

Appendix G



MRCPCH/DCH CLINICAL EXAMINATION POLICY FOR:

- FEEDBACK
- COMPLAINTS
- APPEALS
- REVIEW OF MARKS

Content summary:

This policy consists of:

- Summary of the process flow of Feedback, Complaint, Mark Review and Appeal Processes covering both the MRCPCH and DCH Clinical Examinations
- The process, including evidence thresholds and indicative timelines, for consideration of feedback, review of a complaint, or appeal against a complaint outcome or a request to review marks
- A step-by-step process flow diagram for the above processes.

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	September 2026	Executive Director of Education & Training	New rewritten policy to replace 'Clinical Examination Complaint, Feedback and Review of Mark Policy' (Apr 2017)

Review date: September 2027

Approval: Examinations Board September 2026

Relevant Policies, Templates and Forms:

The following policies, procedures and guidance, available online, should be used or referred to when necessary, alongside this policy.

Name	Version	Date
MRCPCH and DCH: Regulations and Rules	2.2	September 2023
Examination Results MRCPCH/DCH theory and clinical examinations	1.2	September 2023

1 Introduction to this Policy

The RCPCH aims to ensure all MRCPCH and DCH examinations are fair, transparent, free from discrimination and conforming to best practice. The College's examinations are independently regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC), although the GMC does not take part in the examinations complaints process.

Final decisions regarding complaints, feedback, review of marks or appeals received will be made in accordance with this policy and 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 or DCH Clinical examinations believes this has happened, they can use this policy. The policy ensures we deal with these matters 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 policy. Candidates can submit a complaint about any aspect of the clinical examination process if they have evidence that published processes or procedures pertaining to their examination have not been followed correctly.

TERMINOLOGY	EXPLANATION
Feedback	Feedback provided by a candidate about a specific exam or event. Feedback is where a candidate would like to suggest something for consideration by the Examination Review Panel but does not require a redress/is not a complaint. (See Section 4)
Complaints	Complaints are submitted by candidates, with appropriate evidence, to raise concerns regarding procedural failings in their clinical examination journey (application, placement, exam day, customer service etc. (See Section 4)
Appeals	Appeals are the highest and final level of this policy. Appeals are submitted by candidates, with appropriate <i>additional</i> evidence, to appeal the outcome of a complaint. (See Section 5)
Review of Marks	Review of a mark or marks is a process where a candidate can raise a query regarding the allocation of their marks. (See Section 6)
Formal Requests	'Formal requests' is the terminology used throughout this policy to refer to all four elements of this policy under one umbrella term.

2 Limits of the policy

The College excludes the following from its complaints, appeals, and review of mark processes:

- if candidates allege unfairness of practice and process but do not supply evidence to substantiate their allegation.
- anonymous complaints or complaints sent on behalf of the candidate.
- complaints 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.

3 Confidentiality, data protection and retention

Candidates are assured that they have the opportunity to raise matters of concern through this policy without risk of disadvantage or criticism. The RCPCH Clinical Examinations Team recognises the importance of confidentiality when handling Formal Requests and will maintain this as far as is possible during investigations.

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

Formal Requests, and all accompanying statements and records, will be kept confidential as far as is possible, consistent with facilitating a fair and thorough investigation.

Whilst a candidate's privacy and confidentiality will be respected, for complaints and appeals 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

We may therefore need to share details with other stakeholders who have been involved with the examination process, or with others who are needed to assist with the process, and who are responsible for its design and delivery. Examples include examiners, hosts, patients and carers, and members of the RCPCH Examinations Board.

4 Process flow of Complaint, Feedback, Mark Review and Appeal Processes (exam day events and outcomes)

1. The Clinical Examination takes place.

- If there is a concern about the examination on the day, **move to 2**.
- If the concern relates to a wider process outside/before/after the examination day, **move to 6**.
- Candidates who did not submit a formal complaint but wish to raise concerns about their marks may do so by submitting a Review of Mark Request form including paying the Review of Mark Request fee within 10 days of the results and feedback being emailed to them. **Move to 7**.

