



National Patient Experience Survey Programme

Consultation meeting with the Picker Institute Europe

February 2017

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1. Background

The National Patient Experience (NPE) Survey programme purchased a library of internationally-validated questions from the Picker Institute Europe (the Picker library of questions) to use for the National Patient Experience (NPE) Survey questionnaire. In order to ensure that the NPE Survey questionnaire would be fit for purpose and meaningful in the Irish context, the National Patient Experience Survey Programme team engaged in the following process:

1. Eight NPE focus groups, involving 62 individuals, were conducted⁽¹⁾. Six of the focus groups were conducted with patients in one hospital drawn from each of Ireland's hospital groups¹. Two additional focus groups were conducted with data users in Dublin and in Cork.
2. A two-round Delphi⁽²⁾ study was commissioned which integrated the findings from the focus group discussions to further refine the list of questions for inclusion in the NPE Survey. A panel that comprised 60 patients and 'experts' from across the healthcare service was appointed. The Delphi panel ranked all 189 survey questions in order of importance. Among this set of questions, the top 60 questions are considered a priority. The remaining 40 questions could be added to the survey at a later date. These questions were also mapped against HIQA's National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare⁽³⁾ (NSSBH).

In order to ensure that the questions selected for inclusion will provide the greatest value in terms of feedback for the healthcare service, Picker Institute Europe was engaged to provide feedback on the final set of items proposed for the survey questionnaire, and to provide additional consultation for the NPE Survey Programme as required.

2. Purpose of the consultation

The academic literature on survey design recommends that feedback should be obtained on draft questionnaires from survey content, structure and analysis experts to highlight "potential survey design problems" at an early phase of the design process⁽⁴⁾. The NPE Survey team therefore decided to organise a meeting with Picker Institute Europe to review the questions proposed for inclusion in the NPE Survey

¹ As the NPE programme intends to survey adults in acute care, a focus group was not conducted in the Children's Hospital Group.

questionnaire as prioritised by the Delphi panel. As such, the top 100 questions were individually discussed and evaluated on the basis of their rationale for inclusion and usefulness in the final survey questionnaire. Picker Institute Europe (hereafter referred to as Picker) also reviewed the structure and flow of the questionnaire and advised on the implementation of the survey, how to report survey results, how to achieve statistical validity and how to maximise response rates for the survey once it goes live.

Given the considerable expertise of Picker in conducting patient experience surveys, this consultation presented a useful opportunity to review the survey design process to date, to learn from Picker’s practical experience and to refine the set of questions for inclusion in the final survey.

3. Review of the survey questions

Picker individually reviewed the top 60 questions and the reserve bank of 40 questions as identified in the Delphi study⁽²⁾. This section tracks and outlines all changes made to the top 60 questions following recommendations by Picker. A rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of questions is provided in brackets and in italic under each item. The following colour coding was adopted:

- questions which were **removed** from the top 60 questions are marked in **red**
- new questions and questions from the reserve bank of 40 questions which were **included** in the final set of questions are marked in **green**
- questions from the top 60 prioritised questions which were kept and left unchanged are in **black** font.

Table 1. Structure of the survey

Survey theme	Sub-theme (where applicable)
Admission to hospital	Emergency care The accident and emergency department Waiting list or planned admission All types of admission
The hospital and ward	Visitors Food
Doctors	
Nurses	
Your care and treatment	Pain Tests Treatments
Operations and procedures	
Leaving hospital	
Overall	

About you	
Other comments	

For the purpose of this report, the questions have been regrouped by thematic area, in line with the structure of the original Picker library of questions. Table 1 contains an overview of the structure of the survey by themes and sub-themes.

Theme: Admission to Hospital

The first theme covered in the survey is 'Admission to Hospital'. Picker advised that, although not in the top 60, Q1 was required to open the survey and to direct respondents to the next applicable section.

Rank	Question number	Question
65	Q1	Was your most recent hospital stay planned in advance or an emergency? <i>[Filter question – directs respondents to the next applicable section.]</i>

Sub-theme: The Accident and Emergency Department

Under this sub-theme, Picker suggested including a filter question and a question on waiting times. Given the long waiting times for admission to hospital in Ireland, Picker advised including a question on this topic as it captures one of the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and the public may expect this information. Otherwise, questions in this section remained the same.

