

# February 2023 CEQ Examination

## Post-examination Report



### **Critical Essay Question (CEQ)**

The purpose of the CEQ assessment is to test skills considered essential for consultant psychiatrists. The skills align with CANMED roles, and allow candidates to demonstrate the ability to evaluate and critically appraise a proposition relevant to psychiatry, apply evidence-based assessment, and demonstrate a capacity for balanced reasoning.

As usual, the candidates were provided with a prompt in the form of a quote. They were expected to address the quote, critically discuss it in essay form (including a consideration of contrasting viewpoints), and provide a conclusion.

The Committee for Examinations followed established procedures to set the February 2023 CEQ Examination and to determine the pass mark. Standard setting to determine the pass mark was conducted by the Wittens Sub-committee.

The quote used for the February 2023 CEQ examination was a relevant quote for our time and more apt for psychiatry than some previous choices. The quote was very pertinent for our times and provided an opportunity for a breadth of responses. This quote identified a central issue for psychiatry and very relevant to clinical practice.

“There is a widespread desire to base our study of mental disorder on objective symptoms alone and ideally to disregard subjective symptoms altogether.”

*Reference: Jaspers K (1968) The phenomenological approach in psychopathology. The British Journal of Psychiatry 114: 1313–1323.*

*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.114.516.1313>*

Candidates' responses were assessed across six domains of the CEQ Marking Guide. Overall responses had some structure and were articulated clearly enough to understand the thread. Candidates continue to not target their responses to the quote. For instance, candidates seem to have spent a lot of time providing generic historical prose which could have been succinctly summarised and made more pertinent to the quote provided.

Most responses did not contain an actual argument. They appeared as "pre-cooked" "discussions from various angles." Very few candidates declared a position and then defended it. Most opted to speak about the "expected topics" such as criticism of psychiatry of yesteryear, a reference to the difficulties facing the minority groups or specific patient cohorts, and ethics as being a derivative of patient choice etc. Few candidates strayed from what felt to be a "party line." They then arrived at a hedged position which was not particularly persuasive. There were some striking deficits in written language ability including missing conjunctions and articles and misspelling of everyday words.

The Committee for Examinations reviewed the performance of borderline candidates across the examination, in line with accepted procedures. We were pleased with the trend of improving CEQ pass rates subsequent to the decoupling of the essay style paper. Please note that, as candidates' performance is carefully scrutinised by the committee, results are final and will not be reviewed.

Candidates are provided feedback as to their performance in identified curriculum areas taken from the syllabus; this appears in their result letter. Candidates were informed on 10 May 2023. Result letters were released via InTrain, and MY RANZCP website, on 7 June 2023 for trainees and SIMG candidates respectively.

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Given below is a summary of data from the February 2023 CEQ examination.

### Summary – February 2023 CEQ

	Candidate Nos
No. of candidates enrolled in the CEQ examination	232
No. of candidates successful	152 (65.5%)
No. of candidates passing on their first attempt	78.5%
No. of SIMG candidates passing	38%
No. of trainee candidates passing	71.57%
No. of candidates who elected to sit the CEQ and MEQ papers on the same day	83
No. of these candidates who were successful in both the CEQ and MEQ papers (%)	54.2%

The committee were pleased to see well-constructed essays with clear paragraphs and debate. Markers highlighted the broad scope of essays, and definitions of objective and subjective.

The ability to communicate clearly in terms of appropriate grammar and vocabulary was at a similar level to previous examinations (62.5% average score). The ability to critically evaluate the statement/question also performed at a similar level (63% average score). In comparison, the average performance level in the domain related to the understanding of appropriate ethical awareness was lower at 57.6%.

College is mindful of the significant period of time between an exam and the release of results. Each candidate's CEQ paper is marked at least twice by two separate volunteer markers, with some assessed by a third marker. CEQ marking is done by a small group of markers to ensure good inter-rater reliability. The College aims to ensure a fair and rigorous marking process.

Candidates are reminded of College resources and strongly advised to practice on past examination papers which can be found here ([Critical Essay Question - previous exams | RANZCP](#)). We refer you to the College website for slides from the MEQ pre-Congress workshop conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023. [ceq-writtens-congress-2023-for-the-website.pdf \(ranzcp.org\)](#) Candidates are encouraged to use supervision opportunities to discuss consultant perspectives in their daily clinical work and to seek advice and formative feedback on practice answers.

We strongly recommend that candidates are mindful of their handwriting to ensure marks are not missed because of illegibility. CEQ markers are mindful of the time pressure for candidates in this examination and every effort is made to decipher poor handwriting.

The Committee for Examinations remains committed to publishing in the future, exemplars of CEQs submitted by candidates.

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Click on the hyperlink for the [February 2023 CEQ Marking Guide \(ranzcp.org\)](https://www.ranzcp.org) (password required).

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**Dr Nathan Gibson**  
**Chair**  
**Committee for Examinations**

**Dr Sanjay Patel**  
**Co-Chair**  
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