

ACB Trainees Committee

May 2008

'EXAM PREPARATION'

Information is given on data collected to date. As new information is gathered these pages will be updated. If you see an opportunity for the ACB Trainees Committee to help support you with exam preparation through this report please let our webmaster know.

'MRCPath'

Follow the link below to the Royal College of Pathologists' website. This will take you to general information given about the exam structure and candidate requirements if you click on 'Candidate Information' and 'Exam regulations and guidelines' on left hand side menu.

Royal College of Pathologists: <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=6>

Part 1

Written paper - Tips on preparing

In this section the ACB Trainees Committee provides some general information on exam preparation and some data collected from the 2007 survey of trainees on exam preparation.

- 1. Study time – leading up to the exam**
- 2. Study time- immediately pre-exam**
- 3. Training course attendance**
- 4. Attempts at the exam**

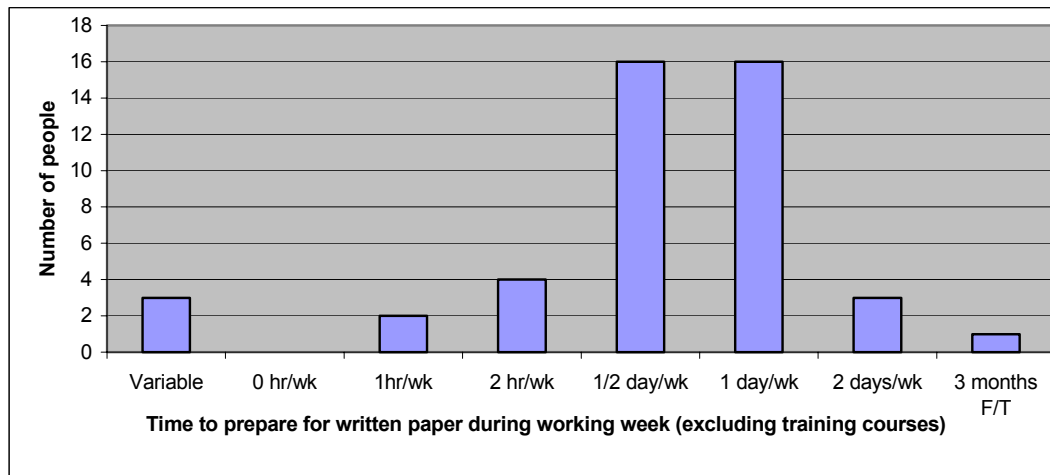
1. Study time – leading up to the exam

Trainees are advised to consult with their supervisors on the time allocated to study time and exam preparation on a local basis. This should be done as early as possible to allow effective time management and to avoid potential conflict.

In 2007 trainees were surveyed on how much study time they were given for exam preparation.

Written paper preparation time is shown in figure 1. The most common amount of time given to trainees to prepare for exams was between 0.5 and 1 day per week.

FIGURE 1. Amount of time given for Part 1 written exam preparation.



Trainees are advised to consult with supervisors on time allocated for study time. Consider how and where this time is best spent if you are allocated time, for example in a library or in the work place. Also consider to ask whether this time will be provided to you if you need to re-sit the exam as some establishments have different rules for re-sits. Trainees that are not given allocated study time might wish to consider how to prepare for the exam in a manner that benefits your department for example;

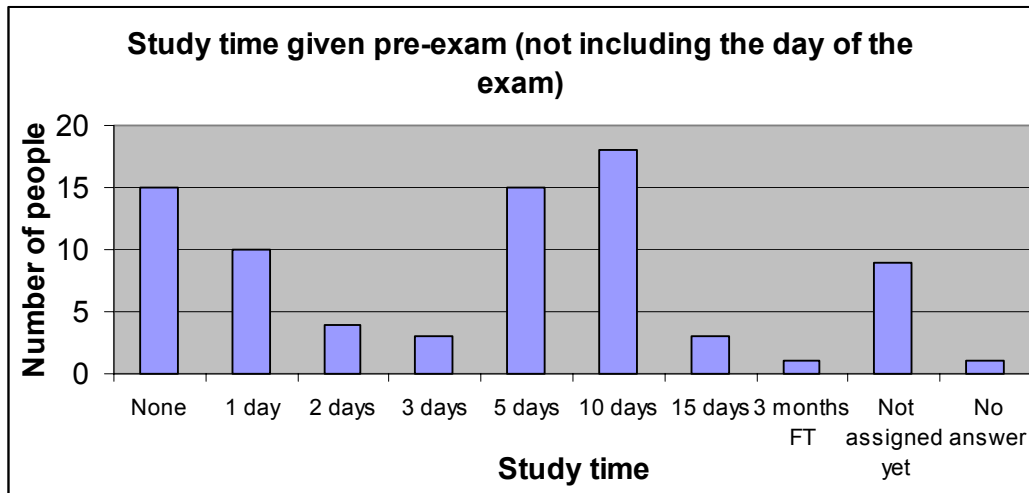
- Offering to write a summary of recently published guideline
- Attending grand rounds or multi-disciplinary meetings on behalf of the department
- Offering to present at a journal club meeting
- Leading a tutorial group of local staff

Supervisors have an obligation to support your training and development. You may wish to ask them to review an essay you have written or give you a short tutorial on a difficult subject. Supporting you through your exams should be discussed at your appraisals and be part of your personal development plan.

