

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations

Intercollegiate MRCS Part A MCQ Invigilator Instructions

Security of examination materials

Examination centres must ensure that appropriate security systems are in place to prevent unauthorised access to the examination materials before, during and after the examination.

Centres must maintain the confidentiality of candidate responses and candidate details.

Examination papers must be stored securely conforming to the three requirements below:

- a) strong safe or security cabinet or metal cabinet with locking bar bolted to wall or floor with two or three key holders only;
- b) secure room in fixed building (i.e. not a prefabricated building) with walls, ceiling and floor of strong, solid construction;
- c) solid door or reinforced door with strong hinges and a security lock e.g. 5 lever mortice or coded keypad lock.

Accommodation for the examination

Any room in which an examination is held must provide candidates with appropriate conditions for taking the examination including heating, lighting, ventilation and the level of noise outside.

Display material (e.g. wall charts) that might be helpful to candidates must not be visible in the examination room.

A reliable clock must be visible to each candidate in the examination room. The clock must be big enough for all candidates to read clearly. All clocks used in the examination room must show the same time.

The seating arrangements must prevent candidates from overlooking (intentionally or otherwise) the work of others. The minimum distance in all directions from centre to centre of candidates' chairs must be one metre.

All candidates should face in the same direction.

Each candidate must have a separate desk or table big enough to hold question papers and answer booklets.

Invigilation arrangements

There must be one invigilator for every 30 candidates

The lead invigilator is the person in the examination room responsible for conducting the examination. Another member of staff will be present throughout the exam to assist with collection of paperwork and to escort any candidate who may need to leave the room during the examination.

Invigilators must arrive at the venue at least 1 hour before the examination.

Invigilators must:

- be familiar with these instructions;

- give all their attention to conducting the examination;
- be able to observe each candidate in the examination room at all times.

Invigilators must not carry out any other task in the examination room.

Question papers, stationery, materials and other equipment

Question booklets should have been individually numbered by College staff in order to be able to clearly identify papers sent to and received from each centre.

No stationery other than that provided by the College, including paper for rough work, may be given to candidates.

Important - When supplied with new versions of examination materials, dispose of the old versions as confidential waste since they will no longer be able to be used.

Identifying the candidates

The centre must make sure that appropriate arrangements are in place to check the identity of all candidates e.g. passport or photographic driving licence with candidate's signature.

In cases where it is impossible to identify a candidate due to the wearing of clothing such as a veil the candidate should be approached by a female member of staff and taken to a secluded area where they should be asked to remove the clothing for the purposes of identification. Once identification has been established the candidate may replace the clothing and proceed to sit the examination.

Before the exam

- Check that the examination materials are the correct ones for the examination to be taken (e.g. part/date/time).
- Place candidate numbers on desks.
- Place one pencil and one rubber on each desk.
- Place one coloured answer sheet on each desk. For example, row 1 all purple, row 2 all green, row 3 purple, row 4 green etc.
- Place one coloured question booklet on each desk. For example, row 1 all purple, row 2 all green, row 3 purple, row 4 green etc.
- Candidates sitting in adjacent rows **MUST NOT** have the same colour question booklets or answer sheets.

Important – A candidate's question booklet and answer sheet must colour-match each other (purple question booklets must accompany the purple answer sheets).

As candidates come in

- Invite candidates into the examination room 15 minutes before exam.
- Candidates are not allowed to have their coats and bags with them at their desk. There should be a safe place provided for candidates to leave these items.
- Candidates are **NOT** allowed to have mobile phones or other electronic devices on their person in the examination room. All mobile phones should be switched off and left in candidates' bags in the designated area, or handed to the invigilator until the examination has finished. If mobile phones are to be kept in the exam room by examination staff, they must be turned off.
- Candidates only need their photographic ID provided at registration, or their admission card and photographic ID with them at their desks, which are to be put on the right hand side of the desk ready for checking.
- Candidates should sit at the desk with their candidate number on it.
- Candidates are allowed to bring a bottle of water or juice into the examination hall.

