



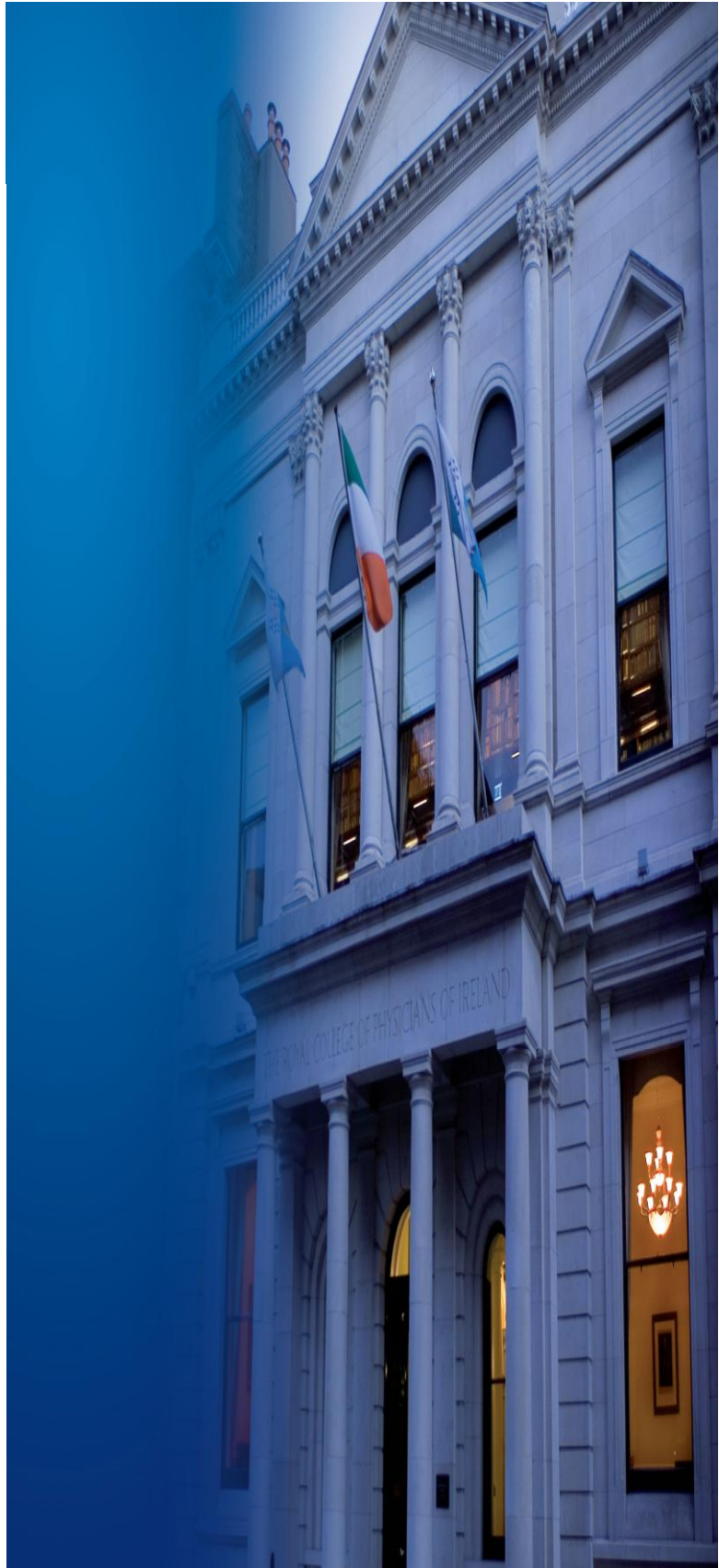
ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

# Regulations and Information for Candidates

**MFOM**

**2012 Edition**

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## 1. Introduction

These Regulations set out the rules concerning eligibility, format, admission, conduct and other issues for the Membership examination (MFOM). They were approved by the Board of the Faculty at its meeting on 14th September 2011. The purpose of the Membership examination is to ensure a satisfactory level of core competence to establish safe practice in occupational medicine for those who work full time in the specialty.

## 2. MFOM

### 2.1 Entry Qualifications

- ❖ Candidates must hold a medical qualification acceptable to the Faculty and the College and awarded by a medical school recognised by the World Health Organisation..
- ❖ They must be registered and authorised to practice medicine by an appropriate national body. Evidence of this will be required as part of the application process.
- ❖ Candidates must have 4 years full time or equivalent experience following full registration, that is to say two years in general medical training and two years satisfactory experience in occupational medicine.
- ❖ Candidates are recommended to have completed academic training in occupational medicine, these are listed on the RCPI website.
- ❖ There are no specific requirements for supervised training.

