

## MRCP(UK) Regulations for Specialty Certificate Examination candidates

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These regulations apply to the Specialty Certificate Examinations from 1 January 2018.

The Specialty Certificate Examinations will continue to change to reflect developments in medicine, GMC requirements and Equality and Diversity legislation - candidates should refer to the Specialty Certificate Examinations section of the MRCP(UK) website (<http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations>) for the most up-to-date information, and examination regulations.

By submitting an application for the examination, candidates are confirming that they have read and understood, and will abide by, these regulations, and the guidance on the MRCP(UK) website.

MRCP(UK)  
11 St Andrews Place  
Regent's Park London  
NW1 4LE  
[www.mrcpuk.org](http://www.mrcpuk.org)

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## 1. The Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK

The three Royal Colleges of Physicians are:

### **Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh**

9 Queen Street  
Edinburgh EH2 1JQ  
Tel: +44 (0)131 225 7324  
<http://www.rcpe.ac.uk>

### **Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow**

232-242 St Vincent Street  
Glasgow G2 5RJ  
Tel: +44 (0)141 221 6072  
<http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk>

### **Royal College of Physicians of London**

11 St Andrews Place  
Regent's Park  
London NW1 4LE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7935 1174  
<http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk>

The Specialty Certificate Examinations are developed in partnership with the Specialist Societies. Responsibility for the organisation of the Specialty Certificate Examinations has been devolved by the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Specialist Societies to MRCP(UK) Central Office:

### **MRCP(UK) Central Office**

11 St Andrews Place  
Regent's Park  
London NW1 4LE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7935 1174  
<http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations>

The Regulations in this document apply to all candidates entering the Specialty Certificate Examinations and custodianship is delegated to MRCP(UK) Central Office.

## 2. The Specialty Certificate Examination

The Specialty Certificate Examination (SCE) is a summative test designed to assess the specialty trainee's scientific and clinical knowledge of the subject in which they have decided to specialise. It is a prerequisite for attainment of the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and strongly recommended for the attainment of the Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) in the specialties listed in section 6; and provides a professional standard against which physicians working outside the UK can measure their level of knowledge attainment. Additional detail regarding the purpose of the examination is available at: <https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations>

Questions for each Specialty Certificate Examination are set from the areas outlined in their specialty blueprint – see the individual specialty pages at: <http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations/specialties>

### 2.1 Format

The Specialty Certificate Examination is a two-paper test delivered on-screen in computer-based format (referred to as CBT). Each of the two papers is 3 hours and consists of 100 'best-of-five' questions.

### 2.2 Marking system

The Specialty Certificate Examination is criterion referenced. For details please see: <http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/about-us/research/exam-pass-marks>

The marking system for the Specialty Certificate Examinations is as follows:

- one mark (+1) is awarded for each correct answer
- no mark is deducted for an incorrect answer (i.e. there is no negative marking)
- no mark is awarded or deducted if a question is left unanswered.

A candidate not achieving the pass mark in the Specialty Certificate Examination will be deemed to have failed.

### 2.3 Entry requirements

There are no prerequisites for entry to any Specialty Certificate Examinations.

### 2.4 Limit on attempts

Candidates will automatically be permitted a maximum of six attempts at each SCE Examination (as specified by the GMC). After six attempts, a candidate will be required to undertake additional educational experience for each re-sit and submit evidence of this: <https://www.mrcpuk.org/sites/default/files/documents/Additional-attempt-form.pdf>. This evidence will need to be supported by a candidate's Educational Supervisor, and the Training Programme Director or equivalent.

The decision of the MRCP(UK) Central Office will be final when determining whether a candidate has sufficiently satisfied the requirements to enable them to undertake a further attempt.

### 2.5 Candidates with constraints on their practice

Candidates who have been erased from the GMC (or equivalent body) register for reasons related to fitness to practise are not permitted entry to the Specialty Certificate Examination.

Candidates who are suspended from practice by the GMC (or equivalent body) are not permitted entry to the Specialty Certificate Examination until the suspension has been lifted.

Candidates who are subject to any warnings, interim orders, undertakings or conditions on their practice from the GMC (or equivalent body) must declare this information to MRCP(UK) upon application and may be permitted to enter the examination at the discretion of the MRCP(UK) Medical Director.

Candidates should note that failure to declare conditions, warnings or suspension as required:

- at the time of application,
- before the examination date for which they have entered

will result in penalties being applied as defined in the MRCP(UK) Code of Conduct and Misconduct Regulations (see [section 3.1](#)).

