

## Dermatology Board Examination in Europe

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In Sweden, as in many Nordic countries, it is not required to take a board examination to become a certified dermatovenereologist, but it is required in many other countries in Europe as well as in other parts of the world. Even so, there may be residents in our Nordic countries that would like to take a board examination anyway and in this article I will tell you about my experience with studying for and taking two different board examinations, the official European examination “the European Board of Dermatovenereology (UEMS-EBDV) Board Examination” and the British examination “Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom (MRCPUK) Specialty Certificate Examination in Dermatology”. I also would like to take the opportunity to warmly thank both the Swedish Society for Dermatology and Venereology (SSDV) and the Dermatology Department at Skånes University Hospital in Lund for giving me the prerequisites to be able to successfully pass the exams, SSDV for the financial support to pay for the UEMS-EBDV examination and my Dermatology Department for giving me 4 weeks to prepare for the exam.

### Why take a board examination?

There can of course be many different reasons to wanting to take (or not to take) a board examination. Personally, I felt the need to push myself to study to make sure I have the knowledge that is expected from a specialist in dermatovenereology in Sweden as well as internationally. For me it was very helpful to have an upcoming examination to follow through in this ambition. Also, during my career I would like to work abroad, and many countries demand that you have passed a dermatology board examination (among other things) to be able to work as a dermatovenereologist in their countries.

### How to prepare?

You can find curriculum and advices on how to prepare for the board examinations on the home pages of the organizing committees. However, the advice on how to prepare is quite comprehensive as you can see in Fig. 1, which was extracted from UEMS-EBDV's home page.

Textbooks: Braun-Falco, Rook-Wilkinson, Fitzpatrick et al, Bologna et al.  
Guidelines:  
EDF (European Dermatology Forum) guidelines.  
IUSTI (International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections) guidelines.  
CME articles in the JAAD, Arch Dermatol, Dermatology, Acta Derm Venereol, JEADV, JDDG (English online version).  
Major review articles in all international dermatological and venereological journals.

Fig. 1. Recommended final preparations for the UEMS-EBDV examination, extracted from their homepage.

How one prepares for an examination is probably very individual, but the groundwork is to read in the acknowledged Dermatology and Dermatopathology books and to study published guidelines. In addition, there are many home pages that offer study support, such as Derm101 and Derm In-Review, and several books that are designed for studying for a board examination (most often intended for the American board examination). As for me, I started to study far in advance and used a study book (Dermatology- Illustrated study guide and comprehensive board review, Jain 2017) as the basis for my studies, and it gave me an excellent overview. After reading a chapter in my study book, I went through the corresponding chapter in Braun-Falco's Dermatology (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Burgdorf et al.) to get a more detailed knowledge. When I had finished this review, I looked over all guidelines published on European Dermatology Forums (EDF) home page. Finally, I answered about 3,000 study questions that I found on Derm In-Reviews home page, making sure to look up all questions I didn't know the answer to. After this, I felt that I was well prepared.

### Which board exam should you choose?

There are many dermatology board examinations in the world, which also reflects that it is required to pass a theoretical knowledge test in many countries to become a certified dermatovenereologist. In Europe, the UEMS European Board

of Dermatology (UEMS-EBDV) organizes a board examination every year in August in Frankfurt. This is the official European examination, supported by EADV, and it tests knowledge in both dermatology and venereology. It contains multiple-choice questions on everything from history to terminology to basic science to epidemiology to clinical cases. To pass this exam you need to score at least 55% correct answers.

It is also allowed for foreign physicians to take the British “Specialty Certificate Examination in Dermatology” which is arranged in October every year. This examination can be written on Pearson VUE test centres that is available in many cities in Europe. In this exam the questions are more detailed and written as clinical cases, but the answers are also in a multiple-choice format. Unfortunately, venereology knowledge is practically not tested in this exam since venereology is not part of the dermatology specialization in Great Britain. To pass this exam you need to score at least 68% correct answers.

I decided to take both examinations and therefore can make a comparison. In my opinion, the questions in UEMS-EBDV was sometimes quite hard to understand and several “true-or-false” questions were in double negative format, so that you in the end were supposed to choose false for a statement that was true and vice versa. This took unnecessary time and effort to

get your mind around. The British examination, on the other hand, was professionally written and it was consistently clear what was asked for. The main weakness in this examination was the lack of venereology questions. Both the European and the British examinations included many difficult questions, most were relevant but a few tested what I would like to label as “superfluous knowledge”. Ergo, knowledge that you never use or need in your clinical practice but that only tests how many details you have managed to memorize during your studies (and that, unfortunately, quite soon will be forgotten due to lack of utilization). Thus, both examinations have their pros and cons, and which one you choose may have many reasons but hopefully this text can offer some guidance.

### **Would I recommend residents to take a board examination?**

It was quite exhausting to prepare for the dermatology board examination, but it was also fun, and I am very glad that I did it. I have gained an enormous amount of knowledge and I feel much more confident in my every day practice now. I also feel proud to have passed a knowledge test and I no longer doubt that my level of knowledge is of an international standard. I therefore want to highly recommend residents in all Nordic countries to take a board examination in the end of your residency! Good luck!