MRCPUK
Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Preparing for your MRCP(UK) Part 1 online examination

12 January 2021

Contents

1. Introduction

This guidance is issued to those preparing to sit their MRCP(UK) Part 1 examination on 12 January 2021.

As a result of COVID-19, your exam has moved to an online format. This is to ensure that the exam will not be delayed again as a result of the pandemic, providing certainty to all candidates and examiners. Our priority is the safety of all candidates, examiners and College staff.

While the method of exam delivery has changed, the format, content and marking of the exam remains the same as the written exam you have been preparing for.

We hope that this booklet will answer many of the questions that you have, and you should read it carefully. You will have several opportunities to raise questions using the contact details in this booklet, and we advise that you ask any questions well in advance of exam day.

2. Identifying a location for your exam

Whilst you may be sitting your exam in a familiar work setting, please remember that you should still treat this with the same professionalism as you would if you were attending an exam venue. You should give serious thought to the location where you will sit your exam. You are best placed to identify a suitable location within your area where you can sit your exam. It is important that the venue is:

- Quiet;
- One in which you will not be disturbed during the whole period of the exam;
- Comfortable and well lit; and
- One with good, reliable Wifi.

It is acceptable to choose to sit the exam in your home, but if you are doing this we would recommend that you will be alone in the house, or in a room where you can guarantee you will not be disturbed. It is vital that you can concentrate on the exam in the same way that you would in an exam hall. You should not attempt to sit the exam at home if you have caring responsibilities for anyone in your home, unless you have made arrangements for additional help that day.

It is important to note that when you have selected a venue for your exam, you must use this venue when you carry out the pre-exam tests to ensure that you have adequate connectivity in that location to sit the exam. This is just as important as testing the actual equipment (e.g. laptop) that you will use.

3. IT Set up

3.1 Equipment specifications

In order to sit the exam, you will require a laptop or personal computer with a camera or attached webcam. A full list of equipment specifications is attached in **Appendix 1**. This includes a link to check your equipment. As noted above, this should be done using the equipment you plan to use for the exam, in the location you plan to use it.

The exam software is designed to work on both Apple and Microsoft, **you must use Chrome browser** as the proctoring software requires a Chrome extension which is downloaded as part of the set up process – this can be removed easily after the exam.

If you are using a laptop you should ensure that this is fully charged and plugged in for the duration of the exam.

3.2 Login details

In advance of the exam you will be sent login details for Practique, which is the online exam system. You access Practique and your exam via ProctorExam. You will also be given information about how to do this. You will not be able to access the exam content until the exam day.

We will ensure this information is provided with enough time for you to familiarise yourself with the process.

4. What to expect prior to exam day

You will be sent full instructions of how complete the Proctorexam prechecks and log in to Practique to take your exam /s on the day.

You will also be sent a candidate Code of Conduct & a candidate declaration. You will be required to confirm that you will abide by the code of conduct prior to the exam. Candidates are reminded of the need to be professional and to be aware of how seriously the Colleges view attempts at deliberate examination mis-conduct.

You will be required to prove your identity at the start of the examination. You should therefore ensure that you have your photographic ID available. This must be an official document, such as a passport, national ID card, driving licence etc. ***Photocopies are NOT permitted.***

To help you to prepare for the exam, a checklist is attached in section 7 of this booklet. We recommend that you complete this as you prepare for the exam to ensure you have completed all the necessary steps.

5. Sitting your Examination

5.1   Timing of the Examination
The start time of the examination will be staggered due to the online format being used. The exam itself lasts for three hours, but you must access Proctorexam using the link sent after your prechecks were completed 10 minutes before the start time. The start time (based on **GMT**) of your exam

could range from 08:00 GMT to 10:30 for paper 1 and between 12.30 and 14:30 for paper 2. Your exact exam time will be confirmed in the week before the exam.

5.2   Online proctoring

Online proctoring (or online invigilation) will be carried out during the exam by a specialist provider. This means that a person will be monitoring your activity throughout the exam, just as they would in a face to face exam encounter. The difference in this case is that you will be monitored via webcam, rather than having someone physically in the exam room with you. All those involved in the online proctoring are fully trained personnel. You will not see the Proctor and they will not talk you – they will communicate via the live chat. The set up process is designed to be automated as much as possible for speed – you will be asked to follow a series of instructions – read these carefully and use the visual prompts to help you.

