

**MRCS Part A/DO-HNS Part 1**  
**Online Delivery – September 2020**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

The four Surgical Royal Colleges are committed to delivering the MRCS Part A and DO-HNS Part 1 examinations to our candidates despite the challenging conditions being faced worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The September 2020 examinations will be delivered remotely as an online assessment through Examsoft and its Examplify programme. We hope that this document will answer some of the questions you may have.

***Is the format of the exam changing?***

No, the examination questions, format and standards have not changed therefore your study preparation should be the same as before. It is just the mode of delivery that is changing.

MRCS Part A normally comprises a three-hour MCQ paper (Applied Basic Science - ABS) followed by a two-hour MCQ paper (Principles of Surgery in General - PoSG). To facilitate remote delivery, the MCQ exam will be delivered in sections with a comfort break between each section. The ABS paper will consist of 2 x 1.5 hour papers, with a short break between each. These will be treated as individual papers - you will not be able to return to questions you have answered after submitting each one. Due to the shorter examination time, the PoSG paper will be delivered in one 2-hour session *with no break*.

Due to the shorter examination time, the DO-HNS Part 1, which is a two-hour paper of multiple true/false and extended matching questions, will be delivered in one 2-hour session *with no break*. DO-HNS Part 1 candidates should be suitably prepared to be sat in their exam room for the full two hours.

**Exam Location**

***Where can I sit the exam?***

You should give serious thought to the location where you will sit your exam. You are best placed to identify a suitable location within your area where you can sit your exam. It is important that the venue is:

- Quiet;
- One in which you will not be disturbed during the whole period of the exam;
- Comfortable and well lit; and
- One with good, reliable Wi-Fi.

This might be your home or it could be your work environment. It is acceptable to choose to sit the exam in your home, but if you are doing this we would recommend that you will be alone there or in a room where you can guarantee you will not be disturbed. The strict proctoring, or invigilation of the exam means that any interruptions may be reported and investigated as a security breach. It is vital that you can concentrate on the exam in the same way that you would in an exam hall. You should not attempt to sit the exam at home if you have caring responsibilities for anyone in your home, unless you have made arrangements for additional help that day.

If your home location is not going to be suitable, we recommend that you consider booking a room for use at your place of work or at a postgraduate training centre. The criteria above should apply to the chosen room. We know that it can be difficult to secure a room where you are confident you won't be disturbed and for that reason you may wish to enlist the support of a clinical supervisor to ensure that you have an appropriate venue. This individual would not

have to invigilate the exam (this will happen online as explained later) but they should ensure that the booked space will be completely quiet and you won't be asked to move to another room or to be disturbed. This is simply a suggestion and it is for you to make your own arrangements and cover any costs.

You should check with your IT department if you intend to sit at a venue at work, or using a device supplied by your employer, as security measures may affect the download and running of the examination.

***Can I sit the exam in a room with other candidates?***

No, it is not possible to have several candidates in one room attempting the exam. You should be alone in the exam room.

**Preparing for the examination**

***What computer equipment will I need?***

In order to sit the exam you will require a laptop or personal computer with an integrated camera or attached webcam. This will enable the exam to be invigilated throughout the exam. You will be unable to sit the exam if you cannot be recorded on your device. If you are using a laptop you should ensure that this is fully charged and plugged in for the duration of the exam.

***Can I use a second screen?***

No, you cannot use a second screen for your laptop or PC.

***Can I wear headphones/earbuds and listen to music to help me to focus?***

No headphones/earbuds are permitted during the exam period. No music or noise is allowed in the exam room

***Is there a mock or practice exam available?***

Yes – you will be emailed an access code and instructions on how to complete a mock exam. The mock exam is mandatory so you can familiarise yourself with how the screen and exam paper will look on the actual exam day, and also to establish baseline identity parameters through an automatically generated image of your face.

