



**Terms of reference: examination sub-committee**

**1. Purpose and scope of this document**

To provide the terms of reference for the examination sub-committee of the faculty board at the Royal College of Physicians.

**2. Objectives of the examination sub-committee**

- To develop and provide oversight of the national and recertification examinations on behalf of the faculty of physician associates
- To create, develop and maintain a bank of single best answer and OSCE questions for use in the national and recertification examinations, ensuring they remain current, accurate and relevant
- To standard set and verify, ensuring the national and recertification examinations are valid, reliable and aligned to best clinical practice

**3. Composition of the examination sub-committee (2015/16)**

The examination sub-committee will comprise the following posts.

- a) Chair (Member of the Faculty of Physician Associates Faculty Board)
- b) Deputy chair
- c) Lead for single best answer examinations
- d) Lead for OSCE examinations
- e) Lead for quality assurance
- f) Lead for training (entrants and examiners)
- g) Physician associates or practising clinicians with physician associate experience from the seven sub-specialties listed below:

- Surgery
- Emergency medicine
- Paediatrics and child health
- Psychiatry and mental health
- General Practice
- Obstetrics and gynaecology
- Medicine

- i) Royal College of Physicians college staff in attendance (to be agreed)



#### **4. Method of appointment of examination sub-committee members**

Members are appointed for an initial term of three years. Appointments are by application to the faculty board to ensure the correct depth and breadth of expertise required. All committee members must be in good standing with the faculty of physician associates (or their respective college for doctors) and be active in clinical practice with experience of physician associates. Physician associate members must not be sitting their next recertification examination for at least two years, eg if a physician associate joins the sub-committee in August 2016, they must be sitting their next recertification examination attempt until at least August 2018.

The examination sub-committee shall be appointed by the faculty of physician associates board at the Royal College of Physicians.

The position of an examination sub-committee member is an unpaid position though the faculty of physician associates may develop a budget whereby certain expenses incurred by members of the examination sub-committee may be recompensed.

Once the examination sub-committee is established, vacancies occurring on the committee by resignation, incapacity, or death shall be filled by invitation of the faculty of physician associates.

Committee members may be removed from the committee by majority action of the commission as a whole for reasons of non-participation, civil malfeasance, or disreputable public behaviour.

Non-participation shall be defined as a examination sub-committee member who has more than two unexplained absences in succession from commission business.

#### **5. Role of examination sub-committee members**

Committee members must be available to attend to the duties of the committee (which are numbered below) and relate to both the national and recertification examinations:

- a. Agree entry requirements and review the eligibility of applicants
- b. Agree process by which questions are set and examination papers are created
- c. Oversee the standard setting of questions
- d. Set examination timetable and deadlines



- e. Ensure consistent terminology / units / glossary for the questions
- f. Test examinations prior to being employed
- g. Agree examination pass mark and review the pass mark with the results
- h. Review the examination to confirm validity, reliability and quality of questions
- i. Recommend modifications to the examination e.g. format, process
- j. Review and consider appeals procedure
- k. Employ systems to detect collusion / cheating
- l. Develop and approve preparatory courses
- m. Provide access to advice and support to candidates who have failed
- n. Provide examination results overview to the faculty board prior to publication / release
- o. Advise and review examination fee structure periodically
- p. Organise and deliver examiner training / examiner support
- q. Arrange and conduct examinations held by, or on behalf of, the faculty of physician associates
- r. Maintain a register of examiners appointed together with a record of their service as examiners and a list of all examiners at each faculty of physician associates examination
- s. Regularly review and update the examination regulations

The faculty of physician associates board at the Royal College of Physicians shall have oversight responsibility for the examination sub-committee and shall ensure there is adequate indemnity coverage for the legal protection of the committee.

The chairperson shall be responsible for the general management of examination sub-committee and shall cause meetings to be held regularly and to be conducted appropriately.



The deputy chair shall have charge of recording and maintaining the minutes of all meetings, shall maintain and conduct correspondence on behalf of the examination sub-committee and shall assume the chair should the chairperson be unable to attend or complete an established meeting.

Should neither the chairperson nor deputy chair be available or able to chair an established meeting a designated committee member (tba) would assume the post of acting chair.

Committee members must make every effort to participate in the examination sub-committee responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

Should any committee member find that they have a conflict of interest in any business before the examination sub-committee, they must so declare that conflict and recuse themselves from that business.

## **6. Quorum**

A quorum of the sub-committee requires 50% of members including the presence of the chair or deputy chair.

## **7. Frequency of meetings and minimum attendance**

Sub-committee meetings are held three times a year, typically at Royal College of Physicians of London. An individual sub-committee member is expected to attend two out of three meetings averaged over two consecutive years. Failure to attend two consecutive meetings will be brought to the members' attention via a letter from the chair of the sub-committee. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings may result in cessation of tenure.

If during a meeting, information of a sensitive nature such as would compromise personal or patient confidentiality, the examination-committee may retire "in camera" to deliberate said issue. Deliberations conducted in these circumstances must be published in the meeting minutes in such a way as to protect confidentiality.



**Royal College  
of Physicians**

Faculty of  
Physician Associates