When all candidates are seated

- Candidates should fill in their candidate number on their answer sheet and question booklet.
- Check no other paperwork is on desks other than
 - Answer sheet
 - Question book
 - Admission card and photographic ID or photographic ID badge
- Any other paperwork (e.g. envelopes/maps) should go with bags and coats or be put on floor. Any pencil cases taken into the examination room must be see-through.
- Read out examination instructions to candidates.
- Centres should begin the examination at the time they have been instructed to do so by the Royal Surgical College for which they are running the exam.

When exam has started

- Candidates may join exam up to half an hour late but will not be given any extra time at the end and should be informed of this.
- The Applied Basic Science paper is 3 hours long and will be held in the morning. No candidate may leave in the first 90 minutes or last 15 minutes of the exam. If they insist or walk out, they may be disqualified and need to be informed of this.
- The Principles of Surgery in General paper is 2 hours long and will be held in the afternoon. No candidate may leave in the first 60 minutes or last 15 minutes of the exam. If they insist or walk out, they may be disqualified and need to be informed of this.
- Only one candidate can use the toilet at a time.
- Check admission cards and photographic ID in order.
- If admission cards have not been signed, get them to sign it.
- If a candidate has forgotten their admission card/examination notice steps should be taken to confirm their identity e.g. check photographic identification and compare signatures.
- Use admission cards to tick names off candidate lists provided.
- Note any absences or late arrivals (with time) on candidate list.
- The lead invigilator must prepare a seating plan which records the location of each candidate and the direction in which they are facing. The seating plan must be submitted to the College with the candidates' answer sheets. Candidates should normally be seated in candidate number order.
- If there is a query on the paper about which several candidates ask, it should be noted on a copy of the paper for investigation when the examination is complete.
- If a candidate queries a question they are to be told that there is no further information available, they should answer the question as best they can and that a note will be made of their query and will be raised after the examination is complete.
- Where a candidate believes that there is an error or omission on the question paper the invigilator must not make any comment but should check that the candidate has the right paper and that there are no missing pages. Invigilators must not provide advice to candidates if they suspect an error in the paper without the permission of the College for which the examination is being run.
- Invigilators should walk around the exam room periodically to ensure security and to check that the number of the candidate's answer sheet corresponds with the number on the desk
- Please inform candidates of the time throughout the examination - 30 minutes to go (if you have not already started to do so, start transferring answers onto answer sheet now), 15 minutes to go. Please inform candidates of the time they can leave the examination if they wish to do so (after the first 90 minutes for ABS and after the first 60 minutes for PoSG and before the examination enters the final 15 minutes.)

When exam is finished

- Once the examination time is complete, no candidate is allowed to leave until all paperwork has been collected.

- Read out instructions.
- Collect all paperwork.
- Check candidate numbers have been filled in on answer sheet and question book.
- Check that the candidate has entered the correct number on their answer sheet.
- Tell candidates when they are free to go and the time they need to be back for afternoon paper.
- Pack question booklets neatly back into bags – in ascending numerical order.
- Put answer sheets in descending order with the highest number on top. i.e. 2010, 2009, 2008 etc. Make sure all the answer sheets are there by checking against the candidate list.

Preparation for afternoon

- Unless the examination room can be securely locked and the key retained by the lead invigilator, at least one invigilator must stay in the examinations room with papers throughout the lunch break. No candidates can stay in the room during lunch.
- Set out pencils and papers as morning. Ensure pencils on desks used in the morning are sharp.

Afternoon paper

- Follow instructions for morning paper noting the Principles of Surgery in General paper is 2 hours long and no candidate may leave in the first 60 minutes or last 15 minutes of the exam.

After exam

- Collect papers as per morning exam.
- **Photocopy all answer sheets and retain in a secure location.** Note that as the answer sheets are double-sided the photocopies should be as well.
- Pack everything away neatly for return delivery by secure courier service to the appropriate address as soon as possible.
- Retain the photocopied sheets securely until results are issued, then destroy as confidential waste.

General

- If there is a major problem during the exam, contact the College using the number provided.
- Make a written record of anything irregular that happens, sign it, and return it with the examination materials.
- Only authorised individuals may be allowed into the examination room.

Related materials:

Suspected Malpractice by Examination Candidates