Where candidates are making a declaration, the '[MRCP\(UK\) and Specialty Certificate Candidate Declaration Form](#)' must be submitted. Candidates are also required to disclose information as to why the condition or undertaking has been imposed.

The decision on whether a candidate is permitted to take the examination will normally be communicated to candidates within two weeks from the date the information was received.

## **2.6 Applying to sit the examination**

Applications can only be [made online](#). Candidates are not permitted to apply for any examination using a third party organisation, such as a travel agent.

Late entries cannot be accepted.

### **2.6.1 Applying to UK centres**

The Specialty Certificate Examinations are held in various [centres across the UK](#). Candidates may schedule themselves to sit the Specialty Certificate Examination at any centre with availability during the booking window that opens approximately one month after the application period opens.

Pearson VUE advises that the earlier a candidate books their test once the booking window is open, the greater the chance of their preferred centre being available. Any candidate who has not booked their test centre once the booking window has closed will automatically be allocated to the nearest available test centre to the correspondence address in their online account.

### **2.6.2 Applying to international centres**

Candidates are given a choice of regions from which to select, and are then asked to nominate a particular city in that region as the desired location for their test. MRCP(UK) will pass this request to Pearson VUE once the application period has closed, and Pearson VUE will confirm final test centre details to candidates via email at least three weeks before the date of the examination.

## **2.7 Transferring between UK centres**

A request must be made in writing to MRCP(UK) Central Office – the ability to accommodate a transfer request cannot be guaranteed.

Candidates may request a transfer between or to a UK test centre up to four weeks before the examination date.

## 2.8 Transferring between international centres

A request must be made in writing to MRCP(UK) Central Office – the ability to accommodate a transfer request cannot be guaranteed.

Candidates may request a transfer between international test centres up to two weeks after the closing date of the international application period.

## 2.9 Payments

Details of the current fees are published on the MRCP(UK) website: <http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations/exam-dates-and-fees>

Once a candidate has pressed the *Finish* button on the final step of the online application system, they are considered as having made their application. **Candidates are then liable for the full examination fee, irrespective of whether the application is complete (e.g. whether the payment has been made or not).** It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that their application is completed by the required deadline, which will be communicated to candidates after receipt of the application.

Candidates transferring fees from outside the UK should remember that banks deduct their charges from the sum being transferred. The Royal College of Physicians must receive the full Specialty Certificate Examination fee in pounds sterling, so candidates must themselves pay the bank charges.

## 2.10 Visas

If a candidate requires a visa to sit an examination, it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the visa application is made in sufficient time before the examination date for which it has been sought. A refund will not be given if a candidate is unable to attend the Specialty Certificate Examination as a result of visa-related problems. For more information on accessing the visa application statement, please visit the MRCP(UK) website: <http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/international/visa-information>

## 2.11 Names

Candidates **will not** be admitted into the examination unless they produce appropriate identification.

### 2.11.1 Name discrepancies and name changes

The name on the identification document must match EXACTLY the name the candidate provided when registering for the examination.

If a candidate has changed their name (e.g. through marriage or deed poll) or there are any name discrepancies; for example, if the records of the MRCP(UK) Central Office show the name as Alan Smith and a candidate's ID shows the name as Alan John Smith, the candidate must contact MRCP(UK) Central Office at least five working days in advance of the examination.

It is a candidate's responsibility to ensure that they notify MRCP(UK) Central Office of any name discrepancies in good time before the examination date. We cannot guarantee that any name discrepancies sent two working days before the date of the examination will be passed on to the candidate's test centre. Test centres **will not** accept evidence of the original marriage certificate on the day of the examination.

### 2.11.2 No ID, No entry policy

Candidates should bring the MRCP(UK) issued admission document to the examination along with their ID.

Candidates will not be permitted to sit the examination if identification provided is not in date.

Candidates will not be permitted to sit the examination unless they produce suitable identification. Candidates whose name on their ID does not match the name provided when registering will be denied access to the examination and will not be eligible for a refund.

Admission to the Specialty Certificate Examination test room will be at the discretion of the invigilator(s) and the decision made by the test centre manager is final. The Royal Colleges of Physicians and Pearson VUE observe sensitivity in the visual identification of candidates, but advance notice of any anticipated difficulties should be given by candidates.

