

JRCPTB

Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board

5 St Andrews Place Regent's Park London NW1 4LB

Specialty Certificate Examination for Palliative Medicine

Background

The Palliative Medicine Curricula of 2007 and 2010 have been developed by the Specialty Advisory Committee at the JRCPTB with input from all Heads of Specialty Training and trainee representatives. These have specified a knowledge-based assessment as part of the evidence required for completion of the curriculum and award of a CCT.

Led by Professor Karen Forbes, the SAC has been working with the Examination Department at MRCP(UK) Central Office, Royal College of Physicians, and a group of question writers, to develop a high quality Specialty Certificate Exam (SCE). Having successfully developed a bank of quality-assured questions, the first diet of the examination will be held on 09/11/2011. The examination will run annually thereafter.

Who will be required to pass the exam?

The SAC has decided that Registrars should be given the opportunity to take the examination on at least two occasions without having to delay their CCT if they are unsuccessful at their first attempt. It is advised that candidates sit the examination during ST5, as before that they may not have covered enough of the curriculum to achieve a pass. Registrars who have less than 18 months whole-time equivalent training left by the date of the first examination will be exempt from sitting it. Registrars may choose to sit the examination sooner if they wish.

As of 09/11/2011, all Registrars who have 18 months or more whole time equivalent (WTE) training to complete before their expected CCT date will be required to pass the examination before their CCT can be awarded.

Registrars who have had periods away from work, for example for sickness or maternity leave, which will change their CCT dates will need to calculate whether they are required to pass the examination on the basis of having 18 months or more whole time equivalent (WTE) training time left after 09/11/2011. **If in doubt, please check with your Head of Specialty Training who may advise you to contact the JRCPTB for an up to date anticipated CCT date.**

Examples

A full time trainee appointed on or after 01/08/2009 will be expected to pass the exam.

A full time trainee appointed on or before 01/08/2008 will be exempt.

Table of examples of trainees who will need to sit the SCE

Registrar	Exam not compulsory if CCT on or before ...	Time left to train on examination date 9/11/11	Mandatory success at SCE for award of CCT on or after ...
Full-time	08/05/2013	18 months	09/05/2013
90 % LTFT	08/07/2013	20 months	09/07/2013
80 % LTFT	23/09/2013	22 ½ months	24/09/2013
70 % LTFT	30/12/2013	25 months 23 days	31/12/2013
60 % LTFT	08/05/2014	30 months	09/05/2014
50% LTFT	08/11/2014	36 months	09/11/2014

Registrars who are on Out of Programme Experience (OOPE) or Research (OOPR) will be exempt if they are not counting any of their time in OOP towards their CCT and will have 18 months or less WTE training time on their return to programme by 09/11/2011.

If registrars are counting part of the OOPE or OOPR towards their CCT and will be returning to programme within 18 months of their CCT after 09/11/2011, they are requested to send a CV to Dr Fiona Hicks, SAC chair, fiona.hicks@leedsth.nhs.uk with details of the dates of their training, nature of the OOP including training allowance given for that time and expected CCT date. This will be discussed with their STC chair, SCE exam lead, and SAC secretary who will decide on the requirement to pass the exam on an individual basis.

Registrars following the 2003 curriculum are encouraged to transfer to a more recent version of the curriculum to benefit from advances in training and assessment. There is a transfer process that can be followed after discussion with your Deanery Head of Specialty Training. The SAC would encourage all Registrars to take the examination alongside their colleagues whichever curriculum they are following, as a **formative** assessment to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge, but those following the 2003 curriculum will not be mandated to do so.

Information for candidates

The Specialty Certificate Examination is designed to ensure and demonstrate that certificated specialists have sufficient knowledge to practise competently and safely as consultants. The examination will complement the workplace-based assessments required by the Palliative Medicine curriculum. The Specialty Certificate Examination will run annually. It comprises two three-hour multiple choice tests of 100 items each and is delivered in computer-based format at an invigilated Pearson VUE [test centre](#). Each paper is based on the MRCP(UK) written paper format and contains 100 multiple choice questions in 'best of five' format, where candidates choose the best answer from five possible answers. Each correct answer is awarded one mark; there is no negative marking. The distribution of questions will be derived strictly in accordance

with a blueprint derived from the specialty curriculum, allowing assessment of core knowledge and its application in the clinical setting. The pass mark for each examination diet will be set in advance by a standard setting group and is criterion-referenced, rather than being set as a proportion of candidates who will pass or fail. If a trainee has not passed the examination by the time of their anticipated final ARCP, they will be given an ARCP Outcome 3 and their training extended. The amount of time that training can be extended depends on discussion with the Deanery.

Examination questions will usually have a clinical scenario, may include the results of investigations and may be illustrated. Questions are asked about the diagnosis, investigation, management, and prognosis of patients, and associated issues about their care. Sample questions are available for some specialties on the MRCP(UK) website. Questions for Palliative Medicine will be uploaded when they are available.

There is no specific reading list for the Specialty Certificate Examination, as it would have to be updated continuously. Candidates will be expected to read widely and to be conversant with current UK best-practice guidance. It will cover all areas of knowledge acquired throughout the training period. Candidates should review all they have learned throughout higher specialist training and consult the Palliative Medicine Curriculum. Drug doses and conversions will be taken from the British National Formulary and the Palliative Care Formulary.

The examination fees for 2011 are £825 for UK candidates and £1035 for overseas candidates.

Candidates who pass the Specialty Certificate Examination will receive a certificate. The majority of candidates who pass and who are recommended for a CCT will have entered higher specialist training with MRCP(UK) or a diploma from an alternative UK Royal College, e.g. MRCP. They will be granted the post-nominal MRCP(UK) (Palliative Medicine).

Further information for trainees recommended for a CESR (CP) is available on the MRCP(UK) website.

The dates for the 2011 diet are as follows:

Online application process opens:	1 July 2011
Closing date (overseas):	1 August 2011
Closing date (UK):	30 September 2011
Exam Date:	9 November 2011

For further information, including details of how to create an online account, how to apply and a list of Frequently Asked Questions see the MRCP(UK) website:

<http://www.mrcpuk.org/SCE/Pages/Home.aspx>

<http://www.mrcpuk.org/SCE/Specialties/Pages/PalliativeMedicine.aspx>