



An Update on the SCE in D&E

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Who is This Strange Man?

- I qualified in 1991
- I trained in D&E and G(I)M in South East Thames
- I did general practice for 2 years
- I did ITU / anaesthetics for a year
- I did research at Mayo Clinic for 2 years on DHEA replacement
- I have been in Norwich since 2004, where I am a full time NHS doctor
- Currently my other roles include
 - Chair of the Specialist Clinical Exam in D&E and was the Inaugural Chair of the European Board Exam in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism
 - Former President of the Endocrine Section of the Royal Society of Medicine
 - Immediate past Chair of the Joint British Diabetes Societies for Inpatient Care
 - Chair of the Association of British Clinical Diabetologists



My Involvement in the SCE

- In 2005 I joined the question writing group for the MRCP(UK)
- In 2007 I was invited to join the QWG for the new SCE that was being set up and that ran for the first time in 2009
- I also joined the Examination Board and the Standard Setting Group
- I became the Secretary of the EB in 2013 and the Chair in 2016

The SCE

- Is made of up 2 papers, each of 100 'best of five' questions
- You are allowed 3 hours for each paper
- It is held once a year
- Usually at 'Pearson View' centres – e.g. driving test centres
- It is mandated by the GMC as a requirement to become a consultant in the UK for UK trainees

The Question Writing Process

- There are approx. 10-15 individual question writers
- All diabetes and endocrine consultants from across the UK
- They are asked to submit 12-15 questions each in November/December so the editors have time to fix them
- These can be on any topic in the curriculum, but the RCP will often let them know where there are gaps in the question bank

The Question Writing Process

- There is a 2-day meeting held in the Spring where every one of the questions is scrutinised by at least 4 other members of the QWG
- Questions may be accepted, amended, or rejected (for a variety of reasons!)
- Once they are accepted, they go in the RCP question bank
- Currently D&E have about 1500 questions in the bank

The Next Step

- In late Autumn, the RCP ‘pulls’ 300 questions out of the bank at random (covering the curriculum), and sends them to the Secretary and the Chair
- It is their job to go through each question to ensure that they are still up to date and relevant
- They whittle the questions down to about 250

The Examination Board

- Made up of 8-10 D&E consultants from across the UK with different specialist knowledge areas – about 50% of whom are also on the QWG
- The 250 questions are divided up so that there are 2 reviewers per question
- Each question is very thoroughly scrutinised!! Arguments are settled by the chair!

The Examination Board

- At the end of the process, we have about 220 questions ready to go to the exam
- Until 2020, the questions then used to go to the Standard Setting Group where the pass mark for EACH question was set by a totally different group of 8-10 specialists, with about 25% shared with QWG and/or EB

What Happens Next?

- The bank has now got sufficient questions that about 50% of the questions have been run in exams and the performance of each question is known and recorded for each time it has run
- Those questions that do well – i.e. are able to discriminate between ‘just passing’ and ‘just failing’ candidates tend to be used more frequently
- Since 2022, it is the standard set by these ‘anchor’ questions that sets the pass mark for the whole exam (‘test equating’)

How Many People Sit the Exam?

Sitting Numbers	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Difference
Part 1	11031	11157	11238	8094	10140	2046
Part 2	5155	5500	5906	3160	6558	3398
PACES	6332	6530	6999	2012	3388	1376
Acute Medicine	291	319	329	319	359	40
Dermatology	413 took the exam in 2023			7	257	0
Endocrinology & Diabetes	326 took the exam in June 2024			6	268	12
Gastroenterology	287 took the exam in November 2024			2	444	112
Geriatric Medicine	474 took the exam in November 2025			1	202	-49
Medical Oncology				0	143	33
Nephrology	212	236	247	291	276	-15
Neurology	178	178	200	182	163	-19
Palliative Medicine	71	78	84	74	81	7
Respiratory Medicine	195	260	281	289	320	31
Rheumatology	145	145	156	153	169	16

How Many Pass?

Overall Pass Rates	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Part 1	44.3	43.7	40.5	49.1	47.1
Part 2	69.4	60.7	61.0	73.1	70.5
PACES	42.9	45.3	47.6	50.9	57.0
Acute Medicine	52.6	54.5	59.6	74.0	72.4
Dermatology	54.2	57.6	50.2	61.5	40.9
Endocrinology	28.6% of all candidates passed the exam in 2023				69.8
Gastroenterology	66.3% of all candidates passed the exam in June 2024				78.8
Geriatric Medicine	50.5% of all candidates passed the exam in November 2024				75.2
Medical Microbiology	40.1% of all candidates passed the exam in November 2025				73.4
Nephrology	57.7	48.5	44.5	54.5	47.1
Neurology	52.8	51.7	62.0	73.1	65.0
Palliative Medicine	76.1	61.5	69.0	73.0	66.7
Respiratory Medicine	62.1	51.9	44.1	55.4	50.3
Rheumatology	49.7	62.8	54.5	60.1	65.7

Let's Focus on UK Trainees

UK Trainees Sitting Numbers	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Difference
Part 1	4079	4018	3760	2580	1562	-1018
Part 2	2110	2260	2430	1404	2975	1571
PACES	2846	2777	2862	1144	2181	1037
Acute Medicine	128	139	147	169	179	10
Dermatology	86	91	88	106	91	-15

