Preparation for the Oral Exam: Candidates Edition

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SCIENTISTS

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- The lack of feedback, body cues or prompts from examiners
- The period of time between written and oral exams

Familiarity with the process and thorough preparation can reduce anxiety

Structure and content of oral examinations

Membership handbook contains general information about the process

Each discipline's subject guidelines provides specific:

- Content
- Format
- Structure

Exam content is approved prior to exam by:

- Chapter Examinations Committee
- Board of Examiners

Preparing for the oral exam

Refer to your individual subject guidelines for:

- Objectives
- Learning outcomes
- Recommended reading material

Identify resources for oral exams

Organise a study group with other candidates

Prepare answers for common and current topics

Collabora and

- Identify a mentor exam techniques exam
- Discuss topics wi
- Collaborate with and practice verb
- If possible, practi styles of question
- Sound out answe

Collaborating with other candidates and identifying mentors

- Identify a mentor who has the experience to provide advice on oral exam techniques, questions and potentially deliver a mock oral exam
- Discuss topics with colleagues and friends in your discipline
- Collaborate with other exam candidates to generate exam questions and practice verbal delivery
- If possible, practice with a variety of people to adjust to individual styles of questions and delivery
- Sound out answers to yourself or friends and family members

Practicing mock oral exams

KEY: Useful but requires appropriately experienced mentor

- Important to construct an organised verbal response and gauge effectiveness/accuracy of information delivered
- Can determine your reaction to unseen questions and ability to communicate under pressure
- Helpful to practice the exam format and timing

Answering e

KEY: Remain calm, take your time, a

- Listen to the question carefully
- Make notes if necessary, which
- Take your time to compose you
- Stay focused and do not ramble
- Focus on demonstrating effecti the final outcome
- It may help to relate the questio
- Do not overthink the question o
- Have confidence in your knowle

Stress and anxiety

It is normal to experience some anxiety before and during oral exams

Oral exams can be intimidating and stressful due to:
- Unfamiliar examiners and environment
- Pressure of answering questions in a limited time
- The lack of feedback, body cues or prompts from examiners
- The period of time between written and oral exams

Familiarity with the process and thorough preparation can reduce anxiety

Techniques to reduce anxiety

KEY: Remain focused and positive -recognise that some level of nervousness is normal

- Seek advice, support and mentorship from family, friends, colleagues and other candidates in both a personal and professional capacity
- When preparing, take a break and a change of scenery when required
- Having a sense that you are well prepared
- Practice as much as possible
- Access material on exam techniques and anxiety
- Remain calm during the examination process
- Seek advice from mental health professionals if required

Logistics

Bring photographic identification that matches the name on your examination application form

Arrive well rested

Allow plenty of time to locate exam venue and waiting room
Consider:

- Car parking location
- Travel time
- Coffee time!

Look and act professionally

Turn off your mobile phone before entering the waiting room

The exam room

- Your exam Observer will check your photo ID and take you to the exam room
- The exam room is a standard hotel room with the beds removed and rearranged with a desk and chairs
- The examiners will be sitting on one side of the desk with a chair for you to sit on the other side
- A computer and screen will be set up
- Water, paper and writing materials are often available in the exam rooms or can be requested prior to or during the examination
- Paper documents or photos may also be used

ogistics

The examiners

- Examiners are directed to be open and friendly but neutral in their responses and body posture to avoid giving candidates cues to direct their answers

- Do not expect or read into feedback or verbal/body cues from examiners

- The examiners will be taking notes as you speak for recording the information you provide – try not to be distracted by this or read into the amount of note taking that is being done

ately experienced

nised

Answering exam questions

KEY: Remain calm, take your time, and clarify the question if required

- Listen to the question carefully and ask for clarification if required
- Make notes if necessary, which may include diagnostic trees
- Take your time to compose your thoughts before answering
- Stay focused and do not ramble
- Focus on demonstrating effective clinical reasoning rather than on the final outcome
- It may help to relate the question to a case you have had in real life
- Do not overthink the question or your answers
- Have confidence in your knowledge and ability
- Remember that each new question is a fresh start

If things go wrong...

