualifications and experience. The examiners have to thoroughly understand the intricacy of the examination system, curriculum process and the level of preparation of the examinees. They have to prepare themselves in terms of questions to be asked and get acquainted to tools and techniques of viva examinations.

The Setting

The designated area of the hospital ward/unit/Health centre is usually the setting of the viva examination. As compared to classroom or laboratory environment, the hospital environment is quite stressful. The stress of the environment can be reduced by the examiners and the faculty involved with conduct of the viva examination by simply exhibiting friendly and supportive gestures towards the examinees.

The Process

The process of examination comprises steps like intimating the students about the actual schedule of examinations, the rules, regulations and discipline to be followed just before, during and after the examination and the conduct of actual viva-voce examination.

Points to be Remembered in Conduct of Viva-Voce examination

By the examiners

The purpose of examination is to find what the student know and not to find out what the students do not know. The examiners get this status by virtue of their experience and qualifications in the field and mostly they are the senior members of the profession. Examiners should think rationally to the point of view of the student and display mature behaviour towards the conduct of examination.

The viva voce examinations are very threatening among all kinds of examinations and some examinee may find it more difficult than the actual practical skill presentations. They may produce a disproportionately high degree of anxiety in the examinees which normally impair the performance of the students (Pahwa et al, 2008; Eysenck, 1982).

The students who are not comfortable in verbal presentations may find this experience as very threatening (Ardent et al, 2004). Reassure the examinee if he/she is anxious and nervous. The tension of examinations not only makes the examinee nervous but quite often they break up before, during or after the examination due to the fear of failure or inability to perform well. In such situations their performance may decline. It is important to reassure the student and help him/her to feel relaxed and comfortable to face the examination.

One illustration highlights the ill effect of not planning and organising the process of viva voce examination adequately by the examiner. One of the examiners was taking viva of one examinee and simultaneously she was also observing the nursing procedure of another examinee. While going to observe the procedure, she told the examinee who was waiting for viva, to read the questions written on the paper and get prepared to answer, till then she said, she will observe the procedure and come back. The examiner handed over the paper of viva questions and went away. To her surprise, the viva examinee found that the paper she got from examiner was not the question paper but the examiner had handed over the mark sheet where marks allotted to each examinee were written. The student was very curious to know her marks, so she started reading the paper in hand and the examiner came back. When she saw the student reading the marks, she was extremely unhappy about the student's conduct. It is regardless to state that this student failed in this examination. So, unless the examiners are carefully selected, trained, and monitored, examinations may become haphazard process (Wakeford et al, 1995).

The examiners have to prepare themselves to conduct the viva examination with thorough understanding of the course syllabi, aims and objectives of the course, type of students, the number of students, and their level of preparation. They need to prepare questions on the important
content area along with model answers (Khera et al., 2005).

Viva questions should be on important content area. The questions which are not of much importance and demand very minute details should be avoided like: State the year when international nursing council came into existence? Who is the first health assembly president? What is the long form of ILO etc. If there are more than one viva examiners then the content of examination should be divided among them beforehand to avoid duplications in questions.

Viva-voce examination provides great opportunity to check comprehension, analysis and application skills of the students. The examiners must ask questions to which the examinee is able to plan, comprehend and present his/her answers in few lines and not in few words.

The examiners must welcome the examinee as the he/she arrives for the viva, make him/her feel comfortable, and ensure non-threatening environment. Greet and offer seat. Initially ask questions on general wellbeing like - How are you? How are you feeling? Are you tensed? Had your breakfast or lunch? Are you prepared to answer the examination? Introduce yourself and your fellow examiners to the examinee. If more than one examiner is taking the viva together, then ask questions one by one and not both together. If the questions are on clinical cases, then provide the statement of clinical scenario to the student to read. State the questions clearly, in simple language, do not use ambiguous terms. Encourage and motivate the examinee to answer. Explain or paraphrase the question to him/her if he/she has not understood. If the examinee is not comfortable with the question the examiners also can present new question to him. The examiners should have multiple questions so that the individual students can be presented with variety of questions. Ask simpler questions first and then complex questions.

