

Currency and number of attempts in MRCPCH examinations

(Including FAQs)

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Revision History

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1.0	March 2013	Examinations Manager/ Vice President of Training & Assessment	Published Policy
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Name	Date	Version	Comments
Examinations Executive Committee	November 2018	1.5	
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Examinations Board	March 2024	1.9	
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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.

Name	Version	Date
MRCPCH and DCH: Regulations and Rules	2.2	August 2019
MRCPCH Further Attempt Application Form	1	July 2022
MRCPCH 7 Year Extension Application Form	1	September 2024

Currency and number of attempts in MRCPCH examinations

In order to grant a Certificate of Training (CCT), the General Medical Council (GMC) must be confident that the doctor has demonstrated the competencies set out in the specialty curriculum through assessments including national professional examinations. In 2012 the GMC undertook a review, with various stakeholders, considering the areas of currency, timings and number of attempts. The GMC determined that there will be a limit on the number of attempts allowed in examinations and also set limitations on how long an examination will be considered 'current' (currency). This document outlines the way in which these rules will be enacted by the RCPCH.

Who do these rules apply to?

The following rules apply to all candidates - both in the UK and internationally.

Where a CESR application is made, using MRCPCH within the evidence for eligibility, the rules relating to currency of the examination will be applied retrospectively.

When will these rules become active?

The above rules came into effect from 1st July 2014 for all doctors seeking to use MRCPCH as part of the evidence of successful completion of Level 1 training (ST1-3), or for entry to Level 2 training (via ST4). These rules applied to all aiming for recommendation for accreditation on the Specialist Register in Paediatrics (including those wishing to gain sub-specialty recognition) via the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT), the Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration through the Combined Programme (CESR CP), or the Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR), these rules apply whenever or wherever the examinations are taken. These rules continue to apply as part of the Progress+ training pathway for doctors seeking to use MRCPCH as evidence of completion of core training (ST1-4) and for entry into specialist training (ST5-7) for those in UK run-through training.

From 1st September 2024, these rules were extended to cover all other candidates, both in the UK and internationally, making an attempt at an MRCPCH examination and amended in relation to the candidate 7-year exam registration period.

Number of attempts

Each examination candidate will be allowed up to 6 attempts at each part of MRCPCH.

The RCPCH, with guidance from the GMC, made the decision to begin to count candidate examination attempts for UK trainees as described above from any examination taken on or after 1st July 2014. Any previous attempts at examinations before July 2014 will not be counted.

For candidates taking the MRCPCH examinations for other purposes of personal or professional development, and candidates taking the MRCPCH examinations overseas if the doctor does not intend to seek entry into the UK training programme towards CCT or CESR (CP), the RCPCH have made the decision to count candidate examination attempts from any examination taken on or after 1st September 2024. Any previous attempts at examinations before September 2024 will not be counted.

Candidates should note that, if they have made unsuccessful attempts at an examination whilst in a UK training programme between July 2014 and September 2024, these attempts will not be nullified if they drop out of a UK training programme. As such, such candidates will not be subject to the condition above stating that their previous attempts before September 2024 will not be counted.

If a candidate fails an examination on 6 occasions, that candidate must provide the RCPCH with evidence of additional educational experience before further attempts at that examination will be allowed.

In the UK, evidence of additional educational experience should come from the Deanery/LETB, and will usually be provided by the educational supervisor. Documented evidence of additional learning must be accompanied by a statement explaining why it is reasonable to believe that this materially improves the candidate's chance of success in that part of the examination, examples of which include additional revision time, attendance at preparation courses peer support etc. The RCPCH will consider this additional educational experience justifies further attempts at the examination. This decision will be made by the RCPCH Officer for Examinations and the Examinations Manager.

For candidates overseas, the necessary evidence and the reasoning should be provided by the centre or agency overseeing the training programme. This would apply across all MRCPCH examination types (FOP, TAS, AKP, MRCPCH Clinical).