If you are sure you cannot answer the question, it is best to admit that and move onto the next question – you can return to that topic later, time permitting

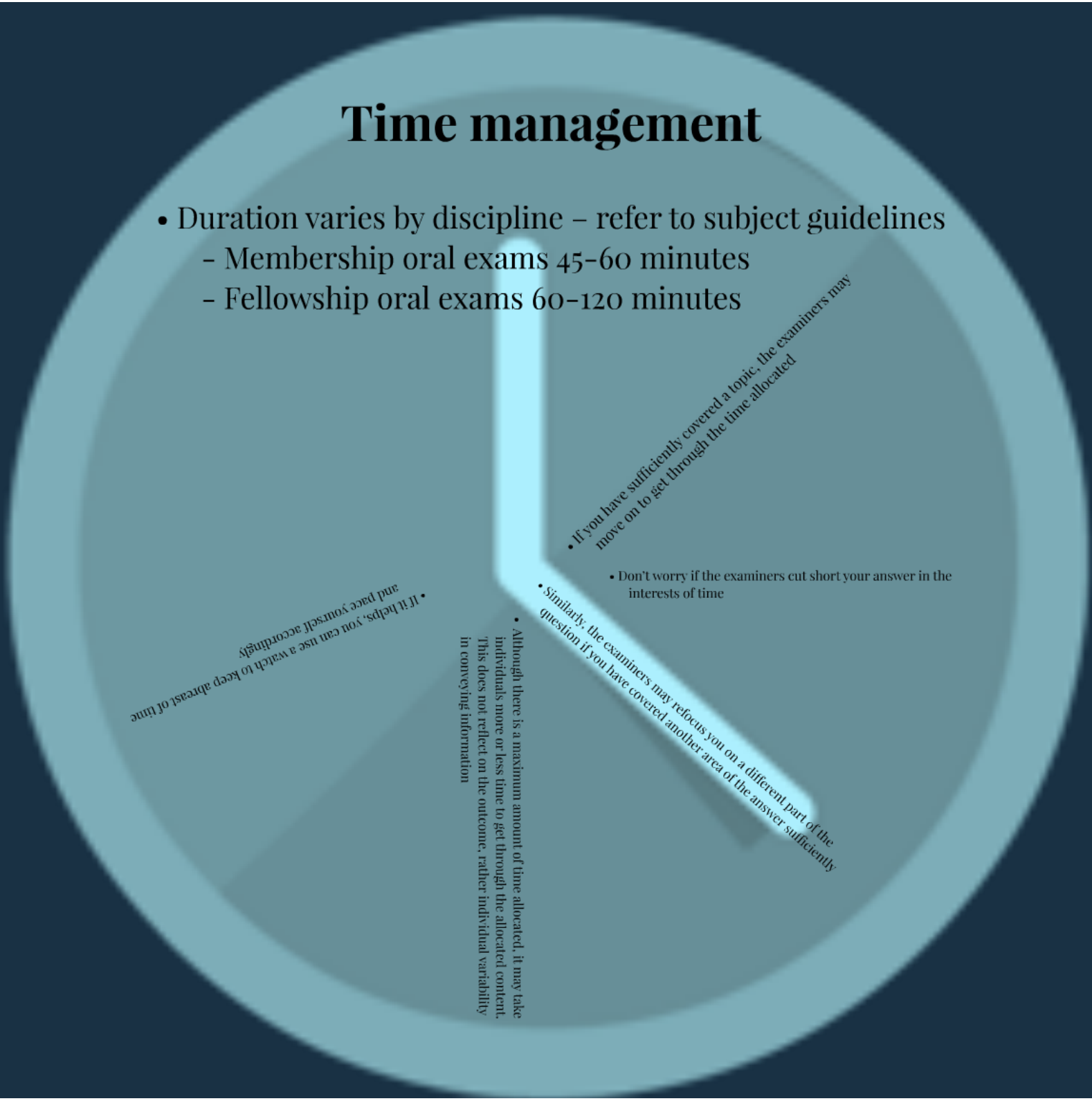
Remember that each new question is a fresh start

If you do find yourself losing your composure, ask the examiners for a brief break to refocus your thoughts and/or get a drink of water

Don't get flustered - remember that you may to be unable to answer some questions as the examiners explore the limits of your knowledge

Time management

- Duration varies by discipline – refer to subject guidelines
  - Membership oral exams 45-60 minutes
  - Fellowship oral exams 60-120 minutes



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ier to subject guidelines

-60 minutes

00–120 minutes

- If you have sufficiently covered a topic, the examiners may move on to get through the time allocated

- Don't worry if the examiners cut short interests of time

- Similarly, the examiners may refo

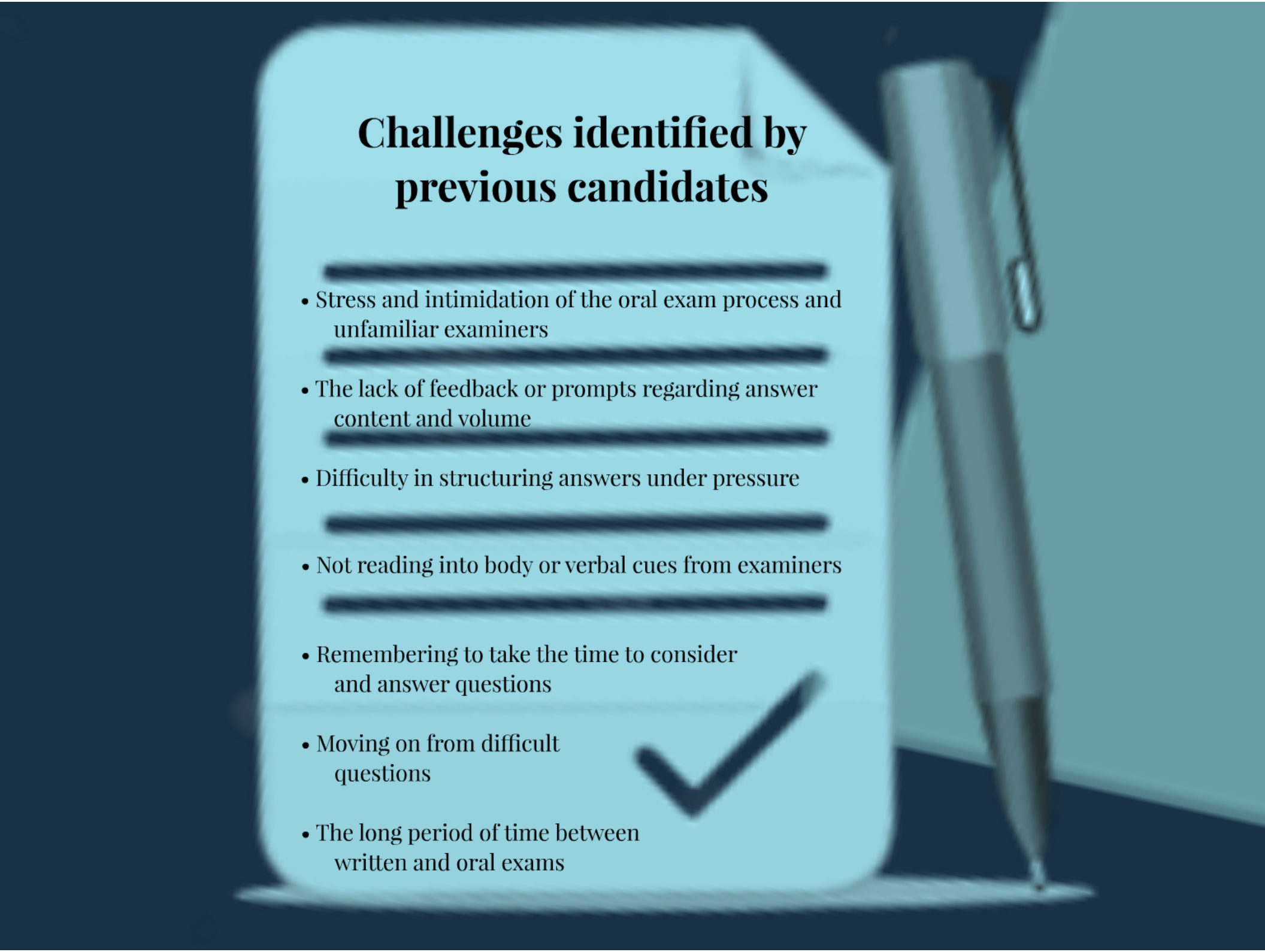
- If you have sufficien
  move on to get th
- Don't worry if the examiners cu
  interests of time

- Similarly, the examiners may refocus you on a different part of the question if you have covered another area of the answer sufficiently

- Although there is a maximum amo
  individuals more or less time t
  This does not reflect on the
  in conveying information

- Don't worry
  interests
- Similarly, the examiners may re
  question if you have covered ano
- Although there is a maximum amount of time allocated, it may take individuals more or less time to get through the allocated content. This does not reflect on the outcome, rather individual variability in conveying information
- If it helps, you can use
  and pace yourself

- If it helps, you can use a watch to keep abreast of time and pace yourself accordingly


Challenges identified by previous candidates
• Stress and intimidation of the oral exam process and unfamiliar examiners
• The lack of feedback or prompts regarding answer content and volume
• Difficulty in structuring answers under pressure
• Not reading into body or verbal cues from examiners
• Remembering to take the time to consider and answer questions
• Moving on from difficult questions
• The long period of time between written and oral exams

Thanks for your support of the college

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