103 of 413 candidates declared that they were UK trainees in 2023

122 of 326 candidates declared that they were UK trainees in June 2024

91 of 287 candidates declared that they were UK trainees in November 2024

152 of 474 candidates declared that they were UK trainees in November 2025

Neurology	77	74	82	94	92	-2
Palliative Medicine	62	61	65	56	58	2
Respiratory Medicine	122	163	168	213	201	-12
Rheumatology	77	75	65	92	71	-21

UK Trainee Pass Rates

UK Trainees Pass Rates	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Part 1	50.6	51.2	48.9	54.9	38.9
Part 2	75.1	64.9	64.0	79.7	75.8
PACES	56.0	55.9	58.9	59.7	58.5
Acute Medicine	69.5	69.1	74.2	86.4	84.9
Dermatology	53.8				
Endocrinology	84.7				
Gastroenterology	83.7				
Geriatric Medicine	81.5				
Medicine of the Elderly	81.5				
Nephrology	70.2				
Neurology	84.4	78.4	84.2	83.0	80.4
Palliative Medicine	85.5	70.5	78.5	91.1	89.7
Respiratory Medicine	74.6	71.8	65.5	67.1	62.2
Rheumatology	76.6	76.0	83.1	82.1	84.5

48.5% of UK trainees passed the exam in 2023

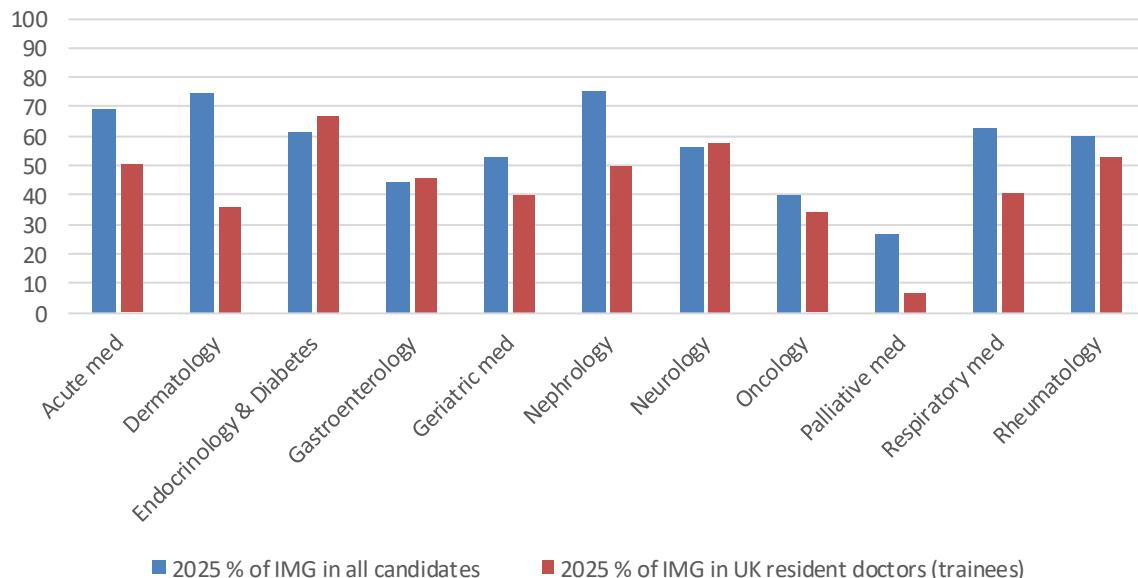
82.8% of UK trainees passed the exam in June 2024

64.8% of UK trainees passed the exam in November 2024

58.6% of UK trainees passed the exam in November 2025

IMG vs UK Graduates

SCEs 2025 % of International medical graduates in sitting candidates and UK trainees



An Unfortunate Truth

- 180,890 candidates assessed – medical school and postgraduate exams between 2014 and 2020
- Things that were associated with a higher chance of failing
 - Place of primary qualification (UK vs IMG)
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Religion
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
 - LTFT status

Statistics

- I get the (self-declared) data broken down by
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Attempt number
 - UK trainee vs non
 - UK graduate vs non
 - Year of trainee (CT to ST7) – the most common year to take the exam was ST4

Voracity

- Every single question is looked at many times before it gets to an exam paper
- Each question is clinically relevant and up to date
- The exam tests basic science (know the steroid synthesis pathway!), normal and abnormal anatomy (know the bones of the foot and what a pituitary MRI looks like!) and much more..

Resources

- The ONLY resource endorsed by the RCP is the practice questions on their website
- Read the guidelines from NICE / SIGN / ESE / SfE / JBDS / ADA / EASD / etc
- Read the diabetes and endocrine literature
- There are a number of other courses available

Data Breach

- In 2024 after the exam had been set and run, RCP became aware of 1 whole exam being available on the internet – with 38 questions of that exam appearing in the 2024 diets
- After a VERY, VERY thorough examination and analysis of the answers, it was felt that no one had been advantaged by this
- That leaked exam is now on the SCE website as a sample paper

The SCE

- It is NOT designed to fail you
- It is designed to pass people who have a degree of experience in D&E
- It covers the whole curriculum
- It is just 1 of the many ways of assessing an individuals' capabilities – along with all of the e-portfolios and other assessments necessary



An Update on the SCE in D&E

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