***Is there a test or any way to check my system is competent and compatible?***

Yes – you will be given the details of a systems check that will check your computer capacity and speed. You can also check your download speed using one of the proprietary apps available.

***How will my reasonable adjustments be accommodated?***

If you have already correctly registered your reasonable adjustment (for example; for visual impairment, dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties, etc) these will be accounted for. Please contact your College if you require clarification.

***When will the exam material be available to download?***

The Exam will be available for download 48 hours prior to the start of the exam. You will be notified when the exam is available for download via email. You should download the exam(s) onto your device a minimum of 24 hours before the exam is due to commence so that there is sufficient time to address any technical queries.

Although you will have the exam on your computer, you will not be able to open the file until the password is released when you are at your seat in your exam room. This will be approximately 15 minutes before your exam start time. Please note, you will not be allowed to

download the exam (i.e. start the exam) more than 30 minutes after the official start time of the exam; this is in line with usual regulations.

## **Examination Day**

### ***What am I allowed to bring into the examination room?***

You may bring a small transparent bottle of water into the Examination. This must remain on the exam table at all times, as any movement off screen - or if you are out of view even briefly - at any time will be noted by the proctor/invigator and referred for investigation. Mobile phones, smartwatches and other electronic devices are **not allowed** in the exam room with you.

### ***What time should I log in to take the exam?***

We recommend that you arrive in your exam room at least 30 minutes early to allow ample time to log into the ExamSoft system and go through the verification of identity process. When the examination is ready to start, you will need to enter with the examination password, which will be provided to you by email. Please note, this password is case-sensitive, and will need to be entered exactly as shown. You must not begin your examination until instructed to do so.

### ***How does the online proctoring work?***

ExamID will verify your identity when you login. At the start of the exam, ExamMonitor will begin recording video and audio files. This will happen without the need for WiFi. Your device will be locked and you will not be allowed to access any files, internet, apps, or other information during the exam. When the exam is completed, the video and audio files are automatically uploaded when your device reconnects to the internet, along with answer files and will be stored securely within ExamSoft.

### ***What happens if I lost internet connectivity during the exam?***

Don't worry if you lose WiFi connection during the exam as your answers will still be recorded. WiFi connection is only necessary to download the examination at the start of the paper and to upload the answer files once the examination has been completed. It is your responsibility to ensure you have sufficient working WIFI to be able to download the exam and to upload answers once the exam is complete.

### ***What if I experience a technical problems during the exam?***

*If you experience an issue during the exam you will need to contact*  
[DOHNSsupport@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:DOHNSsupport@rcseng.ac.uk) or [MRCSSupport@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:MRCSSupport@rcseng.ac.uk).

### ***What happens if I need to take a comfort break?***

You can only leave the examination room to go to the toilet during the programmed breaks between the 90-minute sections of the MRCS Part A ABS paper, or in the time between the MRCS Part A ABS and PoSG papers. If you leave your desk at any other time, this will be noted by the proctor and referred for investigation.

### ***How will I know how much time is remaining on the exam?***

There will be a clock on screen at all times and there will be a warning alert to advise you when five minutes of each section remain; candidates can set up their own further alerts through the delivery platform.

### ***How can I give feedback or raise concerns about particular questions in the exam?***

Feedback on questions will be recordable via an online survey sent after the exam.

***How do I submit my answers once my exam is finished?***

Once the examination is complete, Exemplify will automatically upload your answer file along with the video and audio recording of your exam. You will need to keep your computer connected to the internet with Exemplify until you receive verification that the upload is complete. Once this is successfully completed, you will be able to log out of Examsoft.

If you lose internet connection during the exam, keep your Exemplify page open as your answers will be uploaded automatically on resumption of your Wi-fi signal. You will have 2 hours after the end of exam to upload your answers. It is your responsibility to ensure you have sufficient working WIFI to be able to download the exam and to upload answers once the exam is complete.

Please note, once the exam time limit is complete, you will not be able to get back into the exam to update or change your answers.