

April 2015

Chair's letter

MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical Examination PACES

Report on assessment period September – November 2014

In all, 1306 candidates sat the examination in the UK from September to November 2014, with a further 817 candidates sitting at our international centres. The pass rate for UK graduates at their first attempt was 67.90% and the overall pass rate for all candidates was 46.00%. The pass rates for all groups of candidates remain stable and within historical trends. Further details are available here:

<http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/results/exam-pass-rates>

Recent developments

Examiner compliance

The annual MRCP(UK) clinician census was circulated on 30 March 2015. The purpose of the census is to enable us to monitor compliance with our own, and the GMC's, standards for examiners. In addition, for the first time we collected data from the clinicians who work with us on all nine 'protected characteristics'. Monitoring this data will help us meet our obligations under the 2010 Equality Act and comply with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

MRCP(UK) Standards Annual Review Group

This MRCP(UK) Standards Review Group met for the first time on 19 February 2015. The purpose of the group is to bring externality to MRCP(UK) quality management. Representatives from a wide range of external stakeholders were present. This included COPMED, NHS Employers, Deanery, trainee, lay, IMG (international medicine graduate), BME (black minority ethnic), and external psychometric representation. Senior MRCP(UK) and JRCPTB officers were also present. The Group agreed overall that MRCP(UK) should continue with its efforts to address the issue of differential attainment to ensure that the examination remained as fair as possible, and transparent. It agreed that PACES is an extremely good test of clinical skills. The scoring system and passing standard should remain as they are currently, and the possibility of increased patient involvement in assessment could be investigated.

Investigating lay assessment in PACES

A research project invited surrogates at the Clinical Skills Assessment Centre in Edinburgh to mark candidates' performance in PACES at Station 2 (history taking) and Station 4 (communication skills and ethics). Surrogate marks were used only for comparative analysis with marks awarded by examiners and did not have any impact on candidates' final marks. This was a small- pilot. 11 surrogates took part and their initial feedback supported the introduction of some form of lay assessment into PACES. It is anticipated that further work will be undertaken to consider the potential role of lay assessors in PACES.

PACES in Malta

Following a successful fact finding tour in March, it has been agreed with local organisers that a pathfinder examination will run in October 2015. The first diet of PACES is expected to run in Malta in 2016/1. The PACES examination is anticipated to run twice per year and deliver 90 additional candidate places.

GMC data collection and reporting

Through a new data collection and reporting project, the GMC aims to improve the way data about progression of doctors through training is analysed. Reports published from Monday 9 March 2015 (<http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/25495.asp>) present examination data by UK medical school, Deanery, gender, ethnicity and primary qualification. Examination data will be analysed against data from trainee ARCP outcomes, recruitment, and the National Training Survey, to investigate potential associations between these markers of progression. The release of the 'Exams toolkit' was timed to coincide with a GMC Conference on 'Creating a culture of openness, safety and compassion'. MRCP(UK) joined over 450 delegates at the event on 16 March 2015.



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Hot Topics – April 2015

Discussion sheets

These provide important guidance to the Clinical Examining Board and form the basis of essential feedback to candidates on their performance. Discussion sheets must be completed, with as much detail as possible, when a candidate:

- has scored 28 on Skill G as a result of two unsatisfactory judgements at one encounter, but passed all other skills and scored 130 or more., Examiners must recommend whether the candidate should Pass or Fail.
- scored less than 28 for Skill G.
- failed on 6 skills or more.
- Would benefit from counselling, for example due to a very low score on one particular skill.

Ensuring that discussion sheets are completed is the responsibility of the Chair following full discussion at the post cycle briefing.

Allowing patients or surrogates adequate time to rehearse scenarios

Instances have been reported of patients or surrogates being handed their scenario just before the examination begins. It is important that patients or surrogates are given their scenarios in good time to allow them to prepare. This ensures a high quality, consistent and fair examination experience for candidates.

Scenario feedback forms

Examiner feedback on scenarios is essential to ensure content is fair, relevant and meets the required standard. Feedback is collated for consideration at examination boards and committees and guides the production and development of high quality material. It is an essential part of the quality assurance process and examiners are encouraged to provide feedback (positive and negative) on the scenario and how it performs in the examination.

Timing at stations

MRCP(UK) Central Office routinely monitors the cause of candidate appeals and complaints and in 2015/1 a number of candidates contacted the office about timing within the Station. Examiners are responsible for timing the interactions within each Station and encounter and it is usual to inform candidates of the passage of time during each encounter, by providing time warnings ('you have x minutes left') at the time indicated.

Electronic Candidate Performance Summary (eCPS)

The eCPS is an essential record of candidate scores and should be completed accurately. Any missing marks on the mark sheets should be flagged to examiners as soon as possible to ensure a mark is entered into the eCPS. Those responsible for completing the eCPS on examination day should ensure they are familiar with the guidelines which are available on the MRCP(UK) website at: <http://www.mrcpuk.org/get-involved-examiners/paces-examiners/administrator-hosts>