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Redesigning PRES and PTES – using cognitive interviews for survey revision

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Workshop outline



1. Introduction
2. Cognitive testing: rationale and approaches
3. PRES cognitive interviewing project: method and key results
4. Discussion: Cognitive testing and approaches to redesigning PTES
5. Wrap-up and next steps

Introduction

Redesigning PRES and PTES

- HEA's postgraduate experience surveys first launched in 2007 (PRES) and 2009 (PTES)
- Value to sector evidenced by:
 - increasing participation
 - feedback from institutions
 - PTES Review 2012
 - Vitae research on use of PRES for enhancement
- BUT
 - concerns over length of surveys
 - new developments in PG education since 2007 (e.g. RDF)
 - interest in how students respond to items

Introduction

Redesign of PRES 2012-13

- Mainly focused on ‘experience’ scales
- Reduction in length and removal of redundancy
- Standardisation of question format
- More (and more focused) free-text questions
- Greater emphasis on research and professional development skills – and opportunities for acquiring them
- Refinement of existing and new questions to ensure interpreted consistently and as intended

Professional Development

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about professional development?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. If you have any additional comments about professional development, please write them in here:

Introduction

Trends in PRES participation

	PRES 2007	PRES 2008	PRES 2009	PRES 2011	PRES 2013
HEIs	58	73	82	102	121
Respondents	10,544	16,524	18,644	31,202	~47,000
Response rate	25.2%	28.9%	28.6%	32.0%	~41%

Introduction

What we did...

- Quantitative analysis of PRES datasets, examining for duplication
- Vitae survey, summer 2012
- Consultation with institutions, sector bodies and PRES Advisory Group in autumn 2012
- Commissioned cognitive testing to ensure face validity of existing and new questions:
 - led by University of Glasgow
 - undertaken by and with PGR students at multiple institutions
 - covering multiple subject areas and student groups

