

# **Regulations for the Intercollegiate Diploma in Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (DO-HNS) of the Royal Surgical Colleges of Great Britain and in Ireland: March 2023**

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Intercollegiate Diploma in Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery is to test the breadth of knowledge, the clinical and communication skills and the professional attributes considered appropriate by the Colleges for a doctor intending to undertake practice within an Otolaryngology department in a trainee position. It is also intended to provide a test for those who wish to practise within another medical specialty, but who have an interest in the aspects of where that specialty interacts with the field of otolaryngology. In particular, it will be relevant for General Practitioners wishing to offer a service in minor ENT surgery.

## **IMPORTANT NOTE FOR NEW CANDIDATES**

**Candidates should note that the last sitting of the DO-HNS Part 1 examination was in September 2021. There will be no further sittings of the DO-HNS Part 1 after this time. As such, the DO-HNS qualification will no longer be available to new candidates from 2022.**

**The DO-HNS Part 2 (OSCE) examination will be renamed the MRCS (ENT) OSCE from February 2022. Candidates who wish to attain the Membership Diploma (ENT) should follow the guidance contained in the MRCS (ENT) Regulations.**

**If you are a new candidate you should not read any further.**

**If you are a candidate who has previously passed the DO-HNS Part 1 (MCQ) exam and wish to obtain the DO-HNS diploma, you should continue reading this document.**

## **1. The Examination**

Part 1 is a multiple-choice written examination (MCQ) which will be held simultaneously at all venues. Candidates may apply to any College to sit Part 1.

Part 2 is an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). The OSCE examination will be held on a rotational basis at different surgical college locations for each diet. Candidates should apply for the Part 2 examination with the college from which they wish to be awarded the Diploma.

### **1.1 Part 1 - MCQ Paper**

1.1.1 This comprises Multiple True/False Questions and Extended Matching Questions in one paper to be completed in two hours.

1.1.2 The papers sat at each of the colleges at any particular sitting are identical and are held simultaneously.

1.1.3 **Candidates should note that the attainment of Part 1 DO-HNS MCQ is not required for eligibility for attaining MRCS (ENT).**

### **1.2 Part 2 - OSCE**

1.2.2 The Part 2 OSCE comprises of 20 written/online stations and 4 clinical bays where candidates will be required to examine actors.

1.2.3 Each OSCE bay is normally of seven minutes' duration.

- 1.2.4 To facilitate the assessment of non-verbal communication skills and interaction with the examiner and patient (or actor in the role of the patient as the case may be), the Colleges will require candidates for the OSCE component to remove any clothing and/or other item which covers all, or part of, the candidate's face for the duration of the stations in question.
- 1.4 Candidates are not permitted to apply for a DO-HNS Part 2 examination when the exam sitting commencement date falls within six weeks of an examination date previously entered. This regulation is applicable across all four Surgical Colleges. Candidates who enter for an examination, with any College, within six weeks of a previous examination will forfeit their fee.
- 1.6 All parts of the examination will be conducted in English.
- 1.7 With effect from November 2013, Candidates will be entitled to a maximum of 6 attempts at the Intercollegiate DO-HNS Part 1, and a maximum of 4 attempts at the Intercollegiate DO-HNS Part 2. One additional attempt may be granted under the Additional Attempt Policy.
- 1.8 With effect from August 2014, candidates who have used 4 attempts at DO-HNS Part 2 will be permitted a further 4 attempts at MRCS Part B or 4 attempts at a combination of MRCS Part B (OSCE) and MRCS Part B (OCC – end date January 2016) or 6 attempts at MRCS B (OCC – end date January 2016) in order to achieve MRCS.
- 1.9 Candidates who have had 4 attempts at DO-HNS Part 2 for the award of the Diploma are not permitted further attempts at DO-HNS Part 2 in order to achieve MRCS (ENT).

## **2. Administration**

- 2.1 The MCQ paper is held up to three times a year. The examinations are held simultaneously at all centres.
- 2.2 The OSCE is held at one host centre up to three times a year in the UK and in Ireland. The host centre will rotate between The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, The Royal College of Surgeons of England, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.
- 2.3 The host centre will send out the OSCE programme to all candidates sitting in that diet.
- 2.4 The results will be issued by the College to which the candidate applied.

## **3. Entry to the Examination - Eligibility**

- 3.1 To be eligible to obtain the Intercollegiate DO-HNS, all candidates must:
- 3.1.1 hold a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for **Full or Provisional Registration** or to the Medical Council in Ireland for **Full or Temporary Registration**; overseas candidates must hold a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges; (prospective candidates who wish to check the acceptability of their medical degree should check the list of medical schools on the World Directory of Medical Schools on <http://search.wdoms.org/>. If the medical school does not appear on this list, candidates should contact the examinations department/section at the College to which they wish to apply for the examination);

- 3.1.2 Candidates who have been erased from the GMC register (or that of an equivalent international body) for reasons related to fitness to practise are not permitted entry to any MRCS examination.

Candidates who are suspended from practice by the GMC (or equivalent international body) and/or their employer are not permitted to apply for entry to any MRCS examination until the suspension has been lifted.

