

13th January 2021

Dear Candidate,

Important update on the DIMC and FIMC Examinations

Firstly, once again we are sorry that, due to the exceptional circumstances, the RCS Ed was forced to postpone the Examinations again in January. We share your frustrations and understand the stress that this may cause. Despite the fact that the College continues to be physically closed and many staff on furlough the RCS Ed team, IBTPHEM, PHEMTA and the wider FPHC have been working together on potential practical solutions to the examinations problem. The situation has been changing very rapidly with the evolution of the pandemic and we have only now been able to provide further useful information to you.

In addition to restrictions placed on us by government and college closures, which are completely beyond our control, in revising our plans we have had to take into account some other key factors which are not currently flexible.

- Any diets of DIMC and FIMC Examinations must maintain the set standard. A lesser 'COVID qualification' is not acceptable. Examination content or structure may however be adapted to make delivery easier if examination standards are maintained.
- The practical nature of pre-hospital emergency medicine has led to the key practical OSPE component of the examination. Although conducting the practical examination is challenging during the pandemic, dropping the practical component is not considered a realistic option.
- Although the possibility of an on-line OSPE has been investigated we do not currently have an option sophisticated enough to run such complex examinations as the DIMC and FIMC OSPEs online.
- The availability of candidates, examiners and college staff in the pandemic.
- We are closely monitoring all possible options and how other Colleges are tackling the challenges.

Many other options have all been discussed and considered at length. Unfortunately there is no easy solution, which is reflected in the number of varying options that have been discussed.

Following a meeting on Sunday 10th January, the following was decided:

1. We will apply the GMC derogation of the National Summative Assessment 1 (NSA 1- DIMC) for PHEM Trainees scheduled for January 2021 sitting

In practice this means that trainees who were expecting to sit the DIMC in January 2021 as part of recognised training scheme do not need to sit this examination in order to progress to sitting the NSA 2. This will not confer the award of DIMC RCS Ed 'without examination'. Any PHEM trainee wishing to sit all or part of the examination would be allowed to do so if they requested to and paid the examination fees. Some may choose to, in order to be awarded the additional qualification (on successful completion of both parts) or to aid personal preparation for the FIMC. The FIMC regulations currently on the RCS Ed website will be updated to reflect this change in due course.



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2. A remote (probably on-line) sitting of the written paper for both the DIMC and FIMC will be held on March 15th 2021.

All candidates that were booked to sit the examination in January 2021 will be automatically offered a place to sit the written examination on March 15th, 2021 but may decide if they wish to sit it or not. If they choose to defer, they will automatically be offered a place to sit the written in the July diet instead.

Candidates from the postponed January 2021 examination will automatically all be booked a place for the practical component in the June/July diet, irrespective of whether they choose to sit the written component in March or June/July.

The College Examinations team will communicate further details on this option in due course. It is hoped that this written examination will be able to be run on-line - if not, the College has supported the decision to run this in local 'test' centres whilst being invigilated by a current DIMC or FIMC Examiner. To pass the examination overall the practical component will have to be passed subsequently. The examination regulations will be altered in due course to reflect this change so that a total number of attempts at both the written and practical component will be allowed independently, rather than seen as a single 'attempt'. Sitting the written examination in March will count as 'an attempt'.

3. The practical component for both the DIMC and FIMC will be postponed until the planned diet in June/July 2021

With current circumstances it seems unlikely that a March diet could be delivered and we have taken the difficult decision to cancel this diet with reasonable notice.

4. Plans were already in place to significantly increase the capacity of both the DIMC and FIMC in the June/July 2021 diet

This will allow a greater number of candidates to move through the system as quickly as possible. However, please note that in order to do so it is possible that some candidates will be required to attend the practical component on 28/29th June. The examination dates currently shown on the RCS Ed website will be changed in due course, but candidates should be aware their individual examination dates may fall on any day(s) of the week from Monday 28th June to Friday 2nd July (inclusive).

5. A working group will continue to explore alternative options to a practical examination, should it not be possible to hold an OSPE circuit in the June/July diet

This groups task will be to carefully consider and prepare options that could be deemed an 'acceptable alternative' to a practical OSPE circuit for scrutiny by the College, Faculty, IBTPHEM and the GMC. This is a significant challenge and will require an enormous amount of work from those involved. By running this preparation in parallel to preparation of the OSPE circuits it is hoped that if an alternative solution can be found, standardised and agreed, we can have something in place as a viable option to the planned June/July 2021 diet.

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Thank you for your understanding in these exceptional times. We can assure you that we will continue to work to explore all options and deliver the best solutions open to us to deliver the examinations.

We hope you stay safe and well during this extremely difficult time for healthcare staff.

With kind regards,

Dr Jonathan Birks
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Dr Phil Hyde
Vice Chair, IBTPHEM & FPHC Examinations Committee

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