

MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical Examination (PACES) – December 2015 Standard Setting Exercise

The MRCP(UK) PACES Standard Setting Group met in December 2015 to consider whether the pass mark (achieving the pass standard for all seven skills and a minimum overall score of 130) was still appropriate. The standard setting exercise was carried out by eight experienced examiners, with contributions from two trainee representatives and two lay representatives. The session was led by Professor Chris McManus and Dr Katherine Woolf, MRCP(UK) Educational Advisers, with assistance from MRCP(UK) Central Office staff. The discussion and decisions are summarised below:

- The group maintained the methodology that had been adopted in the 2008 Glasgow and 2009 London meetings. The group considered acceptable pass rate ranges and agreed that this would be 59 – 73%. This was compared to actual pass rates for various groups of candidates.
- The highest and lowest acceptable pass marks for each skill were considered. Estimates of pass marks were found for each skill using a modified Angoff method. These were then used by pairs of examiners to look at the impact of the estimates upon the likely performance of candidates.
- All of the suggested pass marks of the four pairs were reviewed to reach a consensus on the final recommended pass marks. The discussion covered a range of topics that had arisen during the review, including: retention of the minimum overall score, the use of odd marks in the pass standard, the international dimension, whether the pass rate was rising, and the impact of changing the pass mark for Skill B.
- The group made the following recommendations:
 - Increasing the pass mark for Skill A (Physical Examination Skills) by two marks from 14 to 16;
 - Increasing the pass marks by one mark for Skills C (Clinical Communication Skills) from 10 to 11, D (Differential Diagnosis) from 16 to 17, and E (Clinical Judgement) from 18 to 19;
 - No change to the pass marks for Skills B (Identifying Physical Signs), F (Managing Patients' Concerns) and G (Maintaining Patient Welfare);
 - Retaining the requirement to achieve an overall minimum score of 130.
- A test was performed, applying the new proposed pass standard to all candidate results from the assessment periods 2013/3 to 2015/2 ; this resulted in a decrease in the pass rates for UK medical graduates on their first attempts from 69 to 66% and for international candidates from 36.2 to 31.9%.
- The recommendations were considered at the January 2016 meeting of the Academic, Quality Management and Research Committee. It was agreed that the appropriate processes had been followed and that the recommendations to change the pass marks were approved. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to investigate the effects on specific groups of candidates. The impact assessment has demonstrated that no groups will be more significantly disadvantaged than others.

MRCP(UK)
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