

# Preparing for Theory Exams

by Lavina Diamanti

With the busy Christmas period just around the corner it is really easy to get sidetracked and delay the preparation for exams. Therefore, I thought it was timely to do a page detailing the process and share some tips that I have learned along the way.

**Credit Points** Make sure you have accumulated the required number of credit points and have all the records signed off. If you don't have enough, then put a plan together to have them done before you send your application to the Secretary in January. The regulations list the requirements and it is a good idea to print Appendix III from the regulations and keep this with your credit record card. If you don't have a copy of the regulations, download them from the NZDJA website ([nzdogjudge.com](http://nzdogjudge.com)). All the theory exams have questions on the regulations, so it is important that you are familiar with them. There are specific requirements for Specialist applicants so make sure you complete the compulsory activities if you are applying for this panel. There is no maximum number of points you can earn but check for the maximum number of credit points per activity.

**Application Forms** These are all on the NZDJA website. Since these have recently been updated ensure you download the current form. Some things to check: Have you paid this year's annual subscription fee? (Your application will not be accepted if you are not financial); Have you judged the required number of dogs?; Do you have the records and proof of these appointments?; Have you met all the requirements for the panel you are aspiring to? All this information is in the regulations. The Board is unable to "bend the rules" for candidates who haven't met the criteria, so my advice is to check early and if in doubt, check with your branch or a board member.

**The Examination** Theory exams are held at the same time across the country. The exam date is published well in advance so make sure it is noted on your calendar: you don't want to have to wait another year because you double booked! The board will arrange a venue and a supervisor, and you will be advised of the venue well in advance of the exam.

**Study Tips** Passing theory examinations for someone who possess an excellent memory is a breeze. For the rest of us, it can be a real challenge, and the older we get, the more of a challenge it becomes. There are several different styles of studying the breed standards. Some like to read and re-read, some use an e-reader app on their phone or tablet, others write onto cards, others use a combination of methods. You need to find the style that works for you. One thing I have found, though, is the better I understand a breed, the easier it is to learn the standard and retain the information. So not only do I

study the breed standard, I am also cross- referencing and studying the history and development of the breed and how that affects form and function. I also like to look at similar breeds within the group and then study the differences. It is likely that where there are similar breeds, they will both be options in the multiple choice questions so understanding the differences is important.

I like to memorise the key words and phrases within standards which are unique to one or two breeds. This helps to trigger the memory as I can never recall the full wording in the standard! The examination writers follow a set of protocols when writing the papers. All exams are a multiple choice and each question will give four options. One option will be correct, one option will be close but incorrect and the other two will be totally incorrect.

In recent years, candidates have had the huge benefit of access to previous examination papers. As a learning tool, this can be extremely beneficial, and I have used these papers to gauge my learning progress. It is not, however, a substitute for the hard work it takes to really learn breed standards and understand the differences between the breeds in any given group. With the papers now being rewritten each year, a thorough knowledge of breed standards is required to achieve a pass.

Good luck and remember the words of Michael Jordan: "I've always believed that if you put in the work, the results will come." 🐾

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## Important Dates

31 January, 2020	Closing date for exam applications
17 March	Theory exams
27/28 June	Auckland practical exams
4/5 July	Christchurch practical exams
11/12 July	Wellington practical exams (if required)