### 2.2 Examination Locations

The MFOM examination is held in Dublin, Al Ain (UAE) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).

### 2.3 Examination Syllabus

The overall occupational medicine syllabus is as follows:

#### Occupational Health Hazards & Diseases

- Clinical Diagnosis and Case Management
- Health Surveillance
- Hazard Identification
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Management
- Planning Control Measures
- Implementation of Control Measures
- Monitoring Control Measures
- Safety Statements
- Workplace Environmental Control Measures
- Carcinogens
- Occupational Allergic Diseases
- Dusts and Pneumoconiosis

## **Prevention Of Disability And Assessment Of Fitness For Work**

- Evaluation of Fitness for Work
- Disability Evaluation and Rehabilitation
- Employee Assistance Programmes
- Non-Availability for Work

## **Management And Communication**

- Managerial Skills (Personal, Non-Clinical, Running a Department etc.)
- Organisational Management
- Records/Budget/Marketing
- Audit
- Communication Skills

## **Occupational Health Law**

International development of Safety Law and guidelines (W.H.O., I.L.O., E.U.)

Scope and content of the following will depend on the country of residence or future Occupational Health practice of the trainee.

- National Law in Occupational Health and Safety
- Legal and Judicial Systems
- Other legislation relevant to Occupational Health (e.g. Road Transport, Manual Handling, Pregnancy, Shift Work etc.)

## **Ethics**

- Conflict of loyalty between Employer/Employee
- Confidentiality
- Testing for Drugs/Alcohol in the workplace
- Record Keeping

## **Epidemiology And Statistics**

- Statistics (data gathering, quality of data, statistical tests etc)
- Epidemiology (study designs, questionnaire designs etc)
- Interpretation (quality of studies, action to be taken etc)
- Normal Values and Normal Population Distribution etc

## **Occupational Hygiene And Toxicology**

- Occupational Hygiene Surveys
- Occupational Hygiene Sampling and Monitoring
- Hygiene Control Methods
- Personal Protection Equipment
- Human Toxicology
- Descriptive Toxicology
- Toxic effects of Organic Chemicals
- Toxicology of Heavy Metals
- Chemical Hazards

- Physical Hazards
  - \* Radiation
  - \* Vibration
  - \* Noise
  - \* Atmospheric Pressure
  - \* Temperature
- Biological Monitoring
- Surveillance of Workers exposed to Chemical/Toxic/Physical Hazards

### **Work Organisation And Psychology**

- The Nature of Organisations (Size, Structure, Public and Private Sector)
- Management Programming (Objectives, Strategies, Targets etc.)
- Trade Unions
- Employer Organisations
- Health and Safety Committees
- Psychosocial Environment
- Occupational Psychology
- New Technologies (changing patterns of employment)
- Psychological Testing
- Shiftwork

### **Ergonomics**

- Principles of Ergonomics
- Lighting and Vision Standards
- Working Environment (ventilation, working temperature, sick building syndrome)
- Manual Handling
- Prevention of Cumulative Trauma Disorders
- Visual Display Units and Computer Systems

### **Environmental Issues Related To Work Practice**

- Relationships of Occupational Health Services to General Environmental Agencies
- Stack Emissions
- Waste Disposal
- Ecotoxicology
- General Population Effects of Toxic Hazards
- Disaster Control and Emergency Planning
- Dangerous Substances (storage, packaging, labelling and conveyance)

### **Workplace Health Promotion**

- Assessing needs for Health Promotion
- Provision of Health Promotion Programmes
- Group Communications

## **2.4 Preparation for MFOM Examination Examinations**

All MFOM examinations are conducted in the English language.

There is a guideline syllabus to assist with the preparation for the MFOM which is listed on page 3 of this document. The guidelines present a framework of topics which should be covered, but it is not intended to be inclusive and candidates should not limit their studies solely to these topics.

A copy of past MFOM exam papers is available to purchase. Candidates must complete and send to the Examinations Department the past papers order form which can be accessed [here](#). Payment should be made payable to The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, in euro's only.