The Proctor will provide you with any instructions required for the paper. During the exam, they will observe you and will only contact you if they detect a serious breach of exam protocol (for example if you pick up a text book or mobile device). However, if you experience a problem during the exam, you will be able to speak to them to request help and use the live chat.
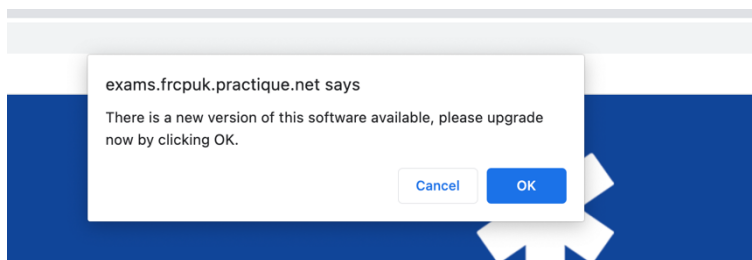
If you need a bathroom break during the exam, you **must** notify the proctor who will note this on their exam report. As in a face to face exam, no additional time will be granted for bathroom breaks unless this is related to a reasonable adjustment request that has been applied for and granted prior to the exam. Do not wait for a response to your request or permission before you take your bathroom break – it will be noted in the review.

Your examination will also be recorded for the purposes of resolving any conduct issues only. While the recordings may be used to gather evidence within a complaint or appeal, this is not the primary purpose of the recording. They cannot be used to dispute the academic judgement of Examiners and will not be used to re-assess an exam outcome. Recordings are for internal use only and will not be released to candidates or examiners.

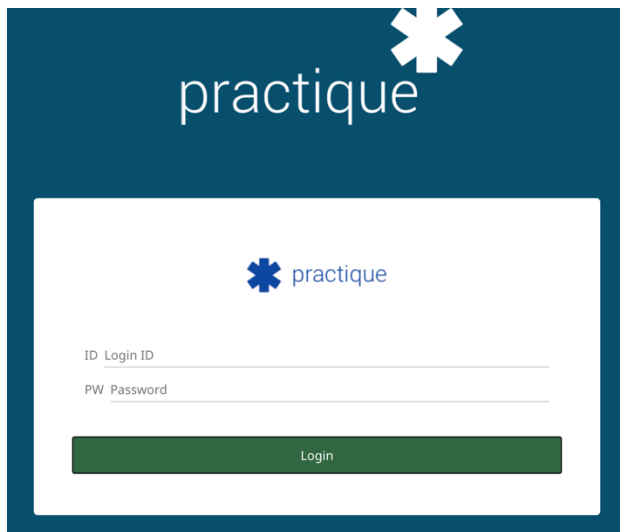You will take your exams in the Practique – *this will be accessed via a link in the final page of the Proctorexam system.*

You will be supplied with your login and password for Practique in advance.

If you have used an older version of Practique in the past you may be asked to update to the latest version. Just click on OK and the update is instant. If you do not see this that is not a problem just continue.
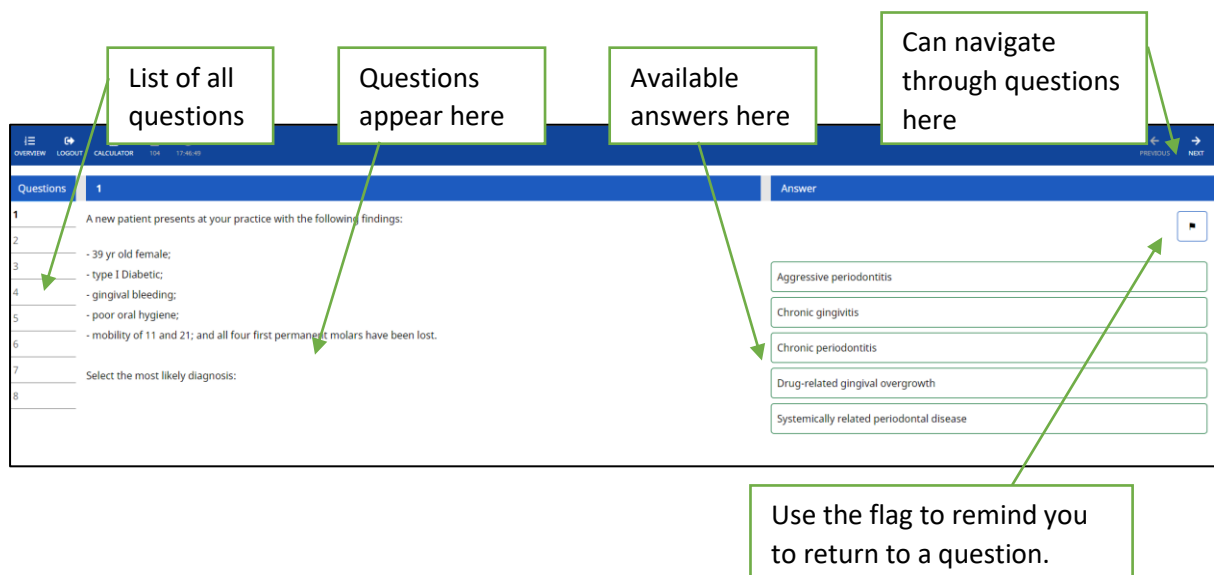
Enter your ID and Password – click Login

