

How to prepare to resit the MRCOG

Dr Helen Halpern 2021





It's not the end of the world.
Many good doctors fail exams.

Why did I fail?

If you failed one paper and not the other, consider the material that was examined in that paper

Did you leave enough time to prepare and revise effectively?

Reflect on previous examination outcomes at school and university as well as MRCOG

If it has been challenging for you to succeed at your first attempt, consider why?

Could you have an underlying processing or organisational problem such as dyslexia?

Look at the Leader tool – self management skills will support examination success as well as professional success

Pause for thought 1



Always update your Training Programme Director or College Tutor about your plans to sit the exam and your results



They have experience of supporting trainees who have struggled with exams and can give you helpful advice

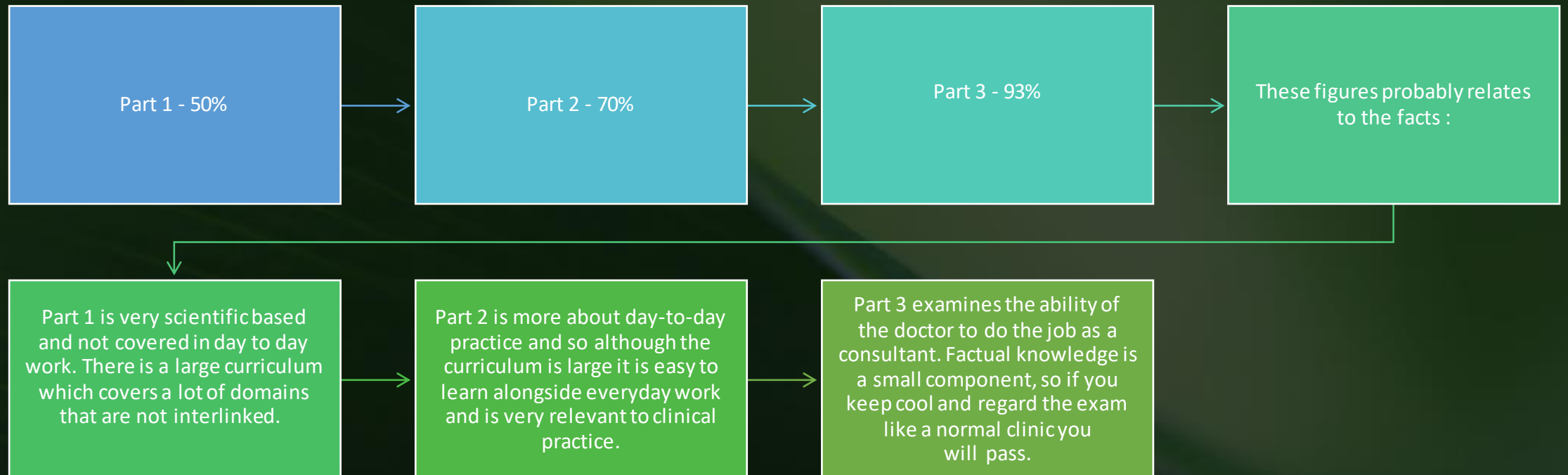
Everything
you need to
know about
the exam is
on the
RCOG
website:

Part 1: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/mrcog-exams/part-1-mrcog/>

Part 2: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/mrcog-exams/part-2-mrcog/>

Part 3: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/mrcog-exams/part-3-mrcog-exam/>

Pass rates (as in 2021)



Exam support e-learning module

There is an exam support module that contains generic tips and advice. It also includes video of a trainee talking about his experience of failing an exam and how he felt.

Here is the link:

