

Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations (ICBSE)

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy for
Candidates with a Disability or Specific Learning difficulty

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 and Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2011 require the Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and in Ireland to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and in Ireland are required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. This policy outlines the processes to follow in applying for a reasonable adjustment in relation to all parts of the MRCS and MRCS ENT examinations and the basis for which reasonable adjustments can be granted.

DEFINITIONS

Reasonable Adjustment

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique and how reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

The needs and circumstances of each candidate are different. The Surgical Royal Colleges will consider any request for a reasonable adjustment on a case by case basis.

The format of the examination will also have a bearing on whether a requested reasonable adjustment is permissible. The competence level of the examination cannot be altered.

ICBSE reserves the right to seek independent advice to ensure any adjustment or arrangement are appropriate and in accordance with any applicable legislation.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to:

- a) access the examination;
- b) show what they know and can do without changing the competence of the examination or provide an unfair advantage over candidates who do not request a reasonable adjustment.

The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual disabled candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

The Equality Act 2010 – Definition of Disability

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- a) identifying a physical or mental impairment;
- b) looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial;
- c) considering if substantial adverse effects are long term;
- d) judging the impact of long term adverse effects on normal day to day activities.

‘Substantial’ means ‘more than minor or trivial’.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed or is likely to exist for at least 12 months.

'Normal day to day activities' may include mobility, physical coordination, speech, hearing, eyesight and memory or ability to communicate.

THE PROCESS

- a) Candidates wishing to apply for special consideration must notify the examinations department of the College the candidate is applying to, in writing, upon application or as soon as possible following the commencement of the disability e.g. sudden accident/illness. Adjustments cannot be made on the day of the exam.
- b) All requests must be accompanied by original medical documentation. In the case of dyslexia, a full Educational Psychologist report is required.
- c) Candidates applying online should send a copy of their medical documentation (either the original or an electronic copy) to the Examinations Department of the College they are applying to **within one week of application**. Medical documentation sent at a later date will not be considered. All reports will be returned at the candidate's request. The Surgical Royal Colleges may not be able to accommodate a reasonable adjustment request if there is insufficient time between receiving the medical documentation and the examination date.
- d) Upon receipt of the medical documentation the Colleges may request additional evidence if deemed necessary.
- e) When supplying an Assessment Report in the case of dyslexia, the assessment should have been completed at the age of 16 years or over.
- f) The submission of supporting evidence is required for each exam application.
- g) It is the candidate's responsibility to specify which of the recommended adjustments within their documentary evidence they require for decision by the Colleges in each application.

SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

Appropriate evidence of need must be provided to the College within one week of application. It should provide the relevant information of the nature and extent of the disability and confirm that without reasonable adjustment the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage.

The medical documentation should be supported with:

- a) a letter from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or full report from an Educational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist or appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health Care Professions Council or the Psychological Society of Ireland

- b) a letter from an appropriately qualified psychiatrist; or
- c) a letter from a hospital consultant; or
- d) a full report from a Local Authority Educational Psychology Service; or
- e) a letter from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service; or
- f) a letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the documentary evidence is true and accurate. Any probity issues can be reported to the Regulator.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION EXAMINATIONS (MRCS PART A & DO-HNS PART 1)

Each Reasonable Adjustment request will be assessed on a case by case basis. The following reasonable adjustments for Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) papers are not exhaustive and are provided as examples only:

Category	Special Provisions		
	Separate Room	Extra Time	Other
Hearing Impairment or deafness	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written instructions issued at the start of an exam or seated near front of exam hall. ○ Inform relevant staff members ○ Contact College exams department if you require additional accommodation
Speech Impairment	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform relevant staff members
Dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulty/Difference	Yes	25% (up to a maximum of 50% dependent on Educationalists recommendations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All written material in dyslexic "friendly" fonts, appropriately sized. ○ All written material on appropriately coloured paper if required. ○ Specific formatting ○ Paper version of exam offered rather than computer-based version
Learning difficulties	Yes	25% (dependent on Educationalists recommendations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervised rest breaks
Mitigating Circumstances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temporary conditions due to illness or injury 	Possibly	Possibly	Possible effect on performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May need scribe or disabled access depending on nature of injury

OBJECTIVE STRUCTURED CLINICAL EXAMINATIONS (MRCS PART B & MRCS ENT))

As with MCQs Reasonable Adjustment requests for the Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) examinations are also assessed on a case by case basis. The examples below are not exhaustive and are provided as examples only:

Category	Special Provisions	
	Extra Time	Other
Hearing Impairment or deafness	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform relevant examiners ○ Contact College exams department if you require additional accommodation
Speech Impairment	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform relevant examiners
Dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulty/Difference	<u>MRCS PART B:</u> No <u>DO-HNS Part 2:</u> Yes	MRCS Part B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All written material in dyslexic “friendly” fonts, appropriately sized. ○ All written material on appropriately coloured paper if required. ○ A reader should be offered for the scenarios and can be used inside and/or outside the stations at the candidate’s discretion ○ Specific formatting DO-HNS Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As above ○ In addition, period of extra time for <u>written</u> stations offered at end of exam
Mobility problems that may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restrict access to certain rooms or ability to carry out clinical examination of patients. 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure access is possible for all rooms and appropriate toilet facilities are available. ○ Adjustable desk ○ In clinical exams – patients in adjustable beds
Mitigating Circumstances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temporary conditions due to illness or injury ○ Provisions needed related to pregnancy or breastfeeding 	Possibly Possibly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May need scribe or disabled access depending on nature of injury ○ Additional breaks or specific start times may be provided ○ Accommodation in a venue with a suitable room where possible to allow privacy if candidate needs to express breast milk on exam day

APPEALS

Where the candidate does not believe the adjustments made are reasonable, they may ask for their case to be reviewed by the ICBSE Chair. The decision of the ICBSE Chair will be final.

CONTACT DETAILS

Any queries relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for MRCS and MRCS (ENT) should be directed to the College through which a candidate has applied for entry to the examination.

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9DW
Tel: 0131 527 1600
Email: surgical.exams@rcsed.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons of England
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Tel: +44 (0)207 405 3474 (Option 3)
Email: SurgicalExams@rcseng.ac.uk

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
232-242 St Vincent Street
Glasgow
G2 5RJ
Tel: 0141 221 6072
Email: mrcsexams@rcpsg.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
123 St Stephens Green
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: 00 353 1402 2221
Email: courtfofexaminers@rcsi.ie

Start Date: April 2023
Review Date: April 2026