AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SCIENTISTS

Preparing effectively for the College exams

We can't make the examinations easier but we hope that by providing advice drawn from years of experience in the examination system, we can help you to prepare more effectively and to avoid common mistakes that limit exam performance. Effective preparation means that you will maximise your chances of passing!

For someone, even who has recently graduated, studying for membership of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists can be challenging. With the pressure of work, family and other commitments, study can be very difficult to manage.

To successfully pass the Membership exam you will be required to demonstrate an advanced level of knowledge in written, oral and (in some subjects) practical examinations. To do this, you will need to know your subject material, and be able to express this knowledge in an examination setting. Make sure that you are studying the right material, check your subject guidelines, check past papers, ask your mentor. Practice both written and oral exams develop and refine your exam technique. This is really important: examiners can only give you credit for the information that you are able to convey in the examination setting. They cannot assume that you know information that you do not include in your answer!

Time management

Before you even start, make sure you are realistic that you will be able to make the time to study. Most people fail because of inadequate preparation. Now that you are no longer at University, we expect you have a lot more demands on your time, and less time for study. Depending on your level of experience, previous study, attendance at Continuing Veterinary Education meetings, participation in study groups, the amount of time that will be required to study will vary.

Do not underestimate what you have learned in your years of practice – check the cases that you are seeing as you prepare for the exams against the literature relevant to your discipline. In this way you will have context, it will not seem like so much work, and your patients, clients and colleagues will also benefit from your efforts.

Try to make a timetable both weekly and monthly to work out what level of study you can achieve, and to cover your discipline in appropriate depth and breadth. Block out time in your work schedule so that you can study uninterrupted. Set realistic goals, and be prepared to modify your goals as circumstances can change.

Resources:

Mentor
One of the common findings in interviewing failed candidates is that they did not make use of a mentor. A mentor can be very useful to guide you as to what is important to cover for the Membership exam and a source of practical tips for preparation and examination. See the Membership Candidate Handbook for more details on mentors. Make sure that you seek the help of a mentor. Specifically ask your mentor what they think is important within the subject guidelines and learning objectives. Ask your mentor to mark your efforts at past exam papers, to provide feedback on areas that you might improve, and ask your mentor to do practice oral exams. If you have any problems with your mentor contact your chapter Subject Standards Committee (SSC).

Study Groups
Make contact with the relevant chapter to see if they have a study group. Also speak to specialists in your chosen field of study, they may know of study groups. Make active use of chat or discussion forums through The Veterinary Information Network (VIN) www.vin.com or your closest Veterinary School. If you know of other candidates, why not initiate a study group yourself. Remember, this process is not competitive, so collaboration and support is only going to be beneficial for everyone.

Recent Members
Make contact with some of your colleagues that may have recently passed the Membership exams. Find out what they felt was most helpful.

Internet
Use your search engine to find online information that might suit your study program and use generic information on exam preparation to supplement the advice given here.

Veterinary Schools
It may be possible to attend rounds, and or journal clubs at your local Veterinary Schools. Make contact with them to see what you can attend.

In-house Clinic CVE sessions
In multi-person practices consider having monthly team CVE sessions, ask each vet to present a small topic related to your chosen discipline. You and the other vets will learn something, and this will also provide a team building exercise.

Oral examinations
The College website has a dedicated section on information pertaining to the Colleges oral examinations to assist candidates in preparing for this component:

It is also a suggestion to look at the resources provided to examiners, so that you can better understand the examination process, what is being asked of examiners, and what the College expects of the exam process.