### 3. How to enter the MFOM Part I Examination

#### 3.1 Method of application

- ❖ Applications must be submitted on the official entry form in block capitals and accompanied by all necessary documentation to the Examinations Office of the College.
- ❖ Candidates will be required to submit documentary evidence that they fulfil entry requirements set out above.
- ❖ Candidates will be admitted to the examination in the name as given on their original diploma of medical qualification, a certified copy of which is required with applications for entry. Similarly, if their names have been changed by marriage or deed poll, documentary proof of the change must be attached.
- ❖ Two recent passport sized photographs must be supplied with the application.
- ❖ The application must be accompanied by the appropriate fee.
- ❖ Candidates must also complete the following declaration at the time of submitting their application:

*“ I apply for admission to the Membership examination to be held on.....(date) at .....(name of centre).*

*I declare that I have read and understood the Faculty’s regulations governing the examination.*

*I understand that I may be refused admission, or have permission to complete the examination rescinded if I infringe any regulation or I am considered by the examiners to have been guilty of behaviour prejudicial to the proper conduct of the examination.*

*I understand too that I may be subject to sanctions up to and including being excluded from any further examinations conducted by the Faculty or College for life. Any such misconduct may be reported to the appropriate licensing body”.*

- ❖ No entries will be accepted after the closing date for examinations.
- ❖ The examinations will normally be held annually, usually in May.

#### 3.2 Visas

If a candidate requires a visa to sit an examination, it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure the visa application is made in sufficient time before the examination date for which it has been sought. The College has no influence in granting or refusing visa’s. A refund will **not** be given if a candidate is unable to attend the examination as a result of a visa related problem.

#### 3.3 Examination fees

The fees payable on entry to the MFOM Examinations are published annually.

Cheques or Bank Drafts should be made payable to: “The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland”. Payment must be for the full amount in **Euro only**.

**Please note**: all bank drafts received **must** be drawn on a bank in the Republic of Ireland. Only personal cheques from the Republic of Ireland will be accepted. Drafts drawn from outside the Republic of Ireland are subject to an additional €40 handling fee.

Payment can also be made by credit card. Please complete the credit card details in the relevant section on the application form. Please note the College is unable to process credit card payments unless the candidate is the card holder. If the candidate is not the card holder, the College must have written authorisation from the card holder before proceeding with payment. The College cannot process Laser or Debit card applications.

Candidates can pay by transfer payment online.

No application to sit an examination will be accepted unless the appropriate fee has been paid and this fee must accompany the application form.

No candidate will be permitted to take any part of the examination unless all outstanding fees are paid in full.

### **3.4 Withdrawal from the examination**

Notice of withdrawal from an examination must be given in writing to the College. A refund less 10% will be made if written notice of withdrawal is received by the College on or before the closing date of entry to the examination. No fee will be held over to a future examination. Refunds will not be made where candidates submit their withdrawal request after the closing date unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances. Each request will be dealt with on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Dean of Examinations, whose decision is final. Documentary evidence is required in all cases. Any request (accompanied by supporting evidence) must be submitted within 2 weeks of the examination date if it is to be considered.

### **3.5 Examination Registration**

Registration will take place 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination. Candidates will be admitted to the examination under the names (surname and first name(s)) as given in the current edition of the Medical Register of Ireland or of the United Kingdom or on their original medical registration certificates or diplomas of medical qualification or official translations of the diplomas. The last name will be taken as the surname. Passport, equivalent national identity card or drivers licence must be produced at all parts of each Examination.

## **4. MFOM Examination Format**

1. There will be three components to the Membership examination: a written section, objective structured practical examination (OSPE) and portfolio.

2. Candidates will be required to obtain a pass in each section in order to be eligible for the award of the Membership.

### **4.1 Written Section**

a) There will be four elements to this component: 2 sets of multiple choice questions (MCQ); modified essay question (MEQ); critical appraisal question.

b) The MCQ's will generally be of the "best of five" type. Paper 1 will be of 100 questions, paper 2 of 50 Questions. Candidates who have previously achieved LFOM will not be required to sit Paper 1, and will instead have their previous score entered into the marking results. The arrangements for Paper 1 will be introduced in May 2013. In May 2012 only, there will be a single MCQ paper of 100 questions, completed by all candidates.

c) The MCQ papers are intended to test knowledge in occupational medicine and will therefore cover the content of the syllabus laid down by the Faculty. The papers will also include questions on clinical medicine and disease management as well as clinical aspects of occupational medicine.

d) The MEQ paper will be composed of up to six questions in a modified essay format. Whilst the emphasis will be on clinical practice - theoretical questions may also be included.

e) The critical appraisal paper will assess a candidate's ability to read, interpret and apply the key points from a scientific journal article. Candidates will be given several journal articles. They will be given time to read the articles and then time to write a critical appraisal of the articles.

