



Exam Expertise

MRCS Part A

Opinion, advice and insight from the April 2019 Exam

The MRCS Part A examination (2019/2) took place on 16 April 2019. The results were released on 15 May 2019.

44% of Pastest customers have reported passing the exam, which is **6% higher than the overall pass rate** reported by the surgical Royal Colleges.

On average, successful candidates answered 3,661 questions in the Pastest resource with unsuccessful candidates averaging 2,809 questions answered.

Prepare for a marathon effort

The MRCS Part A exam is five hours long, comprising a three-hour Applied Basic Sciences paper and a two-hour Principles of Surgery in General paper. That's 300 questions to answer. All on the same day.

Unsurprisingly, many Pastest users complained of fatigue and that the exam was much more energy-sapping than expected. Time keeping in this exam was also cited as a real issue. If you're going to be successful you'll need to pace yourself and remember to consistently hit the required rate of one question per minute.

The best way to do this is to work through practice papers (such as the 'Past Papers' in Pastest's resource) under timed conditions as the exam approaches. This will get you tuned into the pace you'll need to answer all the questions the exam throws at you (correctly of course!).

Hardest topics in Apr 2019 Exam

'Basic science knowledge relevant to surgical practice'

'The assessment and management of the surgical patient'

'Perioperative care of the surgical patient'

(According to Pastest users)

Average Qs answered by **successful candidates**

3,661

Watch out for an image!

Unusually, one of the questions in the April 2019 exam included an image, specifically a lateral head/neck X-ray.

The Royal College exam content guides do suggest that images may appear in either paper, however the appearance of one in this exam still took many candidates by surprise (although by all accounts the X-ray was easy to interpret).



Read the vignettes carefully

A handful of negatively-phrased questions - e.g. 'what is the LEAST likely diagnosis' - cropped up in this MRCS Part A exam.

There is therefore a need to read the question very carefully and right to the end, so you don't unwittingly opt for the 'likely' rather than 'least likely' diagnosis. Helpfully, the negative phrasing is normally in bold and underlined so the chance of you getting caught out should be fairly slim.

Also, the need to have your wits about you is all the more acute due to the 'red herrings' that appear in a number of questions. These usually crop up within questions with lengthy vignettes, leading the candidate to second-guess the answer before being taken off in another direction.

"As part of your revision, get used to how questions are asked and highlight buzzwords."

Aim to ace anatomy

A sure-fire way to get a great score in the exam is to devote a lot of your revision to anatomy. In fact, one Pastest user advises to: **"Sit MRCS A soon after your Finals so all your anatomy and physiology knowledge is still fresh in your mind."**

This will serve you well for Paper 1 in particular, with many questions testing direct knowledge of anatomy and physiology, whereas Paper 2 is more reasoning-based.

Most frequently searched for terms in MyPastest

Thyroid



Breast



Anatomy



Answer LOTS of practice questions!

The stand out piece of advice from past candidates is clear: start revising early and hammer through as many practice questions as you can!

"Start your preparation as soon as you can and apply for a few days' leave before the exam to be 100% focused," recommends one user. **"Personally, I went through Pastest twice and answered all of the Past Papers three times."**

For this sitting, close to 2.6 million MRCS A questions were answered in the Pastest resource, almost one million of which were attempted on our mobile app!

Average mark of Pastest users who answered 3,000+ Qs



Summary

- Work on your time-keeping to make sure you don't have to rush through your answers towards the end of each paper
- That said, try not to read the questions too quickly or else you run the risk of being tripped up by negative phrasing or 'red herrings'
- Swot up on your anatomy, particularly if your time at med school is just a distant memory!
- Allow yourself plenty of time to get through a high volume of practice questions, aiming for more than 3,000 if you can!

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Formed in 1972, Pastest is a global provider of revision materials for undergraduate and postgraduate medical exams.