

How to Prepare Effective Questions for Expert Conclaves

When it comes to expert conclaves, the quality of the questions posed to the experts is crucial. Poorly framed questions not only frustrate the experts but can lead to a sub-standard joint report that does not narrow the issues in dispute.

Here are some key tips for drafting effective questions:

1. Agree on the questions with other parties

Ideally, all parties should collaborate to create a single list of agreed questions. This isn't always possible, but aiming for consensus can streamline the process. Multiple lists from different parties can lead to repetitive and overly long discussions during the conclave, frustrating the experts and significantly increasing costs.

2. Make the questions relevant

Questions should directly address the issues in dispute. If necessary, consult your expert when drafting the questions to help identify the most contentious areas of evidence. Avoid asking questions that elicit information that is already well-documented in the evidence, unless that information is directly relevant to an issue in dispute.

Example: Unless it's a point of contention, there is no need to ask the experts to outline the plaintiff's treatment to date. Instead, this information should be included in the agreed assumptions.

3. Clarity is key

Ensure that questions are clear and concise. Avoid legal jargon and use consistent terminology. Words that may seem interchangeable to you, especially medical or technical terms, might have distinct meanings for the experts. Using incorrect or inconsistent terms can lead to misunderstandings and can potentially alter the experts' answers significantly.

A well-worded question is easy to understand and answer. If you're unsure, consult your expert on how a question should be worded.

4. Keep questions short

Whenever possible, make questions short and to the point. Avoid convoluted sentences and multiple part questions. Questions designed to elicit a simple yes or no response, followed by an explanation of the reasoning, can be effective.

5. Be specific

Questions should be targeted rather than broad or open-ended. This helps experts provide focused answers and prevents them from offering rogue opinions on issues not directly related to the dispute.

6. Admissibility

Questions should elicit admissible evidence. For example, avoid asking experts to comment on areas outside their expertise.

7. Neutrality

Ensure questions are neutral and do not favour one party or outcome. This helps maintain the objectivity of the experts' responses.

8. Limit the number of questions

Avoid overwhelming the experts with too many questions. If the matter is complex and requires extensive discussion, consider scheduling multiple conclave sessions. This helps maintain focus and quality in the experts' responses.

9. Proofread your questions

Always double-check your questions for clarity and accuracy. Typos and errors can confuse experts and lead to incorrect or irrelevant answers. The worst case scenario is that the question's meaning could change entirely, leading to unexpected and potentially damaging answers.

By following these guidelines, you can ensure that the questions posed to the experts in a conclave are clear, relevant, and effective, ultimately leading to a more sophisticated, useful and streamlined joint report.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need further assistance in preparing for your next expert conclave. To book a facilitated expert conclave directly, please visit the R3 Resolutions [website](https://www.r3resolutions.com.au) or contact Rebecca at rmulae@r3resolutions.com.au.