

Learning to Learn

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The College of Optometrists **Final Assessment** at the end of the pre-registration year replaces the Professional Qualifying Exams (PQEs) beginning in 2006.

These notes are written to help you better prepare for your **Final Assessment** and are based on my experience as a Senior Examiner for the College of Optometrists, involvement in the trials of the **Final Assessment**, and preparing students for many years for their PQEs, and from the feedback that I have received from both students and College examiners over the years. ***Remember the curriculum has not changed - only the method of assessing the competency has evolved.*** Thus the core skills and knowledge required to become an optometrist are still the same as they were when the PQEs were around!

Competency. The level of competence you are required to demonstrate to succeed in the **Final Assessment** is set at "entry-level" - to enable you to enter the optometric profession in the UK. These will include the high priority competencies and a sample of medium and standard priority competencies based on the GOC Stage 2 Core Competencies for Optometry. You are not therefore expected to know what experienced optometrists would know. However demonstrating entry-level competency at **Final Assessment** day will require you to have successfully evidenced all the GOC Stage 2 Core Competencies for Optometry to the satisfaction of your assessor, before you will be eligible to enter for the **Final Assessment**.

Study and refresher programmes. You should not rely on short refresher courses to “get you through” what has taken 3 to 4 years full time study and a

continuous assessment process quarterly for a whole year to evidence the competencies. To ensure that you have a good chance of succeeding you should attend refresher programs, which will guide you with regards to “examination technique”. Try and choose small courses/tutorials to ensure that your personal strengths and weaknesses are discussed and considered in the tutoring. Have a go at some mock assessments, and most importantly have a strategy and a systematic approach to revising and preparing for your exams throughout your pre-registration year.

Here are some tips that have worked well with many students in the past:

- Study everyday in sessions of up to 2hrs at a time with 15 minute breaks. During the breaks go for a walk, make a cup of tea; whatever you do, do not sit or lie down and "chill out".
- Eat well - sleep well.
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Keep fit.

Effective reading. A question that I often get asked is "How do I manage to read all the material I have collected over the years and is still growing daily?"

The key is not reading everything but "effective reading"

Here are some approaches to **effective reading** for you to consider:

- Do not read everything
- Only select material relevant to the **Final Assessment**
- Categorise the material you have into:
 - Material that you need to assimilate and apply - Read this actively and thoroughly
 - Material that you just need to be aware of - Skim this and read relevant parts
 - Material that you do not need - Reject

Recalling information. This often leads to the next question and that is "How do I remember and recall this information when I need it?"

Here are some approaches that you should consider to improve your retention and recall of the material you read

Try the **PQRST** approach

- **P** = Preview - Read outlines, section headings and the summary where present to get the essence of the paper/book
- **Q** = Question - Ask yourself about each section heading/chapter
- **R** = Read - Try addressing the questions you have posed by reading the details of the sections
- **S** = Self-recitation - Recall and recite the main points
- **T** = Test yourself - Ask a colleague or a fellow student to test you and "test" them to help you (and them) to revise.

Try **Mind Mapping**

- Popularised by Tony Buzan, it is a method of making visual notes. An example to build on may be seen on the following website page:
www.hirji.co.uk/mind_map.htm
- The idea is to write down the key word/title/image in the centre of the page and create branches from this central point.
- Branches can have sub-branches.
- Use colour.
- All this makes it easier to recall.

Try not to read word for word. Anticipate as much as possible and explain the topic to someone else - a colleague or your supervisor! Remember to ask questions of your supervisor or assessor or for that matter anyone who may be able to help you with areas you are unclear about.

Finally adopt a **positive attitude** to revision to motivate yourself to revise more effectively. Good Luck!

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