

National Undergraduate Neuroanatomy Competition

<http://www.natneurocomp.co.uk/>

The National Neuroanatomy Competition is run by a dedicated team of students, staff and alumni of the University of [Southampton](#).

They are enthusiastic about all areas of neuroscience, neurosurgery and neurology and have developed expertise in near-peer teaching alongside the development of the competition. Many of our teaching resources can be accessed at www.sotonbrainhub.co.uk

Methods of assessment in [anatomy](#) vary across [medical schools](#) in the [United Kingdom](#) (UK) and beyond; common methods include written, spotter, and oral assessment. However, there is limited [research](#) evaluating these [methods](#) in regards to [student performance](#) and [perception](#).

The National Undergraduate [Neuroanatomy](#) Competition was established in [2013](#) as a means for students to display this commitment as well as academic ability.

It is held annually for medical students throughout the UK. Prior to [2017](#), the competition asked open-ended questions (OEQ) in the anatomy spotter examination, and in subsequent years also asked single best answer (SBA) questions. The aim of a study of Merzougui et al. was to assess medical students' performance on, and perception of, SBA and OEQ methods of assessment in a spotter-style anatomy examination. Student examination performance was compared between OEQ (2013-2016) and SBA (2017-2020) for overall score and each neuroanatomical subtopic. Additionally, a questionnaire explored students' perceptions of SBAs. 631 students attended the NUNC in the studied period. The average mark was significantly higher in SBAs compared to OEQs (60.6% vs 43.1%, $P < 0.0001$) - this was true for all neuroanatomical subtopics except the cerebellum. Students felt they performed better on SBA than OEQs, and diencephalon was felt to be the most difficult neuroanatomical subtopic ($n = 38$, 34.8%). Students perceived SBA questions to be easier than OEQs and performed significantly better on them in a neuroanatomical spotter examination. Further work is needed to ascertain whether this result is replicable throughout anatomy education ¹⁾.

A bespoke 22 item questionnaire was designed to determine career outcomes and the role of competition attendance in job applications. It was distributed using the SurveyMonkey website to the 87 attendees at the 2013 and 2014 competitions.

Responses were received by 40 competitors (response rate 46.0%). Twenty-four (60.0%) responders intend to pursue a career in either neurosurgery ($n=18$) or neurology ($n=6$). This included 10 (25.0%) responders who had successfully entered either neurosurgery ($n=9$) or neurology ($n=1$). The performance of these 10 ($n=11$, $57.0\% \pm 13.6$) was significantly better than the other responders ($n=30$, $46.5\% \pm 13.5$) ($p=0.036$). Seventeen (42.5%) responders either included their attendance at NUNC in a post-Foundation job application or intend to.

The National Undergraduate Neuroanatomy Competition provides the opportunity for medical students to demonstrate their interest in neurosurgery. It has the potential to be used as a tool for recognizing [medical students](#) suitable for neurosurgery [training](#) ²⁾.

References

¹⁾

Merzougui WH, Myers MA, Hall S, Elmansouri A, Parker R, Robson AD, Kurn O, Parrott R, Geoghegan K, Harrison CH, Anbu D, Dean O, Border S. Multiple Choice versus Open Ended Questions in Advanced Clinical Neuroanatomy: Using a National Neuroanatomy Assessment to Investigate Variability in Performance Using Different Question Types. Anat Sci Educ. 2021 Jan 8. doi: 10.1002/ase.2053. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 33420758.

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Hall S, Stephens JR, Myers MA, Elmansouri A, Geoghegan K, Harrison CH, E N, D A, Parton WJ, Payne DR, Seaby E, Border S. The career impact of the National Undergraduate Neuroanatomy Competition. World Neurosurg. 2019 Sep 25. pii: S1878-8750(19)32516-1. doi: 10.1016/j.wneu.2019.09.086. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 31562974.

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