

Limit on Attempts Policy FAQs

Does this policy apply to international candidates?

Yes, the MRCP(UK) Diploma and Specialty Certificate Examinations provide an international benchmark for postgraduate medical education and applying the policy to all candidates ensures the same standard and fairness worldwide.

If I am absent from an exam will it count as an attempt?

From January 2014, if a candidate has not attended the examination and is recorded as absent, this will be recorded as one attempt. A withdrawal (as determined by the regulations on acceptable withdrawals) will not be deemed an attempt.

What will happen to candidates who have already had more than six attempts?

Candidates who have had six attempts or more by the end of 2013 will not be eligible to attempt the examination again unless evidence of additional educational experience is provided. Following the sixth unsuccessful attempt the candidate's educational supervisor will be required to confirm that the candidate has demonstrated an improvement in knowledge and skill so that a pass result is highly likely at the next attempt before any further additional attempts are allowed.

What will be required to gain an additional attempt if I have already had six or more attempts?

Candidates applying for further attempts beyond six at any part of the MRCP(UK) and specialty examinations will be required to submit a form signed by their educational supervisor* and training programme director* (or equivalents) confirming that sufficient educational progress has been made to merit a subsequent attempt.

The process is intended to place the responsibility on candidates to discuss their past and subsequent examination attempts with their educational supervisor, to locate areas of persistent weakness and produce and implement an educational plan designed to target these weak areas with a view to enabling the candidate to pass. The nature of the educational activities will depend on the educational needs of the applicant and would likely contain a mix of private study, in service training, and more formal teaching.

Candidates are advised to read guidance published on the MRCP(UK) website about when to take exams, which encourages candidates to discuss decisions about when to take the exams with their educational supervisor.

* The definition of an Educational Supervisor is 'A trainer who is selected and appropriately trained to be responsible for the overall supervision and management of a specified trainee's educational progress during a training placement or series of placements.' This person, together with the candidate, should review the candidate's previous attempt(s), discuss areas for improvement, and agree appropriate additional learning. If the candidate is not attached to any such trainer, their application can be

supported by a consultant (or equivalent) as long as the consultant was part of the process of review and agreement for additional learning.

* A Training Programme Director may be a UK specific term and the following definition is provided to help international candidates find a suitable equivalent: 'A Training Programme Director has responsibility for managing specialty training programmes. They take into account the collective needs of the trainees in the programme and provide support for educational supervisors. They contribute to the annual assessment outcome process in the Specialty and ensure that there is a policy for careers management which covers the needs of all trainees in their specialty programmes and posts'. In absence of an official Training Programme Director it could be a senior medic within the employing hospital who has a role in training and therefore would have an understanding of MRCP and the standards required. This is likely, in the UK, to be someone with the role of Director of Medical Education/Director of postgraduate education/Postgraduate tutor or similar.

What happens to candidates who will be nearing the end of their eligibility period by January 2014?

All candidates will still be subject to the 7 year eligibility rule. From January 2014 candidates on more than six attempts will not be permitted to sit without providing evidence of additional educational experience, even if they are within the 7 year eligibility period.

If a candidate has not completed the MRCP(UK) qualification within 7 years they will return to the Part 1 written examination and start a new 7 year eligibility period. Please note however that all previous attempts at the exams will count.

As per our regulations candidates will not be eligible for any extension to their eligibility period on the grounds that they no longer have time left within their 7-year period of eligibility to pass the PACES or Part 2 Examination. If however, exceptional circumstances prevents you from sitting the exam you should contact the MRCP(UK) Central Office in writing, detailing your situation and providing documentary evidence where applicable. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.