



**Royal College
of Physicians**

Faculty of
Physician Associates

Physician Associate National Recertification Examination

Regulations for examination candidates

Applicable from 29 June 2020

1. Introduction

These regulations apply to the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination from 29 June 2020.

The Physician Associate National Recertification Examination will continue to change to reflect developments in healthcare, and candidates should refer to [Physician Associate National Recertification Examination website](#) for the most up-to-date information and examination regulations. By submitting an application for the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination candidates are confirming that they have read, understood and will abide by these regulations, the RCP Assessment Unit Candidate Code of Conduct, and the guidance on the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) website.

2. Format

The Physician Associate National Recertification Examination consists of a single written examination made up of single best answer multiple choice ('best-of-five' format) questions. The written examination is split over two papers, each containing 100 questions.

The Physician Associate National Recertification Examination certificate is awarded on successful completion of the examination.

2.1 Marking system for the written examination

Candidates' overall results are calculated as an aggregated total of the points awarded in both papers. For the purpose of the exam and subsequent result processing, the two papers are considered a single exam, with candidates receiving a single overall mark for the written exam in its entirety.

The marking system is as follows:

- > One mark (+1) is awarded for each correct answer
- > No mark is deducted for an incorrect answer (ie there is no negative marking)
- > No mark is awarded or deducted if a question is left unanswered
- > No mark is awarded if more than one answer is recorded or the answer is not sufficiently clear
- > The pass mark for the written exam is calculated using the Angoff method of standard setting. To achieve a pass in the written examination candidates must achieve or exceed this pass mark.

2.2 Results

Result letters will be sent to candidates via email from the assessment unit. Certificates will be issued to all candidates who successfully complete both components of the examination.

Anonymised result data will be used for the purpose of standard setting and quality assurance. This data may also be used for research purposes.

3. Entry requirements for the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination

The Physician Associate National Recertification Examination is designed to cover all core areas of practice that a physician associate is expected to maintain knowledge in, regardless of whether they are working in a specific specialty.

In order to remain on the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register (PAMVR) physician associates must pass the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination every 6 years.

The first opportunity will be at the beginning of their fifth year after successfully completing the PA National Certification Examination and they must pass the examination before the end of the sixth year.

3.1 Limited number of attempts

Candidates are permitted a maximum of three attempts during the relevant period of each 6-year cycle outlined above.

If any physician associate fails the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination on three occasions or does not pass the examination within the above timeframe, they will be removed from the PAMVR. They will then have to take the PA National Certification Examination and reapply for FPA membership and entry onto the PAMVR.

3.2 Application process

Details of how to apply are given on the [Physician Associate National Recertification Examination website](#).

All applications must be received by 23:55 (GMT) on the advertised closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

3.3 Examination fee payments

Details of the current examination fees, examination dates, and opening and closing dates for applications are published on the [Physician Associate National Recertification Examination website](#).

Payment of examination fees can only be made via PayPal, and candidates who submit an application will be contacted once the application period has closed with details on how to make payment. Payments via cash or cheque/banker's draft are not accepted.

Any card details received in emails or as attachments will be deleted immediately and payments will not be actioned.

3.4 Identification

Candidates will not be allowed into the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination without appropriate identification (ID). The name on the candidate's ID must EXACTLY match that on the admission document issued by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) Assessment Unit. This will be the name provided during your application, usually your first name(s) followed by surname.

Name discrepancies

Candidates must notify the RCP Assessment Unit if the name as it appears on the identification that will be used to gain entry to the examination is different from the name that was provided on their application.

Names can have significant spelling variations, including those that are phonetically translated into English from other languages. For example, the name 'MacDonald' may appear as 'McDonald' or 'Macdonald'; the name 'Mohammed' may appear as 'Mohamed', 'Mahammed', 'Mahamed', or 'Muhammed'. Such discrepancies will not be accepted for the purposes of entry to Physician

Associate National Recertification Examinations, as they do not allow invigilators to accurately identify candidates.