Rank	Question number	Question
Not ranked – filter question	Q10	When you arrived at the hospital, did you go to the A&E Department (also known as the Emergency Department, Casualty, Medical or Surgical Admissions Unit)? <i>[Filter question - directs respondents to the next applicable section.]</i>
12	Q12	Were you given enough privacy when being examined or treated in the A&E Department?
28	Q13	When you had important questions to ask doctors and nurses in the A&E Department, did you get answers that you could understand?
38	Q16	While you were in the A&E Department, did a doctor or nurse explain your condition and treatment in a way you could understand?
3	Q21	Overall, did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the A&E Department?
82	Q22	Following arrival at the hospital, how long did you wait before being admitted to a bed on a ward?

		<i>[The Irish public may expect a question on waiting times in the NPE Survey; relevant to HSE KPI.]</i>
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Sub-theme: all types of admissions

Based on experience with other survey administrations, Picker advised removing Q39, which resulted in the removal of the sub-theme 'all types of admissions' from the final survey questionnaire.

Rank	Question number	Question
48	Q39	How would you rate the courtesy of the staff who admitted you? <i>[Unfamiliarity with hospital admission procedures may result in patients wrongly identifying staff as admission personnel, thereby introducing bias on the response for this item.]</i>

Theme: The Hospital and Ward

Under the theme of 'the hospital and ward' Picker suggested removing Q47. Picker also recommended moving Q48 to after Q57. Otherwise, questions in this section remained the same.

Rank	Question number	Question
53	Q47	When you needed to use a toilet or bathroom, was there a suitable one located close by? <i>[The closeness of facilities is less important than providing assistance in getting to the toilet (i.e. Q48).]</i>
31	Q51	Were you given enough privacy while you were on the ward?
29	Q56	In your opinion, how clean was the hospital room or ward that you were in?
43	Q57	How clean were the toilets and bathrooms that you used in hospital?
32	Q48	When you needed help from staff getting to the bathroom or toilet, did you get it in time?
34	Q61	Did staff wear name badges?
8	Q62	Did the staff treating and examining you introduce themselves?

Sub-theme: Food

Picker suggested removing Q77 and replacing it with Q74. Otherwise, questions in this section remained the same.

Rank	Question number	Question
27	Q70	How would you rate the hospital food?
62	Q74	Were you offered a choice of food? <i>[Replaces Q77.]</i>
40	Q77	Was the hospital food suitable for your dietary needs? <i>[Could be misunderstood and interpreted as asking patients whether the hospital catered for individual food preferences. Replaced by Q74.]</i>
55	Q78	Were you ever unable to eat during mealtimes (e.g. because you were away from the ward, recovering from surgery, etc.)?
51	Q79	Were you offered a replacement meal at another time?
16	Q80	Did you get enough help from staff to eat your meals?

Theme: Doctors

Picker suggested generalising Q84 in terms of staff. Picker also recommended removing Q89 and replacing it with a question asking patients to rate their confidence in hospital staff. Picker noted that confidence in a physician/hospital staff member and his/her competency generates a sense of assurance and safety not achieved by courtesy. All other questions remained the same.

Rank	Question number	Question
20	Q83	When you had important questions to ask a doctor, did you get answers that you could understand?
46	Q84	If you had any worries or fears about your condition or treatment, did a doctor discuss them with you? <i>[Replaced with Q105, which is more general in terms of staff. Moved to 'Your Care and Treatment'.]</i>
23	Q85	Did you feel you had enough time to discuss your care and treatment with a doctor?
69	Q86	Did you have confidence and trust in the doctors treating you? <i>[Replaces Q89. Recommended combining with Q93 and to generalise in terms of staff. Moved to 'Your Care and Treatment'.]</i>
45	Q89	How would you rate the courtesy of your doctors? <i>[Recommended replacing with a question asking patients to rate their confidence in staff (e.g. Q86 and Q93).]</i>

Theme: Nurses

The changes suggested by Picker in relation to the 'Nurses' theme were very similar to those suggested to the 'Doctors' theme. As such, Picker suggested generalising questions in terms of staff, to remove Q97 and to replace this item with a new question on confidence.

