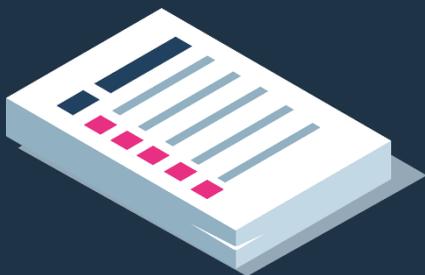


Ten benefits of an “item bank” when delivering online assessments

*Why an item bank and assessment platform
outperform learning management systems*



Introduction: the advantages of an item bank

Why do employers and test setters need an online assessment provider like Questionmark? Why can't they just use a learning management system (LMS) or e-learning system to create and manage tests and exams? Among the many compelling reasons is the value of an "item bank" in which to store questions.

An "item bank" is the name for a database of questions (also called "items") for all tests. Item banks enable test setters to save and retrieve questions according to specific characteristics such as topic, difficulty, competency, or objective.

When saved in this way, item banks help organizations to build online tests more efficiently. They allow test setters to use questions across multiple tests, to maintain a reliable record for defensibility and reduce the risk of cheating.

Some e-learning authoring systems, LMSs and course management systems however only enable organizations to store questions alongside the assessment content or within a course. Questions cannot be searched for or retrieved by their specific characteristic or purpose.

This works well on a small scale but gets harder the more tests an organization has and the more they change over time. So, without an item bank, it's very hard to manage and deliver reliable assessments at any scale.

For test setters with a few hundred questions, an item bank is useful. With a few thousand, it becomes critical.

With our enterprise-grade assessment platform, test setters can create and use item banks to rapidly deliver online assessments. It frictionlessly integrates all aspects of delivering an assessment into one platform.

This white paper is relevant for corporate employers and others who author and deliver online assessments.

Book a demo: <https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/>



Ten reasons why an item bank is invaluable

Item banks enable organizations to deliver assessments in less time. They allow test setters to reuse questions, search for questions that need to be updated, and to reduce the risk of cheating by limiting access to certain questions.

Here are ten ways item banks are critical for employers that use thousands of questions across multiple staff assessments.

1. **Get more value from questions by using them in multiple tests:** when creating a test or exam, employers can pick questions from the item bank and can have the same question in multiple tests. This is tricky to manage if questions are stored in different places.
2. **Search for questions that need updating or can be re-used:** once test setters have thousands of questions, it becomes critical to be able to search and filter them. As shown in the screenshot below, Questionmark's item search allows test setters to search the question description, stimulus, choices, meta tags and more.

