

MRCP(UK) Code of Conduct for PACES Examiners

MRCP(UK) relies on the professionalism and commitment of a large number of Fellows of the three Royal Colleges of Physicians to deliver the MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical Examination (PACES).

To maintain the quality of the examination, MRCP(UK) monitors all aspects of the examination, including the appointment and performance of examiners, and their compliance with relevant equality and diversity legislation.

PACES examiners are expected to follow the code of conduct. It provides a framework against which allegations of misconduct will be judged. In the event of any allegation of misconduct MRCP(UK) will undertake an investigation governed by the principles given in the MRCP(UK) PACES Examiner Misconduct Policy.

1. General standard of behaviour

- 1.1. Examiners are expected to behave in a professional manner, befitting a Fellow of one of the Royal Colleges, whilst undertaking all duties associated with the examination. Adherence to the principles and values within GMC's Good Medical Practice¹ is expected at all times.

2. Interacting with candidates

- 2.1. MRCP(UK) expects all examiners to behave in a way that is non-discriminatory in terms of attitudes, activities, assumptions and beliefs.
- 2.2. Some candidates will have sat before and be familiar with how the cycle should be run; others will have no previous experience. Some will be very nervous and examiners should do all they can to help them to relax.
- 2.3. The role of the examiner is to provide a consistent approach to the candidate's encounter with a patient and to the subsequent questioning, in a manner that helps candidates to show what they can do and what they know. The examiner's manner and tone should be tailored accordingly.
- 2.4. Examiners should allow the candidate to complete their clinical examination without interruption or direction, unless it is evident that the candidate needs guidance on how to proceed, or they are causing the patient discomfort.
- 2.5. One examiner should lead the assessment of the candidate. If that examiner concludes their questioning, they should ask their co-examiner to ask any further questions. The second examiner should not normally ask questions of the candidate without the invitation of the lead examiner.
- 2.6. Examiners should not make any remark to the candidate about their ongoing performance, irrespective of whether the performance is judged to be good or bad.
- 2.7. Examiners should not discuss any aspect of the examination or a candidate's performance with a candidate at any point during or after the PACES examination, unless they are appointed by their parent college to provide formal feedback or counselling.

- 2.8. Examiners should avoid teaching or coaching candidates during their assessment.
- 2.9. Examiners should avoid making any physical contact with the candidate, for example, to guide them from one patient to another.
- 2.10. PACES examination candidates are drawn from across the world, and therefore may not be familiar with local customs and practice in the centre at which they sit the examination. Examiners should all be sensitive to this fact and should provide guidance to candidates on how they should approach patients if any specific cultural beliefs about which they may not be aware apply.

3. Interacting with patients

- 3.1. Examiners should maintain an awareness of patient comfort and safety at all times.
- 3.2. If a patient is for any reason uncomfortable about participating in the examination, either before the cycle starts or during the cycle, examiners should facilitate the withdrawal of that patient.
- 3.3. The dignity and modesty of all patients must be respected at all times. Examiners should ensure that the degree of exposure of a patient is acceptable to the patient and is maintained throughout the cycle.
- 3.4. Examiners should be aware of the impact of discussions regarding a patient on that patient. Ideally, candidate questioning should take place out of the earshot of the patient, and if this is not possible examiners should ensure that any information discussed is clarified for the patient, particularly when erroneous information has been stated by a candidate.
- 3.5. Examiners should ensure that anyone in contact with the patient observes the appropriate hygiene protocols, specifically regarding hand washing.

4. Interacting with colleagues

- 4.1. Examiners are expected to act with respect for fellow examiners, clinicians and others within the team running the examination.
- 4.2. If an examiner has any concern about the conduct or performance of a fellow examiner this should be brought to the attention of the examiner in question, or, confidentially, to the host or the Chair of Examiners on the day, or the Senior Examiner of the hosting college.

5. Handling personal and sensitive data

- 5.1. Examiners are reminded to maintain strict confidentiality and avoid divulging the identity of patients and scenarios to be used in the examination, provisional results, candidate performance or any other information relating to a candidate to any third party who does not have a right to such information.
 - 5.1.1. **Patients** – When arranging for patients to participate in the examination, examiners must ensure that explicit consent is given by the patient, and reduce the use of identifiable information to the minimum required to run the examination. The host examiner is responsible for ensuring that any clinicians helping to run the examination also follow these guidelines.
 - 5.1.2. **Candidates** – Examiners are expected to maintain the confidentiality of candidate results. They should not engage in any conversation with candidates, or any others outside the examiner group

present on the day of the examination, relating to performance in the examination. This includes general indications of performance, as well as specific marks and grades.

- 5.1.3. **Examination material** – Examiners are expected to ensure the security of all scenarios, introductors and patient information before and after the examination.

6. Completion of Marksheets

- 6.1. Candidates are entitled to request copies of their marksheets. Comments on the marksheets should, therefore, be legible, accurate and phrased in a professional manner. A useful guideline is that no comments should be made on the marksheets that the examiner would not be prepared to make to the candidate in person.

7. Participation in commercial activities

- 7.1. It is not acceptable for MRCP(UK) examiners to take part in commercially run (i.e. for profit) training courses. If a non-examiner takes part in such courses and is invited subsequently to become an examiner, it is on the understanding that such activity will cease.
- 7.2. It is not acceptable for examiners to write or contribute to non-college books or other materials, such as CD-ROMs, or to re-edit or revise existing texts or other publications whose specific purpose is to help candidates prepare for any or all parts of the MRCP(UK) examination.

8. Copyright and use of materials

- 8.1. The Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK assumes the copyright of all materials prepared for any part of the MRCP(UK) examination. This includes scenarios for PACES. Examiners, therefore, must assure the Federation that, to the best of their knowledge, any material they prepare for use in the MRCP(UK) examination has not been published previously, and is not the intellectual property of anyone else.
- 8.2. Examiners must agree not to publish, independently of the Federation, any material which they have prepared for, or reviewed, in connection with the MRCP(UK) examination.
- 8.3. Examiners must not use scenarios from the PACES examination within their own training courses. The exception to this is a small selection of Station 2 and 4 scenarios, which have recently been 'retired' from active use in the examination. These have been deemed suitable for use for training purposes and are available on request from MRCP(UK) Central Office.

9. GMC reporting

- 9.1. Examiners should promptly inform the Senior Examiner of their college if any limitations on practice are placed on them by the GMC (or the equivalent in the country in which they practice).

10. Appeals and Complaints

- 10.1. MRCP(UK) receives appeals against examination results from candidates, and complaints against examiners. MRCP(UK) is committed to investigating any such cases in a fair and transparent manner in line with the MRCP(UK) Examination Appeal Regulations and MRCP(UK) Examination Complaint Procedures (see www.mrcpuk.org/regulations).
- 10.2. It is often necessary to approach examiners for comment on appeals and complaints, and examiners are expected to respond to any such approaches in an open and timely manner.