<https://london.hee.nhs.uk/examination-support-home>

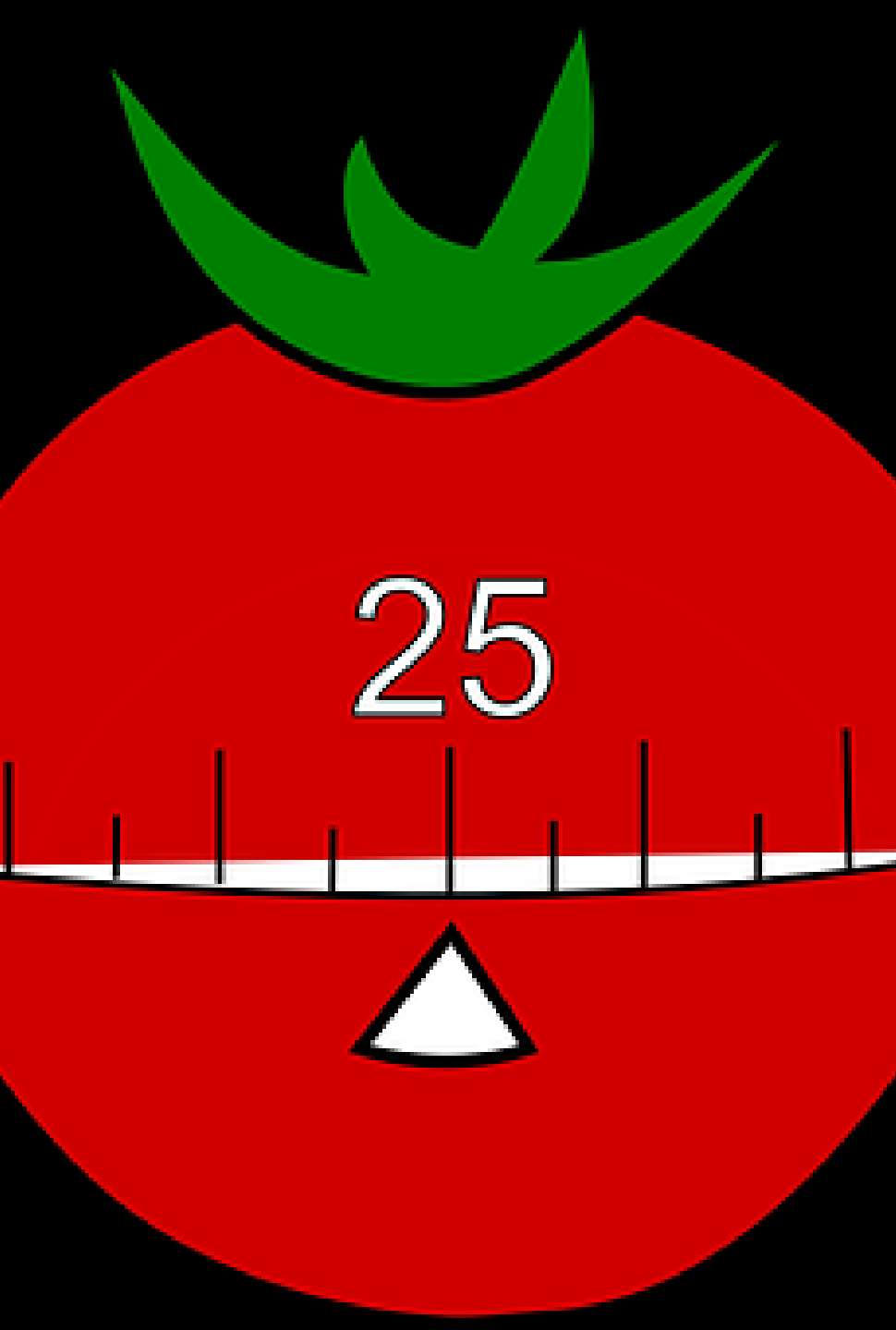
Pause for thought 2

Are you:

- About to get married
- Looking after a new baby
- Under pressure to progress to next training grade
- Caring for someone who is ill
- Dealing with serious personal crises?

If so, talk to your CT or TPD as soon as possible.

