



Update on the Specialty Certificate Exam, Endocrinology and Diabetes

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SCE Exam

- Compulsory component of assessment for CCT for trainees enrolled during or after Aug 2007
- Trainees expected to have attempted the SCE before their Penultimate Year Assessment
- Optional for trainees enrolled prior to Aug 2007 - brings with it the award of 'MRCP (UK) Endocrinology and Diabetes' post nominal if recommended for CCT

SCE Exam - format

- 'One from five' multiple choice questions
- 200 questions in 2 three hours papers
- Covers all aspects of knowledge required in the Endocrinology and Diabetes syllabus
- Questions designed to test the application of clinically important knowledge
- 'Good' questions very difficult to write!

The Specialty Certificate Examination is now compulsory for trainees enrolled after August 2007.

What is the primary purpose of the Exam?

- A. distinguish candidates on the basis of their relative level of specialist knowledge
- B. distinguish the candidate with an acceptable level of specialist knowledge for a newly appointed consultant from those without
- C. identify trainees that have sufficient training to practice as a newly appointed consultant
- D. promote increased levels of knowledge in newly appointed consultants
- E. test the breadth of specialist knowledge of a candidate

The difficult path of questions

- Questions written by members of the Question Writing Group (~20 members) – each must relate to a clearly defined point of knowledge
- Discussed at a QWG group – often considerably modified or rejected
- Reviewed by MRCP Associate Medical Director (~10% risk of rejection)
- Reviewed at Exam Board Meeting (~20% rejected or sent back)
- Reviewed at Standard Setting Meeting (~10% rejected)

Standard Setting

- Uses a Modified Angoff method (as used previously in MRCP exams)
- All questions assessed individually by Standard Setting Group members (8+)
- Asked to estimate likelihood of a 'just-passing' trainee answering the question correctly
- Each question then discussed and each member gives revised likelihood of a 'just-passing' trainee answering correctly
- Average score for group as a whole for all questions used as estimate for exam pass mark
- Actual pass mark adjusted using the Hofstee compromise method

Reasons why questions fail

- Too specialist – not in syllabus or not felt to be essential knowledge for newly appointed consultant
- Too complicated – possible ambiguity introduced or point of question not clear
- No single clearly correct answer – if wrong answer is considered potentially ‘right’ by any member of the exam or standard setting board then can’t go in
- Not important enough – if ‘wrong’ answer doesn’t lead to adverse consequences question probably not important

Experience with exam to date

Diet	Number of candidates	Pass mark*	Pass rate UK trainees	Pass rate UK graduates	Pass rate overseas graduates	Pass rate All candidates	Reliability
2011	139 (88 UK trainees)	62% (124/200)	85.2% (75/88)	96.4% (27/28)	57.6% (64/111)	65.5% (91/139)	0.89
2010	174 (98 UK trainees)	60% (120/200)	86.7% (85/98)	69.2% (18/26)	69.6% (103/148)	69.5% (121/174)	0.89
2009	39 (14 UK trainees)	65.95% (131/199)	64.3% (9/14)	50% (1/2)	37.8% (14/37)	38.5% (15/39)	0.89

* Pass mark determined by Standard Setting Group who assess difficulty of each question using standard approaches employed in MRCP exams

Results by attempt (2011 exam)

**All candidates'
performance per
attempt**

		pass/fail		Total
		fail	pass	
attempt	1	24	74	98
	2	23	17	40
	3	1	0	1
Total		48	91	139

**UK trainees'
performance by
attempt**

		pass/fail		Total
		fail	pass	
attempt	1	8	64	72
	2	5	11	16
Total		13	75	88

Update for the next exam

- Due to take place on the 30th May 2012
- Subtle changes in entry requirements for candidates NOT in UK training schemes (anyone can take the exam if they pay!)
- Candidate feedback will be broken down by areas of the new curriculum
- There will be new sample questions added to the website in the near future
- Unfortunately, cost to take the exam has been increased in line with inflation

Future progress of the exam (1)

- Need to continue to build up question bank (~1000 questions currently but some with limited shelf life)
- Need to match questions accurately to evolving curriculum
- Need to identify and address areas where questions are limited

Future progress of the exam (2)

- Need to continue and strengthen communication between exam boards and stakeholders (trainees, trainers and specialist societies)
- Need to assess carefully trainees who repeatedly fail to pass the exam
- ??? Develop a more international focus with intention to become the primary specialist exam internationally

Useful information

- <http://www.mrcpuk.org/SCE>
- <http://www.mrcpuk.org/SCE/Specialties/Pages/EndocrinologyandDiabetes.aspx>
- <http://www.mrcpuk.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/SCEEandDSampleQs.pdf>