

MRCS/DO-HNS Additional Attempts Frequently Asked Questions

All medical Royal Colleges and faculties are required by the General Medical Council (GMC) to introduce a limit on the number of attempts at their examinations. The maximum number of attempts allowed at each part of the MRCS/DO-HNS examinations is:

MRCS Part A (MCQ) – 6 attempts
MRCS Part B (OSCE) – 4 attempts.
MRCS Part B (OCC) – 6 attempts (end date 31 January 2016)
DO-HNS Part 1 (MCQ) – 6 attempts
DO-HNS Part 2 (OSCE) – 4 attempts

Candidates are also reminded that they should complete the examination process within a seven year time period as recommended by the GMC.

Does this policy apply to all candidates?

Yes, the additional attempts policy for MRCS/DO-HNS Examinations will apply to all candidates and ensures the same standard and fairness worldwide.

If I am absent or withdraw from an exam will it count as an attempt?

If a candidate has not attended the examination and is recorded as absent, this will NOT be recorded as an attempt. An attempt is only recorded when a candidate attends an examination. A withdrawal (as determined by the regulations on acceptable withdrawals) will also NOT be recorded as an attempt. Withdrawals are granted at the discretion of the relevant College's Head of Exams due to exceptional extenuating circumstances. These may include illness or bereavement and should be accompanied by a medical certificate or supported by the consultant or surgical tutor responsible for training. Please consult the regulations relating to your exam for full details.

What will happen to candidates who have reached the maximum number of attempts?

Candidates who have had the maximum number of attempts will not be eligible to attempt the examination again unless evidence of additional educational experience is provided. Following the final unsuccessful attempt, the candidate's Educational Supervisor will be required to confirm that the candidate has demonstrated an improvement in knowledge and skill so that a pass result is highly likely at the next attempt before the additional attempt is allowed.

How many additional attempts am I permitted?

Candidates are permitted a maximum of one additional attempt.

How do I apply for an additional attempt?

Candidates applying for the additional attempt beyond the maximum number permitted at any part of the MRCS/DO-HNS examinations will be required to submit a form signed by their Educational Supervisor* and Training Programme Director** (or equivalents) confirming that sufficient educational progress has been made to merit a subsequent attempt.

The process is intended to place the responsibility on candidates to discuss their training with their Educational Supervisor, to locate areas of weakness and discuss an educational plan designed to target these weak areas.

What do I do once the additional attempt application form is complete?

The completed form should be emailed by your Educational Supervisor/Training Director's email address to your chosen College of entry.

Relevant email addresses are:

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Email: examinations@rcsed.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons of England

Email: MRCS&DOHNS@rsceng.ac.uk

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

Email: mrcsb@rcpsg.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

Email: pgexams@rcsi.ie

Is there a time limit in which to sit the additional attempt?

Yes, there is a **one-year time limit** to use the additional attempt from the date you are notified that the additional attempt is granted.

* The definition of an Educational Supervisor is 'A trainer who is selected and appropriately trained to be responsible for the overall supervision and management of a specified trainee's educational progress during a training placement or series of placements.' This person, together with the candidate, should review the candidate's training. If the candidate is not attached to any such trainer, their application can be supported by a consultant (or equivalent) as long as the consultant was part of the process of review and agreement for additional learning.

** A Training Programme Director may be a UK specific term and the following definition is provided to help international candidates find a suitable equivalent: 'A Training Programme Director has responsibility for managing specialty training programmes. They take into account the collective needs of the trainees in the programme and provide support for educational supervisors. They contribute to the annual assessment outcome process in the Specialty and ensure that there is a policy for careers management which covers the needs of all trainees in their specialty programmes and posts'.

In absence of an official Training Programme Director it could be a senior medic within the employing hospital who has a role in training and therefore would have an understanding of MRCS/DO-HNS and the standards required. This is likely, in the UK, to be someone with the role of Director of Medical Education/Director of postgraduate education/Postgraduate tutor or similar.

What happens to candidates who are nearing the end of their eligibility period?

All candidates will still be subject to the 7-year eligibility rule. Candidates on more than six attempts will not be permitted to sit without providing evidence of additional educational experience, even if they are within the 7-year eligibility period.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure they have completed the exam process (including any additional attempts) within the 7-year time limit. Additional attempts are only open to those candidates who are still eligible to enter the examination.