2. Study time- immediately pre-exam

Trainees are advised to consult with their supervisors on whether study leave is available immediately pre-exam, particularly whether this can be taken as leave or whether you are required to remain in the work place. This should be done as early as possible to allow effective time management and to avoid potential conflict.

The results of the 2007 survey by the ACB Trainees Committee show that a large number of trainees were given 10 days pre-exam study leave, but an almost equal number were given no study leave at all.



Study leave immediately pre-exam is a personal preference and some trainees will find it more useful than others.

If you are not given any study leave immediately pre-exam you may wish to consider using your own annual leave.

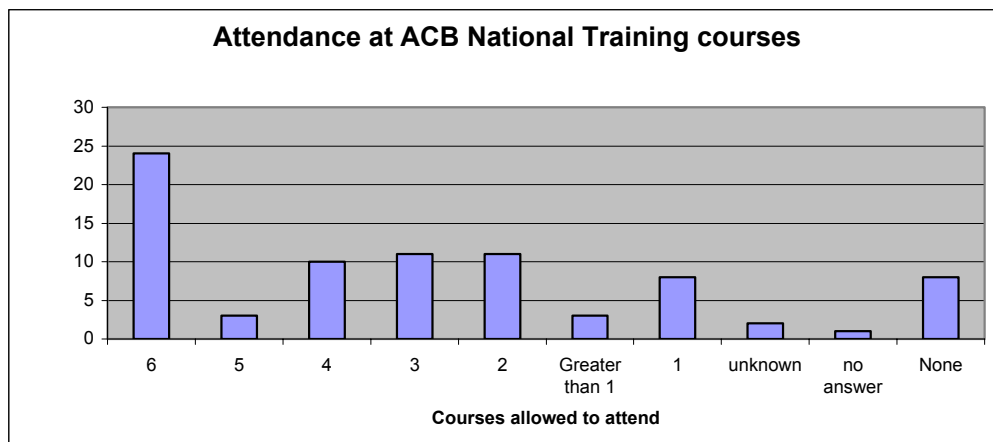
Trainees are advised to research what previous trainees in local departments were given for study time, or even in the region. However no assumptions should be made on your own allocation and this should be raised with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity to avoid disappointment or to allow you to plan your time effectively.

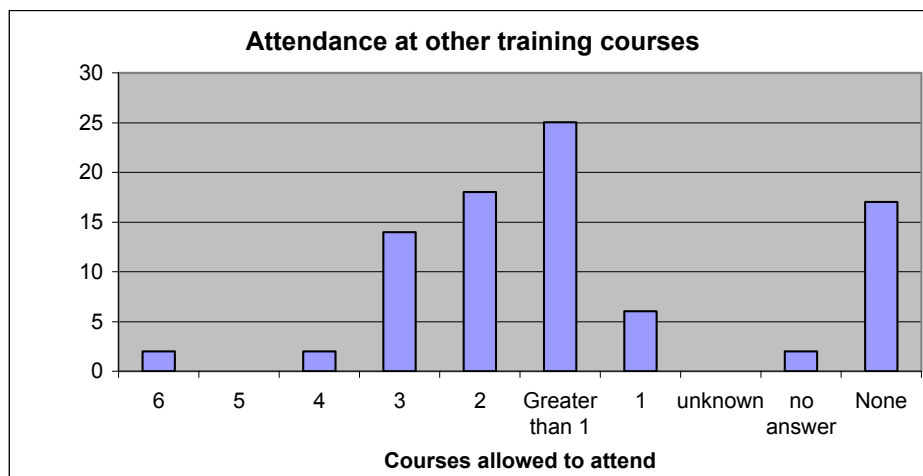
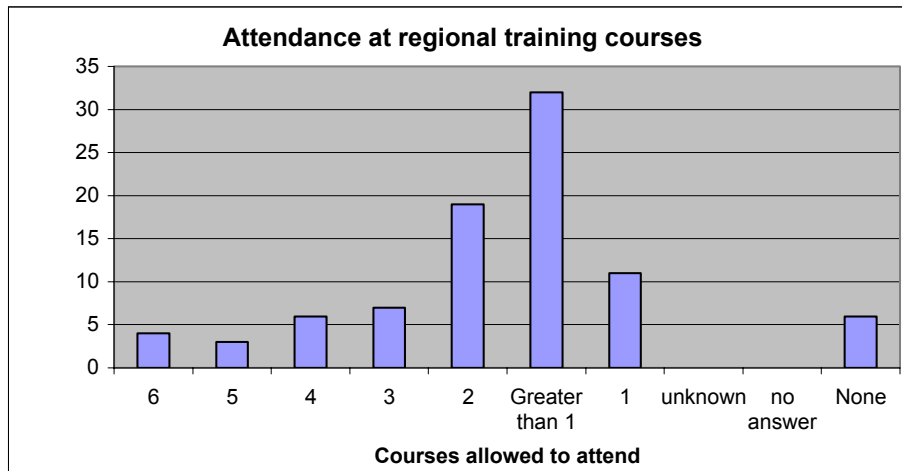
3. Training course attendance