2. The candidate should raise the concern with the Senior Examiner on the day. They will be invited to raise the complaint formally at the end of the session.

- If the candidate wants to raise a complaint, **move to 3**.
- If the candidate wants to submit feedback only, **move to 4**.

3. The candidate should submit a formal Exam Complaint within 7 calendar days of the examination taking place. The Exams Team staff will review if it meets the required rules (as detailed in this policy).

- If it does, it will proceed to a Senior Examiner Panel (**move to 5**).
- If it does not, the Team will respond to the candidate detailing the reasons why.
- End of process.

4. The candidate can submit feedback within 1 calendar month of the examination which will be considered by the most appropriate examinations group for any lessons learned. End of process.

5. Senior Examiner Panel will meet and consider the complaint. They will agree an outcome that will be communicated to the candidate within 15 working days of the panel where possible.

- If the candidate accepts the outcome, the process ends.
- If the candidate has reasons to appeal the outcome, **move to 8**.

6. If a complaint relates to a wider issue (not related to the activity on an exam day), the candidate should submit a Complaint within 7 calendar days of the situation arising. The process will thereafter continue as with Stage 5 above, though the timing of the

complaint may necessitate the organisation of an ad-hoc complaints panel if the date falls outside of the usual Senior Examiner Panel timeline.

7. A Review of Marks Panel will review the candidate's submission. They will agree an outcome that will be communicated to the candidate within 15 working days of the panel where possible.

- If the candidate accepts the outcome, the process ends.
- If the candidate has reasons to challenge a specific procedural aspect of the Review of Marks process that may have impacted on the outcome, **move to 8.**

8. An Appeals Panel will be constituted with independent input to review the new evidence detailed. The outcome from this Panel is final and the end of all related Formal Request processes.

Request	Process	Fee	Time limit	Considered by	Outcome
Provide comments or suggestions	Feedback	None	Submit feedback form within 1 calendar month of the examination.	RCPCH Clinical Examinations Team/Senior Examiner Panel	Reviewed internally
Raise a concern about something that happened on the examination day	Complaint	None	Must be verbally raised with the Senior Examiner on the exam day. Must submit complaint form within 7 calendar days of the examination. 600 word limit	Senior Examiner Panel	Provided within 15 working days of the panel meeting, where possible
Raise a concern about an aspect or process of their examination experience not related to the examination day	Complaint	None	Must submit complaint form within 7 calendar days of issue arising. 600 word limit	Senior Examiner Panel or Complaints Panel	Provided within 15 working days of the panel meeting, where possible
Upon reviewing your marksheets you feel there is an issue with the marking	Review of Marks	£350	Must submit Review of Marks form within 10 days of results being sent. Max of 3 stations. 200 word limit per station.	Review of Marks Panel	Provided within 15 working days of the panel meeting, where possible
Challenge the outcome of a complaint, or procedural irregularity in an RCPCH process	Appeal	None	Varies depending on the appeal.	Independent Appeals Panel	Varies depending on the appeal.

5 PROCESS: Feedback and Complaints

5.1 Introduction to Feedback and Complaints

The purpose of feedback is to inform the Examination Board and teams about areas that could have improved your examinee experience but are not considered as complaints.

The purpose of a complaint is to seek a resolution on a relevant clinical examination experience. Complaints should be focussed and evidence-based. Where evidence is not provided, complaints will not be upheld.

5.2 Submitting Feedback or a Complaint

Candidates who wish to submit a complaint or provide feedback for a MRCPCH/DCH clinical examination must complete an RCPCH clinical examination complaint/feedback form to ensure a consistent process. Other avenues (i.e. email) will not be considered.