Candidates must present two forms of identification – one primary and one secondary from Table One:

**Table One**

Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A currently valid signed passport of any country containing the candidate's photograph and signature (see note*).</li><li>• State ID card issued by the country in which the examination will be sat.</li><li>• A currently valid signed UK photocard driving licence (full or provisional).</li></ul>
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any ID containing the candidate's full name and signature e.g. credit or debit card.</li></ul>

\*A passport can be accepted as a primary form of ID for a candidate even if it does not have a signature, as long as it is determined to be valid and there is no designated place for a signature (e.g. biometric passport).

## **2.12 Submission of documentary evidence**

Candidates, particularly those based outside the UK, are advised to provide authenticated copies of any original documentation or provide scanned copies of documentation by email. MRCP(UK) reserves the right to request to see original documents if there is any doubt about documentation provided.

## **2.13 Re-entry candidates**

Candidates who wish to re-sit a Specialty Certificate Examination should re-apply online, using their original RCP code.

Under no circumstances should a candidate create more than one online account or register for the same examination more than once using a duplicate online account. Creating a duplicate account may result in a delay to your application for the examination and you may incur additional fees of 10% of the examination fee for each account created.

If candidates have difficulty creating an online account or are concerned about their application, they should contact MRCP(UK) Central Office.

It is the candidate's responsibility to provide full and accurate contact details (e-mail address and telephone) at the time of registration, and to ensure that any change is notified to MRCP(UK) as soon as possible.

The giving of false information on the application form for any part of the examination will be regarded as an act of suspected misconduct and be investigated accordingly.

## **2.14 Request for reasonable adjustments**

Any candidate who has a physical disability, specific learning difficulty or any other condition that they believe would disadvantage them compared with other candidates in an examination, may be entitled to reasonable adjustments.

It is the candidate's responsibility to notify MRCP(UK) of any reasonable adjustment request in writing at the time of application, and provide supporting evidence in line with the MRCP(UK) Reasonable Adjustment policy. Full details are provided in the Reasonable Adjustments Procedure available on the MRCP(UK) website (<https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/regulations>).

Candidates should not assume that previously agreed reasonable adjustments will be carried forward to a future examination and MRCP(UK) should be notified of any request at each examination attempt.

If the requested adjustments cannot be implemented, the candidate may either withdraw from the examination or proceed without special arrangements.

Candidates who qualify for reasonable adjustments may not always be able to sit in the location of their choice.

Special arrangements purely for candidate convenience cannot always be made; candidate convenience includes provision for night shifts, courses, seminars and any other clinical commitments.

## **2.15 Cancellation**

On very rare occasions, it may be necessary for MRCP(UK) to cancel an examination. In these circumstances, MRCP(UK) will refund the examination fee of any candidate allocated to the affected examination centre(s), and change the status of each affected candidate to 'withdrawn'.

Unfortunately, MRCP(UK) cannot be responsible for any expenses (such as travel or accommodation) incurred by a candidate in the event of a cancellation.

A cancelled examination will not count as one of the candidate's six attempts allowed for an examination (see [section 2.4](#)).

## **2.16 Absence**

Candidates who do not attend the examination, without notifying MRCP(UK) Central Office, or who do not complete both papers on the same day, will be recorded as absent.

Absence will count as an attempt at the examination.

Except as provided in section 2.17 of these regulations, examination fees are non-refundable.

## **2.17 Withdrawal from the Specialty Certificate Examination and refund of fees**

Notice of withdrawal from the Specialty Certificate Examination must be given in writing (by email) to MRCP(UK) Central Office. Candidates are asked to give their RCP code number, full name and the specialty to which they have applied in their withdrawal notice to allow Central Office staff to identify candidates easily.

Specialty Certificate Examination applications and/or fees cannot be transferred from one examination to another.

Candidates whose withdrawal request is received on or before the closing date of the Specialty Certificate Examination will be refunded 90% of the Specialty Certificate Examination fee paid (10% of the fee is retained as an administrative charge).

For withdrawals from an international centre, these must be received by the close of the international application period to be eligible for an automatic refund.

Where possible refunds will be paid in the same way as the original payment was made.

Refunds will not be made where candidates submit their withdrawal request after the closing date, unless there are circumstances deemed exceptional that can be substantiated.

This will normally only be in the following circumstances and supporting documentary evidence is required:

- illness;
- involvement in an accident;
- death of a close relative (parent, sibling, spouse, child – the candidate must prove their relationship to the relative if they do not share the same surname).

Other cases may be considered on their own merit and at the discretion of the Deputy Head of Service Operations, MRCP(UK) Central Office.

All requests must be submitted no later than four weeks after the examination date. Any request received later than this will not be considered, irrespective of the circumstances.

### 3. Attendance at, and conduct during, the Specialty Certificate Examinations

Candidates presenting themselves for the Specialty Certificate Examination must have complied fully with all admission requirements, including the payment of fees. As well as the regulations listed below, they should expect to comply with additional rules determined by the test provider (Pearson VUE).

#### 3.1 Candidate conduct

The standards of behaviour expected of those applying to and sitting the examinations are outlined in the Candidate Code of Conduct (see <https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/regulations>).

Candidates are advised to be aware that any breach of MRCP(UK) Examination Rules and Regulations will result in a misconduct investigation and the possibility of severe penalties, including exclusion from further examinations and reporting to the UK General Medical Council (or equivalent).

MRCP(UK) uses various methods to identify candidates who attempt to copy, collude or perform some other act that may be regarded as academic misconduct in Specialty Certificate Examinations. These include CCTV footage, candidate keystroke analysis, and the Anomaly Monitoring System (AMS) that seeks to detect instances of copying or collusion by looking for anomalous patterns of responses by candidates. If a pair (or group) of candidates is identified as having a higher proportion of similar answers than would be expected by chance alone, then a further investigation is carried out looking at the centres where the candidates sat, the seating plan, and any other information that may have been provided by the invigilators and staff administering the examination. Should it be determined that there is sufficient evidence of possible misconduct, then the candidate(s) concerned will be contacted and the formal MRCP(UK) Misconduct Regulations may be invoked (see <https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/regulations>).

MRCP(UK) is fully aware that candidates could be implicated in an act of academic misconduct through the conduct of others. In order to avoid such allegations being levied where there is no evidence confirming which of the candidates is the guilty party, both candidates will be informed that they have been identified by the program and will be required to sit separately from other candidates in future. There will be no assumption of guilt in making this request; it is simply a pre-emptive measure.

#### 3.2 Attending the Specialty Certificate Examination

Any infringement of the following rules and regulations may be reported to MRCP(UK) for consideration in accordance with the MRCP(UK) Code of Conduct and Misconduct Regulations.

Candidates are advised to allow for any transport delays when planning their time of arrival at the examination venues as, for security reasons, candidates will not be permitted to enter the test room after the start of the Specialty Certificate Examination. If a candidate is not permitted to enter the test room because they arrive late, the candidate will be considered absent and no refund will be issued (except in circumstances as listed above in section 2.17). Candidates are also advised not to make travel plans that could be jeopardised if the Specialty Certificate Examination starts late or is interrupted.

Candidates must arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the Specialty Certificate Examination and must not enter the test room until instructed by the invigilator(s).

##### 3.2.1 In the test centre

- (1)** Candidates must not bring into the test room any papers, bags, calculators, mobile phones, pagers, (or any electronic audio or communication device), textbooks or documents, food or drink of any kind, or items other than those specifically allowed for that particular Specialty Certificate Examination and previously notified to them.
- (2)** The possession of calculators, mobile phones, pagers, 'smart' watches, or any other such devices that are

audible, make calculations, store information or can be used for communication in the Specialty Certificate Examination is strictly forbidden. Any unauthorised material will be confiscated and a report detailing the incident and identifying the candidate will be submitted to MRCP(UK) Central Office.

**(3)** Electronic items must be deactivated and placed in lockers along with any personal items. Where test centres do not have secure areas to store personal items, any coats, bags or other item(s) brought into the test room should be deposited as directed by the invigilator(s).

**(4)** Test centres will make a wipe-clean board and pen available for each candidate.

**(5)** With prior approval (via submission of a request for reasonable adjustments), candidates may bring into the test centre aids that will enable them to remedy a disability e.g. of sight and/or hearing.

**(6)** If a candidate has unwittingly brought any unauthorised paper or item into the test room, this should be handed to the invigilator(s) before the Specialty Certificate Examination starts or at the earliest possible opportunity thereafter.

**(7)** Candidates must comply with all instructions given to them by invigilator(s).

**(8)** While in the test room, a candidate must not attempt to read the work of any other candidate or communicate in any way with any other candidate or any other person without the express permission of the invigilator.

**(9)** Candidates have a responsibility to help safeguard the security of the examination and their own work. Candidates should make efforts to ensure their work cannot be seen by another candidate, particularly if leaving the test room temporarily to visit the toilet. Candidates have a duty to report (to an invigilator or MRCP(UK) Central Office) any concerns they have that another candidate was attempting to read their work, or any other instances of possible misconduct they see.