Rank	Question number	Question
37	Q91	When you had important questions to ask a nurse, did you get answers that you could understand?
30	Q92	If you had any worries or fears about your condition or treatment, did a nurse discuss them with you? <i>[Replaced with Q105, which is more general in terms of staff. Moved to Your Care and Treatment'.]</i>
70	Q93	Did you have confidence and trust in the nurses treating you? <i>[Replaces Q97. Recommended combining with Q86 and to generalise in terms of staff. Moved to Your Care and Treatment'.]</i>
41	Q96	If you ever needed to talk to a nurse, did you get the opportunity to do so?
39	Q97	How would you rate the courtesy of your nurses? <i>[Recommended replacing with a question asking patients to rate their confidence in nurses (e.g. Q93 and Q86).]</i>

Theme: Your Care and Treatment

Picker did not suggest any changes to the theme 'Your Care and Treatment'. The list of questions below includes the two questions generalised in terms of staff. Q105 had been ranked by the Delphi panel among the top 100, whereas the question 'Did you have confidence and trust in the hospital staff treating you?' is a new question and as such, does not figure in the original Picker library of questions.

Rank	Question number	Question
17	Q100	Were you involved as much as you wanted to be in decisions about your care and treatment?
50	Q101	How much information about your condition or treatment was given to you?
9	Q103	Was your diagnosis explained to you in a way that you could understand?
47	Q104	If your family or someone else close to you wanted to talk to a doctor, did they have enough opportunity to do so?
64	Q105	Did you find someone on the hospital staff to talk to about your worries and fears? <i>[Combines and replaces Q84 and Q92 from the 'Doctors' and 'Nurses' themes.]</i>
New	New	Did you have confidence and trust in the hospital staff treating you? <i>[Combines Q86 & Q93. Replaces Q89 and Q97.]</i>
4	Q109	Were you given enough privacy when discussing your condition or treatment?
1	Q110	Were you given enough privacy when being examined or treated?

Sub-theme: Pain

Q117 is the only question on 'Pain' that was rated in the top 60 by the Delphi panel. Picker suggested including an additional response item to cover all potential answers.

Rank	Question number	Question
19	Q117	Do you think the hospital staff did everything they could to help control your pain? <i>[Include response item 'I was never in any pain'.]</i>

Sub-theme: Tests

Picker did not suggest any changes to this theme.

Rank	Question number	Question
13	Q124	Did a doctor or nurse explain the results of the tests in a way that you could understand?

Sub-theme: Treatments

Picker advised removing Q127. The other two questions in this theme remained the same.

Rank	Question number	Question
57	Q125	Before you received any treatments (e.g. an injection, dressing, physiotherapy) did a member of staff explain what would happen?
59	Q126	Before you received any treatments (e.g. an injection, dressing, physiotherapy) did a member of staff explain any risks and/or benefits in a way you could understand?
36	Q127	Did you feel you could refuse any treatment that you did not agree with or did not want? <i>[Recommended removing this question considering the order in which it appears. A large majority in other similar survey administrations reply 'yes', and hence this question would not yield useful data.]</i>

Theme: Operations and Procedures

Picker did not suggest any changes to this theme.

Rank	Question number	Question
42	Q131	During your stay in hospital, did you have an operation or procedure?
21	Q132	Beforehand, did a member of staff explain the risks and benefits of the operation or procedure in a way you could understand?
22	Q134	Beforehand, did a member of staff answer your questions about the operation or procedure in a way you could understand?
25	Q135	Beforehand, were you told how you could expect to feel after you had the operation or procedure?
5	Q139	After the operation or procedure, did a member of staff explain how the operation or procedure had gone in a way you could understand?

Theme: Leaving Hospital

Picker recommended excluding Q153 as this item tends to be highly correlated with Q151 and Q152 (and therefore redundant). Picker also recommended including the response item "I had no medicines" for Q151.