Candidates who are subject to any warnings, interim orders, undertakings or conditions on their practice from the GMC (or equivalent international body) and/or their employer must declare this information to the relevant College upon applying to any MRCS examination. Candidates are also required to disclose information as to why the condition or undertaking has been imposed. Any information provided may be checked with GMC (or equivalent) and/or their employer. This will be reviewed by the relevant College prior to the examination and will be taken into account in deciding whether a candidate is permitted to sit the examination. The relevant College's decision on these matters is final.

Candidates should note that failure to declare conditions, warnings, or suspension as required:

- at the time of application
- prior to the examination date for which they have entered, or
- when applying for election to membership

will result in penalties being applied as defined in the Intercollegiate Code of Conduct and Intercollegiate Misconduct regulations.

- 3.1.3 have complied with the regulations;

- 3.1.4 have paid the examination fee.

- 3.2 **First time applicants whose names do not appear on the Registers of the UK General Medical Council or Medical Council in Ireland** must submit their original certificate (or an authenticated copy) of a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges (see note under paragraph 3.1.1 above on checking eligibility of primary medical qualifications).

- 3.3 Candidates who pass Part 1 at a different College should forward the information required under 3.1 and 3.2 to the College from which they will receive the Diploma having passed Part 2.

#### **4. Timing**

- 4.1 Any candidate entering any part of the DO-HNS examination under these regulations is required to pass Part 2 of the examination within seven years of passing Part 1.

#### **5. Recommendations and Advice**

- 5.1 It is strongly recommended that before they apply for Part 1 of the Intercollegiate DO-HNS examination candidates should have been engaged in acquiring professional knowledge and training in Otolaryngology for at least 6 months in a full-time or equivalent part-time position after acquiring their basic medical qualification.

5.2 It is strongly recommended that candidates seek the advice of their Assigned Educational Supervisor, Programme Director or equivalent, before deciding when to take any part of the examination.

5.3 **This Diploma should not be confused with the Membership Diploma of the Surgical Royal Colleges. On successful completion of both the MRCS Part A and the DO-HNS Part 2 examinations, candidates may, if they wish, apply for a Membership Diploma (ENT): full details are contained in the MRCS (ENT) Regulations.**

## 6. Admission to the Examination

6.1 **Candidates should consult individual College websites or contact the examinations department/section of the relevant College for details of dates and venues for examinations.** Details of the examinations department/section of each of the four Colleges are to be found at the end of these regulations.

6.2 **Candidates can enter any Part of the examination through any College, but may only enter with one College at each sitting.** Any candidate who has entered an examination with more than one of the four Colleges at the same sitting will forfeit the fee for each additional application.

6.3 Application for entry to any part of the examination must:

6.3.1 be made on the appropriate (paper or electronic) application form;

6.3.2 be accompanied by the examination fee which must be received in full by the relevant College before a candidate is entered for the examination;

6.3.3 reach the examinations department/section of the appropriate College by the date specified in the examinations calendar. Applications received after the closing date will be returned.

6.4 If, exceptionally, a candidate is permitted to enter the examination without first having paid the specified examination fee and fails thereafter to pay the fee, the candidate shall not be permitted to take any further Part with any Surgical Royal College without payment of the outstanding fee or, if the unpaid fee relates to such a candidate's Final part of the examination, the relevant College reserves the right not to mark or assess that Part of the examination.

## 7. Proof of Identity

7.1 Candidates must bring proof of identity to each examination. Proof of identity must be an official document, such as a current passport or driving licence that includes their name, signature and a photograph.

7.2 For the purposes of visual identification, any candidate sitting any examination will be required to remove any clothing and/or other item which covers all, or part of, the candidate's face. The Colleges will observe sensitivity and, in specific circumstances privacy in the visual identification of candidates.

## **8. Withdrawal from the Examination**

- 8.1 A candidate who withdraws, in writing, an application for admission to any part of the examination may be refunded the fee paid (less an administrative fee of 20%) provided that notice of an intention to withdraw is received by the examinations department/section before the closing date by which applications are due, as shown in the examinations calendar. Refunds are not normally made to candidates who withdraw after the closing date.
- 8.2 Applications for consideration of a refund on medical grounds must be accompanied by a medical certificate and must cover the date of the examination. The application must be submitted within 14 days of the commencement of the examination. Applications approved on these grounds will be refunded 80% of the fee.
- 8.3 Applications for a refund on bereavement grounds must be accompanied by a death certificate and must be submitted within 14 days of the commencement of the examination. Applications will be considered for immediate family members only. Applications approved on these grounds will be refunded 100% of the fee.
- 8.4 Applications for consideration of a refund on compassionate grounds must be supported by the consultant or surgical tutor responsible for training. All such applications must be submitted to the examinations department/section of the appropriate College within 14 days of the commencement of the examination and will be refunded 80% of the fee.

From August 2022 onwards, candidates who withdraw on the grounds of having tested positive for Covid-19 and wish to apply for a refund (less an administrative fee of 20%) should provide evidence in the form of a letter from their consultant/trainer to confirm that they had been too ill to work at the time of the examination.

