

FEEDBACK ON THE MRCGP[INT] DUBAI – WRITTEN PAPER: 2020 TO MARCH 2022

Introduction:

This paper highlights areas related to the Written Paper module of the MRCGP International exam in which candidates have done well, and done less well. We hope this feedback is useful to all those applying to sit future AKT modules in Dubai.

For important general information about how to prepare for the Written Paper exam, including a description of the exam format and content please see the DHA MRCGP website:

<https://www.dha.gov.ae/en/MedicalEducationandResearch/MedicalResearch>

Extraordinary circumstances between 2020 and March 2022:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic stopped us running the Written Paper in 2020. Safety of candidates, examiners and Dubai Health Authority staff had to come first.
2. The Written Paper was re-introduced in April 2021. Appropriate safety measures were put in place. These included social distancing and the wearing of face masks/shields.
3. As many candidates based outside the UAE sit the MRCGP International exam in Dubai, it was decided that the diagnosis, investigation and management of COVID-19 would not be tested in the Written Paper as policies vary from country to country.

What candidates did well:

Most candidates did well on areas related to patient care including assessment and managing diseases. Candidates scored higher when they:

1. Linked clinical findings to a broad range of differential diagnoses.
2. Presented a well-written management plan from the differential diagnoses that addressed these options in order of likelihood.
3. Linked management to teamwork (including appropriate referral where necessary).

Better candidates organized their ideas into separate constructs. This showed they were thinking broadly about all the aspects included in the question.

The best candidates scored well in critical reading questions too. They commented on the strengths and weaknesses of the studies and interpreted the results in a clear and elaborate way.

What candidates did less well:

1. Candidates tended to score less well if they used generic (non-specific) phrases in every question regardless of what the question was about. Examples included: “ideas, concerns and expectations”, “health beliefs”, “hidden agenda”, “communication issues” and “establish rapport”. Less-good candidates failed to demonstrate how these phrases were of relevance to the question being asked, or how they could be applied in a clinical scenario.
2. Less-good candidates found questions related to managerial topics and dealing with colleagues or patients’ families more challenging.
3. Candidates scored less well in critical reading questions if they answered generically (non-specifically) about research in general, without addressing the specific context of the study being asked about.

What candidates may wish to consider to help them prepare for the Written Paper:

1. Candidates need to be working in a primary care setting in order to be aware of the cases and issues that face GPs/Family Physicians on a daily basis. They need to be aware of the psychosocial aspects of the disease, in addition to decision-making, communication within the family and between family members and healthcare providers, and continuity of care.
2. Candidates are also expected to have a basic knowledge of the administrative issues that face doctors in Family Practice, and how to deal with them.
3. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the latest evidence regarding the management of common diseases in Primary Health Care.
4. It is recommended that candidates read the question more than once. This should help identify the main themes.
5. Candidates should answer the questions by describing what they would actually do to help that patient in a real clinic setting.
6. Candidates are advised to practice answering questions using a concise, well structured framework. Answer the question that has been asked, rather than elaborating on general topics!
7. Candidates should prepare for the evidence-based questions by going through the latest guidelines in managing and treating disease. Use current, peer-reviewed sources in the answers.
8. It is advisable that candidates practice reading research articles and practice critical appraisal on topics related to the primary healthcare.

9. Try to **avoid following rigid answer templates** taught on commercial preparatory courses (especially those run by colleagues with no links to the setting of the MRCGP International exam). Templates such as: “Patient; Practice; Population” do not always apply! Instead, be flexible and adjust your answer to the needs of the question in front of you. There is no such thing as a single RCGP ‘correct answer template’.