

REPORT ON AKT QUESTIONNAIRE – APRIL 2017

Introduction

As part of the routine quality assurance for the Applied Knowledge Test, an exit questionnaire was held after the April 2017 diet of the exam. It was provided as an extension of the computer-delivered AKT and lasted 10 minutes. Participation was voluntary and candidates were able to opt-out and finish their exam as usual after 190 minutes.

The questionnaire covered topics such as organisation and delivery of the exam, preparation strategies, previous training, and language and disability information.

We were also interested in candidates' level of confidence and their ability to estimate their own performance and so consent was sought to link the answers to the questionnaire to their examination results. This will be the subject of further investigation, so this report is a preliminary summary of the anonymous unlinked responses.

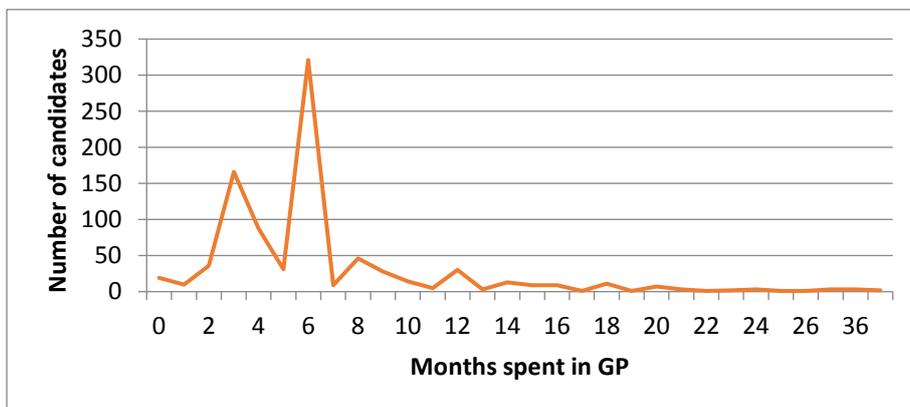
Results

There were 1485 candidates for the April 2017 AKT of whom 884 started the questionnaire, a response rate of 59.5%. The previous questionnaire held in 2012 had a response rate of 84% and the lower rate this time may reflect the fact that the time for the AKT has been extended from 180 to 190 minutes since then, and candidates did not wish to stay any longer. 855 completed the whole questionnaire.

1. Preparation for the AKT

Time in training

670 (77%) of 875 responders had spent six months or less in general practice at the time to taking the AKT.



Trainer and VTS

Candidates were asked how helpful they found their trainer in preparing for the AKT with 44% saying they were helpful or very helpful, and 3% saying very unhelpful. 55% found their VTS helpful or very helpful in preparation.

Foundation year and undergraduate training

46% described their foundation year training as helpful or very helpful with 63% saying their undergraduate training was helpful or very helpful. This may reflect the focus on the breadth of clinical medicine within the AKT compare with the specialties of foundation year training which varies widely in content.

2. Training materials

Candidates were asked about online training materials provided by the RCGP such as sample questions, podcasts, presentations as well as educational training modules such as Essential Knowledge Updates. For both exam and educational training material combined, around 60% of candidates described them as helpful or very helpful while about 10% classified them as “not applicable” which may mean they are not accessing them.

The vast majority (96%) used other online material for their preparation with a variety of providers such as Passmedicine, BMJ Onexamination and several others. This would be in keeping with the computer-based delivery of the AKT although several commented that the standard and style of some of the training material was different to the AKT itself.

Relatively few candidates used formal taught courses for preparation, and fewer than half appear to have used peer study groups with 57% recording “not applicable”.

3. Educational support

Candidates were asked about the relationship that they had with their trainers, programme directors and other specialty GP trainees.

Over 80% rated their relationship with their trainer as excellent, good or satisfactory with 3% describing it as poor or very poor. The results were very similar for the TPD, and 99.3% said their relationship with other trainees was excellent, good or satisfactory.

4. Confidence

This section will be used for the linkage study with those who have consented to this, but the anonymised responses show that 63% considered themselves very or fairly confident in clinical medicine, 48% in research and statistics, and 32% in practice administration. 54% rated themselves as very or fairly confident in their overall knowledge.

5. Organisational information and timing

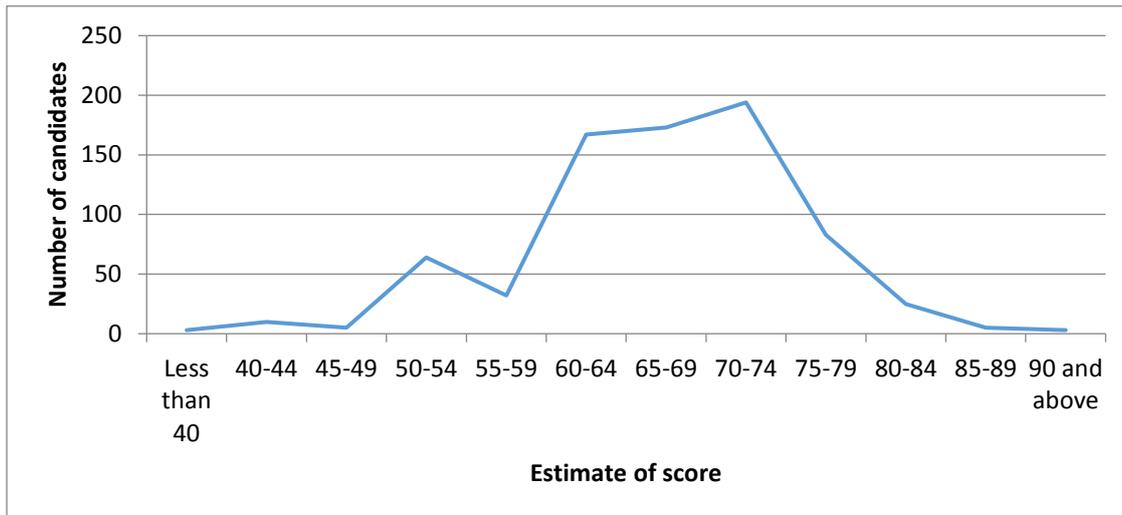
98% rated both the information given by the RCGP Exam department, and that given at the test centre on the day, as excellent, good or satisfactory. Over 80% considered there was enough time to complete the test with 12% saying they had more than enough time. 3% said they had much too little time. This fits with the actual completion data from the test itself.

6. Relevance and fairness

76% considered the overall content of the AKT as either very or fairly relevant, with about 10% responding that it was fairly or very irrelevant. 65% described it as a fair assessment of their knowledge with 21% saying neither fair nor unfair. 13% responded that it was moderately or very unfair.

7. Performance

Again this section is designed to be used in the linkage study but the anonymous results show that 40% considered they had done very or moderately well in clinical medicine, 48% in the research questions and 29% in the administration questions. They were asked to estimate their score in the AKT with the majority estimating their score between 60 and 75%. The actual mean score for AKT30 was 74.1% and the pass mark was 68.8% so the estimated scores were in line with the real outcomes, although slightly underestimating performance.



8. Choice of specialty

88% said that GP was their first choice of specialty although when asked if they had trained in another specialty, 26% had done so.

9. Equality and diversity

96.4% described English as their preferred language for reading and writing. 82 candidates (about 10% of respondents) had been granted an adjustment for disability with around half of those saying that the adjustment was helpful, and the remainder saying they were not sure or it was not helpful.

10. Consent

Candidates were reassured that their consent would not identify individual candidates' results and the study would not be undertaken until after the results were published. Of the 855 candidates who responded to the question about consent to link their questionnaire responses to their results, 76.7% agreed, and further work will be undertaken on this linkage study.

11. General comments

This free text element allowed candidates to make any comments about the AKT and ranged from comments about the difficulty of the test, relevance of their preparation, parking problems and requests for drink breaks. All of these will be checked in detail and due consideration given to them to see what is relevant and feasible.

Summary

The majority of the candidates are taking the AKT with less than 6 months experience in general practice. Their preparation strategies are mainly to use online revision material from a variety of external providers. There are some useful comments about the RCGP educational material, which will be passed on as feedback within the organisation. Overall, the candidates consider that the AKT is a fair and relevant test which is well organised and delivered.