It is the candidate's responsibility to resolve any discrepancies with the RCP Assessment Unit **before** the examination. Please contact the RCP Assessment Unit via PAExams@RCPLondon.ac.uk with any queries regarding name discrepancies.

Name changes

Candidates who change their name by marriage or deed poll must submit the original or authenticated documentary proof of this if they wish to be admitted to the examination under their new name.

Candidates are advised to provide authenticated copies of any original documentation by email. The RCP Assessment Unit cannot accept responsibility for any items lost in transit.

Name format

RCP Assessment Unit records, and the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination certificate, show forenames followed by the family name, for example Alan John Smith. Correspondence will typically be addressed using the candidate's first name and family name, for example Alan Smith.

4. Candidate responsibilities

Candidates should:

1 Ensure that their application is fully complete

Candidates must submit the application within the application period.

An application is considered complete only upon receiving full payment of fees. And confirmation of a candidate's current place on the PAMVR. The RCP Assessment Unit will contact candidates to advise them of any outstanding information and will provide a deadline for receipt.

Candidates who submit an application and pay the required exam fee but are subsequently found to be ineligible, will have their application withdrawn and a full refund of their fees provided.

Eligible candidates will not be permitted to take the examination unless all outstanding fees have been paid in full.

If payment of fees is not completed by the provided deadline, the candidate's application will be rejected. Once rejected, an application cannot be reinstated.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that any correspondence is sent securely and received within given deadlines.

2 Provide full contact details

It is the candidate's responsibility to provide full and accurate contact details (email address and telephone number) at the time of registration, and to ensure that any change is notified to the RCP Assessment Unit as soon as possible.

3 Read and act on any correspondence from the RCP Assessment Unit

Candidates must ensure that they read all correspondence issued by the RCP Assessment Unit up to and including the day of the examination.

On rare occasions changes to the examination arrangements may have to be made at short notice. The RCP Assessment Unit will use the email address provided to inform candidates of these changes. Candidates who are absent or late for an examination because they did not read such an email will not be automatically entitled to a refund.

4 Not give false information

Giving false information on the application form for any part of the examination will be regarded as an act of suspected misconduct and be investigated accordingly.

5 Be feeling well enough to undertake the examination

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they are physically and mentally fit to sit the examination. Should a candidate feel unwell prior to the start of the examination, they should inform an invigilator and consider withdrawing from the examination. Candidates are reminded to be aware of their responsibilities as physician associates to take into account any risks that their own health may pose to others, such as candidates and staff.

6 Consider the time required to obtain any necessary visas

If a candidate requires a visa to sit an examination, it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that they are eligible to receive a visa for entry to the UK.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that a visa application is made in sufficient time before the examination date for which it has been sought.

A refund will not be given if a candidate is unable to attend the examination as a result of visa-related problems.

4.1 Reasonable adjustments

Any candidate who has a physical disability, specific learning difficulty or any other condition that they believe would disadvantage them compared with other candidates in an examination, may be entitled to reasonable adjustments.

It is the candidate's responsibility to notify the RCP Assessment Unit of any reasonable adjustment request in writing at the time of application and provide supporting evidence in line with the RCP Assessment Unit [Reasonable adjustment policy](#).

Candidates should not assume that previously agreed reasonable adjustments will be carried forward to a future examination. Candidates must notify the RCP Assessment Unit of any request at each examination attempt.

If the requested adjustments cannot be implemented, the candidate may either withdraw from the examination or proceed without the adjustments.

Candidates who qualify for reasonable adjustments may not always be able to sit in the location of their choice.

Special arrangements purely for candidate convenience cannot be made. Candidate convenience includes provision for social events (such as holidays), courses, seminars and any other clinical commitments.

4.2 Candidate conduct

The standards of behaviour expected of those applying to and sitting the examinations are outlined in the [code of conduct for examination applicants and candidates](#).

Candidates are advised to be aware that any breach of the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination regulations will result in a misconduct investigation and the possibility of severe penalties.