Rank	Question number	Question
10	Q140	Did you feel you were involved in decisions about your discharge from hospital?
54	Q141	Were you given enough notice about when you were going to be discharged?
60=	Q142	Were your family or someone close to you given enough notice about your discharge?
15	Q149	Before you left hospital, did the doctors and nurses spend enough time explaining about your health and care after you arrive home?
44	Q150	Before you left hospital, were you given any written or printed information about what you should or should not do after leaving hospital?
18	Q151	Did a member of staff explain the purpose of the medicines you were to take at home in a way you could understand? <i>[Include response item "I had no medicines".]</i>
33	Q152	Did a member of staff tell you about medication side effects to watch for when you went home?
52	Q153	Were you told how to take your medication in a way you could understand? <i>[Highly correlated with Q151 & Q152.]</i>
49	Q155	Did a member of staff tell you about any danger signals you should watch for after you went home?
35	Q156	Did hospital staff take your family or home situation into account when planning your discharge?

26	Q157	Did the doctors or nurses give your family or someone close to you all the information they needed to help care for you?
14	Q159	Did hospital staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?
58	Q162	Do you feel that you received enough information from the hospital on how to manage your condition after your discharge?

Theme: Overall Experience

Picker recommended removing of Q169 as kindness is measured elsewhere and essentially already covered by Q168. Picker's experience of other survey administrations shows high overlap between Q168 and Q169.

Rank	Question number	Question
7	Q168	Overall, did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the hospital?
6	Q169	Overall, were you treated with kindness and understanding while you were in the hospital? <i>[Concepts of kindness and understanding are already covered by other items selected for inclusion.]</i>

Theme: About You

Picker advised including additional demographic questions. At a minimum, Q176, Q177, Q178 and a question on ethnicity/cultural background were recommended for inclusion. Picker recommended including Q176, which asks whether the questionnaire was completed by proxy, that is, whether someone else completed the questionnaire on behalf of the patient. Surveys filled out by proxy consistently report worse experiences of care. Picker advised that a question on medical cards and private health insurance, if included, could act as a crude proxy for socio-economic status. As this question would be new, it would need to be tested locally.

Rank	Question number	Question
Not ranked	Q176	Who was the main person or people that filled in this questionnaire?
60=	Q177	Are you male or female?
56	Q178	What is your year of birth?*
New	Irish census question	What is your ethnic group or cultural background?
New	New	Do you currently have a medical card and/or private health insurance?

*NB. The original wording of this question is "What was your year of birth?".

Theme: Other Comments

Picker highlighted the importance of including open-ended questions such as Q196, Q197 and Q198, as they allow patients to further describe their experience and focus on aspects of their care particularly important to them. These were included with identical wording as shown below, but with an addition to the instructions: "We are interested in hearing the views and experiences of everyone, whether good or bad. We encourage you to express your views here. Any information you provide will be treated in total confidence."

Rank	Question number	Question
2	Q196	Was there anything particularly good about your hospital care?
11	Q197	Was there anything that could be improved?
24	Q198	Any other comments?

4. Other points of discussion

Picker recommended clearly delineating sections addressing different themes to avoid respondent confusion and noted that various themes would benefit from one or two introductory sentences to ensure that patients understood exactly under which theme they were asked to answer questions. This advice has been implemented in the final stages of survey structure and layout.

5. Additional changes made to the NPE Survey questionnaire

A small number of additional changes were made to the final questionnaire. These changes were necessary to ensure that the questions flow in a logical manner. Moreover, minor cultural adaptations were made to tailor the questionnaire to the Irish context.

Two questions changed sequence: Q10, previously under the theme 'The Accident and Emergency Department', was moved to the theme 'Admission to Hospital'. Under the theme 'The Accident and Emergency Department', Q12 was moved to after Q16.

A new filter question was included after Q21, at the end of the section on 'The Accident and Emergency Department'. The question 'Did you remain in A&E for the entire time of your stay?' was added to direct participants to the next applicable section. It is probable that some survey participants remained in the emergency department for the entire time of their hospital stay, and did not get to a ward. As these individuals were not 'inpatients' as such, the majority of questions, originally designed by the Picker Institute for inpatient settings, will not apply to them. This new filter question will direct participants to the sections 'About You' and 'Other Comments' at the end of the questionnaire, where participants can share important aspects of their experience.

