

## Three stage approach for exam remediation and interview template

Stage 1: Guided reflection by trainee.

Stage 2: Trainee discussion with SOT.

Stage 3: Remediation interview.

ANZCA exam remediation is a staged process. The aim is to encourage active participation and critical thinking by the trainee so that they are driving the process, and developing strategies which will lead to success in the ANZCA examinations. The first two stages are strongly encouraged to help the trainee prepare for the remediation interview. The remediation interview is a positive, supportive session for the trainee to establish a structured approach to prepare for their next exam attempt.

The conditions for a mandatory remediation interview are specified in Regulation 37.7.3.1.6.

### Stage 1: Guided reflection by trainee

Before the remediation interview consider the ways in which you have prepared for the exams to this point, and any difficulties you are experiencing. Reflect on your personal experience using this checklist and the questions that follow. Then you should organise a meeting with your supervisor of training (SOT) to discuss your ideas and prepare yourself for the remediation interview. Bring this template to the remediation interview to help identify new study patterns which may work better for you.

#### Checklist

Which of the following have you used in preparation for your most recent exam?

Resource	Y	N
Study plan/timetable		
ANZCA Curriculum (Learning outcomes mapped to the examination)		
Online MCQ collections such as: <a href="http://www.anaesthesiamcq.com/">http://www.anaesthesiamcq.com/</a>		
Past SAQ papers (including examiner reports)		
Operating theatre teaching		
Textbooks (preferred texts)		
Primary LO of the Day <a href="https://primarydailylo.wordpress.com/">https://primarydailylo.wordpress.com/</a> (for primary exam)		
Other internet resources		
Study notes from past trainees		
Question cards		
Study group		
Exam technique resources		
Psychology support – managing exam anxiety		
Others - list here		

### **Study techniques**

1. How did you use each of the resources you have identified in the checklist?
2. What do you think was your most beneficial study approach? Why was it useful for you?
3. What do you think was your least beneficial study approach?
4. How many hours per week did you commit to preparing for the exam?
5. How do you approach revising material you've already covered?

### **Barriers to success**

1. Why do you think you have been unsuccessful in multiple attempts at the exam so far?
2. Can you identify any contributing factors making it difficult for you to achieve your goal of passing your next attempt at the exam?

### **Remediation Interview**

1. What do you hope to achieve from the remediation interview?
2. Do you have any questions for the examiner or the education officer (EO)?

**If you do not have a current SOT, the director of professional affairs (DPA) assessor or the EO may be able to assist with finding a suitable individual to help you prepare for the Remediation Interview. This may be a previous SOT, the rotational supervisor or a mentor. Alternatively, please bring your own guided reflection notes to the remediation interview.**

## Stage 2: Trainee discussion with SOT

The aim is to assist the trainee to prepare for the remediation interview, and prepare for success in future attempts at the examination. The trainee should be encouraged to complete the guided reflection before talking with the SOT face to face or remotely. The SOT can assist the trainee to identify their specific concerns in relation to:

- Past exam attempts.
- Future examination attempts.
- The remediation interview.

When a trainee has moved into interrupted training they may no longer have an SOT. In those cases the DPA assessor or the EO can assist the trainee to find a suitable individual to help them prepare for the remediation interview. This may be a previous SOT, the rotational supervisor or a mentor. Alternatively, the trainee can bring their own guided reflection notes to the remediation interview.

A coaching approach can be used to guide the discussion between the SOT and the trainee. It is important to identify assumptions the trainee is making and explore/challenge these. The trainee should have already done the guided trainee reflection, however some trainees can be overwhelmed by their situation and struggle to clearly identify a way forward without support.

One useful coaching conversation model is **GROW**:

### **GOAL – REALITY – OPTIONS – WRAP UP**

This template offers some potential questions for the SOT to guide the conversation, and lists some resources available.

#### **Focus of the conversation:**

1. Trainee guided self-reflection template (stage 1) should be discussed to assist the trainee to think critically about their approach to the exam and identify specific areas for improvement in future exam attempts.
2. Preparation for the remediation interview. What can the trainee expect?
3. Trainee accountability and responsibility for exam outcome.
4. Local resources available to support trainee to pass the exam.
5. Is the trainee experiencing difficulty in other areas of their training and may require more support and remediation or a TDP? Exam remediation may form part of a TDP.

### **GOAL**

Focusing on the main goal can help reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Confirm the commitment to passing the exam. Consider the trainee ongoing commitment to anaesthesia as a career.

For example: I imagine you have committed a great deal of time and energy to your past exam attempts. It appears your primary goal is still to pass the exam. Have I got this right?

### **REALITY**

We have established your commitment/intention to pass the exam so let's look at your reflections to see what appears to be working for you and any barriers you have identified.

Tell me about the factors you think have impacted on your inability to pass the exam so far.

Have you identified any patterns to your study, good or bad?

What would an effective plan of study look to you? Is that realistic for you?

What are you hoping to achieve from the discussion with the EO and the examiner at the remediation interview? Explain that they will have access to examiner feedback and comments but their exam answer papers will not be available.

What personal and professional commitments do you need to balance with your study and the goal of passing the exam?

Is the trainee experiencing difficulty in other areas of their training in addition to the examinations? Consider whether the trainee requires support in other areas in addition to the remediation interview.

## **OPTIONS**

What can the trainee do to achieve their goal of passing the exam?

What are the things you think will make the biggest difference to helping you prepare for the exam this time?

- Focus on issues the trainee has control over.
- In areas the trainee doesn't have direct control over, consider what the SOT/department could assist with, e.g., access to existing study groups and tutorials, practice exams.

What local resources are available? Are they accessible for the trainee?

How will you overcome the factors you have identified making it difficult for you to pass the exam?

Brainstorm multiple alternatives and then assist the trainee narrow down to realistic options with intention for trainee to commit to action.

## **WRAP UP**

*Who* will do *what* by *when*? What can the trainee start to do now to change their approach to the examination, and improve the chances of success in the future?

Clarify the purpose of the remediation interview:

- To provide a positive supportive session focused on identifying areas the trainee could work on to improve their chance of success in their next attempt at the exam.
- To consider the timing of future exam attempts based on relevant professional and personal commitments identified before and during the interview.
- To work with the trainee to establish a structured approach to prepare for the next exam attempt with clearly defined SMART goals.
- To highlight resources and opportunities available to the trainee to assist with preparing effectively for the exam.

Is the trainee experiencing difficulty in other areas of their training and may require more support and remediation or a trainee experiencing difficulty process (TDP)? Exam remediation may form part of a TDP, however a trainee cannot be in a TDP while in interrupted training.

Review any limits on training time:

- Regulation 37.5.5.8.4 on extended training.
- Regulation 37.5.6.9 on interrupted training.

Useful Resources for the SOT

- Early indicator checklists – [exam failure](#).
- Trainee Handbook entry on the remediation interview.
- Trainee guided self - reflection template (stage 1).
- Trainee experiencing difficulty process.
- Local and online welfare resources.
- Mentors.

## SOT Resources to help prepare candidates for the exams

*Before coming to the remediation interview the trainee should have reflected on their preparation for the exam. Here are some ideas and suggestions to help the SOT discuss what they've done so far, and help them to build on it to be successful in the next exam attempt. It has been written by a primary examiner but much of it is relevant for final examination candidates. Final examination resources are well covered in Networks on the ANZCA website.*

## Past SAQ papers (including examiner reports)

This is really important. It's active learning. It gives the candidate an idea of how questions are worded. There are usually repeat SAQ questions in primary examination papers. We recommend that candidates try answering questions in different time frames:

- Unlimited time for model answers.
- 2 minutes to get the important material out.
- 8 minutes to get all the material out.
- Papers of perhaps 6 x 10 mins to give practice at doing them sequentially.

## Other considerations

- Getting someone else to create a 'paper' for them makes it more valuable.
- Finding someone to mark them really helps - tutors can make a reasonable bank of questions with answers and then just keep reusing them every year.
- The candidate or tutors can create new questions by modifying exam questions - substitute a different drug into a pharmacology question or a different system in physiology.
- Examiner reports can help, but they are not model answers. Refer [here](#).

## ANZCA Curriculum

Candidates must cover the breadth of the material. Websites such as <http://www.cinder.hk/ANZCAPrimary/> collate the learning outcomes which are examinable in the primary examination in a logical order to assist candidates prioritise study topics.

## Study groups

Study groups are great but if someone has failed a number of times it can be difficult for them to find one. The SOT may be able to assist a trainee to approach members of local groups.

