

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations

Security Procedures for Management of MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ, MRCS OSCE Scenario and Props Banks and MRCS Oral and Communications Question Banks and Examination Papers

1. MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ Question Banks and Question Papers

1.1 The MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ question banks

1.1.1 The MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ question banks will be held on the main server of the RCSEng. Data held on the server will be backed up daily and a copy held in secure conditions in accordance with the English College's IS disaster recovery procedure.

1.1.2 Access to the MRCS MCQ and DO-HNS question banks will be limited to the Question Editor, Editorial Assistant, Systems Coordinator, ICBSE Manager and other nominated individuals.

1.2 Preparation of question papers

1.2.1 Paper Panel members and question writers will supply secure postal addresses to which any question papers will be sent.

1.2.2 Paper Panel members and question writers will be notified when papers are to be sent out in order to minimise the risk that parcels will be left unopened/unattended for extended periods of time.

1.2.3 Question papers will be sent by special delivery.

1.2.4 Question papers will be sent in double-wrapped packages. The outer envelope will have no indication that the sender works in an examinations department. The inner envelope will be tamper-evident (i.e. cannot be resealed) and will contain details of the sender. Question writers will be provided with necessary materials for the return of question papers.

1.2.5 During office hours it will be the responsibility of the Question Editor and the Editorial Assistant to ensure that paper copies of questions and scenarios are not left unattended on desks or elsewhere at any time.

1.2.6 There shall always be a spare paper available for the MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ examinations in case of a security leak.

2. MRCS OSCE Scenario and Props Banks

2.1 The OSCE scenario and props banks

2.1.1 The MRCS OSCE scenario and props banks will be held on the main server of the RCSEng. Data held on the server will be backed up daily and a copy held in secure conditions in accordance with the English College's IS disaster recovery procedure.

2.1.2 Access to the MRCS OSCE scenario and props banks will be limited to the Question Editor, Editorial Assistant, Systems Coordinator, ICBSE Manager and other nominated individuals.

2.2 Preparation of scenarios

2.2.1 MRCS OSCE scenarios and props are usually transmitted via email. Scenario writers will supply email addresses to which props and scenarios will be sent.

2.2.2 If the scenarios or props have to be sent by post, the rules concerning mailing MRCS and DO-HNS MCQ Question Papers (1.2.1 - 1.2.4) apply.

2.2.3 During office hours it will be the responsibility of the Question Editor to ensure that printed copies of scenarios and props are not left unattended on desks or elsewhere at any time. Outside office hours, see general rule 4.1.5.

2.2.4 If working at home, the Question Editor and Editorial Assistant will access the RCSEng server via a secure connection and will log off at the end of each session. Any printed copies of scenarios will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and returned to the ICBSE office for disposal or shredding as per rule 4.1.5.

2.2.5 When working on scenarios, BCA leads will only work on the most up-to-date versions of scenarios by having the scenarios sent to them by the Question Editor or Editorial Assistant. BCA leads should delete the scenarios from their computers after finishing work on them.

3. General rules

3.1 Security of papers/questions

3.1.1 All computers holding software giving access to the item banks will be password protected. They will be located in an office that is either locked or staffed at all times and computers will be 'locked' whenever staff are away from their desks.

3.1.2 All banks will be password protected.

3.1.3 Questions sent by email will be compressed using Winzip. The recipient will be notified in advance that confidential material is to be sent. Passwords will be sent separately and will be changed frequently.

3.1.4 All BCA leads, OSCE scenario writers, Paper Panel members and question writers or members of subgroups who might contribute to question writing will be sent guidelines on question writing, on the management of questions and on question paper security and will be asked to sign an *Undertaking* to abide by these security guidelines.

3.1.5 All discarded paper copies will be shredded or discarded in confidential waste containers stored in the English College's departmental safe.

3.1.6 All paper copies of questions, including past questions, will be stored in the departmental safe outside office hours.

3.2 Printing/ photocopying

3.2.1 Exam papers will be printed externally only by vetted printing companies. The RCSEng, on behalf of the Colleges, will ensure as part of the commissioning process that the printers have appropriate security procedures.

3.2.2 Exam papers will be transmitted to printers using secure means agreed with the printers (FTP Site).

3.2.3 The photocopying of exam papers, as may be necessary to manage costs for small print runs, will be undertaken 'in-house' under the close supervision of a senior manager.

3.2.4 Exam papers will be sent securely to each College by the printers. Each College will provide an agreed address/name for that purpose. Each College will check that the number of papers received are as expected and will inform the ICBSE question editors and/or ICBSE Manager immediately of any discrepancies. Each College will be responsible for the on site storage and disposal of question papers.

3.3 Security arrangements at examination venues (UK and Ireland)

3.3.1 If examinations are to be held at venues in the UK/Ireland other than at the Colleges, College staff will, whenever possible, transport the papers to the venue on the day of the examination and will be responsible for their safekeeping.

3.3.2 Where it is necessary for papers to be sent to venues in advance of the examination, the College will inspect the security arrangements available for the safekeeping of papers and will enter into a written agreement with the venue concerning those arrangements which will specify:

- an individual specified by the venue by their job title will be responsible for the papers
- papers will be stored in a safe or a reinforced metal filing cabinet
- that there will be a limited number of key holders and these will be specified by the venue
- arrangements for the collection of papers by the College
- that the venue will acknowledge receipt of the papers to the College within 24 hours
- the name of the College staff member to be contacted by the venue on any matter concerning the question papers.

3.3.3 Papers will be stored at the venue in tamper evident package(s), clearly labelled with the name of the College, the name of the individual at the venue responsible for their safekeeping, the name of the individual to whom they are to be surrendered and the date on which they are to be collected. Where there is more than one package, each package will be numbered (e.g. 'package 1 of 3').

3.4 Security arrangements at examination venues (outside UK and Ireland)

3.4.1 The Colleges will only allow their question papers to be taken outside the UK and Ireland where the arrangements for the examinations are

conducted by the British Council or suitable alternative venues as long as the conditions of the security policy can be met.

3.4.2 Papers will be sent to British Council (or suitable alternative venue) offices by courier.

3.4.3 The British Council (or suitable alternative venue) will be notified of the despatch date and courier details and will be expected to confirm safe receipt of the papers within 24 hours of receipt.

3.4.4 Colleges will ensure that the security arrangements for the safekeeping of papers by the British Council (or suitable alternative venue) are acceptable and will enter into a written agreement concerning those arrangements which will specify:

- an individual specified by the venue by their job title will be responsible for the papers
- papers will be stored in a safe or a reinforced metal filing cabinet.
- that there will be a limited number of key holders and these will be specified by the British Council (or suitable alternative venue)
- arrangements for the transport of papers to the venue
- arrangements for the opening of parcels of question papers
- arrangements for the collection/ disposal/ return of question papers
- the name of the College staff member to be contacted by the British Council (or suitable alternative venue) on any matter concerning the question papers.

3.4.5 Papers will be stored in a tamper evident package, clearly labelled with the name of the College and the name of the individual responsible for their safekeeping. Where there is more than one package, each package will be numbered (e.g. 'package 1 of 3').

3.5 Conduct of the examination

The Colleges will ensure that the procedures for maintaining the integrity of the question papers during the conduct of the examination are enforced at all of the venues for which they are responsible (e.g. ensuring that papers or notes made are not taken from the examination room).

3.6 Managing security breaches/ potential security breaches

3.6.1 Each College will nominate an individual, and a deputy, with day-to-day responsibility for managing the security of question papers and scenarios.

3.6.2 Any breach or suspected breach of security will be reported to the Heads of Examinations of the four Colleges as early as practicable. The Head of Examination at the College reporting the breach, or potential breach of security will be responsible for co-ordinating any investigation and subsequent remedial action that is necessary, including the notification of the related subgroup and IQA chairmen of any incident.

3.6.3 A written report on any breach of security, the actions taken and recommendations for further actions will be prepared by the Head of Examinations at the College reporting the security breach for submission to the chairs of the relevant subgroup and IQA.

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations

Security Guidelines for Committee Members and Question Writers

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure as far as possible the security of all MRCS and DO-HNS exam questions, props and question papers.

Rationale

In 2009, ICBSE asked for a significant review of the security arrangements of the Question papers. Questions and question papers represent a significant amount of work and as such they are a valuable commodity which needs to be subject to stringent security procedures.

General rules

Committee Members and Question Writers will be notified when examination papers are to be sent out in order to minimise the risk that parcels will be left unopened/unattended for extended periods of time.

Examination papers will be sent to Committee Members and Question Writers by special delivery.

Papers and questions will be sent in double-wrapped packages. The outer envelope will **have no indication** that the sender works in an examination department. The inner envelope will be tamper-evident (i.e. cannot be resealed) and will contain details of the sender. Question writers will be provided with necessary materials for the return of examination papers.

Examination papers sent by email will be compressed. The recipient will be notified in advance that confidential material is to be sent. Passwords will be sent separately and will be changed frequently.

Security Guidelines

In order to maintain a high level of security, the following guidelines have been put in place for the preparation of questions, scenarios and question papers. By signing the Undertaking, question writers agree to abide by the following guidelines:

1. Committee Members and Question Writers will supply secure addresses to which papers and questions will be sent.
2. Wherever possible, Committee Members and Question Writers should send examination papers to the relevant Question Editor by special delivery.
3. When no longer needed, all examination papers, questions and scenarios must be shredded or returned to the relevant Question Editor.
4. Papers, scenarios, questions, laptops and memory sticks on which such documents are saved, and electronic mobile devices on which the documents are viewed should not be worked on in a public place.

5. In order to ensure appropriate version control, after the submission of final versions of questions, all scenario leads, OSCE scenario writers, Paper Panel members and question writers or members of subgroups who might contribute to question writing should delete all electronic copies of scenarios from computers, laptops and all portable electronic devices and securely discard or return paper copies to the ICBSE office for shredding as per rule 4.1.5.
6. All electronic devices used for question editing must have appropriate security protection and should be protected by passwords at all times.
7. While examination papers are not being worked upon they must be locked away where possible or stored out of sight if not possible.
8. Any papers or questions printed from an electronic copy should be collected immediately and not left on a printer if printed in a public place.
9. Examination papers should not be shown to third parties.
10. Examination papers, scenarios and questions, or laptops with questions or papers saved on them, must not be left visible in parked cars and care should be taken of the papers, questions and laptops while they are being transported.
11. Any breach of security must be notified immediately to the relevant Question Editor or to the ICBSE co-ordinator.
12. Committee Members and Question Writers will sign an undertaking to confirm that they have read and understood these security guidelines and will adhere to them.

Undertaking

I confirm that I have read and understood the above Security Guidelines in place for the preparation of questions, scenarios and examination papers and will abide by them to the best of my ability.

I am currently responsible for MRCS questions as (please specify the exam paper and your role in connection to question writing/editing):

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Signed.....

Date.....

Print Name.....