Complaints can be broadly seen under two definitions:

- Complaints about procedural irregularities on an exam day, which should be raised on the day with the Senior Examiner and which will be reviewed as part of a Senior Examiner Panel (see 5.4 below)
- Complaints about procedural irregularities beyond the exam day, which should be raised within 7 calendar days of the issue and will be reviewed at either a Senior Examiner Panel or a specially convened complaints panel (see 5.5 below)

For clinical exams, complaints are typically reviewed at Senior Examiner Panel meetings held prior to exam results being made available to candidates.

For these reasons, complaints regarding any specific exam must be submitted no later than 7 calendar days from the date on which a candidate undertook their examination. If a complaint is received after this deadline, it is likely to be rejected and taken as feedback. If accepted after this firm deadline due to exceptional circumstances, it will not be possible to review it within the stated timelines within this policy. All complaints are reviewed by senior examiners, who are NHS consultants, and they are required to give appropriate notice to their employing Trusts/Health Boards. Therefore ad-hoc complaints panels may take time to set up. Anyone raising a complaint should, having read this policy, recognise those time requirements.

If a candidate attempts to move beyond the appropriate stages of this policy (i.e. indicating they are following a legal pathway), they should be referred by College staff to the policy noting they have not exhausted all appropriate complaint stages and directed to submit the appropriate paperwork.

RCPCH examinations are taken by those wishing to demonstrate subject knowledge understanding and clinical decision-making abilities to (for MRCPCH) ensure they have reached the standard of someone entering their core specialist training or with allied health professional (for DCH) wishing to demonstrate general competence in the management of child health concerns commonly seen in primary care settings. 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. Complaints requesting an adjustment to a candidate's grades will not be considered (please refer to MRCPCH/DCH clinical exam review of marks process below).

5.3 Bullet pointed process: Feedback

- Feedback can be communicated on the day or within 1 month of the examination.

- Candidates can request a link to the online/webform to share feedback by emailing clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk
- The feedback will be considered by a relevant Senior Examiner Panel (MRCPCH/DCH) and will be recorded for internal review.
- If RCPCH staff or Senior Examiner Panel members have any further questions regarding the feedback there might then be further correspondence.

5.4 Bullet pointed process: Complaints about examination days

On the day of the exam

- For MRCPCH Clinical (held face to face):
 - RCPCH Senior Examiners monitor the standard of exam delivery at each clinical exam centre. These individuals can be identified by approaching any member of staff present on the examination day to enquire. If candidates experience any issue on the day of an MRCPCH Clinical exam, they must notify the Senior Examiner at that centre at the end of their exam session.
 - Any complaint shared with Senior Examiners will be documented on the day of the examination and submitted to the RCPCH Examinations Team in the Senior Examiner Report for further investigation.
 - Small issues *may* be solvable immediately and can be discussed with the examiner in your station.
- For DCH (held online):
 - The DCH clinical examination is delivered online and as such feedback **during** the exam is limited to submitting direct messages within the exam delivery system to the recognised RCPCH staff members.
 - Candidate Debrief: Opportunity to feedback to the Senior Examiner or RCPCH staff lead at the end of a circuit.
 - 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.
- For both examinations:
 - Failure to formally raise an issue with the Senior Examiner (or for DCH staff member) on the exam day as detailed above will mean that the candidate's complaint, even if submitted within the 7-day deadline, will be treated as feedback, rather than a complaint.
 - Raising a concern related to the examination running on the day of the exam is a requirement to submit a complaint.

Post-examination

- Complaints should be submitted within 7 calendar days of the event to be reviewed at the pre-arranged Senior Examiner Panel.
- The maximum word count for a complaint is 600 words. If any form is received that exceeds this, the additional text will be disregarded
- Candidates can request the online form to be sent to them by emailing clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk
- Any complaints submitted after 7 days without evidence of extenuating circumstances for the delay will be treated as feedback.

Receipt

- The College will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of its receipt and confirm whether a candidate's complaint falls within the scope of this policy.
- If there are 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.