## Textbooks

Textbooks are a good place to start studying and to use to gain the knowledge to base active learning on. The College library has a great selection and individual chapters can even be downloaded as pdfs. Reading chapters right through and highlighting has a place early in a study program but it's a very limited place. Ways of using textbooks include:

- Making notes.
- Making flashcards.
- Using as a resource to answer past questions.

## Operating theatre

Candidates often fail to appreciate how much of the primary material they can learn and reinforce in the operating theatre. Some suggestions are:

- Be curious, ask themselves questions about how things around them are working, and go and look them up.
- Go through drug properties in their heads as they administer them or look at them on the trolley.
- Teach a topic to medical students, anaesthesia technicians, nurses or consultants. Allow the audience to ask questions to probe for more detail or check for a deeper level of understanding.

## Primary LO of the Day

<https://primarydailylo.wordpress.com/>

This is a pet project of a few primary teachers who are also examiners. Has true/false questions to read around, study tips, and some exam related welfare material.

## Online MCQ collections

Also known as the black bank <http://www.anaesthesiamcq.com/>

See <https://primarydailylo.wordpress.com/2016/12/02/study-tip-samizdat/>

This can act as an unofficial syllabus and as a way to study when too tired for more creative methods. Incredibly useful if used to learn the material covered by the remembered MCQs, incredibly useless if answers are simply memorised. The most recent examinations have fewer repeated questions than previous exams. This trend is likely to continue.

To use it properly requires a lot of work but leads to much more effective study than just reading and rote learning the material. A lot of candidates use a flash card app - Anki is the most popular and there are banks of cards for past MCQs available on the internet.

### Other internet resources

A lot of the candidates will use websites with model SAQ answers such as Amanda Diaz's (PEX), Mark Finnis's (PEX) and Andy Pybus (FEX). However, candidates who copy these and don't construct their own from their own reading are not learning effectively. There are anki flashcards written for other things such as drugs, common graphs. They have a place, but these resources are best if the candidate constructs their own.

### Journals

Journal articles are not essential reading for the primary exam but can present material in a fresh way. Specific anaesthesia education journals such as BJEACCP would be the best. The primary learning outcome of the day blog sometimes flags articles that may be useful.

### Revision

Structured revision/Ebbinghaus curves <https://primarydailylo.wordpress.com/2017/01/27/study-tip-doing-effective-revision/>

Candidates often read over what they've done and mistake recognition for knowing.

### Time

*I asked some of my successful candidates how much study they did...*

Candidate 1:

*We all differed a little, and in the three months leading up to the written intensified significantly. For the nine months or so prior I woke at 4-4:30am and studying for about 90 minutes, with 5 hours on Saturday and Sunday. I exercised in evenings. Once I was four months out, I slept in until 6am and studied in evenings for about 3-4 hours, with 8 hours on Saturday and Sunday. For the month or so prior, I studied whenever I got the chance. I found more important than the amount of hours was the quality of what I did. I only really started getting the point once I was attempting SAQs. If I was really tired I'd practice past MCQs.*

Candidate 2:

*Hard to know exactly... I started 12 months before the written exam but initially just tutorial and prep for the tutorial, so I guess maybe 10 hours per week depending on how well I knew the subject. I probably did that until 6 months out at which point I increased to about 20 hours per week - about 2 hours a day during the week and 5 hours per day at weekends. The last three months I have no idea - every spare moment!! At least 30 hours per week as a very rough guess. I also had three weeks of intensive courses (Melbourne and Monash) and a week of private study leave. So totalling up I guess around 1000 hours pre written over a year and another 200 between written and viva. That doesn't include time in anaesthetic lists with consultants, discussing and being quizzed- which was invaluable.*

## Trainee Remediation Interview Template – STAGE 3

The Remediation Interview will take place with an examiner, EO, trainee and SOT or delegates. The trainee is encouraged to bring a support person/mentor. **It is anticipated the process will last about 60 minutes, and it will be wrapped at 90 minutes should it extend beyond this expected duration.** This template can be used both as a guide and a record of Interview. Extra sheets can be attached if required. A copy of the completed record and the agreed action plan must be forwarded to the trainee, the SOT and the General Manager, Training and Assessments as soon as possible after the Interview.

Role	Responsibility
Education officer (EO)	To lead the Remediation Interview  Work collaboratively with the trainee and the panel to create a learner centred action plan focused on improving the potential for success at the next exam attempt.
Examination representative (via video conference if a local examiner is not available)	To review previous exam attempts and identify any patterns/recurring themes (e.g., insufficient detail, not answering the question) to highlight potential changes for the trainee to consider in their future preparation. To provide guidance on issues such as exam technique, question development, how marks are awarded, and clarify trainee misconceptions about the exam.
Supervisor of training (SOT)	Support to trainee  Implement and follow up on action items agreed in interview.
Support person / mentor	Support to trainee (can be supervisor of training).
Trainee	Interviewee  To work collaboratively with the panel to develop an action plan focused on improving the potential for success at the next exam attempt.

### Introductions

EO to introduce all participants and roles, and provide an overview of the process. Ensure that all participants understand that actual exam answers are not available, and cannot be discussed. However examiner feedback and marking is available for discussion.

- Primary purposes of the interview.
- To provide a positive supportive session focused on identifying areas the trainee could work on to improve their chance of success in their next attempt at the exam.
- To consider the timing of future exam attempts based on relevant professional and personal commitments identified before and during the interview.
- To work with the trainee to establish a structured approach to prepare for the next exam attempt with clearly defined SMART goals.
- To highlight resources and opportunities available to the trainee to assist with preparing effectively for the exam.



## Exam remediation interview record

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainee name: \_\_\_\_\_ College ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Training period: \_\_\_\_\_ Training site: \_\_\_\_\_

Examination: primary examination / final examination

Trainee has been unsuccessful at \_\_\_\_\_ attempts at the primary / final examination

Education officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Persons present and designation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Trainee perspective and goals

The trainee should be encouraged to briefly summarise their main concerns relating to exam attempts so far, and identify any specific information they would like from the examiner. The trainee self-reflection document can be used as a guide. Confirm that the trainee primary goal is to pass the exam.

Potential questions:

What would need to happen today for you to feel that this time has been well spent?

What are the trainee goals for the remediation interview?

## **2. Current reality – trainee and examiner perspective on examination performance**

Consider using the guided reflection to explore the trainees previous experiences related to exam preparation to gain an appreciation/understanding of their perspective about possible reasons for their exam failures.

Examiner to engage with the trainee to reinforce points where the trainee has identified factors/patterns/themes also noted by the examiner. The examiner can ask questions to stimulate the trainee to think about other factors not articulated.

Examiner to share their own conclusions from the review of previous exam failures. This is also an opportunity offer information about how exam questions are written and marked, tips on exam technique, and to identify any misconceptions the trainee has about the exam process.

The examiner may suggest an approach or specific study strategies for the trainee to consider which may improve their chance of success in future exam attempts.

**3. Current reality – trainee and EO perspective on study habits and exam preparation**

What study strategies has the trainee found successful in the past? What has the trainee found challenging or unhelpful? How much time is the trainee realistically able to commit to study each week? Is this time used effectively? Does the trainee express thoughts which suggest a realistic perspective on their current situation?

**4. Options for success – trainee and EO**

Brainstorm ideas together which might help the trainee improve their performance in their next exam attempt. Share/summarise your interpretation of what you have heard using skills such as paraphrasing and reframing based on facts rather than assumptions.

Planning and preparation, study strategies

Resources available to assist the trainee

Timing of the next exam attempt

**5. Wrap up / action plan**

Encourage the trainee to articulate a plan of action including short term and long term goals. Develop SMART goals which the trainee can take away from the Interview.

Clarify expectations around the role and responsibility of the trainee to implement and deliver on the plan. Include key points/milestones and when these will be achieved.

Agree any actions ANZCA/SOT will take to support the trainee in the implementation of the plan

Before they leave get them to commit to at least one action they will complete to initiate the plan. Identify strategies to achieve this.

SMART GOALS	Date for completion	Who is responsible?
<i>E.g., I will write a study timetable this week leading up to my next exam attempt</i>	<i>One week from today</i>	<i>Trainee</i>

Trainee signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Education officer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor of training signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The record of the remediation interview should be submitted to the College by the EO within two weeks of the interview. Email [training@anzca.edu.au](mailto:training@anzca.edu.au) or fax +61 3 8517 5362.*