Introduction

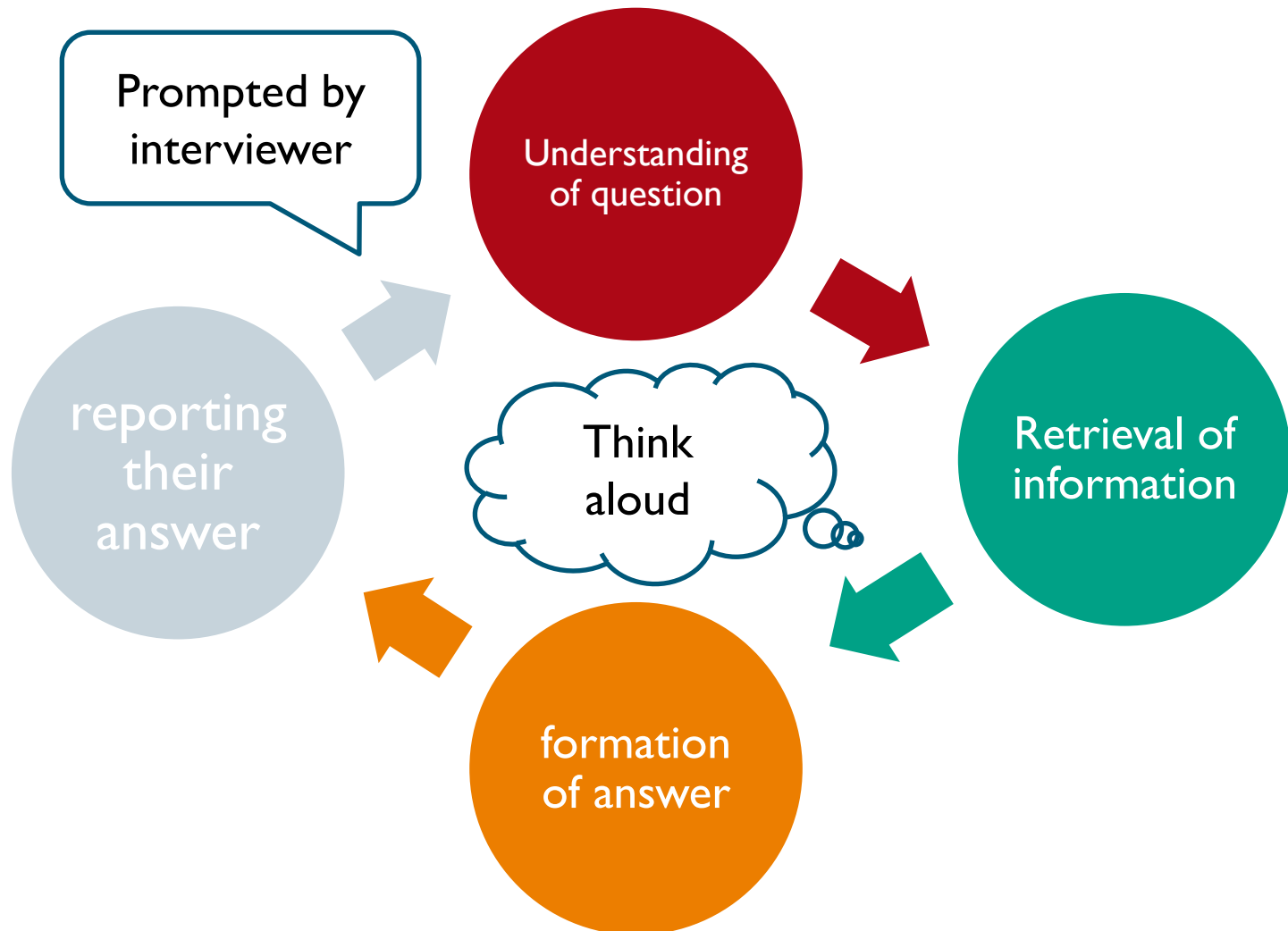
Redesigning PTES

- Focusing on the design of the PTES questionnaire in advance of PTES 2014
- Planning to consult widely with institutions
- We have just commissioned a programme of cognitive testing with PGT students...

Cognitive testing of survey items

- Semi-structured one-to-one interviewing
- Use survey items as prompts
- Participants think-aloud as they answer
- Also use follow-up probes
- Explores question interpretation, validity, and alternative wordings

Why “cognitive”?



You have a go...

In pairs, please ask the other to think aloud whilst considering the following question...

“On a scale of 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.

As a result of my current employment,
I have become more confident at
tackling unfamiliar problems”

what did ‘unfamiliar problems’ mean for you?

Interpretation and understanding





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PRES EVALUATION

METHODS AND RESULTS



- Timeline: Sept 2012 - Jan 2013!
- 21 PGR interviewers, 146 Interviews in 10wks (~150 hrs)
- Interviews took place at 16 institutions (14 with multiple rounds) across the UK, covering all mission groups
- Produced university selection criteria; advertised by PRES officers and student unions & selected via 3 person panel
- Each interviewer conducted 3-4 rounds of interviews using different questions

KEY RESULTS

- There is more than one aspect to the question being asked leading to respondents being unsure on how to answer the question

“Effectively *planning* (1), *managing* (2) and *delivering work* (3) in good time”

- An aspect of a question is placed after a more easily understood term leading to the question being answered mainly on this term

“My understanding of research practices that are respectful of the intellectual and *personal rights* of others has developed during my programme”

- An aspect of the question has many interpretations leading to non consistent answers

“The *research environment* in my department or faculty stimulates my work”

KEY RESULTS

- The key aspect of a question proves difficult to understand
“I am active in my department's *research community*”
- The question was not relevant to the majority of respondents
“My ability to *work with others and influence teamwork* has developed during my programme”
- A part of the question is seen as redundant as it is covered by a previous part
“I have adequate access to the specialist resources and *facilities* necessary for my research”

Discussion

- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of cognitive testing?
- Could cognitive testing help you in using the results to inform enhancement?
- Are there particular aspects of PTES where we should focus testing?
- What does PTES not cover now that we should look at including for 2014?