Initial investigation

- The relevant Clinical Examinations Manager will take responsibility for gathering facts relevant to the submission of a complaint, ensuring that the information gathered is accurate and complete. They will refer to all key documentation such as exam day logs and notes, senior examiner reports, candidate marksheet feedback and any other relevant documentation.
- A decision will be made at this stage whether sufficient evidence exists to escalate the request to the Senior Examiner Panel which is comprised of the Chair of the relevant clinical exam (or their nominated deputy for UK panels) or a Principal Regional Examiner (or their nominated deputy for Overseas panels) as well as at least 2 other senior examiners. In some instances, the Head of Clinical Examinations/Associate Director may also be notified. DCH Senior Examiner Panels are typically made up of the senior examiners present on each exam day.

Panel investigation

- The Senior Examiner Panel will meet on their pre-agreed set date to consider all complaints and feedback.
- For all RCPCH clinical examinations, the relevant examination centre Senior Examiner's Report will be scrutinised. The administrator may also contact the relevant clinical examination host / host team, examiner and senior examiner to gather further statements related to observations of the examination day. If necessary, the RCPCH Psychometric Team and senior clinicians responsible for the production of content and analysis of performance will be informed of the complaint to ensure that review of specified scenario content is undertaken if required.
- They will refer to all collated paperwork/evidence and detail their decision for scribing by the staff member administering the panel.
- Candidates are asked not to telephone the College regarding their complaint during this time. College staff cannot inform candidates of the outcome of their complaint over the phone.
- No Panel members will have been involved in the previous stages of the examination.

5.5 Bullet pointed process: Complaints about other areas/aspects of an exam candidate's 'examination journey' (from application to end of exam day).

Post-examination

- For complaints relating to any issues/incidents experienced outside of the exam day (from application to end of exam day), as indicated above, these should be submitted within 7 days of the incident occurring
- Any submitted after 7 days of issue/incident occurring and without evidence of extenuating circumstances will be treated as feedback.
- **The maximum word count for a complaint form is 600 words.** If any form is received that exceeds this, the additional text will be disregarded.

Receipt

- Identical to 4.4 above.

Initial investigation

- The relevant Clinical Examinations Manager will take responsibility for gathering facts relevant to the submission of a complaint, ensuring that the information gathered is accurate and complete. They will refer to all relevant documentation and correspondence.

Panel investigation

- A non-exam day incident/complaint may be discussed at a relevant Senior

Examiner Panel meeting. Any complaints that fall outside of the time frame of the relevant Senior Examiner Panel meeting can be reviewed at a specially constituted Panel consisting of the senior examiners with no prior involvement in the incident.

5.6 Bullet pointed process: 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 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.

5.7 Complaint outcomes

Complaints may 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. This will normally be within 15 days of the relevant Senior Examiner Panel meeting (or specially constituted panel if one is required). If that deadline proves impossible to meet, the candidate will be updated regarding the status and time frame of the investigation.

For all other types of complaints, the College aims to respond to them as fast as reasonably possible without negatively impacting the fairness and expertise required to review the complaint. It is essential to note that as every complaint is different and as they need to be reviewed by senior examiners (who are NHS consultants with notice periods they must give to their employers), timeframes for complaints that fall outside of the usual panel cycle will likely take time to arrange and it may initially be impossible to give a timeframe (as the team will be liaising with multiple senior examiners to confirm the panel date).

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 (additional attempt added) 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.
- It may also be agreed to give a refund or a free or discounted sitting of the next examination.

Therefore, in summary, there are two possible outcomes from complaint reviews:

- **Not upheld** – candidates will receive a formal letter explaining the decision not to uphold their complaint.
- **Upheld** – the attempt is expunged from the candidate's record (additional attempt added) and the Panel will determine appropriate remediation.

If a candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as reviewed at the relevant complaints Senior Examiner Panel meeting, there is provision to appeal the outcome, subject to qualifying criteria (see next section – section 6).