## **4.2 Portfolio**

a) All candidates are required to submit a portfolio containing TEN clinical cases and FIVE other projects. The purpose of the portfolio is to allow candidates to demonstrate the ability to apply the principles of occupational medicine in a clinical setting and critically reflect on the medical condition and the occupational context.

b) Candidates who are re-sitting, and have previously submitted a dissertation must now submit a Portfolio.

c) The portfolio should contain two sections: clinical and other projects.

d) All portfolios should be submitted by the application closing date – usually the end of February. Check dates with the examinations office.

### **Clinical Case Section**

e) The clinical section should involve accounts of ten clinical cases which the candidate has personally managed as an occupational physician. General medical cases or non-occupational health cases managed in general practice are not acceptable.

f) The clinical case section of the portfolio should be formatted as follows:

1. Contents – list the cases

2. The clinical cases numbered (1) to (10) should contain:

- Heading e.g. Occupational Asthma
- History – including occupational history
- Clinical Examination
- Investigation & results
- Diagnosis & Treatment
- Case management – emphasising occupational health management and prevention
- Follow up
- Discussion
- References

The management of the case should consider where appropriate aspects of rehabilitation, legal context, task analysis, communication to the employer and their response. The discussion section of each case is important and should include an appraisal of the case which covers the association between the clinical condition and its occupational context. In addition, issues such as causation and options for management should be discussed. Candidates will be expected to have carried out a relevant literature review in regard to the case and all citations should be referenced according to the Vancouver convention.

## Other Projects

g) The five “other projects” subject areas are shown below:

- a walk-through survey of a workplace to include a detailed hazard survey or risk assessment and relevant interpretation with recommendations;
- an audit of some aspect of the candidate's occupational health practice;
- an example of how the practice of the candidate influenced change in an organisation for which they provide occupational services;
- an example of the candidate's development of a policy/guidelines/operational procedures within their occupational health department; and,
- candidate selected choice of topic. This should not include any of the projects already described above. The topic should be relevant to current occupational health practice. Examples may be – impact of pandemic influenza in an organisation; introduction of a computer system into an occupational health department; the role of occupational health in managing sickness absence etc.

Advice on the suitability or otherwise of candidate selected projects can be sought from the Academic Registrar.

h) Relevant literature should be cited where appropriate for all projects and all citations should be referenced according to the Vancouver convention. Marks will be awarded for the adoption of a critical style in the compilation of the project.

i) The other project case section of the portfolio should be formatted as follows:

The projects numbered (1) to (5) should contain:

- Title of the project
- Introduction
- Description of the project
- Discussion
- References

j) The portfolio must be written in clear English, which implies the use of an active voice whenever possible, simply constructed sentences and the avoidance of repetitive wording. Jargon should be avoided. Abbreviations should be explained in full on first use in the text. Prose should be used throughout. At the beginning, the candidate should set out a brief curriculum vitae including details of their current occupational health commitments. This should not be included in the total word count.

k) Whilst no minimum word count is specified the complete clinical case section should not exceed 10,000 words (1000 words per case) and the other projects not to exceed 7,500 words in total (1500 words per project).

l) The portfolio must bear the following declaration:

**Declaration**

*I declare that this dissertation consisting of ..... words and ..... pages (insert the appropriate numbers in figures) is all my own work.*

*Where I have relied on the work of other people, I have acknowledged this according to the normal academic conventions.*

*I understand that my dissertation may be subject to electronic scrutiny.*

*I consent to the publication of an abstract or abstracts on the Faculty's website*

*Signed:*

*Name in print:*

*Date:*

m) The portfolio must be printed on good quality paper of A4 size and single sided. The left margin should be 4cms to allow for binding. The right, top and bottom margins should be of 2.5cm each. Papers should be numbered consecutively. The text should be set out in either 1.5 or double line spacing. Initial submission can be made electronically by the specified closing date for applications – this should be in a single Word 2007 or Adobe Acrobat 9 file, without password protection. The file should be submitted by email.

n) As marks will be awarded for presentation, candidates are strongly advised to review and proof read their work prior to submission.

o) The portfolio will be marked by two examiners using a marking grid. The pass mark will be 60%.

p) Candidates will be expected to respect the normal rules of citation practice. Anyone found to have plagiarised material will be considered to be in breach of these regulations. To this end, a proportion of submitted portfolios and those suspected of plagiarism may be subject to further examination using specific anti-plagiarism software.

q) Cases submitted previously in an LFOM portfolio are not acceptable as part of the membership portfolio. Any attempt to do so will be regarded as a breach of these regulations and treated accordingly.

