

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations (ICBSE)

Examiner Recruitment and Appointment

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1. Introduction

The Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations (ICBSE) is a committee of the Joint Surgical Colleges Meeting representing the four Surgical Royal Colleges of the United Kingdom and in Ireland. The four colleges (Edinburgh, England, Glasgow and Ireland) jointly manage the maintenance and development of the MRCS and DO-HNS examinations via the ICBSE.

Whilst each Surgical Royal College recruits, trains and reappoints their own Board of Examiners this document aims to provide a standard set of Regulations which all four Surgical Colleges will adhere to in order to ensure a standard approach in all processes relating to Examiners.

The appointment of Examiners and the size of each Surgical College's Board of Examiners are determined by the individual College. The Surgical College's Board of Examiners comprises both Surgical and Lay Examiners.

2. Application process

- 2.1. The Eligibility Criteria and Person Specification will be published on the Intercollegiate website.
- 2.2. Prospective Examiners should forward their completed application form to the Surgical College for which they wish to examine. Incomplete applications will be returned.

Requests for References will be made by the Colleges on receipt of the application form. It is essential that the Referee completes the form verifying the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and person specification. To expedite this process, the Colleges will also send the reference form to the applicant so that the applicant can also send the reference form to the referee.

3. Selection and Appointment of Examiners

- 3.1. Selection of examiners will be made against the Examiner Eligibility Criteria and Person Specification (Appendix A).
- 3.2. Selection will be by application only.
- 3.3. In order to manage the College's examiner panels, consideration may be given to the following during the selection process:
 - a. Clinical or Basic Scientist or Lay (if applicable)
 - b. Geographical location
- 3.4. The ICBSE Chair is required to ratify all Examiner appointments.
- 3.5. Once the Examiner's application has been ratified by ICBSE Chair the applicant will be required to carry out mandatory examiner training.
- 3.6. The examiner's Term of Appointment will commence once the examiner has completed the required induction examiner training and Equality and Diversity training.

- 3.7. The appointment of Examiners will be for a term of six years which will include a one-year probationary period. Examiners can be re-appointed for two additional terms of up to five years each at the discretion of the College.
- 3.8. At the end of the probationary period the Examiner will:
- Be confirmed as an Examiner
 - Not be confirmed as an Examiner
 - Continue for a specified probationary period
- 3.9. Lay Examiners will be appointed for a term of six years which will include a one-year probationary period. Lay Examiners can be re-appointed for a further term of three years at the discretion of the College.
- 3.10 Examiners will be required to sign and adhere to the Examiner Code of Conduct document (Appendix B).
- 3.11. The Colleges will notify ICBSE of re-appointments and retirements.

4. Examiner Training

- 4.1. An Examiner cannot begin their Term of Appointment without completing the required induction examiner training and Equality and Diversity training.
- 4.2. Training includes a Practical OSCE training course and a two-module online Equality and Diversity programme. Those who have completed generic workplace-based Equality and Diversity training may be exempt from Module 1. Examiners will be required to complete refresher Equality and Diversity training if they wish to renew their term as an examiner. It is the responsibility of the relevant College to inform the ICBSE office when an examiner is renewing their term and requires refresher training, so joining instructions for the training package can be sent to them. Refresher training will also be required of all examiners if there is a change to the law. Data relating to the Examiner's training record may be shared between the Colleges for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- 4.3. Examiners will be required to observe the OSCE Examination prior to being able to examine.
- 4.4. Refresher training may be required if an Examiner has not actively examined an OSCE examination within the last two years or if reorientation is required due to significant changes in the exam process and/or assessment methods.
- 4.5. Examiners are subject to the ICBSE quality assurance processes.

5. Examiner Reappointment process

- 5.1. Examiners have to apply to extend the Term of Appointment once their initial six-year term has ended.
- 5.2. If appointed, the second and third Terms of Appointment will be for up to five years each at the discretion of the College.

- 5.3. If appointed, the second Term of Appointment for Lay Examiners will be for up to three years at the discretion of the College.
- 5.4. Examiners will not normally be permitted to examine after the end of their third Term of Appointment.
- 5.5. Lay Examiners will not normally be permitted to examine after the end of their second Term of Appointment.

6. Retirement & Resignation

- 6.1. Retirement – unless an Examiner successfully reapplies for an additional Term of Appointment they will be expected to step down at the end of their appointed term.
- 6.2. Retirement from practice – If an Examiner wishes to continue to examine beyond the point at which they demit from active practice, they should meet the expectations and requirements of all Examiners, with the exception that they are no longer in active practice, but they have maintained a licence to practise. International Examiners will be required to meet the regulatory requirements of their governing body.

Surgeon examiners can continue to examine for a period of two years after giving up their licence to practise. After two years, surgeon examiners are only able to examine in basic science stations.

In exceptional circumstances, where the delivery of the exam is in jeopardy, Surgeon Examiners without a licence to practice can examine in any station as required.

- 6.3. Resignation – Resignations should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Examiners of relevant College.

7. Dismissal of Examiners

- 7.1. If an Examiner's performance or conduct consistently fails to meet an acceptable standard the Surgical Royal Colleges may recommend that the examiner:
 - a. Carry out additional remedial training
 - b. Be suspended from examining pending investigation

This is in line with the ICBSE Examiner Remediation Protocol.

- 7.2. A serious breach of policy may result in a referral to the relevant regulatory body.
- 7.3. A full Examiner Code of Conduct can be found at the end of the document (Appendix B).

8. International Examiners

- 8.1. International Examiners will be subject to the same recruitment, appointment and training procedures as those from the UK and Ireland.

- 8.2. International Examiners must hold full registration and be in good standing with their host country regulator (i.e. no restrictions on their clinical or professional practice).

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1. ICBSE aims to provide an environment for candidates that is free from discrimination and that no candidate receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of their protected characteristics. As such the Surgical Royal Colleges will provide regular examination-specific Equality and Diversity training for Examiners.
- 9.2. The Surgical Royal Colleges routinely collect the Equal Opportunities data on examiners and these may be anonymously used in reporting to College Committees and in Annual Reports.

Appendix A

1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(a) Clinical Examiners

- i. Fellow (including Fellow *ad eundem*) of one of the four Royal Surgical Colleges.
- ii. Hold or have held full consultant status (not a locum post) for at least 2 years post CCT or equivalent.
- iii. Able to complete one term of office before retirement i.e. one full term (6 years including a probationary year). Two further terms of 5 years may be approved.
- iv. Engaged in active clinical/academic practice. If an examiner wishes to continue to examine beyond the point at which they demit from active practice, they should meet the expectations and requirements of all examiners, with the exception that they are no longer in active practice, but they have maintained a licence to practise with the GMC. International examiners will be required to meet the regulatory requirements of their country's governing body.

(b) Basic Science Examiners

- i. Holder of equivalent basic science qualification from equivalent organisations such as:
 - Fellowship of the Royal College of Anaesthetists,
 - Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists,
 - Fellowship of British Association of Clinical Anatomists (BACA)
 - Fellowship of the Anatomical Society (of Gt Britain and Ireland)
 - Fellowship of the Physiological Society

This list is not exhaustive and Colleges can provide a supporting statement for those applicants who do not directly hold an equivalent qualification. Basic Science examiners can only examine in their own basic science for the manned generic and speciality defined stations.

(c) For all IMRCS & IDO-HNS Examiners (except Lay Examiners)

- i. Active in postgraduate surgical training/education/teaching.
- ii. To have informed his/her Chief Executive/Medical Director of their application to become an Intercollegiate MRCS Examiner and list this commitment in their job plan.
- iii. In good standing with the College/Professional Organisation.
- iv. In good standing with the GMC/IMC or equivalent body and not under investigation by an NHS Trust/employing body that restricts their clinical or professional practice.

If there are known limitations to practice this must be disclosed and the information will be shared with the four surgical colleges.

- v. A commitment to equality and diversity.
- vi. Able to provide the names and contact details of two suitable referees (see below).

(d) Lay Examiners

Lay examiners should not be qualified in professions allied to medicine or have received previous medical training.

- i. Knowledge of the rationale, expected standard and structure of the MRCS as defined in the regulations for the examination.
- ii. High levels of integrity and professional standards as an examiner.
- iii. A commitment to ongoing assessment, training and development as an examiner.
- iv. Ability to understand appropriate examination techniques.
- v. A commitment to the examination process.
- vi. Effective oral and written communication skills.
- vii. A commitment to equality and diversity.
- viii. Able to remain objective and dispassionate where necessary.
- ix. Provide references in support of their application.

Full person specification and further particulars document for Lay Examiners can be obtained from one of the Surgical Royal Colleges.

(e) Post Fellow/Pre Consultant Question Writers

Post Fellow/pre Consultant trainees are permitted to contribute to the MCQ and OSCE Question Banks. These question writers would not be examiners or be able to examine at the OSCE examination but would be required to adhere to the Examiner Code of Conduct, where applicable (Appendix B).

2. PERSON SPECIFICATION

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria, examiners must show commitment to:

- High professional standards as an examiner, including understanding of appropriate techniques and a policy of courtesy, fairness and non-discrimination towards all candidates
- High professional standards in teaching, including an ability and positive attitude towards teaching
- Competence in and loyalty to the surgical profession
- Question writing in both MCQs and OSCEs.

3. LIST OF POSSIBLE REFEREES (CLINICAL & BASIC SCIENCE EXAMINERS)

- Postgraduate Tutor in your Trust
- Medical Director
- Postgraduate Dean

- Programme Director
- Regional Specialty Advisor or Regional Advisor
- Head of any academic Department of Surgery

4. LIST OF POSSIBLE REFEREES (LAY EXAMINERS)

- Current or most recent employer
- Friend of the family or neighbour
- Teacher, lecturer or tutor

Appendix B

Examiner Code of Conduct

1. General

- a. Examiners should adhere to the principles laid out in their regulatory body's code of practice (General Medical Council's publication 'Good Medical Practice' or Irish Medical Council's publication 'Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners' or equivalent).
- b. Examiners must abide by the principles and guidelines defined in the mandatory training courses and examiner guidance documents.
- c. Examiners are expected to act professionally and courteously at all times to patients, actors, candidates, fellow examiners, members of examination staff and members of hospital staff assisting with the examination.
- d. During all examinations Examiners must bear in mind that they are representing the Surgical Royal Colleges and are therefore responsible for maintaining the reputation of the Colleges.
- e. Examiners should be aware of their role as ambassadors in examinations outside Great Britain and Ireland and must be sensitive to cultural differences.
- f. Examiners should not act in a manner that is discriminatory towards candidates on grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or age and should maintain training in line with the ICBSE Equality and Diversity policy and Equality and Diversity acts currently in force in the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- g. Examiners must not by any actions or omissions, bring the examination into disrepute.
- h. It is not necessary to avoid examining a candidate who is well known to an examiner.
- i. Examiners should honour commitments agreed with the College.
- j. Examiners should follow the timetable laid out by the College for any given examination.

2. Confidentiality

- a. Examination materials should not be copied, removed from the examination, described, shown to, or discussed with third parties.
- b. Examiners should be aware of the risks of inadvertent disclosure of confidential material.
- c. Examiners may not at any time discuss the details of candidates' performance with third parties unless with the candidates' permission.
- d. Examiners should not divulge examination results or discuss individual performance until the results have been released.

3. Teaching

Most Examiners will be engaged actively in teaching trainees. Examiners must ensure, however, that the integrity of the examination is preserved and that no individual or group of trainees gain, or is perceived to gain, an unfair advantage in the examination.

It is acceptable for Examiners to participate in MRCS/ DOHNS preparation courses under the following conditions:

- a. An Examiner should not teach on an examination preparation course four weeks prior to a diet of an examination in which they are participating.
- b. A course or lecture that is aimed at 'coaching' (the use of privileged knowledge to enable an individual or group of individuals to gain an advantage in an examination) is inappropriate. This is distinct from teaching of material from the syllabus which is a legitimate activity.
- c. Examiners may advise candidates and/or course faculty on the running and conduct of the examination.
- d. Examiners must not use materials which have been used in the examinations. The sole exception to this is where material is piloted within a training course with the explicit agreement of the ICBSE. Material used in a revision course that is subsequently piloted and entered into the question bank should no longer be used in the revision course.
- e. Examiners and Assessors should consider the potential conflict of interest of being involved in the ownership, management, design or advertising of commercial revision courses for the MRCS for personal financial gain unless a period of 12 months has elapsed since demitting their role. This does not apply to courses organised by the Royal Colleges, Deaneries and Schools of Surgery that charge a fee.

These restrictions will continue to apply after examiners have completed their term of office unless otherwise stated.

4. Contributions to publications

Examiners may contribute material to undergraduate and postgraduate textbooks and other scientific publications.

It is not acceptable for examiners to write or contribute to books or other materials or to edit or revise books or other materials with the aim of coaching candidates with privileged knowledge that will confer a specific advantage to a small group.

5. Good standing

Examiners should inform the examinations and membership departments in their college if any limitations have been placed on their practise. Examiners who have had limitations placed on their clinical or professional practise or have been suspended will not be able to examine.

6. Licence to practise – Surgeon Examiners

It is a requirement for Surgeon Examiners to hold a licence to practise and it is the examiners responsibility to inform their College if they no longer hold a licence to practise. Surgeon examiners can continue to examine for a period of two years after giving up their licence to practise. After two years, surgeon examiners are only able to examine in basic science stations. International Examiners will be required to meet the regulatory requirements of their governing body.

In exceptional circumstances, where the delivery of the exam is in jeopardy, Surgeon Examiners without a licence to practice can examine in any station as required.

7. Breach of the Policy

If an Examiner is deemed by his/her college or ICBSE to have breached any part of the above policy the matter will be dealt with in the first instance by his/her College in line with the Examiner Remediation protocol. This may involve a period of suspension from examining duties until the matter is resolved or further sanctions imposed. A serious breach of policy may involve referral to the relevant regulatory body.

Approved ICBSE 23 November 2012 (updated August 2019)

Undertaking

I confirm that I have read and understood the above Examiner Code of Conduct and will abide by it to the best of my ability.

Signed.....

Date.....

Print Name.....