



Regulations for Specialty Certificate and European Specialty Examination Candidates

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1. Introduction

These regulations apply to the Specialty Certificate and European Specialty Examinations.

The regulations are designed to ensure that:

- All candidates have equal and fair access to, and experience of, the examinations.
- The standard and integrity of the examination is not compromised.

These principles should be kept in mind when interpreting these regulations.

The Specialty Certificate and European Specialty 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 for the most up-to-date information, and [examination regulations](#).

Any dispute concerning the interpretation of these or any other MRCP(UK) Regulations will be referred to the Medical Director, whose decision will be final.

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.

2. The Specialty Certificate Examination

The Specialty Certificate/European Specialty Examination (SCE/ESE) is a summative assessment designed to assess a trainee's scientific and clinical knowledge of their specialty. It is a prerequisite for attainment of the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and strongly recommended for the attainment of the portfolio pathway to specialist registration (previously known as the Certificate Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR)) in the specialties listed in on the [MRCP\(UK\) website](#). The SCE provides a professional standard against which physicians working outside the UK can measure their level of knowledge. Additional detail regarding the purpose of the SCEs can be found on the [MRCP\(UK\) website](#).

Questions for each SCE are set from the areas outlined in the specialty blueprint, which is based on the relevant UK specialty curriculum. As such, candidates will be tested on their knowledge of medical practice in the UK, including NICE/SIGN guidelines. Further information can be found on the [individual specialty pages](#) of the MRCP(UK) website.

2.1 Format

The SCE is a two-paper test delivered using an in-centre Computer-Based Testing (CBT) format (unless an alternative has been agreed with MRCP(UK); further information about registering for a centre can be found on the MRCP(UK) website). Each of the two papers is three hours and consists of 100 'best-of-five' questions.

2.2 Marking system

The SCE is criterion referenced. Further details can be found on the [MRCP\(UK\) website](#).

The marking system for the SCE is as follows:

- One mark 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 SCE will be deemed to have failed.

3. Applying for the SCE

3.1 Applying for Specialty Certificate & European Specialty Examinations

Details of how to apply for examinations are available on the [MRCP\(UK\) website](#): including fees, methods of payment, application periods, and examination dates.

Application periods open at 08:00 on the advertised opening date. All applications must be received by 08:00 (GMT) on the advertised closing date; late applications will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the payment is made, and their application is completed, by the advertised deadline.

Candidates who do not complete their application will be liable for an administration charge of 10% of the relevant examination fee and will not be able to apply again until this is paid.

MRCP(UK) will endeavour to allocate candidates as close to their requested centres as possible but will not cover any additional costs incurred by candidates for travelling to examination centres.

Applications submitted via a third-party organisation or person will not be accepted.

3.2 Language requirements

The SCE/ESE is conducted in English.

Candidates are advised that in order to be sufficiently prepared to sit the SCE/ESE, 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 SCE/ESE.

The SCE/ESE cannot be used to demonstrate competence in the English language.

3.3 Limited number of attempts

Candidates are permitted a maximum of six attempts at an SCE/ESE (as required by the GMC). After six attempts, a candidate will be able to apply for an exceptional additional attempt using the process outlined on the [MRCP\(UK\) website](#). Requests must be based on undertaking additional education or training that will assist with passing and supporting evidence must be submitted. Requests for an additional attempt cannot be based on exceptional circumstances, as candidates have the right to withdraw from an examination prior to sitting. Requests will be considered by the MRCP(UK) Regulatory Sub-Group, whose decision on whether it should be granted will be final.

3.4 Candidates with constraints on their practice

Candidates who have been erased from the GMC register (or that of an equivalent international body) for reasons related to fitness to practise are not permitted entry to the SCE/ESE.

Candidates who are suspended from practice by the GMC (or equivalent international body) and/or their employer are not permitted to apply for entry to the SCE/ESE 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 international body) and/or their employer must declare this information to MRCP(UK) upon applying to any SCE/ESE, using the Specialty Certificate [Candidate Declaration Form](#). Candidates are also required to disclose information as to why the condition or undertaking has been imposed. Any information provided will be checked with GMC (or equivalent) or the candidate's employer where necessary. This will be reviewed by MRCP(UK) prior to the examination and will be taken into account in deciding whether a candidate is permitted to sit the examination. This decision on whether a candidate is permitted to take the examination will be communicated within two weeks from the date the information was received. MRCP(UK)'s decision on these matters is final.

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

- at the time of application
- prior to 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](#).

3.5 Names and Identification

Candidates will not be allowed into any SCE/ESE without appropriate identification (ID). All ID documents must be in date, and the name on the candidate's ID must EXACTLY match that on the admission document issued by MRCP(UK). This will be the name registered on MyMRCP(UK), usually your first/given name(s) followed by father's name or family name.

If the name under which a candidate is applying for the examination is different from the name that appears on their primary medical qualification or the GMC register, they will need to submit a certificate from the issuing university or an affidavit stating that the candidate (in his or her full name) is the same person as that named on the primary medical qualification or GMC register. A candidate who changes their name by marriage or deed poll must submit the original or authenticated documentary proof of this if they wish to be admitted to the examination in their new name.

Candidates must also notify MRCP(UK) if the name as it appears on the photographic identification that will be used to gain entry to the examination is different from the name that appears on their primary medical qualification.

It is the candidate's responsibility to resolve any discrepancies with MRCP(UK) before the examination. Please contact MRCP(UK) with any queries regarding name discrepancies.

Candidates are advised to provide authenticated copies of any original documentation or provide documentation by email ahead of the examination date. MRCP(UK) cannot accept responsibility for any items lost in transit.

MRCP(UK) records, and the MRCP(UK) diploma, show given names followed by the family name, for example, Alan John Smith.

3.6 Candidate Responsibilities

Prior to the examination, candidates must:

- i) Ensure that their application is complete in accordance with paragraph 3.
- ii) Provide full contact details. Candidates must ensure MRCP(UK) is notified of any change.
- iii) Read and act on any correspondence from MRCP(UK) or the relevant administrative office.
- iv) Ensure that all information provided is accurate. Providing false information at any stage will be regarded as an act of suspected misconduct and investigated accordingly.
- v) Be feeling well enough to undertake the examination. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they are physically and mentally fit to sit the examination. Should a candidate feel unwell prior to the start of the examination, they should inform an invigilator and consider withdrawing from the examination; it is possible to withdraw from the examination right up to the start time. In these circumstances, the attempt would be removed from a candidate's record, and their fees would be refunded (see below). Candidates should be aware of their responsibilities as doctors to consider any risks that their own health may pose to others, such as other candidates or invigilators.

3.7 Submission of documentary evidence

Candidates, particularly those based outside the UK, are advised to provide copies of any original documentation or 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.

3.8 Re-entry candidates

Candidates who wish to re-sit an SCE should re-apply online, using their original RCP code.

3.9 Reasonable adjustments

Candidates sitting any MRCP(UK) examination who have a disability as defined by the [Equality Act 2010](#) are entitled to request reasonable adjustments to the examination. Further information, including how to apply for an adjustment, can be found on the [Reasonable Adjustments page](#) on the MRCP(UK) website.

3.10 Withdrawal from the SCE/ESE and refund of fees

Candidates have the right to withdraw from the examination after applying. Any candidate wishing to withdraw should contact MRCP(UK) by email, providing their RCP Code Number, full name, and date of birth to assist with identification. A withdrawal will not be counted as an attempt.

Candidates can request to withdraw prior to the examination. The proportion of the fee they receive as a refund will vary depending on when they submit the request as a percentage will be retained to cover administrative costs:

1. During the application period: 90%
2. After the application period closes and more than 28 days before the examination: 60%
3. Candidates who request to withdraw within 28 days of an examination will not receive a refund (unless they provide evidence of exceptional circumstances. All requests will be reviewed individually by MRCP(UK) or college management, whose decision on whether any refund should be offered is final).

Applications cannot be reinstated after they have been withdrawn.

Requests to withdraw after the examination, along with any supporting documents, must be received within two weeks of the date of the examination. Where possible, candidates should contact MRCP(UK) or the relevant college administrative office before the examination.

4. Examination Day

4.1 General standards of behaviour

Candidates presenting themselves for the SCE/ESE must have complied fully with all admission requirements, including the payment of fees.

The standards of behaviour expected of those applying to, and sitting the examinations, are outlined in the MRCP(UK) [Candidate Code of Conduct](#). Any breach of the examination rules and regulations will result in a misconduct investigation and the possibility of severe penalties, including exclusion from future examinations and reporting to the UK General Medical Council (or equivalent national regulator).

4.2 Absence

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

Refunds will not be made where candidates are absent unless there are circumstances deemed exceptional that can be substantiated.

Absence will count as an attempt at the examination. Further information can be found on the [limit on attempts page](#) on the MRCP(UK) website.

4.3 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). A cancelled examination will not count as one of the candidate's six attempts allowed for an examination (see Limit on Attempts).

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

4.4 Attending the SCE

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 should arrive outside the examination venue at least 15 minutes before the reporting time and should not enter until instructed to do so by the invigilator(s).

Candidates will not be admitted to any paper if they arrive more than 30 minutes after the examination has started. Candidates who arrive after the scheduled start time will not be permitted any additional time to complete the paper.

Robust security checks will be conducted for all candidates to ensure that no unauthorised items (e.g., phones, watches, notes, stationery) are brought into the examination room. These may include checking or requiring candidates to show clothing (e.g., pockets, waistband, ankles) and glasses, ears, and wrists or forearms. Candidates must comply with instructions from the invigilators, including any additional checks deemed necessary, or they may not be permitted entry to the examination room. Any unauthorised items will be retained by the centre staff and returned to the candidate at the conclusion of the examination. Where it is suspected that a candidate has consciously attempted to bring such items to the examination, in breach of our regulations, the candidate will be excluded from the examination and referred for misconduct proceedings. If any unauthorised items are identified after entry to the examination room, this may result in candidates being excluded from the examination.

Where items of clothing are worn for religious reasons, these checks can be conducted in a private room by an invigilator of the same gender.

Candidates are advised to allow for any transport delays when planning their time of arrival at the examination venue as, for security reasons, we cannot guarantee that they will be permitted to enter the examination venue after the start of the examination.

It should also be noted that, on occasion, the examination start time could be delayed. Candidates are therefore advised not to make homeward travel plans that could be jeopardised if the examination starts late or is interrupted for any reason.

If a candidate is not permitted to enter the test room because they arrive late, they will be considered absent.

4.5 No ID, No Entry

Candidates should bring the MRCP(UK) issued admission document to the examination along with their ID and be ready to present this to the centre invigilator.

In accordance with paragraph 3.6, candidates will not be permitted to sit the examination unless they produce suitable valid identification, which must be in date. This will normally be a passport. Where candidates do not possess a passport, some other form of identification may be acceptable, provided that it includes both the photograph and signature of the candidate (see list of Primary ID documents below). Electronic state identity cards or proof of residency documents issued by the government of the country in which the candidate is resident will also be accepted (photographs or scans of identity documents such as passports are not permitted).

Acceptable Primary ID Documents:

- Current valid passport (containing photograph and signature)
- Full or provisional photocard driving licence
- EEA Member State identity photocard
- National identity photocard for non-EEA foreign nationals
- Identity card issued by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
- Electronic state ID card or residence document issued by the relevant authority
- Alternatively, two forms of identification, one with a photograph and the other with a signature, will be accepted (see list of Secondary ID documents).

Acceptable Secondary ID Documents:

Two forms of secondary ID will need to be shown together e.g., NHS/Hospital Identity card with a debit card; at least one of these **MUST CONTAIN** a photograph and a signature (this does not necessarily need to be in the same piece of ID):

- Valid credit or debit card
- Valid student card with photograph
- NHS/Hospital Identity card
- Paper driving licence
- Certified copy of passport or driving licence. *

*These documents must be accompanied by an official stamp or letter from the issuing organisation in order to qualify as an acceptable form of ID. Self-made photocopies will not be accepted without such official corroboration.

Additional forms of ID may be considered provided candidates contact MRCP(UK) well in advance of the examination.

Candidates should ensure that the name on their ID exactly matches the name on their admission document. Where names do not match, candidates must contact MRCP(UK) well in advance of the examination for advice.

Admission to the examination will be at the discretion of the proctor, and proctors have the right to question a candidate further if they are not satisfied with the identification that has been provided. The Royal Colleges of Physicians observe sensitivity in the visual identification of candidates, but advance notice should be given by candidates of any anticipated difficulties.

4.6 Conduct in CBT examination venues

Invigilators are present at all MRCP(UK) written examinations to ensure that regulations are enforced. Invigilators will:

- Speak to candidates if they suspect any infringement of the regulations to make clear what is causing concern and remind the candidate of the relevant rules and instructions.
- Confiscate any unauthorised material from candidates.
- Prevent candidates from continuing with examinations if they have committed misconduct. Candidates may be ejected from an examination if their conduct causes disruption.
- Compile a report for MRCP(UK) about the examination, including any incidents of suspected misconduct.

The following rules apply when sitting written examinations:

1) Candidates are only permitted to have items required for the examination on their desk, i.e., ID, and admission documents. Food and drink are permitted (this may not apply in all centres). All other personal possessions (e.g., mobile phones) should be kept in candidates' bags; candidates can bring other items if these have been permitted by MRCP(UK) as an approved reasonable adjustment. Candidates are not permitted to have devices that can make calculations, store information or be used for communication (including smart watches) on or around their desks; these must be switched off and stored with belongings.

2) If a candidate has unwittingly brought any unauthorised item into the examination hall, this should be handed to an invigilator before the examination starts or at the earliest opportunity.

3) Candidates must comply with all instructions given to them by invigilators, even if they judge the instruction to be unreasonable.

4) Candidates must not start reading or answering the examination questions until the start of the examination is announced by the invigilators. Candidates should immediately stop working when instructed to do so by the invigilators. Any candidate observed to be continuing work after the end of the examination has been announced will be reported.

5) Candidates:

- must not attempt to read the work of any other candidate or communicate in any way with any other candidate.
- should ensure that their work is not visible to other candidates if they are away from their desk at any stage.
- must report any concerns about the conduct of another candidate to an invigilator.
- must inform invigilators about any factor (e.g., noise disruption) that is adversely affecting them during the examination.
- must stay for the full duration of each paper. Candidates cannot leave the examination venue if they finish the examination paper early or they will have their attempt annulled. Candidates who have received extra time as a reasonable adjustment are entitled to leave after three hours if they have completed the examination, and do not need to stay for the additional allocated time.
- must ask permission to leave the examination hall temporarily. Candidates cannot leave the examination hall temporarily during the first 30 minutes or the final 10 minutes of either paper.

6) Candidates should not attempt to copy individual questions. All MRCP(UK) examination questions are confidential and are under the copyright of the Royal Colleges of Physicians. Information about questions should not be communicated to any person or third-party organisation during, or at any time after, the examination. Candidates should inform MRCP(UK) if they are approached or asked to divulge examination content in any form whatsoever by any person or organisation. The Colleges reserve the right to initiate civil action and/or criminal prosecution if theft of intellectual property is suspected.

4.7 Conduct in Online examinations

(i) General rules

Candidates sitting an online examination will be monitored by a remote proctor (invigilator) for the duration of both papers and must comply with any instructions given. Invigilators may speak to candidates during the examination.

Examination content must not be copied or recorded in any way. If a proctor suspects that a candidate is attempting to copy examination content they will speak to the candidate, ask them to stop any activity, and make a report of the incident to MRCP(UK).

Candidates are permitted to use blank paper for making notes (a maximum of six loose pages, i.e., not bound in a notebook).

Candidates must not switch off their webcam or screenshare feed during the examination (see paragraph 4.6 (a) (iv) below). Technical difficulties should be reported to the invigilator or using the help facility as soon as possible during the examination so support can be provided in resolving these. Candidates should report any issues encountered to MRCP(UK) after the examination.

Candidates must:

- Ensure that they are in an appropriate environment for sitting the examination with no other people present and demonstrate this to the invigilator prior to starting. If more than one candidate is sitting from the same address, candidates should inform MRCP(UK) ahead of the examination and ensure that they are sitting in different rooms.
- Accept the non-disclosure agreement prior to starting the examination.
- Complete both examination papers in the correct order on the same day or their results will not be counted.

Candidates are permitted to:

- Submit their answers and exit from the examination system if they finish before the advertised end time. They are not required to stay online for the full duration of the paper if they have completed it.
- Use devices connected to their computer to ensure uninterrupted internet connectivity during the examination. These devices should not be capable of storing information, accessing the internet, or communications and MUST be shown to the proctor during the set-up process.
- Have drinks or snack on their desks.

(ii) Breaks in online examinations

Candidates are permitted to take one break of a maximum of five minutes during each paper. They should indicate to the proctor that they are taking a break, but do not need to wait for permission to leave their desk. No additional time will be added to the examination to compensate for breaks. The proctor will record the time that the candidate leaves their desk and when they return. If a candidate takes more than one break, or a break longer than five minutes, their performance will be subject to an enhanced review of the proctoring record and analysis of their keystroke/clickstream data obtained after the examination.

Candidates who require to take longer or more frequent breaks for medical reasons should request this through the Reasonable Adjustments process. Supporting evidence will be required for such requests.

(iii) Violations

A room scan will be conducted at the start and end of the examination to ensure that the candidate's environment is appropriate. A proctor may ask a candidate to conduct a room scan during the examination if they believe that the regulations have been breached.

To prevent academic misconduct during online examinations, and to ensure that they are not interrupted by proctors, candidates are NOT permitted to:

- Look at a mobile phone, tablet, or any other device capable of communication or storing information. All such devices must be removed from the examination environment prior to starting, and this must be confirmed with the invigilator during initial checks. Candidates can use mobile phones if they need to contact MRCP(UK) in the event of encountering technical difficulties during the examination.
- Wear any of the following items (this will be checked during the registration process):
 - earplugs or headphones
 - any clothing that can be used to hide materials, i.e., hooded jumper. Items worn for religious purposes are permitted and discretion will be exercised in conducting ID checks.
 - Sunglasses (unless permitted for medical reasons) or smart glasses.
 - Watches (including smart watches).
- Switch off their webcam or screenshare feed.
- Access any web pages other than the ones required for sitting the examination. Any other web pages that candidates have open before starting the examination should be closed. Candidates can access email accounts if they need to contact MRCP(UK) in the event of encountering technical difficulties during the examination.
- Access other applications on their computer.
- Take screenshots of or copy examination content.
- Talk to anyone outside the room or attempt to communicate with anyone else sitting the examination using phones or email.
- Use multiple screens or connect the computer they are using to an external screen.
- Use a calculator.
- Have textbooks or notes in the examination environment (blank paper is permitted).
- Sit in a room that is too dark.
- Angle their laptop or camera upwards or have their face obscured.
- Vape or smoke.

If invigilators identify any of the above behaviour, they will make a record of this, and it will be reported to MRCP(UK). Candidates will also be reported if they are seen to be looking away from their screens repeatedly or looking at their hands or wrists.

Candidates are reminded that in all MRCP(UK) examinations statistical methods are used to detect anomalous candidate behaviours which may be regarded as academic dishonesty. In the online version of examinations these will be supplemented by the detailed analysis of 'click streams' so that candidates' progress through the examination can be monitored and assessed and can be compared with video and other records of candidate behaviour. Further information can be found on the MRCP(UK) website.

(iv) [Interruptions to webcam and screenshare feeds](#)

Candidates must not switch off their webcam or screenshare functions at any point while sitting the examination. If either of these functions are disabled or disrupted by technical difficulties, the proctor will record the details in the examination log, including the duration of any period of disruption during which it has not been possible to monitor the candidate. This will be reported to MRCP(UK) after the examination and reviewed as part of the regular quality assurance processes.

To ensure the integrity of the examination, all instances where a candidate has experienced significant disruption, which has prevented them from being fully monitored for more than five minutes, will be referred to the chair of the relevant examining board, who will decide

whether the candidate's results should be released. Candidates will have the right to appeal against a decision to not release their results.

5. After the examination

5.1 Candidate results

Examination results will be communicated to candidates in accordance with the timescales indicated on the MRCP(UK) website.

Candidates are not allowed to claim that they hold the Specialty Certificate Examination or use the post-nominal until they have passed the examination and fulfilled the other requirements.

MRCP(UK) reserves the right to delay the release of results for quality assurance purposes. In the event that this is necessary, candidates will be informed as far as possible in advance of the scheduled date and will be provided with an indication of the new timescale for release.

Results communicated to candidates are considered final and will only be amended in the event of an error being identified. Re-marks of written examinations are not offered. PACES results are confirmed in the post-cycle discussion on the day of the examination, and it is not possible to conduct reviews of these.

5.2 Post-nominals

All candidates who pass the SCE are entitled to use the post-nominal 'SCE (Specialty)'. This replaces the previous regulation which linked use of the post-nominal to completion of the relevant UK training programme and passing MRCP(UK).

5.3 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 MRCP(UK) as soon as possible after the examination by submitting an appeal. Details of the process and grounds for appeal can be found on the [appeals page](#) of the MRCP(UK) website.

5.4 Anomalous results

MRCP(UK) treats with the utmost seriousness its responsibility to protect patient safety and ensure that the public can have full confidence that its qualifications reflect the highest standards of UK medicine. Candidates are advised that MRCP(UK) may withhold or annul results and require a candidate (or a group of candidates) to re-take an SCE/ESE. This action will be taken if MRCP(UK) is presented with:

- sufficient evidence that the security of any part of the examination has been compromised
- statistical evidence, based on accepted psychometric procedures, which demonstrates that a candidate's results are highly unlikely to accurately reflect their performance.

MRCP(UK) reserves the right to enforce this in the absence of evidence of direct candidate involvement in any activities that may be investigated under the misconduct regulations.

Where possible candidates will be informed of any such action being taken prior to the published date for the release of results for the relevant examination.

MRCP(UK) will inform a candidate's educational supervisor, Training Programme Director, or Responsible Officer if their results are annulled under this procedure.

5.5 Missing or Incomplete Marks

In the event of a significant procedural error occurring during an examination the examination centre staff should record whether this has adversely affected the performance of a candidate or group of candidates. This should be referred to the officers of the relevant examining board after the examination has finished, and they will decide whether to treat the marks for the affected section of the examination as missing or incomplete.

Such marks will be reviewed in accordance with accepted psychometric procedures to determine the probability of a candidate passing if the procedural error had not occurred. This will be used to inform the decision of an examining board about the pass/fail status of affected candidates, and if any additional remedy is appropriate. The decision of the examining board in these instances will be final.

Candidates should note that this procedure is not part of the standard appeals process and will only be used in exceptional circumstances.