### **4.3 OSPE**

a) Candidates will be examined using a set of OSPE (objective structured practical examination) stations. There will be at least ten stations with between 5-15 minutes at each. Many of the stations will involve taking directed specific histories from patients or will involve performing physical examinations of particular systems. In addition, there will be several stations where there will be no patient contact and practical assessments will be undertaken such as interpretation of audiometric or spirometric tracings, results of biological monitoring etc.

b) The candidates will be expected to answer relevant questions at the end of the station. Failure in three or more stations will constitute a failure in the OSPE part of the examination.

b) Under no circumstances will exemptions be granted from the OSPE examination.

c) Candidates are expected to bring with them a stethoscope, measuring tape, tendon hammer, clinical torch, ophthalmoscope and auriscope.

## **5.1. Fire Evacuation**

- 5.1 The emergency exits will be pointed out to candidates during the announcements prior to the commencement of the examination.
- 5.2 Unless otherwise advised, all alarms should be treated as an emergency. If the alarm is sounded, a College staff member will be responsible for the evacuation of the examination venue.
- 5.3 Candidates should note that they remain subject to examination rules during the evacuation and should not communicate or have contact with other candidates. Candidates must not attempt to collect personal belongings.
- 5.4 On instruction from the College staff member, all students will cease writing and leave their answer booklets on the desk.
- 5.5 The College staff member will instruct the invigilators to act as 'Fire Marshalls' and these marshals will be responsible for leading their designated sections of candidates.
- 5.6 The Fire Marshall should collect the exam register and evacuate the candidates to the assembly point using the emergency exits.
- 5.7 Do not use the lift.
- 5.8 When assembled the Fire Marshall will check the candidates against the examinations register.
- 5.9 If it is possible to resume the examination, candidates will be instructed to endorse their scripts with the words 'examination interrupted' indicating the time of the interruption and the time of resumption. Candidates will be allowed compensatory time equivalent to the period from the time the alarm sounded to the resumption of the examination, plus 10 minutes for re-reading the examination paper and settling back into the examination. The invigilator will inform candidates of the revised finishing time for the examination.
- 5.10 A written report of the evacuation will be filed by the College staff member and forwarded to the Dean of Examinations.
- 5.11 A delay of more than thirty minutes will automatically require a re-scheduling of the examination concerned. In this case, invigilators will announce to the students that they should contact the Examinations Department regarding alternative examination arrangements. Students may then leave.

## **6. Code of Conduct**

This code shall apply to all candidates for examinations of the College. Candidates should note by applying to enter to sit an examination they are deemed to have understood and agreed to comply by this code. Misconduct includes, but is not restricted to:

- 6.1 Introduction into any examination materials other than those specifically permitted for the examination.
- 6.2 Any attempt to communicate with another candidate or any person other than an invigilator on duty.

- 6.3 Any attempt to gain access to or plagiarise the work of another candidate.
- 6.4 Any attempt to gain or pass on information with regard to the contents of the examination in advance of the date of the examination.
- 6.5 Impersonation of a candidate.
- 6.6 Bribery of another candidate or examination official.
- 6.7 Unacceptable or disruptive behaviour during an examination.
- 6.8 Failure to abide by the instructions of an invigilator or other examination official.
- 6.9 Falsification or alteration of any results document or qualification.

### **6.1 Report procedures**

Suspected misconduct may be reported to the College by examiners, invigilators, candidates, patients and any other person who becomes aware of suspected misconduct.

- 6.1.1 Where an invigilator suspects a candidate of violation of examination rules and guidelines, they will:
  - (a) Confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate.
  - (b) Make a note of the time when the alleged infringement was discovered. An invigilator should ask another invigilator to act as a witness to the alleged infringement and countersign the note to confirm this.
  - (c) Allow the candidate(s) to continue the examination. Ejection from the examination centre will only take place in the event of a candidate(s) causing disruption to other candidates.
  - (d) Inform the candidate(s) at the end of the examination that a written report of the incident will be submitted to the Dean of Examinations.
  - (e) Within three working days of the examination, the invigilator will submit a written report on the alleged incident together with any confiscated materials to the Dean of Examinations.