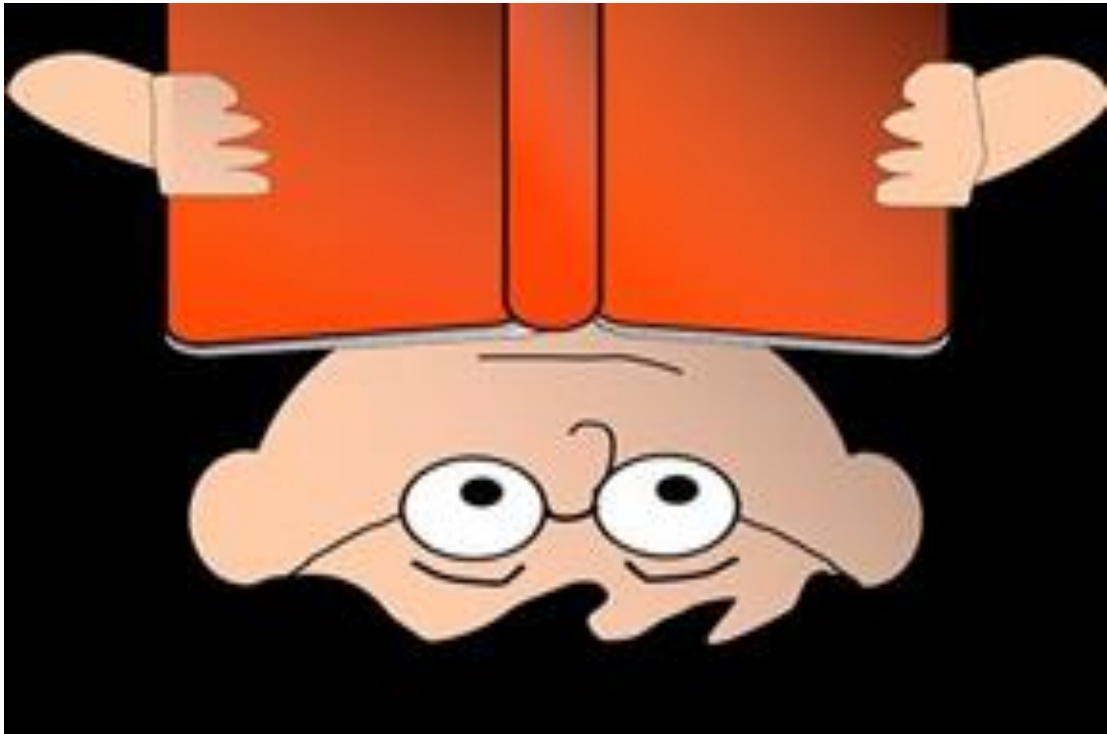
There are always options e.g. out of programme pause/out of programme experience with no on-call/career break



Concentration

- How long can you really concentrate for?
- Most of us cannot manage more than about 20-30 minutes at a time
- Try breaking your revision into short blocks with breaks in between
- Some people find it helpful to use a timer as in the Pomodoro technique (have a look on the internet)

Learning and neurodiversity



- Have you wondered if you might have dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, autism or another condition?
- Some of these are common amongst doctors
- You can be assessed for dyslexia via the Professional Support Unit
- If you suspect that you have a different neurodiversity condition you will need to ask your GP for a specialist referral

Might you have dyslexia?

Good doctors can struggle to pass exams – get help early

Have you ever previously just scraped through or needed to re-sit an exam?

Were you able to complete the paper in the time given?

Do you find it challenging to retain or process information in line with your peers?

You can read more about dyslexia here: <https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/dyslexia>

Dyslexia assessment

You can access the British Dyslexia Association screening tool here:

<https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/dyslexia>

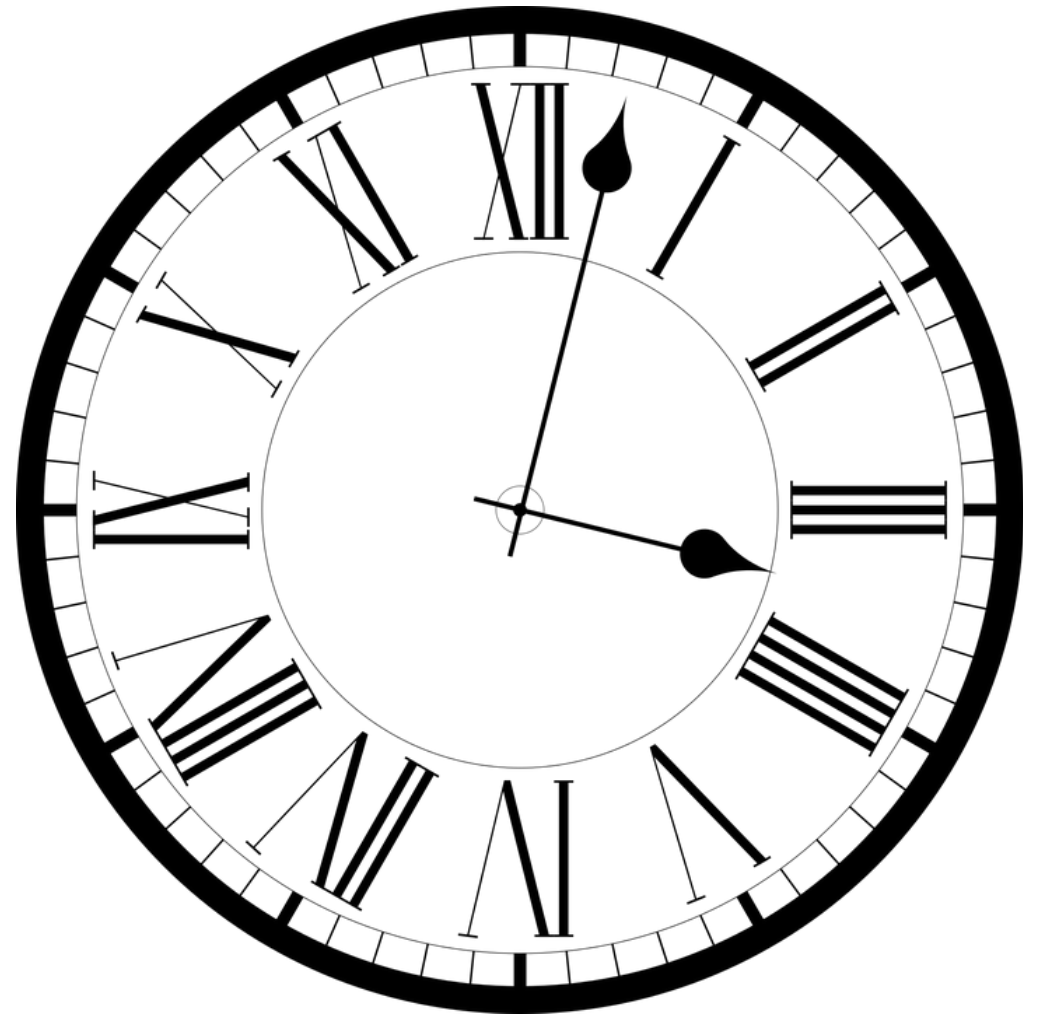
Even if your screening score is low but you are having difficulty in passing exams contact the Professional Support Unit:
<https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/spoc-single-point-contact>

Reasonable adjustments

- If you have had a formal recommendation for additional time to complete the exam you need to apply for this through the RCOG exams department:
<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/courses-exams-events/store/?q=§ion=Examinations>

Extra time for the exam papers

- Consider how best to use any extra time
- Discuss with a supervisor or specialist coach
- It may be helpful to use some of the extra time to practise relaxation or mindfulness to help centre yourself or to take some short breaks and re-charge your energy



Pause for thought 3

If you are breast feeding let the college know



It is now an option to take a pause in the exam to feed your baby



Get your eyes tested

- You will be putting in a lot of screen time during your revision
- On the exam day you will be looking at a screen for at least 6 hours
- You may benefit from glasses

Need motivation to re-sit? Might coaching help?

- It can be hard to revise material that you already feel you know.
- You can apply for up to 4 free 1:1 sessions
- Your coach could help you to:
 - plan your revision, including time for self-care
 - deal with multi-tasking
 - gain perspective on your career progress and aspirations
 - improve your self-confidence
 - manage anxiety/stress
- Apply via this link: <https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/coaching-service>



Is anxiety an issue for you?

- A certain level of anxiety before and during an exam is normal and can improve performance. However, for some people the anxiety becomes overwhelming and difficult to manage.
- If your anxiety is mainly related to exams there is a 2 hour workshop that you might find helpful. This uses a cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) approach to dealing with exam stress.
- There is also an exam preparation workshop for trainees across all specialities who have had difficulty in passing exams.
- Details of these workshops and a direct booking link can be found on this webpage:
<https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/courses-and-conferences>



What else is going on in your life?

- Are you distracted by other important issues at the moment?
- How is your mood?
- Are you in good physical and mental health?
- Are you able to get enough sleep?
- Can you find time to relax/take breaks/have a holiday?
- Are you able to focus and concentrate on revision?
- Do have sufficient support from family and friends?

You can arrange a confidential conversation with a professional colleague outside of your work environment

<https://london.hee.nhs.uk/professional-development/spoc-single-point-contact>

Final tips and strategies



Read (or re-read) the module on passing the MRCOG



Ask your supervisor or TPD if they can put you in touch with others taking the same exam. It can be helpful to study with colleagues



Take care when reading exam questions. You may think you recognise them from before, but the wording might have changed



The examiners are not trying to catch you out, so don't over-think your responses



The good news

Most people do better on subsequent attempts at an exam
Good luck!

Acknowledgments

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