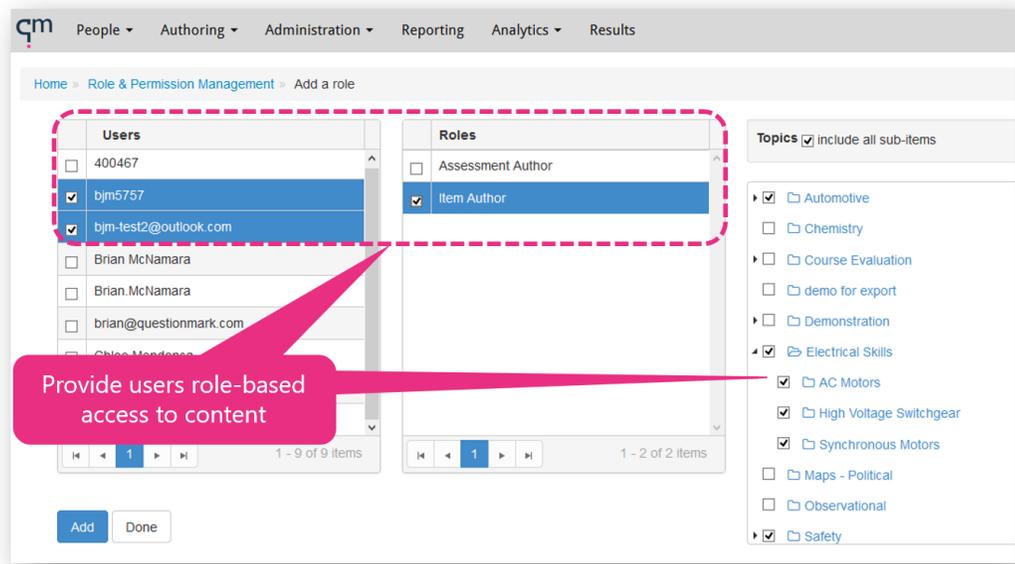
Item Search

The screenshot displays the Questionmark item search interface. A search bar at the top contains the text 'load capacity'. Below the search bar, a dropdown menu is open, listing various search criteria: Description, Question status, Maximum score, Created by, Created on, Modified by, Modified on, Copyright holder, Review status, Question Stimulus, Question ID, Question Choices, Question Outcomes, Questions by tag name, Questions by tag value, Created on range, Modified on range, and Original reference. The 'Question Stimulus' option is highlighted. A pink callout bubble points to the search bar with the text: 'Search item bank to find items that contain certain words and/or tags'. A teal callout bubble points to the search criteria dropdown with the text: 'Search description, stimulus, choice, status, meta tags, dates and more'. The main interface shows a table of questions with columns for 'Or...', 'Description', 'Type', and 'Modified on'. The table contains 9 questions, with the first three rows visible. The first row has a checkbox, '1', 'Forklift operation - visibility while moving a pallet', 'True / False', and 'Jul 06 2018'. The second row has a checkbox, '2', 'An operator must engage the brakes prior to dismounting.', 'True / False', and 'Jul 06 2018'. The third row has a checkbox, '3', 'When refueling or recharging a powered industrial truck the ...', 'Multiple choice', and 'Aug 15 2018'. The table also has a 'Revisio' column on the right side.

3. **Align questions to topic or competency area:** it's useful to tag questions by topic, difficulty level, competency, objective, and other characteristics. An item bank allows test setters to organize questions hierarchically and assign meta tags so they can find, select, and use them as needed.

4. **Keep records for defensibility purposes when questions are retired:** it can be useful to “retire” a question when they become out of date, get shared too widely, or no longer match the assessment objective. With an item bank, a retired question is no longer used but organizations can still reference it as evidence to defend past tests or to run statistics on.
5. **Maintain integrity by being able to roll back questions:** a good item bank keeps track of all changes to questions. If a change needs unraveling, an item bank allows employers to roll back to a previous version.
6. **Show an item audit trail for legal defensibility:** tests are used to make people-related decisions. So, employers, certification bodies and test setters may need to prove questions were constructed using a proper process. If organizations are challenged that a test is unfair, it is critical to maintain previous versions and record the construction history of each question in the test.

Roles & Permission Management



7. **Reduce cheating risk by limiting access to questions:** an item bank allows employers to set roles and permissions, and limit access to questions on a “need to know” basis. This reduces the risk of leakage and potential test fraud.

8. **Manage translations well:** when test setters change a question, an item bank can help them keep track of updating the translations. It's very time consuming to make multilingual tests without a good item bank.
9. **Assessments that select at random from the item bank:** an item bank makes it easy to deliver assessments that select questions at random using criteria to ensure topic coverage and similar difficulty. This creates a different test for each test-taker and enables someone to take a test again and receive different questions. By updating the bank, organizations can add and remove questions over time without disrupting the test.
10. **Make it practical for a team to collaborate on building a test:** perhaps the biggest benefit of an item bank is that it enables a team to work together to build questions and the test. Questionmark allows collaborative authoring with separate logins, an audit trail of all changes, the ability to see a comparison "track changes" view of items and much more.



Conclusion: where does technology fit in?

Some employers, organizations and test setters may be tempted by an assessment solution that does not offer an item bank, such as an e-learning system or basic software tool.

But, for organizations with thousands of questions, this may be a false economy. The lack of an item bank may mean these approaches are time-consuming, difficult to operate, and inefficient.

Questionmark provides an enterprise-grade assessment platform that offers an item bank as standard. Our platform also integrates with a range of other features such as proctoring, badging and much more.

For test-setters with a few hundred questions, an item bank is useful. With a few thousand, it becomes critical. Some of our customers have hundreds of thousands of questions.

Book a demo

<https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo>



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About Questionmark:

We help employers and their people unlock their potential to deliver better performance.

Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise. Its full-service online assessment tool and professional services help customers to improve their performance and meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable and fair, which can be defended.

Questionmark offers secure powerful integration with learning management systems (LMS), learning record stores (LRS) and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place.

Questionmark's cloud-based assessment management platform offers rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S., Australian and European-based data centers.

Working with Questionmark

To further explore how Questionmark could work for your organization, or to book a free consultation and demo, please see: <https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/>

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