## **6.2 Investigation Procedure**

The Academic Registrar will review the report of the alleged case of misconduct and will determine whether there is sufficient evidence of a case to be answered after consulting with other members of College staff where necessary. In cases deemed to be of a very minor or technical nature, a letter of reprimand will be issued (and no further action will be taken).

In all other cases the Dean of Examinations will inform the candidate in writing of the allegations that have been made about them within 10 working days of receiving a report of alleged misconduct. The candidate will be invited to reply in writing to the allegation of misconduct.

The candidate will provide their response in writing to the allegation within 10 working days from the date of the Academic Registrar's letter. If no response is received within 10 working days, a warning letter will be sent. If no response to this warning letter is received within another 10 working days, the file will be sent to the College Executive for a final decision along with a recommendation of an appropriate penalty.

Where a candidate admits in writing to the allegations, full details of the case shall be passed to the College Executive to formally consider the case. The candidate will have the opportunity to include with their response a written statement which may be considered by the Executive. On full review of the case, the Executive will make a final decision, together with a recommendation of an appropriate penalty. The candidate will be notified of the Executive's decision in writing.

## **7. Adapted Examination Arrangements**

Any candidate who has a physical disability, learning disability or any other special need that they believe could affect their performance in an examination, may be entitled to adapted examination arrangements. The purpose of any specific arrangement is to compensate for any restrictions imposed by a disability without impairing the validity of the examination. All such candidates should inform the Examinations Department at the time of application of their circumstances in writing, together with a consultants report to support their application. Failure to include this information at the time of application may affect the arrangements that can be put in place in time for the examination. The information provided is treated strictly confidentially.

## **8. Examination Marking & Results**

### **8.1 Marking**

- Candidates must pass all three of the examination components - Written, Portfolio and OSPE. There will be no compensation between these components.
- An overall pass mark of 50% is required in the written component of the examination. Compensation will be permitted between the four elements of the written component examination – MCQs, MEQ and Critical Appraisal.
- Failure in any of the written component, OSPE or portfolio will be deemed a failure of the examination.
- Once the portfolio, written or OSPE components have been passed, each component may be carried forward (for a total of 3 subsequent years) in future attempts at the same examination and need not be re-sat.

## 8.2 Examination Results

The College processes the marking of MFOM examinations as quickly as possible, consistent with ensuring accuracy, fairness and a stable pass standard. Secure transport of candidate's optical mark sheets to the College from overseas centres, human inspection of the adequacy of the candidate's pencil shadings and optical scanning are required to obtain accurate raw data. Mathematical performance indicators are then calculated and scrutinised by the examiners, along with invigilator's reports, to confirm the fairness of every question. Misperceived or ambiguous phrasing, misprinting or breach of security can occasionally lead to questions being withdrawn. The mathematical procedure for determining the pass mark is then applied and approved by the examiners. Individual feedback letters giving detailed breakdown of performance by sub-specialty are prepared.

- Examination results for successful candidates **only** will be posted on the College website, approximately four working weeks after the date of the examination. Under no circumstances will examination results be given over the telephone, by fax, email or by visiting the College in person.
- All result letters will be posted to candidates shortly thereafter.
- If a candidate wishes his/her result letter to be sent to a different address from that on their application form, they will need to complete the "Change of Address" form available from the invigilators during the examination.
- Please refrain from telephoning the College regarding your result during this period, as this will delay the process.

## 8.3 Recheck procedure

Candidates can request a recheck of their examination results in the MFOM examinations. There is a fee of €150 for this procedure. This charge will be refunded if a recheck changes the overall examination result. Requests for a recheck of examination results must be made in writing, to the Academic Registrar at the College address within six weeks of the results release date, together with the recheck application form.

- 8.3.1 Any representations by candidates must be submitted to the Academic Registrar within one month of the completion of the examination.
- 8.3.2 The submission may be made in the form of email initially but must be followed up with a hard copy by ordinary post bearing the signature of the candidate.
- 8.3.3 The appeal will be managed according to the Faculty's interim appeal process.

Requests for a recheck of examination results must be made in writing, to the Dean of Examinations at the College address within six weeks of the results release date, together with the recheck application form.

## 9 Admission to the Faculty

- Candidates must pass all sections of the examination. No compensation is allowed.
- The results will be posted at the examination centres as soon as possible after completion of the examination.
- Prior to admission, each successful candidate must pay the appropriate admission fee, the first year's I subscription and a declaration that they will continue to pay their

- annual subscription in the future

## **Appendix**

[Exam Calendar](#)

[Application Form](#)

[Declaration](#)