



## Exam preparation

The two most common questions from prospective applicants and candidates who have previously failed an exam are 'How much study do I need to do?' and 'How can I improve my performance?' There is no single answer to suit everyone, but based on interactions and feedback with previous exam candidates, ASMIRT have collated the following tips to help you prepare for your certification exam.

Generally speaking, the earlier you can begin revision for an exam the better. At least 6 months ahead, download the Course Syllabus. The course syllabi list the topics that will be assessed in the exam as well as suggested text books and other learning materials. Invest in a comprehensive, up-to-date text book. Although there are countless reputable free sources of information, a good quality text book will help fast-track your study.

Having a structured revision plan for exam preparation will not only improve your exam performance, but also reduce stress, and give you a feeling that you are in control of both your revision and of the exam itself.

Exams are designed to assess your ability to practise to a standard. Your experience in clinic/private practice or hospital setting is central to passing the exam. There is a significant clinical component to the exam and candidates with no or limited clinical experience in the modality struggle to pass the relevant exam. It is recommended that candidates undertake at least one year of clinical practice in MRI before attempting the MR exam.

Preparations should include a safe, evidence based approach to whatever you are seeing in your everyday role, and making this part of your exam preparation. As you see patients throughout the day, make a note of any areas where you were less confident and why, and note anything new or unfamiliar that crops up. This will help you to formulate your study plan. Discuss these areas with your colleagues and see if they have any advice or can assist you with useful tips and information. Reinforcing your study revision with actual cases will always enhance your ability to retain and recall information

## Formulating a study plan

You need to put thought into how and what to study. Plan your study with equal attention to each topic. You do not need to be 'outstanding' in any particular area – rather focus on a breadth of knowledge and skills. So first, develop a list of topics that you are going to focus on.

Next, consider how much time you can devote to your revision, and what times of the day/night suit you best. Try to plan revision time for when there will be minimal interruptions. For example, you might fit in an hour or so first thing in the morning before the rest of the household are awake – or arrive at work early and use that time to isolate yourself for revision. Alternatively, at night once the household has gone to bed. We all have different time clocks. Alternatively, if you find that organising yourself timewise doesn't work for you, perhaps look at setting study goals by identifying certain parts of the syllabus to have studied by a certain time....x topics per week for example.

There are a number of educational resources that will be helpful with your study such as the study guide which lists suggested text books and other learning materials and be sensible in those you access. There

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is no point reading reams of material if you are a visual learner...you won't remember it and it will frustrate you. Try and look at relevant images with less words. Everyone learns in a different way.

One very helpful strategy can be to develop a bank of concise notes on important topics. This should be easily accessible – no need to write an encyclopedia – but notes where you can add thoughts easily and read back as part of the reinforcement of knowledge. You can do this on your phone, tablet or even the old-fashioned way with pen and paper. Whatever works for you; having the record is what matters and the simple act of noting things down reinforces them.

We would highly recommend finding other candidates who are preparing for the same exam and starting a study group. This will keep you motivated and on track. You can meet on line, in person or by phone – whatever works for you. We would also highly recommend letting your colleagues know that you are embarking on a serious examination and that you would welcome information on less common acquisitions, seeing artefacts and hearing about interesting cases. Furthermore, try to find a mentor. This would preferably be someone who has passed the relevant exam and has high level skills and knowledge.

Participate in relevant seminars and conferences. These give you a great opportunity to consolidate your knowledge and ask questions of speakers and other delegates to improve your understanding of difficult concepts.

Another tool you could utilise is to volunteer to give presentations or develop learning material for your workplace on topics to be covered in the exam. This is a great form of targeted self-directed learning.

### **Timelines**

Approximately 6 weeks out from the exams is when you need to assess what you have studied to date. If you have missed something, make sure it is identified and time allocated to bring yourself up to speed on that topic. Once this has been done, set out a timetable for yourself to read through and thoroughly revise all that you have studied. This time should not be spent on learning new topics – but reinforcing everything that you have learnt to date.

You should try to finish your revision a few days before the exam and then have a few days away from study to give yourself a break, and to ensure that you are fresh and rested before the test.

### **On the day of the exam**

Make sure you know where the exam venue is ahead of time and allow plenty of time to get there. The last thing you want is to be driving around trying to find a car park as time ticks away on you. Remember to bring any necessary proof of identity and other documentation that may be required. Make sure you have had a good breakfast or lunch ahead of the exam – and that you are well hydrated. A toilet stop before the exam starts is highly recommended!

### **Finally....**

Good luck!

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