Early indicator checklist for examination failure

This is a checklist to use to address concerns about exam failure or failure to attempt an exam.

Designed to help a supervisor of training (SOT) faced with an issue that has just been raised, these checklists take you through how to confirm there is a problem, how to raise this with the trainee and how to plan the correct course of action to assist the trainee.

Sometimes the nature of the issue a trainee is struggling with is not isolated to one concern. If this is the case please refer to the “Checklist introduction” and consider using the “Checklist for global assessment concerns” as well.

If the issues raised relate to professional misconduct or threaten the safety of patients or the trainee, contact your clinical director as soon as possible.

This checklist includes notes on:

**Preparation**
- Presentation.
- Risk assessment.
- History.
- Further assessment.
- Planning for the meeting with the trainee.

**Meeting with the trainee**
- Discussion.
- Action-plan options.
- Documentation.
PRESENTATION

What is the issue?

• Exam failure, repeated failures.
• Exam avoidance – failure to present for exam despite rotation expectations, nearing the end of a training period or being in extended or interrupted training due to lack of exam attempt.

How was it raised?

• Volunteered by trainee, raised by supervisor of training (SOT) or notification received from Examination Committee or education officer.
• Trainee in extended training because of failure to meet exam requirement of training period.

RISK ASSESSMENT
(exclude immediate danger to trainee or patient safety)

• Exam avoidance behaviour – failure to present for exam, withdrawal after applying or “no show” on the day.
• Less immediate danger, but may indicate underlying concerns:
  - Trainee in part-time/interrupted training – in order to buy time to have another attempt at the exam.
  - Repeated failures – trainee at risk of running out of training time or close to maximum permitted number of exam attempts.

HISTORY

How might this issue be clarified?

The training portfolio system (TPS) provides exam information – whether a trainee registered for an exam, whether they passed or failed and how many times. This is under Courses and Exams, and in the Trainee Summary Report.

FURTHER ASSESSMENT

The SOT should consider gathering further information. Most often this will occur during an initial meeting with the trainee.

• Unsuccessful candidates receive written feedback on exam performance. This notes the marks received on each section of the exam. Questions where performance was especially poor may receive individualised comments.
• Unsuccessful candidates can request an exam feedback interview. These interviews are conducted either by the chair or a member of the Exam Committee.
• A remediation interview is mandated after three failed attempts at an exam.

PLANNING FOR A MEETING WITH THE TRAINEE

In addition to that listed above, consider who should attend the meeting with the trainee. A support person should be invited.

As poor examination performance may indicate other difficulties, it is often helpful to review a trainee’s progress with respect to their other training requirements. This may require more far-reaching support and/or require a look at training time.
Meeting with the trainee

**DISCUSSION**

Address the trainee’s insight into their performance – expected outcome compared to actual. Review feedback from the Examination Committee with trainee.

**Exam preparation**

Have a detailed look at exam preparation undertaken by the trainee, including:

- Knowledge of exam process, including feedback from recent candidates.
- Duration and intensity of study prior to exam.
- Attendance at local teaching.
- Exam courses attended.
- Use of practice exams.
- Use of study group.
- Other supports used (mentor, exam psychologist).
- Were other stressors interfering with exam preparation?

**Other areas of concern**

Consider whether this is an isolated exam problem or whether there are other areas of concern, such as clinical performance, maintenance of other training requirements, health and wellbeing, and family life.

**Training program considerations**

- Confirm training time and period of training.
- Discuss trainee’s understanding of extended and interrupted training. Clarify the rules and their implications with respect to exam re-sits in the trainee’s current period of training, with particular respect to their requirements to sit exam.
- Discuss the limited number of allowed exam sittings.

**ACTION PLAN**

The ANZCA remediation interview will be mandated after a third unsuccessful exam attempt. If this is not the trainee’s third attempt, consider requesting a feedback interview from a primary or final examination officer if the routinely supplied mark breakdown does not give enough insight into areas of concern.

