



Candidates have little idea of what to expect from an oral exam and are usually nervous about being put under the spot light. Against this backdrop, the College has to run a fair and defensible exam process. So what does that look like on the day? The following are some tips based on experience.

The first thing to emphasise is that while you don't want to lead the candidate, you also want to come across as human. Candidates will be seeking feedback from you, and they can interpret your actions in as many different ways, as you can possibly imagine. So you might as well go ahead and smile. Please do smile!

The object is to be fair, by delivering the same examination for all candidates. This approach doesn't mean you have to stick rigidly to a script and it doesn't mean wooden, robotic or "stony-faced" examiners. It does mean that every candidate is asked the same questions so that they get the same opportunity to show their knowledge.

With these objectives in mind, let's look at possible ways to put candidates at ease, move through questions and ensure consistency between candidates and between teams of examiners.

### ***In the beginning...***

The candidate will be brought into the room by the Observer, who will have started a rapport during the walk from the waiting room, but now it is over to you, the examiners. Putting the candidate at ease is easier said than done, but a friendly demeanour and a discussion about anything other than exam questions (such as it is great to see them in the sunny Gold Coast, have they come far to get here/been here before) goes a long way as it is something they can answer easily.

When the Membership candidate comes into the room, this may be their first opportunity to establish a relationship with other members of their Chapter-to-be.

Things to tell the candidate:

- Who you are
- What the examination will be, e.g. "over the next 45 or so minutes we will talk about 6 cases, we will alternate asking questions, and some images will be put on the screen as we go".
- What to do if they don't understand a question, e.g. if you need us to repeat anything, just ask.
- That you will be making notes, e.g. "we may be jotting down notes as we go through, please don't be distracted as it doesn't mean anything if we are or aren't writing"

## ***Asking questions***

Candidates have no idea how many marks a question is worth, so they don't have the usual clues as to how much depth their answer should go into. So you need to provide guidance by giving them cues – “can you expand a bit more on...”.

If there is going to be some signalment information summarised on a slide, this can be distracting for the candidate as they have to listen to you and read at the same time (when they are also thinking about what the question will be and what their answer will be, not to mention did they answer the last question correctly...). So guide the candidate by telling them that you are now going to give them some information about a case that will be the basis for this question and that the details of the signalment will be written on this slide so that you don't need to jot them down. Tell them they can go back to this slide if they need.

You should plan ahead of time for cues and redirection that may be needed. If the candidate does not understand the question, re-phrase it. If the question has multiple aspects, and the candidate forgets one, remind them of this part of the question.

If the candidate goes on to discuss something that is part of a subsequent question, use your judgment as to whether you can redirect them back to the question at hand or let them go on. Think about the likelihood of this happening as you write your questions and write in planned cues for how you want to handle it.

### ***What to do if the candidate gets stuck or off track...***

If the candidate is spending too long writing down notes and not speaking, then say to them – “can you please explain your thought processes as you write down your notes”.

If the candidate does not know the answer and is getting flustered - “we can come back to that part at the end of this question if you like”.

If the candidate has already given you the answer you want and is heading into further details – “that is all I needed for that question so I will move you onto the next”.

### ***During morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea breaks***

For subjects with multiple examining teams, you should discuss exam progress during breaks in the exam schedule to compare notes on whether the exam is running according to plan and whether extra cues have been necessary. This exchange helps with standardisation across rooms.