

FAIRNESS, EQUALITY AND MEDICAL ROYAL COLLEGE EXAMS

ACADEMY OF MEDICAL ROYAL COLLEGES STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Academy recognises that there have been questions about equality and fairness of Medical Royal College examinations. The Academy Council believes that this is an important issue for all medical Royal Colleges and Faculties.

The Academy Council adopted the following principles in relation to College examinations and medical education:

- The purpose of College examinations is to ensure that doctors are of the right quality to deliver safe patient care in that particular area/specialty
- If candidates do not achieve the standard required in an examination it is right that they do not pass in order to protect the safety of patients
- Exams and curricula must, of course, be designed and implemented in the fairest possible way for all candidates to eliminate bias whilst maintaining high standards of care and patient safety
- Differential attainment amongst different groups of candidates does not in itself show that the exam or curricula content, processes or delivery is discriminatory. For example, the GMC commissioned independent report into the MRCGP exam published in September 2013 found that while there are significant differences in pass rates between different groups of doctors *'the method of assessment is not a reason for the differential outcomes'*
- The factors that can lead to differential attainment are not unique to College medical exams. They are complex and varied and predominantly outwith the control of an individual organisation. However, this does not reduce the need to seek to understand and address the causes of differential attainment
- Colleges have a responsibility to consistently review their exam content, processes and delivery to ensure that they are free from discrimination and bias and, indeed, promote equality of opportunity. There must be no factors within their control that contribute to differential attainment
- The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges:
 - Affirms that quality and patient safety have to be the first consideration
 - Supports the recommendations in the GMC commissioned report into the MRCGP
 - Urges all Colleges to regularly review their exam content, processes and delivery to ensure that they are free from discrimination and bias and that there are no factors within their control that contribute to differential attainment
 - Urges Colleges to consider how they can best provide feedback and support for struggling or failing candidates
 - Supports more research into the factors within and beyond medical education which are leading to differential attainment.