Plan the preparation for the next exam attempt, including:

- Study timetable.
- Practice exam.
- Study group, exam coach.
- Teaching and exam courses, including outside region.
- Education/performance psychologists.
- Management options for other stressors.
- Resources available – see the resources directory below.

**Consider a TDP**

This is not compulsory for exam failure but may provide a good framework to address this issue, especially if exam performance was very poor, failed to improve after a previous failed attempt, there is an unwillingness to attempt the exam, or is there are issues to address outside exam performance.

Consider training time and leave options.

**DOCUMENTATION**

There is a formal remediation interview record document.

Alternatively Appendix 3 of the ANZCA Handbook for Training and Accreditation can be used to guide documentation.
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<th><strong>ONLINE RESOURCES</strong></th>
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<td>The basics: dates, venues and closing dates</td>
<td><strong>Examinations</strong> page on the ANZCA website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes to examinations</td>
<td>Any news relating to the exams will be posted in the Training E-Newsletter. You should receive an email from the College every two months. <a href="#">Previous editions</a> can be found on the ANZCA website.</td>
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<td>Eligibility, exam format, examination reports and reading lists</td>
<td><strong>Primary exam</strong> page on the ANZCA website&lt;br&gt;<strong>Final exam</strong> page on the ANZCA website</td>
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<td>Scope of exam defined by learning objectives</td>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong>&lt;br&gt;• See Appendix 2 for learning outcomes mapped to primary exam&lt;br&gt;• See Appendix 6 for learning outcomes mapped to the final exam</td>
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<td>Exam attempts and when trainees are required to re-sit</td>
<td><strong>ANZCA Handbook for Training and Accreditation Handbook</strong>&lt;br&gt;• See section 7.6 for an overview of the primary and final exam&lt;br&gt;• Trainees are permitted five attempts at the primary exam and seven attempts at the final exam&lt;br&gt;<strong>Regulation 37</strong>&lt;br&gt;• See sections 37.7.3.1.3 and 37.7.3.2.3 of regulation 37&lt;br&gt;• Also sections 37.5.5.8.4 and 37.5.6.3 of regulation 37</td>
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<td>Illness, accident and disability and the exams</td>
<td><strong>Regulation 37</strong>&lt;br&gt;• See section 37.7.3.4 of regulation 37</td>
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<td>Online study resources in Networks</td>
<td><strong>Preparation for the primary exam</strong>&lt;br&gt;• This resource covers general preparation advice, tips for preparing notes and summaries and information about revision.&lt;br&gt;• It also includes a series of simulated viva videos, past trainees speaking about their experience with the examination and ANZCA primary examiners offering advice to trainees preparing for the examination.&lt;br&gt;• The resources are found in Networks, in the Curriculum teaching and learning network under “Basic training”.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Preparation for the final exam</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Trainees preparing for the ANZCA final examination may find it helpful to review the videos available. The videos provide insights into the exam process and focus on what happens on the day. They include examples of mock vivas to demonstrate ways in which you can optimise your performance.</td>
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In the Essential exam tips podcast, Dr Patsy Tremayne provides an overview of the issues faced by trainees in the months leading up to the primary and fellowship exams. She outlines suggestions for structured and optimal study, and testing at home under approximate exam conditions.

For tips about preparing for the exam, life balance and personal health and strategies, see the Welfare of Anaesthetists Special Interest Group Training and examinations resource document.

Under the Basic training module on the Curriculum teaching and learning support network, you will find podcasts that cover content relevant to the ANZCA primary examination. In the same network, there are also some useful ANZCA Roles in Practice podcasts.

Contact your local ANZCA regional office for information on dates. These courses are very popular and can fill up quickly. Trainees may need to travel interstate if there are no vacancies in their local course.

ANZCA Handbook for Training and Accreditation
- See section 7.6.6.1 of the handbook

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  Regulation 37
  - See section 37.7.3.1.6 and 37.7.3.2.6 regulation 37