The examiners should not evaluate the language of the students if not stated as evaluation criteria. They should not expect that the students will answer in the same language, sequence as the examiner knows. There are individual differences and people choose words for presentations based on their preferences.

The examiners should not threaten the students like, 'You will fail', and 'I will fail you as you have not answered well'. They should not ask such questions like: 'Where have you learnt this?' 'Which teacher has taught you this? The examinees should never be ridiculed when they have given wrong and inadequate answers.

When the examinee is answering the question, listen to him/her and do not stop them abruptly.

The examinees should not be evaluated based on their personality, place of residence, religion, ethnicity etc.

If the same examiner is appointed for theory and clinical examination then avoid relating theory examination of the examinee with the clinical and viva examinations. Do not ask questions to the students on the areas where he / she has not done fairly well in theory examination.

By the examinees

The examinees have to be very clear about the objectives of the viva examination, know the syllabus well and prepare accordingly. If the viva is following the clinical examination, then the examinees must ensure that they know all the aspects of patient’s clinical problems and line of nursing and medical management (McCulloch, 2007).

The examinees must know the types of cases admitted in the ward, the existing health problems and common health problems of the region. They should be positive and confident of their hard efforts, and should not get panic or anxious, if they do not present any part of the answer. Anxiety related to the answer of the previous question may have negative effect on the next question.

They should take care of their grooming. Wear clean and ironed uniform/apron. Take light meal as heavy meals may give rise to drowsiness.

Greet the examiners pleasantly and politely. Take seat when you are asked. Listen very carefully what examiners are saying. Listen to the questions carefully.

Understand the question, analyse and assess the content area, organise and present answer in a pleasant tone of voice. The examiner can be requested to repeat the question If not understood properly, or request for changing the question, if not comfortable about it (this request should be made only for one or two questions).

Present the answer completely or till the examiners tells to stop. Do not present wrong answers. Do not make gestures or facial expressions which will communicate negatively to the examiners. Do not argue with the examiners. Thank the examiners after the viva examination.
References


Mahrashi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha’s
Smt. Bakul Tamat Institute of Nursing Education
Karvenagar, Pune 411 052. Estd. 2000 (Only for Women)
Tel.No (020) 25475020, 25477557, 25478107, Fax No. (020) 25475020.
Email: btine@vsnl.net Website: www.mkss sine.org
Recognized by Maharashtra Nursing Council, Maharashtra Government & Maharashtra University of Health Sciences and Indian Nursing Council (Implementing ISO –9002).

R.A.N.M Programme (1½ Years)
Applications are invited from 10th or its equivalent with 45% or its equivalent with 45% Passed candidates for admission to 1½ Years course.
Age limit: 16 – 35 Years.
Prospectus Price : Rs.200/-

Basic B.Sc Nursing Programme(4 Years)
1) 12th Passed candidates or its equivalent consisting of PCBE with 45% of the total marks.
2) Asso-CET-2012 / MHT-CET-2012 is essential for regular quota. For NRI quota CET is not essential.
For detail information, visit website www.amupmdc.org
3) Have attained age of 17 years on admission
Prospectus Price : Rs.300/-

Post Basic B.Sc Nursing Programme (2 years)
1) G.N.M. passed with registered Nurse & Midwife
2) Age limit: Complete (40 Yr. for OPEN) & (45 yr. Reservation) at the time of admission (31st July 2012)
Prospectus Price : Rs.350/-

M.Sc Nursing Programme (2 Years PG Course)
1) B.Sc(N)/P C.B.Sc (N) passed with 55% of the total marks.
2) APGN-CET 2012 (Association Post Graduate Nursing CET) For detail information, visit website www.amupmdc.org
4) One year of work experience after Basic B.Sc(N) or prior or after work experience in Post Basic B.Sc(N)
Prospectus Price : Rs.400/-

Ph.D (N) Centre
1) From the year 2012 onwards the college started Ph.D (N) centre under Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik. For detail information, visit university website www.muhnsashik.com

Send DD/M.O drawn in favour of “Principal, Smt.Bakul Tamat Institute of Nursing Education," Pune.

Principal
Smt. Bakul Tamat Institute of Nursing Education

Secretary
Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha