

# **Regulations for the Intercollegiate Membership Examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain**

**(From September 2008 - dated July 2008)**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Intercollegiate MRCS examination has been revised to make it appropriate for the new curriculum and the pattern of surgical training introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) from August 2007. This revision is implemented within the UK for first examination in September 2008.
- 1.2 The examination syllabus and the format and content of this revised examination are common to all three colleges in the UK. (i.e. The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, The Royal College of Surgeons of England and The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.)
- 1.3 Candidates can enter any part of the examination through any college, but may enter with only one college at each sitting. Any candidate who has entered an examination with more than one of the three colleges at the same sitting will forfeit the fee for each additional application.
- 1.4 Upon successful completion of all parts of the examination, candidates will be eligible for election as Members of the College at which they have applied for Part B of the examination, irrespective of where the examination is held; some diets may be held in rotation at different College locations depending upon candidate numbers. See paragraph 14 for details.

Note: The Intercollegiate MRCS Examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008) will continue to be offered in the UK, to existing candidates only, until Oct/Nov 2010: see the end date notice at [www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk/old/announcements.html](http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk/old/announcements.html). However, it will continue to be offered to existing and new candidates outside the UK until further notice. See paragraph 13 of these regulations for further information.

## **2. The Examination**

With effect from September 2008, the Intercollegiate MRCS examination, under these regulations, comprises two Parts as follows:

- 2.1 Part A Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ)

2.1.1 Part A is a four hour MCQ examination consisting of two papers, each of two hours' duration, taken on the same day.

2.1.2 The marks for both papers are combined to give a total mark for Part A.

2.1.3 The papers sat at each of the colleges at any particular sitting are identical and are held almost simultaneously.

2.1.4 The papers cover generic surgical sciences and applied knowledge, including the core knowledge required in all nine specialties as follows:

Paper 1 - Applied Basic Sciences MCQ paper  
- comprising Single Best Answer Questions

Paper 2 - Principles of Surgery-in-General MCQ paper  
- comprising Extended Matching Questions.

2.1.5 To achieve a pass in Part A the candidate will be required to demonstrate a minimum level of competence in each of the two papers in addition to achieving or exceeding the pass mark set for the combined total mark for Part A.

## 2.2 Part B Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

2.2.1 Part B consists of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

2.2.2 The OSCE will normally consist of sixteen examined stations each of nine minutes' duration in the following areas:

1. Anatomy and surgical pathology
2. Surgical skills and patient safety
3. Communication skills
4. Applied surgical science and critical care
5. Clinical skills in history taking and physical examination.

2.2.3 There will, in addition, normally be four rest or preparation stations.

2.2.4 A number of the stations will be examined in a specialty context. Candidates must specify their choice of specialty context stations at the time of their application.

2.2.5 To facilitate the assessment of non-verbal communication skills and interaction with the examiner and patient (or actor in the role of the patient as the case may be), the colleges reserve the right to

require candidates for the Part B (OSCE) to remove any clothing and/or other item which covers all, or part of, the candidate's face.

2.3 All parts of the examination will be conducted in English.

### **3. Entry to the Examination - Eligibility**

3.1. The Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain under these regulations will be held in the UK by each college up to three times each year commencing with the diet held in September 2008. It will not be held by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

3.2 To enter the examination, a candidate **must** possess a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for Full or Provisional Registration or to the Medical Council in Ireland for Full or Temporary Registration; overseas candidates must hold a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the colleges. Prospective candidates who wish to check the acceptability of their medical degrees should see the International Medical Education Directory (IMED) on <http://imed.ecfmg.org/search.asp>. If the medical school does not appear on this list, candidates should contact the examinations department/section at the college to which they wish to apply for the examination for further clarification. Candidates who have previously entered Part A with one college and then apply to a different college will also have to supply full details, as set out here, to the new college.

3.3 Candidates who have passed specific part(s) of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008) may choose to take further part(s) of that examination in order to satisfy the examination requirements of the MRCS. Full details are given in the transitional arrangements at <http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk>. Any candidate who has passed Part 1 and Part 2 of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination (June 2006 Regulations, revised June 2008) and who remains within the time specified for the completion of Part 3, may choose to complete the requirements of the MRCS examination by applying to sit Part B (OSCE) of the MRCS under these regulations. Such candidates are not entitled to exemptions from stations of the Part B (OSCE). Once a candidate has sat the MRCS Part A or Part B (OSCE) under these regulations he/she may not enter for any part of the MRCS held under previous regulations.

3.4 Candidates who have passed either Part 1 or Part 2 of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008), and who remain within the time specified for the completion of Part 3, may enter for Part A

of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain under these regulations.

- 3.5 Candidates who have passed Part A of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Colleges of Great Britain (September 2007 to August 2008) but have **not** passed the structured interview component of Part B, must enter for Part B (OSCE) of the MRCS under these regulations, in order to satisfy the examination requirements of the MRCS.
- 3.6 Candidates who have passed Part A of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Colleges of Great Britain (September 2007 to August 2008) and have passed at least one component of Part B (structured interview, clinical, communication skills) of that examination have up to and including the diet of March 2009 to pass the remaining components of Part B of the MRCS examination under the September 2007 to August 2008 Regulations. Any candidate, who has not passed all components of the Part B (structured interview, clinical and communication skills) by the end of the March 2009 diet, will have no further opportunity to sit these components. In order to complete the MRCS examination, any candidate in this category must pass the Part B (OSCE) component of the MRCS offered under these regulations. Any candidate who has passed part, but not all, of the Part B (structured interview, clinical and communication skills) examination will not be entitled to any exemptions from the stations of Part B (OSCE).
- 3.7 Notwithstanding the conditions of paragraph 3.5, any candidate who has passed Part A of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Colleges of Great Britain (September 2007 to August 2008) and has passed any component of Part B (structured interview, clinical, communication skills) of that examination may, if he/she wishes, enter for the Part B (OSCE) under these July 2008 regulations with effect from the OSCE diet to be held in October 2008. Such candidates are not entitled to exemptions from stations of the Part B (OSCE).
- 3.8 The Intercollegiate MRCS examination under these regulations may be taken by those who are not in recognised training posts and who are not time-expired candidates from the MRCS under different regulations.
- 3.9 For those who are in recognised training posts, it is recommended that Part A should be taken in Specialty/Core Training Year 1 (ST/CT1) and that Part B (OSCE) should be taken in Specialty/Core Training Year 2 (ST/CT2). Candidates may, however, take the examination earlier subject to the requirements of paragraph 3.2.
- 3.10 Candidates must pass Part A before proceeding to Part B (OSCE).
- 3.11 Candidates who fail the Part B (OSCE) are not required to re-sit Part A.

- 3.12 Candidates who fail the Part B (OSCE) are required to re-sit all stations of the Part B (OSCE) in order to meet the requirements of these regulations.
- 3.13 Once a candidate has entered for the MRCS Part A or Part B (OSCE) under these regulations, he/she may not enter for any part of the MRCS held under previous regulations.

#### **4. Timing**

- 4.1. There is no limit on the number of occasions on which candidates may attempt to pass Part A of this examination. Candidates are permitted *four attempts* in which to pass the Part B (OSCE). Failure to pass the Part B (OSCE) within the permitted number of attempts will debar the candidate from applying for any component/part of the MRCS examination under these, or any other regulations.
- 4.2 The number of attempts for completion of the Part B (OSCE) cannot be increased.
- 4.3 Candidates who are “time-expired” in the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008) or the Collegiate MRCS, are not permitted to sit Part A or Part B of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain, unless they are in a Specialty/Core Training Year 1 (ST/CT1), Specialty/Core Training Year 2 (ST/CT2) or a Fixed Term Specialty Training (FTST) post at the time of sitting the examination. Those in such posts must pass Part A and Part B (OSCE) to satisfy the requirements of these regulations and may not use the exemptions stated in paragraph 3 of these regulations.
- 4.4 Any candidate who has sat the Part A MRCS under regulation 4.3, whether achieving a pass or fail, is permitted subsequently to apply for all parts of the MRCS subject to the requirements of these regulations, even although he/she may no longer be in an ST/CT or FTST post. The number of attempts for completion of the examination (as defined in paragraph 4.1) will apply to such candidates. Note: Any candidate who is permitted to apply for Part A MRCS under regulation 4.3 but who does not sit Part A at the next available diet after eligibility has been confirmed will not be permitted to apply for a subsequent diet unless he or she continues to fulfil the requirements of regulation 4.3.
- 4.5 Candidates who have attempted Part 1 and/or Part 2 and/or Part 3 of the Intercollegiate MRCS (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008), who are not time-expired, and who transfer to Part A or Part B (OSCE) of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of

Great Britain under these regulations, are subject to the limitations of paragraph 4.1.

## **5. Admission to the Examination**

- 5.1 Candidates should consult individual college websites or contact the examinations department/section of the relevant college for details of dates and venues for examinations. Details of the examinations department/section of each of the three colleges are to be found at the end of the regulations.
- 5.2 Application for entry to any part of the examination must:
- 5.2.1 be made on the appropriate (paper or electronic version) application form;
  - 5.2.2 be accompanied by the specific examination fee payment, which must be received in full by the relevant college before a candidate is entered for the examination;
  - 5.2.3 reach the examinations department/section of the appropriate college by the date specified in the examinations calendar.

Applications received after the closing date will be returned.

- 5.3 If, exceptionally, a candidate is permitted to enter the examination without first having paid the specified examination fee and fails thereafter to pay the fee, the candidate shall not be permitted to take any further part with any Surgical Royal College without payment of the outstanding fee or, if the unpaid fee relates to such a candidate's final part of the examination, the relevant college reserves the right not to mark or assess that part of the examination or not allow the candidate to proceed to Membership of the relevant college in accordance with these regulations.
- 5.4 The colleges reserve the right, regardless of eligibility to take the examination, to review applications on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances.

## **6. Proof of Identity**

- 6.1 Candidates must bring proof of identity to each examination. Proof of identity must be an official document, such as a current passport or driver's licence that includes the candidate's name, signature and photograph.
- 6.2 For the purposes of visual identification, any candidate sitting any examination may be required to remove any clothing and/or other item

which covers all, or part of, the candidate's face. The colleges will observe sensitivity in the visual identification of candidates.

## **7. Withdrawal from the Examination**

- 7.1 A candidate who withdraws in writing an application for admission to any part of the examination may be refunded the fee paid (less an administrative fee of 20% ), provided that notice of an intention to withdraw is received by the examinations department/section before the closing date by which applications are due, as shown in the examinations calendar. No refunds are normally made to candidates who withdraw after the closing date.
- 7.2 Applications for consideration of a refund on medical grounds must be accompanied by a medical certificate. Applications for consideration of a refund on compassionate grounds should be supported by the College or Clinical Tutor or the Assigned Educational Supervisor and the Head of the School of Surgery. All such applications must be submitted to the examinations department/section of the appropriate college within 14 days of the commencement of the examination.
- 7.3 For information on pregnancy and deferral see paragraph 12.
- 7.4 Candidates with special needs should advise the appropriate college at the time of application of the nature of their needs and any assistance that they require. Requests should be supported by medical evidence (an educational psychologist's report is required for requests for extra time because of dyslexia). If appropriate, details of extra time or other allowances made by other examining bodies should be given, although the colleges are not bound to follow these

## **8. Results**

- 8.1 Results will be placed on the website and sent out in the post by the examinations department/section of the college through which the candidate entered.

## **9. Feedback**

- 9.1 Candidates will receive a breakdown of their marks for both Parts of the examination. No further feedback is available.

## **10. Appeals Mechanism**

- 10.1 Any candidate who wishes to make an appeal about the conduct of his/her examination must address it to the examinations department/section of the college at which he/she took the examination within 30 days of the publication of results. Appeals will be considered which alleged maladministration or bias or impropriety of some kind, whether in the conduct or in the determination of the result of the examination. Appeals disputing the academic judgement of the examiners will not be considered. Details of the appeals process and fees charged may be obtained from the appropriate college.

## **11. Improper Conduct by Examination Candidates**

- 11.1 In the case of improper conduct of an examination candidate, as defined below, the colleges acting jointly may impose a penalty relating to the candidate's eligibility for the relevant or future examinations. Improper conduct is defined as:

11.1.1 Dishonestly obtaining or attempting to obtain entry to the examination by making false claims about eligibility for the examination, or falsifying any aspects of the entry documentation.

11.1.2 Obtaining or seeking to obtain unfair advantage during an examination, or inciting other candidates to do the same. Examples of unfair advantage are:

11.1.2.1 having on the person any material that would give advantage in an examination once the examination has commenced (this includes electronic communication devices);

11.1.2.2 communicating, or attempting to communicate, with another candidate, once the examination has commenced;

11.1.2.3 refusing to follow the instructions given by invigilators, examiners or examinations staff concerning the conduct of, and procedure for, the examination.

This list is not exhaustive.

11.1.3 Removing or attempting to remove from the examination any confidential material relating to the examination.

11.1.4 Obtaining or attempting to obtain confidential information concerning the examination from an examiner or examination official.

- 11.1.5 Passing confidential information on the content of the examination to a third party.

This list is not exhaustive.

- 11.2 If a candidate is found to have acted improperly, their name may be reported to their national authority. The colleges may also on an individual basis decide that a candidate should not be allowed to proceed further with the examination or, having passed the examination, may not be admitted to Membership according to their own statutes and regulations, in cases where serious misconduct not related to the examination is judged to make the person unfit to become a Member of the College.

## **12. Notification of Pregnancy and Deferral**

- 12.1 A deferral may be permitted to a candidate supplying an appropriate medical report which satisfies the relevant college indicating that:

12.1.1 the candidate has any pregnancy related problems or illness; and/or

12.1.2 the candidate's confinement is due shortly before or around the date of the examination; and/or

12.1.3 the candidate has sufficient discomfort for her to consider that it will have a detrimental affect on her performance.

In such circumstances, a deferral will be permitted and no further fee will be required.

- 12.2 Any candidate who does not inform the college of her pregnancy and is consequently unable to sit for that examination will not normally be allowed to defer this examination without submission of another fee.

## **13. Intercollegiate MRCS Examination – Regulations June 2006**

Subject to certain limitations on entry (please see the end date notice at <http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk/old/announcements.html>) the Intercollegiate MRCS Examination (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008), will continue to be offered in the UK until October/November 2010. It will continue to be offered outside the UK until further notice. Prospective candidates had until and including the diet held in April 2007 in which to make their *first* attempt at Part 2 of the examination in the UK. Such candidates will have until and including the oral/clinical diet to be held in October/November 2010 to pass successfully all parts of the examination. Any candidate who took the Part 2 examination for the first time in April 2007 and who has not passed all

three parts of the examination by the conclusion of the oral/clinical diet to be held in October/November 2010 will have no further opportunity to sit the examination in the UK and will be time-expired.

## **14. Eligibility for Diploma of Membership**

14.1 Candidates who have passed the Intercollegiate MRCS under these regulations may apply for Membership of one of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain providing they satisfy the criteria below. The candidate must:

14.1.1 hold a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for Full, or Provisional Registration or to the Medical Council in Ireland for Full or Temporary Registration; overseas candidates must hold a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the three colleges; (prospective candidates who wish to check the acceptability of their medical degree should check the International Medical Education Directory (IMED) on <http://imed.ecfmg.org/search.asp> . If the medical school does not appear on this list, candidates should contact the examinations department/section at the college to which they wish to apply for the examination;

14.1.2 have passed the examination requirements which may be satisfied in one of the following ways:

14.1.2.1 A pass in Part A and Part B of the Intercollegiate MRCS under these regulations.

14.1.2.2 A pass in Part 1 and Part 2 of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination (Regulations June 2006 revised June 2008), *and* a pass in Part B of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination (September 2007 to August 2008 regulations or these regulations).

14.1.2.3 A pass in Part A of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination (September 2007 to August 2008 regulations) *or* these regulations *and* a pass in Part 1 and Part 2 of the DO-HNS examination. For additional regulations governing this route to the Diploma of Membership, see Announcement to DO-HNS candidates dated July 2008.

14.1.2.4 A pass in Part 1 and Part 2 of the Intercollegiate MRCS examination (Regulations June 2006 revised June

2008), *and* a pass in Part 1 and Part 2 of the DO-HNS examination. For additional regulations governing this route to the Diploma of Membership, see Announcement to DO-HNS candidates dated July 2008.

- 14.2 Candidates should apply for membership in accordance with the laws of the College at which they have applied for Part B of the examination, (irrespective of where the examination is held), or the Part 2 of the DO-HNS examination. Some diets may be held in rotation at different College locations depending upon candidate numbers.

**NOTE: These Regulations are under continual review. It is recommended that candidates keep in regular contact with their college to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information. Any changes will be announced on the Intercollegiate website: ([www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk](http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk))**

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