July 2022
Multiple Choice Question Examination (MCQ) - Post Examination Report

The Royal
Australian &
New Zealand
College of
Psychiatrists

The College continues to be mindful of the impact COVID-19 has on trainees and resources. It is also aware that exam preparation and administrative planning can be affected at the last minute by unexpected natural disasters that occur.

This year, we were pleased to add Cairns to our list of exam sites. There has been demand for such a site in far north Queensland, however this venue has limited capacity so enrolments will be made on a first-come-first-served basis.
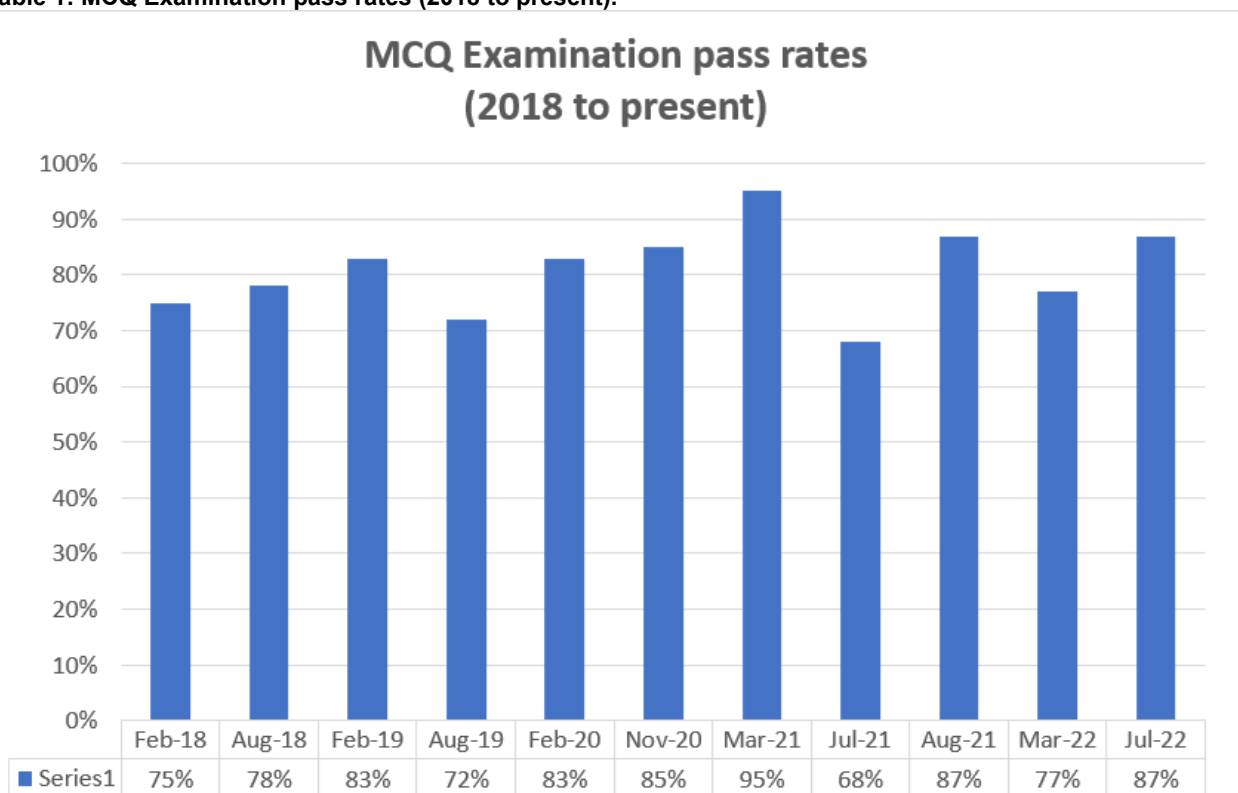
Established procedures were followed by the Committee for Examinations (CFE) to create this examination. Fellows across Australia and New Zealand contributed to the standard setting of every question, and the final cut-score that was calculated.

After reviewing the item performance of items in the exam, the CFE removed MCQ 137 from the exam. As a result of the removal, there was no effect on candidates' overall results and the maximum marks for the MCQ exam was reduced to 179 marks. The MCQ component was therefore reduced from 140 marks to 139 marks. The CAP component remained at 40 marks.

The July 2022 MCQ Examination was sat by 203 candidates, the highest number of trainees over the last 15 years. The pass rate of 87% was achieved.

Table 1 below shows the pass rates over the last 5 years.

Table 1: MCQ Examination pass rates (2018 to present).

MCQ Examination pass rates (2018 to present)

	Feb-18	Aug-18	Feb-19	Aug-19	Feb-20	Nov-20	Mar-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Mar-22	Jul-22
Series1	75%	78%	83%	72%	83%	85%	95%	68%	87%	77%	87%

NOTE: The August 2021 exam was conducted as the reserve exam for July 2021 and was sat by 53 candidates.

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The exam content covered the foundational knowledge within the Stage 1 and Stage 2 syllabus. The pass mark was set to the standard expected by end of Stage 3 training. Candidates were provided performance feedback in identified curriculum areas.

Table 2 shows a breakdown of exam content and the average percentage achieved for each question content.

Table 2: Average percentage of each question content.

Question content	Average percentage of marks achieved by cohort
Assessment	70%
Basic sciences/medical knowledge	69%
Epidemiology, Diagnosis, Classification and public health	73%
Ethics, History and Philosophy	40%
Leadership, governance & relevant legal frameworks	56%
Phenomenology	80%
Psychology, philosophy and psychodynamic principles	72%
Scholarship	92%
Sociocultural awareness	76%
Specific areas of practice	59%
Specific Disorders	63%
Treatments in Psychiatry	61%

Analysis showed that areas of psychiatry where candidates performed well were in the fields of Sociocultural awareness, Phenomenology.

Areas of psychiatry which candidates are not as strong in are Ethics, History and Philosophy and Leadership, Governance and relevant legal frameworks. The cohort may benefit from more study in these areas.

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

MCQs 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.

Questions in examination data bank are continuously reviewed for quality based on item performance.

The performance of questions in all exams varies and any MCQ items that show low performance are reviewed by members of the CFE. Post-examination review of such questions in the exam confirmed the quality and robustness of these questions, indicating that lack of knowledge may have contributed to poor candidate performance. Questions with a response pattern that was unexpected were individually reviewed and adjustments made as determined by members of the CFE.

The Specific Areas of Practice were broken down into the categories of: Child and Adolescent, Consultation Liaison, Forensic and Old age. Analysis showed strong knowledge in Consultation Liaison.

The Specific Disorders covered in the exam were Eating, Impulse Control (1 question), Mood (1 question), Perinatal (1 question), Personality, Psychosis (1 question), Sexual (1 question), Sleep, Somatoform Disorders, Substance Use Disorders and Trauma and stress-related and dissociative (1 question).

Critical Analysis Problems (CAPs)

The Critical Analysis Problems presented to the cohort were drawn from articles about a systematic review and a longitudinal data-linkage study.

All CAP questions are categorized within Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the syllabus as covering basic sciences and medical knowledge.

Cohort performance on the CAP questions was good with CAP 1 performing better than CAP 2.

Within each CAP, there were a few questions where candidates struggled to answer correctly resulting in low scores however the answers were reviewed by the Committee for Examinations and were justified.

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 CAPs

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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