The RCP Assessment Unit reserves the right to use various methods to identify candidates who attempt to copy, collude or perform some other act that may be regarded as academic misconduct in the Physician Associate National Recertification Examinations. This includes an Anomaly Monitoring System (AMS) that seeks to detect instances of copying or collusion by looking for anomalous patterns of responses by candidates, the answers of one candidate being more similar to those of another candidate than would be expected by chance alone. If a pair (or group) of candidates is identified as having an unusually high proportion of similar answers then a further investigation is carried out looking at the centres where the candidates sat, the seating plan, and any other information that may have been provided by the invigilators and staff administering the examination. Should it be determined that there is sufficient evidence of possible misconduct, then the candidate(s) concerned will be contacted and the formal [misconduct regulations](#) may be invoked.

The RCP Assessment Unit is fully aware that candidates could be implicated in an act of academic misconduct through the conduct of others. In order to avoid such allegations being levied where there is no evidence confirming which of the candidates is the guilty party, both candidates will be informed that they have been identified by the AMS and will be required to sit separately from other candidates in future. There will be no assumption of guilt in making this request; it is simply a pre-emptive measure.

5. Withdrawal, absence and cancellation of examinations

5.1 Withdrawal from the examination and refund of examination fees

Notice of withdrawal from any part of the examination must be given in writing (by email) to the RCP Assessment Unit via PAExams@RCPLondon.ac.uk.

Candidates should give their full name in their request to withdraw, along with their candidate number if known, to allow staff to identify candidates easily.

Examination applications and/or fees cannot be transferred from one examination to another.

Candidates whose withdrawal request is received on or before the application closing date will be liable for 10% of the exam fee as an administrative charge. This fee must be paid before any future application is accepted.

Refunds will not be made where candidates submit their withdrawal request after the closing date unless there are circumstances deemed exceptional that can be substantiated. Any refund provided will be 90% of the exam fee (10% of the exam fee will be retained as an administrative charge). This

does not apply to candidates who are subsequently confirmed as being ineligible for the examination by their university. In such instances a full refund will be provided.

Withdrawal will not count as an attempt at the examination.

5.2 Absence

Candidates who do not attend the examination, without notifying the RCP Assessment Unit, will be recorded as absent.

Refunds will not be made where candidates are absent unless there are circumstances deemed exceptional that can be substantiated.

Absence will not count as an attempt at the examination.

5.3 Cancellation of examinations

On very rare occasions, it may be necessary for the RCP Assessment Unit to cancel an examination. In these circumstances, the RCP Assessment Unit will refund the examination fee of any candidate allocated to the affected examination centre(s) and change the status of each affected candidate to 'withdrawn'.

Unfortunately, the RCP Assessment Unit cannot be responsible for any expenses (such as travel or accommodation) incurred by a candidate in the event of such a cancellation.

A cancelled examination will not count as one of the candidate's three attempts allowed for an examination.

6. Attending the Physician Associate National Recertification written examination

Any infringement of the following rules and regulations may be reported to the RCP Assessment Unit for consideration in accordance with the RCP Assessment Unit [code of conduct for examination applicants and candidates](#).

Candidates are advised to allow for any transport delays when planning their time of arrival at the examination centre as, for security reasons, we cannot guarantee that they will be permitted to enter the examination centre after the start of the examination.

It should also be noted that, in conditions of heightened security, the examination start time could be delayed. Candidates are therefore advised not to make homeward travel plans that could be jeopardised if the examination starts late or is interrupted for any reason.

Candidates should report to the examination venue at least 30 minutes before the start of the examination and should not enter until instructed by the invigilator(s).

Candidates will not be admitted to any paper if they arrive more than 30 minutes after the examination has started, unless in exceptional circumstances with the express permission of the chief invigilator.

If a candidate is not permitted to enter the test room because they arrive late, the candidate will be considered absent.

6.1 No ID, no entry policy

Candidates should bring the RCP Assessment Unit issued admission document to the examination along with their ID.

Candidates will not be permitted to sit the examination if identification provided has expired.

Candidates will not be permitted to sit the examination unless they produce suitable identification.

This will normally be a passport. Where candidates do not possess a passport, some other form of identification may be acceptable, providing that it includes both a photograph and signature of the candidate (see list of Primary ID below).

