



Tips and Tricks for Exam Writers



THE REGISTRATION EXAMS WILL BE HELD ON October 7th. Until then, there will be some lively debates in study groups, all-night study sessions fuelled by coffee and panicked calls to mentors. All the anxiety and stress will be worthwhile next February when today's examinees are officially inducted into the ABCFP at the annual conference and AGM.

There have been some significant changes to the registration exams this year. For RPFs, the take-home exam is now mandatory and all examinees will write four of seven questions on the sit-down portion. Because you are answering fewer questions, the time allotted to the exam is now four hours.

New RFT candidates will also write a four-hour exam and will have to answer four of seven questions. Conditional RFTs and RFT candidates who are making a second or third attempt at the exam will write the old Part A/Part B exam. As in the past, these candidates will only have to write the Part(s) they did not pass the first time.

In 2011, both the RPF and RFT exams will focus on professionalism, ethics and forest policy. There will be less emphasis on technical forestry than in the past. The top two reasons people fail the registration exam are:

- not answering the question being asked (usually because the candidate misreads the question); and
- running out of time.

Not Answering the Question Being Asked

It is critical to take the time to read the questions carefully and make sure you know what they are asking. Be sure to not only list the applicable bylaws or section from the *Foresters Act* but to explain why this particular piece of legislation applies to the situation laid out in the question. Here's a quick formula from the *Writing the Best Exam Possible* online workshop to help you write out your answer:

- Think about what the question is asking and then state the issue.
- Next use policy and bylaws to support your decision and include information on who (or what groups) the situation applies to.
- Provide evidence for each point that you make.

Running Out of Time

Getting to the last few minutes of the exam and realizing that you still have a question (or two) to answer is not a good feeling. The key to ensuring you have enough time to finish all four questions is planning.

While it may seem counter-intuitive, taking some time to plan your exam will save you time in the long run. When you first open your exam booklet, take five to ten minutes to read each question and decide which four you want to answer. Hopefully, four questions will jump out at you because they are within

your area of expertise; however, if this doesn't happen, don't panic. Simply mark each question with a check mark (meaning that you will answer it), an X (meaning that you won't answer it), or a question mark (meaning that you could answer it but it might take you longer than a check-marked question). The next step is to answer the easiest questions first as they will take you the least amount of time.

One of the keys to getting as many marks as possible is to take the time to check over your questions. Taking 15 to 20 minutes at the end of the exam to read over your answers one more time to make sure you didn't forget anything will pay dividends. For example, missing a single word like "not" can change your entire answer. Double-spacing your answer will make it easier to make last minute corrections.

Another tip for not running out of time is to set yourself a schedule and stick to it. To help you keep on track, bring a watch or clock as electronic devices like cell phones are not allowed in the exam room. A suggested schedule might be to spend 50 minutes on each of the four questions which would leave you 10 minutes to plan at the beginning, 20 minutes to check at the end and 10 extra minutes.

Finally, plan to meet your study group or fellow exam writers after the exam to enjoy a beverage to celebrate the fact that you all made it! 🍷

The format is changing for the British Columbia registered forestry exam. WILL YOU BE READY?



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Decision : Continued from page 18

Analysis System Including Economic Return (FAN\$IER) is currently being tested and will be available in the next Table Interpolation Program for Stand Yields (TIPSY) release of Fall 2011. This addition to TIPSY is designed to provide improved economic analysis options to aid forest professionals and planners in evaluating the impact of selected silviculture events on the discounted value returned by end products at the stand level. More information on this can be found in an upcoming article in LINK News <http://jem.forrex.org/> or by contacting Mario Di Lucca, Growth and Yield Application Specialist with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations at Mario.DiLucca@gov.bc.ca.

Trade Off Analysis

This growing field offers a complement of tools that are mainly linked with forest estate models and larger forest planning exercises.

Scenario planning is one process that can help with trade-off analysis especially when combined with forest estate modeling tools which include optimization routines (e.g., Patchworks and Woodstock). Using the scenario process helps to compare and contrast futures under different resource management objectives. For more information on how scenarios can be used in the development of Sustainable Forest Management Plans refer to the Morice and Lake's Innovative Forest Practices Agreement (IFPA) Sustainable Forest Management Plan.

http://www.moricelakes-ifpa.com/publications/documents/MoriceSFMPan_032509.pdf

Multiple accounts/criteria analysis is another tool that can help with trade-off analysis. This tool is a relatively simple trade-off analysis technique that can be implemented as a spreadsheet application independent of forest modelling. The technique involves ranking and aggregating multiple criteria across multiple values by assigning relative importance scores (or weightings) to the individual criteria. An example of such a tool was used by the Forests for Tomorrow Program in 2009. They developed a multiple accounts decision-analysis (MADA) template that was used to help prioritize stands within individual management units for silviculture investment. More information on Forests for Tomorrow's MADA can be found on their website.

<http://forestsfortomorrow.com/fft/tool/multiple-accounts-decision-analysis-mada/223>

Information related to many of these growth and yield models and forest and landscape analysis tools is currently being pulled together by Steve Stearns-Smith 'RPF' for publications in the *Journal of Ecosystem and Management* (JEM). This article will also touch on a couple of models that may be of interest to those wishing to identify what options are available for early stand development decision makers.

I've touched on a range of tools here. However, the scope of this topic is very broad and there are many tools I haven't had space to mention. If you are interested in learning more about early stand establishment decision support tools, please contact me at kathie.swift@forrex.org

Kathie Swift, RPF, is a fourth generation forester and is one of the founding extension specialists of FORREX. She has recently become FORREX's new manager for knowledge exchange. She holds an Honours Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Lakehead University and a Masters of Science from UBC.