If you do not connect to the exam away straight (which is unlikely) you will see a message asking you to wait, do not worry this will not take long. If you need help, message the Proctor.
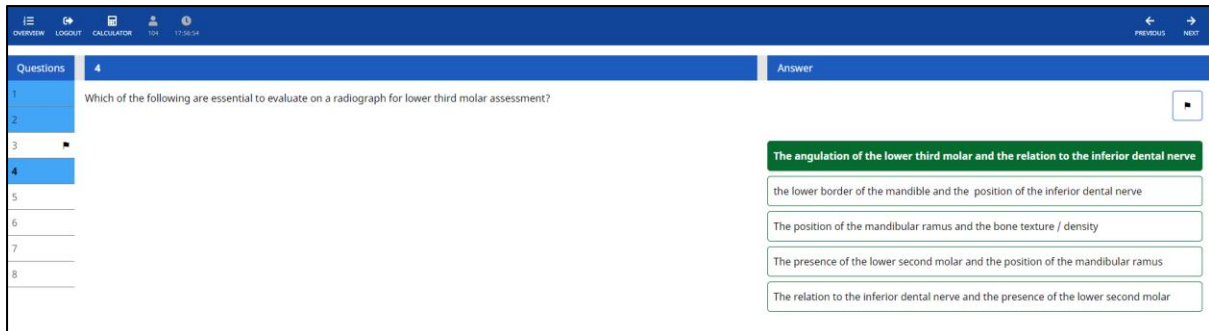
5.3   Answering the paper

Once your ID checks have been completed and you are ready to begin the paper you will be able to click on the link to your exam. Enter your login details. When the exam begins, the question numbers will appear on the left-hand side of your screen. You will be able to access all questions from the moment you open the paper and can navigate either by using the list on the left or by clicking 'next' and 'previous' at the top right of the screen:

Select your chosen answer by clicking on this on the right-hand side of the screen. Once you have selected an answer, the question number on the left will be coloured yellow or blue indicating the system has received your answer. A yellow bar indicates you are currently offline and your answer will be conveyed back to the system when your internet reconnects. A blue answer indicates that you are online and your answer has been received by the system.

If you would like to flag a question to return to (either because you do not want to answer it just now, or because you would like to revisit the submitted answer) you can use the 'flag' button above the possible answers. This will leave a flag for you to remind you to revisit this later, as shown on the image overleaf.

The candidate above has answered questions 1, 2 and 4, and the answers are blue, indicating that they have been saved. The candidate has flagged to return to question 3, and this flag appears on the question list on the left of the screen.

There is a clock at the top of the screen and a timer in Practique will let you know when you are approaching the end of your exam.

5.4   Dealing with issues during the exam

In the same way that there can be unforeseen circumstances during a face to face exam (candidates feeling unwell, fire alarms etc) it is entirely possible that you may encounter an issue during the online exam. If this happens, please remain calm and follow the stated procedures to report this or troubleshoot it. A full report of any issues will be logged and reviewed by the Exam Board prior to results being issued. If a significant issue has occurred, a decision will be taken on how best to address this. However, as with a face to face exam, incidents during the exam cannot be used to amend examiner marks and overall results.

In your final exam instructions, you will be provided with details of how to contact support in the event of difficulties during the exam. This will include what to do in the event of a computer issue, Wifi issue, illness or a fire alarm or other disturbance. The College will also have plans in place to manage any such issue to ensure that any impact on your exam is minimised.

6. Contact details

Further information will be provided to you prior to your exam, in line with the communications list provided. However, if you have any questions, please contact us on part1@mrcpuk.org.

We will also provide a direct email address or telephone number which can be used during the exam if you experience any issues.

7. Checklist to prepare for exam

We recommend that you begin to fill in this checklist in as you prepare for the exam.

