

JRCPTB/ MRCP(UK) release to Deaneries

The MRCP(UK) Examination: Changes to eligibility for entry and the application processes 2008/9

- To ease the time pressures on trainee physicians, the MRCP(UK) Part 1 Examination will be made available sooner and the '18-month rule' revised to allow the Examination to be taken 12 months following graduation. This will take effect from the September examination diet this year (2008/3).
- MRCP(UK) Management Board have agreed that the MRCP(UK) Part 2 Written Examination should be 'uncoupled' from the MRCP(UK) Clinical Examination (PACES). Consequently, from the 1st January 2009, candidates will be able to sit the MRCP(UK) Part 2 Written and PACES in any order and simultaneous entry to both will be permitted after a candidate has passed the MRCP(UK) Part 1 Examination.
- To comply with all PMETB principles for curricula and assessment, a formal submission of the above proposal will be made to PMETB before 2010 with the intention that trainees entering CMT/ ST1 from August 2010 must complete the MRCP(UK) Examinations process and that from 2012 the full diploma will be an essential criterion for entry to ST3.

Readiness to sit MRCP(UK) – the role of Educational Supervisors

Management Board and particularly our lay representatives have expressed concerns regarding the effects of compressing the examination experience and potentially increasing the fail rate. Agreement with Educational Supervisors on 'fitness to sit' any one part of the examination would rationalise examination attempts and structure a trainee's examination timetable. In addition, entry to the component parts of the examination should be guided by the judgements of the other supervising consultants and informed by performance in workplace-based formative assessments.

Consequently, as part of the revision to entry and eligibility requirements all applications for all parts of the MRCP(UK) Examination will need to be supported by the candidate's current or most recent educational supervisor or supervising consultant (who may be a non-MRCP(UK) holder). Inclusion of the Educational Supervisor's contact details on the application form will therefore be mandatory for entry. No signature will be necessary from the Educational Supervisor. The onus will be on the candidate to confirm on the application form that the appropriate 'approval' to enter the Examination system has been granted though some random checks will be carried out.

In effect the Educational Supervisor will be providing up-to-date guarantees of the candidate's recent experience, educational record and satisfactory performance in the workplace-based assessments.

The MRCP(UK) Part 1 Examination

Feedback from trainees has indicated that at this early stage a significant number of career-focused pre-registration doctors may have already decided on hospital medicine or even a medical specialty as their final career choice. We would therefore support access to summative assessments such as MRCP(UK) for young doctors who have made a career choice this early in training. Entry into the Part 1 Examination will require the endorsement of the candidate's Educational Supervisor.

The MRCP(UK) Part 2 Examination

The MRCP(UK) Part 2 Examination currently comprises two parts: the Part 2 Written Examination, an assessment of applied clinical knowledge and clinical problem-solving skills, and the PACES Examination, an assessment of bedside clinical skills. The Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom believe that, as the two examinations assess different components of clinical performance, it would be appropriate to permit entry into either following completion of the Part 1 Examination and so have introduced the changes detailed earlier in this paper. Entry into either the Part 2 Written Examination or PACES will require the endorsement of the candidate's Educational Supervisor.

Trainees are unlikely to be able to apply their clinical knowledge, or demonstrate their clinical skills, across the broad range of clinical cases, and thus be successful in the Part 2 Written or PACES Examinations, before a total of two years experience following the award of their primary medical degree. This period should include at least four months in medical specialties or medical sub-specialties. We therefore recommend that candidates should normally have completed a two-year Foundation programme (or an equivalent period of training) before attempting either the Part 2 Written or the PACES Examinations. Within these two years not less than 4 months should be spent in posts involving the continuing care of emergency medical patients. This experience in the UK should be at Foundation Year One and Two level, or equivalent, or above but may be gained in any hospital throughout the world. We will continue to advise candidates that the usual route should be to pass Part 2 Written before sitting PACES as the applied knowledge acquired for Part 2 written is necessary to perform well in the questioning in PACES. Candidates or supervisors in doubt about likely readiness to sit the examination should review the relevant curricula and the PACES information section on the MRCP (UK) website.

Candidates and supervisors should note that poor performance in the examination may result in a recommendation from MRCP(UK) to defer further attempts until further evidence of readiness to sit, perhaps accrued from a further period of training, is available.

Implications for non-UK graduates

Our general recommendations are a response to the proposed changes in UK Postgraduate Medical Training. Any changes in regulations would, however, apply to candidates sitting any part of the Examination in all parts of the world, some of whom may wish to compete for selection into Core or Higher Medical

Training in the UK. We need to ensure that neither UK nor non-UK graduates are unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged at any stage of the examination process.

Conclusion

All three components of the Examination are well placed to be key assessments for progression through and exit from CMT. Entry to the component parts of the Examination should continue to be guided by the judgements of the trainee's Educational Supervisor(s) and informed by performance in the workplace-based formative assessments. Streamlining the Examination process and increasing flexibility of entry can only occur with radical changes to the regulations. This will ensure that the Examination remains a key component of the assessment of trainee physicians. Detail of the changes will be posted on the MRCP(UK) website (<http://www.mrcpuk.org>) Regular updates for examiners will follow.

Chris Clough and Neil Dewhurst

On behalf of JRCPTB/ MRCP(UK) and the Federation of the UK Medical Royal Colleges, June 2008.