Acceptable primary ID

- > Current valid passport (containing photograph and signature)
- > Full or provisional photocard driving licence
- > EEA Member State identity photocard
- > National identity photocard for non-EEA foreign nationals
- > Identity card issued by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

Alternatively, two forms of identification, one with a photograph and the other with a signature, will be accepted (see list of secondary ID).

Acceptable secondary ID

Two forms of secondary ID will need to be shown together, eg NHS/hospital identity card with a debit card. At least one of these MUST CONTAIN a photograph:

- > Valid credit or debit card
- > Valid student card with photograph
- > NHS/hospital identity card
- > Paper driving licence
- > Certified copy of passport or driving licence*

*These documents must be accompanied by an official stamp or letter from the issuing organisation in order to qualify as an acceptable form of ID. Self-made photocopies will not be accepted without such official corroboration.

Additional forms of ID may be considered provided candidates contact the RCP Assessment Unit well in advance of the examination.

Candidates should ensure that the name on their ID exactly matches the name on their admission document. Where names do not match, candidates must contact the RCP Assessment Unit well in advance of the examination for advice.

Admission to the examination will be at the discretion of the invigilator(s), and invigilators have the right to question a candidate further if they are not satisfied with identification that has been provided (including if the candidate does not look sufficiently similar to their photograph).

The Royal College of Physicians observes sensitivity in the visual identification of candidates, but advance notice should be given by candidates of any anticipated difficulties.

6.2 In the examination venue

- 1** All the required stationery, including the pencil to complete marksheets, will be provided by the RCP Assessment Unit. Candidates must use only the stationery provided.
- 2** Pens, including highlighters, are not permitted unless they have been given prior approval as a reasonable adjustment. Any rough work must be completed on the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination question booklet and not on admission documents.
- 3** Candidates must not bring to their desk any papers, bags, textbooks or documents, or items of any kind other than those specifically allowed for that particular examination and previously notified to them.
- 4** The possession of calculators, mobile phones, pagers, personal stereos, 'smart' wrist watches or any other such devices that are audible, make calculations, store information or can be used for communication are strictly forbidden on or around candidates' desks. These items must be switched off and stored with candidates' belongings in the designated area at the examination venue. Where examination venues do not have secure areas to store personal items, any coats, bags or other item(s) brought into the examination venue should be stored as directed by the invigilator(s).
- 5** Any unauthorised items or material will be confiscated and a report detailing the incident and identifying the candidate will be submitted to the RCP Assessment Unit.
- 6** With prior approval (via submission of a request for reasonable adjustments), candidates may bring into the examination venue aids that will enable them to remedy a disability, eg of sight and/or hearing, or a medical condition, eg a glucometer for diabetes.
- 7** If a candidate has unwittingly brought any unauthorised item into the examination venue, this should be handed to the invigilator(s) before the examination starts or at the earliest possible opportunity thereafter.
- 8** Answer sheets are individually numbered (with candidate numbers) in the top right-hand corner. Candidates must sit at the desk where the answer sheet is marked with their candidate number.
- 9** Candidates must not start reading or answering the examination questions until the start of the examination is announced by the invigilator(s).
- 10** Candidates must comply with all instructions given to them by invigilator(s). Such instructions may include the instruction to leave the examination venue and not to return during the period of the examination.
- 11** A candidate will be prevented from proceeding with the Physician Associate National Recertification Written Examination if it is the chief invigilator's view that he/she is too unwell to continue, or his/her conduct is likely to endanger the safety of, cause distress to or disrupt the work of other candidates.
- 12** It is the duty of a candidate to comply with an invigilator's instruction even if they judge the instruction to be unreasonable. There is the right of appeal if a candidate considers that the invigilator has not acted in accordance with these regulations.

