

Theory Examinations Complaints Policy

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	June 2023	Theory Examinations Coordinator	New policy

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Approval: Theory exams team January 2025

Name	Date	Version	Comments
Theory exams team	January 2025	2.0	Reviewed policy to comply with new suppliers (TestReach & The British Council)

Relevant policies, templates and forms

The following policies, procedures and guidance should be used or referred to, when necessary, alongside this policy. All policies and templates are available on the RCPCH website once finalised and approved.

Name	Version	Last modified
Theory exams - how you sit your exam	N/A	January 2025
TestReach Exam Day Preparation	N/A	January 2025
MRCPCH and DCH: Regulations and Rules	2.1	August 2022
Examination Results MRCPCH/DCH Theory and Clinical examinations	1.3	August 2022

Theory Examinations Candidate Complaints Policy

1. Our policy

RCPCH aims to deliver all MRCPCH and DCH examinations to a high standard and to ensure that they are fair, transparent, and free from discrimination. The College strives to comply with best practice and is regulated in this regard by the General Medical Council (GMC). Final decisions regarding complaints, feedback or appeals received will be made in accordance with this policy and any other statutory requirements.

While the College aims to provide the highest level of service to the healthcare professionals accessing our examinations, the College recognises that, on occasion, its service may fall short of expectations. If an examination candidate for any of the RCPCH Theory examinations believes this has happened, they can use the complaints procedure to make a complaint. This outlines how to make a complaint and how it will be handled. All complaints received regarding the quality of delivery of a specific Theory examination will be dealt with in a consistent and equitable way.

Candidates making a complaint should only do so having read and agreed to the RCPCH Examinations regulations, including this Complaints policy.

Candidate complaints, and all accompanying statements and records, will be kept confidential as far as is possible, consistent with facilitating a fair and thorough investigation. Whilst candidates' privacy and confidentiality will be respected, this needs to be balanced with:

- The need for an open and fair investigation
- Any necessary remedial action being taken
- The outcomes of the investigation to be reported appropriately
- Actions to be taken to improve College processes and quality of service.

Candidate complaints may therefore need to be shared with other stakeholders who have been involved with the examination process and responsible for their design and delivery. Examples include invigilators and members of the RCPCH Examinations Board.

2. Scope of the policy

Candidates can submit a complaint about any aspect of the Theory examination process if they have evidence that published processes or procedures have not been followed correctly. Section 4 of the policy refers to making formal complaints about exam day issues only.

If a candidate wishes to submit a complaint not regarding to an exam day issue, they can do so via email at theoryexams@rcpch.ac.uk. These will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Theory Exams team.

3. Limits of the policy

The College excludes the following from its complaint process:

- If candidates allege unfairness of practice and process but do not supply evidence to substantiate their allegation. A non-exhaustive list of the evidence required can be found in sections 4a and 4b.
- Anonymous complaints or complaints sent on behalf of the candidate.
- Exam results cannot be changed as a form of remediation according to this policy.

4. a. How does a candidate make a complaint about an exam at a test centre?

If an issue arises on the day of a candidate's examination, the candidate should speak to the invigilator or test centre staff on duty at their examination centre. Any complaint issued to these identified leads will be documented by them on the day of the examination and will be submitted by them to the RCPCH Theory examinations team for further investigation.

All test centre candidates who wish to make a complaint are required to complete the complaint form on the booking system. This must clearly state all issues to be raised in the complaint.

b. How does a candidate make a complaint about an online exam?

Online invigilation candidates are required to raise any issues with the TestReach online proctor / tech support on the day as per the online invigilation candidate guidance.

For any candidate that submits a complaint to be eligible for the compensation, they **MUST** meet the following criteria:

- Systems checks must be completed before the exam, in the same environment and with the same equipment you will be using for the exam.
- All candidate guidance must be followed which includes the [Online Invigilation Candidate Guidance](#) and [TestReach Exam day preparation Guide](#)

If a candidate is unable to start the exam within 15 minutes of the start time, the exam will be voided with no refund.

We will not accept under any circumstances complaints relating to an exam after the results for that exam have been published. All complaint details must be reported on exam day following the complaints policy.

c. How to make a complaint using the booking system

All test centre and online candidates who wish to submit a formal complaint or provide feedback about an exam day issue **must use the booking system** to do so. All candidates who are sitting the exam for which they are scheduled will be eligible to make a complaint via the booking system from 12 pm GMT/BST on the day of the exam for 7 calendar days until 9 am the following day after the 7 days has elapsed.

If a complaint is made after this deadline, it will only be considered under extenuating circumstances, and we will ask for evidence where required.

If you submit a complaint and we require evidence, you will also be given a deadline to provide this further information. If the evidence required is not provided within this time, we will consider the complaint withdrawn.

Candidates attempting to submit a complaint informally by telephone or email **will not be considered for review**. Candidates will be advised to submit a complaint via the booking system, and it will be their responsibility to do so. If any candidate would like to make a general enquiry about the status of their complaint, withdraw their complaint, or ask for further information, they can email theoryexams@rcpch.ac.uk.

5. How RCPCH (the College) will manage complaints

Stage 1

The 7-day submission period in which candidates can make a complaint will open on exam day at 12 pm GMT/BST.

The Theory Exams team will assess the validity of the complaint during the time when state is showing as “**Complaint Accepted**”, “**Request More Information if necessary**”, and will assess whether the complaint meets the requirements as stated in the policy.

