



ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

NOTICE TO CANDIDATES REGARDING THE PRIORITISATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE MRCPI PART 2 GENERAL MEDICINE CLINICAL EXAMINATION IN IRELAND

From 13th March 2006 (the opening date for applications for the June 2006 Irish clinical exams) the prioritisation of applications for the MRCPI Part 2 General Medicine clinical examinations held in Ireland will be based on the candidate's country of residence - i.e. candidates living in Ireland or the U.K. will be given priority for exam places ahead of those living in other countries.

Candidates living in countries other than Ireland or the U.K. will not be excluded from applying for clinical exams held in Ireland but they are advised to apply to the College's overseas exam centres whenever possible (candidates living overseas will be given priority when applying to the College's overseas exam centres).

BACKGROUND TO THIS DECISION

Whilst there is currently no limit on the number of candidates who can be accommodated at the College's written MRCPI exams, places on the MRCPI Part 2 clinical exams held in Ireland have been heavily over-subscribed in recent years, resulting in some candidates failing to obtain a place on their chosen exam date. This is an unsatisfactory situation and the College is continuously reviewing ways to resolve the problem.

The Dean of Examinations and the Examinations Department staff have made great strides in increasing the number of exam places – up 30% over the last two years – but the demand for places has also increased and appears set to continue to outstrip supply.

In the clinical exam's current format candidates interact with patients in a hospital environment and are assessed by examiners in both long and short cases. The College's ability to offer places on a clinical exam is therefore wholly dependent on the involvement of hospitals throughout Ireland. The ongoing provision of services and facilities by hospital staff is greatly appreciated. However, there is a finite limit to these resources and for many reasons not all of the hospitals are available for each period of exams.

Due to the over-subscription a system of prioritisation of applications was introduced some time ago, whereby candidates on their first or second attempt would be allocated an exam place ahead of those on their third, or more, attempt.

Following a recent statistical review of the Irish clinical exams it has become clear that a significant number of candidates travel to Ireland from overseas countries for the exams. The College currently has two clinical exam venues outside of Ireland – in Oman and Malaysia – and there are plans to introduce additional overseas clinical exam venues. Overseas clinical candidates are therefore encouraged to apply for exams in venues nearer their country of residence, hence the change to the system of prioritisation.

The following should be stressed:

- The new system of prioritisation is based on country of residence and not nationality – a large percentage of MRCPI candidates living in Ireland and the U.K. are overseas nationals.

- Candidates living in countries other than Ireland or the U.K. will still be permitted to apply for the MRCPI Part 2 clinical exams held in Ireland but they should be aware that their applications will only be accepted if and when candidates living in Ireland or the U.K. have been accommodated. If there are insufficient places available for all candidates the unsuccessful applications will be returned.
- No candidate will be guaranteed a place on the exam for which they have applied, regardless of their country of residence, unless sufficient exam places are available.

THE TWO-YEAR RULE

Candidates have two years from the date of passing the MRCPI Part 2 written exam in which to pass the MRCPI Part 2 clinical exam. We are aware that a minority of candidates who fail to pass the clinical exam in this time frame may be affected by being unable to gain a place on an exam. Unsuccessful candidates who are approaching the end of their two years and who fail to gain a place on a clinical exam should write to the Dean of Examinations at the College address with full details of their situation. The Dean will then make a decision as to whether an extension to the two years is warranted (an extension will only be granted in exceptional circumstances).

IN CONCLUSION

We regret that we are not currently in a position to accommodate all candidates who apply for our clinical exams. This situation is of no benefit to the College and we are making every effort to resolve the problem - e.g. by increasing the number of available exam places and also by looking at potential changes to the format of the exam in order to improve its deliverability – but these solutions are likely to be long term. In the meantime we have to deal with the situation as it stands and we need to administer the exams as equitably as possible.

We are striving to accommodate all candidates and we hope you will bear with us as we endeavour to do so.

Thelma Russell
Manager of Examinations