

Multiple-choice question paper scores in pathology

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Scores obtained from 10 medical schools, for multiple-choice pathology papers (Finals and pretest) taken in April and October of both 1969 and 1970 are analysed.

Comparison of the results by medical school shows that one school tends to score lower, and three to score higher; with one of these three schools maintaining consistently high scores.

Comparison of results by sex was difficult. The numbers of students were not comparable; however, women tend to obtain higher scores.

Using identical pretest papers on each of the four occasions (as a means of standardizing the different Finals papers), it appears that each October group scores higher than its respective April group. In terms of scores, a higher standard seems to have been required in 1970 than in 1969. Familiarization with the pretest paper over the period studied may have complicated its use as a standardizing tool, but these results reinforce our view that fixed pass marks tend to be inappropriate for multiple-choice question (MCQ) tests. At present we can suggest no method for discovering these variations in standard other than that of retrospective analysis. Students using the pretest paper scored higher in the Finals MCQ paper than those who did not.