

Exams for doctors in training

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, COPMED and GMC statement March / 2020.

Understandably many trainees are concerned about what will happen with respect to postgraduate exams, both written and clinical, in the next few months following disruption due to COVID-19. Employers and trainers also have a deep interest in how to support and advise their doctors in training and making sure we maintain patient safety.

We are aware of the anxiety and stress this current situation is causing on many fronts and, with regard to exams, of the hard work many have already put in preparation. We also know that the situation is constantly changing and that it is unlikely that trainees will be able to take time away from direct clinical care and take study leave for the immediate future. There have been helpful messages from regulators and education authorities about missed exams due to COVID-19 which are available on the Academy COVID-19 webpages.

The Academy has been working with COPMED and the GMC to develop coherent advice. All Medical Royal Colleges have consulted with each other, the Government Senior Medical Advisers and NHS leaders with the aim of supporting trainees whilst making sure we maintain standards and ensure patient safety.

Following the Government's most recent advice,

— Colleges have cancelled all exams. Details of individual College positions can be found on their websites

— Trainees in programmes will not be disadvantaged by missing exams because of circumstances out with their control related to COVID-19 and in particular

— Payment for an exam that is postponed, or where the candidate has demonstrated the reason for inability to attend will carry over until the next sitting or be refunded

— Progression within training that is exam success dependent will not be automatically halted but will be based on evidence of competence and capability provided there are no other issues, with the expectation that the exam is successfully completed at the next or a future sitting. We would currently only expect trainees to progress one stage without completing these exams

— Colleges and the Academy continue to work with the GMC, HEE, NES, HEIW and NIMDTA to implement a consistently flexible approach to training and recruitment issues during this unprecedented time

— In General Practice and other specialties where an exit exam is required for CCT, discussions are ongoing with the relevant Statutory Education Bodies and GMC, and further advice will be issued. However, the expectation for final exams required for CCT is that entry to the specialist register will still require the evidence of competence for all learning outcomes and completion of all assessments.

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
Professor Carrie MacEwen
Chair, AoMRC

Exams for doctors in training
Dr Tom Lawson
Postgraduate Medical Dean
Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Professor Sheona MacLeod
Deputy Medical Director HEE, Chair COPMED

Professor Carrie MacEwen
Chair, AoMRC

Professor Colin Melville
Medical Director, GMC

Professor Rowan Parks
Acting Medical Director,
NES Education for Scotland

Professor Keith Gardiner
Medical Director Chief Executive/Postgraduate
Dean, Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training
Agency