	Tick when complete
Prior to the day of the exam:	
Identify a quiet venue where you will be undisturbed during the exam.	
Ensure you have a laptop or computer and WiFi connection which meets equipment specification in Appendix 1.	
Work through the pre-exam technical checks on the equipment you plan to use, in the location you plan to use it.	
Check that you have your photographic ID available for your system check and, on the day, to show the proctor at the start of your exam.	
Ensure you have received your login details and know how to access the online system.	
Ensure you read and accept the candidate code of conduct sent to you by the College.	
On the morning of the exam (at least 30 mins before start):	
Take all steps to ensure you will not be disturbed for the duration of the exam.	
Make sure you are comfortable (e.g. check the room is not too hot/too cold).	
Have your photographic ID to hand.	
Ensure that the area around your computer or laptop is clear of any items. You may have a piece of scrap paper to write on – but you must show the proctor	
Ensure your computer or laptop is fully charged and plugged in and there are no issues with Wifi. It is recommended that you retest the system using the link at Appendix 1 to test your webcam, microphone and internet speed.	
Ensure you have your required login details to hand.	
Ensure you have had a bathroom break.	
You may have a small clear bottle of water to hand and a small snack	
Ensure any mobile devices/telephones in the room are switched off, and not anywhere close to your working area.	
Ensure you have the contact details for the College to hand in case they are required.	

Appendix 1: Equipment Specifications and Test Link

- **Do these checks in the same location and with the same Laptop / PC you intend to use take the exam.**

It is important to check your set up in the conditions and location in which you intend to take the exam. Proctoring requires Chrome browser and your laptop or PCs webcam, microphone and screensharing capability. If you have experienced any issues using any of these functions, especially with a third party – for example when sharing your screen in a video call, please make sure you double check your set up and ask for advice if you are unsure. Here are some suggested tests to check your IT set up. If in doubt about your bandwidth, contact your Broadband provider.

Check your internet speed:

https://www.speedtest.net/

Check your webcam.

https://www.onlinemictest.com/webcam-test/

Check your microphone:

https://www.onlinemictest.com/

Please ensure that your device meets the following specifications for more information visit the Proctorexam website – PLEASE NOTE you will **not** be using the mobile phone app in these exams

https://proctorexam.com/test-taker-support/

1. **Minimum Device Requirements**

- Only a desktop PC or laptop can be used; laptops should be fully charged and connected to a power source. Chromebooks, IPad, IPad Pro tablets and mobile phones *do not meet requirements.*
- No dual monitors are allowed.
- Please ensure you have the latest operating system available installed

Mac - minimum 10.12 Sierra

Windows - minimum Windows 7

Linux does *not meet requirements*

You will need:

- A working built in or external webcam and microphone (a mobile phone is NOT acceptable)
- A stable internet connection and sufficient bandwidth.
  - Do not use a Hotspot

- Internet speed must be at least 2 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload

- Sufficient hard drive storage space minimum 20GB free space on PC/laptop
- Memory (RAM) 4GB minimum, 8GB recommended
- Web Browser with popup block disabled:

Chrome version 78 (minimum) – this is the only browser you can use.

Proctorexam works using a Chrome extension which is installed during the set-up process – you can easy remove this after your exams

Please complete checks in the same location and using the same PC / laptop you will be using to take your exam. If you are using a work/NHS laptop please check that you are able to use the webcam and screenshare with an external/third party. A working built in microphone is required.

Appendix 2: Guide to carry out complete system checks

How to clear website data

Chrome

1. On your computer, open Chrome.
2. At the top right, click 'More' (represented with 3 dots).
3. Click 'More tools'. Clear browsing data.
4. At the top, choose a time range. To delete everything, select All time (recommended).
5. Next to "Cookies and other site data" and "Cached images and files," check the boxes.
6. Click 'Clear data'.

How to update browser
Chrome
1. Open the Google Chrome **browser**.
2. Click the Customize and control Google Chrome button in the upper-right corner of the screen.
3. From the drop-down menu that appears, select Help, then select About Google Chrome.
4. The window that appears will automatically check for **updates** and show you the current version of Chrome.

How to update iOS
Mac
1. Plug your device into power and connect to the internet with WiFi
2. Go to Apple menu > choose System Preferences
3. Click Software Update
Tip: You can also choose Apple menu > About This **Mac**, then click Software **Update**

Checking hard drive storage
Windows

1. Open File Explorer. You can use the keyboard shortcut, **Windows** key + E or tap the folder icon in the taskbar.
2. Tap or click This PC from the left pane.
3. You can see the amount of free **space** on your **hard disk** under the **Windows** (C:) **drive**.

Apple Mac
1. Open the Apple menu, then select About This **Mac**.
2. Click the **Storage** tab in the toolbar to see how much **disk space** you have available. (On OS X Mountain Lion or Mavericks, click the More info button, then click **Storage**.)