The wording of Q10 and Q22 were modified to fit the Irish hospital context. In Q10, 'When you arrived at the hospital, did you go to the A&E Department (also known as the Emergency Department, Casualty, Medical or Surgical Admissions Unit)?', 'Admissions Unit' was replaced with 'Assessment Unit' as this is more commonly used in Ireland. The words 'to a bed' were removed from Q22 'Following arrival at the hospital, how long did you wait before being admitted to a bed on a ward?'. Inpatient wards are equipped with beds but can also contain other devices for patients to lie down. Picker previously indicated that changes to the wording of validated questions are permissible when there is a need to adapt a question to a particular cultural context.

Q131 ('During your stay in hospital, did you have an operation or procedure?'), which is a filter question for the theme 'Operations and Procedures', was removed to further reduce the number of questions. Filter questions mainly serve an instrumental purpose; they can be removed unless their exclusion renders the sequencing of the questions problematic. Q131 was also removed to ensure consistency with the sections on 'Tests' and 'Treatments', which are not prefaced by filter questions. Instead, all introductory questions for 'Tests', 'Treatments' and 'Operations and Procedures' now include an additional response item which allows participants to state that they did not have an intervention. These additional response options perform the same function as filter questions.

Table 2 (at the end of this document) presents the questions to be used in the next and final stage of questionnaire development, the cognitive interviews.

6. Conclusion

The consultation meeting with the Picker Institute Europe constituted an opportunity to further inform and refine the survey tool and to learn from the Institute's extensive experience in carrying out patient experience surveys. The expert advice of Picker has proven valuable in the development of a robust and user-friendly survey instrument, the findings of which will inform quality improvement for hospital patients.

This paper has outlined the changes made to the final NPE Survey. Through a multi-stage refinement process, the original Picker library of 189 questions was reduced to 60 core questions for inclusion in the NPE Survey.

7. Next steps

In a next phase, commencing in January 2017, cognitive interviews will be carried out to assess the comprehensibility of the proposed NPE Survey instrument from a cognitive and logical point of view, and to make final changes as necessary. Cognitive interviews are a form of pre-survey evaluation method designed to identify problems that could compromise the interpretation of questions/information as intended by the survey developers.^{5, 6} In cognitive interviews, participants will be asked to provide verbal information on how they process questions and navigate the questionnaire. This information in turn feeds into revisions of the questionnaire.^{5, 6} Cognitive testing will also inform the layout and visual design the NPE Survey questionnaire. The content of the survey questionnaire will not change; no questions will be removed or added to the NPE Survey in this testing phase.

On approval from the National Patient Experience Steering Group for the final survey design, the survey tool will be ready to be administered nationwide in 2017.

The National Patient Experience Survey will allow and enable patients to voice their opinion, to tell their story and, in doing so, provide a rich source of information that will assist all of the partner organisations to work towards improving the quality of patients' experiences in acute healthcare.

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Table 2: Final questions for inclusion in the NPE Survey (with necessary local adaptations to question wording)

Sequence	Rank	Question number	Question
Admission to Hospital			
1	65	Q1	Was your most recent hospital stay planned in advance or an emergency?
2	Not ranked	Q10mod	When you arrived at the hospital, did you go to the A&E Department (also known as the Emergency Department, Casualty, Medical or Surgical Assessment Unit)?
The Accident and Emergency Department			
3	28	Q13	When you had important questions to ask doctors and nurses in the A&E Department, did you get answers that you could understand?
4	38	Q16	While you were in the A&E Department, did a doctor or nurse explain your condition and treatment in a way you could understand?
5	12	Q12	Were you given enough privacy when being examined or treated in the A&E Department?
6	3	Q21	Overall, did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the A&E Department?
7	New	New	Did you remain in A&E for the entire time of your stay?
8	82	Q22mod	Following arrival at the hospital, how long did you wait before being admitted to a ward?
The hospital and Ward			
9	31	Q51	Were you given enough privacy while you were on the ward?
10	29	Q56	In your opinion, how clean was the hospital room or ward that you were in?
11	43	Q57	How clean were the toilets and bathrooms that you used in hospital?
12	32	Q48	When you needed help from staff getting to the bathroom or toilet, did you get it in time?
13	34	Q61	Did staff wear name badges?
14	8	Q62	Did the staff treating and examining you introduce themselves?
Food			
15	27	Q70	How would you rate the hospital food?
16	62	Q74	Were you offered a choice of food?
17	55	Q78	Were you ever unable to eat during mealtimes (e.g. because you were away from the ward, recovery from surgery etc.)?
18	51	Q79	Were you offered a replacement meal at another time?
19	16	Q80	Did you get enough help from staff to eat your meals?
Doctors			
20	20	Q83	When you had important questions to ask a doctor, did you get answers that you could understand?
21	23	Q85	Did you feel you had enough time to discuss your care and treatment with a doctor?
Nurses			