**(10)** Where an invigilator suspects a candidate or candidates of infringing Specialty Certificate Examination Regulations/test room rules he/she shall:

- Wherever possible alert another invigilator to the suspected misconduct so that they may act as witness if subsequently required;
- Discreetly speak to the candidate(s) involved, making clear what is causing concern, and reminding them of the relevant regulations and instructions;
- Confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate(s);
- Record details of the alleged infringement;
- Allow the candidate(s) in question to continue the Specialty Certificate Examination;
- Inform the candidate(s) in question at the end of the Specialty Certificate Examination that a written report of the incident will be submitted to MRCP(UK) Central Office;
- Arrange for details of the incident to be recorded, including details of any witnesses and any confiscated materials, and ensure these are sent to MRCP(UK) Central Office.

Any invigilator or examiner present is empowered to refuse to allow a candidate to continue with the Specialty Certificate Examination on grounds of misconduct. Ejection from the test centre should normally take place only in the event of a candidate's conduct causing disruption to other candidates.

**(11)** Candidates who wish to attract the attention of the invigilator(s) during the Specialty Certificate Examination should do so by raising a hand.

**(12)** Candidates should bring to the attention of the invigilator any factor (e.g. distracting noise) that is adversely affecting them during the Specialty Certificate Examination. Where necessary they should communicate the same in writing to the MRCP(UK) Central Office immediately following the Specialty Certificate Examination concerned.

**(13)** Once admitted to each part of the Specialty Certificate Examination, candidates must stay for the full duration of each paper. Candidates may **not** leave the test room as a result of finishing the Specialty Certificate Examination paper early. Those who attempt to do so will have their examination attempt annulled, and may be investigated under MRCP(UK) Misconduct Regulations.

**(14)** Candidates must not leave the test room temporarily, during the period of the Specialty Certificate Examination, unless given express permission by the invigilator(s) to do so. If such permission is given, they must be accompanied by an invigilator and must not attempt to contact any other person or consult any material relating to the Specialty Certificate Examination while outside the test room. They should report to the invigilator(s) on returning to the test room.

**(15)** There is a scheduled break, usually of 1 hour, between papers 1 and 2. Candidates will be permitted to leave the test centre during this period. Candidates returning late to the test centre after this scheduled break will not be re-admitted to the test room; they will be marked as absent for the full examination and an incident report will be submitted to MRCP(UK). The candidates' report time for paper 2 will not alter, even if paper 1 ends after the scheduled time stated.

**(16)** Candidates should not remove from the test room any materials. Questions, or any part of them, must not be copied or removed from the test room. All Specialty Certificate Examination questions are confidential and are under the copyright of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. A candidate may not communicate any question or part of a question to any other person or organisation. To do so would be a serious breach of copyright and of the MRCP Code of Conduct and Misconduct Regulations.

**(17)** When authorised to do so by the invigilator(s), candidates should leave the test room in an orderly manner.

Candidates should note that if any information comes to light at a later stage that indicates that Specialty Certificate Examination Regulations have been breached, the Royal College of Physicians reserves the right to invoke the Misconduct Regulations retrospectively.

### **3.3 Circumstances affecting results**

In the event of a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination, or exceptional circumstances that adversely affected a candidate's performance, candidates should inform the MRCP(UK) as soon as possible after the examination by submitting an appeal. Details of the process and grounds for appeal can be found at:

<https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/results/appeals>

## 4. Additional regulations and procedures

Details of other MRCP(UK) regulations for candidates are available on the MRCP(UK) website at <http://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/regulations>. These are:

- Examination Appeals Regulations
- Examination Complaint Procedure
- Reasonable Adjustments Procedure
- Code of Conduct
- Misconduct Regulations

## 5. Language requirements

The Specialty Certificate Examination is conducted in English.

Candidates are advised that in order to be sufficiently prepared to sit the Specialty Certificate Examination, their English language ability should be equivalent to International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Level 7.5. However, candidates do not need to have taken IELTS, or any other language examination, to sit the Specialty Certificate Examination.

The Specialty Certificate Examination cannot be used to demonstrate competence in the English language.

## 6. Specialties involved in Specialty Certificate Examinations

Ten specialties currently have Specialty Certificate Examinations:

Acute medicine  
Dermatology  
Endocrinology and Diabetes  
Geriatric medicine  
Medical oncology  
Nephrology  
Neurology  
Palliative medicine  
Respiratory medicine  
Rheumatology

Compiled by MRCP(UK) on behalf of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of UK  
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