6 PROCESS: Appeals

6.1 Introduction to Appeals

Appeals are only for candidates who have been through the complaints process indicated in the section above. Appeals are the final stage of the examination 'Formal Requests' process and there is no further route of appeal or complaint. Appeals are concerning the effectiveness of the process to date.

Appeals are constituted of a fully independent panel who have not been involved in the exam diet under consideration or previous stages of the process. The Associate Director for Examinations & Training and/or the Executive Director for Education & Training will convene the panel. The panel will involve senior MRCPCH or DCH examiners and may include, depending on the content of the appeal, one panellist external to the process. The role of the external panellist is to ensure that all stages of the process have been adhered to fairly and consistently.

6.2 Requesting an Appeal

An appeal should be submitted within 7 calendar days of receipt of the outcome of a complaint. To enquire about submitting an appeal please email clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk.

Appeal submissions will only be considered if they are presenting appropriate/relevant evidence and reason. Examples of appropriate/relevant evidence and reason include:

- **New** evidence that has come to light since the complaint was reviewed. This does *not* include information that was previously already provided or known and the candidate neglected to originally submit.
- Evidence that the complaints panel itself has failed in its duties to undertake a fair and consistent process. Evidence must be submitted within or with the appeal. It cannot be an assertion based on displeasure with the outcome.

6.3 Bullet pointed process

Submission and receipt

- The Appeal must be submitted within 7 calendar days of receipt of the outcome of a complaint.
- The Clinical Examinations team will acknowledge receipt within 5 calendar days.

Initial investigation

- The Associate or Executive Director/support staff will gather and review facts relevant to the submission, ensuring that the information gathered is accurate and complete.
- This will include all previous documentation, any additional information necessitated by the additional evidence supplied by the candidate, and any testimonies additionally required.
- A decision will be made at this stage whether sufficient evidence exists to elevate the request to an Appeals Panel. The Panel members will be new and will not have been involved in any previous related complaint or Review of Mark process.

Panel investigation

- A specially constituted panel will be convened as early as possible bearing in mind the diary limitations of the senior clinicians/any external representative involved.
- The panel will review all paperwork/evidence collated and detail their decision for scribing by the staff member administering the panel.

6.4 Appeal outcomes

Appeals will either be upheld or rejected.

Rejected appeals will be detailed in writing to the candidate with the reasoning of the panel included. This is the end of the process with no further avenues of appeal.

Upheld appeals will also be detailed in writing to the candidate with the reasoning of the panel included. Remedial action will depend on the nature of the appeal and be agreed by the Panel and communicated to the candidate. It will likely conform to the example actions noted in Section 5.7 (Complaint Outcomes) above.

7 PROCESS: Review of Mark(s)

7.1 Introduction to Review of Mark(s)

The purpose of the Review of Mark process is to ascertain if the marks for the stations requested for review have been calculated and recorded correctly. The process is not to review the professional judgement of the examiner for the stations requested. The Review of Mark Request Form is distinct from feedback/complaints and should only be used specifically for requesting that marks be reviewed.

Candidates should note that requests for a review of a mark must be supported with clear reasoning as to why you feel the mark is not accurate. Examples of **unacceptable** reasons:

- I know I did better than this
- I did well in other stations
- I did well in this station on a previous exam
- I did well in this domain in another station or another exam
- I told the examiner X but they must not have heard me
- This mark doesn't seem right
- I have been told by my ES, TPD or other senior colleagues that I generally tend to perform much better than the feedback and scores on my marksheet suggest during normal clinical practice

Candidates who submit request forms using the above reasons will be emailed and informed that their request cannot be taken forward.

Review of Marks must be focused to areas where candidates feel some important procedural error has been made or something important has been missed and they must be very specific about the reasons for that. Candidates can submit a Review of Marks form for up to 3 clinical exam stations in total. Candidates who submit forms requesting a review of more than 3 clinical exam stations will have their request rejected without review. The maximum word count for a Review of Marks form is 200 words per station complained about.

