

## Practitioner Final Module Hints and Tips

(aka 'I hate poly pockets')

The last hurdle, the final frontier, the 'I'm almost there' moment - it's the last thing before all the hard work should win you the coveted title of Equine Touch Practitioner - but will it? Are you going to pass?

Because it is important that there is a specific standard for every applicant no matter where in the world they studied or who their Instructor was, it was decided by the Equine Touch Foundation that only one person would mark all the submissions within a learning structure, or country to ensure that there was parity.

For people who learn under the UK system of three practical classes with a practical assessment and exams in theory, anatomy and physiology along with their case assessments at each level, then after a final practical assessment by Ivana or an appointed representative, a final module of yet more theory and anatomy and physiology, case histories and the all important Essay of 'What the Equine Touch is to me' the final portfolios have to be handed in to me, Lyn Palmer!

You know I truly do feel it is an honour to be able to assess that final portfolio BUT as an Instructor and practitioner of not only ET but VHT and CT as well as being responsible for ET as a whole here and in some European countries, I also have a lot of trouble to find the time to sit down and do that marking, so anything that makes it quicker would be greatly appreciated. There is so much work involved in that portfolio and certainly, out of respect to the applicant, I need to give it the time it deserves. The 20 theory questions and the 40 A&P questions take two or three hours each to mark to enable feedback to be given and as for the case studies of 20 horses with three sessions each, that can take as long to mark as it would for you to give a full session on a horse!

I like to think that I try to be as unbiased as possible in every way but maybe when I feel under pressure am I as generous and understanding as I would be if it was an easier job?! That 0.5 of a mark might make the difference of a whole percentage when finally added up!

So what can you do to ensure that you get the maximum marks that your work deserves? Here are some hints!

This whole module is entitled 'Thinking like a Practitioner' and the introduction to the theory paper and essay sums it up beautifully. *"At this final stage a student should be able to show in depth knowledge and understanding of the Equine Touch modality, drawing on all practical training, home study work, and theoretical study, to illustrate the level of competency required to achieve Equine Touch Practitioner status."*

If the portfolio application is messy and muddled how convinced would I be that, as a practitioner, you would be able to keep records efficiently and communicate professionally?

So the biggest hint of all is READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ON EACH ELEMENT! For example, using the theory paper and essay as an example again, the instructions are quite detailed, even to a guideline of the number of words the essay should exceed but items 5 & 6 seem to be the two hints that people seem to miss the point on.

- 5     *You must answer each question. A pass cannot be awarded unless all questions are attempted, regardless of marks achieved.*
- 6     *We strongly advise that you read the questions carefully and have regard for the marks allocated. The marks available for each question are given in square brackets.*

Pretty clear isn't it? But surprisingly these instructions are sometimes the stumbling block. For example as it states in instruction 6 about having a regard for the marks allocated - if a question has 15 marks allocated to the answer what is the point in making a one sentence answer? Or another example is in the final theory module question 11

*"Besides Equine Touch, there are other bodywork modalities available for equines. Choose four and discuss for each one its similarities and its differences to Equine Touch, and whether it could be used in conjunction with Equine Touch or not. [40]"*

Answering for example, 'chiropractic works with ET' is hardly going to gain 10 marks as one of the four modalities!

As for instruction 5 think of this scenario - you are answering a theory question, late in the evening after a long day, not quite certain about something you want to say and your manual is out with the horses so you decide to leave it for tonight and check the manual so you can finish it later. BUT later on do you remember that was what you planned? When you go back to the exam paper and check through that you have answered every question did you remember that there was something you were going to check and re-write? Actually the answer to that on several occasions has been 'no'! So, as the assessor I can see that the question was not completed and there was an intention to either add more information or change the answer completely but all I can mark is what I have presented to me. Try to have a system of either leaving a large blank space or writing it in red or something so when you do that final check you can see there is something missing.

