Guidance on pre cycle briefing of candidates at PACES

The chair of the examiners, or an examiner acting as a nominated deputy should brief the candidates shortly before the start of each cycle of PACES.

This can usually be done once the examiner has completed calibration or in the break between cycles.

The briefing is desirable, but is not a mandatory part of the examination. A failure to complete the briefing would not therefore constitute a procedural irregularity and would not be a valid ground for appeal.

The purpose of the briefing is to welcome the candidates to the examination, remind them of the nature of the examination, set them at ease as far as possible and thereby enable them to demonstrate their abilities effectively.

It is suggested that the following topics are covered in the briefing;

- Welcome to the venue and examination
- Currently likely nervous, but important to relax into the exam
- Avoid carrying anxiety from one station to the next – focus on task in hand
- Examiners generally are keen for candidates to pass – no trick questions
- Read the written material outside the stations carefully including the required task and plan the encounter
- Listen to the questions that the examiner asks and answer them directly (if asked for the signs give the signs, if asked for a diagnosis give the diagnosis etc)
- Avoid examining through clothes. Ensure adequate patient exposure whilst maintaining dignity
- Listen to the patients / surrogates in the communication and consultation encounters and address issues as they arise – important for Skill F Manging patient's concerns
- Sum up and agree a way forward towards the end of the Communication encounters. Important for Skill E Clinical Judgement
- Examiners personally examine the patients independently without prior knowledge of the signs or diagnosis to agree the findings and the criteria for Satisfactory marks
- Any questions

January 2025