For the attention of GP Directors/Heads of School

20 July 2016

Dear Colleague

We have now successfully concluded the 2015/16 session of examinations and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and to update you regarding a number of planned changes for the next academic year.

**Exceptional fifth attempts at the AKT/CSA**

For candidates who entered UK GP Specialty Training after 1 August 2010 a maximum of four attempts at the AKT/CSA components is permitted. This limitation on the number of attempts is evidence based, and has been approved by the GMC. Analysis of examination data suggests that after four attempts at either the AKT or CSA a point is reached where further attempts at the examination are unlikely to be successful except by chance, which has implications both for candidates and potentially for patients.

This notwithstanding there is anecdotal evidence that some candidates demonstrate late take off in terms of acquiring the competencies required for success in the AKT or CSA and do succeed at their fifth attempt. The GMC has approved a new RCGP policy to allow an exceptional fifth attempt at either the AKT or CSA on the grounds of additional educational attainment, where the candidate has made sufficient progress to merit a further attempt. Fifth attempts should always be exceptional rather than the norm.

This change will apply prospectively to those candidates who fail an examination for the fourth time after 1 August 2016. The application needs to be made by the trainee’s current or most recent educational supervisor and an application form containing the eligibility criteria and supporting information in the form of FAQs will be available shortly from the MRCGP webpages of the College’s website.

**Review of MRCGP complaints, appeals and mitigating circumstances**

We have undertaken a review of these policies and the main change has been to separate the regulations from policy and process, and to ensure that the information presented to candidates is easily accessible, transparent and comprehensive.

The revised documentation will be available from the MRCGP webpages of the College’s website in early August.

I would like to draw your attention to the section on mitigating circumstances, which applies to all attempts. Mitigating circumstances are serious, unforeseen, unpreventable events that significantly affect candidate performance during a specific examination attempt.

All candidates are required to sign that they are fit to sit on the day of their examination and to report any circumstances that they believe may have affected their performance as soon as they arise, or as soon as possible thereafter, and no later than 48 after the exam has been sat. This process is not intended as a default route for obtaining additional attempts.
CSA feedback
In response to requests from candidates and supervisors, and in compliance with Academy of Medical Royal Colleges standards we are increasing the amount and detail of the CSA feedback that candidates will receive.

Candidates will receive their marks for each domain (data gathering and interpretation; clinical management; interpersonal skills) for every case in addition to summated domain scores, which should allow them to more easily understand the areas of the case where they have performed less well.

Candidates will also be provided with all of the feedback statements that they receive for each of their 13 cases. This change will make the feedback more case specific and remove anomalies whereby a candidate can receive a failing grade in a domain and not receive a feedback statement for that domain.

The primary purpose of feedback is to improve future performance and we encourage candidates to share their feedback with their supervisor to inform future learning/examination preparation.

Programme for Trainers/TPDs to visit the CSA
We would like to thank you for supporting our programme to encourage trainers and training programme directors to visit the CSA, which has received excellent feedback.

Please do encourage any trainers/TPDs who would still like to arrange a visit to contact exams@rcgp.org.uk

Thank you again for your support.

Pauline Foreman
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RCGP