Royal College of Psychiatrists
MRCPsych Examiner Code of Conduct

Introduction

1.1 MRCPsych examinations rely on Members and Fellows of the Royal College of Psychi atrists to be committed and professional in all aspects of MRCPsych examinations both in the UK and Overseas.

1.2 To maintain the quality and standards of our examinations, all aspects are monitored including the appointment and performance of examiners ensuring a rigorous initial training programme with an associated assessment, and an examiner refresher training programme which must be completed every 2 years whilst examining. Failure to complete refresher training means that an examiner’s status will be reviewed. Both training programmes include and ensure all examiners are compliant with relevant equality and diversity legislation. Examiners will be kept informed of any significant changes to the examinations during their tenure on the Board of Examiners.

1.3 Additionally, we monitor examiner performance at each Clinical examination and all examiners are given this feedback on their performance in comparison to the overall group of examiners. Additional feedback may arise from candidate complaints or findings at an Appeals Panel in order to further quality assure the process of examining.

1.4 MRCPsych examiners are expected to follow the Code of Conduct for RCPsych examiners which provides the framework against which any allegations of misconduct will be judged. In the event of any allegations of misconduct being made the RCPsych will follow the process in accordance with the appropriate College policy.

2. General standard of behaviour

2.1. All MRCPsych Examiners are expected to behave in a professional manner, befitting a Member/Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, whilst undertaking all duties associated with the examination. Adherence to the principles and values within GMC’s Good Medical Practice (https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-medical-practice) (or equivalent in overseas countries) is expected at all times. No examiner should be involved in legal/court proceedings involving their professional conduct with patients.

3. Interacting with candidates

3.1. RCPsych expects all examiners to behave in a way that is non-discriminatory in terms of attitudes, activities, assumptions, beliefs and abilities.

3.2. It is the responsibility for all examiners to refer to the Examiner Instructions and Information Booklet and ensure examiners are aware candidates may be nervous and they should endeavour to help them relax and have a positive examination experience.
3.3. The role and expectation of each examiner is to provide a consistent approach to each candidate’s encounter with role players and to the subsequent questioning, in a manner that helps candidates to show what they can do and what they know.

3.4. Examiners should allow the candidate to complete their clinical examination without interruption or direction, unless they are causing the role player discomfort.

3.5. Examiners should not make a remark to the candidate about their on-going performance. Performance judged to be good or bad should not be commented on. Examiners must not teach or coach candidates during their assessment.

3.6. Examiners should not discuss any aspect of the examination or a candidate’s performance with a candidate at any point during or after the MRCPsych Clinical examination.

3.7. Examiners should avoid making any physical contact with the candidate, for example, to guide them from one station to another.

3.8. MRPsych Clinical examinations candidates are from across the world, and therefore may not be familiar with local customs and practice in the centre at which they sit the examination. Examiners should all be sensitive to this fact but should not provide guidance to candidates on how they should approach patients.

4. Interacting with role players

4.1. Examiners should maintain an awareness of role player comfort and safety at all times.

4.2. If a role player is for any reason uncomfortable about participating in the examination, either before the circuit starts or during the circuit, examiners should facilitate the withdrawal of the role player by informing the chief invigilator.

4.3. The dignity and modesty of all role players must be respected at all times. Examiners should ensure that the degree of exposure of a role player is acceptable and is maintained throughout the circuit.

4.4. Examiners should ensure that anyone in contact with the role player observes the appropriate hygiene protocols, specifically regarding hand hygiene.

4.5. Examiners should be polite, courteous and professional in their approach to all role players during exam days.

5. Interacting with colleagues

5.1. Examiners are expected to act with respect for fellow examiners, clinicians and other staff within the team running the examination at all times.

5.2. If an examiner has any concern about the conduct or performance of a fellow examiner this should be brought to the attention of the examiner in
question, or, confidentially, to the chief invigilator on the day as soon as is possible.

6. Handling personal and sensitive data

6.1. Examiners are reminded to maintain strict confidentiality and not divulge the content of scenarios used in the examination, results, candidate performance or any other information relating to a candidate to any third party who does not have a right to such information.

6.2. Candidates - Examiners are expected to maintain the confidentiality of candidate results. This includes general indications of performance, as well as specific marks and grades.

6.3. Examination material - Examiners are expected to ensure the security of all scenarios, and station information before, during and after the examination.

7. Completion of marksheets

7.1. Candidates may request to be sent copies of their marksheets. Comments on the marksheets should, therefore, be avoided. Examiners should use the standard statements in the feedback section of the marksheet. Examiners should refer to the detailed statements for further guidance.

8. Participation in commercial activities

8.1. It is not acceptable for MRCPsych examiners to take part in commercially run (i.e. for profit) training courses. If a non-examiner takes part in such courses and is invited subsequently to become an examiner, it is on the understanding that such activity will cease.

8.2. It is not acceptable for examiners to write or contribute to non-college books or other materials, or any digital formats, or to re-edit or revise existing texts or other publications where the specific purpose is to help candidates prepare for any or all parts of the MRCPsych examinations.

8.3 Examiners should not use their College status to market non-College courses or products. The Head of Examinations, the Chief Examiner and the Examinations Sub-Committee will monitor external products.

9. Copyright and use of materials

9.1. Copyright of questions used in RCPsych Examinations belongs to the RCPsych. The MRCPsych questions are prepared and revised through the hard work of many College members and staff. Our aim is to produce valid, appropriate and well-prepared questions so that our examinations are fair and effective. Our question bank and reputation are threatened by unauthorised copying of exam questions. Examiners must report instances of infringement of copyright. Examiners should not divulge examination questions to outside organisations. The penalties for examiner misconduct regarding examination security will be considered by the College Disciplinary and Complaints Committee.
9.2 Examiners must agree not to publish any material which they have prepared for, or reviewed, in connection with the MRCPsych examinations for non-College products.

10. GMC reporting

10.1. Examiners should promptly inform the Head of Examinations if any limitations on practice are placed on them by the GMC (or the equivalent in the country in which they practice).

11. Appeals and Complaints

11.1. Any allegations of examiner misconduct will be investigated in a fair and transparent manner in line with the College Disciplinary and Complaints Committee.

11.2. It is often necessary to approach examiners for comment on candidate appeals and complaints, and examiners are expected to respond to any such approaches in an open and timely manner.

Examinations Sub-Committee
February 2019