Review of Marks should be considered where there is a likelihood of the outcome of the examination changing.

Candidates who then choose to submit a review or marks request must complete and submit the online form within 10 days of receiving their exam results and feedback email.

7.2 Bullet pointed process

Submission

- Candidates must wait, before deciding to submit a review of marks request, until they have received the email with their results letter and feedback (marksheets).
- Candidates must submit an online Review of Marks form within 10 days of receiving their feedback via email.
- Requests for review after this time will not be considered unless there are documented extenuating circumstances.
- They must request a link to the online form be sent to them by emailing clinicalexams@rcpch.ac.uk
- They must fully complete the online form.
- They can list up to three specific stations and give details of their specific concerns for each station queried.
- Review of Marks forms are limited to no more than 200 words per station. If any form is received that exceeds this, the additional text will be disregarded.
- Candidates must pay the Review of Mark fee of £350. Payment of this fee will be via the same online booking system as candidates use to apply for exams, using a credit or debit card.

Receipt

- The College will acknowledge the completion of an online Review of Mark Request within 5 working days of its submission and confirm whether it meets the requirements of this policy for reviews.
- If there are requirements the candidate should have followed but they have not, the College will advise the candidate that the basis of the request falls outside the permitted scope of this review request policy.

Withdrawal

- A candidate can withdraw their request for a review of a mark at any time by writing to the RCPCH Clinical Examinations Team regarding their request and quoting their RCPCH number. The candidate's request will then be closed permanently and will not be re-opened.
- The fee may not be refundable if we have already spent staff or other resources on investigating the review.

Initial investigation

- The relevant Clinical Examinations Manager and their team will gather facts relevant to the request for a review of marks, ensuring that the information gathered is accurate and complete. They will refer to all key documentation such as exam day logs and notes, senior examiner reports, candidate marksheet feedback and any other relevant documentation.
- A decision will be made at this stage whether sufficient evidence exists to elevate the request to the Review of Marks Panel, comprised of the Officer for Examinations (for UK panels) or a Principal Regional Examiner (or their nominated deputy for Overseas panels) as well as at least 2 other senior examiners.

Panel investigation

- The Review of Marks Panel will meet on their pre-agreed set date to consider all review of mark requests.
- No examiner involved in the station(s) under review will be involved in the review.
- They will refer to all collated paperwork/evidence and detail their decision for scribing by the staff member administering the panel.

Outcome

- The College aims to provide the Panel's response for a Review of Marks request within 15 days to the candidate
- Should there be a delay in sending the response, the RCPCH Clinical Examinations Team will contact the candidate by email to inform them of the reason for the delay and provide a revised estimated completion date.
- For more detail on how outcomes are communicated, please see the section immediately below.

7.4 Review of Mark Outcomes

The response from the College will contain reasons for either upholding or rejecting the request to amend a mark, as follows:

1. Where the request is rejected:
 - This will be confirmed to the candidate with the reasoning of the Panel included.
 - There is no appeal against the outcome of a request for a review of a mark.
 - It is possible to submit an appeal about the process behind a review of marks panel if there is evidence provided that the process itself (rather than the outcome) was insufficient, i.e. if issues raised were not responded to. See Section 6 on Appeals. The Review of Mark fee will be processed.
2. Where the request is upheld but does not change the examination outcome:
 - This will be confirmed to the candidate with the reasoning of the Panel included.
 - Where one or more marks may be determined to be appropriate to upgrade but are not sufficient to change the pass/fail outcome for the candidate the candidate's clinical exam record will be updated and exam results and feedback will be resent.
 - Any remediation, if at all, agreed by the panel but the Review of Mark fee will be processed if the review does not result in an overall pass.
3. Where the request is upheld and changes the examination outcome (overall pass):
 - This will be confirmed to the candidate with the reasoning of the Panel included.
 - The candidate will receive new results and feedback documents, and the website will be updated.
 - The £350 fee will be refunded.