AKT - Where do I start? - The "how"

What should you learn?

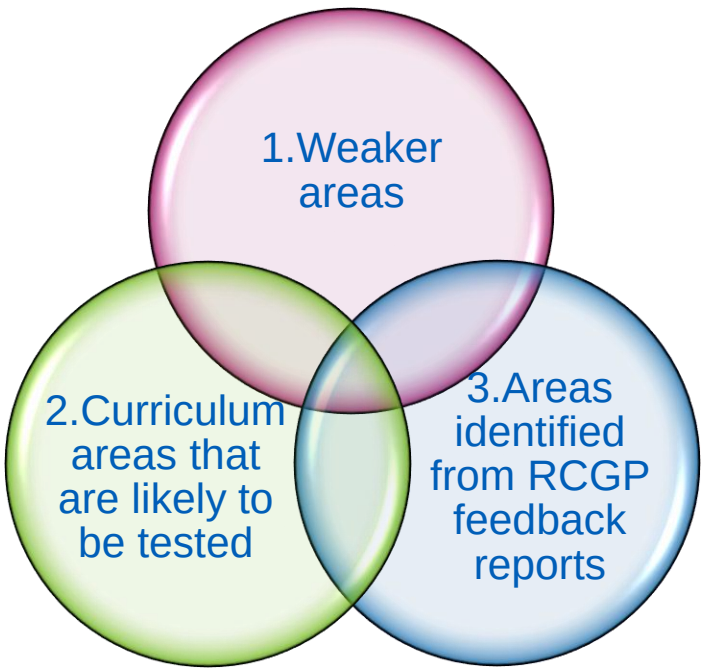
The curriculum is so vast it can feel a little overwhelming when starting to prepare for the AKT. You will improve your score more if you focus your learning into specific areas.

It is important to know what you are going to learn. For most people it takes about three months preparation. For those with significant responsibilities outside of work it may take longer.

Writing some lists of what will be learned will help you to divide up the time you have.
As discussed on the trainee day it may help to write lists as follows.

1) Weaker areas (it may help to use the super condensed guides on RCGP website or the confidence rating scale provided to write your list) https://www.rcgp.org.uk/training-exams/training/gp-curriculum-overview/rcgp-curriculum-super-condensed-curriculum-guides.aspx
2) Curriculum areas that are likely to be tested including chronic disease, mental health, dermatology, and significant conditions like cancers.
3) Areas identified in RCGP feedback from previous settings. https://www.rcgp.org.uk/gp-training-and-exams/mrcgp-exam/mrcgp-applied-knowledge-test-akt.aspx (on the drop-down box)

Look at the diagram below of the three lists. Focus your initial studying in the middle of the Venn Diagram. This is where your learning will have maximum impact.



Remember that evidence and data interpretation and practice management form only 20% of the exam in total. Most of your time should be spent learning clinical topics. Saying that it is helpful to learn the evidence interpretation and practice management areas early in your preparation and then revisit just prior to the exam so that you remember the necessary equations and facts.

How do you learn best?

We all learn in different ways. It is helpful to know what kind of learner you are if you are not sure. This will help you to work out if you are better watching videos, listening, reading, or learning from what you see in the day. Most of us learn in a variety of ways.

A learning styles questionnaire is below.

https://www.ilfm.org.uk/cms/document/ILFM_Learning_Styles_Resource_TK_09Oct17_Ver1.0.pdf

The AKT resources sheet provided gives a variety of sources for learning and includes text, videos, and podcasts.

Plan your time

It is important to divide the time you have before the exam and write a detailed revision timetable.
Plan which topics you will learn at each sitting and how you will do this. You will learn more by spending an hour productively than several hours with interruptions.
Set realistic targets for each sitting (and then you can tick them off and walk away with some learning). Building some contingency to the plan just in things get in the way.

It's also important to be prepared to change the plan that you have if it is not working. This is self-regulation and is key to successful adult learning.

Keep it creative.

If you are writing notes, you may find it more memorable if you use diagrams, mind maps, flashcards, and mnemonics.
Don't just rewrite the text you are reading. It is better to just make notes of what is new to you so that when you go back to it, it is succinct and interesting.
Make your own notes, they will be much more relevant to you than borrowing someone else's.
Some people find it helpful to read out loud as this may aid remembering.

Identify your workspace

Try to identify a space to work where there is less distraction. This may involve staying in work to study and means when you are at home you can relax.
Leave your phone in another room and let others know you are working.

Keep positive, well and motivated

The way you look after yourself when you are preparing for an exam is important. You should try to get enough sleep and not study when you should be resting.
You should eat regularly, stay hydrated and try to exercise if you can.
It is important to reward yourself regularly for your commitment to learning.
If you are getting stressed it may be helpful to try techniques like mindfulness and meditation.
If you are starting to feel overwhelmed talk to friends, family, your educational supervisor, or the deanery.
Don't forget the learning that you do now will not only help you towards the exam but will also help you in your day-to-day job.

Don't rely on just doing questions.

Questions are testing and not learning.
Some question banks are not written by GPs and the questions are less relevant to the AKT.
Doing thousands of questions may improve your score but some of this may be familiarity with the questions rather than demonstration of knowledge.
Some trainees use questions to identify gaps to go back and learn. This is more useful than just repeatedly doing questions.
Doing a mock test to decide whether you are ready to book the exam may be helpful.

Perfect your technique

There is a time when doing questions is useful. Near the time of the exam, it is worth sitting and doing some mock tests under exam conditions. This means taking the time allowed to do the questions and not racing through them.
Read and reread the question answering as you go along.
This will help you get a feeling for how fast you need to be in the exam and will also help you to identify some gaps in your knowledge that you may need to go back and relearn.