EXAMINATION COMPLAINT / FEEDBACK POLICY AND FORM
Revision History

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**Review date:** July 2017 and then every year thereafter during the relevant Examinations Executive Committee

**Approval:** Examinations Executive Committee November 2018

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**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.

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Introduction

This policy consists of:

- A policy ‘Examinations’ Candidate Complaints / Feedback Policy,’
- A complaint/feedback form ‘Theory Examination Candidate Complaint / Feedback Form’ - Annex 1
- A complaint/feedback form ‘Clinical Examination Candidate Complaint / Feedback Form’ - Annex 2
Examinations Candidate Complaints / Feedback Policy

1. Our Policy

RCPCH (The College) through its Examinations Team 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 received will be made in accordance with this policy and any other statutory requirements.

Whilst the College tries to respond to the wishes and aspirations of the healthcare professionals accessing our examinations, the College recognises that, on occasion, its service may fall short of expectations. If an examination candidate for MRCPCH and DCH examinations believes this has happened, they can use this complaints procedure, which outlines how to make a complaint and how it will be handled. All complaints received regarding the quality of delivery of a specific 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 Complaint Procedure.

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 candidate’s 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 outcome of the investigation to be reported appropriately
- Action to be taken to improve the College’s processes and quality of service.

Candidate complaints may therefore need to be shared with others who have been involved with the examination process and responsible for their design and delivery.

2. Scope of the policy

Candidates can complain about any aspect of the examination process if they have evidence that published processes or procedures pertaining to their examination have not been followed correctly.

3. Limits of the policy

The College excludes the following from its complaints process:

(a) if the candidates disagree with the principle or content of the examination process, or its outcomes. The RCPCH have a separate process of appeal against clinical examination result decisions (Appendix J - Clinical Examination Appeals) as well as a process to request a re-mark of a theory examination (Appendix I - Re-marking of theory exam)

(b) if candidates allege unfairness of practice and process but do not supply evidence to substantiate their allegation
(c) anonymous complaints or complaints sent on behalf of the candidate. If an issue arises on the day of a candidate’s examination, the candidate must speak to the Senior Examiner (clinical examination) or Lead Invigilator (theory examination) on duty at their examination centre. These individuals can be identified by approaching any member of staff present on the examination day to enquire. Any complaint issued to these identified leads will be documented on the day of the examination and submitted to the RCPCH Examinations Team for further investigation. The results of the relevant examination will not be altered even if the complaint is upheld. It is however possible that other forms of acknowledgement of an issue could be provided if a complaint is upheld, for example the examination attempt not being counted, and a candidate’s seven-year registration period being extended.

4. How does a candidate make a complaint?

Candidates who wish to submit a complaint or provide feedback are invited to complete an RCPCH examination complaint/feedback form.

Candidates attempting to submit a complaint informally by telephone or email will be requested to use the standard form as it ensures consistent and appropriate investigations are conducted.

The sooner a candidate makes a complaint, the easier it is to investigate, and the sooner the College can address a candidate’s concerns or potential issues with service delivery.

For these reasons, complaints must be submitted within 72 hours of the incident complained of. Please note that any complaint submitted after this deadline will not be reviewed by the Examinations Team unless there are extenuating circumstances that account for the delay. Documented evidence supporting reasons for delay in submitting complaints within the 72-hour time frame would need to be provided with the complaint.

Please note the following for Theory Examinations:

- BTL is the College’s test centre and software provider. To notify them of an issue or incident - Complete BTL Incident Form at the test centre on the day of the exam. Failure to formally raise an issue and complete a BTL Incident Form may impact on the outcome of a complaint investigation.

- Formal complaint procedure – Complete RCPCH Examination Complaint Form and send to RCPCH within 72 hours of the incident attached with BTL Incident Form from the day of the exam.

Please note the following for Clinical Examinations:

- RCPCH Senior Examiners monitor the standard of exam delivery at each clinical exam centre. If candidates experience any issue on the day of a clinical exam they must notify the Senior Examiner at that centre at the end of their exam. The Senior Examiner should add details of the concern into the Senior Examiner Report Form for the centre. Failure to formally raise an issue with the Senior Examiner at the exam centre at the end of the exam may impact on the outcome of a complaint investigation.

- Formal complaint procedure – Complete RCPCH Examination Complaint Form and send to RCPCH within 72 hours of the incident indicating on the form that you had raised your concerns with the Senior Examiner at your clinical exam centre.
5. How RCPCH (the College) will manage a candidate's complaint

Stage 1

The College will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of its receipt and confirm whether a candidate's complaint falls within the scope of this policy. If there are particular requirements which the candidate should have followed, but has not, the College will advise the candidate that the subject matter of their complaint falls outside the scope of this complaint procedure.

The College recognise that complaints vary in complexity, and in investigating them the College may need information from a variety of individuals. The College aims to answer complaints as swiftly as possible and will update the candidate as soon as it can as to the expected completion date for the investigation of their complaint.

For complex complaints an official response will be sent within 35 working days from the examination date. The College will endeavour to provide the candidate with an update on the progress of their complaint during this time period along with an estimated completion date if possible.

Should for any reason there be a delay in sending the official complaint response as detailed directly above, the RCPCH Examinations Team will contact the complainant by email to inform them of the reason for the delay and provide assurance that the issue is continuing to be investigated providing a revised estimated completion date.

It should be noted that results for the vast majority of examinations will be published within each candidate's online account during the complaint's response time frame referenced directly above. Candidates should be assured that even though a result has been issued, their complaint will continue to be properly investigated.

