



THEORY EXAMINATIONS COMPLAINTS POLICY

Revision History

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

Review date: July 2023 and then every year thereafter during the relevant Examinations Board

Approval: RCPCH Examinations Board July 2023

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Theory Examinations Board	July 2023	1.0	New Policy

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	Date
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

The 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.

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 any of the RCPCH Theory examinations believes this has happened, they can use the 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 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 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 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 pertaining to their examination have not been followed correctly. Section 4 of this policy refers to making formal complaints about exam day issues only.

If a candidate wishes to submit a complaint not regarding 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 complaints process:

- (a) 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.
- (b) Anonymous complaints or complaints sent on behalf of the candidate.
- (c) **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 on the day of the examination and submitted to the RCPCH Theory Examinations Team for further investigation.

All test centre candidates who wish to make a complaint are required to complete a “Candidate Incident Form” as evidence on exam day to support their formal complaint. This must clearly state all issues raised in the complaint, which must be agreed upon as true by both the candidate and a test centre member of staff. Both parties must then sign the incident form. If it is not possible to come to an agreement with test centre staff, or if the complaint is about the behaviour of test centre staff for example, details of what happened will need to be provided to the RCPCH directly using the complaint form on the booking system.

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

Online invigilation candidates will need to raise any issues with the online proctor or tech support as per the online invigilation candidate guidance.

Online candidates are required to get in touch with tech support or the RCPCH immediately due to technical issues on the day. For any candidate that submits a complaint to be eligible for 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.
- Evidence of a speed test provided on the day of the exam, either a screenshot or link to results online at speedtest.net or a similar site.
- Guidelines for contacting us must be followed - refer to the Online Invigilation Candidate Guidance (appendix 1)

Candidates experiencing technical issues should get in touch with tech support. If we have not heard from candidates who are unable to start within 30 mins of the start time within 45mins we will void the exam.

We will not accept under any circumstances complaints after the results 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 they are scheduled for will be eligible to make a complaint via the booking system from 12pm GMT/BST on exam day for **7 days** until 9am GMT/BST the following Thursday. 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 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 12pm GMT/BST. Complaints coming in after seven days or via email will not be considered for compensation unless in extenuating circumstances.

The Theory Exams team will assess the validity of the complaint, 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 Exams Manager. A decision will be made at this stage on whether sufficient evidence has been submitted to investigate further. More complex cases will be further reviewed by 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 or review after this date.

Once an outcome has been reached, candidates will receive a formal outcome letter via email and the 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 re-opened. 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.

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.

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 specialist training. For this reason, competence cannot be assumed but must be clearly demonstrated by a pass grade in the examination.

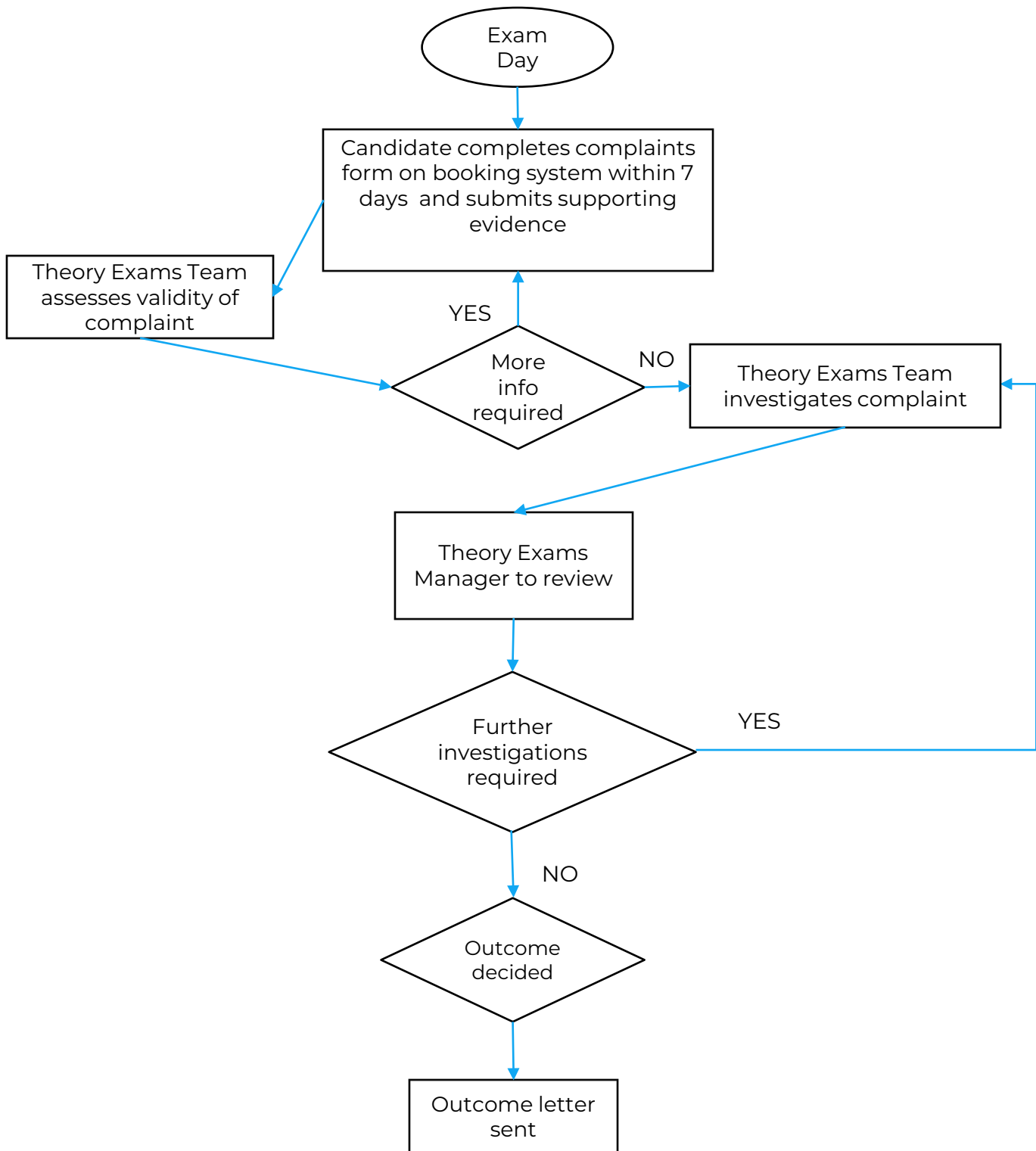
Complaints requesting an adjustment to a candidate's score or result in any of the RCPCH Theory Examinations will not be considered.

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 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.

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 the outcome.

Theory Exam Complaints



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.

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. It would also be ideal that you complete the check at around the time you will be taking the actual exam.

Systems check links only work once so if you are having problems with the first, please use the second link. If you do not have a second link, you will need to contact us.

On the exam day

- Check that you are trying to connect at the right local time
 - o 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
 - o The emails are automated and populated with specific links, so if you are sitting the two papers of the Applied Knowledge in Practice Examination, or Foundation of Practice AND Theory and Science, you may have 2 very similar emails – try going back to check the other one
- Check your internet connectivity
 - o You can use a website such as, www.speedtest.net to check your internet speed.
 - o The supplier recommends a 1.5mbps or higher upload speed, 10mbps download speed and a ping under 25 ms.
 - o 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 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

Appendix 1

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 Surpass and Proctor Exam tabs and re-launch from the email (Surpass saves your answers every 60 seconds, so you will not lose any answers)

If things go wrong

Technical issues can still occur, even if you have carried out the necessary preventative steps. Connection issues are the most common cause of an exam being interrupted, failing to start, or even voided. This is why it's essential to ensure 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 which 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 Proctor Exam Tech Support via the chat platform
 - if you are not able to access the chat support, or resolve the problem within 30mins, please in touch with RCPCH via onlineinvigilation@rcpch.ac.uk
 - all candidates both at test centres and via online invigilation are required to begin the exam within **30mins of the start time**, if you are not able to start the exam within 30mins from the start time and have not got in touch with the RCPCH (not Proctor chat support) for support to resolve any issues, we will void the exam and you won't be entitled to compensation

If you have tried everything and are continuing to experience problems, please email: onlineinvigilation@rcpch.ac.uk including your RCPCH number and all details about the problem along with what you have already tried to fix the problem.