

# How to succeed in the EEGC: a guide for trainees and their trainers

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Georgina Ooues,<sup>1</sup> Chris Plummer,<sup>1,2</sup> Jim Hall,<sup>3</sup> Clive Lawson,<sup>4</sup> Susanna Price,<sup>5</sup> Russell Smith,<sup>1</sup> Ian Wilson,<sup>6</sup> Rob Wright,<sup>3</sup> Sarah Bowater<sup>1</sup>

All doctors are highly experienced at passing exams during medical school and in postgraduate training. However, for a number of trainees, notably those who have had a period out of programme to undertake research or for parental leave, the European Examination in General Cardiology (EEGC) is the first exam they will have sat in more than 4 years. In addition, the challenging and busy nature of cardiology training, annual review of competence progression and advanced modular training allocation process can allow little time or energy for revision. Finally, personal circumstances and responsibilities change as we get older, and this can pose additional difficulties, and at times conflict, when preparing for the exam.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EXAM AND TOPICS COVERED

The British Cardiovascular Society (BCS) emails all cardiology trainees about the EEGC in November of their fifth Specialty Training year (ST5)—if you are in ST5 and don't receive this email, you should contact the BCS and inform your training programme director. It is important that trainees understand the structure of the exam and the topics covered. This information is covered in detail in Behind the Scenes of the European Exam in General Cardiology, Heart 2019 and on the BCS, European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS) websites.

## Preparing the knowledge required to pass the exam

Adult learners should be independent and self-directed, possessing an internal drive

### Box 1 How trainers can support the trainees for the exam preparation

#### What should the trainer do?

- ▶ Provide a suitable learning environment *throughout training*:
  - Ward rounds.
  - Cardiac catheterisation, electrophysiology and imaging facilities.
  - Clinics.
- ▶ Facilitate appropriate study leave.
- ▶ Facilitate on-call swaps for revision activity or exam-oriented CPD.
- ▶ Acknowledge that trainees may be stressed and/or distracted in the period before the exam.

for learning,<sup>1</sup> but trainees need support from their trainers and peers during revision for the EEGC.

Trainers can support learning by providing experiences that will allow trainees to 'construct' knowledge based on what they already know. These experiences should be relevant and applicable to real-life situations to optimise learning. Other ways trainers can help are outlined in [box 1](#).

A recent survey of trainees in the West Midlands showed that 84% received little or no support in their preparation for the EEGC from their educational supervisors. It is clearly important that trainers are more aware of the timing and structure of the exam so that they can support their trainees effectively.

Trainees should encourage their colleagues and supervisors to challenge them on topics covered by the exam, for example, asking about relevant guidelines and evidence, to help strengthen their understanding of the topics.

Trainees are encouraged to read widely. There is a plethora of tips available on

how to pass the EEGC, but the list of recommended resources for exam preparation<sup>2</sup> may appear daunting ([box 2](#)). Learning should be a social and collective process. Trainees are encouraged to talk to colleagues who have passed the EEGC and consider joining or creating a study group of trainees preparing for the exam.<sup>3</sup>

We recommend starting revision early to allow time to use as many resources as possible. Keeping notes from study materials is advised in order to be able to revise key points from a wide variety of sources. Obtaining study leave to attend courses that provide focused teaching on updated guidelines and general cardiology topics can be extremely useful for revision. Finally, maintaining a healthy study-life balance is crucial to avoid becoming tired and unproductive ([figure 1](#)).

## Taking the EEGC

The exam is taken on computers in Pearson VUE centres (<https://home.pearsonvue.com/esc>). To ensure fairness, they

### Box 2 Recommended resources for exam preparation

#### Recommended study materials for the European Examination in General Cardiology (EEGC)

- ▶ Textbooks: for example, *The ESC Textbook of Cardiovascular Medicine*.
- ▶ Guidelines: ESC, NICE/DVLA (for UK-specific questions).
- ▶ MCQ revision books: for example, Oxford Higher Specialty Training, Mayo Clinic Scientific Press – published questions do not necessarily reflect the content or style of the EEGC.
- ▶ Courses: for example, British Cardiovascular Society (BCS) courses, BCS and Mayo Clinical Cardiology Review Course, BJCA Cardiology to the Core.
- ▶ Online educational reviews: for example, Education in Heart, ESC webinars and ESC conference presentations.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Cardiology, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Cardiology, Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Cardiology, James Cook University Hospital, Middlesbrough, UK

<sup>4</sup>Department of Cardiology, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Maidstone, UK

<sup>5</sup>Adult Intensive Care Unit, Royal Brompton Hospital, London, UK

<sup>6</sup>Department of Cardiology, Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, Wakefield, UK

**Correspondence to** Dr Chris Plummer, Department of Cardiology, Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7DN, UK; [chris.plummer@nhs.net](mailto:chris.plummer@nhs.net)



Figure 1 Authors' tips on 'how to succeed in the EEGC'.

have strict rules about conduct before, during and after an exam:

- ▶ Candidates will receive a registration confirmation email from Pearson VUE, which includes the date, time and place of your exam—you must contact the BCS and your training programme director if you do not receive this at least a month before the exam.
- ▶ You must arrive at the test centre at least 30 min before the scheduled start of the exam.
- ▶ You must bring a valid photographic identity document to the test centre that has exactly the same forename and surname as on your registration documents.

- ▶ You must follow the instructions of the Pearson VUE staff.
- ▶ No personal items, food or water are allowed in test rooms.
- ▶ If you are taking the exam in the morning, you will not be allowed to leave the test centre until the afternoon exam has started.
- ▶ You must report any incidents at the test centre and to the BCS immediately.
- ▶ If there are any special circumstances such as dyslexia, you should let the BCS know as soon as possible.

In the authors' experience, booking a holiday for after the EEGC provides something to look forward to at the end of the exam 'tunnel' and is a good incentive for effective study; it should also be an

opportunity to celebrate passing the exam. Good luck!

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