

February 2024 CEQ Examination

Post-examination Report



Critical Essay Question (CEQ)

The CEQ examination was conducted on Tuesday 20th February 2024.

The purpose of the CEQ assessment is to test skills considered essential for consultant psychiatrists. These skills align with CANMED roles and allow candidates to demonstrate the ability to evaluate and critically appraise a proposition relevant to psychiatry, apply evidence-based assessment, and demonstrate a capacity for balanced reasoning.

The Committee for Examinations followed established procedures to set the February 2024 CEQ Question and to determine the pass mark. Standard setting to determine the pass mark was conducted by the Writtens Sub-committee.

Candidates were provided with a prompt in the form of a quote. They were expected to address the quote, critically discuss it in essay form (including a consideration of multiple viewpoints), and provide a conclusion.

The quote for the February 2024 CEQ examination was:

“...diagnosis is a useful form of communication, it is not a fact.”

Reference: Tyrer P (2022) Remembered jewels: The role of diagnosis in psychiatry by Robert Kendell. BJPsych Advances 28: 9-10. DOI: 10.1192/bja.2021.50.

This quote was used for the CEQ examination as this topic is essential in the practice of Psychiatry and lent itself to many discussion points.

Candidates' responses were assessed across six domains of the CEQ Marking Guide. Overall, most candidates had a structure and were open to interpreting the quote which allowed them to show their breadth of knowledge and ability to reflect.

Table 1: CEQ marking guide Fellowship Competency

Fellowship Competency	Description	Weighting
1	Communicator	10%
3	Medical Expert, Communicator, Scholar	20%
5	Medical Expert, Health Advocate, Professional	20%
6	Professional	15%
9	Medical Expert, Communicator, Scholar	10%
10 (combined 7 & 8)	Medical Expert, Collaborator and Manager	25%

Many candidates had a good understanding of historical, cultural, ethical, advocacy perspectives, and of advantages and disadvantages of using diagnoses. However, many candidates included information in their responses which were irrelevant, thereby losing time. For instance, including historical facts which did not address the quote or add substance to their response to the quote.

The ability to communicate clearly in terms of appropriate grammar and vocabulary was at a slightly higher level to previous examinations (63.5% average score). The ability to identify and develop a number of lines of argument performed well (63% average score). Ethical aspects addressing this quote appeared to perform poorly in this examination, with candidates achieving a relatively low average mark of 56.2%.

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Table 2: Pass Rates for the CEQ examination following decoupling of the Essay-style examination in 2021.

	Aug-21	Feb-22	Aug-22	Feb-23	Aug-23	Feb-24
Pass Rate	76%	73%	72%	66%	75%	71%

The Committee for Examinations reviewed the performance of borderline candidates across the examination, in line with accepted procedures. Please note that, as candidates' performance is carefully scrutinised by the committee, results are final and will not be reviewed.

Candidates are provided feedback as to their performance in identified curriculum areas taken from the syllabus; this appears in their result letter. Result letters were released via InTrain, and MY RANZCP website, on 22 May 2024 for trainees and SIMG candidates respectively. College is mindful of the significant period of time between an exam and the release of results. Each candidate's CEQ paper is marked by two separate volunteer markers, with some assessed by a third marker. CEQ marking is done by a small group of markers to ensure good inter-rater reliability. The College aims to ensure a fair and rigorous marking process.

Given below is a summary of data from the February 2024 CEQ examination.

Table 3: Summary – February 2024 CEQ

	No. of candidates
No. of candidates enrolled in the CEQ examination	239
No. of candidates successful	170 (71%)
No. of candidates passing on their first attempt	76.1%
% of SIMG candidates passing	53.1%
% of Trainee candidates passing	73.9%

Table 4: CEQ Comparison Trainees vs SIMGs Aug 2021 – Feb 2024

	Aug 2021	Feb 2022	Aug 2022	Feb 2023	Aug 2023	Feb 2024
Total No of candidates	240	198	250	232	239	239
No of SIMGs	23	26	24	42	42	32
- SIMG MEAN /40	22.4/40	21.9/40	22.4/40	22/40	20.7/40	23/40
- SIMG Candidate Passed	10/23	13/26	10/24	16/42	18/42	17/32
- SIMG Pass rate	43.5%	50.0%	41.6%	38.1%	42.8%	53.1%

Final comments

Candidates are reminded of College resources and strongly advised to practice on past examination papers which can be found here: [Critical Essay Question - previous exams | RANZCP](#). We also refer candidates to the College website for slides from the CEQ pre-Congress workshop conducted on 28th May 2023: [ceg-writtens-congress-2023-for-the-website.pdf \(ranzcp.org\)](#). Candidates are encouraged to use supervision opportunities to discuss consultant perspectives in their daily clinical work and to seek advice and formative feedback on practice answers.

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The College has embarked on a process seeking consent from those candidates who provided exemplary responses in this exam, in order for the College to publish these on the website to aid with training for the CEQ examination. These exemplars were regarded by markers as typical of a reasonable essay, eloquent and well-rounded, and may not have been awarded the top marks. College members will be informed via the College newsletter when these have been published on the website.

The College is mindful of the performance gaps between SIMGs and trainees, and are working to narrow the gap.

We strongly recommend that candidates are mindful of their handwriting to ensure marks are not missed because of illegibility. CEQ markers are mindful of the time pressure for candidates in this examination and every effort is made to decipher poor handwriting.

Click on the hyperlink for the February 2024 Marking Guide [Past papers and study support | RANZCP](#) (password required).

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