Omitting a question is also a classic error in the A&P segment and quite often when the question is left to be checked later and it is only a matter of choosing from a, b or c multiple choice, there have been occasions where it has been left blank entirely and technically that would give an automatic fail!

Hints on the essay - well to be fair it would be highly unlikely that anyone could fail the essay element - though I suppose if there were insufficient words it could happen. Not to date though, and in fact over the years I have often been moved to tears over the personal journeys I read about in the submitted essay! It is so entirely a personal thing and even the title 'What the Equine Touch means to me' is very emotive. So often coming to ET and finding how easy it is to help horses gives a whole new meaning to your life with equines. It is such a privilege for me to read these accounts of how ET has changed not only our horse's lives but also our own, so please never be afraid of writing it in the style that comes most naturally to you and never be afraid to admit either emotionally or technically what ET really does mean to you.

Finally the case studies - oh my do they take some deciphering sometimes. I need to be able to follow not only your actions but also your thought processes and so often the things that might give me a clue such as markings on a diagram are missing. If you don't say what it was that made you choose to do a BBB when I see from the comments on previous sessions and from the branding notes that an ABB would have been more appropriate then you will lose marks. Classic is reading on the third session something like 12 AOC procedures why on earth would you do that on top of a BBB - surely having learnt whole-istic back opening on Level 3 that would have prepared the body for that amount of work?

Another inappropriate statement is one I often read and that comes at the end of a session with the statement that 'next session I will carry out x y z AOC procedures' - really?? how do you know what THIS session might have changed?!!! Another I often ask myself is why would you choose a Basic Body Balance for a subsequent session with the reasoning that an Advanced Body Balance 'might be too much for the horse' - don't you remember from Level 1 that it is the blocks and processing time that create the bigger 'too much' effect whilst from Level 2, the ABB works on chaos and confusion and covers more areas within the balance itself therefore giving more feedback about the body as well as addressing some extra areas within the balance and allowing, if he can take it, more AOC's to be applied without him being off the planet. Make it clear your thinking on each session!

Silly things lose you marks, omitting vet details, contact details name, age, what the horse is used for - a missing owner's signature will probably fail that session all together. Previous concerns and observations about areas of influence etc etc. The final Case History sheets are incredibly detailed and the more background information you can gather the better - why? well it is not as though you need to have a diagnosis to work on a horse but sometimes knowing that there is a long standing and therefore chronically compromised area of the horse's body will confirm what you are feeling under your hands. I have often said that I would find it hard to fail someone when they record all they have done as after all they are the ones that are there and whilst 20 AOC procedures would not normally be at all acceptable, if that horse was able to take them, then I have to trust your judgement because after all you are the one who has the hands on the horse and is reading the requirements and of course it is always the horse that drives the session BUT if you have recorded vet diagnoses, trainer comments, owner's history and then totally disregarded that information then I would rightly deduct marks!

Each set of three sessions can take at least 30 minutes to read through and it is very taxing trying to follow the reasoning so providing a logical paper trail and the shortest and most concise way of recording all the reactions and reasons for choice of body balances and area of concern procedures is ideal. To have all the paperwork typed also saves hours of deciphering demented spider handwriting so will probably give you a better mark because it is certainly easier to follow what you did.

Whilst presentation is important and it is lovely to see a nice big fat file, (and I do need to physically see at least owners signature sheets, but scanning them is fine) compiling your portfolio electronically and then sending it to me via Dropbox will really save both of us time and you a lot of money - postage on the portfolios these days tends to be around the £12 mark for a 'signed for' delivery. If you still wish to send your folder physically by mail, make your filing logical so I can see and handle each page individually and sequentially and not encased in polythene pockets that have to be dismantled to read oh and please remember that portfolios are not returnable so make sure that you have copies of the case history sheets you might need in the future - if you have done a good job on the final case histories then these are probably going to be your first clients so get yourself sorted ready for the big off before you send it all in.

**And finally did I say - I hate poly pockets**

**- that is all!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**