- 13** While in the examination venue, a candidate must not attempt to read the work of any other candidate or communicate in any way with any other candidate or any other person without the express permission of the invigilator.
- 14** Candidates have a responsibility to help safeguard the security of the examination and their own work. Candidates should make efforts to ensure their work cannot be seen by another candidate, including when leaving the examination venue temporarily to visit the toilet.
- 15** Candidates have a duty to report to an invigilator or the RCP Assessment Unit any concerns they have that another candidate was attempting to read their work, or any other instances of possible misconduct they notice.
- 16** Candidates who wish to attract the attention of the invigilator(s) during the examination should do so by raising a hand.
- 17** Candidates should bring to the attention of the invigilator any factor (eg distracting noise) that is adversely affecting them during the examination. Where necessary they should communicate the same in writing to the RCP Assessment Unit immediately following the examination concerned.
- 18** Candidates must stay for the full duration of each paper. Candidates may not leave the examination venue as a result of finishing the examination paper early.
- 19** Any candidate who leaves the examination early will have their examination attempt annulled and may be investigated under the Physician Associate National Examinations Misconduct Regulations.
- 20** The only exception to (17) and (18) is candidates who are granted additional time for their written examination, and who may leave Paper 2 once the first 2 hours have elapsed. Candidates who do choose to leave Paper 2 are not permitted to return to the examination venue once they have left.
- 21** Candidates must not leave the examination temporarily, during the period of the examination, unless given express permission by the invigilator(s) to do so. If such permission is given, they must be accompanied by an invigilator and must not attempt to contact any other person or consult any material relating to the examination while outside the examination venue.
- 22** Candidates may not temporarily leave the examination venue, even to visit the toilet, during the first 30 minutes of any paper or in the 10 minutes before the scheduled end of each paper.
- 23** Candidates should immediately stop working and stop using pencils/erasers when instructed to do so by the invigilator and remain in their seats in silence while papers are collected.
- 24** Any candidate who is observed to be continuing work on their paper after the end of the examination has been announced will be reported.
- 25** Candidates must not remove from the examination venue any papers or examination materials. All Physician Associate National Recertification Examination questions are confidential and are under the copyright of the Royal College of Physicians. The RCP reserves

the right to initiate civil action and/or criminal prosecution if theft of intellectual property is suspected.

- 26** Question papers or any part of them, including individual questions, must not be copied or removed from the examination venue.
- 27** Candidates must not communicate any question or part of a question to any other person or organisation. Candidates should inform the RCP Assessment Unit if they are asked to divulge examination content by any individual or organisation.
- 28** When authorised to do so by the invigilator(s), candidates should leave the examination venue in an orderly manner.
- 29** Candidates should note that if any information comes to light at a later stage that indicates that examination regulations have been breached, the RCP Assessment Unit reserves the right to invoke the misconduct procedures retrospectively.

6.3 Invigilation

Where an invigilator suspects a candidate or candidates of infringing Physician Associate National Recertification Examination regulations or examination venue rules, he or she may speak to the candidate(s) involved, making clear what is causing concern, and reminding them of the relevant regulations and instructions.

Invigilators may confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate(s).

Invigilators compile a written report of the examination for the RCP Assessment Unit, including any incidents of suspected misconduct.

Invigilators are empowered to refuse to allow a candidate to continue with the examination on grounds of misconduct. Ejection from the examination should normally take place only in the event of a candidate's conduct causing disruption to other candidates.

7. Completion of the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination

Once a candidate has successfully completed the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination, a certificate will be posted to them. Details of successful and unsuccessful candidates will also be passed to the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) so they may update their records accordingly.

8. Additional regulations and procedures

Details of other Physician Associate National Certification Examinations regulations for candidates are available [here](#). These are as follows:

- > Code of conduct for examination applicants and candidates
- > Examination appeals regulations
- > Examination complaints procedure
- > Misconduct regulations
- > Reasonable adjustment policy

9. Language requirements

All parts of the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination are conducted in English.

As all assessments are conducted in English, the Royal College of Physicians advises that in order to be sufficiently prepared to sit the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination, candidates' English language ability should be equivalent to International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Level 7.5. However, candidates do not need to have taken IELTS or any other language examination to sit the Physician Associate National Recertification Examination.

The Physician Associate National Recertification Examination cannot be used to demonstrate competence in the English language.