



Physician Associate National Examination – OSCE Examiner Misconduct Policy

Dealing with allegations of misconduct

1. The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) Assessment Unit relies on the professionalism and commitment of a large number of healthcare professionals to deliver the Physician Associate National Clinical Certification Examination (PANE), which is an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). To maintain the quality of the examination, the RCP Assessment Unit monitors all aspects of the examination, including the appointment and performance of examiners, and their compliance with relevant equality and diversity legislation. PANE OSCE examiners are expected to follow the Physician Associate National Examination Code of Conduct for OSCE Examiners, which provides a framework against which allegations of misconduct will be judged.
2. Allegations of misconduct by an examiner (for example relating to attitudes or behaviours during an examination) may be made by candidates or others involved in the examination process. In addition, routine monitoring of the examination may bring to light possible issues with examiner conduct (for example, systematic bias in the assessment of one candidate group, or a failure to adhere to the processes expected of an examiner within their station).
3. In the event of any such allegation or occurrence, in accordance with RCP policy, all complaints that have a conduct element are first referred to the RCP Registrar for review. Upon review, the Registrar may exercise the right of their office to move the processing of the case outside the RCP assessment unit and into the RCP and/or Faculty of Physician Associates misconduct processes.

If the Registrar is content that the complaint should be investigated through the Assessment Unit processes, the RCP Assessment Unit will undertake an investigation as follows:

- 3.1 The investigation will be led by the PANE Clinical Examination Lead¹ and RCP Head of Assessment².
- 3.2 Within 10 working days of receiving a report of suspected misconduct, the RCP Assessment Unit will inform the examiner in writing that an allegation has been made about them and provide them with a copy of this policy.

¹ Or nominated deputy

² Or nominated deputy

- 3.3 No definitive action will be taken against any examiner until the investigation is complete, however, in some instances it may be necessary to suspend the examiner from examining duties pending investigation.
 - 3.4 The anonymity of the examiner will be protected as far as is possible.
 - 3.5 Investigations may involve requests for examiners to attend a meeting and/or analysis of statistical information on examiner marking.
 - 3.6 On completion of the investigation the RCP Head of Assessment Unit will inform the examiner of the detail of the allegation. The examiner shall be asked to comment on the allegation and invited to admit or deny the allegation.
 - 3.7 The examiner shall provide their response in writing to the allegations within 10 working days from the date of letter. If no response is received within 10 working days, then a reminder letter shall be sent. If no response is received to this reminder after a further 10 working days, then the case will continue without the examiner's submission.
 - 3.8 If the investigation substantiates the allegation, the Clinical Examination Lead³, following confirmation with the PANE Senior Examiner, will make recommendations to the RCP Head of Assessment regarding the examiner's future involvement in the Physician Associate National Examination.
 - 3.9 The RCP Assessment Unit uses the balance of probabilities when making a decision as to whether allegations of examiner misconduct are substantiated. Recommendations on an examiner's future involvement will be made if the RCP Assessment Unit considers that, on the evidence available, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not.
 - 3.10 Once a decision has been made, this will be communicated to the examiner within 10 working days.
 - 3.11 Where a decision is not possible within 10 working days this will be communicated to the examiner and an updated timeline provided.
 - 3.12 Where an examiner wishes to appeal against a decision, they must do so in writing within 10 working days of the original decision being communicated to them. Any appeal will be referred to the RCP Assessment Unit Chief Examiner, whose decision will be final.
 - 3.13 In exceptional circumstances, the RCP Assessment Unit may also refer the examiner to the examiner's regulatory or membership body.
4. An investigation may involve asking other examiners to comment on any allegations or observations. In this case, all examiners are expected to respond to any such approaches in an open and timely manner. Any information shared with other examiners is strictly confidential.

³ See note 1