Checking memory (RAM)
Windows
1. Click on start menu
2. Type 'about' and press enter when 'about your PC' appears
3. Scroll down, and under device specifications, see 'installed RAM'

Apple Mac
1. Open the Apple menu
2. Click on the Apple logo in the top-left corner of your screen and select About This **Mac**. On the Overview tab, the **Memory** line lists the amount of **RAM** in GB

Maximising available RAM
Apple Mac
1. For disabling auto-start software, on Mac go to: apple -> system preferences
2. -> Users & Groups -> Login Items and remove all items from the "These items will open automatically when you login" by selecting an item, and using the '-' button underneath the box.
NB. After removing the auto-start items, you should reboot the computer.
iOS - power the device down, and restart.

Windows
1. Click on start menu
2. Select Settings > Apps >Start Up
3. Disable all Apps for automatic start up
If you do not see Start Up option in Settings:
1. Right click Start
2. Select Task Manager
3. Select the Start Up (if you do not see Start Up, then select More Details)

Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions

Exam Location

Can I sit the exam at home?
Yes, as long as the venue is quiet and you will not be disturbed.

Can I sit the exam in a location with other candidates?
No, it is not possible to have several candidates in one room attempting the exam., You must be alone in the exam room.

IT Equipment

Can I use a tablet to sit my exam?
No, you should use a laptop or desktop computer.

Can I attach a keyboard/mouse if I am using a laptop?
Yes – it's important that you choose a set up that is comfortable for your use.

Can I use a second screen?
No, you cannot use a second screen for your laptop or PC.

What if I lose my login details?
Contact the College, who will re-send your details to you.

Will I get a chance to see the system?
Yes – we will provide video guidance which will allow you to see the system and how it works. You will also have a chance to test your equipment prior to the exam.

How will I know the exam is secure?
There will be a secure website providing the paper, which is impossible to open before the exam time. It will be permanently deleted from your computer at the end of the exam. Throughout the exam, you will be observed by online proctors (or invigilators).

I have applied for a reasonable adjustment. Will the exam delivery platform be able to take account of the adjustments I require?
If you have been granted a reasonable adjustment your College of entry will contact you to confirm the details.

Taking the Exam

If I need to take a bathroom break, will additional time be added on to my paper?
No, as in an exam hall, should you need a bathroom break, you will not be awarded any additional time unless this is related to a reasonable adjustment request that has been granted in advance of the exam with appropriate medical information.

Will the invigilator be male or female?
The invigilator could be either male or female. If you have any specific concerns regarding the gender of the invigilator, please contact your College of entry.

Will my image be recorded?
Yes. Your examination will also be recorded for the purposes of resolving any conduct issues only. While the recordings may be used to gather evidence of suspected cheating, or within a complaint or appeal, this is not the primary purpose of the recording. They cannot be used to re-assess an exam outcome. Recordings are for internal use only and will not be released to candidates or examiners. The recordings will be destroyed shortly after the exam.

What happens if I am disturbed by someone during the exam?
The proctor will note any disturbances during the exam and may ask you to confirm what has occurred. You may be asked to re-confirm that you are alone in the room. The proctor may refer any incident for further investigation/adjudication if malpractice is suspected.

Can I wear headphones/earbuds and listen to music to help me to focus?
No, headphones/earbuds are not permitted during the exam period. There should be no noise or music audible in the exam room

Can I ask questions of the proctor (invigilator) during the exam?
You should only speak to the proctor if problems arise in your exam environment during the exam. The invigilators will not be able to comment on any questions in the exam.

What happens if I log in late to take the exam?
You must be on time for your exam as you may not be admitted after the scheduled start time. You should therefore ensure that you are ready to start the test at the time stated on your examination schedule, which will be issued in the final week prior to your examination.

What will the online proctor (or invigilator) do during the exam?
The online proctor will have the same duties as an invigilator in the exam hall. They are there to ensure that you start the exam at the correct time and assist you with any issues during the paper (e.g. if you require a bathroom break or feel unwell) and to ensure that the exam environment is secure. They will do this via webcam rather than being there face-to-face. At the start of the exam, the proctor will help you if you have problems with the automated set up sequence. They will not be visible on your screen but will be available should you need to alert them to a problem

If you need to do something e.g. take a bathroom break or turn down the heating or take off a jumper etc. do not wait for permission but do say out loud you are doing this and/or make a note in the chat, your actions will be recorded for review if necessary.

The proctor will not talk to you – they will communicate by live chat – they can however, hear you if you talk/have a question.

What if I experience problems during the exam?
You will be provided with details of how to contact technical support or applicable College staff during the exam if you experience any issues. Help will be on hand throughout the examination, and one of the team will work with you to try to get you started again. Even if you have internet problems during the exam, everything that you do will be saved to the system and none of your answers will be lost.