

March 2021

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) - Post Examination Report



Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) Examination

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the RANZCP examinations. While most of the major lockdowns and restrictions trainees' experienced in 2020 had eased since November, some regional areas within Australia and New Zealand still experienced travel restrictions and some limitations on services. As a result of the potential risk of an examination test centre unable to provide their services to the RANZCP, the Committee for Examinations decided to conduct the March 2021 MCQ Examination in a paper-based format.

The Committee for Examinations followed established procedures to create this MCQ examination. Fellows across Australia and New Zealand contributed to the standard setting of every question and the final cut-score that was calculated.

The March 2021 MCQ Examination was sat by 111 candidates within Australia and New Zealand. A pass rate of 95% was achieved, which was the highest achievement by a cohort. Generally, candidates performed to a higher standard than previous cohorts on both sections (CAP, EMQ/MCQ) of this exam.

The Exam content covered the foundational knowledge within the Stage 1 and 2 syllabus. The standard was set to the end of Stage 3 training. Candidates were provided performance feedback in identified curriculum areas. These areas include: Assessment, Basic Science/Medical Knowledge, Epidemiology, Diagnosis & Classification and Public Health, Ethics and History, Phenomenology, Psychiatry, Philosophy & Psychodynamic Principles, Specific Areas of Practice, Specific Disorders, and Treatments in Psychiatry.

The Committee for Examinations was pleased to record that areas of psychiatry where candidates performed really well were in the fields of Phenomenology and Assessments. Poorer performing areas of the syllabus were in Ethics, History and Philosophy.

Critical Analysis Problems (CAPs)

The two Critical Analysis Problems presented to the cohort were drawn from articles about systematic reviews and a longitudinal data-linkage study. All CAP questions are categorized within Stages 1 and 2 of the syllabus as covering basic sciences and medical knowledge.

Analysis on all CAP questions showed that most of the cohort had very good knowledge of the subject matter. Candidates were relatively stronger in CAP 1. The facility range for most questions was between 46% up to 99%.

However there were three questions (one from the systemic reviews series of questions and two from the longitudinal data-linked study) that challenged the cohort with facility range between 6% and 21%.

The CFE would like to remind all candidates that the ability to read and interpret the professional literature is regarded as a core skill of a psychiatrist. Candidates are expected to have knowledge of different types of research studies, controls, sources of bias, basic descriptive and analytic statistics, and reporting of findings. You can access a detailed guide to the knowledge that may be assessed in the CAP component on the College website: [RANZCP Guidelines for CAP's](#)

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Extended Matching Questions (EMQ) / MCQs

EMQs cover foundational knowledge in psychiatry and can include areas of knowledge such as (but not limited to) neuroscience, pharmacotherapy, experimental design and critical analysis, history and philosophy of psychiatry, and principles of key psychotherapies.

Despite the MCQ exam being generally the first piece of assessment trainees attempt in their training, a number of EMQs performed poorly in the March 2021 Examination. Post-examination analyses of poorly-performing questions revealed a lack of knowledge to be problematic in specific areas of psychiatry.

The specific areas of practice were broken down to the categories of Child and Adolescent, consultation liaison, forensic and old age (only 1 question). Despite the small number of questions within each category, candidates performed really well in the categories of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

With regard to question type by specific disorder, questions categorized as Organic, Anxiety and Substance Use Disorders performed well. Other categories include somatoform disorders, substance use disorders, trauma and stress related (1 question), eating (1 question), mood, organic, perinatal, personality and psychosis.

The CFE would like to remind candidates that, as the MCQ examination is predominantly a knowledge-based examination, it is important for candidates to ensure that they are up to date with basic sciences and medical knowledge.



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