- 8.5 The Colleges reserve the right, regardless of eligibility to take the examination, to review applications on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances. For information on pregnancy and deferral see paragraph 14.
- 8.6 Candidates with special needs should advise the appropriate College at the time of application of the nature of their needs and any assistance that they require. Requests must be supported by medical evidence (an educational psychologist's report is required for requests for extra time because of dyslexia). If appropriate, details of extra time or other allowances made by other examining bodies should be given, although the Colleges are not bound to follow these.
- 8.7 Candidates should note that the four Royal Surgical Colleges operate a 'Fit to Sit' policy; if a candidate attends and takes an examination, they are declaring themselves fit to sit the examination and they will not be able to subsequently claim that their performance was affected by mitigating circumstances. Candidates will therefore need to take responsibility for deciding in advance whether they are unwell or facing other significant mitigating circumstances.

## **9. Results**

- 9.1 Results will be posted on the website and sent out in the post and/or by email by the examinations department/section of the College through which the candidate entered.
- 9.2 The Diploma will be issued by the College to which the candidate applied for the Part 2 examination that they passed.

- 9.3 Anonymised result data will be analysed for the purposes of standard setting, and anonymised result data may also be used for research purposes.
- 9.4 Result outcome data for UK trainees will be passed to HEE, on behalf of the four statutory education bodies, for recruitment purposes.

## **10. Feedback**

For Part 2 of the examination all candidates will receive a breakdown of their performance. No further feedback is available.

## **11. Appeals Mechanism**

Details of the appeals process and any fees charged may be obtained from the appropriate College.

## **12. Infringement of the Regulations**

The Colleges may refuse to admit to, or to proceed with, the examination of any candidate who infringes any of the regulations, or is considered by the examiners to be guilty of behaviour prejudicial to the proper management and conduct of the examination.

## **13. Improper Conduct by Examination Candidates**

- 13.1 In the case of improper conduct of an examination candidate as defined below, the four Colleges acting jointly may impose a penalty relating to the candidate's eligibility for the relevant or future examinations. Improper conduct is defined as:

- 13.1.1 Dishonestly obtaining or attempting to obtain entry to the examination by making false claims about eligibility for the examination or falsifying any aspects of the entry documentation.
- 13.1.2 Obtaining or seeking to obtain unfair advantage during an examination, or inciting other candidates to do the same. Examples of unfair advantage are: having on the person any material that would give advantage in an examination once the examination has commenced (this includes electronic communication devices), communicating or attempting to communicate with another candidate once the examination has commenced, refusing to follow the instructions given by examiners or examinations staff concerning the conduct of and procedure for the examination. This list is not exhaustive.
- 13.1.3 Removing or attempting to remove from the examination any confidential material relating to the conduct of the examination.
- 13.1.4 Obtaining or attempting to obtain confidential information concerning the examination from an examiner or examination official.
- 13.1.5 Passing confidential information on the content of the examination to a third party.

The list given above is not exhaustive.

13.2 If a candidate is found to have acted improperly his/her name may be reported to his/her national authority; the Colleges may decide that a candidate should not be allowed to proceed further with the examination.

#### **14. Notification of Pregnancy and Deferral**

14.1 A deferral may be permitted to any candidate supplying an appropriate medical report which satisfies the relevant College indicating that:

14.1.1 The candidate has any pregnancy-related problems or illness; and/or

14.1.2 The candidate's confinement is due shortly before or around the date of the examination; and/or

14.1.3 The candidate has sufficient discomfort for her to consider that it will have a detrimental affect on her performance.

14.2 In such circumstances, a deferral will be permitted and no further fee will be required.

14.3 Any candidate who does not inform the College of her pregnancy and is consequently unable to sit for that examination will not normally be allowed to defer this examination without submission of another fee.

**NOTE: These Regulations are under continual review. It is recommended that candidates keep in regular contact with their College to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information. Any changes will be announced on the College websites and [www.intercollegiatemrcsexams.org.uk](http://www.intercollegiatemrcsexams.org.uk).**

## **College Details**

### **The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh**

Examinations Section  
Nicolson Street  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9DW  
Tel: 0131 527 1600  
E-mail: [surgical.exams@rcsed.ac.uk](mailto:surgical.exams@rcsed.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.rcsed.ac.uk](http://www.rcsed.ac.uk)

### **The Royal College of Surgeons of England**

35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
London  
WC2A 3PE  
Tel: 0207 869 6281  
E-mail: [surgicalexams@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:surgicalexams@rcseng.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.rcseng.ac.uk](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk)

### **The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow**

232-242 Vincent Street  
Glasgow  
G2 5RJ  
Tel: 0141 221 6072  
E-mail: [exams@rcpsg.ac.uk](mailto:exams@rcpsg.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.rcpsg.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk)

### **The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland**

123 St Stephen's Green  
Dublin 2  
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Tel: 00353 1402 2221  
Email: [mrcsexams@rcsi.ie](mailto:mrcsexams@rcsi.ie)  
Web: [www.rcsi.ie](http://www.rcsi.ie)