The ACB National training courses can provide a useful learning resource to help with exam preparation and further information is given through the link below. Training courses are also provided on a regional and local basis.

ACB national training courses: <http://www.acb.org.uk/training/trainingabt.asp>

The ACB Trainees Committee 2007 survey on exam preparation showed that the majority of trainees attended a range of courses as part of their exam preparation.





Regional training courses organised via the ACB are advertised to members and often in the ACB news. As a trainee you may have an allocated number of days for attendance at training courses and or an allocated budget. It is recommended that you discuss this with your supervisor in order to prioritise the courses that would be the most use to you and are at the most suitable academic level.

Often regions have locally organised MRCPPath tutorials or training days. These may be formal training days with invited speakers or more informal groups of other trainees studying together. For more information on those organised in your region then please contact your Trainees Committee regional representative (<http://www.acb.org.uk/training/committee.asp>) for more information.

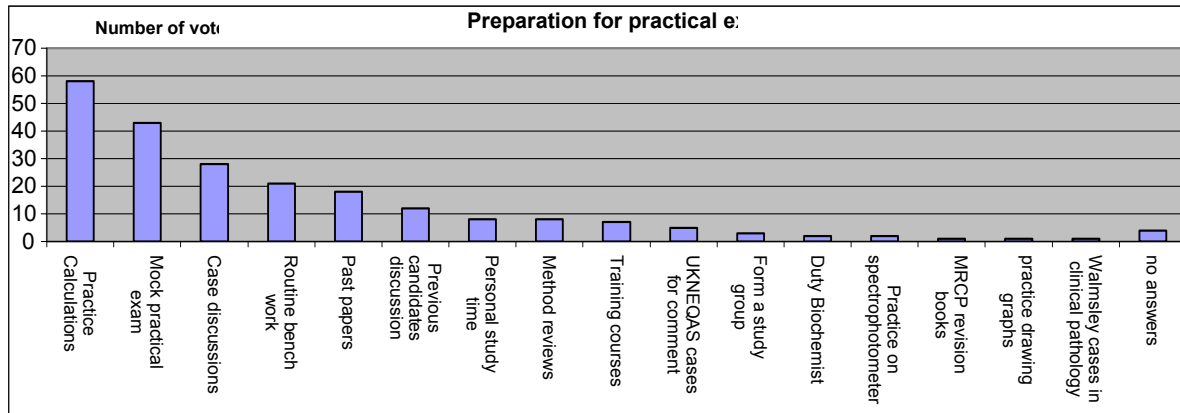
4. Attempts at the exam

In the 2007 survey Trainees were asked how many attempts they had at passing the practical exam. Only 2/40 had two attempts at passing the practical exam and 38/40 had one attempt at the practical exam.

Practical Exam - 'Tips on Preparing'

In this section the ACB Trainees Committee provides some thoughts on exam preparation, collected from the 2007 survey of trainees on exam preparation.

The graph below gives ideas as to what people found were the three most useful things to do to prepare for their practical exam.



Some suggestions given by people who have sat the MRCPPath practical exam are given below.

Reading method protocols. Doing bench work using SOPs but using a lab notebook as well. Writing up routine work as a lab report. Discussion with experienced BMSs about time planning and practical tips
NEQAS cases for comment scheme, ACB news calculations
past questions
practice calculations
Deacon's qs in ACB news, past papers, sample qs from RCPPath website, other trainees!
Practicals
Examples from work, working together with one other person taking the exam. CMGS Bayes course was also useful
practice calculations and past papers
Practice OSPE questions & spot tests. Mock wet practicals. Tutorial sessions led by senior members of staff using questions from past papers
calculations, past papers