Stage 2

Once all supporting information has been collated it will be reviewed by the Theory Examinations Manager. A decision will be made at this stage on whether sufficient evidence has been submitted to investigate further. More complex cases will be forwarded to the Head of Theory and Standards. Depending on the severity of the complaint, the Head of Theory and Standards may decide to escalate it for review either through the Associate Director for Assessments, or the Officer for Examinations, and/or the RCPCH Examinations Board.

Stage 3

We aim to complete all investigations and reach an outcome of all complaints by the date the results are published online; however, more complex cases may require further escalation prior to review after this date.

Once an outcome has been reached, candidates will receive a formal outcome letter via email and state of the complaint will be updated to “**complaint – outcome communicated**” on the booking system. **All complaint outcome decisions are final.**

6. Withdrawal of complaints

A candidate can withdraw their complaint at any time by writing to theoryexams@rcpch.ac.uk regarding their complaint, quoting their RCPCH reference number, examination type, examination date and name of examination centre. The candidate's complaint will then be closed permanently and will not be reopened. The state of the complaint on the booking system will also be amended to ‘**complaint withdrawn**’ by the Theory Exams team.

7. Confidentiality, data protection and retention

Candidates are assured that they have an opportunity to raise matters of concern through the Complaint Procedures without risk of disadvantage or criticism.

The RCPCH Examinations Team recognises the importance of confidentiality when handling complaints and will maintain this as far as is possible during investigations.

Complainants' data will be anonymised when considering complaints, although it may on occasion be necessary to disclose a complainant's identity to progress an investigation further. Candidates who are not willing for their identity to be disclosed should make this clear within the complaint feedback form.

8. Outcomes

RCPCH examinations are undertaken by those wishing to demonstrate subject knowledge understanding and clinical decision-making abilities to ensure they have reached the standard of someone entering their specialist training. For this reason, competence cannot be assumed but must be clearly demonstrated by a pass grade in the examination.

Complaints requesting an adjustment to a candidate's score or result in any of the RCPCH Theory examinations will not be considered.

Under extenuating circumstances, candidates may receive compensation. This will usually only be offered to candidates that have failed the exam. It is extremely unusual to offer compensation to candidates who have passed.

Where a significant issue is identified that may have impacted on candidate performance whilst the outcome will stand, the examination sitting or attempt will not be counted and the details of the issue can be made available to the candidate's Education Supervisor, Head of School, specified overseas examination training body or, if required, ARCP Panel. This will only take place with the candidate's express permission/consent.

All candidate complaints will be filed for internal use only to make improvements to exam delivery. All candidate feedback will be taken into consideration for future exams, regardless of outcome.

Appendix 1

Online Invigilation Candidate Guidance

This guide is intended to help those candidates taking their exams using the online invigilation method.

Every effort is made to ensure the smooth running of your exam. However, on occasion, there may be technical problems that are beyond our control. Before calling us, we advise you to remain calm and work through the steps below that apply to you.

Before the exam day

Please ensure you have completed the systems check prior to the exam by using your given access code in the TestReach application.

We recommend that you complete the check on the devices you will be using to take the actual exam and at the location you will be taking it in for your exam setup to be checked. It would also be ideal that you complete the check at around the time you will be taking the actual exam.

If you do not pass systems checks prior to the exam you will not be able to access the exam.

On the exam day

Check that you are trying to connect at the right local time.

- For overseas candidates, all timings are in UK time so it is vital that you check you will be starting your exam at the right time:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

Check that you are using the correct link.

- The emails are automated and populated with specific links, so if you are sitting the Foundation of Practice AND Theory and Science, you may have two very similar emails – try going back to check the other one.

Check your internet connectivity.

- You can use a website such as www.speedtest.net to check your internet speed.
- The supplier recommends a minimum bandwidth of 2mbps+ upload speed, 10mbps download speed and ping under 25 ms. If you are unsure how to check your bandwidth there are a number of bandwidth testing sites that you can access online to test your bandwidth for you.

- If you are having problems but your internet connectivity is **above** the minimum required, we recommend taking a screenshot or sharing the link with the RCPCH Theory Exams team so we can pass this along to our supplier for further support.

If your internet connectivity is low, it may look like your messages are being delivered to the proctor. However, they may not receive them and will therefore not reply.

- Reboot the Wi-Fi router or try moving to a wired connection if you can.
- Restart a device that does not work.
- Close the TestReach app and re-enter your access code.

If things go wrong

Technical issues can still occur, even if you have carried out necessary preventative steps. Connection issues are the most common cause of an exam being interrupted, failing to start, or even voided. If there is an internet connection issue, candidates will not be considered for a refund. This is why it is essential to ensure that your technology and connection can support the exam.

If you have made every attempt to get in touch with tech support and/or the College, and you are still having technical problems that prevent you from completing the exam, you may be considered for compensation. In order to be considered, however, you **MUST** meet the following criteria:

- Systems checks must be completed before the exam, in the same environment and with the same equipment you will be using for the exam.
- Evidence of a speed test provided **on the day of the exam**, either a screen shot or link to results online at speedtest.net or a similar site.
- Guidelines for communicating technical issues must be followed:
- You must get in touch straight away with TestReach via the chat platform.
- If you are not able to access the chat support or resolve the problem within 15 minutes, you should get in touch with RCPCH via theoryexams@rcpch.ac.uk.
- All candidates via online invigilation, are required to begin the exam within **15 minutes of the published start time**. If you are not able to start the exam within 15 minutes of the start time and have not got in touch with TestReach chat support to resolve any issues, we will void the exam, and you will not be entitled to any compensation.

Please refer to complete guides below

[Remote proctoring candidate guide](#)

[RCPCH Remote invigilation candidate instructions](#)