Revision History

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**Review date:** July 2019 and then every year thereafter during the relevant Examinations Executive Committee with input from the RCPCH Information Systems Team.

**Approval:** August 2019

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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.

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Appendix J – Clinical Examination Appeals

The RCPCH Examinations Team aims to deliver the MRCPCH and DCH clinical examinations to the highest standards. There may be times where unexpected incidents occur. Disruption can occur on examination days which can impact on candidate performance.

What MRCPCH/DCH Clinical candidates can appeal against

The RCPCH Examinations Team will only investigate appeals where there is evidence of:

- Procedural irregularity in the delivery of the examination which may have adversely affected a candidate’s performance; or
- Other exceptional circumstances for which clear evidence must be provided as soon as possible after the examination day;

Candidates are reminded that there is a right of withdrawal from examinations and that by appearing on the day of examination to take the examination they are certifying themselves as fit to do so.

What MRCPCH/DCH Clinical candidates cannot appeal against

Appeals based on the following grounds will not be accepted:

- failing the examination by a narrow margin
- questioning academic or professional judgement
- previous candidate performance in the workplace or other examinations
- candidate position in training

Disagreeing with marks awarded by examiners does not constitute grounds for appeal. The MRCPCH/DCH Clinical Appeals Panel will not review decisions made by examiners regarding candidate marks in MRCPCH/DCH Clinical encounters at which they were not present. The Appeals Panel will therefore not award additional marks to a candidate’s score in a MRCPCH/DCH Clinical examination.

Procedure Candidates Must Follow to Have Their Appeal Considered

In order for an appeal to be considered by the RCPCH, a candidate must have:

- Raised the irregularity or exceptional circumstance on exam day with the Senior Examiner or Host; and
- Submitted an RCPCH candidate complaints form to the RCPCH Exams Team within 72 hours of the relevant exam date; and
- Submitted their appeal form within the time frame listed below.

Candidates must ensure they have raised any concerns they have about their exam with the Senior Examiner at the end of their exam circuit. This should then be entered into the Senior Examiner Report form. Additionally, MRCPCH/DCH Clinical candidates must have submitted a completed RCPCH Candidate Complaint Form within 72 hours of their examination date in order for an appeal to be considered. If you have submitted a completed complaints form, please include whether you raised your concern with the Senior Examiner and please include the details of what you discussed with the Senior Examiner on the day.

MRCPCH and DCH clinical examination candidates sitting the exam in the UK who wish to appeal against an aspect of their clinical examination must do so within 7 working days of the results letters being sent out (calculated from the date of the letter/email). Candidates sitting
the exam Overseas who wish to appeal must do so within 3 weeks of the results letters being sent out. Appeals received after the deadline will not be considered.

The RCPCH provides copies of mark sheets to all MRCPCH and DCH Clinical examination candidates. In line with GMC recommendations (Standards for Curricula and Assessment) these are intended to provide feedback to help candidates improve their skills. It is therefore strongly recommended that all candidates discuss/share their mark sheet feedback with their educational supervisor, sponsor or senior colleague before submitting any appeal.

MRCPCH and DCH candidates who raise any concerns they may have had on their examination day and/or have submitted a complaint form within 72 hours of their examination date will already have had their concerns reviewed at the Clinical Examination Board (CEB), led by the Chair of the MRCPCH/DCH Clinical Examination, prior to the issue of results.

This process entails the Senior Examiners from each centre and key College staff looking in close detail at the Senior Examiner Report Form, complaints/feedback provided by candidates, examiners, patients and host team staff and any important examiner comments included on candidate mark sheets. Psychometric analysis of examination results data is also reviewed.

Appeals Panels will be convened as soon as possible after the Appeals submission deadline. Appeals Panel meetings are scheduled around the UK MRCPCH/DCH Clinical examination dates, therefore an overseas candidate lodging an appeal in the second diet of any given year (e.g. May) may have to wait longer for the appeal to be considered.

Submissions to the Appeals Panel must include:

- A completed Appeals Form. The form should include the circumstances of the appeal. Please provide details for each station you tick on the form stating clearly why you wish to appeal against an aspect of your examination experience in the/these station/s. Appeals Panel have determined that all Appeals forms are limited to no more than 1000 words in total. If any letter is received that exceeds these criteria, the additional text will be disregarded. Testimonials, letters of support, or any additional documents and materials not on the appeals form will not be considered by the Appeals Panel and should not be submitted.

- A sterling (£) cheque for the correct appeals fee (the current fee is published on our website) made payable to the ‘Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health’. We are currently unable to process card payments for clinical exam appeals. Appeals received without the correct fee will not be considered.

Please submit your completed form and cheque or bank draft to the address below:

MRCPCH/DCH Clinical Examinations
Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health
5-11 Theobalds Road,
London
United Kingdom
WC1X 8SH

Please write your RCPCH number and exam centre on the back of the bank draft. It should be sent by registered post (DHL, UPS, Royal Mail trackable) so that you can track delivery. Please take a photograph/scan/photocopy of the bank draft and proof of postage before sending, for your records and keep a note of the tracking number.
Investigation of appeal

The process for investigating appeals is:

- The RCPCH Exams Team will carry out an initial review to consider whether their appeal is based on the criteria above. The candidate will be informed if it is considered that there are no grounds for appeal and their Appeals cheque will be returned to them.
- Where an appeal has grounds for further review, it will be fully investigated by RCPCH staff assigned by the RCPCH Examination Executive Committee. Invigilators, examiners or other individuals present on the exam day may be contacted for comments. These will be included in a summary report which is submitted to the Appeals Panel for review.
- The Appeals Panel will decide whether the appeal should be upheld based on this evidence.
- A decision will be communicated to candidates as soon as possible.

The Appeal Process

The Appeals Panel consists of 3 or 4 experienced examiners and is chaired by the Officer for Examinations. In the event that the Officer for Examinations is unable to chair the panel, a suitable deputy would be appointed such as the Chair of the MRCPCH Clinical/DCH Chair. None of the Panel members will have acted as examiners for the cases that they review.

The Panel considers all appeals carefully, reviewing all of the evidence submitted and gathered in detail. If an appeal is related to the running of the examination, additional information will be sought from the host centre and senior examiner. Candidates are therefore advised to bring to the attention of the Senior Examiner any matters relating to problems with their exam on the day of their examination so that these can be included in the Senior Examiner Report submitted to the subsequent CEB.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges has scrutinised each member college’s appeals procedures and have recommended that appeals on academic grounds should not be allowed as this undermines the examiner’s role. Following this recommendation ensures colleges are compliant with the GMC’s requirements as specified in Standards for Curricula and Assessment regarding “The Role of the Assessor.”

Appeals cannot be upheld on grounds relating to the personal circumstances of candidates on the day. If candidates are acutely unwell or otherwise indisposed, they should not sit the examination and should explain their situation to the Senior Examiner.

Outcome of Appeals

There are two possible outcomes for appeals:

- **Not upheld** – candidates will receive a formal letter explaining the decision not to uphold their appeal (the majority of appeals are not upheld);
- **Upheld** – the attempt is expunged from the candidate’s record and Appeals Panel will determine an appropriate refund amount (in part or in full). A free attempt for a future examination date may be considered

Candidates will normally be informed of the outcome of their appeal by email within 2-3 days of the Panel meeting. This may take longer where additional investigation is required. An explanation of the Panel's findings will be sent in writing approximately 4 weeks after a Panel meeting.
Candidates should note that this decision is final and constitutes the end of the process. No further correspondence will be considered.

Candidates are asked not to telephone the College during this time. College staff are not able to inform candidates of the outcome of their appeal over the phone.

Candidates who are successful on appeal and have submitted a cheque to cover the fee will have their appeal fee cheque returned to them with their outcome letter.

To see all MRCPCH and DCH examination rules and regulations, go to www.rcpch.ac.uk/exam-rules