We strongly recommend that any candidates who have failed 3 attempts in any MRCPCH examination should seek help and support from trainers and supervisors in their place of work

as soon as possible. Additionally, the Theory exams team recommends a break of one diet before making another attempt following three failures at a Theory exam. In the UK, help and advice should be available with the training programme (e.g. Educational Supervisor, Clinical Supervisor, Royal College Tutor, or Deanery Training Programme Director). Overseas-based candidates may have similar support networks but may also wish to call upon their sponsors for help and support.

Candidates who do not attend an exam will not have this counted as an attempt. An attempt is defined as an occasion when a candidate commences, but does not necessarily complete, any MRCPCH Theory examination (FOP, TAS or AKP) or MRCPCH Clinical examination.

Candidates who are diagnosed with a condition that would require a reasonable adjustment after an unsuccessful exam attempt may request additional attempts for the component of the exam at which they were unsuccessful equal to the number of attempts taken for that component of the exam prior to their diagnosis.

How to apply for further attempt/s after having six attempts at an examination:

Discuss your past examination attempts with your educational supervisor (or equivalent) to locate the areas of persistent weakness and produce and implement an educational plan designed to target these weak areas.

Once additional educational experience has been undertaken, discuss with your educational supervisor (or equivalent) when you should attempt the examination again.

Once you have identified which examination you should next attempt, complete the 'Further Attempt' application form.

Your Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director (or equivalents) must complete and sign the form confirming that you have demonstrated an improvement in knowledge and skill so that a pass result is highly likely at the next attempt.

For candidates outside the UK, or who are not in a training programme in the UK, you should provide evidence of your improvement in knowledge, such as a learning plan that you have followed, and have an appropriate colleague, such as your employer, sign this off in the additional attempt form. If you are not sure who should sign off your additional learning in the additional attempt form, please contact the relevant RCPCH Exams team to discuss this.

If the further attempt form is in relation to a Theory examination (FOP/TAS/AKP) then completed forms should be sent via email to theoryexams@rcpch.ac.uk.

If the further attempt form is in relation to the MRCPCH Clinical examination then completed forms should be sent via email to clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk.

Once the form has been received it will be verified by the RCPCH and reviewed by the Head of the relevant team and the Officer for Examinations. This review process will take up to 20 working days.

Should there be agreement that sufficient evidence has been provided, restrictions will be removed from your record on the college database; this will take no longer than 10 working days from a decision being made. You will then be able to apply online to take the examination at the next application period.

For more information on this process please contact the relevant team using the relevant email address above.

Currency of an examination

The currency, or validity, of an examination refers to the time period over which the examination pass may be used for progression within the UK training programme.

MRCPCH is used as part of the evidence of successful completion of Level 1 training, and is required for progression towards Level 2 training. Success in MRCPCH may be used for entry into ST5 for a maximum period of 7 years from the date on which you sat and passed the MRCPCH Clinical examination.

Currency is not absolute and exceptions may be made. This will require application to the RCPCH by the candidate, supported by their Deanery/LETB or the agency overseeing their training. For instance: a period of over 7 years may be accepted if a doctor who achieves MRCPCH then works, for example overseas, in clinical practice that is similar to or complements the experience that they would have gained if they had remained in UK training into ST4 or beyond.

Rules for progression

Examination candidates will be eligible for entry into the MRCPCH Clinical examination only if they have successfully completed all parts of the Theory examinations. Once all Theory

examinations are passed at least one of these examinations must have been successfully completed within the last 7 years in order for a candidate to be eligible to sit the MRCPCH Clinical. If a candidate has not passed any one of the Theory examinations within the last 7 years and is still yet to pass the MRCPCH Clinical then the candidate will be required to successfully resit/complete the Applied Knowledge in Practice Theory examination before they would be eligible to apply for any further attempts at the MRCPCH Clinical examination. Therefore, once passed, the Foundation of Practice/Part 1A/Part 1 (pre January 2004) and Theory and Science/Part 1B/Part 1 (pre January 2004) examinations will now be banked indefinitely once successfully completed.

For the purpose of establishing the 7 years, the dates will be the dates on which the examinations are held. Further information can be found on the GMC website.

[National professional examinations - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](http://gmc-uk.org)

How to apply for an extension to the 7-year exam registration period:

Discuss your situation with your educational supervisor (or equivalent) to clearly identify the reasons that support your extension request. In order for RCPCH examination staff/faculty to determine if an extension is warranted there would need to be clear evidence to explain why you have had a limited number of sittings of the exam within your 7-year exam registration period. If you have/had applied to sit MRCPCH clinical and either subsequently withdrew or sat and failed then we will take the number of these instances into account when making a decision to extend. Educational supervisors, training programme directors or other senior colleagues will be required to testify that evidence provided to explain the lack of attempts within the 7-year period is both genuine and warrants consideration. If this is provided then the Clinical Assessment team will review.

Candidates considering applying for this extension will also be required to provide evidence that they are still actively studying/preparing towards completion of MRCPCH clinical. It will therefore be important to include additional educational experience that has been undertaken recently; discuss this with your educational supervisor (or equivalent) and ask them to provide further supporting statements within the submitted form.

Your Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director (or equivalents) must complete and sign the form confirming that you have demonstrated an improvement in knowledge and skill so that a pass result is highly likely at the next attempt.

Completed forms should be sent via email to clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk.

Once the form has been received it will be verified by the RCPCH and reviewed by the Head of Clinical Assessment and the Officer for Examinations. This review process will take up to 20 working days. Should there be agreement that sufficient evidence has been provided, restrictions will be removed from your record on the college database; this will take no longer than 10 working days from a decision being made. You will then be able to apply online for upcoming MRCPCH clinical examinations from the next available application period.

For more information on this process please contact the relevant team using the relevant email address above.

Cathryn Chadwick
Vice President, Training and Assessment
April 2025

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Frequently Asked Questions

Number of Attempts

Do I have 6 attempts per each single examination i.e. FOP, TAS, AKP and Clinical?

Yes – 6 attempts at each component of the MRCPCH examinations; Foundation of Practice, Theory and Science, Applied Knowledge in Practice and the MRCPCH Clinical.

Both the new and past equivalent examinations will count as part of your attempts if they were attempted after 1st July 2014 (UK trainees) or 1st September 2024 (all other candidates).

From what date do I start to count the number of attempts?

For UK based candidates/currently in the UK training programme: From 1st July 2014 any examinations you take and do not pass will count towards your 6 attempts. (Any examinations you took and did not pass before 1st July 2014 will not count towards your 6 attempts)

For all other candidates: From 1st September 2024 any examinations you take and do not pass will count towards your 6 attempts. (Any examinations you took and did not pass before 1st September 2024 will not count towards your 6 attempts)

If I have passed an examination before 1st July 2014 (UK trainees) or 1st September 2024 (all other candidates), does it matter how many times I attempted it before I passed it?

No. This rule only affects examinations that you are still to pass and not those that you have already passed before this rule was brought in for you.

Do these rules apply to candidates attempting to pass the Diploma in Child Health (DCH)?

The rules specified above regarding the number of attempts candidates are allowed at MRCPCH examinations will also apply to DCH candidates taking the FOP examination. As such, DCH candidates will be allowed up to 6 attempts at the FOP examination.

There is no limit on the number of attempts candidates may make at the DCH Clinical examination.

If I am diagnosed with a condition that could have warranted a reasonable adjustment, can a previous unsuccessful attempt at a component of the MRCPCH (FOP, TAS, AKP or Clinical) be disregarded?

Attempts taken before diagnosis cannot be fully disregarded. However, if you are diagnosed with a condition after an unsuccessful exam attempt that would have required a reasonable adjustment, you may request additional attempts equal to the number of unsuccessful attempts at that component of the exam prior to your diagnosis. As with all reasonable adjustment requests, evidence of the condition will need to be provided.

Currency

How many years will my Theory examinations be valid for in order for me to be eligible to apply for/sit the MRCPCH Clinical examination?

At least one of the MRCPCH Theory examinations must have been successfully completed/be valid within the last 7 years.

If all of my Theory examination passes were completed more than 7 years ago what will happen?

Candidates will need to resit and pass the Applied Knowledge in Practice examination (AKP) before they will be eligible to sit the MRCPCH Clinical examination.

Once passed, will I be required to resit the Foundation of Practice (FOP) or Theory and Science (TAS) examinations?

No, once passed both of these examinations are banked indefinitely and you will not be required to resit either.

Do these rules apply to candidates attempting to pass the Diploma in Child Health (DCH) Clinical?

DCH Clinical candidates are no longer required to pass the Foundation of practice (FOP) Theory examination before being eligible to sit the DCH Clinical examination. Candidates can sit/attempt both examinations in any order. Once passed both the FOP and/or DCH Clinical examinations are valid for 7 years. After passing either component should a candidate then be

unable to pass the other within 7 years they will be directed to resit the examination they had previously passed again before successfully completing the Diploma in Child Health.

If I obtained the full MRCPCH more than 7 years ago, can I enter/re-enter ST4 (UK training programme) after 1st July 2014?

This will depend upon individual circumstances. Currency is not absolute and exceptions may be made. This will require application to the RCPCH by the candidate, supported by their Deanery/LETB or the agency overseeing their training. For instance: a period of over 7 years may be accepted if a doctor who achieves MRCPCH then works, for example overseas, in clinical practice that is similar to or complements the experience that they would have gained if they had remained in UK training into ST4 or beyond.

If you have remained out of clinical practice during this time it is unlikely an exemption will be possible. If you have either been out of clinical practice or you have been doing clinical work that is not considered to be equivalent to that undertaken on the UK training programme you will need to successfully complete the Applied Knowledge in Practice Theory examination and the MRCPCH Clinical examination before you can be considered eligible to enter/re-enter the UK training programme on the CCT/CESR (CP) route.

If I obtained FOP or TAS Theory examinations more than 7 years ago can I enter/re-enter ST3 after 1st July 2014?

This will depend upon individual circumstances. Currency is not absolute and exceptions may be made. This will require application to the RCPCH by the candidate, supported by their Deanery/LETB or the agency overseeing their training. For instance: a period of over 7 years may be accepted if a doctor who achieves MRCPCH then works, for example overseas, in clinical practice that is similar to or complements the experience that they would have gained if they had remained in UK training into ST3 or beyond.

If you have remained out of clinical practice during this time it is unlikely an exemption will be possible. If you have either been out of clinical practice or you have been doing clinical work that is not considered to be equivalent to that undertaken on the UK training programme you will need to successfully complete the Applied Knowledge in Practice Theory examination before you can be considered eligible to enter/re-enter the UK training programme on the CCT/CESR (CP) route. Please note: In order to successfully complete Level 1 training (i.e. commence into ST4) you will be required to complete the remaining Theory examination (e.g. if you had done Theory and Science as outlined above, you would need to obtain Applied Knowledge in Practice) in addition to the clinical examination.

How will the RCPCH calculate when my 7 years has expired from each examination?

From 1st July 2014 (UK trainees) and 1st September 2024 (all other candidates), the date the RCPCH will use to count your 7 years from will be the date the examination was sat.

If you are concerned that this ruling is going to affect you or if you are in any of the situations listed below you are strongly advised to seek assistance and discuss this with your educational supervisor.

- a candidate who is nearing a 6th attempt at any of the MRCPCH examinations.
- a candidate who is aiming to sit the MRCPCH Clinical after 1st July 2014 (UK trainees) or 1st September 2024 (all other candidates) but will not have a Theory examination that is valid within the previous 7 years.
- a candidate who holds the full MRCPCH examination and wants to enter the UK training programme after 1st July 2014.

It is the responsibility of all trainees to read the rules, recognise whether the rules apply to them, and seek help accordingly.