

Testing Methods and Teaching Islam

By PhD student, [Shaftolu Gulamadov](#)



I worked this year as RA for Shafique Virani, assisting with his courses at the UTM campus. Virani is a lively and inspirational teacher of Islamic history who uses various teaching styles to encourage students to think critically. The aim of the course I worked with was not just to communicate facts, but to help students achieve competency in locating, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and applying knowledge in real life, complex situations. I was responsible for creating weekly multiple-choice tests in such a way that they could both test and develop students' higher order thinking skills.

Before I began designing the tests, I was under the impression that multiple-choice test items were only good for measuring simple recall of facts, i.e., lower-level objectives such as those based on knowledge of terms, methods, procedures, principles and so on. The multiple-choice tests I had seen and taken before seemed only to assess these limited types of well-defined or lower-order skills. This research opportunity has given me the chance to do some serious research on testing methods and how to make them useful for promoting higher order thinking skills. Among many other things, I have carefully studied Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives and categories of cognitive behaviour, Robert Gagne's hierarchy of learning, Royer Cisero's theoretical analysis of cognitive behaviour, Thomas Haladyna's classification of higher order thinking skills and methods of developing and validating multiple-choice test items.

Learning about the methods of creating tests and theories of higher order thinking, and then creating the tests and seeing their positive impact on students' learning, has been a truly rewarding experience. The help and guidance of Professor Virani throughout the research and work on the tests has been beyond measure. Not only has this unique research opportunity allowed me to gain practical experiences for a future teaching career, it has also allowed me to enhance my knowledge of Islamic history.

About Shaftolu Gulamadov

Gulamadov is originally from Tajikistan. He has attended schools and universities in Tajikistan, Russia, England and Canada. He earned his MPhil degree in Classical and Medieval Islamic History from the University of Oxford. His areas of interest include the role of Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia, classical Persian literature, Shi'i (particularly Isma'ili) socio-political history, and Sufism. His main research interest is to study the religious literature of Pamiri Ismailis in Tajikistan. He enjoys learning languages, traveling and embracing and appreciating different cultures and customs. He has had the pleasure of visiting many countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa, Eastern and Western Europe.