

Assessment of Anatomy at Birmingham

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Although anatomy is taught to some extent to a wide variety of students here, this report summarises the teaching and assessment of anatomy and histology as it is taught to undergraduate medical students at the College of Medical and Dental Sciences at the University of Birmingham in the academic year 2009 – 2010.

Although previously a discrete course delivered and assessed in 'traditional' form, since the GMC's recommendations for changes to medical education presented in Tomorrow's Doctors, anatomy at Birmingham has been taught as part of a series of systems-based modules throughout the first two years of a five year medical course. Although there are a few overview lectures for most modules, the majority of content is delivered as small group teaching sessions and prosection practicals. Although most of the 'systems' do not lend themselves to a regional approach to learning, this is covered through the use of medical images as well as prosections.

All biological science modules have a similar format of assessment (see below), with anatomy contributing questions in all formats – according to the proportion of the course – and having a single paper that is exclusively functional and clinical anatomy. Students must achieve a pass of 50% in each module, but not in individual papers.

Year 1 / Year 2 MBChB Assessment Summary

<u>Main sit</u>		<u>Resit</u>	
In-course assessment	20%		
Anatomy EMQ	10%	Anatomy EMQ	12.5%
MCQ	20%	MCQ	27.5%
Short answer questions (6)	50%	Short answer questions (6)	60%

In-course assessment varies hugely between modules and will not be discussed here. The anatomy EMQ paper is presented at the same time as the 20 MCQ questions forming a 40-minute paper. It comprises three themed options lists (between 12 and 20 options) linked by a stem statement, each with five questions (ie 15 questions per paper). The questions may relate to images (eg CT scan), diagrams or a list of associated subjects – for instance named nerves – presented in alphabetical order. The MCQ questions come are derived from a variety of disciplines but the format is always best of five. In anatomy I tend to write questions that require a degree of understanding – so not a list of structures. Typically I will present five related statements, and the students are asked to select the one correct / incorrect answer based on that theme. Short answer question papers are more obviously integrated with anatomy often sharing questions with other disciplines (especially physiology). The one hour paper has 6 questions each with 10 marks. Students are expected to discuss and describe, apply their knowledge and indicate their understanding. Typically we find that the short answer paper is the most discriminating when the modules are seen as a whole. I give formative sessions in all these assessment criteria to the students and provide individual feedback where possible prior to summative assessments.