



AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SCIENTISTS

ORAL EXAMINATION POLICY

1. Examiners must contribute to the construction of the oral examination by providing questions and marking schemes to the Head Subject Examiner. All questions and marking schemes must be reviewed and agreed upon by all the examiners delivering the oral examination including all materials to be used, for example images, radiographs, ECG's and histopathological slides. They must also be reviewed by the CEC liaison and the BoE as is the normal procedure for all other examination components.
2. Oral examinations are to be submitted on Word and Powerpoint templates provided by the College. A separate examination must be provided for each day of examination.
3. The oral examination for each candidate within a subject will be standardised so that the same number of questions of similar scope and depth of areas assessed and addresses the same learning outcomes.
 - a) The same examination questions will be used for all candidates examined in a subject on the same day and by all examining teams in that subject working concurrently on the same day.
 - b) For subjects in which oral examinations span more than one day of examining, the questions must be changed after each full day of examining, while maintaining the number of questions and the similarity in scope, depth and learning outcomes assessed.
4. The degree of sameness of the examinations within a day will be such that the same content, materials (scenarios, images, radiographs, etc), cues and qualifiers will be used by all examiners, and the questions will be as much the same as possible while still allowing for examiners to individualise the examination to explore the knowledge of each candidate. Specific guidance is given in the Guidance Notes for Oral Examinations, below.
5. The amount and type of cueing may be (inversely) proportional to candidate knowledge and reasoning. A strong candidate may pre-empt subsequent material. Examiners should identify in advance where and how they may need to cue candidates during the oral examination so that all candidates receive similar cues, as required. Examiners should also consider how the need for cues is reflected in their marking scheme. Any additional cueing required during the examination should be recorded in examiners' notes, and will likely influence marks awarded.

6. Membership oral examinations will be designed to last approximately 45 minutes and Fellowship oral examinations to last 60-120 minutes as specified in the subject guidelines. The exact duration of the examination for each candidate may vary depending on the speed with which the candidate proceeds through the questions.
- a) Candidates will not be allowed unlimited time to answer questions, and examiners will move ahead to the next question after a reasonable time if candidates cannot answer.
 - b) Candidates are expected to present themselves for examination composed and ready to begin. Delays by the candidate at the start or during an examination of more than five minutes will not be allowed.

Guidance notes for examiners

How much "the same" do oral exams held on the same day need to be?

Many things need to be the same:

1. Scenario details and ancillary data

All details of the scenario presented should be the same, including the facts given to candidates and the data presented (eg tables, lab data, images, radiographs).

2. The general plan of "main" questions

The general or main questions must be the same. So, for example, if a candidate is to be given a scenario and then asked about their management plan, management must be covered with all candidates. Similarly if the candidates are to be asked to explain or justify their answer, then all candidates must be asked this.

3. Qualifiers and cues

Qualifiers express limits or provide additional detail about the type of answer candidates should give, and help the candidate to understand the focus of the question. Cues are used to prompt the candidate to expand or extend their answer. Cues should not lead the candidate. Examiners should be aware that candidates may variably look for additional cues, and should be vigilant in directing the candidate back to the question to avoid excessively directing candidate responses.

Examples of qualifiers to a question about management might include:

- *over the first 3 days*
- *imagine you are explaining your plan to a colleague (or alternatively to an owner, which substantially changes the type of language a candidate might be expected to use).*
- *assume you have an unlimited budget and all the equipment you would like.*

Examples of planned cues might include: remind the candidate to consider sub-parts of question (if forgotten):

- *ask candidate to summarise or focus their thoughts*
- *before progressing to the next disclosure, ask candidate if there is anything further they would consider*

In constructing the examination, examiners need to think carefully and plan for the qualifiers and cues that might be needed for an adequately prepared candidate, and ensure that equivalent delivery is provided to all. This will require detailed thought and planning.

4. The order of each scenario

Each scenario planned should be presented to candidates in the same order.

Things that would usually be the same but may need to differ:

1. Exact wording

We have no wish for examiners to have to read exact wording from a script, although they may need to look at detailed notes to ensure that all scenario details, ancillary data and the same qualifiers are provided to each candidate at the appropriate stage.

For example one examiner might ask a candidate

"Okay let's move on now and I would like you to tell us about the management plan you would consider ideal if there were no limitations on equipment or money you could spend. Let's just talk about the next 3 days for now. Tell me as if you were speaking to a colleague."

Another may say:

*Examiner: How would you manage this case if you could spend any money and access any equipment? Imagine you are explaining your plan to a colleague. Let's just concentrate on the next 3 days.
Candidate: ok so you just want the first 3 days?
Examiner: yes that's right*

Note that all candidates should be given the qualifiers without them having to ask, however candidates may ask for qualifiers to be repeated or clarified and examiners should answer.

2. Number of qualifiers provided

With careful planning all necessary qualifiers should be identified in advance. However if it is discovered during an examination that further qualifiers than were planned are needed, examiners should insert the new qualifiers into the questions for subsequent candidates and also communicate with examiners examining at the same time so that they also insert the new qualifiers.

3. Additional questions to explore the depth of knowledge of a candidate

Examiners may need to add additional clarification questions above those planned in order to check the depth of understanding of a candidate about particular points they have made. However, in most instances it is appropriate to ask all candidates to justify their interpretations, plans or other statements. Asking for justifications should not be reserved for candidates who give an incorrect or unusual answer.

Examiners must not give hints or advice or clues to the correct or best answer to any candidate.

4. The order of questions

Generally the order that questions are asked within each scenario presented should be the same from candidate to candidate. However examiners may find that some candidates pre-empt questions and may jump ahead before they have been asked. Examiners do not have to interrupt the flow of this, but should ensure that candidates have all necessary information (including qualifiers) to answer at that point. Examiners should also be sure to come back to cover all parts of the question that were planned.

How similar must exams on subsequent days be?

If a subject is examined over more than one day, different questions should be used for each day of examining. While the questions need to be different, the following aspects need to be kept as much the same as possible:

- There should be the same number of “main” questions or scenarios
- The learning outcomes covered by the questions should be the same. This may be at a broad level. For example if the learning outcome concerns animal nutrition, then animal nutrition should also form the basis for the second day’s question. The day one may address a deficiency of one element and day two may address over-supplementation with another element.
- As far as possible the level of difficulty should be kept the same.

This type of similarity can often be achieved by substituting a different scenario but retaining the same questions.