

A standard topic list for conducting cognitive pre-tests



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Quest Workshop
Washington 9-11 April 2013

Background

- The CIRF forced us to specify all individual steps we take in a pre-test project.
- Surprise: we already seem to have a standard way of executing pre-tests, but have not fully documented it.
- Input for the construction of a standard topic list.

Comparing CIRF Categories with elements of the original report

	CIRF Categories	Chapter	Original StatNeth Report
1	Research Objectives	1	Introduction
2	Research Design	1 & 2.2	Introduction & Methods, subsection Test procedure
3	Ethics	-	Not included
4	Participant Selection	2.1	Methods, subsection Test respondents
5	Data collection	2.2	Methods, subsection Test procedure
6	Data analysis	3	Results
7	Findings and recommendations	3	Results
8	Conclusion, implications and discussion	4	Conclusions and recommendations
9	Strengths and limitations	-	Not included
10	Report format		Appendices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •(test) questionnaire •test protocol •examples of recruitment letter, consent form etc.
-	Not included		Methods, subsection Test questionnaire

Items in topic list

- 1) Reviews
- 2) Defining research questions
- 3) Designing the pre-test
- 4) Executing the pre-test
- 5) Analyses
- 6) Reporting

Step 1 Reviews

- Review of previous versions of the questionnaire.
- Review of previous evaluations.
- Desk review by methodologist identifying potential problems.
- Review of 'common knowledge'.
- Review of translation procedure.
- Review of survey design, one mode or mix of modes.

Step 2 Research questions

- Based on outcomes of step 1.
- Combine research questions of clients:
 - *National*: Statistical department of StatNeth, Research Institutes, Governmental Departments
 - *International*: Eurostat, other NSI's
- Define general and specific research questions for the pre-test:
 - comprehensibility and validity
 - mode specific issues
 - flow of the interview

Step 3 Design of the pre-test

- Define test population and recruitment strategy.
- Choose test methods (cognitive interview techniques, observation, conversation analyses, small scale experiments).
- Choose (mixed of) mode(s) for pre-test.
- Design or compile the test questionnaire, i.e. scripted probes, alternative question texts, additional evaluation questions etc.
- Write protocol for test interviews with guidelines for test interviewer

Step 3 Design of the pre-test (organisation)

- Define project planning with strict time schedule.
- Choose project team members, include client, interviewers methodologists, content specialists, etc.
- Define plan for analyses and reporting, crucial for international projects or projects with several testing partners.

Step 4 Execution of pre-test

- Recruit test respondents.
- Plan appointments, keep in mind project schedule, availability of test interviewers, burden of test interviewers.
- Instruction for test interviewers. Explanation of protocol.
- Execution of test interviews.
- Reporting on individual test interviews.
- Evaluation meeting with test interviewers, first impression and the preliminary results.

Step 5 Analyses

- Triangulation: Based on the individual test reports and the findings from the reviews (history, evaluations, common knowledge, translation procedure, design) a spreadsheet is composed.
- To get an overview of the most prevalent and significant problems a draft list of main findings was composed.
- Example of template of an international pre-test (ICT survey).

Step 6 Reporting

- Based on the analyses of the template a report is written for the client including recommendations.
- The Cognitive Interviewing Reporting Framework (CIRF) can be used as a standardised form to report on pre-tests to achieve completeness and comparability.

Discussion

- How to incorporate the topic list and CIRF to report on your pre-tests?
- Too many steps or more additional steps?
- Usefulness of the topic list and the CIRF?