

Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

MRCP(UK) PACES Examination

Trainee Examiners' Guide

The PACES (Practical Assessment of Clinical Examination Skills) format to the MRCP(UK) Part II Clinical Examination was introduced in 2001. It aimed to standardise the assessment of candidates and improve the reliability of the examination. It is important that examiners are trained in order to achieve that consistency and reliability.

The training of new examiners will comprise:

a) Preparation before attending PACES

In the days prior to attending the clinical examination, the trainee examiner should:

- Read/re-read the latest version of the Examiner's Guide. This should be sent by the College Examination Department and can be downloaded from the MRCP(UK) website (www.mrcpuk.org). The latter is updated continually and should be reviewed by examiners prior to each diet in which they participate.
- View/re-view the PACES Video/DVD.

b) Attend PACES as Trainee Examiner

New examiners must attend three cycles of PACES wherever possible although training can be undertaken at a centre running only two cycles per day. The Trainee should arrive in good time and introduce him/herself to the Host and Chair of Examiners.

Essential Components of a Training Day

- Attend the briefing by the Chair of Examiners
- Cycle 1: Calibrate and "shadow-mark" 5 candidates at Station 1 or 3
- Cycle 3: Calibrate and "shadow-mark" 5 candidates at Station 4 (or Station 2)
- Cycle 2 can be used to observe one candidate at each of the 3 other stations and to work with the 11th examiner checking the accuracy of mark sheets, usefulness of examiners comments, and entering marks on the spreadsheet.

The Chair of Examiners should agree the training plan at the start of the day and complete the Trainee Examiner Assessment form (TE2) attached to this document or download from www.mrcpuk.org, at the end of the day. This form and the shadow mark sheets must be returned to the College.

Further detail follows:

Trainee examiners must attend the briefing given by the Chair of Examiners before the examination starts. Thereafter, the Trainee should take part as follows:

- **Cycle One** (essential)

The Trainee should join either Station One or Station Three for the first cycle of 5 candidates. The Trainee must become familiar with the cases along with the examiners at that station before the cycle begins and ensure the introductory statements are appropriate. The Trainee should take part in the examiners' discussion to agree the physical signs, the questions that might be posed to the candidate, and the schedule of marking that will lead to the award of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory performance at each skill.

The Trainee will be introduced to each candidate as a Trainee Examiner and will observe the conduct of the examination without playing an active part in the questioning. The Trainee should "shadow mark" the candidate, justifying the award of Unsatisfactory or Borderline with comments that would allow feedback to the candidate. Comments should also be written when a candidate is awarded Satisfactory – the co-examiners might have come to different judgements.

The "shadow marks" and appropriate comments to justify the mark and give feedback to the candidate should be entered on the mark sheets without conferring with the examiners. However, after the mark sheets have been collected, the marks awarded and the comments should be discussed between examiners and Trainee in the interval before the next candidate starts.

Shadow Mark Sheets are not pre-completed by candidates and the candidates name and examination number as well as the Trainee Examiner's name should be entered and a brief description of the case given. The shadow mark sheets will be collected at the end of the examining day and returned to the College Examination Office along with your Trainee Examiner Assessment Form (TE2).

- **Cycle Two** (may be omitted if centre is running only 2 cycles per day)

Each of other stations of the examination should be visited in rotation - rotating in reverse order to the candidates so that any one candidate is not followed. This will allow familiarisation with all of the stations in the carousel although there will not have be time to assess the patients in detail. Time should be spent with the 11th examiner.

- **Cycle Three** (essential)

The trainee should join a "talking" station – either Station Two or Station Four – and with different examiners from those joined for the first cycle. The Trainee should assess the patient/surrogate along with the examiners at that station before the cycle begins and take part in discussion to agree the important points and questions that might be put to the candidate. The schedule of marking should be agreed.

Again, the Trainee will be introduced to each candidate as a Trainee Examiner. The conduct of the examination should be observed without playing an active part. The candidate should be "shadow marked", ensuring candidate name and number have been added, noting the scenario number and giving a brief description of it, and providing comments to justify the marks awarded (as at

Cycle 1). The shadow mark sheets will be collected after the examination, and returned to the College Examination Office.

- **Post-cycle discussion** (essential)

The Chair of Examiners will lead a short discussion of the marks after each of the cycles. The Trainee should attend this important session where marks are reviewed, discrepancies between examiner pairs are discussed, and any errors in mark sheets are identified. Candidates whose performance merits counselling are identified at these post-cycle discussions. Any procedural irregularities or problems running the cycle are identified at each post-cycle discussion and are forwarded through the relevant College Examination Office to the Clinical Examining Board. Candidates who were thought to be rough with the patient will be discussed in detail.

At the end of the day, the Trainee Examiner should discuss the experience with the Chair of Examiners. The Chair will seek feedback from the examiners with whom the Trainee was attached, review the mark sheets, and the aptitude for examining. The Trainee should let the Chair know whether he/she feels confident to examine independently.

The Trainee must ensure that the Host Examiner has the following papers to return to the College:

- Trainee Examiner Assessment Form (TE2, attached to this document or download from www.mrcpuk.org) - completed fully, signed by the Trainee and by the Chair of Examiners or the Host Examiner at the centre at which the training took place.
- The shadow mark sheets for Station 1 or 3 and for Station 2 or 4.

The Examination Office at the College through which the training was arranged will notify the Trainee whether he/she can proceed to examine independently following the day as a Trainee.

Trainee examiners are encouraged to comment on the training experience and a Trainee Examiner Feedback Form (TE3) is also attached, or can be downloaded from www.mrcpuk.org. It should be returned to the College which organized the training – either through the Host examiner with the other training documents or independently.

L G McAlpine
Medical Secretary, Clinical Examining Board
MRCP(UK) Central Office

March 2005, revised August 2009