Sequence	Rank	Question number	Question
22	37	Q91	When you had important questions to ask a nurse, did you get answers that you could understand?
23	41	Q96	If you ever needed to talk to a nurse, did you get the opportunity to do so?
Your Care and Treatment			
24	17	Q100	Were you involved as much as you wanted to be in decisions about your care and treatment?
25	50	Q101	How much information about your condition or treatment was given to you?
26	9	Q103	Was your diagnosis explained to you in a way that you could understand?
27	47	Q104	If your family or someone else close to you wanted to talk to a doctor, did they have enough opportunity to do so?
28	64	Q105	Did you find someone on the hospital staff to talk to about your worries and fears?
29	New	New	Did you have confidence and trust in the hospital staff treating you?
30	4	Q109	Were you given enough privacy when discussing your condition or treatment?
31	1	Q110	Were you given enough privacy when being examined or treated?
Pain			
32	19	Q117	Do you think the hospital staff did everything they could to help control your pain?
Tests			
33	13	Q124	Did a doctor or nurse explain the results of the tests in a way that you could understand?
Treatments			
34	57	Q125	Before you received any treatments (e.g. an injection, dressing, physiotherapy) did a member of staff explain what would happen?
35	59	Q126	Before you received any treatments (e.g. an injection, dressing, physiotherapy) did a member of staff explain any risks and/or benefits in a way you could understand?
Operations and Procedures			
36	21	Q132	Beforehand, did a member of staff explain the risks and benefits of the operation or procedure in a way you could understand?
37	22	Q134	Beforehand, did a member of staff answer your questions about the operation or procedure in a way you could understand?
38	25	Q135	Beforehand, were you told how you could expect to feel after you had the operation or procedure?
39	5	Q139	After the operation or procedure, did a member of staff explain how the operation or procedure had gone in a way you could understand?
Leaving Hospital			
40	10	Q140	Did you feel you were involved in decisions about your

Sequence	Rank	Question number	Question
			discharge from hospital?
41	54	Q141	Were you given enough notice about when you were going to be discharged?
42	60	Q142	Were your family or someone close to you given enough notice about your discharge?
43	15	Q149	Before you left hospital, did the doctors and nurses spend enough time explaining about your health and care after you arrive home?
44	44	Q150	Before you left hospital, were you given any written or printed information about what you should or should not do after leaving hospital?
45	18	Q151	Did a member of staff explain the purpose of the medicines you were to take at home in a way you could understand? [Include response item 'I had no medicines']
46	33	Q152	Did a member of staff tell you about medication side effects to watch for when you went home?
47	49	Q155	Did a member of staff tell you about any danger signals you should watch for after you went home?
48	35	Q156	Did hospital staff take your family or home situation into account when planning your discharge?
49	26	Q157	Did the doctors or nurses give your family or someone close to you all the information they needed to help care for you?
50	14	Q159	Did hospital staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?
51	58	Q162	Do you feel that you received enough information from the hospital on how to manage your condition after your discharge?
Overall			
52	7	Q168	Overall, did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the hospital?
About You			
53	Not ranked	Q176	Who was the main person or people that filled in this questionnaire?
54	60=	Q177	Are you male or female?
55	56	Q178	What is your year of birth? ['was' changed to 'is']
56	New	2016 Irish census question	What is your ethnic or cultural background?
57	New	New	Do you currently have a medical card and/or private health insurance?
Other Comments			
58	2	Q196	Was there anything particularly good about your hospital care?
59	11	Q197	Was there anything that could be improved?
60	24	Q198	Any other comments?

Note: question numbers show the original placement of the question in the full 189 item set.