

Preparing for the Duke Elder Award

BY EUAN MACINNES

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The Duke Elder examination is an undergraduate ophthalmology exam, conducted by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) and undertaken by students with an interest in ophthalmology. It is a two-hour, 90-question, multiple choice exam with a broader curriculum than that taught at undergraduate level. By doing the exam, students can further their knowledge of ophthalmology, but also have a chance to score points in the ophthalmology portfolio. Scoring in the top 10% gives you two points. Scoring in the top 60% previously gave you one point, but in 2024 RCOphth reduced it to 0.5 points.

There are many resources that can be used to prepare for the exam and a list of recommended texts are listed on the RCOphth website [1]. PREP Duke Elder is a relatively new exam preparation resource, offering an online textbook which covers a lot of the basic knowledge required for the exam, alongside an integrated question bank [2]. The online textbook is easy to navigate and provides a concise overview of common exam topics that are unlikely covered by the undergraduate curriculum. I found the optics section particularly useful as I had very little knowledge of this subject beyond basic high-school physics.

The integrated question bank provides over 1200 questions, mainly drawn from information in the textbook section. The interface allows you to customise what you would like to study, allowing you to answer previously unseen questions, questions previously answered incorrectly or a mixture of both. This allows you to focus on weaker areas of knowledge.

Preparing for the Duke Elder exam can be costly. The exam itself is £50 to register. This question bank / textbook costs a further £60 for one-year access. For an undergraduate student, this can be a lot to invest, but given there is a potential to score two points accounting for nearly 5% of the portfolio, I believe this is a good investment.

I used this website alongside other resources and found it to be an excellent tool to build the foundation of knowledge required to

sit the exam. It has an easy-to-use interface that lends itself well to students with little prior knowledge of ophthalmology. I would recommend this to anybody who is planning on sitting the Duke Elder.

For more information on this topic, check out these Eye News articles:

- **‘Getting the Duke Elder examination right: reflections and tips from a medical student’** by Bing Jie Chow and Antony Raharja
- **‘My Top Five: Duke Elder Undergraduate Ophthalmology Prize Exam Tips’** by Paras Agarwal – Reviewed by Oana Vonica and Zaria Ali
- **‘The Duke-Elder exam: A medical student’s head start into ophthalmology’** by Neel Vyas
- **‘Ophthalmology Specialty Training 2024: What’s different?’** by Mertcan Sevgi

References

1. Duke Elder Candidate Information Pack (2024). The Royal College of Ophthalmologists. <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2024-Duke-Elder-Candidate-Info-Pack.pdf>
 2. PREP Duke Elder. <https://prepdukeelder.com/home>
- [All links last accessed July 2024]

AUTHOR



Euan MacInnes,

FY1, Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton, UK.

Declaration of competing interests:

None declared.