

## **Eligibility for MRCGP examinations, number of attempts permitted, and consideration of mitigating circumstances**

The following statement has been prepared to clarify the regulations regarding eligibility for the AKT and CSA elements of MRCGP with effect from 1 August 2012.

The regulations (6.6 and 6.11 respectively) themselves read as follows:

### Applied Knowledge Test

With effect from 1 August 2010 eligibility for the AKT is limited to those in the Specialty Training Years 2 and 3 (ST2 and ST3) stages of the training programme. This regulation applies equally to both full time trainees and those training flexibly. A maximum number of four attempts will be permitted for those entering GP Specialty Training on or after 1st August 2010.

### Clinical Skills Assessment

The CSA may be attempted when a trainee is in Specialty Training Year 3 (ST3) stage of the training programme. This regulation applies equally to full time trainees and those training flexibly. A maximum number of four attempts will be permitted for those who entered year ST3 on or after 1st August 2010 and are sitting the CSA for the first time after this date.

**During the period January to May 2012 there was a temporary relaxation of the regulations limiting the number of attempts at the CSA to four. These temporary arrangements have now concluded and the maximum number of attempts that can be made at both the AKT and CSA is once again limited to four.**

We would suggest that trainees should plan carefully for the optimum time in their training programme prior to sitting examinations, taking advice as necessary from their educational and/or clinical supervisors. They should in particular avoid sitting examinations before they are ready to do so.

### Consideration of mitigating circumstances

All trainees should familiarise themselves with the Examination Regulations before applying for the AKT or CSA and in particular section 10 concerned with mitigating circumstances.

The regulations are clear around the issue of mitigating circumstances, and those that are accepted may result in examination candidate being eligible for a further attempt at an examination.

The following are examples of possible mitigating circumstances and the supporting documentation required in order for them to be accepted and another attempt permitted.

1. Exceptional personal circumstances which might have lead to underperformance in an examination e.g. bereavement or immediate family illness.

These events do not usually occur on the day of the examination, but within a short period beforehand. In most circumstances the trainee would be expected to have withdrawn and the need to request another attempt would therefore not arise.

Therefore only in exceptional circumstances would the request be considered and there would need to be evidence of the personal circumstances, such as might be provided by a screen shot from the trainee's ePortfolio documenting an event and its educational impact. Copies of death certificates and travel documents confirming travel which had disrupted preparation may also be required.

2. Personal illness that was not severe enough at the time of the examination to make the candidate withdraw but which in retrospect could have had a serious adverse affect on performance.

In these instances confirmation by a medical attendant will be required. Occasionally if the condition is one that might affect performance but which does not preclude normal attendance at work additional evidence may be required and requested.

All reports of mitigating circumstances must be submitted to the RCGP no later than two working days after the examination has taken place. It should be noted however that candidates presenting for either the AKT or CSA will be deemed fit to take the assessment and required to sign a declaration to that effect as part of the registration process on the day.

Candidates should note that most practitioners suffer adverse personal circumstances at one time or another during their working lives, and it is part of demonstrating fitness to practice when an individual makes an assessment about how much an event might have affected their performance.

If a circumstance is likely to have affected performance in an examination we would expect there to be contemporaneous documentation in the ePortfolio of discussions with the educational supervisor about fitness for work.

The General Medical Council's guidance *Good Medical Practice* and *Duties of a Doctor* cover presenting for work, educational activities and training (including implicitly attendance at postgraduate medical examinations) and fitness to practice is implicit in the guidance. Doctors are expected to recognise and work within the limits of their competence.

All candidates are asked to note that that the granting of an additional attempt beyond the maximum number permitted does not confer any right to additional training.