

Regulations for the Intercollegiate Membership Examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland

(June 2006 Revised April 2009)

Membership of one of the surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland is open to surgeons who have passed all parts of the Intercollegiate Membership examination and meet the criteria set out below. The examination syllabus, format and content, are common to all four colleges. The examinations are held separately by each College at the same time of year in Great Britain and Ireland, but at different times overseas, with the exception of the Part 1 and Part 2, which are held at approximately the same time worldwide.

Candidates can enter any part of the examination through any College, but **may only enter with one College at each sitting. Any candidate who has entered an examination with more than one of the four Colleges at the same sitting will forfeit the fee for each additional application.** Candidates will be eligible for election as Members of the College with which they successfully complete Part 3 of the examination.

End Date of the MRCS under these Regulations in the UK

The MRCS in the UK has been re-structured to make it appropriate for the new training pattern, brought in with Modernising Medical Careers from August 2007. See <http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk> for further details.

Earlier versions of these regulations announced that candidates had until and including the diet 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.

Notwithstanding 4.2 below, 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.

In the exceptional event that an extension of period is permitted, it should be noted that the format of the examination described within these regulations will no longer be held within the UK, although it will be offered in the Republic of Ireland and in some overseas venues until further notice. Should the candidate who is permitted an extension of time choose to sit this format in the Republic of Ireland or overseas after 2010, he or she will be required to fulfil the requirements of the regulations that govern the MRCS at the time at those locations. Should the candidate who is permitted an extension of time wish to continue to sit the examination in the UK, he or she will be required to fulfil the requirements of the regulations that govern the MRCS being held in the UK at the time.

Note: Until further notice, the examination will continue to be held overseas under these regulations by all the four Surgical Colleges and in the Republic of Ireland by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

1. Eligibility for Diploma

To be eligible to obtain the Diploma of Member, all candidates **must**:

- 1.1 hold a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for **Full or Limited 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 four Colleges; (prospective candidates who wish to check the acceptability of their medical degree should check the list of medical schools on http://avicenna.ku.dk/database/who_directory/. 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);
- 1.2 have passed Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the MRCS examination; and
- 1.3 have applied for Membership and been approved by the relevant College Council. Details of the procedure for election to Membership may be obtained from individual Colleges.

Candidates should note that eligibility for entry to Higher Surgical Training in the Republic of Ireland is dependent upon possession of the Certificate of Completion of Basic Surgical Training (CCBST). To acquire the CCBST trainees will need to have passed the MRCS and to meet a number of other conditions, including successful completion of twenty four months' training in recognised posts from defined specialties and completion of mandatory courses. Full details of the CCBST are available by accessing the RCSI website found at the end of these regulations.

Note: CCBST ended in the UK in June 2007.

2. Entry to Examination

- 2.1 In order to enter the examination, all candidates **must** possess a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for Full or Limited 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 four Colleges. (See note under paragraph 1.1 above on checking eligibility of primary medical qualifications.)
- 2.2 Candidates may enter for Part 1 or 2 at any time after gaining their primary medical qualification, however they are strongly recommended to be in surgical training before entering any part of the examination.

2.3 Candidates can enter Part 3 of the examination on successful completion of Parts 1 & 2.

In view of the surgical focus of Part 3 examination candidates are strongly recommended to have at least 18 months' training in different surgical specialties before entering the Part 3 examination.

3. The Examination

The examination is in three parts:

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

Part 2 - Clinical Problem-Solving MCQ paper - comprising Extended Matching Questions

Part 3 - This part comprises three separate components, the Oral Component, the Clinical Component and the Communication Skills Component.

All parts of the examination will be conducted in English.

3.1 Parts 1 and 2 - MCQ papers

3.1.1 Parts 1 and 2 of the MRCS examination each consist of one MCQ paper:

Part 1 - Applied Basic Sciences (ABS).

Part 2 - Clinical Problem-Solving (CPS).

The paper sat at each of the Colleges at any particular sitting is identical.

3.1.2 Part 1 and Part 2 are each three hours in length.

3.1.3 Parts 1 and 2 are held up to three times a year in centres worldwide. The examinations are held almost simultaneously at all centres.

3.1.4 Each Part stands alone, candidates being awarded either a "pass" or a "fail".

3.1.5 Candidates may enter Part 1 and Part 2 in any order. Both parts may be entered at any time after gaining an acceptable primary medical qualification (see paragraph 1.1 above). However, candidates are recommended to undergo one year's surgical training before entering and to sit Part 1 before Part 2.

3.1.6 Candidates may resit Parts 1 and 2 repeatedly. **However, candidates should note that they will have 3½ years in which to complete all parts of the examination dating from their first attempt at Part 2. This regulation applies even if they choose to sit Part 2 before Part**

1. (But see earlier note about end-dating of this examination in the UK).

3.1.7 Candidates may sit Part 1 and Part 2 with different Colleges.

3.1.8 Candidates must pass both Part 1 and Part 2 before applying to sit Part 3 of the examination.

3.2 Part 3

Part 3 of the MRCS consists of three components: the oral, the clinical and the communication skills. All components are held up to three times a year in the UK. Additional diets are held in overseas centres. Candidates must take all components with the same College.

3.2.1 The Oral Component

The oral is the first component of Part 3 of the MRCS.

3.2.1.1 The oral component is a knowledge-based part comprising three individual question and answer sessions, each lasting 20 minutes, in:

- Applied surgical anatomy & operative surgery;
- Applied physiology & critical care;
- Applied surgical pathology & principles of surgery.

3.2.1.2 Candidates will be awarded a mark in each part of the oral and a pass or fail overall in the oral component.

3.2.1.3 Candidates must pass the oral component in order to proceed to the clinical and clinical communication skills components.

3.2.1.4 Candidates who fail the oral component are not required to re-sit Part 1 and Part 2; they are only required to re-sit and pass the oral component of Part 3 before attempting the clinical and communication skills components of Part 3.

3.2.2 The Clinical Component

The clinical is the second component of Part 3 of the MRCS.

3.2.2.1 Candidates must have passed Parts 1 and 2 and the oral component before sitting the clinical component.

3.2.2.2 The clinical short cases will be organised into four 15-minute bays. The bays will require candidates to be able to diagnose, elicit physical signs from and be familiar with the treatment of patients with conditions in the following areas: trauma and orthopaedics; vascular; endocrine, breast, skin, head and neck; and trunk and groin. There are two

examiners in each bay and candidates will be awarded a mark by each examiner; all bays are equally weighted.

- 3.2.2.3 Candidates who fail the clinical component will not be required to resit the oral component or Parts 1 and 2; they will only be required to resit the clinical component.

3.2.3 The Communication Skills Component

The Communication Skills is the third component of Part 3 of the MRCS. It is held at the same time as the clinical component and does not require a separate application form (unless the candidate is re-sitting only this component).

- 3.2.3.1 Communication skills will be assessed in two bays. One bay will assess the giving of information and one will assess taking and presenting a history. The total assessment time will be 25 minutes. Candidates will be required to demonstrate the ability to provide information to, and receive information from, patients, their relatives and other healthcare professionals.

- 3.2.3.2 There are two examiners in each bay. In the Information Giving bay each examiner will award one mark. In the Information Gathering bay each examiner will award two marks, one mark for the history taking and one for the presentation of the history.

- 3.2.3.3 Candidates who fail the communication skills component but have passed the clinical component will only be required to resit the communication skills component.

4. Timing

- 4.1 Candidates must pass Parts 1 and 2 before proceeding to Part 3, and must pass the oral component before proceeding to the clinical and communication skills components.

- 4.2 After the first attempt at Part 2 (even if they take Part 2 *before* Part 1), candidates will have **3 ½ years** to complete the examination. Candidates who have not completed all parts of the MRCS within the 3½ year time limit may not take or retake any part of the examination. This timescale cannot be extended unless there are extenuating circumstances acceptable to the Colleges, such as prolonged illness, maternity leave or armed forces service. Candidates who believe that they have extenuating circumstances should apply for an extension as follows:

- 4.2.1 If the candidate has not attempted any component of Part 3, the candidate should seek the approval of the College examinations department/section at which the first attempt at Part 2 was made. This

should be done as soon as possible, with a letter of support from the College Tutor or the candidate's consultant.

- 4.2.2 If the candidate has attempted the oral component of Part 3, the candidate should seek the approval of the College examinations department/section at which the first attempt at the oral component was made. This should be done as soon as possible, with a letter of support from the College Tutor or the candidate's consultant.

5. Recommendations and Advice

- 5.1 It is recommended that candidates do not enter Part 1 until they have commenced their first year's training. They are also strongly recommended to attempt Part 1 before Part 2. (However, candidates should note that they will have 3½ years in which to complete all parts of the examination dating from their first attempt at Part 2. This regulation applies even if they choose to sit Part 2 before Part 1.)
- 5.2 It is strongly recommended that candidates seek the advice of their trainer or programme director, or equivalent, before deciding when to take any part of the examination, particularly before taking Part 2, as they will then only have 3½ years remaining in which to complete all parts of the examination.
- 5.3 It is also strongly recommended that candidates do not enter the clinical component before completing a Basic Surgical Skills course and, preferably, an Advanced Trauma Life Support®/Care of the Critically Ill Surgical Patient/Early Trauma and Critical Care course.

6. Admission to the Examination

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 four Colleges are to be found at the end of the regulations.

- 6.1 Application for entry to any part of the examination must:
- 6.1.1 be made on the appropriate (paper or electronic version) application form;
 - 6.1.2 be accompanied by the specific examination fee payment of which must be received in full by the relevant College before a candidate may enter the examination; and
 - 6.1.3 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.

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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 oral, the clinical and the communication skills components to remove any clothing and/or other item which covers all, or part of, the candidate's face.
- 6.4 Proof of Eligibility

All first-time applications for Parts 1 and/or 2 must be accompanied by a certificate confirming the holding of, or eligibility for, Full or Limited registration with the UK General Medical Council or Full or Temporary registration with the Medical Council in Ireland; candidates who do not hold such registration must submit their original certificate (or an authenticated copy) of a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges (see note under paragraph 1.1 above on checking eligibility of primary medical qualifications). Candidates who have previously entered Parts 1 and/or 2 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.

- 6.5 Candidates must bring proof of identity to each examination. Proof of identity must be an official document, such as a current passport or driving licence that includes their name, signature and a photograph.
- 6.6 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 or 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 consultant or surgical

tutor responsible for training. 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 The Colleges reserve the right, regardless of eligibility to take the examination, to review applications on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances. 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

Results will be posted on the website and sent out in the post by the examinations department/section of the College through which the candidate entered.

9. Feedback

Candidates will receive a breakdown of their marks for all parts of the examination. With effect from the June 2009 diet, the feedback for Part 3 (Oral, Clinical and Communication Skills) will comprise the mark awarded in each part of the examination together with the overall mark. The mark descriptors will appear on the MRCS website for reference at http://www.intercollegiatemrcs.org.uk/old/pdf/oral_guidance.pdf, but will not be sent to candidates with their results. No further breakdown of a candidate's performance will be available.'

10. Appeals Mechanism

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 appropriate College within 30 days of the publication of results. Appeals will be considered which allege 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 allowed. Details of the appeals process and fees charged may be obtained from the appropriate College.

11. Improper Conduct by Examination Candidates

In the case of improper conduct of an examination candidate as defined below, the four 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 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.
- 11.2 Obtaining or seeking to obtain unfair advantage during an examination, or inciting other candidates to do the same. Examples of unfair advantage are: having on the person any material that would give advantage in an examination once the examination has commenced (this includes electronic communication devices), communicating or attempting to communicate with another candidate once the examination has commenced, refusing to follow the instructions given by examiners or examinations staff concerning the conduct of and procedure for the examination. This list is not exhaustive.
- 11.3 Removing or attempting to remove from the examination any confidential material relating to the examination.
- 11.4 Obtaining or attempting to obtain confidential information concerning the examination from an examiner or examination official.
- 11.5 Passing confidential information on the content of the examination to a third party.

The list given above is not exhaustive.

- 11.6 If a candidate is found to have acted improperly his/her name may be reported to the relevant 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 candidates 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.

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

12.3 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.

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 College websites.

College Details

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