RCPCH computer-based examination scores and grades are not processed automatically. Results analysis is undertaken once all results are extracted and the review of all centre invigilator reports has been completed. There are further results review meetings that are held following the examination date to ensure focused scrutiny of question/scenario/examiner performance.

Stage 2

The relevant Examination Administrators/relevant Exam Coordinator and the Examinations Manager will all be involved in the investigation of the candidate’s complaint, and will gather facts relevant to the complaint, ensuring that the information gathered is accurate and complete. RCPCH Examination Team staff will refer to all key documentation. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Examinations Manager may decide to escalate it for review by the Officer for Examinations and the Director of Education and Training.

Theory Examinations

For all RCPCH theory examinations the relevant test centre invigilator reports will be scrutinised. The College will contact the examination programme and test centre network provider to gather further details on how the examination system performed on the examination day and further test centre statements if required.

If necessary, the RCPCH Psychometric Team and Senior Clinicians representing the Angoff judging panel will be informed of the complaint to ensure that review of specified
questions is undertaken if required. This review will be documented and referenced within the complaint response.

**Clinical Examinations**

For all RCPCH clinical examinations, the relevant examination centre Senior Examiner’s report will be scrutinised. The relevant administrator may also contact the relevant clinical examination host / host team and senior examiner to gather further statements related to observations of the examination day. All complaints will be raised at the relevant Clinical Examination Board.

Clinical Examination Boards are meetings held at the RCPCH where the Senior Examiner present at all clinical examinations from within a fixed examination week or examination event submit a report to be reviewed, and endeavour to attend to discuss any issues that were experienced on the examination day.

The response from the College will contain reasons for either upholding or rejecting the candidate’s complaint. Where the Examinations Team has upheld the candidate’s complaint and proposes a remedy, the Examinations Manager will provide confirmation to the candidate regarding this remedy. In addition, if the complaint is upheld, the action taken and the lessons learned or to be learned will be logged for future purposes.

### 6. Withdrawal of complaints

A candidate can withdraw their complaint at any time, by writing to the relevant RCPCH Exam Team member of staff that the candidate has been directly corresponding with 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 re-opened.

### 7. Confidentiality, data protection and retention

Candidates are assured that they have the 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.

Complainant’s 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.

In line with RCPCH data management policies, all materials relating to complaints will be deleted upon completion of MRCPCH/DCH qualification.

### 8. Outcomes

RCPCH examinations are taken by those wishing to demonstrate subject knowledge understanding and clinical decision-making abilities to ensure they have reached the standard of someone entering their core specialist training. For this reason, competence cannot be assumed but must be clearly demonstrated by a pass grade in the examination. It is not the policy of the RCPCH to adjust examination grades unless there is evidence of an error in marking (see below).
Complaints requesting an adjustment to a candidate’s grades will not be accepted / considered.

Where a significant issue is identified that would 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 Educational 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. If appropriate a candidate’s seven-year registration period may also be extended.

As previously stated the official RCPCH response to submitted complaints will be sent within 35 working days from the examination date.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint, there is provision for further review through the following routes.

9. Theory Examinations Re-Marking Procedure

Please refer to the guidance for issuing a request for a re-mark for a candidate’s theory examination - Appendix I - Re-marking of theory exam

10. Clinical Examinations Appeals Panel

Please refer to the guidance for issuing an appeal against a candidate’s clinical examination outcome - Appendix J - Clinical Examination Appeals

Ultimately, it is up to candidates if they believe they have a complaint, to submit a complaint if they so wish, in line with the RCPCH Examinations Candidate Feedback/Complaints Policy (as above).
Examinations Complaints & Feedback Form

This form should be used to provide feedback about examinations at the RCPCH or to lodge a formal complaint about an exam or related issue. Formal complaints will be responded to as per the complaint procedure detailed above.

If you wish to request a re-mark of your theory examination result or make an appeal against your clinical examination result after it has been published, you should refer to the following relevant policies, which are on the website at www.rcpch.ac.uk/exams-regulations.

‘Appendix J. Clinical examination appeals policy.v.1.2’
‘Appendix I. Theory examination re-marking policy.v.1.1’

Please note that any information candidates submit on this form will be received in the strictest confidence and dealt with entirely separately from the RCPCH marking and results delivery process.

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<tr>
<td>RCPCH Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
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<td>Last Name</td>
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<td>Contact Email Address</td>
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<td>Daytime Telephone Number</td>
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<tr>
<th>RCPCH Examination Details (please tick relevant box below)</th>
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<td>TAS ☐</td>
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<td>AKP ☐</td>
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<td>MRCPCH Clinical ☐</td>
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<td>DCH Clinical ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam Centre</td>
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<td>Exam Date</td>
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Please confirm if you are providing feedback or lodging a formal complaint. A formal complaint must follow the guidelines of the RCPCH Examinations Complaints Procedure and must be submitted within 72 hours of the incident taking place.

| Please tick | Feedback ☐ | Formal Complaint ☐ |
Details of your complaint or feedback
Please keep to no more than 1 side of A4 (hand-written or typed separately in no smaller than 11-point font).
*Theory Exams: Please indicate on this form if you raised your concerns on the day of the exam with an invigilator
*Clinical Exams: Please indicate on this form if you raised your concerns on the day of the exam with the Senior Examiner

Confirmation
Please sign and date this form. An electronic signature is not acceptable. The form should be printed, signed, and scanned for return to exams@rcpch.ac.uk.

I confirm that the account provided in this form is an accurate account of my experience in relation to examinations at the RCPCH.

Signed:

Date: