

13 May 2020

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations

The Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations (ICBSE) and the four Surgical Royal Colleges are intending to resume examination activity for the MRCS and DO-HNS from September 2020, dependent on relevant Government and Scientific advice.

This resumption in examination activity is being planned with the expectation that social distancing measures will remain in place, in order to ensure the safety of candidates, examiners, and staff members. The safety of all those involved in the exam is at the forefront in the planning in how examination activity will be resumed. As such, three key principles will inform the planning of resumption of examination activity:

- fewer candidates will be at exam centres at any one time to maintain social distancing
- examining days will be increased in order to accommodate as many candidates as possible in a socially distanced context
- UK and Ireland candidates within Core Surgical Training will be prioritised in the allocation of places in both Part A and Part B examinations if reduced capacity requires this. After this, priority will then be given to candidates whose exam was postponed in April or May

These principles will inform the following specific measures for autumn 2020:

MRCS Part A

The September 2020 diet may be held on two days - the 15th and 16th of September - with each candidate sitting on one of these days. The question papers will be different on the two days in order to maintain the security and integrity of the examination. This will be the case both in the United Kingdom and Ireland, and internationally.

MRCS Part B

In the October 2020 diet Colleges will seek to maximise the number of examining days within the existing two-week diet (3-18 October) where this is possible. This will be necessary to accommodate the fact that the number of candidates taking part in any given circuit of the MRCS Part B in the October 2020 diet will be reduced below the normal capacity. It may be necessary to examine candidates at a venue run by another College if capacity issues requires this.

DO-HNS Part 1

The September 2020 diet will have social distancing measures in place, but it is not expected that any changes to the delivery of the exam will need to be made in order to do this.

DO-HNS Part 2

The October 2020 diet will have a reduced number of candidates taking part in any given circuit to ensure that there will be enough physical space between candidates and others while the exam is taking place.

International diets of the MRCS Part B

ICBSE and the four Surgical Royal Colleges are watching the international situation to assess when examinations will be able to resume outside of the United Kingdom and Ireland. It is the intent of ICBSE and the four Surgical Royal Colleges to resume examination activity at international venues when it is safe to do so.

