

Guidance notes for completing of SEC Chair checklist

Breadth and level of the examination as a whole (all components including written practical and oral)

Are the questions focused on middle to higher level tasks such as creation, evaluation, analysis and application?

Questions should assess higher level learning outcomes such as the ability to create, evaluate, analyse and apply knowledge and skills. Refer [Examiner Handbook](#), Principles of College Assessment, Fig 1

Are the questions at the right level of difficulty?

There is a match between the depth of knowledge and degree of skill (both practical and cognitive) required to answer the question, and those specified for the topic in the learning outcomes. Demanding tasks are provided for topics in which a high degree of skill or knowledge is required; less demanding tasks are provided for topics in which a lower degree of skill or knowledge is required. Whether the exam is a fellowship or membership exam must be considered.

Do the questions provide the right breadth of coverage and relative weighting of the subject guidelines?

As a whole, all 3-4 components of the examination (written, practical and oral) should sample from all the learning outcomes specified in the subject guidelines and with the most important topics and skills given the most weighting in the examination. There should be nothing in the examination that does not fall within the learning outcomes as specified in the subject guidelines.

Examination structure

Do the examination materials follow the exam structure format as described in the current guidelines?

The Subject Examination Committee (SEC) Chair is responsible for reviewing and editing the examination papers and marking guides prior to submission to the College Office by the Head Subject Examiner, ensuring that they conform to Subject Guidelines and College requirements.

Does the content come from the recommended reading list?

Are marks allocated to each question and separate subpart?

All questions must have a mark allocation indicated. Subparts of questions should have marks indicated if they would be answered and marked separately. If subparts would form part of an integrated answer and marked holistically, marks for subparts do not need to be indicated.

Are the marks allocated to each question and each sub-part appropriate?

Do the marks allocated reflect the relative difficulty, importance and time required for each question and subpart?

Do the marks add up to the expected total?

The total marks for the paper should be easy for candidates and examiners to follow so that it is easy to plan the time allocation for each answer. In general, 1 mark per minute of exam time is allocated i.e., a 20-mark question will take 20 minutes to answer.

Is there sufficient time to answer all the questions?

Candidates should only need to write 20 words per minute or less to give a complete and correct answer.

What percentage of questions have been reused or are substantially similar to questions asked in previous three examinations for this subject?

No more than 30% of the questions in any written or practical examination can be substantially similar to questions offered in the previous three examinations offered in the same subject.

What percentage of multiple choice questions have been reused or are substantially similar to questions asked in the previous two examination cycles for this subject?

No more than 50% of the multiple choice questions per examination component may be reused from the previous two examination cycles.

Question structure

Is it clear for each question what is required in terms of scope?

The scope needs to be well defined so it is clear to candidates what an answer should include and what it does not need to include.

Does each question contain an instructional verb that explains the task required to the candidate?

Instructional verbs (e.g.: List, explain, critique) must be provided to indicate to candidates what they need to do to demonstrate their knowledge.

Are the questions worded as a statement?

Aside from MCQs there should be NO question marks in the written papers.

Does each question avoid the use of the second person (you/your)?

Allowable exceptions include “Justify/explain your approach”.

Is signalment provided and complete for clinical scenarios?

Is each question worded so that it can be answered by candidates living either in Australia or NZ?

Unless specified otherwise in the learning outcomes, questions should be framed so that they can be answered using a knowledge of either Australian or NZ legislation, climate, geographical features etc.

Have prompts/cues been appropriately planned for the oral examination?

Prompts may be used to ensure that the candidate has completed their answer. Cues are used to prompt the candidate to expand or extend their answer or redirect them if their answer precludes them from being able to answer the next part of the question appropriately.

If oral exams span multiple days, do the questions on subsequent days cover different aspects of the same learning objectives?

The question structure (e.g., number of subparts) and marks for the questions on each day should remain the same.

Are ancillary materials used (images, radiographs, histopathology slides etc) fit for purpose, clear, legible and of good quality?

All materials used in written, practical and oral examinations should be checked by examiners and the SEC Chair. It is especially important to check that all agree on the interpretation and that the quality is sufficient that what is supposed to be seen can be seen. The level of difficulty in making the interpretation should also be appropriately aligned with the specified learning outcomes for the subject.

If there are multiple choice questions:

- do they comprise 50% or less of the marks for each exam component?

- do they assess higher learning outcomes?
- is there a clear testing point for each question?
- are the questions worded positively?
- are all distractors plausible?
- are the options in each key homogeneous in content and length?
- are the questions and options clear and unambiguous?
- do they pass the 'cover test'? (i.e., the question should be answerable without needing to read the options).
- have all 'clues' been removed from the stem (i.e., avoid repeating terms in both the stem and the key)?
- is there only one correct answer?
- do you agree which answer is correct?

Is a marking guide provided which indicates the agreed standard by which candidates' answers will be judged and marks awarded?

How marks will be awarded and what constitutes a clear pass, borderline answer and fail should be discussed and agreed upon by examiners and recorded in a marking guide for review by the SEC Chair and BoE. The marking guide must be used by all examiners during marking.

Does the information provided in the marking guide address the question that is being asked?

Check the question is clearly worded so it asks the question the examiner wants answered, including all parts the marking guide awards marks for. (i.e., Does the model answer match the question posed)?

Do you agree with the marking guides?

Does the marking guide reward answers you consider are correct?

Have holistic marking rubrics been included for higher order questions (to factor in logical approach, clinical reasoning, contradictory information etc)?

Please note that this is mandatory for all questions/subparts worth 6 or more marks (Membership) and 10 or more marks (Fellowship).

Grammar and spelling

Is the language used in each question clear and grammatically correct?

The meaning of the question is clear so there is no confusion about the task or scope. Abbreviations should be spelled out unless testing the knowledge of the abbreviation is a key part of the question (which would rarely be the case). Be aware that terminology may vary in different areas of the world.

Are there any spelling mistakes (particularly discipline specific words)?

The Macquarie Dictionary provides standard spellings to be used.

Are units given as SI units?

All imperial units should be converted to SI units or those in standard use in Australia and NZ.

Are any numerical values used realistic and correct?

For example are there any errors in scale such as the value is in the hundreds when it should be in the thousands?