

Guideline

Subject: Examiner and Observer Code of Conduct for Oral Examinations
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Introduction

Acting as an examiner for the RCPA is an important role and carries with it responsibility for maintaining the high standards expected of candidates wishing to attain RCPA qualifications. This Code of Conduct has been developed as a guide to the behaviours and values expected from all College examiners and observers. It should be read in conjunction with related RCPA documents as listed at the end of this guideline.

General standards

Examiners are expected to:

- Behave in a professional manner
- Demonstrate respect in all interactions with fellow examiners, candidates and College staff
- Demonstrate a commitment to fairness, confidentiality and integrity of the examination process.
- Remain in the examination premises throughout the period of the examination where the examiner's services are needed or ensure that this is delegated to an individual who is aware of the responsibility and has been fully briefed

Conflict of interest

- Examiners are required to declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest with any potential candidates, ideally well in advance of the examination
- Unforeseen conflicts should be declared before or during the preliminary meeting on the examination day
- To prevent conflicts of interest from arising, an examiner should not approach any candidate regarding any matters either professional or personal, which could at that time or later be deemed or perceived to be a conflict of interest
- The following may constitute conflicts of interest:
 - The examiner and the candidate have a close social or supervisory association, past or present
 - The examiner has had difficulties/disagreements/problems with the candidate in the past
 - The examiner has engaged in commercial activity in connection with examination processes e.g. running a non-RCPA approved examination preparation course
- The following circumstances are generally not considered to be conflicts of interest:
 - The examiner has previously examined the candidate
 - The candidate is known to the examiner, but there have been no circumstances that may lead to the trainee making a claim of bias
 - Where there is uncertainty, the Chief Examiner will determine if a significant conflict exists.

Confidentiality and security

- Examiners are expected to maintain strict confidentiality of all examination questions and materials, including images, marking guides, results sheets and compiled results
- Examination materials are the property of the College and must be returned to the College
- Examiners may not publish or distribute, independently of the RCPA, any material which they have prepared for, or reviewed, in connection with the RCPA examinations
- Examiners may not discuss provisional results, candidate performance or any other information relating to a candidate to any third party who does not have a right to such information
- Examiners should not engage in any conversation with candidates, other than questioning, during the examination
- Examiners should not engage in conversations with others regarding candidates or examination processes where they may be overheard by candidates

Impartiality and fairness

- By participating in the assessment of an examination, examiners agree to use the established marking procedures and criteria without bias
- Candidates are to be identified solely by RCPA identification number on all marksheets
- All candidates are asked the same questions
- Each candidate must be treated equitably and fairly, avoiding any behaviour or language which may be perceived as discriminatory
- Examiners will judge each candidate on their performance without being influenced by any other factors
- Personal knowledge of a candidate's daily clinical performance does not provide examiners with grounds for challenging or changing the independently obtained candidate examination marks during any post examination forum

Examiner preparation

Examiners are expected to:

- Be familiar with the form and content of the examination
- Arrive at the examination centre in time to allow familiarisation with the location, material, and organisational arrangements
- Participate in a preliminary meeting with the Chief Examiner, other examiners and RCPA staff before the examination to ensure that they understand the administrative procedures, and agree on questioning approaches and marking criteria
- Switch off or turn to silent any communication equipment

Interaction with candidates

Examiners are expected to:

- Treat all candidates with dignity and respect
- Greet the candidate, introducing themselves and any observers, putting candidates at ease as far as possible
- Avoid physical contact with the candidate other than an initial handshake
- Be mindful of the well-being and safety of candidates, reporting any concerns to the Chief Examiner and/or RCPA staff
- Be consistent in their approach to questioning candidates, enabling candidates to show what they can do and what they know
- Allow the candidate to respond to the question without unnecessary interruption
- Avoid exceeding the time limit

- Refrain from making any remark to the candidate about their performance
- Avoid teaching or coaching candidates during the assessment
- Refrain from making any remarks that may imply bias, cause embarrassment, or impair the performance of the candidate

Observers

Observers are expected to:

- Demonstrate respect in all interactions with examiners, candidates and College staff
- Observe all requirements for confidentiality and security
- Remain in the examination room for the duration of the station unless the candidate indicates a preference for the examination to be conducted without the observer
- Be seated unobtrusively behind the candidate and not behind the examiner
- Switch off or turn to silent any communication equipment
- Not talk during the examination process

Related documents

Policy 4/2002: Oral Examinations

Policy 3/2005: Ownership, Confidentiality and Security of Examination Materials

Guideline 3/2015: Quality Framework for RCPA Examinations – Written, Practical and Oral

Policy 9/2000: Selection of Examiners for the College and Panels of Examiners

Policy 3/2017: Conflicts of Interest